Metadata Tools Forum Discussion Summary 2008-05-08

Question was raised on how Archivists Toolkit and Archon compare. Merrilee Proffitt noted that RLG Programs is interested in doing a landscape review of EAD tools.

Almost all attendees saw at least one tool that could be used in their own environments. All have local practices that would need to be adjusted. Attendees expressed the desire to have access to the source code and modify it as needed. For example, UCLA added configuration options to LC's WebCat Assistant. It was suggested that this tool could be modified for Dissertation Abstracts. Attendees expressed much interest in NLA's Subject Selector. Since it's Web-based and uses Z39.50 searching, it should be easy to add additional authority or thesaurus files, such as the Getty's Art and Architecture Thesaurus and Cataloging Cultural Objects terminology. The MarcEdit tool has lots of current and potential uses. One example: Use it for editing Connexion local save files. Updating tools as new standards are introduced should be easy. Terry Reese noted that in two years there have been 20,000 – 30,000 MarcEdit downloads.

The support for developing tools varies greatly, from fully funded to assigning staff to develop the tools as part of their jobs to individuals developing them on their own time. Increasing metadata creation efficiency and productivity (and thus reducing labor costs) can be used to get or increase institutional support to develop tools.

There is no one place to learn about tools available. (The EAD Help Pages may be an exception. URL = http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/ead/tools.html) It was reported that LC will be updating its metadata tools page.

Missing tools: 1) archival collection management, 2) rights management, 3) a tool that produces structural metadata.

Needs:

- Tools should be easily configurable and easily modifiable.
- Identify gaps in tool output and external requirements.
- Programmers are often not available, so "shrink-wrapped" tools requiring little technical expertise in installation and configuration are needed. However, some tool users also are equipped to tinker.
- Develop closer ties between developers and user communities. Provide more opportunities for catalogers and coders to get together.
- Provide hooks between different tools. Cornell's LS Tools takes advantage of Terry Reese's MarcEdit. University of Wisconsin's BibApp tool to create institutional bibliographies that imports citations from a variety of sources, generate citations in a variety of formats, identify publications for depositing into institutional repositories, and assign permissions is another example of such hook-ups.
- Provide opportunities for co-development and for user communities to specify functional requirements and beta-testing.
- Institutions or organizations that commit to ongoing support once a tool is released. Tools that are basically proof of concepts need to be industrialized if they are to be broadly useful.