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Assignment #1: Metadata for Searching Moving Image Collections Comparison

For this assignment, I compared the websites of the Pacific Film Archive and Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision. My four initial search concepts were “16mm,” “streaming available,” “Christmas” and “1960s.” For both websites, the ease of searching depended on the type of search I was performing. Keyword or subject searches the best supported, while searches by carrier or access conditions were more difficult. The Pacific Film Archive had a simple search box that was connected to Berkeley’s general library catalog, OskiCat. The PFA provided instructions on how to limit searches in OskiCat to the film archive. OskiCat supported advanced search options, and provided descriptions on the search page of each searchable field as well as gave instructions on how to select multiple limits for a search. Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision also had simple and advanced search options. The advanced search options were filters that could be applied to the initial search term. Advice on how to search was provided in a page, separate from the catalog, entitled “Search Help.” Ngā Taonga gave advice on filters, exact searches, fuzzy searches, and Boolean searches.

Both PFA and Ngā Taonga had search boxes that allowed the user to start making simple searches quickly and easily. However, the advanced searches on Ngā Taonga’s site were not intuitive. It was difficult to tell when filters were applied. After selecting a filter, the user has to click on a button at the top of the page to “Hide Filters & Update

Search.” There were no instructions indicating that this was a necessary step. The first few times I tried to apply filters, I would click on the filters I wanted and then enter the search without clicking the “Hide Filters & Update Search” button. This led to unfiltered searches. Since Ngā Taonga shows you all of the items before keyword searches and filters are applied, it is possible to browse their collection. It is unclear, however, how the items are ordered. In contrast, browsing is not an option for the PFA’s collection. It is mandatory to search the catalog with at least one term in the author, title, subject, or note field.

For both catalogs, I was not able to search with the precision I had expected of an advanced search, leading to results I did not expect. For example, I wanted to search for 16mm as an item carrier. Entering 16mm as a keyword lead to results where 16mm was in a field such as title. A common result was books on the history and use of 16mm. While both catalogs had the option to limit or filter based on material type, the options available to select were too general to allow searches by gauge. PFA does list gauge in the description field for each item, but the search could not be limited to just the description field, preventing one from looking at all the 16mm prints. In contrast, Ngā Taonga does not list specific carrier metadata, making it an impossible criterion for searching or filtering. However, I did get the results I expected when doing a subject search for “Christmas.” This mostly came up with items that had Christmas in the title or subject, although on occasion Christmas was someone’s last name. Both websites would search for terms in multiple fields unless instructed otherwise. The available metadata supported some of my searches and not others.

I did not find documentation on which metadata standards the two archives are using for their catalogs. My best guess would be that PFA is using MARC 21 for its data structure and RDA for its content standard. The catalog lists “Genre/Form” as an element, which I found in the Open Metadata Registry as the 655 index term in MARC 21. The catalog also includes the field “indexed in,” which is listed as an RDA property in the Open Metadata Registry. I would guess that Ngā Taonga is also using RDA because their catalog entries include “Media Type,” “Duration” and “Place of Production,” which are RDA properties.

The biggest difference between the PFA and Ngā Taonga catalogs were in the display of the results. The Berkeley catalog rated and divided the results into “Most relevant titles entries,” “Highly relevant titles entries” and “Very relevant titles entries.” Items with the search term in the title ranked higher than items with the term in a different field. It was also possible to sort by date or title instead of relevance. In contrast, the ordering mechanism for results in the Ngā Taonga catalog was completely unclear to me. When I used “16mm” as a keyword search, most of the results had “16mm” in the title, but very first result did not. Instead, “16mm” was part of the production company’s name, a fact which one could not see without clicking on the item for the full description. The layout of the results further contributed to the perceived lack of order. The entries were in boxes of varying sizes, preventing clear lines of sight. Results could not be sorted, but additional filters could be applied to narrow down the results. Ultimately, both catalogs are useful for simple searches like locating known titles. However, if I were researching a broad topic or specific format, I would want to enlist the help of a librarian to find the most appropriate resources.

Works Cited

"BAM/PFA - Search Film, Video, And Book Catalogs " Web. 3/6/2016

<http://archive.bampfa.berkeley.edu/pfalibrary/search_library>.

"The Registry! :: home " Web. 3/6/2016 <<http://metadatarregistry.org/>>.

"Search | Nga Taonga Sound & Vision " Web. 3/6/2016

<<http://www.ngataonga.org.nz/collections/search>>.