The Next Stage: Moving from Isolated Digital Collections to Interoperable Digital Libraries

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Abstract

Online collections do not yet function like conventional libraries. Many digital collections are experimental and lack service components, and few have preservation components. The function of searching across collections is a dream frequently discussed but seldom realized at a robust level. This paper places a conceptual framework upon digital library development, and discusses how we might move from isolated digital collections to interoperable digital libraries. It first examines how early efforts to construct digital collections were conceived as experiments rather than operational libraries. It then discusses various conventional library components that are necessary to deployment of operational digital libraries. Finally, the author points to functions (such as infrastructure, robust metadata, and preservation components) that can be deployed to move us from isolated digital collections to interoperable digital libraries.

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