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Peer Review

Open Peer Review

Iakovakis, C. (2023, May). [OER Discovery, by B. Burnett, N. Cannon-Rech, R. Hunnicutt & J. Mortimore]. *Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education, 2*(1), 243–247. doi:10.13001/joerhe.v2i1.7879

Reviewer: Clarke Iakovakis

Recommendation: Resubmit for Review

Scope, Objectives, Content

Is the article in scope for Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education? Does the topic discuss an element related to open education, open data, open access, or other open topics? Is the topic an important one, or is it trivial or of low priority?

This manuscript describes an approach developed by Georgia Southern University to create a hybrid metadata standard in order to enhance discovery of OER and enable them to more readily crosswalk and adapt that standard to other metadata standards moving forward. The issues raised in the article are of critical importance to open education work, and are situated in a very active discussion in the community on sharing metadata across platforms, optimizing for discoverability, novel challenges in description of OER, and more.

Organization

Does the article proceed logically? As applicable, does the article adhere to a recommended structure and the section guideline?

I believe the literature review could be expanded further and go into more depth as to the strengths and shortcomings of existing OER metadata standards, such as the OTL MARC records, MHCC OER MARC, OER Schema, DPLA Profile, etc., as well the role and importance of metadata in discovering OER and the consequences for OER publishers, authors, users, librarians, etc. The problem is referred to in the first paragraph by the sentence "MARC, Dublin Core (2012), and IEEE-LOM (2002), all have some limitations in describing specific attributes of many OER materials," but these limitations are not enumerated. The Methods section refers to this review process and refers to the most common elements between standards and analysis of the MARC21 and RDA formats, so if these standards are introduced

and even cursorily described in the Lit Review, it will better help the reader to understand the thought process in the development of the hybrid standard produced.

There is also a claim made in the lit review that is not fully substantiated: "Short of the community coalescing around a 3rd-party repository or preferred metadata scheme, we are unlikely to see much progress toward a shared standard for OER description and sharing." While this inference is possibly accurate, it would be useful to review any existing literature exploring barriers to shared standards. Perhaps it would be better to move this claim into the Introduction and to use it to further frame the issue and demonstrate the urgency of the problem.

Finally, in the last sentence of the second full paragraph of the Literature Review, it might be helpful to summarize some of "questions remaining" pertaining to the development of OER Metadata Rosetta Stone that were provided in the presentations listed, given that the latter proposes to address OER discovery and inconsistencies in OER metadata is itself referred to as a resource by the authors later in the article.

By expanding the Lit Review in this way, I believe it will provide a deeper and more thorough context for the creation of the custom metadata standard at Georgia Southern, and could in itself be a resource for those trying to chart their own course forward.

A further point that could be explored in more depth is brought out in the conclusion; namely, the value of collaboration between people doing OER work across roles. This is another interesting and critical aspect of the work, and there would be some value in drawing on that literature in the introduction and literature review. As it is currently in the conclusion, it seems somewhat disconnected from some of the other issues introduced in the earlier part of the article, and the highly technical metadata descriptions in the Methods and Discussion.

Methodology, Approach, Conclusions

The methodology for data gathering and analysis should be appropriate for the problem addressed. Inferences from data should be sound--the author should not reach unsupported conclusions. Not all papers will use a scientific research methodology, but all should employ sound reasoning and an adequate balance between description and critical analysis. Consider: Is the article factually accurate? Is it clear the author knows, or has investigated, previous work on the subject of the article? Has the author failed to reference recent or seminal work on the subject?

As mentioned above, this article appears to be closer to a case study than an original research article. Furthermore, the process described is still under development and in the prototype phase, and the authors have not yet developed crosswalk tools that would provide a further demonstration of the value of their approach.

Writing Style, References

Please indicate whether there are problems with expression or flow, but do not comment about grammar or basic edits. Do NOT take the time to do copy editing - that will be handled later in the process. However, general comments pointing out problems with style or format are useful.

This is a clear and well written article. For the most part it is well referenced and the references appear to be well formatted. Also there are some acronyms that are not spelled out or defined the first time they are introduced, including IEEE-LOM, UNESCO, JSON-LD, RDF, RDA.

The Methods section does get into some intricacies of mapping the OER Commons metadata to MARC; while there is value in this, it might be useful to generalize some takeaways from this mapping process in the Discussion section.

Application:

Does the article contribute knowledge or practical examples that will inform/improve others' practice or education?

The article without question contributes both knowledge and practical examples that can improve practice and education. It provides a critical perspective on the issues associated with developing custom or hybrid metadata schemas, and an outline of some of the issues with standardized schemas. I do think the process is worth disseminating, though as described above, I'm not certain if it fits within the scope of the Journal as a "quantitative and qualitative research article."

What are the stronger points/qualities of the article?

As described already, it is well-written, interesting, and a valuable contribution to the growing discussion on the challenges of OER discoverability.

What are the weaker points/qualities of the article? How could they be strengthened?

I have addressed this in other comments; namely that it is not original research as traditionally defined. I'm also not altogether certain that the title fits the article: in what ways have the authors processes ensured that OER rise to the top? Because the changes are still in prototype and the article does not include any measurements but is rather a description of a process, it is difficult to see how they can assert that their process has fully addressed the challenges they describe.

Peer Review Ranking: Scope

Does the topic discuss an element related to open education, open data, open access, or other open topics?

Highly Relevant

Peer Review Ranking: Clarity

Clarity of expression and flow? Does the article proceed logically?

Clear

Peer Review Ranking: Contribution

Contribution to Higher Education research and/or practice

Contributes

Peer Review Ranking: Research Assessment

If this is a research paper, is the methodology appropriate?

Not Appropriate

Peer Review Ranking: Research Assessment

If this is a research paper, are the conclusions sound? Does the article contribute knowledge or practical examples that will inform/improve others' practice or education?

Not Sound

Overall Evaluation

-1- Weak Reject
