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Releasing catalogue data: Cologne-based libraries to pioneer Open Data practices

Joint statement of the North Rhine-Westphalian Library Service Center, the University and Public Library of Cologne, the University Library of the University of Applied Science of Cologne, the Library of the Academy of Media Arts Cologne and Library Centre of Rhineland-Palatinate.

Cologne-based libraries and the Library Centre of Rhineland-Palatinate (LBZ) in cooperation with the North Rhine-Westphalian Library Service Center (hbz) are the first German libraries to adopt the idea of Open Access for bibliographic data by publishing their catalog data for free public use. The University and Public Library of Cologne (USB), the Library of the Academy of Media Arts Cologne, the University Library of the University of Applied Science of Cologne and the LBZ are taking the lead by releasing their data. The Public Library of Cologne has announced to follow shortly. The release of bibliographic data forms a basis for linking that data with data from other domains in the Semantic Web.

Libraries have been involved with the Open Access movement for a long time. The objective of this movement is to provide free access to knowledge to everybody via the internet. Until now, only few libraries have done so with their own data. Rolf Thiele, deputy director of the USB Cologne, states: "Libraries appreciate the Open Access movement because they

themselves feel obliged to provide access to knowledge without barriers. Providing this kind of access for bibliographic data, thus applying the idea of Open Access to their own products, has been disregarded until now. Up to this point, it was not possible to download library catalogues as a whole. This will now be possible. We are taking a first step towards a worldwide visibility of library holdings on the internet." The library of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) has already published its data under a public domain license in January.

Public data is placed in the public domain

The publication of the data enables anybody to download, modify and use it for any purpose. "In times in which publishers and some library organisations see data primarily as a source of capital, it is important to stick up for the traditional duty of libraries and librarians. Libraries have always strived to make large amounts of knowledge accessible to as many people as possible, with the lowest restrictions possible," said Silke Schomburg, deputy director of the hbz. "Furthermore libraries are funded by the public. And what is publicly financed should be made available to the public without restrictions," she continued.

Cooperation and data exchange between libraries have been firmly established in the library world for more than 100 years. Freely supplying bibliographic data should not only further enhance cooperation among libraries but enable subsequent use by non-library institutions. "In the course of the internet's development it became clear that many services can be greatly enhanced by catalog data. The German Wikipedia for example has been enriched with German National Library data for a long time. Such enrichment is often hindered and constricted by the data's half open character," Schomburg notes.

Data for the Semantic Web

The North Rhine-Westphalian Library Service Center has recently begun evaluating the possibilities to transform data from library catalogs in such a way that it can become a part of the emerging Semantic Web. The liberalization of bibliographic data provides the legal background to perform this transformation in a cooperative, open, and transparent way. Currently there are discussions with other member libraries of the hbz library network to

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publish their data. Moreover, "Open Data" and "Semantic Web" are topics that are gaining perception in the international library world.

Weblinks:

URL: http://www.hbz-nrw.de/angebote/linked_open_data/

Queries

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About the hbz (german)

Das Hochschulbibliothekszenrum des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (hbz) steht im Bereich des Bibliotheks- und Informationswesens für Wissen, Information und Innovation. Im Mittelpunkt des Aufgabenspektrums des hbz steht die bedarfsgerechte Planung und Umsetzung in enger Absprache mit den Kunden. Auf dieser Basis wird an der konstanten Weiterentwicklung bestehender Systeme, deren Leistungsfähigkeit und Stabilität gearbeitet. Das hbz greift innovative Tendenzen und aktuelle Entwicklungsansätze auf und bietet hierfür praktikable Lösungen an. Die Verbunddatenbank des hbz weist ca. 18 Millionen Titel- und 39 Millionen Bestandsnachweise nach und integriert die Nordrhein-Westfälische Bibliographie sowie alle Zeitschriften der Zeitschriftendatenbank (ZDB). Das hbz betreibt darüber hinaus DigiBib - Die Digitale Bibliothek, die von über 220 Kunden deutschlandweit genutzt wird. Weitere Produkte des hbz: Konsortiale Erwerbung von elektronischen Inhalten, DigiLink, DigiAuskunft, die Open-Access-Plattform Digital Peer Publishing (DiPP), die Deutsche (DBS) und Österreichische (ÖBS) Bibliotheksstatistik, BIX - der Bibliotheksindex, Linked Open Data, Digitalisierung u. a. mit

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