

From Perth 2018 at the ASA Conference

Session 9c: Directory of Archives in Australia Project

The most depressing and muddle-headed session I attended. I questioned and received no coherent answer on what the functional requirements for this Project are. It is a cardinal error to supply answers to questions that haven't been formulated. Like putting the cart before the horse.

Enthusiasm is no substitute for reflection.

Enduring Identity

It appears that entries for defunct repositories are to be deleted. That is not right. Once registered they must remain. Put dates around them and run a redacted version if you wish (but why would you want to?) but a register system endures. God forbid they start re-using the numbers. It never occurred to me to make enduring identity a requirement in the [Modest Proposal](#). I just took it as read. An illustration that you can't assume **anything**. I'm not even sure if ISDIAH allows for time-bound relationships (previous/subsequent) and it would be too painful to look it up. If it does someone will tell me.

Including the Ungathered

They are using AtoM/ISDIAH and only wishing to notice "collections" or repositories. Requirement 4 calls for inclusion of the ungathered as well as the gathered. Examples of ungathered resources include land data, life data, geospatial data, statistical data, meteorological data, research data sets. They're unlikely ever to go to an archives repository. The objection to ISDIAH (in case you've forgotten) is that institutions registered under ISDIAH are, in fact, corporations that should be registered under ISAAR.

... And then some

These were the only two issues I got to raise (out of a very long list). But I had already concluded they weren't going to get to Dublin from here. There was talk of expanding its role to something like a directory of archival resources. Ye gods – revenge of the flatlanders!

Session 10: Replicating the Replicants: Do Archivists Dream of Downloadable Sheep?

This was almost a re-run of a similar session at Parramatta (under the heading of ubiquity) involving some of the same speakers. It's about "liberating" archives from structures and hierarchy and enabling enriched and more useful access via connections (relationships) that are random and unbounded. My [response to the Parramatta presentation](#) was along these lines

It would have been possible to conclude that ubiquity, in and of itself, is an absolute good, virtuous in its own right ... My response is [that] ubiquity is neither good nor bad in itself but only contingently - by reference to how it is used, what it is for, what purposes it serves, and what requirements it fulfils (or fails to fulfil) ... contingency, limits, boundaries, and frameworks are virtuous in recordkeeping. It is how we include and exclude things and how we position them in relation to each other that supports (or imperils) evidence ... Both approaches are based on relationships. There is potential, therefore, for congruence rather than contrast. Alongside limitless and random conjunction ... defined relationships that characterise recordkeeping (if only our descriptive practices were better employed) might thus powerfully deliver results that illuminate the character and meaning of the record. Meaning comes from a statement of what is and what is not; it comes from providing the user with information that this is important and that is not. Evidential relationships are relevant precisely because they are preferred over others, because they affirm the pertinence of one relationship over another – at source and prior to use. When all relationships have equal value, their meaning as testimony to the circumstances of their creation and use is vitiated: when everyone is some-body, then no one's any-body (W S Gilbert).

The problem with both sessions (today and two years ago) apart from the misleading impression that archival description has not abandoned hierarchy and singularity and has failed to embrace multiplicity, is that they do not contextualise themselves. Ubiquity enhances the role of the archivist as a custodian of heritage assets, but that is not the only role archivists fulfil. Making evidential records cannot be based on random and boundless associations – quite the opposite. And it is the work of the records maker that the records keeper inherits and must preserve. By a curious juxtaposition the concept of recordkeeping by design came up in the next session (13a: Thinking Machines, smart applications and recordkeeping innovations)

Ubiquity is fine within the role of archivist-as-heritage-curator but inimical to the archivist-as-recordkeeper role. There are yet more roles in the space in between - such as those that support communities and special needs (e.g. Find and Connect) where a blend of structure to support evidence and ubiquity to support discovery is required. Failure to clarify that different approaches are appropriate to different roles simply confuses things.

Keynote 4: Wikipedia Loves Archives; Archives Should Love Wikipedia, Too

The most enchanting session I attended – not least because it resonates so well with my [Modest Proposal](#) for a wiki approach to federated access. I went into this session feeling old and tired and I left (I swear to God) with a spring in my step – not because I thought Australian archivists would do something about it but because of the possibilities it disclosed.

It was all about how organised data can be incorporated into [Wikidata](#) and used not just by us but by everyone. That would include all of the higher-level structures I imagined would be needed for my wiki to provide a framework for contributions. My goodness! They may already be there. So far as I could tell, it would also accommodate the higher level contextual data from archival programmes themselves and provide protocols for resolving duplication (e.g. NAA's registration of the State of Victoria alongside PROV's registration of same).

With this resource available, how can archives programmes with budgetary restraints justify systems of their own to support such data? They would, of course, still have to maintain and update the data itself but they wouldn't have to maintain the systems. (If you look up the Wikipedia entries for kingdoms, principalities, countries, and political offices you will find an entity/relationship approach which accommodates ours). For that matter why isn't [SNAC](#) in Wikidata? I managed to ask a question verifying that externally maintained taxonomies of the kind I proposed we would need to make use of, such as the ABS [work classifications](#), could also be incorporated into WikiData.

And, of course, it would be ideal for hosting the upgraded *Directory*. With the advantage, supposing ASA can bring itself to concede the requirements set out in the *Modest Proposal*, that programmes for both gathered and the ungathered records could be accommodated without any further nonsense derived from AtoM/ISDIAH and the GLAM-orous flatlander wheeze.

Description – Quo Vadis?

Quo vadis? can be rendered, inter alia, as “whither are we drifting?” or “and where are you off to?” This will be the first of a series of posts about it over the next week or so, deriving from sessions set up at the Perth Conference and at the Melbourne Conference a year ago – in particular from three sessions:

- a) [At Melbourne](#), a workshop that attempted to launch a collective approach by “small” archives to shaping AtoM into a series-friendly adaptation;
- b) [At Perth](#), a demonstration of Morty (Session 13b) purporting to be a proof-of-concept implementation of the Records-in-Context (RiC) conceptual model;

c) [Also at Perth](#), a presentation (Session 17) by a panel of consultants of approaches at differing levels of conceptual and technical complexity and cost that might be used by “small” archives (but no reason why it couldn’t be used regardless of size) to develop series-friendly projects.

To begin, I shall try to lay the groundwork for what is to follow.

Background

What are the features of the descriptive landscape (for the moment, in a fast-moving world)?

- a) [Describing Archives in Context \(DAIC\)](#): in the absence of anything else, it is believed by some to be an authoritative statement of Australian theory and practice. It emphasises (wrongly) that “separation” of agencies and series is the defining characteristic but contains (muted) reference to the true essence of our approach – viz. entity/relationships.
- b) *ISAD Suite (ISAD+)*: the four currently approved international descriptive standards that incorporate the hierarchical multi-level rule although the implications of that have been softened and have become almost irrelevant through successive editions that have incorporated more series-friendly adaptations. Comprising [ISAD\(G\)](#); [ISAAR \(CPF\)](#); [ISDF](#); and [ISDIAH](#).
- c) Software: e.g. [AtoM](#) developed by Artefactual and purporting to implement the ISAD+ Suite but very forgiving of breaches of the ISAD+ rules. Other Software, such as [ArchivesSpace](#), etc. Some of these provide a measure of digital asset control but other dedicated software - e.g. [Preservica](#), [Archivematica](#), [MirrorWeb](#), etc. – exist that may be integrated with descriptive software.
- d) [Records-in-Contexts \(RiC\)](#): a purported normalisation of the four ISAD+ standards that has become something else altogether and could be the basis for a revolution in international descriptive thinking by replacing multi-level description with entity/relationship approaches.
- e) Local Standards in Other Countries: e.g. [US-DACS](#) which is currently being redrafted to abandon multi-level description in favour of an entity-relationship approach recommended by RiC (to say nothing of Australians who have advocated this approach over the last 50 years – and, believe me, they do say nothing; it’s like we have been living on a different planet). Hold your breath - establishing this idea in North America would be a game changer.
- f) *Morty*: a proof-of-concept implementation project revealed in Perth, the “concept” purporting to be RiC.
- g) Emergence of ancillary descriptive support tools that can be used to enhance our endeavours (e.g. [SNAC](#) ; [ADB](#); and [Wikidata](#)) and of federated access platforms (such as [Europeana](#)) that could be emulated here - some will think of [TROVE](#) in this regard but that is problematic for us in ways so complex that discussion needs to be held over. The rest of the archival world is getting a lot better than we are in deploying the results of description in imaginative and useful ways – honourable mention though for [AWM](#).

Above all, as I alluded to in one my posts from Glasgow, the ground is moving beneath our feet. Just as it is no longer possible to think about stand-alone EDRM systems, it is no longer possible to think in terms of stand-alone descriptive systems. Description must be integrated conceptually and, so far as practicable, architecturally with the whole archival/r-keeping process (viva, Ian Maclean!). Even small archives that cannot do so in practical terms should learn to think conceptually of descriptive systems as merely one component of their architecture.

Disclaimer: Where Do I Stand?

My “friend” Barbara Reed stated in the Morty Session that I am an opponent of RiC. This is untrue. I am used to being misunderstood and misrepresented (poor me!) but, if portraying me thus can assist Barbara in whatever it is she is trying to do, I am happy to help in the role of a straw man and as a

stock figure of the unworldly theoretician out of touch with “practical” matters. But for the record and for the purposes of the postings to follow I should give a more accurate account of my own bias:

- a) Conceptually, I stand by my understanding of the so-called Series System.
- b) That is no longer the same as the articulation given to it by Peter Scott, although it is true (I believe) to the underlying concepts deriving from his work and that of Ian Maclean.
- c) I think I am not alone in this role as a *continuator* of “series” thinking, but I would not claim that others of that ilk are in agreement with me or with each other.
- d) No archives in Australia (including NAA) still practices the “Series System” as articulated by Peter. There is no uniformity in Australian descriptive thinking or practice that can be embodied in any single implementation or proof-of-concept. Worse, there is no proper understanding or acknowledgement that this is the case.
- e) I believe RiC is a great break-through but I am wary of becoming over-enthusiastic about the prospects of its being adopted internationally. We must wait and see. Its impact is equally uncertain: what effect would the replacement of ISAD+ by RiC have on AtoM which is ISAD+ compliant, for example? Will archives around the world reconfigure their data to comply with standards based on a new conceptual model? How about a proof-of-concept that such transitions can be facilitated? If posing difficult questions be opposition, so be it.
- f) No software package can (alone) provide any archives with what is needed. Descriptive software can only ever be part of the design solution underlying archival processes. Accessioning, processing, repository control, preservation, lending/issue, and (lord-a-mercy) the whole of r/keeping back out into creation-space, through the processes of migration, normalisation, replication, rendition, and digitisation, and then forward into secondary-user-space (including rights management and redaction) must now be aligned.
- g) I agree, therefore, with Piers Higgs in the Consultants’ Session that there is no magic bullet and that a variety of “solutions” (scaled up or scaled down depending on circumstance) rather than a single implementation model is likely needed - utilising a smorgasbord of software offerings and approaches to implementation design.

Why Relationships Matter

The original impetus for *ISAD(G)* was to standardise archival descriptions to facilitate federated searching (it wasn’t called that back then). I know, I was there. If all descriptions were alike they could be inter-sorted much like the old-fashioned union catalogues as described in the [Modest Proposal](#). Unfortunately, this vision was driven by library-type thinking, Flatland thinking. It was Flatland thinking mixed up in an unholy gallimaufry along with recordkeeping thinking in the standards they drafted. In Flatland, each asset is singly described and carries almost all of the metadata needed for its discovery. Federated discovery requires an alignment of the metadata and the technology has become very much better at doing that without the need for as much standardisation as was once thought necessary.

In Flatland, aligning metadata was achieved using “authority files” (e.g. [LC Headings](#)). An authority file controls the value of the characteristics of an asset. Following the library model, the ICA Descriptive Standards folks, when they began to accept a degree of separation between Doers and Documents, entitled the standard for describing Doers – *ISAAR(CPF)* – an authority record. To some degree they continued to think of *ISAAR* like that. I know, I was there. The emphasis was on bringing descriptions into alignment *a posteriori* by (essentially) building relationships as you search – just like ubiquity does in Flatland. This is what happens when archivists dream only of downloadable sheep (Session10) and it can produce some amazing and valuable results.

But evidential recordkeeping relies on *a priori* relationships, established at creation or identified as part of archival description, and preserved (in the service of evidence) thereafter. These

relationships support different kinds of alignments - particular, contingent, and structured, not ubiquitous. Customarily, this was achieved by grouping assets together when they had a common relationship:

- Items were grouped by reference to the Series to which they belong;
- Series were grouped by reference to the Agency that creates them;
- Documents were grouped by reference to the Activity that generates them;
- etc. etc. etc.

The common device used was the dreaded hierarchical list which gave rise to:

- entrapment of entities within a singularity (you had to choose the group an entity belonged to);
- interdependence of descriptions (an Item description didn't make sense unless read in conjunction with the description of the Series to which it belonged).

The ICA folks sought to overcome these defects by borrowing the idea of authority records from Flatland. I know, I was there. In my time with them, the notion that such authorities could be used for the double purpose of separating descriptions of different entity-types, thereby placating the pesky Australians, had just begun to glimmer. They were genuinely puzzled why it didn't placate me.

Disclaimer: This is not (or ought not to be) a binary analysis – on/off, good/bad, yes/no. Ubiquity and structure should augment each other. They both work and uphold different aspects of the recordkeeping enterprise.

Relationships lie at the heart of the "Series System". The singularity is broken when we allow Series to belong (descriptively) to more than one Fonds. Initially, as formulated by Peter, that (along with the separation of Provenance and Ambience) was the only point of separation. He and I had ferocious arguments over whether or not one Item could belong to two Series. He was concerned, I think, to preserve as much as possible from traditional thinking so as to avoid further charges of heresy. But the logic of the S/system requires that we break-up singularity at all points – everything can be related to anything else – giving rise not only to multiple provenance but to simultaneous multiple provenance and parallel provenance as well (at all "levels").

Now, this may sound very much like ubiquity but it isn't because our kind of multiplicity supports a recordkeeping view derived from the actual, observed circumstances of creation and use (and preserved thereafter) and not from a Flatland view in which anything can be related to anything. The challenge for us, so far unmet as far as I can see, is how to

- incorporate r/keeping relationships into federated searching;
- support alignment of entities across the boundaries of Ambience (at all "levels").

Maybe that's one problem, not two. Note: we must stop thinking of Ambience, Provenance, etc. as defining characteristics of an entity-type. It is relationships that determine what role an instant entity plays. The same entity may confer Ambience or Creation depending on the relationships forged, not upon its essence.

All of which makes relationships so important. *RiC* has 800 or so of them, piled on, one after the other, in a riotous display of intellectual virtuosity (see how clever I can be!). If ever there was a case of the wood being lost in the trees, this is it. In the Morty Session, I ventured to suggest a way of dealing with this. They used the term relationship types to characterise the *RiC* list. If you read [Documenting for Dummies](#), you will see that I made the point there that entities must be grouped into entity-types in support of scalability. Thus Items, Sub-Series, Series, Super-Series, Sous-Fonds, and Fonds are all instances of the Document Type. The (as yet unproven) hypothesis is that we can construct rules around entity-types that apply more or less equally to all instances belonging to that type. Anybody: how about a proof-of-concept for that?

I asked the Morty folk to consider replacing their use of the term relationship type with the idea of instances of a relationship-type, but they didn't get it. They thought that when I said I could reduce the *RiC* list to about 15 I meant eliminating 785 relationships from the list. Quite the contrary. No one outside of Bedlam would dream of implementing 800 relationships. But it doesn't really matter if they're only instances of 15 types - the number could grow to 8,000 and it still wouldn't matter so long as we are clear about how many relationship-types they fit into. An implementation will choose which instances best fit the circumstances and then apply rules based on the relationship-type to which the chosen instances belong. That's the theory, anyway.

Take outs:

- r/keeping relationships differ from ubiquitous relationships – everything can be structurally related to anything but anything cannot be ubiquitously related to anything;
- we still have a long way to go in understanding how r/keeping relationships work and how they can best be used.

Whither RiC?

RiC is a conceptual model in search of a concept - cf. [RiC at Riga](#). The drafting Committee (EGAD) was asked, in effect, to normalise *ISAD+* along the lines I suggested in *Documenting for Dummies*, saying the same thing about dating entities in all four standards, that sort of thing. They've produced something quite different, but hardly a conceptual model - yet. Apart from a few conceptual ideas (approving the entity/relationship approach, for example) it consists mostly of tables of possible entities and relationships about which I have already had my say - cf. [Records in Context \(RiC\) 1.0–Comments on First Draft \(2016\)](#). As for what kind of conceptual model might emerge over time, we must wait and see.

Now, for a happy thought. When draft *ISAD(G)* was launched we made a lot of fuss and I was made a member of the drafting Committee. At that time, *ISAD(G)* was accompanied by a *Statement of Principles*. At my first meeting, I was told the *Statement* was no longer open for discussion and they moved straight on to drafting *ISAD+*. I have told this story in *RiC at Riga* and elsewhere. Suppose, just suppose, that *RiC* is not intended to replace *ISAD+* but, instead, to subsume it.

Twenty-five years ago, I struggled to convince the internationals that it was not our intention to displace multi-level description in favour of a series-friendly approach. It was always my contention that an agreed set of descriptive principles could support alternative approaches that could be written into the standards. I'm not sure they believed me. After a lifetime of crushing disillusionment, I have come to believe that it is next to impossible to persuade someone of the correct answer to a question they haven't yet formulated for themselves. Could it be that what will emerge is a *RiC* that fills the gap left by the abandoned *Statement*? That after twenty-five years (!) EGAD stands on the cusp of repairing the damage done when the *ISAD+* path was taken without principles – not by abandoning *ISAD+* but by redirecting it?

It would not then be necessary to urge that *RiC* be made series-friendly. The international descriptive discourse would become (as I have always believed it should be) a song made harmonious with many melodies. Should this occur (God, I'm being optimistic here) the concept that would have to be proved is that they have succeeded in fashioning a conceptual model that can, in fact, accommodate series-friendly description (along with others). But for that we must wait and see.

Whither the Series System?

Peter Scott published what were effectively implementation guidelines for the S/system as it developed under his hand at NAA. The files there groan with many other unpublished memoranda.

The whole experience came to be embodied in the *CRS Manual*, which I am told is still accessible on the web. Whether the *Manual* is still maintained I know not. I am certain, however, that neither its most recent version nor NAA's current practice still follow Peter's precepts. Nor do any other applications currently being maintained by *inheritors* of the system.

As for a coherent conceptual statement, where are we to go?

- There is the work of the *continuator*s – those academics and writers (including myself) who have extended Peter's thinking and expressed themselves in articles, research studies, and metadata models. It's all good stuff (most of it) but homogeneous it is not.
- There is *DAIC* – which purports to be a conceptual presentation of the S/system but which can only be marked as C+. It was written in a muddle (and rewritten, and rewritten, and rewritten) and then issued in desperation to be rid of it. I know, I was there.

It follows that exercises in implementation now (such as *Morty*) must be guided by one person's interpretation of the S/system since no coherent agreed interpretation is available. We are all more-or-less operating in the same space and facing in the same direction but not with precision - no, not with that. The question is, would it be worth revisiting *DAIC* and coming up with a better conceptual model of the S/system? Would it, indeed, be possible?

What Really Matters?

Alice comes to a fork in the road and is puzzled about what to do. Sitting in a nearby tree is a Cheshire Cat. She asks the cat which road she should take. "Where do you want to go?" asks the cat. "I don't know," Alice says. "Then," replies the cat, "it doesn't matter."

One talks of separation and of models, and of entity/relationship vs multi-level approaches, and of structure and ubiquity – but all of that is about technique. Technique is worthless gymnastics until it is deployed for a purpose. What is our purpose? What is description for? To make good records. Yes. To preserve them. Yes. To make them available. Yes. To make them usable. Yes. To make them interesting and more serviceable. Yes (but more dangerous, that). But all of these are objectives which the techniques are employed to achieve. They still don't tell us what direction to take (where we want to go). They don't tell us what matters.

Above and beyond the technical features of the S/system (whatever they may be) lies a view about what matters. A philosophy of archiving, if you like. It is seldom spoken of (alas) and is (I fear) often lost sight of by some of its practitioners. But the ghost of Ian Maclean speaks of it loud and clear. What matters is recordkeeping. If we are anything, we are recordkeepers – first, last, and always. What does it mean to be a recordkeeper? Well, thanks be to Jenkinson, a lot has been said and written about that and it's a discourse that is still alive and well. Isn't it? (he added nervously).

Nothing in the contemporary descriptive discourse is more distressing than the all but ubiquitous use of the word "collection". That others use it constantly is not surprising because their use of it is supposed to be the thing above all others that marks us and our way of doing things off from them and their way of doing things. Not using it is supposed to signify what it means to be one of us – to be on the side of the S/system. Nowadays I find that we are using it too – all the time.

Understanding that collecting doesn't matter is supposed to be the hallmark of our understanding of what does matter. Terminological carelessness is a little thing but, in this case I fear, it goes deeper - that it reflects an ignorance of what matters, that we have forgotten.

Ubiquity also abhors collections. Collections are boundaries that ubiquity seeks to traverse. How odd that recordkeepers seem to have forgotten that. And do not subscribe to the great untruth that collecting can be enforced upon you by circumstances. It doesn't matter what kind of materials you deal with – personal or institutional, private or official, current or non-current. It doesn't matter

what kind of employment you are in – library, archives, museum, gallery, or office. Wherever you are and whatever you do, you can still have a recordkeeping frame of mind.

So, what matters is the focus of our descriptive efforts. That, unsurprisingly, is the connections (the relationships) we employ and an understanding of the different purposes we use them for. Clarification of the different purposes of structure, ubiquity, and collection would be a first step to understanding but certainly not the last.

Conclusions

A year ago, in Melbourne, a workshop looked at possibilities for enhancing AtoM as a more series-friendly implementation in “small archives”. It was announced in the [Consultants’ Session](#) (Session 17) that this didn’t really go anywhere. No more one size fits all. Instead, they took a new tack in this Session by providing guidance and examples of tools to assist small archives in going about the business.

Stand-Alone Descriptive Software

Proprietary products, even if they [are](#) Open Source, aren’t cost-free. They take up time and resources to deploy and to maintain. They are technologically dependent and I have yet to hear of an instance in which the archivists don’t need IT support of some kind. AtoM seems (to me) to suffer from being developed on the run and there are other problems – e.g. download issues related to Linux (good for universities, bad for banks). I am a lurker on the AtoM User List and a day does not go by when there aren’t a dozen or more postings about bugs, problems, and queries. Artefactual are very good at maintaining this List and offering free advice but it suggests to me that small and sole archivists would need support. That is available from Artefactual itself at a cost or from someone else who would also need to be paid or budgeted for. I should also add that many archives (including ANU) seem to have installed AtoM without (apparent) difficulty but that may prove the point because I suspect they had in-house support.

Integrated Descriptive Solutions

As alluded to in earlier posts (and in the Consultants’ Session), stand-alone descriptive systems are becoming a thing of the past. Even small archives need to look at the possibility of integrated approaches and the Consultants’ Session was basically about how to go about this. I approve the approach taken and have nothing to add. But there is another aspect to integration. As alluded to in [my session at Parramatta two years ago](#), the focus on digital (and digitised) assets runs the risk of sidelining the as-yet-un-digitised physical assets, for the foreseeable future the overwhelming proportion of the assets we manage. Our descriptive efforts must continue to ensure that their existence is noticed and that access is given to as much information about them as possible in ways that are integrated with, not separated from, access to digital/digitised content.

Meanwhile, What About Standards?

I am still not clear about what Morty is about, but anything that makes standards more series-friendly is a good thing because it means standards-compliant software (like AtoM) will be more useful for us.

And, What About Really, Really Small Archives

These are the ones I call the barefoot archivists: tin shed, uncertain electricity, and Internet only three days a week. Community archives, historical societies, back office on Thursdays, that sort of thing. Requirement 3 is for them to be included somehow. They may still need a product that truly is simple and cost-free like [Tabularium](#) was. Tabularium wasn't actually free, of course, it was just done as a labour of love by David Roberts.

Federation?

The default position is that our descriptions are essentially available in one of three ways

- seriatim, knowing where to look and searching the on-line tools provided by each archives;
- looking in TROVE to see if the assets have been harvested (or contributed);
- doing a Google search and hoping something shows up.

The last two are searches in Flatland. Ubiquity, if I understand it correctly, points towards clever, purposeful, targeted harvesting as an alternative route to the same end.

In the *Modest Proposal* I tried to get a conversation started on what the requirements are for federated searching in our world. I suggested a wiki approach to illustrate one possible implementation model (not the only possible one) but my first concern is clarifying what we want and need, not how to get it (that comes later). There has been very little interest shown. Do we think it's an issue? Do we care? The Directory Session threw out a possibility that the *Directory* might be used to prompt searchers (somehow) towards institutions - for a seriatim search (I suppose). In Hobart, Michael Piggott et al threw out the possibility of [a resources-assessment approach](#) that I thought could be integrated into the wiki proposal. But I have no sense that federated searching is a live issue amongst us at the moment. Am I wrong?