FACING THE WORLD WIDE HEALTH CRISIS WITH VOCABULARY
CONTROL AND STANDARDS: NKOS WORKSHOP 2020

STANDARDS – THE BEDROCK OF OUR CONNECTED WORLD

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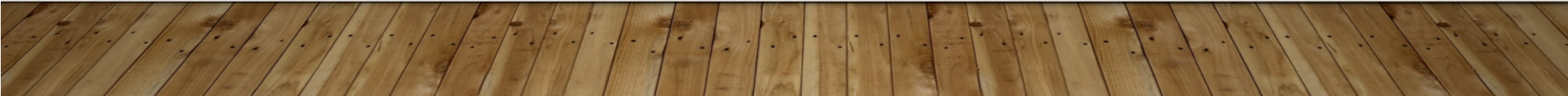
VICE PRESIDENT, CONTENT MANAGEMENT

ITHAKA

AGENDA

- Personal Info/Background

- Standards and their place in the world
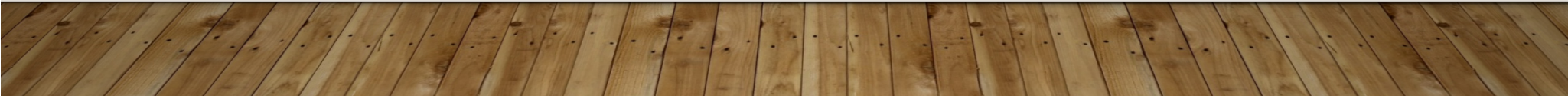
- Why do they matter now?

BACKGROUND INFO

- VP of Content Management at ITHAKA, which is a not-for-profit dedicated to improving access to knowledge around the world and making it more effective and affordable

- Products
  - JSTOR – an online archive of academic journals, books, and research reports
  - Portico – a preservation service for born-digital content for publishers and libraries
  - ITHAKA S&R – Strategies and research supporting higher education

- Before ITHAKA, nearly 20 years in health sciences publishing, including Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer

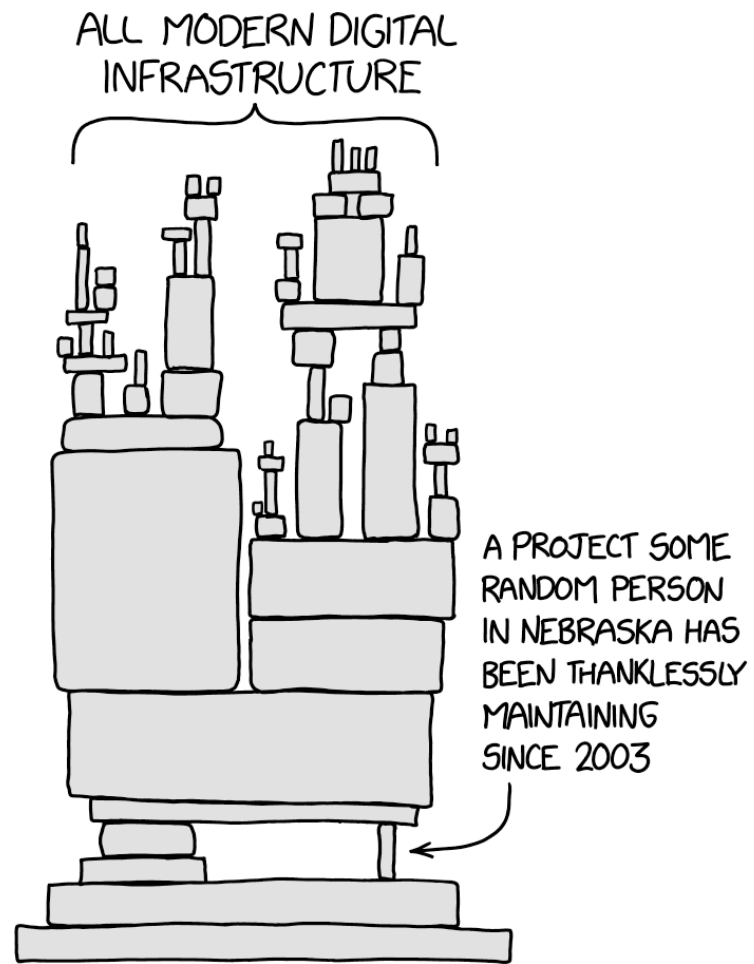- FULL DISCLOSURE – NISO Board Member (currently Treasurer) since 2016

STANDARDS AND THEIR PLACE IN THE WORLD

- Whether we know it or not, standards help us every day – some in ways we see, and others in ways we don't

- In exchange of information…
  - TCP/IP enables communication
  - DTD/schemas enable information architecture
  - Z39.50 enables information retrieval
  - Z39.19 enables categorization (controlled vocabularies)

- Imagine a world without these standards (Nevermind: it's too scary!)

WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO AVOID ☺

Source: xkcd.com

"ALL MEDICINE IS LOCAL"

- Judy and Travis are charged with putting solid, peer-reviewed information into the hands of health care professionals – from a policy perspective *and* from a clinical guidelines perspective

- The amount of disinformation available on the web is astounding

- In health care, being right can be a matter of life and death

- Doing this without standards that validate that the information is from a trusted source would be malpractice

- Standards enable them to do their jobs

- This is always important. It is even more important in 2020, when a global pandemic has raised the stakes

DIFFERENT USERS, DIFFERENT NEEDS

- Consider the needs of the following health-care professionals:
    - A nurse practitioner at a local health clinic
    - A pediatrician in private practice
    - An EMT responding to a health emergency at a local shopping mall
    - A registered nurse in a critical care unit at a large hospital
    - A medical coder processing insurance forms

- All have different needs, at different times, and with different points of entry into the current accepted practice of health care

BRINGING ORDER OUT OF CHAOS

- Without standards, and without the peace of mind that standards can bring to information architecture, satisfying the needs of these varying users would be impossible

- I can Google "what to do if my left arm is numb," but the only benefit you'll get is targeted Google ad words that will follow you for weeks

- Managing health care information is difficult in normal times, but particularly important in times like this, when knowledge of COVID-19 is evolving daily
  - Having standards increases the likelihood that "trusted sources" can be validated

STANDARDS THAT HELP NORMALIZE THE WORLD (NOT A COMPLETE LIST!)

- ISO/ANSI/NISO/W3C/NKOS

- ORCID/ISNI for contributor names

- XML, HTML, PDF, and ePUB for formats

- Industry/National Groups
  - Library of Congress (LCSH)
  - BISG (ONIX metadata for books)
  - STM

STANDARDS ENABLE

- Validity of source (Is information credible?, Can I trust it?)

- Quicker/easier exchange of information

- Seamless updating of information (is this the latest knowledge?)

- Discoverability – standards around taxonomies/NKOS are critical, because of the disambiguation they can provide for search

WHAT DO YOU CALL YOUR ANNUAL VISIT TO THE DOCTOR?

- Physical
- Checkup
- Check-up
- Health check
- Physical check-up
- Physical exam
- Physical examination

- Health examination
- Doctor's visit
- Looking over
- Yearly checkup
- Medical examination
- Once over

IN A GLOBAL, CONNECTED WORLD…

- That might seem trivial, but multiply the number of terms by different "lenses" in the world, and it becomes significant

- Or think about the variability in ASCO's world of Oncology, which is just ONE discipline of medicine, and medicine is just one branch of health sciences

FINAL THOUGHTS

- The world would still spin without standards

- But access to information in a timely, verifiable way would be severely limited

- As tough as 2020 has been, hard to think about how much worse it would be without the information made available by standards

THANK YOU

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