Nancy DeLaurier Award documents

Gregory Reser Nancy DeLaurier Comments,
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"... the distinction between "works", which are expected to be the focus of users' interest, and their digital representations, which are the elements manipulated in information systems like Europeana.

People ask me all the time, "Why do you spend so much time working on VRA embedded metadata projects?" I always answer, "Because I love it." I think that's the best reason to take on volunteer projects; it really is the only way to sustain your interest and effort. I began working on embedded metadata because I truly believed, and still do, that it is a good technology and should be used more. I think it can solve a lot of problems for image producers/publishers and provide a lot of benefits for users. I needed more motivation than that however; I needed to enjoy working on it. I needed to have fun with it. Luckily, VRA has allowed me to do that; they (you) have accepted my unconventional presentation style and laughed at most of my jokes. In return, I have tried to present useful information and assistance to those brave enough to try embedded metadata. This sounds like a win-win situation, but I think I actually get the best part of the bargain.

A few years ago I was bored with my job. I know it's hard to imagine ever getting bored with cataloging, but it happened to me. I was looking for something to get excited about, something to care about. I would go to VRA conferences and listen to speakers talk about big, profession-changing projects, like VRA Core and I would wonder how I could make a similar impact. I wanted to contribute, but most of all, I wanted to matter. That's a simple desire, impacting a profession, right? I have to tell you, it feels pretty good when it works out, which apparently it has.

I stumbled across embedded metadata while tagging my personal photos and I immediately saw the impact it could have on my day job. I began researching it and mapped out how it could be used in visual resources work. Information this good had to be shared. There was one problem: I was terrified of public speaking. I mean, breaking out in a cold sweat and stuttering incoherently scared. I really wanted to share what I had found though, so when an opportunity to speak at the VRA conference in Toronto (thank you, Mark Pompelia) came up, I took it. I decided that I wanted to do a different kind of presentation, one that would be entertaining and informative. I also wanted to have fun doing it. Looking back, I wonder if I hid my fear with jokes. I think I did. Luckily, VRA was receptive to the style and the content of my presentations and I have come to look forward to public speaking now.

I have to thank VRA for giving me a forum to share my ideas. Without VRA, I would just be a random guy posting ideas on a wiki. VRA gives me a supportive community to debate ideas and to try tools and techniques. It's hard to work in a vacuum, especially if you are creating tools that people will use. I need my colleagues in the VRA Embedded Metadata working group to help develop usable guidelines and tools. EMwg needs everyone on the Data Standards Committee and the Core Oversight Committee to answer complex questions about schemas, vocabularies and best practice. We need the VRA listserv to evaluate and use our tools and help us improve them. I may have made the effort to get embedded metadata out there, but I really am just a small part of it becoming a full fledged component of VRA.