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OPACs, Users, and Readers' Advisory: Exploring the Implications of User-Generated Content for Readers' Advisory in Canadian Public Libraries

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This article examines the contribution of social discovery platforms and user-generated content (UGC) on readers' advisory (RA) services in Canadian public libraries. Grounded Theory was used to conduct a content analysis of library-assigned subject headings and UGC of 22 adult fiction titles in 43 Canadian public libraries that use BiblioCommons, SirsiDynix, and Encore social discovery platforms. Findings indicate that UGC complements the MARC bibliographic record as it provides insight into the subject of a work, its protagonists, and the effect the book has on readers. User-generated reviews provide a rich data set that clearly connects to known RA access points.

KEYWORDS user tagging, indexing, social cataloging, library catalogs, public libraries, readers' advisory, readership communities

INTRODUCTION

Public libraries are social environments that encourage the interaction, sharing, and communication of ideas, opinions, and many other types of information. In the readers' advisory (RA) community, information professionals welcome reader interactions through book clubs, book discussions, and

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recommendations. With the increasing popularity and use of social media Web sites and, by extension, their increasing popularity and use by library users, it is necessary to explore the implication of user-generated content for readers' advisory, to strengthen RA services and to benefit readers who have become accustomed to sharing and benefiting from other users' suggestions. In her examination of the wider landscape of books and reading culture, Hoffert suggests that the book review landscape has changed significantly in the past few years due to reader input: "Reviewing is no longer centralized, with a few big voices leading the way, but fractured among numerous multifarious voices found mostly on the web. In turn, readers aren't playing the captive audience anymore."¹

Social media Web sites allow users to connect with each other over various themes and topics. This popularity extends to the use of libraries, books, and reading-related culture; for example, sites like Goodreads (<http://www.goodreads.com/>) and LibraryThing (<http://www.librarything.com/>) provide popular platforms for people to share and discuss their reading interests. Similarly, corporate booksellers such as Amazon (<http://www.amazon.com/>) include social components within their online sales catalogs. Amazon customers can choose to include personalized reviews in the records of books and other items, which can be read and possibly used by other customers in their decision-making process to purchase reading material.

This incorporation of user-generated content and the potential benefits they offer users have been extended to the library environment. Various online public access catalogs (OPACs) are integrating social discovery platforms, also referred to as social catalogs, social catalog systems, or social discovery tools, such as BiblioCommons (<http://www.bibliocommons.com/>), SirsiDynix (<http://www.sirsidynix.com/>), and Encore (<http://encoreforlibraries.com/overview>), which allow users to connect with each other through user-generated content such as reviews, comments, recommendations, or tags. These social discovery platforms aid users and librarians to gain access to materials, including reading material, but they can act as a tool for RA work, that library-specific service in which "the entire point . . . is to reach readers" and to provide the right book to the user at the right time.²

The traditional RA model is based on a face-to-face discussion initiated by the reader, or sometimes, by a proactive librarian, and is based very much on the reference interview, and on the premise that "direct interpersonal contact is the best way to give service and encourage future interactions."³ The use of social discovery platforms by public libraries can offer important new ways to complement the traditional RA model, which includes providing an online environment where users can establish a social space to share and discuss common reading interests. This social space provides a grassroots and democratic RA service to comment on titles read, make recommendations for future reading based on such ideas as shared interests, and classify items

in the catalog with their own descriptors (or tags) or reviews that may be more reflective of their language and needs than the formal subject headings that are traditionally assigned by catalogers and library staff. These tags and reviews can serve as added access points by which users can search for items of interest. Social discovery platforms may also benefit RA staff. Librarians and library staff can interact with users, learn more about their needs, and become part of the online community, while at the same time compile recommended reading lists and make purchasing decisions based on the reviews and recommendations made in the catalog by users.

The goal of this article is to examine the contribution of social discovery platforms and user-generated content on RA services in Canadian public libraries. Grounded Theory was used to conduct a content analysis of user-generated content about a selection of adult fiction titles in Canadian public libraries that use the BiblioCommons, SirsiDynix, and Encore social discovery platforms to address the following research questions:^{4,5,6}

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What kind of content do users contribute about adult fiction titles (i.e., tags and reviews/comments)?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What categories of access points do users provide about the content of adult fiction titles (e.g., location, subject, genre, and so forth)?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): To what extent do user-contributed access points parallel those established for the traditional face-to-face RA model?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the growing use of social media and users' increasing expectations to interact, share, and recommend reading material in a variety of settings, social discovery platforms have been little investigated thus far in the context of their contributions to RA work in public libraries. We are limited, then, to literature that examines and discusses the possible uses of user-generated content in RA services, potential benefits as well as shortcomings of such content, and those articles that provide anecdotal evidence based on in-house practices.

The traditional RA model typically consists of a personal encounter between a librarian and a reader and is based on a number of assumptions: (a) the reader approaches a librarian with RA questions; (b) the librarian approached is the correct person to provide assistance; (c) enough information is obtained in an interview to provide good RA service; (d) quality RA service is possible, given time constraints; and (e) face-to-face RA encounters are documented sufficiently to support follow-up.⁷ This traditional model may not always work optimally for a variety of reasons.^{8,9,10,11,12,13} A commonly cited problem is the reluctance on the part of many readers to

discuss their reading interests with librarians, possibly due to shyness, a lack of awareness that some librarians are trained to provide this type of service, a perception of librarians as intimidating or unapproachable authority figures, assumptions that a librarian of a different age, gender, culture may not relate to them, and a fear of having their reading interests dismissed or judged. In order to mitigate some of these perceptions and problems, some libraries use other methods to deliver RA services, such as online or print forms that readers can fill in and return to library staff, or virtual interviews conducted via e-mail or instant messaging services.^{14,15}

Another challenge to the traditional model of RA provision is the structure of the bibliographic records in library catalogs. In the tradition of cataloging, the assignment of access points to works of fiction can be problematic for a variety of reasons. As pointed out by Bates and Rowley, “claims to neutrality and inclusivity are central to public libraries’ self-understanding.”¹⁶ In catalog records, attempts at neutrality are normally manifested in the careful selection of subject headings—typically *Library of Congress Subject Headings* (LCSH)—that provide what is perceived to be a balanced and unbiased opinion about the content of the work. Catalogers are responsible for selecting the access points for books, including the assignment of subject headings to describe the content of these titles. It is not clear, however, the extent to which neutrality and inclusivity are possible via systems such as LCSH, which may include biases and assumptions that reflect certain sociopolitical or cultural norms.^{17,18} Library subject headings may not change quickly enough to match the language of readers or changes in, and growth of, literary genres. Some have found the cataloging and subject heading application for fiction insufficient and have proposed alternatives.^{19,20,21} As discussed earlier, the provision of neutral, unbiased reviews can be contrasted with the growing popularity of sites such as Goodreads and Amazon, where readers add their own reviews to supplement those written by professional reviewers.²² Spiteri questions the possibility of a “neutral” bibliographic record to meet the potentially diverse cultural needs within library communities. Spiteri suggests that social discovery platforms may help provide bibliographic records that more closely reflect reader needs because they offer users the chance to describe the content of works in their own words via tags or reviews/comments which may help reflect the diversity and range of Canadian society.²³

The selection of books for reading involves a number of possible factors. Shelving schemes, such as the Reader-Interest Classification, which classifies material by genre, places the reader at the center and encourages independent library use and discovery.²⁴ In their study of the reading selections of adult members of book clubs, Ooi and Liew found that the selection of fiction books occurred to a large extent outside of the public library. Selecting fiction books is influenced by users’ personal characteristics and circumstances, as well as sources from their everyday lives, such as family, friends, book clubs, and the mass media. It is worth noting that although the authors found the

public library provided the main source for access to books, it was not their first source for finding ideas about what to read.²⁵ Ross identified several factors that affect people's reading selections, including their mood and the elements of the books, such as setting, time, plot development, pacing, length of the book, author, and so forth.^{26,27} Saricks identified what she terms the elements of appeal of a book, which are based on how users perceive the feel of a book, namely characterization, timeframe or setting, atmosphere, story line, and pacing.²⁸ In their content analysis of 648 bibliographic records derived from six sources (two online bookstores, two RA databases, and two public library catalogs), Adkins and Bossaller identified several fiction access points, including setting, time, pacing, subject, intended audience, and genre. Of further significance, the authors found that the online bookstores and RA databases were more likely to use fiction access points than library catalogs. The authors concluded that the library catalog records, where greater subject access is provided for non-fiction titles in the form of subject headings and classification numbers, may provide fewer access points than those records that contain user-generated content.²⁹

A variety of tools have been developed or adapted for use in RA services, such as *NoveList* (<http://www.ebscohost.com/novelist/>) and *What Should I Read Next* (<http://www.whatshouldireadnext.com/>); these databases provide valuable resources to advise RA librarians with ways to connect users to their reading interests. RA librarians can also make use of social reading sites such as LibraryThing, Goodreads, and Shelfari (<http://www.shelfari.com/>), which allow users to document, discuss, and share their reading interests. LibraryThing for Libraries (LTFL), for example, allows library catalogs to import LibraryThing tags and user reviews. RA librarians can easily consult these social reading sites for reading ideas, regardless of whether any data are imported to their catalogs.³⁰ Trott and Naik, and Rapp suggest that librarians can mine Goodreads to create read-alike lists, and can help show users how to use Goodreads as a virtual book-browsing tool.^{31,32} Mendes, Quiñonez-Skinner, and Skaggs examined the use of LTFL in the Oviatt Library at California State University over a period of 170 days. The authors found that for every new book a user discovers using LCSH headings, they will discover four books using LTFL, and suggest that the addition of user-generated metadata to catalog records enhances resource discovery, for example, for those titles lacking subject headings, which is sometimes the case for works of fiction. Tags facilitated the discovery of resources by genre and, since they reflect the natural language of users, provide new paths for resource discovery.³³ Similarly, DeZelar-Tiedman's exploration of works of English and American literature in an academic library and LibraryThing demonstrates that tags work to facilitate access to material.³⁴

Peterson and McGlenn discuss Hennepin County Library's efforts to create a virtual community of readers. In an attempt to engage users as active participants and to combine staff- and patron-contributed

content in an attractive and interactive way, the library created BookSpace (<http://www.hclib.org/pub/bookspace/>), an online RA Web site that blends traditional staff-produced and subscription-based RA resources with user-contributed content. This Web site contains features such as “find a good book,” blogs, author lists, readers’ lists, and reader comments, among others. Through BookSpace, users are encouraged to contribute and share their own reading lists, and to share their opinions of titles they have read with other users.³⁵ Winston examined 84 North Carolina public library Web sites to determine the extent to which those libraries use Web 2.0 technologies for RA services. The author found that only 25 of the 84 (30%) use any kind of Web 2.0 technology; of these, 27% offer no online RA services.³⁶

The use of social discovery platforms to provide librarian-led RA services to users is a natural progression from the recent developments discussed above. As has been shown, librarians are already making use of sites such as LibraryThing and Goodreads to mine user-generated content for data that can help provide RA services to users. Stover points out that social reading sites are very popular among users and that “a Web nation of feral readers’ advisors is being born, who in turn will inform their friends and colleagues of good books to read using the language we have provided in our tags, bookshelves, reviews, and annotations.”³⁷ Trott points out that RA staff have competition from services such as LibraryThing, Shelfari, and Goodreads, and that they need to consider how best to blend the concepts of reading appeal with the idea of users tagging books with their own headings.³⁸ Given that sources that help with selection are diverse and that the OPAC provides users with holdings information and other details to help with selection, Tarulli is apt in her thinking when she questions, “we are steeped in a society that expects to interact, recommend and share. But are we allowing our readers to share?”³⁹ Wyatt suggests that because the ultimate goal of RA services is to create conversations about reading and reading materials, incorporating user interaction in library catalogs is a giant step forward for RA. This interaction “connects the collection and readers to each other in original, flexible, and idiosyncratic ways. It allows for reader-to-reader conversations sparked by interest, whimsy, and personal knowledge. It makes greater use of librarian expertise as well, offering another way to interact and offer suggestions.”⁴⁰ In another article, Wyatt quotes Ike Pulver, stressing how beneficial it would be to “. . . classify books—fiction especially—by ‘feeling’ rather than by subject, or adjectivally (big, fast, exciting, intricate, thought-provoking) instead of nominally (horse, houses, shops, satellites, cheese).”⁴¹ While traditional cataloging practices reflect primarily the subject of books, readers’ advisors are interested in language that captures the experience a book provides. This appeals terminology is identified to share elements that capture the experience, emotions, and interactions users have with books. To be clear, this type of terminology and the practice of tagging have been studied generally outside of the domain of books and reading, and with regard to cultural

institutional use.^{42,43,44,45} Tags have also been assessed for affect and emotional connections.^{46,47} With these emotional and experiential aspects in mind, Wyatt suggests that because of technologies such as user-generated tagging RA services need to go through a rebirth, or rethinking process about mining appeals information. Wyatt states, "there's a common thread in these new takes on defining and applying appeal: they come through listening to and analyzing reader reaction and conversation."⁴⁸ These reactions and conversations are found through content generated by users in the form of reviews, ratings, and tags.

While the literature provides discussions about the use of Web 2.0 technologies to enhance and complement the role of RA services in public libraries, what is lacking is a comprehensive review of how user-generated content in social discovery platforms can contribute to RA services. This research is an important step in determining whether the putative benefits of user-generated contents to RA are, in fact, being realized in social discovery platforms.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate the potential contribution of user content on RA services, this research uses Grounded Theory to conduct a qualitative content analysis of user-generated content about a selection of adult fiction titles in Canadian public libraries that use the BiblioCommons, SirsiDynix, and Encore social discovery platforms.^{49,50,51,52,53} Grounded Theory is an inductive methodology that, through rigorous research procedures, allows researchers to find and understand patterns in data leading to the emergence of conceptual categories.

Libraries were selected using the Canadian Public Libraries Gateway, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/gateway/s22-200-e.html>, which provides a central list of all types and sizes of public libraries in Canada. This list was used as an authoritative starting place to determine those libraries that use social discovery platforms, specifically those that allow users to contribute tags and reviews or comments to individual records. It was clear that BiblioCommons, SirsiDynix, and Encore are the social discovery platforms used most frequently by Canadian public libraries. The entire population of 43 Canadian public libraries was included in this study. Of these, 33 use BiblioCommons, seven use Encore, and three use SirsiDynix. In order to focus on user-generated content provided specifically by public library users, imported reviews from private, non-library entities, such as Goodreads or LibraryThing, were not considered. Bibliographic records for digital or audio versions of the titles were not selected because these records often differ considerably in content and are provided by external services such as OverDrive (<http://www.overdrive.com/>). Unique user-generated content in

the form of subject headings, tags, and reviews/comments was extracted from the final set of 831 library-located bibliographic records to determine what type of content users contributed. In the case of tags, spelling variations (e.g., labor/labour), and single or plural variants of terms (e.g., dog/dogs) were considered as non-unique terms.

The bibliographic records for 22 unique adult fiction titles were examined in the 43 social discovery platforms. The 22 titles were selected from the following shortlists and winning lists of major literary prizes (with duplicate titles removed):

- Giller Prize 2011 Shortlist
- Canadian Governor General's 2011 Literary Awards
- Man Booker Prize Shortlist 2011
- Pulitzer Prize 2011 Fiction Finalists
- Commonwealth Writer's Prize 2011 Winners

These lists were selected as they reflect the geographic location and diversity of Canada; further, these lists represent major literary prizes that receive wide-ranging publicity in relevant press and authoritative reviewing outlets relevant to both the Canadian readership and those working in relevant library collection development units.

In total, 4,541 tags, 3,501 Library of Congress subject headings, and 631 reviews were extracted between January and March 2013 from the base sample of 831 records originating from the 22 titles searched against 43 Canadian public libraries that use the BiblioCommons, SirsiDynix, and Encore social discovery platforms. The subject headings and user-generated content extracted were assessed and analyzed separately by the research team, comprised of three principal researchers and two research associates. Two researchers independently derived categories from the tags and subject headings from each record using the Grounded Theory method. Each researcher coded independently and inductively, allowing categories to emerge from the dataset. Similarly, two other researchers worked independently from each other to derive categories from the user reviews and comments. Derived categories provide information about the content about the titles, for example, information about the location of a story (e.g., Nunavut), or the emotional impact of the title on the user (e.g., boring, funny). In both cases, a third researcher, who was not involved in the first round of analysis, independently coded for categories for the tags, subject headings, and reviews. This researcher subsequently assessed the three sets of categorical analyses of the tags, subject headings, and review data and examined them for overlap, clarity, exclusivity, and relevance. These three sets of independent categories were assessed for similarity and subsequently grouped into one set of categories.

The third researcher detailed this final set of categories through thorough memo writing, a process that was further assessed by the three principal researchers against the fiction access categories for traditional RA models derived by Adkins and Bossaller, Ross and Chelton, and Saricks, with categories that include, for example:^{54,55,56}

- Award/recognition
- Characters' occupations
- Characters' relationships
- Emotional experience
- Ending
- Explicit content
- Factual information
- Genre
- Intended audience
- Literary influences
- Pacing
- Plot development
- Readability
- Real events
- Setting
- Size or length of the book
- Specific characters
- Subject
- Time

Credibility of the analysis was maintained through prolonged engagement with the dataset at all stages and by all researchers. Further, coding comparisons conducted by one researcher independent of the primary analysis ensured that the integrity of the inductive research was based on the principles of Grounded Theory. Finally, in the comparative analysis, memo writing as a method of undertaking the final analysis and discussion between researchers allowed for themes to be revisited at multiple intervals.⁵⁷

FINDINGS

To reflect on the research questions, especially regarding what content is present in the bibliographic entries, including how the library community contributes user-generated content that adds to the catalog metadata, we examined the dataset through a quantitative lens. Since the focus of this research is on the content of the bibliographic record, rather than the libraries themselves, the names of the libraries will not be referenced in the analysis of the data.

TABLE 1 Number of Subject Headings and Tags Assigned

Title	Number of Collecting Libraries Title ($n = 43$)	Total Number of Subject Headings	Total Number of Tags	Average Number of Subject Headings per Sampled Libraries' Holdings	Average Number of Tags per Sampled Libraries' Holdings	Number of the Collecting Libraries' Records ($n = 2$) without Subject Headings	Number of Collecting Libraries' Records ($n = 2$) without Tags
<i>A man melting</i>	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0	0
<i>A visit from the goon squad</i>	39	184	322	4.72	8.26	4	6
<i>Annabel</i>	43	184	501	4.28	11.65	6	9
<i>Better living through plastic</i>	42	80	88	1.90	2.10	3	13
<i>Grace Williams says it out loud</i>	24	117	0	4.88	0.00	2	40
<i>Great house</i>	39	135	224	3.46	5.74	1	11
<i>Half-blood blues</i>	43	205	403	4.77	9.37	3	9
<i>Jamrach's menagerie</i>	33	261	52	7.91	1.58	4	9
<i>Pigeon English</i>	40	178	116	4.45	2.90	3	12
<i>Room</i>	43	193	499	4.49	11.60	2	9
<i>Snowdrops</i>	38	216	87	5.68	2.29	6	10
<i>The antagonist</i>	43	157	199	3.65	4.63	6	10
<i>The cat's table</i>	43	170	215	3.95	5.00	2	9
<i>The free world</i>	43	149	65	3.47	1.51	6	10
<i>The little shadows</i>	43	147	4	3.42	0.09	2	42
<i>The memory of love</i>	40	177	124	4.43	3.10	3	10
<i>The privileges</i>	28	111	50	3.96	1.79	1	4
<i>The sense of an ending</i>	43	147	511	3.42	11.88	6	9
<i>The sisters brothers</i>	43	198	393	4.60	9.14	3	10
<i>The surrendered</i>	36	112	29	3.11	0.81	1	6
<i>The tiger's wife</i>	43	210	495	4.88	11.51	2	11
<i>Touch</i>	42	170	164	4.05	3.90	2	10
Total	831	3501	4541	89.48	108.85	68	259
Average	37.77	159.14	206.41	4.07	4.95	3.09	11.77

RQ1: What Kind of Content Do Users Contribute about Adult Fiction Titles (i.e., Tags and Reviews/Comments)?

As shown in Table 1, 831 records were sampled across the 22 titles from 43 libraries; in some cases counts are lower, as the libraries did not collect

the titles, or the catalogs reflected only the ebook version contained in the collection, which was not within the scope of this research. The title, *A Man Melting*, stands out as it was not collected by any of the sampled libraries, and therefore contains no user-generated data. Overall, more tags (4,541) were assigned to the titles than were subject headings (3,501). While many tags and subject headings were assigned overall, it is important to reflect on the gaps noted from the data. Sixty-eight bibliographic records of the 831 sampled (8.2%) were not assigned any subject headings; on average, per title, 3.09 records were not assigned any subject headings. One library using the BiblioCommons platform did not include subject headings for any of the titles. One can only speculate that this library has decided not to assign subject headings to works of fiction. Of the 831 bibliographic records for the 22 titles, 259 (31.17%) do not contain any user-generated tags; on average, per title, 11.77 records did not include tags. Further, none of the records for the title, *Grace Williams Says It Out Loud*, had user tags.

The total number of subject headings illustrated in Table 1 may look inflated, especially since most of these catalogs share bibliographic content; for example, the title *Jamrach's Menagerie* contains the most with 261 subject headings, but it is important to remember that in most cases because the individual libraries are using the same bibliographic record in the shared BiblioCommons environment the total reflects many repeated entries. What is more significant to examine is the average number of subject headings assigned per title which, in the case of the example, *Jamrach's Menagerie*, is 7.91.

As with subject headings, the total number of user tags per bibliographic title can appear inflated because most of the catalogs in the dataset share bibliographic content. Again, what is more significant to examine is the average number of user tags assigned per record, which, ranges from 0.09 for *The Little Shadows* to 11.60 for *Room*. On average, more user tags (4.95) were assigned to the individual bibliographic records than subject headings (4.07).

The number of unique subject headings is more revealing than the total number of subject headings (see Table 2); again, in a shared bibliographic environment, many of the catalogs use the same set of subject headings, so the *unique* number of subject headings is perhaps a better indicator of the range of topics assigned per title. The number of unique subject headings per title ranged from five for *The Privileges*, to 25 for *Jamrach's Menagerie*. There is some level of redundancy amongst the unique subject headings; for example, *Canadian fiction* and *Canadian fiction – 21st century*, were considered to be different subject headings, as determined by the way they are assigned in standard cataloging practice. There is not necessarily a direct correlation between the average number of subject headings for one title and the average number of unique subject headings; for example, *Better Living through Plastic*, is a very interesting case, since most of the libraries

TABLE 2 Number of Unique Subject Headings and Tags

Title	Total Number of Unique Subject Headings	Total Number of Unique Tags
<i>A man melting</i>	0	0
<i>A visit from the goon squad</i>	6	11
<i>Annabel</i>	16	14
<i>Better living through plastic</i>	14	4
<i>Grace Williams says it out loud</i>	16	0
<i>Great house</i>	10	9
<i>Half-blood blues</i>	37	19
<i>Jamrach's menagerie</i>	25	2
<i>Pigeon English</i>	20	4
<i>Room</i>	14	25
<i>Snowdrops</i>	17	3
<i>The antagonist</i>	22	7
<i>The cat's table</i>	19	11
<i>The free world</i>	19	6
<i>The little shadows</i>	15	4
<i>The memory of love</i>	10	4
<i>The privileges</i>	5	2
<i>The sense of an ending</i>	9	15
<i>The sisters brothers</i>	18	24
<i>The surrendered</i>	19	1
<i>The tiger's wife</i>	6	18
<i>Touch</i>	22	9
Total	339	192
Average	15.41	8.73

simply assigned one or two genre headings (e.g., Short stories, Canadian), which accounts for the low average of 1.90 subject headings per title. On the other hand, for those libraries that assigned headings pertaining to more than genre, there was a large variety of unique subject headings, including different genre headings (i.e., Black humor; Humorous stories, Short stories, Canadian – 21st century; Canadian fiction – 21st century, etc.). This does raise a question about the level of redundancy that can be found in bibliographic records, as noted in the different, yet similar genre headings. This is likely related directly to the pre-coordinate nature of LC headings, where you cannot have two separate headings, such as *Canadian fiction* and *21st century*, but are obliged to combine them, which results in a degree of redundancy in the records. Given this degree of redundancy, the number of unique subject headings can be a little inflated, which helps explain the seeming discrepancy between the average number of subject headings assigned to the titles (4.07) and the average number of unique subject headings assigned to the titles (15.41).

There is a fair amount of variance in the total number of unique tags assigned to each bibliographic title. As shown in Table 2, *The Surrendered* was assigned only one unique tag (repeated across the catalogs), while at

TABLE 3 Number of User Reviews

Title	Number of Libraries Collecting Title (<i>n</i> = 43)	Total Number of Sampled Library Catalogs with Reviews	Total Number of Unique Reviews
<i>A man melting</i>	0	0	0
<i>A visit from the goon squad</i>	39	34	38
<i>Annabel</i>	43	36	41
<i>Better living through plastic</i>	42	29	6
<i>Grace Williams says it out loud</i>	24	21	1
<i>Great house</i>	39	33	6
<i>Half-blood blues</i>	43	36	29
<i>Jamrach's menagerie</i>	33	26	10
<i>Pigeon English</i>	40	34	9
<i>Room</i>	43	35	210
<i>Snowdrops</i>	38	30	13
<i>The antagonist</i>	43	33	8
<i>The cat's table</i>	43	38	48
<i>The free world</i>	43	34	9
<i>The little shadows</i>	43	33	10
<i>The memory of love</i>	40	35	5
<i>The privileges</i>	28	25	2
<i>The sense of an ending</i>	43	36	53
<i>The sisters brothers</i>	43	34	78
<i>The surrendered</i>	36	29	6
<i>The tiger's wife</i>	43	35	44
<i>Touch</i>	42	32	6
Total	831	678	632
Average	37.77	30.82	28.73

the other end of this spectrum, *Room* was assigned a total of 25 unique tags. The difference between the average number of tags assigned per record (4.95), and the average number of unique tags (8.73) is considerably smaller than was the case with the subject headings, since there is little redundancy across the tags; one reason for this is that few tags repeat the redundant structure of the example of the two subject headings *Canadian fiction*, and *Canadian fiction – 21st century*. While an analysis of the structure of the tags is beyond the scope of this article, the tags do represent a mix of single terms (e.g., brothers), compound terms (e.g., black humor phrases; killers for hire), and what could be considered non-standard combination of terms (e.g., immigrants communism).

USER-GENERATED REVIEWS

Table 3 shows the number of catalogs per title that contain user reviews, and the total number of unique reviews per title, alongside the number of libraries that hold each title. Of the 831 holding libraries' records, 678 (30.82%) contain user reviews; within these there are 632 unique reviews. The bulk

TABLE 4 Number of Categories Represented by Subject Headings and Tags

	Subject Headings	Tags
Administrative note	0 (0%)	5 (2.40%)
Awards	2 (0.31%)	40 (19.23%)
Format	4 (0.62%)	9 (4.32%)
Genre	320 (48.84%)	30 (14.42%)
Historical event	6 (0.93%)	4 (1.92%)
Language	2 (0.31%)	0 (0%)
Location	75 (11.68%)	18 (3.85%)
People	101 (15.73%)	16 (7.69%)
Period	14 (21.81%)	4 (1.92%)
Personal note	0 (0%)	2 (0.96%)
Relationships	2 (0.31%)	0 (0%)
Tone	0 (0%)	21 (10.09%)
Topic	116 (18.06%)	59 (28.36%)
Total	642	208

of the reviews originated from the Bibliocommons libraries, although these numbers were not equal across each Bibliocommons library, which suggests that while user content is shared among institutions, it is not equitably uploaded to each library, or that the host library has a choice from where the content originates. The number of reviews resulting from the Encore or SirsiDynix platforms was quite limited and, in the case of the Encore platform, seems to be isolated to the host library's community. There was a vast range in the number of user-contributed reviews for the titles; *Grace Williams Says It Out Loud* contained one review, whereas *Room* contained 210.

RQ2: What Categories of Access Points Do Users Provide about the Content of Adult Fiction Titles (e.g., Location, Subject, Genre, and So Forth)?

Table 4 shows the total number of categories represented by the unique subject headings and tags assigned to the titles. It should be noted that any one subject heading could represent more than one category; for example, the unique subject heading *Identity (Psychology) – Fiction* represents *Topic* and *Genre*, which reflects the pre-coordinate nature of many subject headings that include a topical heading, for example, followed by geographical, chronological, and form subdivisions. This means there is no direct correlation between the total number of unique subject headings and the number of categories these headings represent. Tags, on the other hand, represented discrete categories (e.g., sea journeys (*Topic*), short stories (*Genre*), or moody (*Tone*)).

Of all the categories represented by the subject headings, *Genre* represents the largest proportion (48.84%), followed by *Period* (21.81%), *Topic*

TABLE 5 Number of Categories Represented by User Reviews

	Reviews
Author	157 (9.61%)
Awards	51 (3.12%)
Format	15 (0.92%)
Genre	57 (3.49%)
Historical events	20 (12.25%)
Location	77 (4.72%)
Pace	35 (2.14%)
Paratext	12 (0.73%)
Period	33 (2.02%)
Plot	131 (8.02%)
Protagonists	263 (16.10%)
Readability	363 (22.23%)
Tone	288 (17.64%)
Recommendation	131 (8.02%)
Total	1633

(18.06%), *People* (15.73%), and *Location* (11.68%). These categories closely parallel the typical subject fields used in MARC bibliographic records, namely 600 Subject Added Entry, Personal Name; 650 Subject Added Entry, Topical Term; 651 Subject Added Entry, Geographic Name; and 655 Index Term, Genre/Form. *Period* would be equivalent to a chronological subdivision to one of the 6XX MARC fields, rather than a standalone field. Of all the categories represented by the tags, *topic* represents the largest proportion (28.36%), followed by *Awards* (19.24%), *Genre* (14.42%), and *Tone* (10.09%).

Table 5 shows the total number of categories represented by the total number of user-generated reviews assigned to the titles. Of all the categories represented by the reviews, *Readability* (22.23%) represents the largest proportion, followed by *Tone* (17.64%), *Protagonists* (16.10%), and *Historical events* (12.25%). The top two categories for the reviews place an emphasis on the affective aspects of the work, namely its readability, and tone. In a traditional bibliographic record, it is difficult to capture these affective aspects, since the 6XX fields focus on the content of the work (e.g., location, period, topic). Information about the affect of a book might be found in the 5XX note fields if a summary of the work is included, and if this summary describes these affects. Since content in the 5XX note fields might not always be indexed, and thus not be fully searchable, it could be overlooked.

An examination of Tables 4 and 5 indicates that although there is some overlap among the categories derived from the subject headings, tags, and reviews (*Awards*, *Tone*, *Period*, *Historical events*, *Genre*, *Format*, and *Location*), there are also some significant differences. As shown in Table 4, the tags included some administrative notes (e.g., the tag *staff review*) and personal notes (e.g., the tag *impossible to take book out due to lack of copies/3wk*

time). These types of notes did not appear in the reviews; rather, notes of a more personal nature were reflective of specific *recommendations* made to their members (e.g., *Quirky, not for everyone because it is darkly comic, but I enjoyed it*). The *People* category assigned to the subject headings and tags refers to more generic descriptions of types of people, for example, brothers, musicians, and so forth; *Protagonists* was assigned to reviews, since in this case, the people in question were identified as specific characters or protagonists in the work (e.g., *Eli the narrator*). This is admittedly a fine line, so it is possible that the two categories could be blended. *Relationships* is reflective of the very specific subject headings *Man-woman relationships* and *Race relations*, and has no direct equivalent in either the tags or reviews. *Author* is used in reviews to indicate specific mention of the author, or related authors. In a typical MARC record, the author's name appears in the 100 (main entry) or 700 (added entries) fields, rather than in the 6XX subject fields, yet none of the tags made mention of the author. *Paratext* appears exclusively in reviews to mention specific aspects of a book, such as its content or the nature of the book's dust jacket. Some reviews make specific mention of the *Plot* and *Pace* of the titles; this information does not appear in any of the subject headings or tags. *Readability*, exclusive to the reviews, refers to comments that discuss the quality, flow, structure, and so forth of the writing (e.g., *Definitely an easy read*).

RQ3: To What Extent Do User-Contributed Access Points Parallel Those Established for the Traditional Face-to-Face RA Model?

Table 6 shows the comparison between the categories derived by the researchers from the tags, subject headings, and reviews, and those used in traditional RA models.^{58,59,60} Exact equivalents can be found for the following derived categories: *Genre*, *Pace*, *Paratext*, and *Readability*, if one ignores the slight grammatical difference between *Pace* and *Pacing*. As well, *Period* and *Time* could be considered interchangeable terms.

Partial equivalents can be found for the pairs *Awards* and *Award/recognition*; *Recommendation* and *Award/recognition*; and *Recommendation* and *Advice to Readers*. *Awards* was assigned to references to specific awards, such as the Giller Prize, while *Recommendation* was derived from reviewers who made specific comments such as "I recommend . . ." or "would make a good movie." The term "recognition" is perhaps somewhat vague, particularly when it is appended to the much more specific "awards." *Advice to readers* appears to be very close to *Recommendation*, but the latter category is more flexible, since it could be used as an access point to non-text based materials, such as films, music, and so forth. *Plot* is closest to the RA categories *Plot development* and *Ending*. A subtle difference exists here, in that *Plot* was used for reviews where aspects of the plot were

TABLE 6 Comparison of Sets of Categories

Derived Categories	RA Models Categories
Administrative note	No equivalent
Author	No equivalent
Awards	Award/recognition
Format	No equivalent
Genre	Genre
Historical event	Setting; Real events; Factual information
Location	Setting
Pace	Pacing
Paratext	Paratext
People	Specific characters; Characters' occupations
Period	Time
Personal note	No equivalent
Plot	Plot development; Ending
Protagonists	Specific characters
Readability	Readability
Recommendation	Award/Recognition; Advice to Readers
Tone	Emotional experience
Topic	Subject
No match	Characters' relationships
No match	Intended audience
No match	Literary influences
No match	Size or length of the book

provided by the users; *Plot development*, on the other hand, could potentially be used to describe the structure or pace of the plot, rather than the plot itself, and thus could be subsumed under the category *Pace*. None of the reviews actually provided the ending of the story, for which users would be grateful, so the utility of this category is perhaps questionable, unless people want works that have a happy ending, for example. *Tone* and *Emotional experience* could be seen as partial matches, in that they both refer to an affective response; it is perhaps more likely that the term "tone" would be more accessible to most users. In retrospect, *Mood* might be a more accurate category than *Tone* and, again, is likely more obvious in its meaning to users than *Emotional experience*.

In other cases, matches between the two sets of categories were more indirect. *Location* was used to refer to specific geographic places or regions, such as Canada, while *Setting* typically includes varied concepts such as culture, geographic place, historical period, and so forth. Given the very broad scope of *Setting*, it might be better to use combinations of the more specific *Location*, *Period*, and *Historical Event*, as they would allow the users to separate more clearly these distinct access points. *Historical event* is matched most closely by *Setting*, *Real events*, and *Factual information*. *Real events* is perhaps ambiguous, as it is not clear that the historical aspect of these events is necessarily obvious. The meaning and scope of *Factual information* is perhaps rather vague; would a history of a battle in World

War II be either a *real event* or *factual information*? The scope of the categories *People* and *Protagonists* has been provided in the previous section; the closest RA matches are *Specific characters* and *Characters' occupations*. These four sets of categories vary in granularity: *People* allows access to more generic types of humans, such as *Painters* or *Girls*; this level of breadth is not provided in the RA categories, since *Specific characters* would be a close equivalent to *Protagonists*, in that both could be used to named characters in a book. *Characters' occupations* could be subsumed under *People*, in that *artists*, for example, are types of people; in this case, the RA category provides a finer level of granularity.

No equivalents could be found for *Administrative notes* and *Personal notes*; this is not surprising, since these categories appeared very seldom, and referred to instances too specific to be of any general use. *Format* has no direct RA equivalent, which is surprising, as it is very possible that users would want access to an e-book, audio book, and so forth; perhaps it could be assumed that in an online catalog, it is relatively easy to sort items of interest based on format. Similarly, the lack of *Author* in the RA model might speak to a heavy reliance on the content of the bibliographic record, since author would be specified in the 100 or 245 MARC fields; on the other hand, *Subject* can also be accessed via the MARC 6XX fields, but it still appears in the RA models. The following RA categories have no clear equivalent in the categories we derived: *Characters' relationships*; *Intended audience*; *Literary influences*; *Size/length of the book*. The nature of characters' relationships might be referred to in the *Plot* of the work, or possibly in *People* (e.g., sisters). None of the user content indicated specific mention of the intended audience of the work, possibly because the users perceived themselves as the audience. *Literary influences* could be subsumed under *Author*, as some reviews did compare the work at hand to other named *authors*. Finally, none of the user content referred to the size or length of a book; rather, focus was placed on the pace of the work.

DISCUSSION

It is interesting to examine what is conveyed by the inclusions and exclusions in the social discovery tools. While the tags place a greater emphasis on the topic of a title, or what could be called the subject of the work, the subject headings emphasise the genre of the title, which does not provide specific information about the title's content. Information about any awards won by a title would typically go in the 500 or 586 MARC notes fields, rather than in the subject headings field, which would explain why the awards category appears very infrequently in the subject headings. The emphasis of awards in the tags, however, points to the importance of this category to the user; since tags are hyperlinked, this category would direct users to

other works that have won the same prize, which could not be done as easily via the MARC record, as items in the 5XX note fields are not typically hyperlinked. The *Tone* category is of particular interest, since this points to the ability of tags to reflect the affective aspect of a title (i.e., the emotional impact on the user, the mood of a work, and so forth). Subject headings are not equipped to deal with affect, since emphasis is on describing the more “neutral” components of a work, such as the topics, locations, periods, and so forth that it covers. Tags thus can serve to express important aspects of a work that cannot always be expressed easily by subject headings. Further, user reviews place a heavy emphasis on more affective aspects of a work, such as the readability of a book and its tone or mood. Comments about the plot of a work and its protagonists do feature in the reviews, but not to the same extent as the emotional interaction between the user and the book.

This aboutness or thematic emphasis is important as it indicates the distinction made between objectivity versus “the feel” of a work. Where the catalogers want an objective stance on what the title conveys, users want to provide a complete picture of the title—what it contains in a factual sense and what it contains in an emotional or reading experience sense. Staff-created bibliographic records tend to denote the “who, what, where, when, and type” of a work; while the user tags do contain these elements, what is noticeable is their description of the tone or mood of a work. User-generated reviews go further in this sense and can thus serve to add valuable additional information to a bibliographic record, particularly in conveying the affective or emotional impact of a book. Ultimately, this works to broaden the content of the bibliographic records, adding detail and emphasis that might not be available in the records designed by library staff.

In adding a more user-centered aspect to the system of the shared catalog, we must ask what is gained or lost for the user. Certainly there are potential benefits and limitations to having a shared bibliographic environment, as libraries import both the strengths and the limitations of a shared environment. The lack of subject headings may certainly detract from the quality and accessibility of bibliographic records, as not only do the records fail to provide a description of content, but fail also to allow users to link these titles to any other titles about similar topics. Similarly, excluding tags from the shared environment suggests limits to this system, as users cannot find works that other users deemed to share similar characteristics. Certainly, it must be acknowledged that tagging is not a controlled system, but instead offers a characterizing means by which users perceive and react to their readings. The tagging system, therefore, can provide insight into the ways users understand and respond to their own readings. From the opposing perspective, the shared environment does provide benefits, where both subject headings and tags allow for an expansion of resources, as users can link to

other material with similar connections. Tagging allows for the global expansion of a readership community, where the individual user, through those tag connections, may commune with others in varied places and through other libraries. The book title and user-generated content become the pivot points that connect users when they would otherwise not find themselves in a community due to distance or otherwise.

User-generated reviews allow for a similar level of expansion, since users can click on the associated username to see other titles, tags, and reviews with which this name is associated. BiblioCommons, as an example, allows users to follow other users and view their personal bookshelves through their personalized accounts, and those using SirsiDynix can see other reviews by users. Since the data analysis discovered that reviews most frequently contain more affective inclusions (e.g., readability, tone), which are often excluded from the standard MARC bibliographic record, users can find personal advisors from their wider readership community. These possibilities, which begin at the point of the user-generated content, link to broader and richer options, working to craft a reading community from those details that the user deemed significant in the first place.

There are implications to this global readership community formed through the social catalog, in that the user can add his or her own perspective in a way that Spiteri has noted as “the principle of user warrant, wherein individuals are considered to be members of a certain culture(s) and represent that culture(s) when they participate in the development and use of knowledge organization systems.”⁶¹ The library user relying on user-generated content becomes a member of a wider reading community and shares a local and personal perspective into that community. In return, in a shared user-generated bibliographic environment the user is exposed to content from others outside his or her community. Embedding outside perspective and culture may not be localized to the users’ own library community, which could result in a reduction in the localized nature of the users’ own library community. This shared bibliographic environment differs from the more traditional practice of forming library collections through community analysis and engagement.

In examining the record details, we must also question what is left out. In records where subject headings are not included, nor is there user-generated content, what is being communicated to the user? There is as much to be learned from the gaps as there is from the inclusions: Does this lack of information indicate an unspoken bias regarding the work itself? Is the work deemed less important, less popular, or less desirable? The lack of subject headings may certainly detract from the quality and accessibility of bibliographic records, as not only do the records fail to provide a description of content, but fail also to allow users to link these titles to any other titles about similar topics.

CONCLUSION

Implementing a social discovery platform is an important step in the creation of a community of users who can engage actively not only with library staff, but with fellow library users. The findings of this study provide insight into the kind of content that users contribute in Canadian public library catalogs that allow such contributions. As has been shown, user-generated content serves to complement the MARC bibliographic record; while the latter provides greater emphasis upon the genre and format of a book, user content provides more insight into the subject of a work, its protagonists, and, perhaps most importantly of all, the affect the book has on its readers. User-generated reviews, in particular, provide a rich data set that clearly connects to RA access points and, as such, has possible implications for users and RA professionals, as both of these parties can use them for RA related decisions that are more informed and relevant to their pleasure reading and work, respectively.

An important next step is to measure the impact of user-generated content on both users and library staff. Do library staff use this content to understand better the reading interests of their library community? Does this content impact decisions relating to the purchase of library materials and the content of the bibliographic records? Further, the focus of this research can be expanded to other geographic areas outside of Canada, and to non-public library settings, such as academic libraries. The consolidated findings from all the stages of this research can provide useful models for mining user-generated content to enhance both RA and cataloging services to provide users with optimal tools or infrastructures to support their reading.

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