

Bibliographic Modelling of Transmedia

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Abstract

Transmedia is a set of techniques that use multiple media platforms (books, films, games, live performances, etc.) to create a single narrative. The thesis investigates how transmedia resources can be described and accessed within the conceptual framework provided by the FR family of data models and the FRBRoo ontology. Principal characteristics of transmedia compositions will be analysed in order to identify those relevant to the representation of this type of content in bibliographic and authority databases. These characteristics will be translated into entities, attributes and relationships (or classes and properties) defined in the conceptual models.

Keywords: Transmedia, FR models, FRBRoo

1 Introduction

The thesis investigates possibilities of modelling transmedia resources within the conceptual framework provided by the FR family of data models¹ and the FRBRoo ontology.

¹ The consolidated FR model that merges FRBR, FRAD and FRSAD has not been published at the time of writing. Therefore in the text it is referred to as 'FR model' or 'FR family of models'. Revisions brought by the consolidation will be taken into account in the research.

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Transmedia is a set of techniques that use multiple media platforms (books, films, games, live performances, etc.) to create a single narrative. Each of the platforms tells a unique part of the story, making use of its own strengths to enhance the experience of the whole. As library collections are growing more concerned with all types of media, including many resources with transmedia characteristics, the need emerges to collocate parts of transmedia content and explicate their relationships to the user in order to facilitate information navigating and finding in library databases.

The FR family is a set of entity-relationship data models developed by the library community with the scope of meeting the requirements for bibliographic and authority data in the information environment greatly shaped by digital technologies and the Internet. Their object-oriented version, the FRBRoo model, is the result of the harmonization with the conceptual model CIDOC CRM developed within the museum community (Riva et al., 2008). The applicability of both models (FR and FRBRoo) to various media types lead to assume that they can provide a good base for organizing transmedia resources in libraries and other memory institutions.

2 Conceptual framework

2.1 Research problem

Economic and cultural factors will probably continue to impact the growth of transmedia content delivery (Jenkins, 2006: 11; Johnson, 2013). Without taking this into consideration, bibliographic organization cannot stand up to the challenges of today's information universe.

Complementarity of different media is essential to the concept of transmedia (Jenkins, 2003; Giovagnoli, 2011: 33). In the bibliographic organization the requirement to 'hunt and gather' the content (Jenkins, 2003) is met mainly by the collocation task (Svenonius, 2000: 15–18). However, the collocation of transmedia resources can be a great challenge for library information tools, considering that formats, standards and workflows in today's library cataloguing often fail to support more complex bibliographic relationships typical of transmedia content (fig. 1). A model is required that goes beyond simple linear display by author, title or subject access points.

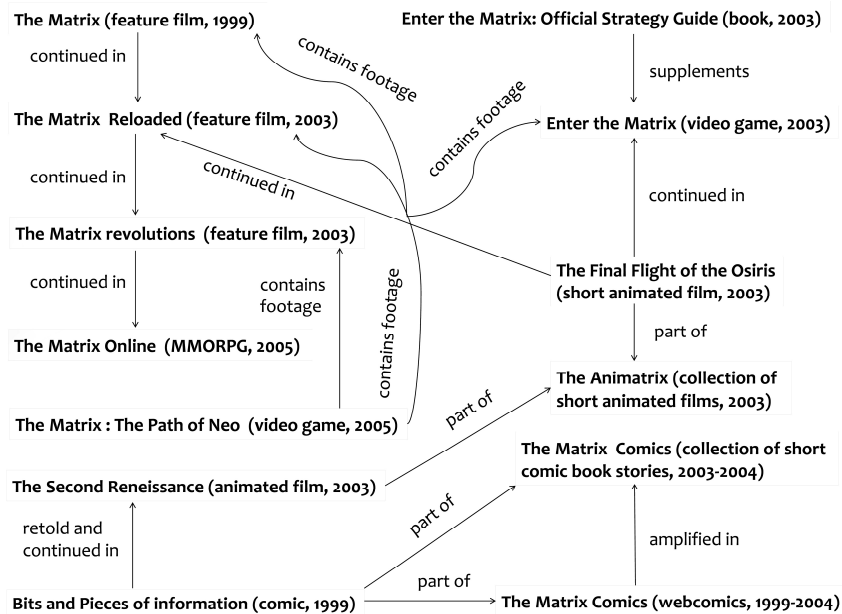


Figure 1. Different kinds of relationships within The Matrix transmedia franchise

On the other hand, the fragmented nature of transmedia narratives and their frequent employment of augmented reality in order to deepen the consumer's experience pose many questions regarding the concept of the authorship, from the audience collaboration or the role of the "experience designers" (supervisors responsible for managing of the content through multiple media channels), to the phenomenon of fictional characters appearing as authors or performers. Therefore the efficient approach to transmedia content calls for rethinking of the existing paradigms in bibliographic organization and authority control.

2.2 Research scope and goal

The research will explore how transmedia resources can be described and accessed within the conceptual framework provided by the FR and FRBRoo models. The research has a dual objective. On the one hand, it seeks to improve the way transmedia content is represented in bibliographic and authority databases. On the other hand, it can be seen as an evaluation of the mo-

dels' relevance in the context of the information universe increasingly characterized by media convergence (Jenkins, 2006). The research results can assist in making better-informed decisions on development, implementation or application of data models, standards and rules in libraries and other memory institutions.

2.3 Research questions

The principal research questions concern the features that should be taken into account when seeking to improve the presentation of this type of content in bibliographic and authority databases. Namely, which characteristics of transmedia resources are relevant to the information organization and how can they be expressed in the modelling language of the FR and FRBRoo models? Further questions focus on different aspects of relationships between and within transmedia compositions. For example: since transmedia compositions are cohesive creations, but often made up of autonomous parts (Dena, 2009: 146 f.), is it possible to define them unambiguously in terms of Work and Expression entities/classes? Considering that transmedia compositions relate to one another in many dynamic ways (Dena, 2009: 146 f.; Giovagnoli, 2011: 30; Jenkins, 2011), can relationships/properties provided by the FR and FRBRoo models cover the whole spectrum of possibilities, e.g. the instantiation (Smiraglia, 2005), or the re-appropriation of the content? Another set of questions deals with intellectual responsibility, e.g. what kind of agents are supervisors of transmedia projects? How can the authorial aspects of the user-generated content (such as fan fiction) be modelled? Do the models allow for name authority control to be extended to imaginary entities when they appear as creators?

2.4 Hypotheses

The FR and FRBRoo models provide good support for bibliographic modelling of transmedia resources. Many features of transmedia resources are reflected in the models, e.g. the importance of relationships, or the distinction between a work as an abstract intellectual creation and its realizations. The models also support specific forms and aspects of intellectual responsibility that are typical of transmedia. FRBRoo particularly focuses on time aspects, which is in line with the way most transmedia narratives develop. Further-

more, blurring the lines between genres, forms, media etc. reaffirms the need for interoperability between models from different communities, of which FRBRoo is a good example.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research methods

The research method is based on conceptual modelling. Characteristics and relationships typical of transmedia resources will be translated into the conceptual structure of the FR and FRBRoo models. The identification of these characteristics and relationships will particularly draw on the work by Christy Dena (2009), who approaches the phenomenon of transmedia from a variety of human sciences including media and cultural studies, aesthetics and semiotics.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

Since the definition of transmedia encompasses a wide variety of types, covering various examples seemed to be more helpful for providing insight into multiple aspects of transmedia than the case-study method. Therefore a selected number of resources representing various types of transmedia compositions will be used as a corpus. The framework for building such a corpus will be provided by the work of transmedia theorists such as Jenkins, Dena, Scolari, and others. A corpus will be further analysed through qualitative textual analysis (Brennen, 2013: 192–231) in order to identify key characteristics and relationships relevant to information organization.

The identified features will be modelled in terms of entities, attributes and relationships defined in the FR models. The results will be compared to classes and properties in FRBRoo. The findings will be used to evaluate the applicability of both models to transmedia resources, possibly identifying room for improvement.

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