Brief Bio and (PR)²: Problems & Pitches – Rants & Raves by Melanie Gardner

Self Introduction
Melanie Gardner is a librarian at the USDA’s National Agricultural Library and recently had a change in title to – “Manager, Innovation and Collaboration.” Over the past 12 years, she has led a voluntary effort of over 60 institutions called AgNIC – Agriculture Network Information Center. AgNIC partners work to identify credible agriculture information and offer it through a “portal.” AgNIC uses a Content Management System for managing partner metadata, OAI-PMH protocol for harvesting metadata from institutional repositories, and multiple maneuvers to harvest metadata from several library catalogs such as AGRICOLA and PubMed. For the past year, she has also the led the NAL Digital Repository and for the USDA’s instance of VIVO. Within USDA there are 28 agencies and offices each with their own organizational structures and work. For someone who began their library career as a rare book and manuscript librarian, working with technology is a stretch, making semantic technologies a universe far away from rare book work. I work hard to understand and keep up and there is never a boring moment.

Relevant Publications

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General Questions

1) What is your main interest in attending the workshop?
Understand the future developments for VIVO. The USDA is very interested in tying funding into VIVO some way. I think it would be worthwhile all around.

2) What three features or functions of researcher networking (i.e., tools and services related to assisting researchers with finding people, resources, data, projects, and scholarly works) are most critical to adoption?
* Finding people: USDA has 28 different agencies that basically operate independently. VIVO is seen as a tool to flatten the field for scientists and researchers – see who is doing what across the Department – and better expose the science of the Department for the public.
* Exposing scholarly works: Many agencies within USDA do not track what their scientists are publishing.
* Potentially connecting scientists/researchers to the funding.

3) What three features of researcher networking are most critical to success after adoption, or sustainability?
Ease of using/harvesting existing data sources.
Ease of maintenance and modifications.
Ease of participation.

4) Are you aware of especially innovative approaches to any of these features or functions?
We are working with UF and Cornell on data ingest but we are so new at this, that we don’t have any suggestions at this point.

5) What features of researcher networking are most important to you as a researcher, for your own use?
The semantic structure will make connections never made this broadly. If this works well, the USDA will be very pleased. I am not a scientist, but in working with scientists around the Department, I find that their hope is to connect with/find out about others within the Department doing related research. The USDA has tried for years to better expose to the public the research of the Department.

6) Are you or your group working on any of these features?
We are working closely with 6 agencies within USDA to determine what is most important so that we demonstrate the power of the technology.

7) What would you like to learn / achieve at the workshop?
As the person who has to articulate where we are going with this to the USDA, I hope to learn more about where VIVO is going and more about any timeframes or milestones.