A Search of Our Own

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Metadata, information which describes information, has an inexorable hold on our perspectives and understanding of almost every piece of information we come across in our every day lives. Traditionally, searches within library catalogues have been dependent on the metadata provided by professional cataloguers. However, the texts, objects, and images that can be found within any library system all hold unique personal meanings and associations for each of us, a relationship which cannot be reproduced by professionally created metadata. My research looks at the ways in which users assign "tags" to materials in the Consortium of Research and Academic Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) I-Share System, observing similarities and differences in the way we as individuals contextualize, organize, and describe these information sources for ourselves. These images display a fraction of the thousands of unique tags found just in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign online catalogue, reflecting five different languages and dozens of academic and personal fields of interest. Each tag represents the potential for broadening and diversifying metadata for a more open and accessible future.