FAST:
the British Library's experiences

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Why the project?

- Inconsistent subject coverage on BL collections: opportunities for extending coverage to resources currently excluded?

- Need for efficiencies in the light of increased intake/reduced funding

- To improve retrieval and linking in an online world

Why choose FAST for this project?

- Controlled BUT enumerative vocabulary based on LCSH/literary warrant

- Uses MARC coding

- Easy to assign and interrogate

- Easy to maintain

- Suited to a linked data environment

- Already used elsewhere with specialist materials

Examples of FAST headings

Topical e.g. *Dentistry; Civil procedure; Federal aid to adult education; Felix the Cat (Fictitious character); Minerva (Roman deity)*

Geographic e.g. *Puerto Rico; Himalaya Mountains; Zimbabwe*

Chronological e.g. *To 1900; 1066-1485; 1981*

(NB These chronological headings are only established when needed as a cross-reference)

Examples of FAST headings (cont.)

Events e.g. *Paris Peace Conference (1946); Tour de France (Bicycle race); Persian Gulf War (1991)*

Names as subjects e.g. *Clinton, Bill, 1946-; University of Oxford; Inferno (Dante Alighieri)*

Form/genre e.g. *Posters; Guidebooks; Blogs; Biography - Anecdotes*

What we did

- Trials by a small team of cataloguers – various languages, various types of material

- Use in spreadsheet system by temporary staff

- Use in databases devoted to specific topics

- Extensive feedback from participants

Our conclusions:

- **Potential benefits of adopting FAST:**

- *Efficiency*
  - FAST is quicker to apply.
  - Searching is quicker in FAST than LCSH
  - Training overhead significantly reduced

Benefits (continued)

- *Discovery*
  - *FAST is better adapted to online display*
  - *FAST uses terms not strings*
  - *Form/Genre fully implemented in FAST*
  - Potential to extend application to unclassified/un-indexed collections

Benefits (continued)

- ***Economy***
  - Free FAST Web tool.
  - FAST authority file can be downloaded free from the internet as an XML file.
  - No Cataloger's Desktop subscription required
  - Continuity with past practice and easy transition from current standards,
    - FAST vocabulary terms same as LCSH and LC/NACO Authority File
    - FAST has a full thesaural structure

Benefits? (continued)

- ***Sustainability***
    - FAST is supported by OCLC. OCLC has assigned FAST to records in World Cat that contained LCSH.
    - Many libraries are already using FAST for particular projects
    - FAST is independent of coding, but can be expressed using the same MARC tagging as LCSH

RISKS and issues

- *Discovery and usage*
  - Some loss of precision

- *Governance and sustainability*
  - *FAST is currently maintained as an OCLC research project, not a service. It is not clear whether or when FAST may become a service.*

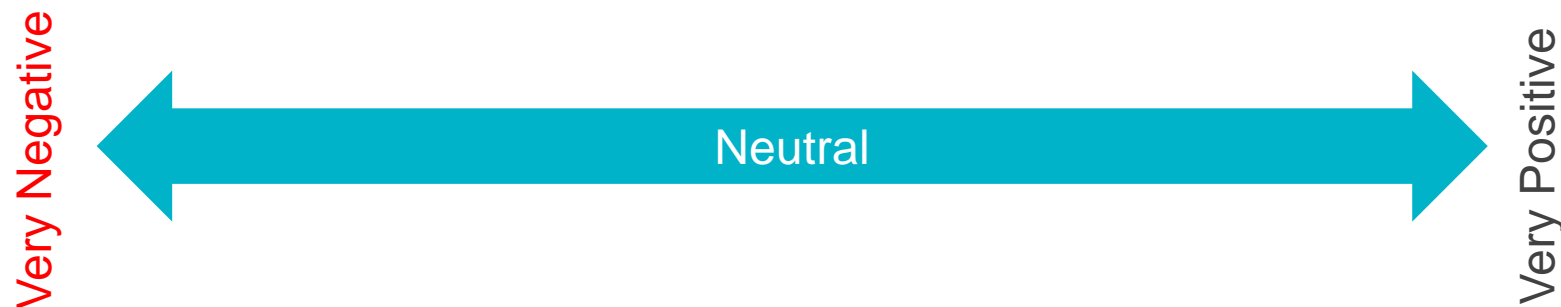# British Library Subject Standards Survey:

March-April 2016

Proposals

1. The British Library proposes to adopt FAST selectively to extend the scope of subject indexing of current and legacy content.

2. The British Library proposes to implement FAST as a replacement for LCSH in all current cataloguing, subject to mitigation of the risks identified in the background paper; in particular, the question of sustainability.

3. The British Library proposes to implement Abridged DDC selectively to extend the scope of subject indexing of current and legacy content.

Questions

1. What is your response to the proposed change?

2. How would you characterise the impact of the proposed change on your business?

3. How would you characterise the impact of the proposed change on your use of British Library metadata?

Very Negative ←———————— Neutral ————————→ **Very Positive**
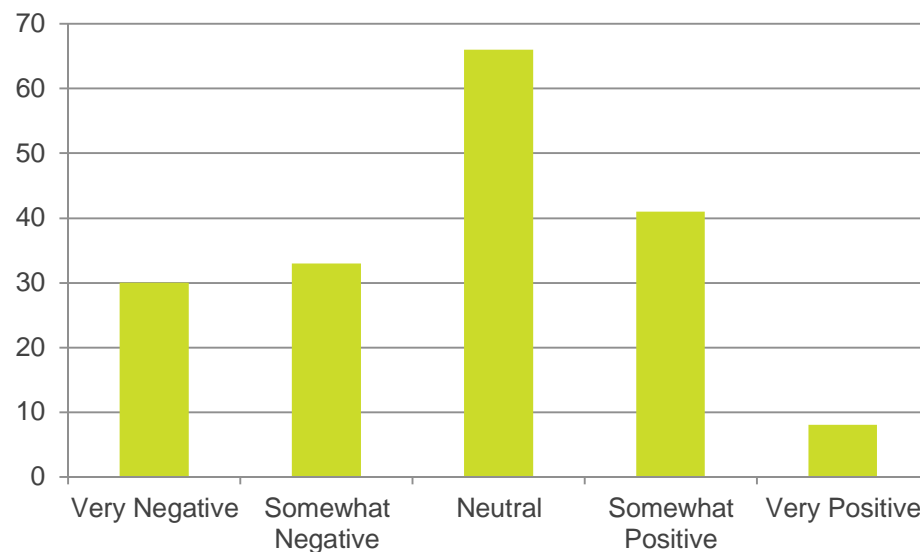
Responses

- 60 responses received

- UK, USA, NZ, Europe

- Public, academic, national and special libraries

- The following charts illustrate the overall response to each proposal

1. The British Library proposes to adopt FAST selectively to extend the scope of subject indexing of current and legacy content…

How would you characterise the impact of the proposed change:

- generally

- on your business

- on your use of British Library metadata

1. The British Library proposes to adopt FAST selectively to extend the scope of subject indexing of current and legacy content…

Fast headings are too general to be meaningful as index terms
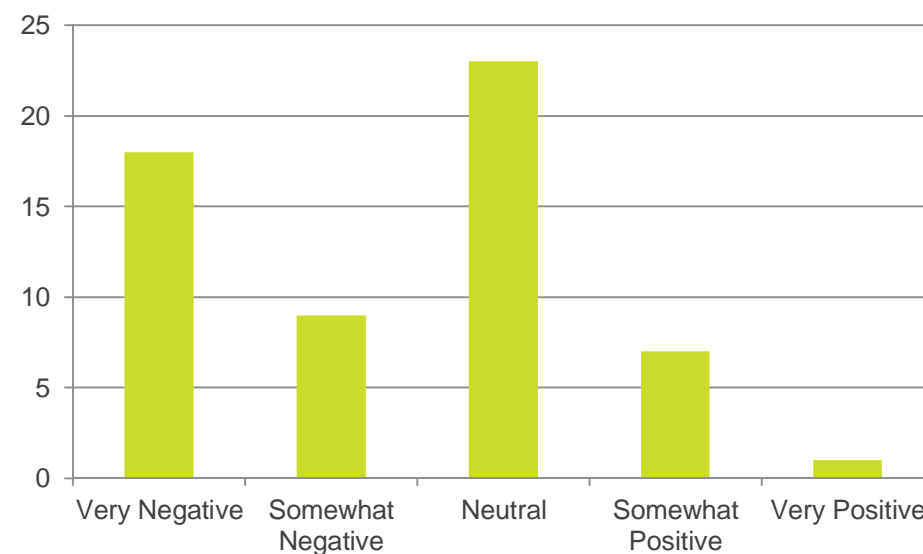
We mostly use BNB records, which have LCSH.

British Library Metadata isn't our first choice because we are outside of the UK

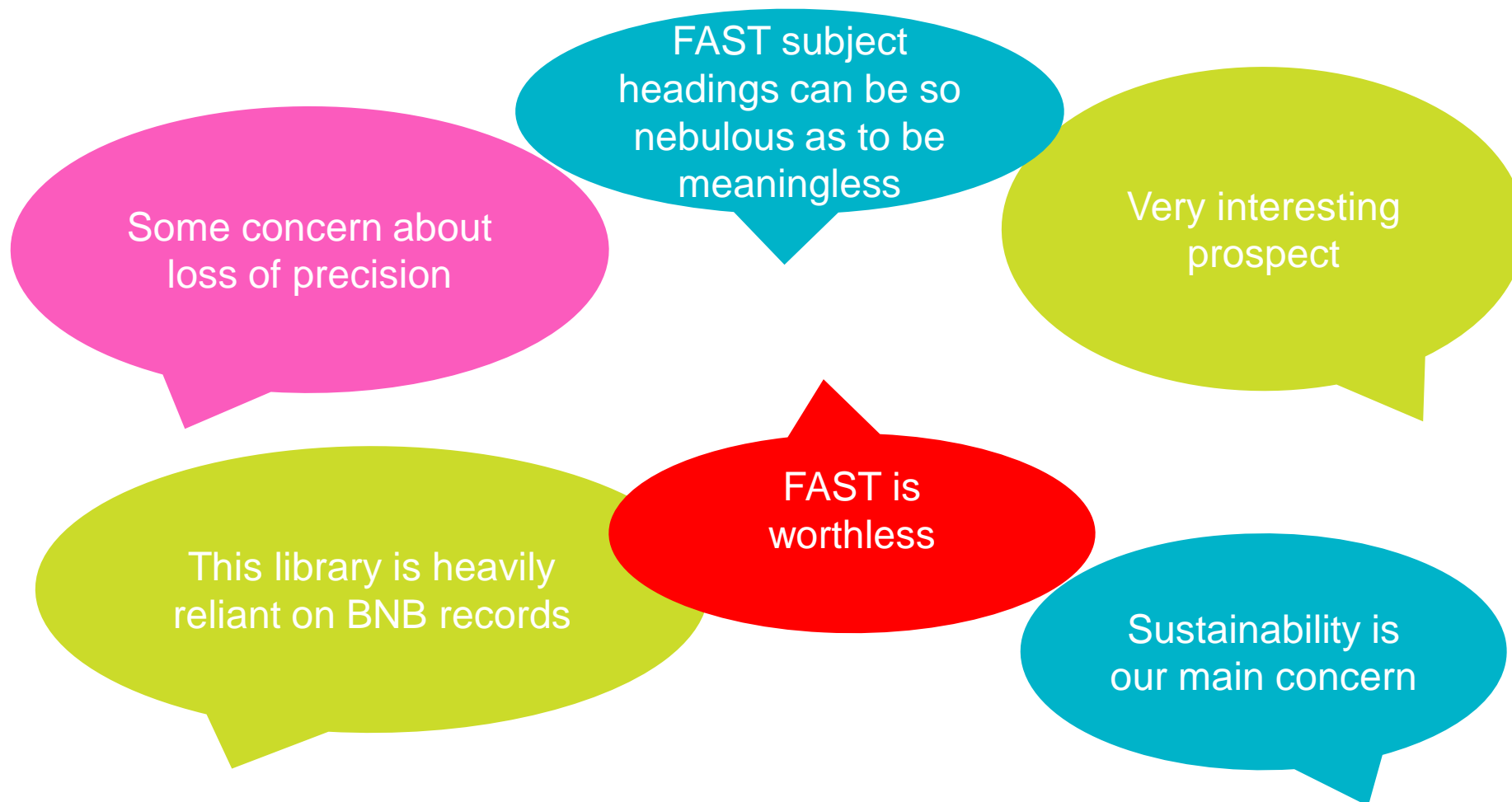I would like to know more about 'selectively'

2. The British Library proposes to implement FAST as a replacement for LCSH in all current cataloguing.

How would you characterise the impact of the proposed change:

- generally

- on your business

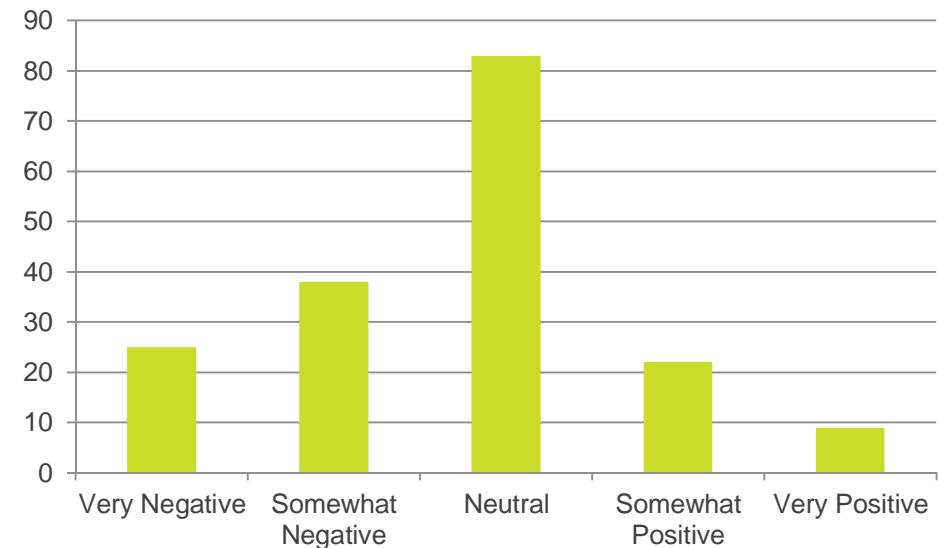- on your use of British Library metadata

2.The British Library proposes to implement FAST as a replacement for LCSH in all current cataloguing

FAST subject headings can be so nebulous as to be meaningless

Some concern about loss of precision

Very interesting prospect

This library is heavily reliant on BNB records

FAST is worthless

Sustainability is our main concern

3. The British Library proposes to implement Abridged DDC selectively to extend the scope of subject indexing of current and legacy content.

How would you characterise the impact of the proposed change:

- generally

- on your business

- on your use of British Library metadata

3. The British Library proposes to implement Abridged DDC selectively to extend the scope of subject indexing of current and legacy content.

I would rather not have another edition of Dewey in the mix

We mostly use BNB records, which have full DDC.

Again pushing the work back to us.

The library does not make use of DDC

We would prefer to use other sources of metadata should this proposal be introduced.

…it might not be a terribly bad thing…

Future needs and plans

- Continuing support

- An active role in development

- Time and motion study

- Retrievability study

Thank you

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