

# Metadada

AMA  
Digitization  
Workshop

Elizabeth-Anne Johnson  
University of Manitoba  
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# Metadata

- Metadata is information about archival objects—literally, it is data about data
- Metadata lets us know many things, including when an item was created, by whom it was created, its file format and history, and its relationships with other items
- 4 kinds of metadata:
  - Descriptive metadata – describes an item so it can be identified and retrieved (e.g. title, creator)
  - Structural metadata – describes relationships within/among items (e.g. how one page follows another)
  - Administrative metadata – contains information used to manage items (e.g. date of creation, file type)
  - Preservation metadata – documents preservation actions, ensures authenticity

# Basic metadata

- Basic metadata elements can include:
  - Collection name and number
  - Box and folder number
  - Image identifier
  - Item summary and/or title
  - Creator
  - Date of creation
  - Date of modification
  - Location
  - Subjects
  - Copyright/usage information
- Some of this information can be included in the filename of a digital object, but we need to arrange the information in other ways as well

# Good metadata

- Metadata should:
  - Be appropriate to the materials, use, and users of a collection
  - Support interoperability (i.e. be able to be used by multiple systems)
  - Use standard vocabularies to describe the who, what, where, when of the item
  - Include a clear statement on the conditions and terms of use for the item
  - Be authoritative and verifiable; have the qualities of archivability
  - Support the long-term management of objects in collections
- (Source:  
<http://www.niso.org/publications/press/UnderstandingMetadata.pdf>)

# Metadata standards

- It is important to adhere to standards when creating and using metadata so that the information can be sorted, searched, and used efficiently
- Different kinds of standards:
  - Value standards – terms used to name people/places/subjects (e.g. Library of Congress Subject Headings)
  - Content standards – what information is included in a description (e.g. Rules for Archival Description)
  - Format standards – how metadata is structured and encoded (e.g. Encoded Archival Description)

# Record-specific standards

- It's important to choose correct standards to describe specific kinds of records; examples include:
  - Rules for Archival Description (RAD) – Canadian content standard for describing archival collections
  - Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS) – format standard that encodes structural metadata about digital objects
  - Metadata Object Description Schema (MODS) – format standard used to encode descriptive metadata about digital objects
  - International Standard Archival
  - Authority Record (ISAAR) – content standard used to describe people/families/companies

# Metadata and MAIN

- The Manitoba Archival Information Network (MAIN) uses the following metadata standards to structure its descriptions:
  - For archival descriptions: RAD
  - For authority records: ISAAR
  - For archival institutions: ISDIAH
- Each of these standards requires certain information, formatted in a certain way
- Using these standards across every description in the database means that information is uniform and easy to understand

# Managing metadata

- Metadata should be indexed to digital material in some way, whether in a database, spreadsheet, or embedded within the digital items themselves
- Encoded Archival Description (EAD) – standard used to encode finding aids into XML, a markup language that can be read both by humans and machines
  - e.g. [finding aids on the U of M website](#)
  - Developed by US Library of Congress
  - Used to encode finding aids for an online environment
  - Can include description down to the item level and beyond
- Databases can include metadata about digital objects but should also include a link to the permanent location/identifier of the object



# Embedding metadata

- Digital files (e.g. TIFFs and PDFs) can have expanded metadata added to the embedded metadata already associated with them
  - Embedded metadata can be edited by using programs like Photoshop or Acrobat
  - Embedded metadata stays with the item when it is shared with other users
  - Embedded Metadata Manifesto:
    - 1) Metadata is essential to describe, identify and track digital media and should be applied to all media items which are exchanged as files or by other means such as data streams.
    - 2) Media file formats should provide the means to embed metadata in ways that can be read and handled by different software systems.
    - 3) Metadata fields, their semantics (including labels on the user interface) and values, should not be changed across metadata formats.
    - 4) Copyright management information metadata must never be removed from the files.
    - 5) Other metadata should only be removed from files by agreement with their copyright holders.

# Resources

- NISO, "Understanding Metadata": <http://www.niso.org/publications/press/UnderstandingMetadata.pdf>
- Wendy Duff and Marlene van Ballegooie, "Archival Metadata": <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/curation-reference-manual/completed-chapters/archival-metadata>
- METS: <https://www.loc.gov/standards/mets/>
- EAD: <https://www.loc.gov/ead/>
- RAD: <http://www.cdncouncilarchives.ca/archdesrules.html>
- ISAAR: <http://www.ica.org/10203/standards/isaar-cpf-international-standard-archival-authority-record-for-corporate-bodies-persons-and-families-2nd-edition.html>