2022

Scholarly Communications & Data Management Tip Sheet: Metadata

Ellie Dworak
Boise State University

Albertsons Library Data Management Team

METADATA

Metadata is structured information that describes, explains, locates, or otherwise makes it easier to retrieve, use, or manage the associated resource or item.
- National Information Standards Organization (NISO)

Singular or plural?

Carl Siebert tells us that "In common usage, "metadata" is treated as a mass noun, like "luggage", or "sand", and is, therefore, singular. "Data" is obviously plural, and "metadata" is a compound word based on "data" so that might not seem right or just to grammarians. But logic and justice don't always prevail."

- 2017, Metadata. What is it?

Metadata for Research Data

- ○ **Descriptive metadata** describes a dataset so that others can find it. Examples: title, author, date of submission, location, DOI

- ○ **Structural metadata** describes a dataset so that it can be shared. Examples: attribute names, file types, software required to use the data, collection processes, units of analysis

- ○ **Administrative metadata** describes a dataset so that it can be managed. Examples: update frequency, use rights & restrictions, embargo release date, funding citation

EXAMPLES

Descriptive Metadata

Dataset for Time Series of Terminus Position for Glaciers Along the Periphery of Southeast Greenland
Summary & Purpose
These data correspond to the time series of glacier terminus positions generated from an automated terminus mapping method described in Liu et al. (2021) applied to glaciers along the periphery of southeast Greenland.
Authors
Julia "Jukes" Liu, Ellyn Enderlin, Andre Khalil, H.P. Marshall
Date of Submission: 09/14/2021
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18122/cryogars_data.1.boisestate

Structural Metadata

Federal Employee Attitudes Survey, 1790-1980
(ICPSR 7804)
Sample
The 1979 survey was distributed to a stratified random sample of 20,000 federal civilian employees from over 20 federal departments and agencies, and the 1980 survey was conducted with a sample of senior federal employees.
Time Method: Cross-sectional
Unit(s) of Observation: Individual
Data Type(s): Survey data
Mode of Data Collection: Self-enumerated questionnaire

Administrative Metadata

OsteoArthritis Initiative
Repository type: disciplinary
Language: English
Funding: National Science Foundation
Policy: Access portals
Type of access: Restricted
Last update: 2019-08-07

Click an example to see the source

For more information and to learn about how the Library's Research Data Management Team can help, visit: https://www.boisestate.edu/library/research-support.