Public Humanities Workshop
What to Think About When Digitising
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Some slides created by
Introduction

There are a good number of basic questions we all need to ask before we ever start talking about Metadata, Megapixels, Scanners, Cameras, and Web Sites.

But we never seem to ask them...
Why not?

The Questions we need to ask are so basic and obvious it almost seems silly to talk about.

But they are one of, if not the, most important parts of a successful digitisation programme or project

*99% of all the questions I am regularly asked are about technical specifics, not about the nature of the project itself*
What do we need to ask?

Just like they teach the journalists
(but remember these need to be asked formally)

• **Who** are we digitising the material for?
• **What** are we digitising?
• **When** will it die?
• **Why** are we digitising all this stuff in the first place?
• **Where** will it all go?
• **How** will we do it?

**Stick with questions relating to these topics, and until they are fully answered ignore specific technology and metadata discussions**
Questions

• They need to be asked formally (out loud)
• Independently of any other discussion
• The answers need to be well documented
• Openly disseminated
• Answer honestly and realistically (some of the answers might be a bit embarrassing)
  • “I don’t know why we are doing this but everyone else is so we had better be too” – valid answer

Equally valid and identical for internal, collaborative, or outsourced work
Describing your digital assets
Metadata and controlled vocabularies
You can use metadata to establish relationships between Assets

- Digital to digital
- Physical to digital
- Your content and someone else’s
  - This usually requires some level of standards implementation
I call it metadata

You call it ....

• Documentation
• Captions
• Notes
• Descriptions

*don’t get hung up on the semantics*
Metadata is

Nothing more than data about data

Or, if you want a more precise definition:

Metadata is “structured information that describes, explains, locates, or otherwise makes it easier to retrieve, use, or manage an information resource” (NISO, 2004)

Or better yet

Metadata is a love letter to the future
Because....

It allows you and future online researchers to discover your digital stuff and know exactly what they are looking at.

And because....

(Perhaps even more importantly in today’s electronic world)

Well structured metadata allows machines to find and expose data more easily online and between themselves.
Basic ‘Descriptive’ Metadata

- Names
- Titles
- Topics
- Places
- Dates
- Descriptions
- Genres/Formats

*It is often more important to determine how to write these descriptions than what specifically you write*
Important ‘Administrative’ Metadata

• File and Folder names

• Unique Identifiers
  • These are essential for databases to link your digital assets with your metadata

• Rights Information
  • The Achilles heel of digital projects

• Access limits
  • Particularly for Social Science data: anonymization strategies, code books, etc.
Metadata In Action

Creator:
Browne, Charles R., 1867-1918

Title:
Anthropometry in action, 1893

Collection title: Charles R. Browne Collection of photographs, vol. 1

Date: 1893

Relation: Is part of: Charles R. Browne Collection of photographs

Identifier: IE TCD MS 10961/1
Metadata in Action

Subject:
Ireland--History--19th century
Ireland--Pictorial works
Anthropometry--Ireland

Description: Small photograph album, broken in two, containing 31 blue- tinted photographs pasted onto cardboard supports. Folios 12r-13v precedes folio 1r. Folios 15r and 17v are blank.
From a six album photograph collection including images of Dublin and Trinity College Dublin, including the anthropological museum; Irish and English military and hospital scenes, West of Ireland island community and antiquities; genealogical material.

Charles R. Browne (1867-c.1918) medical doctor and anthropologist. He was an assistant, for many years, to Daniel Cunningham, Professor of Anatomy and Surgery at Trinity College Dublin 1883-1903.
More Metadata – Controlled Vocabularies

Creator:
Browne, Charles R., 1867-1918 [CONTROLLED VOCABULARY: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS NAME AUTHORITY FILE: https://lccn.loc.gov/no2012092285]

Title:
Anthropometry in action, 1893

Date: 1893 [METADATA SUPPLIED IN PHOTOGRAPH ITSELF]

Dissecting the Metadata

Relation: Is part of: Charles R. Browne Collection of photographs

Identifier: Item No. : IE TCD MS 10961/1 [THIS IS THE LIBRARY’S IDENTIFIER]

Subjects: [DATA FROM LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SUBJECT AUTHORITY FILES]
Ireland--History--19th century [https://lccn.loc.gov/sh85068017]
Ireland--Pictorial works [https://lccn.loc.gov/sh2008115503]

Anthropometry--Ireland
Functional Metadata

Metadata must be structured and accessible in machine-readable form

Example: Dublin Core Generator
http://www.dublincoregenerator.com/generator_nq.html
Intellectual property rights issues
IP Considerations

- A single digital object may have several layers of rights
- Copyright happens automatically (moment of fixation)
- Copyright laws, particularly fair use rules, vary widely between jurisdictions
  - Usually 70 years from the death of the author
- Copyright terms are different for individuals and for commercial firms
  - 70 years from the date of publication
- Orphan works legislation also varies widely
  - EU now requires/recommends registration
Orphan Works

- Registered, *copyright protected works* for which the creator or rights holders cannot be located or identified
- Does not cover artworks and other visual media
- EUIPO Orphan Works Database: Institution must be registered as a beneficiary organisation and submit possible orphan works to the Competent National Authority [Ireland: IPO]
Example 1

René Magritte: The treachery of images. Oil on canvas, 1929. LACMA © C. Herscovici, Brussels / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Example 2

Saorstát Eireann: Irish Free State official handbook. Dublin, 1932. Edited by Bulmer Hobson (1883-1969), with essays by leading intellectuals and illustrations and reproductions of paintings by well known Irish artists such as Paul Henry (1877-1958)
Example 3

Orphan work: unpublished letter. Tracked down the author of the letter, Ms. Annie Noel Graham, who died childless and it was impossible to establish who her heirs were. Registered the item as an orphan work with the EUIPO Database, and it is now possible to use it on our Digital Collections database.
IP guidance: Rights statements

Three Categories of Rights Statements

**IN COPYRIGHT**

Statements for works that are in copyright

**NO COPYRIGHT**

Statements for works that are not in copyright

**OTHER**

Statements for works where the copyright status is unclear

The rights statements fall in three categories: Statements for works that are in copyright, statements for works that are not in copyright and statements for works where the copyright status is unclear. The statements provide end users with easy to understand high level information about the copyright and re-use status of digital objects. With the exception of the two statements for objects with an unclear copyright status, these statements should only be applied after the copyright status of a work has been established. You can find more information about how to apply the rights statements in the documentation section.
Publishing Your Own Intellectual Output

Creative Commons

- Licensing is something distinct from copyright: By licensing your work you are not surrendering your copyright, but just allowing others to use your content.
- CC Licenses are non-exclusive and non-revocable

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Resources

Metadata Standards

• Digital Curation Centre: Metadata standards for the social sciences and humanities: http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/subject-areas/social-science-humanities

Intellectual Property Rights

• EUIPO Database: https://euipo.europa.eu/orphanworks/index.html
• Rights Statements: http://rightsstatements.org/page/1.0/?language=en
• Irish Patent Office Copyright Information: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Copyright/
Thank You