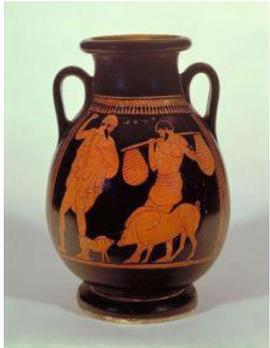


Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC): Enhancing Metadata & Creating Context

What is Metadata?

In order for an item in a digital library to be findable and usable, the item should be described with information about the item. For a book in a library, this is often done with a catalog record. For an item in a digital library, the item information is also known as a record or more accurately as *metadata*.

Metadata is *data about data*, or *defined information about a particular thing*. Library and museum metadata may look something like this:

| | |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Format: Greek Vase</p> <p>Date: 470 - 460 BC</p> <p>Height: 35 centimeters</p> <p>Title: [Greek Vase of Odysseus and Eumaios the Swineherd]</p> <p>Notes: from Homer's story of the Odyssey</p> |
|--|---|

Many items in dLOC have metadata that is created from existing resources, like catalog records for library items and finding guides for archival materials. For other items, the metadata is created for the first time with the digital item.

Whether from existing records or newly created, there are often opportunities for scholars and student-scholars to contribute their expertise and enhance the existing metadata with information that requires scholarly expertise.

Creating Context

In addition to providing basic citation type information with title, author, and publisher, metadata can and should place a particular item in context with other materials. For instance, subject terms help to link relevant materials with each other. Abstracts and notes help to inform readers and users of other possible links across materials, but also provide greater context for the contents within a single item.

Ideally, context should be created and supported through metadata and through additional scholarly writing. For instance, the *dLOC Teacher Guides & Materials Collection* (<http://www.dloc.com/teach>) includes teaching guides, lesson plans, background information, and other materials that help to frame and provide context for the primary resources in dLOC. Other types of teaching and scholarly resources that could be created to provide context include author biographies, additional bibliographies, annotated bibliographies, and other familiar scholarly forms.

Example: Creating Context for Herbert G. de Lisser

Herbert G. de Lisser was an important author. A number of his novels and his serial publication *Planters' Punch* are in dLOC. Scholars have noted that he was ethnically Jewish and that this informs scholarly research of his work. However, there is no way for a patron or user to know this from the materials. This is not included in the metadata, and dLOC does not yet include scholarly materials that provide this context. Fortunately, de Lisser does have a Wikipedia page that exists and is more than a stub. This is very fortunate given that this is not the case for many important Caribbean authors. However, even in this fortunate situation, the information is still brief and this information is not available.

For this particular example, review the recommended minimum metadata list, example records in dLOC, and at least two items in the *dLOC Teacher Guides & Materials Collection* (<http://www.dloc.com/teach>) to become familiar with how metadata and scholarly contextual materials could provide context for de Lisser.

Recommended Minimum Metadata for All Items

For all items, the recommended minimum metadata fields to be completed are:

1. Title
2. Other titles (as applicable)
3. Type
4. Physical description
5. Language
6. Identifier (as applicable; e.g., Library of Congress number, number as listed in an authoritative bibliography, etc.)
7. Holding location
8. Source institution
9. Creator
10. Publisher
11. Place of publication

12. Date of publication
13. Subject
14. Spatial subject (as applicable)
15. Coordinates (as applicable)
16. Abstract
17. Note (as applicable)

For more on these fields, see the *dLOC Metadata Guide*: <http://www.dloc.com/AA00002864/00001/pdf>

Enhancing Metadata & Creating Context

After reviewing the materials, consider the following questions for the Herbert G. de Lisser example and for other examples for which you have scholarly expertise that can be shared:

- Considering how metadata can be used, is there an appropriate place to include this contextual information in the metadata for any of the de Lisser items, a set of items, or all of the items?
- Given that metadata is not the only place to add context, would it be useful and appropriate to add this context to the metadata for any, some, or all of the items?
- It would be useful and appropriate to create a new scholarly work that provides context on de Lisser. Some examples of scholarly work forms have already been noted: biographies, bibliographies, and annotated bibliographies.
- What other scholarly forms could be useful and appropriate for providing context on de Lisser?
- Are there existing scholarly works that are available as Open Access? If so, would it be useful and appropriate to referencing these in a bibliography or an annotated bibliography?

After considering the questions above for your area of expertise if you would like to contribute your expertise to dLOC, please contact us:

- dLOC Program Director: Brooke Wooldridge, dloc@fiu.edu
- dLOC Technical Director: Laurie Taylor, Laurien@ufl.edu