

Descriptive Metadata Best Practices

INTRODUCTION

The intent of the Descriptive Metadata Best Practices section of these guidelines is to provide direction for creating metadata records for digitized materials that have been reformatted from an existing physical resource, such as photographs, text, audio, video, three-dimensional artifacts, etc. The Descriptive Metadata Best Practices define commonly used Dublin Core elements used in CONTENTdm.

Application of these best practices will result in standardized records that:

- provide detailed descriptions to inform and educate users
- enhance online search and retrieval accuracy
- improve resource discovery capabilities
- improve quality control of metadata records
- facilitate inter-institutional interoperability for multiple partnership opportunities

This document seeks to accommodate the different cataloging needs of the diverse collections held within the Montana Memory Project. Currently the Montana Memory Project uses Dublin Core to catalog collections in CONTENTdm.

All digitized items will have a descriptive metadata record. This record will be the Dublin Core record stored in CONTENTdm.

For additional information on Dublin Core, please visit the following website:

<http://dublincore.org/documents/usageguide/elements.shtml>

Montana Memory Project

USING THE DESCRIPTIVE METADATA BEST PRACTICES

Controlled vocabularies

Employing terminology from controlled vocabularies can improve the quality of search results and increases consistency when more than one individual creates records.

Controlled vocabularies recommended by the Montana Memory Project include:

- Library of Congress Subject Headings for all broad subjects, events and places
- Library of Congress Name Authority for all personal, corporate and conference names
- Getty Art and Architecture for works of art
- Library of Congress Thesaurus for Graphic Materials I: Subject Terms (TGM I)
- Library of Congress Thesaurus for Graphic Materials II: Genre and Physical Characteristic Terms (TGM II)

Keywords vs. Subject terms

Best practice recommends that subject terms be taken from a controlled vocabulary whenever possible for more accurate retrieval of resources. However, other non-controlled terms or keywords that identify the resource with some precision can be added to a record to enhance resource retrieval and discovery, especially in cases where such terms are too new to be included in controlled vocabularies.

Grammar and Punctuation

Metadata creators should follow the general grammatical rules of the language involved when entering descriptive information about resources.

Abbreviations

In general, the following abbreviations are allowed: common or accepted abbreviations (such as "St." for "Saint"); designations of function (such as "ed." for "Editor"); terms used with dates (b. or d.); and distinguishing terms added to names of persons, if they are abbreviated on the item (such as "Mrs."). In case of doubt, spell out the abbreviation.

Capitalization

In general, capitalize the first word (of a title, for example) and proper names (place, personal and organization names). Capitalize content in the description element according to normal rules of writing. Acronyms should be entered in capital letters.

Character Encoding

Have a clear understanding of how the database handles non-standard characters and/or diacritics (such as ü, é, ñ, etc.) and input them so that they display and retrieve effectively.

Exceptions

The Montana Memory Project recognizes that not all institutions, due to internal cataloging procedures for creating metadata records, will be able to meet the following recommendations for creating a Dublin Core record. While the MMP encourages all institutions to strive to meet these criteria, exceptions can be made. For any such issues or concerns, please contact the MMP staff at mmp@mt.gov.