Metadata Elements for Oral History_1.1

Read Me Text

Description

This list of metadata elements is a work product of the [Oral History Association's Metadata Task Force](#) (OHAMTF), published under a CC-BY-4.0 license. Its purpose is to serve as a reference resource for practitioners managing oral history projects and collections. The list includes specific information that practitioners could capture and preserve as metadata about oral history interviews and collections. This elements set, or list, is intentionally "schema-agnostic" and massive, and it is intended to contain all the possible types of information a given practitioner may want to collect, capture, or share about their oral histories.

While this list is comprehensive it is not intended to be prescriptive. Practitioners do not need to use every element in the list; rather, the list is meant to present an exhaustive set of information that practitioners may use as a decision-making tool for collecting, capturing, and sharing information about their oral histories. Users of this list are encouraged to utilize it at the beginning of new projects, to evaluate existing workflows, to crosswalk or map fields from one system or platform to another, or simply as a reference.

Similarly, the list does not conform to any one particular metadata standard or schema. It is a system/schema-agnostic set of elements that multiple practitioners across disciplines have contributed to and assessed. The elements in this list could be captured, preserved, utilized, and adapted based on the particular needs, schemas, and systems in place for a given oral history project or institution, and the elements could be configured and maintained in various structures based on these particular needs.

Alongside each suggested element, the OHAMTF has prepared descriptions meant to guide users about the meaning of the element, potential uses, and any considerations practitioners might wish to note. In some element descriptions, the OHAMTF provides examples or suggests information users could include in a given field. Please note these examples are not meant to be exhaustive, and users of this list could include whatever information is appropriate for their needs. Please also note that the format of examples given (such as date) are meant to be illustrative, not prescriptive. Users of this list could format the data in whatever way is appropriate for their needs. The information captured within each field could be broken out within a customized controlled vocabulary or retained in narrative form. Finally, elements could be repeatable as needed.

In this list, each element also includes a suggested lifecycle stage during which the element is most likely to be applied. This refers to the following oral history lifecycle: Plan, Interview, Process, and Disseminate. These stages are a recommendation, and practitioners may use

elements during whichever stage is appropriate for the needs of their projects, workflows, or institutional practices. Although users of this list are free to sort the elements in different ways, one recommendation is to sort, review, and assess the list by lifecycle stage. Please note that the Process stage could also include maintenance on the collections after dissemination, such as format migration.

Notably, this list also includes a column for noting where the oral history metadata is (or may be) stored. Practitioners are encouraged to make use of this column to help in their own decision-making and metadata organization. Completing this task of noting where various pieces of metadata are stored can be a helpful information sharing exercise for a team working on the same project and serve as a check-in for details that might have gotten lost.

Although version 1.1 will likely be the public, published version through 2022, this list is not considered finite as technology advances and practices evolve. Curious, motivated, and committed metadata/oral history practitioners are welcome to connect with the OHAMTF with questions and to discuss future collaborations.

This list is centrally located and available for download on the OHA Archipelago Commons.

The OHAMTF has also developed practitioner profiles including real examples of oral history practitioners' decisions about which elements from this list they use for their collections, based on the nature and needs of their collections and institutions. These profiles are also meant to aid in oral history metadata decision-making.

Sourcing Methodology
From its inception, this list has been crowdsourced in nature. It originated in 2013 from a series of brainstorming workshops at regional oral history conferences across the US, where attendees were given the prompt "What's Important to Know About Oral History?" From these beginnings, OHAMTF normalized, refined, and coalesced the elements. Additionally, we updated this list multiple times based on survey responses, feedback we received from conference presentations, and other feedback from practitioners across the United States and beyond from roughly 2016 through 2019. Some elements in the list may look familiar, as contributors were practitioners in the cultural heritage community whose work is informed and guided by existing schemas and standards.

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Related Resources
Oral History Metadata and Description: A Survey of Practices

Field Descriptions
Lifecycle Stage: An oral history lifecycle stage (Plan, Interview, Process, Disseminate) has been assigned to each element according to when it is first likely to emerge.
Element Name: These are the names of the elements.
Element Description: These are the descriptions of how these elements can be used and understood.
Where Data Stored: Optional: Use this column to note where you already keep or plan to keep this information. This could be a record type such as 'Dublin Core record' or it could be the name of a document or database where you store the information such as 'MS Access database,' or 'Pre-interview Questionnaire.'
Element Mapping: Optional: Create a mapping here of the record tag or field where you already store or plan to store this element information. For example, '245' in a MARC record or 'Source' in a VRA Core record.