

Metadata for Dummies

(and for everyone else)

What is this Metadata, anyway?

Metadata is information about information

Say what...?

Metadata is the who, what, when, where, why and how that describes your data, document, photo, video, etc.

Why is it so Important?

The Metadata that you record with your photos is the best, and often the only, way for people to be able to put your photo into some sort of context.

Often even the most well known 'facts' can become forgotten over time. With the metadata we maximize the value of a photograph by documenting as much information about each photo as possible

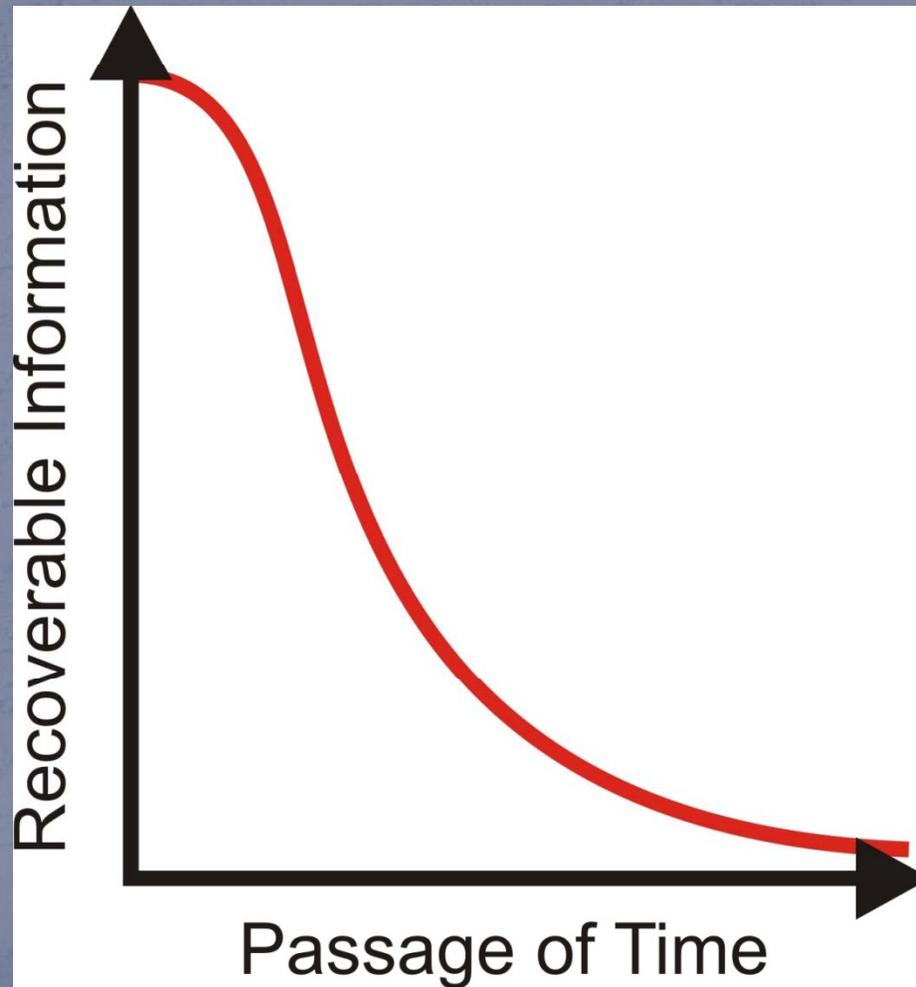
Why is it so Important?

Without metadata you greatly reduce the possibility of someone (including yourself) finding the photo in the future.

Without metadata you significantly reduce the scientific content/value of the photo.

Why the Rush?

(I promise to do it when I get home...)



Six W's and an H

- **Who** Who made it? Who is in it? Who is it about?
- **What** What is it? What is it doing?
- **When** When was it made? When was it modified?
- **Where** Where did it take place?
- **Why** Why was it done?
- **How** How was it done?

Who?

- Name of the author
 - Contact person
 - Email address
 - Copyright owner (more about this later)
-
- Who is that person?
 - Who is this about?
 - Who created this metadata?
 - Who identified the organism?

What?

- What is this about?
- What species is it? (more about this later too)
- What part is it?
 - Leaf, root, fruit, flower, cell...
- What type of view?
 - Dorsal, ventral, lateral
 - Close-up, microscopic, in situ
 - Cross-section, stain...
- What is it doing?
 - Behaviors, interactions...

When?

- When was it made?
- When was it collected?
- When was it processed?
- When did you answer all of these questions?

Where?

- Where was it made?
- Where was it collected?
- Where was it processed?
- What coordinate system are you using?
- How precise are your coordinates?

Why?

- Why was it made?
- Why was it made that way?

How?

- How was it made?
 - Equipment used, special techniques employed
- How was it (the object of the photo) prepared?
 - What stains?
 - What sectioning?
 - In situ versus studio?
 - Spontaneous or staged?

Other things to keep in Mind



Taxonomy

Location

Keywords

Long descriptions
vs. Captions

Taxonomy

- Make sure you get the identification right
 - Be clear about your level of confidence – if you are only sure about the genus then use **sp.**
- Spelling counts
 - Any misspelling, no matter how minor, matters. That includes extra spaces and periods
 - Higher taxonomic levels can optionally be included in the description field

Location

- We record Country, Province and Site
 - Be as specific as you can with the site
 - Multiple levels are permitted eg. Isla Colón, Bocas del Toro Marine Station, Dock
- Spelling counts
 - Any misspelling, no matter how minor, matters. That includes extra spaces and periods
 - If you can't use whatever everyone else is using, at least be consistent with your own spellings

Location

- Coordinates can be either UTM or lat/long
- Lat/long should be decimal degrees
 - By convention, southern and western hemispheres are considered to be negative. Eg. The Bocas station dock is located at: lat. 9.3511, long -82.2574
- Precision
 - Use only the number of significant digits that truly reflects the accuracy of your coordinates

Keywords

- We have an approved list of keywords, please use them
- If you wish to use a new keyword, you may do so under the following conditions
 - You consult with me or Rachel
 - The concept is unique and important and is something someone would probably search on
 - Provide a Spanish translation for it
- Spelling counts

Description vs. Captions

- The variable Long_desc is intended to describe in 254 characters or less what is in the photo. Eg. It's this thing, doing this, prepared in this way, showing that, found here
- Use the species name for identification, however, common names can additionally be used.
- Higher taxonomy is sometimes added
- Spelling counts (but not as much)

Description vs. Captions

- Captions are meant to be succinct descriptions and are used to identify photos when shown as small icons
- Be brief.
- Often the species name is enough, however, modifiers such as flower, fruit, colony, cross-section, etc also work well
- Spelling counts (but not as much)

Common Mistakes



Speling

Inconsistency

Waiting too long

Not asking questions

Now is always a good time to record metadata

Thank You

