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Metadata in the Management of Electronic Records:
Implications for Colleges and Universities

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ABSTRACT

Recent research has shed new insights into the critical roles that metadata can play in the creation, identification, authentication, management, preservation, and use of electronic records throughout their existence. Consideration of how best to exploit metadata to these ends, however, raises several significant issues, including the following:

- Different communities have differing definitions of the term "metadata." What should be the scope of metadata for electronic records and archival management purposes?
- Can metadata be divided into classes based on how, when, and why they are created, or how they behave?

- What are the relationships between metadata and the record? Are some metadata part of the record? Which metadata relate to aggregates of records, and which to individual record or record components?
- How much metadata needs to exist in time and over time to support the evidential qualities of the record?

- Where do/should the necessary metadata reside?

- To what extent should archivists and records managers be engaged in the design and creation of metadata for active record-keeping systems?
- What is metadata management, and what are the associated preservation implications?

- To what extent do archival programmatic and research interests regarding metadata interface with those of other communities who are working on metadata development, interoperability, and standardization?
- Are there any metadata considerations that might be distinct to the college and university environment?

This presentation will review current knowledge about metadata with reference to these questions and the findings and perspectives of recent projects conducted in North America, Europe, and Australia.

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