

Australian Standard™

AGLS metadata element set

Part 2: Usage guide

This Australian Standard was prepared by Committee IT-021, Records Management. It was approved on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia on 14 November 2002 and published on 6 December 2002.

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- Australian Society of Archivists
- Department of Education and Training, NSW
- Institute of Internal Auditors, Australia
- Institution for Information Management
- Monash University
- National Archives of Australia
- Public Record Office Victoria
- Records Management Association of Australia

Additional interests participating in the preparation of this Standard:

- ACT Government
- Ausdoc Information Management
- Australia-New Zealand Land Information Council (ANZLIC)
- Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
- Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing
- Commonwealth Department of Immigration & Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs
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PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by Standards Australia Committee IT-021 on Records Management.

In addition to the work of Committee IT-021 valuable contributions have been received from several other organizations.

The information in this two part Standard has been adapted from the AGLS (Australian Government Locator Service) metadata standard prepared by the AGLS Working Group.

AGLS has been available on the National Archives of Australia website http://www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/gov_online/agls/ since 1998. The members of IT-021, Records Management decided that it should be expanded to cover non government sectors and published as an Australian Standard and invited the AGLS Working Group to become a subcommittee of IT-021.

The AGLS metadata element set provides a set of metadata elements and associated usage guidelines designed to improve the visibility, accessibility and interoperability of online information and services.

This Standard consists of the following parts:

AS

5044 AGLS metadata element set

5044.1 Part 1: Reference description

5044.2 Part 2: Usage guide (this Standard)

The term 'informative' has been used in this Standard to define the application of the appendix to which it applies. An 'informative' appendix is only for information and guidance.

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FOREWORD

Development history

The AGLS element set had its origins in the work of the Information Management Steering Committee (IMSC), an interdepartmental committee established by the then Commonwealth Office of Government Information Technology (OGIT). The IMSC was established in 1996 at the request of the then Chief Government Information Officer, Andy McDonald and was chaired by the then Deputy Director-General of the National Library, Eric Wainwright. The Committee's report, *The Management of Government Information as a National Strategic Resource* (August 1997) proposed frameworks for government information policy and the deployment of associated technologies into the 21st century.

Development of the AGLS element set began in December 1997 with an invitational workshop held at the National Archives of Australia. The workshop brought together representatives of federal and state/territory government agencies, other interested parties such as the Federal Libraries Information Network, and the academic research community.

The development objective of the AGLS working group was to produce a set of metadata elements which would improve the visibility, accessibility and interoperability of government information and services through the provision of standardized Web-based resource descriptions which enable users of search engines to locate the information or service that they require. The work of this cross-jurisdictional and interdisciplinary working group led to the development of the 19 elements in the AGLS set.

Since 1998 the use of AGLS has spread beyond the public sector for which the standard was originally developed. This process has been accelerated by the use of AGLS by various cross-sectoral web portal initiatives. In recognition of the wide potential adoption of AGLS within Australia, Standards Australia decided to adapt and issue AGLS as an Australian Standard.

Relationship to Dublin Core and other online resource discovery metadata initiatives

AGLS extends the Dublin Core Metadata Element Set (DCMES) of 15 descriptors documented on the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI) website at: <http://dublincore.org/documents/dces/>. The DCMES was also issued by the American National Standards Institute as ANSI/NISO Z39.85-2001 on 10 September 2001.

AGLS is a more complex element set than the Dublin Core Standard, containing a number of element qualifiers which enable it to describe more categories of resources, organizations and services. AGLS is compatible and interoperable with the Dublin Core element set. AGLS is a generic metadata set which any sector or community of interest may use, but particular communities (e.g. the health and education communities) may wish to use their own specific metadata standards. AGLS can coexist with other metadata standards based on different semantics.

STANDARDS AUSTRALIA

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SECTION 1 SCOPE AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This Guide is intended to be an entry point for those wishing to implement the AGLS metadata standard for the online description of resources that are themselves available either online or offline. As a usage guide it provides details on the use of AGLS metadata and how to assign metadata to resources in order to make them more widely ‘discoverable’ on the Internet. The Guide explains in non-technical language how to use AGLS metadata elements to describe resources in order to make them more accessible. It includes examples of the use of each element in a number of different syntaxes. It also includes information about certain business issues that need to be resolved when a decision is made to implement AGLS metadata.

This Guide is intended for use with AS 5044.1 which explains the semantics of the AGLS elements and qualifiers. It should not be used without reference to that document.

1.2 WHAT IS METADATA?

Metadata is just a new term for something that has been around for as long as humans have been writing. It is the Internet-age term for information that librarians traditionally have put into catalogues and archivists into archival control systems. The term ‘meta’ comes from a Greek word that denotes ‘alongside, with, after, next’. More recent Latin and English usage would employ ‘meta’ to denote something transcendental, or beyond nature. Metadata, then, can be thought of as data about other data. Although there are many varied uses for metadata, the term is commonly used to refer to descriptive information about online (World Wide Web) resources, generally called ‘resource discovery metadata’.

Resource discovery metadata is information in a structured format that describes a resource or a collection of resources. A metadata record, then, consists of a set of properties, or elements, which characterize resources and which are used to describe a resource. For example, a metadata system common in libraries — the library catalogue — contains a set of metadata records with elements that describe a book or other library item: author, title, date of creation or publication, subject coverage, and the call number specifying location of the item on the shelf.

The linkage between a metadata record and the resource(s) it describes may take one of two forms—

- (a) elements may be contained in a record separate from the item, as in the case of the library’s catalogue record; or
- (b) the metadata may be embedded in the resource itself.