Making Pictures Identifiable in the Long Now: Opportunities for Embedded Metadata

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Abstract: Obtaining sufficient preservation metadata is a challenge for archivists who bring any digital content into their collections. It is especially challenging when collections include digital images. While provenance and other descriptive information may be extractable from text files it is often not possible with digital image files, especially the essential information needed to understand the images at the item level.

This platform presentation provides an update to the cross-organizational work being done by the Visual Resources Association's Data Standards working group on Embedded Metadata. In the past year we have worked closely with industry and photographers as well as photo collections curators to develop an input panel for embedding metadata in digital image files. I will show this prototype, explain our process, and discuss the collaborations we've made along the way.

Practitioners in the Visual Resources community are currently engaged in experimentation with embedding standards-based descriptive and administrative metadata into image files. The data is structured using metadata schemas that are interoperable and software independent.

This project addresses a long-standing problem for visual resource collections and digital image creators who want to share digital images and embedded metadata. Losing the link between the image and its description frequently leads to unknown and orphan image files. The presentation will describe the work of a Visual Resources community effort at embedding metadata into digital image files with a goal of soliciting questions to the archival community of how this endeavor may aid in long-term access and digital preservation. Feedback from Forum participants will inform the continued development of this work.

About the author:

Kari Smith earned her B.A. in International Relations from George Mason University and her M.S. in Information from the University of Michigan School of Information. She is head of the Visual Resource Collections and Media Services at the University of Michigan Department of the History of Art. With more than ten years of experience with digitization and metadata projects, Kari is leading the VRC through its ongoing transition from a predominantly slide library and image archives to a collection of digital image resources. She is responsible for managing this program in addition to addressing the daily operational needs of the department faculty as well as external users of the photographic distribution project and archival image materials. She engages with colleagues around the University and at peer institutions as well as through professional associations. Kari's research

interests include intellectual and long-term access to cultural material especially through interoperable metadata of digital objects. She is a member of the VRA's Data Standards Committee, Embedded Metadata Subcommittee investigating the preservation implications of embedding rich metadata into image files. She is also an instructor and project manager for the Digital Preservation Management workshops directed by Nancy Y. McGovern.