What Is Metadata?

Introduction

Metadata is a set of data that describes and gives information about other data. There are various types of metadata, however, for the purposes of this lesson students will be focusing on Descriptive Metadata which gives information about a resource used for discovery and identification. It includes elements such as title, abstract, author, keywords, and subjects. Metadata is important because it allows you to organize data in a way that makes it easier to find information that you may be looking for and keeps data consistent and accurate.

Objective

This lesson plan will examine a diary written by Sarah Logan Fisher. Students will read through a sample of the diary in an effort to create their own metadata for the document. Through analysis of this metadata students will gain an understanding of the importance of metadata and how it may be useful to researchers by allowing them to have avenues to broaden their search to other documents connected through metadata. Students will think about what it means to work as a scholar or an archivist and the practical applications that this may provide for them in future research.

Hook Activity

1. Journal Activity: The teacher will show students different food items that may be purchased in a grocery store and ask them to journal where these items would be located in the store and how they came to these conclusions. What characteristics do these items share with other food items that might be located in the same section of the grocery store. A whole class discussion will then take place.

2. Students will then watch a short video clip providing an overview of metadata.
   - What is metadata? (and why does it matter?)

3. Students will watch the explainer video discussing The Revolutionary City followed by the tutorial on how to interpret metadata info found in the portal.

Essential Question

Why is metadata important when curating a portal like The Revolutionary City?
Procedure

1. Whole group activity: The teacher will select a document from the portal and review the metadata information included with the document to model for the students how to find metadata information in a primary source.

2. Small group activity: Students will be provided with a portion of the Sarah Logan Fisher diary (pages 8-11 from Volume 2) https://therevolutionarycity.org/islandora/object/hsprevcity%3A1908#page/8/mode/1up and asked to work together to create metadata information on the selections. Students will be asked to focus on the following categories: title, abstract, author, people, keywords, subjects. They can also create their own categories as well. A worksheet is provided to help them.

3. Whole group activity: Teacher will now debrief with students on what they found in the entry within the different categories and create a whole class metadata entry for this diary.

Closing/Assessment

Students will write about the different ways in which metadata is useful in organizing the various pieces of information that are contained within the diary entries. In particular, students will write about which of the nine themes could be relevant for this document and explain their answers.
Metadata Guided Questions

Sarah Logan Fisher Diary, Volume 2 (pgs 8-11)

1. Within your group transcribe the diary entries and work together to create metadata within the following categories:

   a. Title of the Document
   b. Abstract (brief description of the document)
   c. Author of the Document (research to provide a brief background of author)
   d. People - Who is mentioned in the diary entries?
   e. Keywords - What events or locations are mentioned that might be noted?

Themes of The Revolutionary City

1. Review the nine different themes used in The Revolutionary City portal. Which of the themes would this diary fit into and why? There can be more than one answer for this.