

Spatial Data Custodianship



All About Data

A prospective user wants first of all to find out whether a dataset exists, then to assess whether it is suitable for his or her needs ("fit for purpose"). To achieve this by signing a license agreement, downloading and testing the actual data would be very time consuming.

The Custodian wants to avoid users making incorrect assumptions about data quality and repeatedly responding to individual questions about it.

Metadata answers both these needs. It is a description of the dataset, published online in the Victorian Spatial Data Directory. The data itself is not published in the directory. Metadata describes who is the custodian; the history of the dataset and processes used to create it; update schedules and technical information. A minimum set of Metadata must be supplied with every dataset in the custodianship program. Without it the data itself would be of very limited use, hard to access and risky to base decisions on.

- **Dataset Title** – the name of the dataset
- **Custodian** – the organisation responsible for the dataset
- **Description Abstract** – a short description of the contents
- **Search Word(s)** – words likely to be used by a non expert to look for the dataset
- **Geographic Extent** – the area the dataset covers
- **Data Format Type** – the format(s) in which the dataset is available, showing at least, whether the dataset is available in digital or non-digital form
- **Access Constraint** – any restrictions or legal prerequisites applying to the access and use of the dataset
- **Currency** – the time period covered by the dataset
- **Contact Information** – the ordinary name of the organisation from which the dataset may be obtained, position, telephone and email

Creating Metadata

Creating Metadata is a straightforward exercise which should take no more than 20 minutes.

Metadata should be reviewed annually.

The Victorian Spatial Council (VSC) has directed the Spatial Information Infrastructure Division in the Department of Sustainability and Environment to manage the Custodianship Program on its behalf.

[Spatial Information Infrastructure](#)

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The aim of Metadata ('data about data') is to save time by answering questions.

- *Does the data I need exist already?*
- *Is the data accurate enough and sufficiently up to date for my needs?*
- *Does it cover the required geographic area?*
- *Am I allowed to access it?*
- *Who can I speak to about it?*
- *How do I get it?*
- *How is the data structured?*
- *What projection transformations will be required to load it into my GIS?*

"Begin by realizing that METADATA IS A PART OF GEOSPATIAL DATA. Just like the user's manual is part of your car, the deed is part of your property and your medical records are part of who you are, metadata is part of what geospatial data IS."

North Carolina Centre for Geographic Information and Analysis

More about Metadata

For an excellent explanation of why metadata is important, how it is used and examples of good and bad metadata visit

The University of Wyoming
Geographic Information
Science Center at

<http://www.uwyo.edu/wygisc/metadata/what.html>

