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Adjunct Teaching Lesson

From evidence to metadata: making information findable and trustworthy

This sample lesson is designed for online or hybrid adult learners in library and information science, archives, metadata, history, digital stewardship, data governance, or information organization. It can be taught as a 50- to 60-minute live class session or adapted into an asynchronous module.

Lesson Snapshot

Item	Use / Notes
Audience	Graduate LIS learners, upper-level undergraduates, career changers, or adult learners beginning work with evidence, metadata, archives, or governed information.
Format	50-60 minute online synchronous lesson with a short demonstration, structured practice, and exit ticket.
Core question	How does information become findable, trustworthy, and usable when the record itself is incomplete, messy, or context-dependent?
Materials	One short archival or web source, a simple metadata worksheet, access to a shared document, and a brief example of a descriptive record.

Learning Outcomes

- Explain why metadata is not just description, but a set of decisions that affects discovery, access, trust, and reuse.
- Identify basic descriptive elements: title, creator, date, source, subject terms, rights/access note, context, and uncertainty.
- Draft a short metadata record for a source and explain one decision that required judgment.
- Recognize where a standard helps and where human judgment is still needed.

Session Flow

0-5 min: Opening prompt: show a record, screenshot, or archived webpage with limited context. Ask what learners can know, what they cannot know, and what a future researcher would need.

5-12 min: Mini-lesson: metadata as evidence infrastructure. Define findability, context, authority, uncertainty, and reuse in plain language.

12-22 min: Instructor demonstration: build a brief metadata record live and model the decision points rather than presenting the record as mechanically obvious.

22-40 min: Learner activity: learners create a short metadata record for a source and flag one uncertain or ethically significant description decision.

40-50 min: Debrief: learners share one field that was easy, one field that required judgment, and one user who might benefit or be harmed by the description.

50-60 min: Exit ticket: learners write two sentences, one describing what the record is and one explaining a metadata decision they would document for accountability.

Practice Activity

Learners receive a source and complete a short metadata worksheet. The worksheet intentionally includes one ambiguous field, such as creator, date, subject, audience, access note, or rights context. The goal is not perfect description; the goal is visible reasoning.

- Required fields: title, creator/source, date or date range, format, subject terms, context note, access or rights note, and uncertainty note.
- Learners must identify one decision they would document for another professional to review.
- Learners must write one plain-language sentence explaining how their metadata helps someone find or trust the source.

Assessment

- Formative assessment: instructor checks whether learners can separate observation from inference.
- Exit ticket: one metadata decision and one accountability note.
- Optional graded artifact: a one-page metadata record plus a 250-word reflection on standards, uncertainty, and user impact.

Inclusive Online Teaching Moves

- Make the task visible before asking learners to perform it: show the fields, model the first decision, and name what uncertainty looks like.
- Use structured participation: chat option, shared document option, and verbal share-out option.
- Treat confusion as data. If learners disagree about a field, pause and ask what evidence each decision depends on.
- Keep the learner in the loop: explain why each step matters professionally and where it appears in real archival, metadata, or governance work.

Adaptations

- Archives course: emphasize DACS, provenance, access, and archival silence.
- Metadata course: emphasize Dublin Core, controlled vocabularies, authority control, and interoperability.
- History course: emphasize source context, evidence limits, and citation trails.
- Data governance course: emphasize business definitions, stewardship, documentation, data quality, and AI-ready information.