

Practical implementation of metadata for electronic records is **recurring theme** in the consultations I usually received. It seems that the conceptualization effort made in several areas rather than facilitate implementations in practice had caused very complex approaches or, in the best case, a lot of questions and doubts about how to address them. For example, the published metadata schemes that follow the guidelines of the

### **ISO 23081**

standard, such as

[e-EMGDE](#)

for the Spanish government, are a source of discussion and controversy at the time of implementation.

In my experience in dealing with the implementation there are some **key questions** to consider:



- The implementation decisions of metadata for electronic records are closely linked to the **information architecture and technology**

of the organization where the implementation is carried out. The same metadata schema can lead to different implementations. So I like to handle the

### **application profile**

concept, which is explained in the document

[ISO TC46 / SC11 Metadata where do you start?](#)

An application profile takes into account the technological environment and the architecture on which it is based and must be modified and revised as changes occur on them. The application profile resolves issues like the metadata elements to be embedded in the file format, to be included in the EDRMS types of objects, or be kept in interrelated information systems. Also resolves where to find the tables of allowed values ??for a given element and how to implement the dependency between elements or which elements have a required value.

- **Metadata schemas** should represent a higher level where the elements are established, their names and / or encoding, its semantics or the exact significance of this element and its syntax. This will allow us interoperability between implementations that share the same schema

and we will facilitate the migration and changes in technologies that support the management of electronic records. They should also solve the mandatory elements in the application profiles, which in my view should not be confused with the required values ??of each of the elements.

- When a particular technology is put in place, for example an [EDRMS](#) (Electronic Document and Records Management Systems), before to implement a metadata schema, an understanding on **how the technology works and the provided information structures and architecture** is needed. It is not about to turn every element of the scheme on an attribute of the main digital object. For example, it is common for "records management" modules in [ECM](#) (Enterprise Content Management) are structures for storing information retention schedules and disposition actions; and therefore not repeat these elements configurable elements or attributes.

- **Classifications, taxonomies and structures** that applied to electronic records should also be understood as metadata in the broad sense. For example, when structuring a hierarchy of folders on directories of the file system we are providing to documents (files) a context (metadata) that allows a better understanding. Without losing information same context can be provided using a completely different technology that maintain and apply different types of classifications and metadata.

- An approach to metadata for records only related with **search and discovery** in an EDRMS commonly fall into the mistake of trying to build a complete business information system trough metadata for records. For example, the amount of an invoice is a proper data for the accounting system data or [ERP](#), rather than metadata that must incorporate the EDRMS associated with the type of document invoice. So, once again, the implementation of metadata requires a global view of the organization information architecture.

As I usually said, [metadata management is actually electronic records management](#) . Therefore, a clear strategy to address it is one of the keys of a successful implementation. In this regard, I have a great lack of confidence when I meet an EDRMS consultant with a blank

## Metadata for records in practice

Written by

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notebook asking a business user:

**What metadata do you want for your documents?**