Using Metadata, and Understanding Why It’s So Important

When you create any new item in Jadu, you should include descriptive information called *metadata*. Getting metadata right is important for getting your information to the right place.

**What is metadata?**

“Metadata” means data about data, or descriptions of information. On the web, objects that need metadata include images, videos, whole pages, or chunks of text. The description, usually in the form of keywords or “tags”, helps identify an object so it can be found and used appropriately. If you think of your department as a general category or chapter in a book—let’s use History as an example—then metadata tags are the sub-categories or index terms at the back of the book. An image of Paul Revere could be described using metadata tags, including “Paul Revere”, “U.S. history”, “American Revolution”, and “Image”.

**Why is metadata important?**

Metadata helps our site visitors find what they’re looking for. When a user searches by topic, tags will help return the right results. In addition to your own department page, for instance, something you post may be of wider interest. Tags entered in the optional metadata field make your content easier to find, and may enable it to be used easily in more than one place—perhaps on the main news page or another department’s page. External search engines like Google or Bing also crawl our site for tags and use them to rank results.

**How do you create metadata?**

In Jadu, content creators enter metadata tags when creating a new page or uploading assets, like images or video. The CMS will prompt you to enter terms (when creating pages) or tags (when uploading assets). Separate each term or tag by a comma.

Please consider the following tips:

- **Use consistent terminology.** Before you enter anything, consider the language you want to use and stick to it! We will circulate a vocabulary of common Dickinson tags, so you should start there. If you need extra terms for your content, make sure that once you’ve entered a new term, you continue to use it. If you use the term “U.S. History” for the Paul Revere image, you’ll want to use the same term, and not “American History”, when creating a page on the Civil War. Alternatively, you may want to use both U.S. History and American History in all cases, to account for users who may use either of the possible descriptions.

- **Pick terms that your users are likely to use when searching.** Use tags that an outsider may associate with that page. People in your department may use specific terms to refer to certain topics, but how would a prospective student refer to those same topics? You can use both.
- We suggest using nouns, like management, rather than verbs, like managing.
- Keep tags short: one word is best; use at most two or three words.

**Share your metadata!**
We recommend compiling your own department meta vocabulary list and sharing it with content producers and CMS editors so that everyone is working from the same page. This will also help promote the idea of departmental keywords which, when used consistently, can improve search engine optimization (SEO) results.