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# Metadata Best Practices

Traditional archival best practices are giving way to smart approaches for meaningful digital collection development. This involves entering less detail per record, while making sure that the basic metadata that is entered is meaningful to the different groups who might ever discover that item. Generally, the required fields for every type of item in a digital archive are:

- Item Name/Title
- People Mentioned or Pictured [In the first pass, only enter names that are immediately obvious, e.g. the name is written on the back of a photograph.]
- Date/Date Range
- Era
- Event
- Subjects
- Transcript [All of the readable text in the items will be extracted and placed into this field. In HistoryIT's Odyssey Preservation Software, the transcript is created automatically when you upload any item containing typed text. It may then be edited.]

Utilizing the subject tagging approach is the smartest way to make items discoverable by different groups. This requires first that a meaningful library of subject terms be created that relate to all of the collections as a whole.

As assets are created for the digital collection, it is critical to record the metadata for the fields listed above in order for people to be able to discover and interact with the digital collection. If desired, digital tools and volunteer support can be used at a later date to create additional enhanced metadata. This task should come as a second pass. The “nice to have” metadata enhancements include the following fields:

- Item Description [This could include the positioning of the named people in a photograph if that information is known.]
- People Mentioned or Pictured [When creating enhanced metadata, names that require research in order to determine who an individual is may be added.]
- Location (City, State)
- Notes
- See Also references to other items in the collection
- Item Type-specific metadata details, such as size, scale, material, etc.

Item type templates for a digital archive could include the following. These types include additional fields that are specific to each type. They are:

- Audio/Visual
- Correspondence
- Ephemera
- General Document
- Newspaper/Magazine Clipping
- Object
- Photographic Image
- Postcard
- Print Publication
- Publication Article
- Sheet Music