BACKGROUND:

More and more of the scholarly and cultural record exists in digital form; steps must be taken to secure its long-term future. There are many practical challenges in implementing reliable, sustainable digital preservation strategies; one of these is **preservation metadata**.

Preservation metadata is information that supports and documents the digital preservation process:

- Provenance: *Who has had custody/ownership of the digital object?*
- Authenticity: *Is the digital object what it purports to be?*
- Preservation Activity: *What has been done to preserve the digital object?*
- Technical Environment: *What is needed to render and use the digital object?*
- Rights Management: *What intellectual property rights must be observed?*

In short, preservation metadata makes **digital objects self-documenting across time.**

PROBLEM:

Digital repositories need implementable preservation metadata, along with guidelines for application and use, that is relevant to a wide range of digital preservation systems and contexts.

SOLUTION:

In June 2003: OCLC and RLG sponsored the international working group *PREMIS (PREservation Metadata: Implementation Strategies)*. The goal of PREMIS was to **define implementable, core preservation metadata, with guidelines/recommendations for management and use.** PREMIS membership included more than 30 experts from 5 countries, representing libraries, museums, archives, government agencies, and the private sector.

In May 2005, PREMIS released *Data Dictionary for Preservation Metadata: Final Report of the PREMIS Working Group*. This 237-page report includes:

- PREMIS Data Dictionary 1.0: a comprehensive, practical resource for implementing preservation metadata in digital archiving systems;
- Accompanying report (providing context, data model, assumptions);
- Special topics, glossary, usage examples;
- Set of **XML schema** was developed to support use of the Data Dictionary.

BENEFITS:

The PREMIS Data Dictionary …

- supplies a critical piece of the digital preservation infrastructure, and is a **building block** with which effective, sustainable digital preservation strategies can be implemented;
- is the first comprehensive technical specification for preservation metadata produced from an **international, cross-domain, consensus-building process**;
- is **widely applicable** across all sorts of institutions, digital preservation contexts, and system implementations;
- is oriented toward **practical implementation**;
- is supported by the **PREMIS Maintenance Activity**, which provides a central destination for PREMIS-related information and resources, and hosts the PREMIS Implementers' Group discussion list.

URLs:

PREMIS Working Group: http://www.oclc.org/research/projects/pmwg/
PREMIS Maintenance Activity: http://www.loc.gov/standards/premis/
PREMIS Data Dictionary: http://www.oclc.org/research/projects/pmwg/premis-final.pdf