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Part 1: Metadata concepts

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Foreword

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Introduction

This document describes the concept of metadata, particularly in respect of its use within the data management speciality in information technology.

The ISO/IEC 11179[2] and ISO/IEC 19763[4] series describe the structure for registering information about metadata that is used and/or held elsewhere.

The ISO/IEC 11179 series defines metadata as “data that defines and describes other data”. There are, however, many other definitions of metadata that are used more generally, for example, the US National Information Standards Organization (NISO) defines metadata as "structured information which describes, explains, locates, or otherwise makes it easier to retrieve, use, or manage an information resource”.

Metadata is, therefore, just data, but data which has the specific purpose of defining or describing other data. Metadata is normally used within a particular context, which is the set of circumstances, purposes or perspectives within which any particular item of data is used as metadata. Metadata can, therefore, be considered to be data about data within some context.

The definitions above, by themselves, do not say how metadata arises, where it comes from, how it is used, or how it is managed (although the ISO/IEC 11179 series describes the facilities for registering and managing structured metadata). For those reasons, this document has been developed to provide a broader view of metadata and the associated concept of the metamodel.

These concepts of metadata and metamodels are important when trying to understand exactly what is being registered within the registries whose structure is specified in the ISO/IEC 11179 and ISO/IEC 19763 series.

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Information technology — Concepts and usage of metadata —

Part 1: Metadata concepts

1 Scope

This document describes the basic concept of metadata, and its relationship to both data and metamodels.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

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