Categories for the Description of Works of Art (CDWA)

Describe, catalogue, link works of art, architecture, and cultural heritage

CDWA, the Categories for the Description of Works of Art, is a data content standard for the visual arts and related disciplines. CDWA includes rules for best practice, discussions of issues, and a conceptual framework for cataloguing, describing, and accessing information about works of art, architecture, other material culture, groups and collections of works, and related images. It provides a model for linking data. CDWA is mapped to various other standards at the [Metadata Crosswalk](). The CDWA audience includes museums, special collections, archives, libraries, conservation professionals, archaeologists, documentation projects, visual resources professionals, and the information professionals associated with these groups.

The discussions in CDWA identify fields, vocabulary resources (including the Getty vocabularies), and descriptive practices that will make information residing in diverse systems more accessible and more compatible for sharing and linking. CDWA may be used to map existing art information systems, to identify issues related to the development of new systems, and to inform the linking of data in an open environment.

CDWA includes 540 categories and subcategories. A small subset of subcategories is considered core, in that it represents the minimum information necessary to identify and describe a work. For each subcategory, CDWA includes discussions of issues, basic cataloguing rules, guidelines, and examples.

Broad CDWA Categories:

OBJECT/WORK, Type **(core)**	SUBJECT MATTER **(core)**
CLASSIFICATION **(core)**	CONTEXT
TITLES OR NAMES **(core)**	DESCRIPTIVE NOTE
CREATION, Creator, Creation Date **(core)**	CRITICAL RESPONSES
STYLES/PERIODS/GROUPS/MOVEMENTS	RELATED WORKS
MEASUREMENTS **(core)**	CURRENT LOCATION **(core)**
MATERIALS/TECHNIQUES **(core)**	COPYRIGHT/RESTRICTIONS
INSCRIPTIONS/MARKS	OWNERSHIP/COLLECTING HISTORY
STATE	EXHIBITION/LOAN HISTORY
EDITION	CATALOGUING HISTORY
FACTURE	RELATED VISUAL DOCUMENTATION
ORIENTATION/ARRANGEMENT	RELATED TEXTUAL REFERENCES
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION	
CONDITION/EXAMINATION HISTORY	PERSON/CORPORATE BODY AUTHORITY
CONSERVATION/TREATMENT HISTORY	PLACE/LOCATION AUTHORITY
	GENERIC CONCEPT AUTHORITY
	SUBJECT AUTHORITY

How can CDWA be obtained?

- CDWA is available online: **https://www.getty.edu/research/publications/electronic_publications/cdwa/.**
- A core subset of CDWA is available in the book *Cataloging Cultural Objects (CCO)*, published by ALA.

What is CDWA Lite?

- CDWA Lite is an XML schema to describe core records for works of art and material culture based on CDWA and *Cataloging Cultural Objects* (CCO). The CDWA Lite schema has been integrated into the Lightweight Information Describing Objects (LIDO) schema, which is available on the CIDOC site.