



Metadata

Jeffrey Pomerantz

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Everything we need to know about metadata, the usually invisible infrastructure for information with which we interact every day. When "metadata" became breaking news, appearing in stories about surveillance by the National Security Agency, many members of the public encountered this once-obscure term from information science for the first time. Should people be reassured that the NSA was "only" collecting metadata about phone calls--information about the caller, the recipient, the time, the duration, the location--and not recordings of the conversations themselves? Or does phone call metadata reveal more than it seems? In this book, Jeffrey Pomerantz offers an accessible and concise introduction to metadata.

In the era of ubiquitous computing, metadata has become infrastructural, like the electrical grid or the highway system. We interact with it or generate it every day. It is not, Pomerantz tell us, just "data about data." It is a means by which the complexity of an object is represented in a simpler form. For example, the title, the author, and the cover art are metadata about a book. When metadata does its job well, it fades into the background; everyone (except perhaps the NSA) takes it for granted.

Pomerantz explains what metadata is, and why it exists. He distinguishes among different types of metadata--descriptive, administrative, structural, preservation, and use--and examines different users and uses of each type. He discusses the technologies that make modern metadata possible, and he speculates about metadata's future. By the end of the book, readers will see metadata everywhere. Because, Pomerantz warns us, it's metadata's world, and we are just living in it.

Metadata Details

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Author : Jeffrey Pomerantz

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Martti says

So, I judged a book by it's cover - which is not even shown correctly in Goodreads, fantastic work.

And it turned out it was a book about what it actually bluntly said on the cover. I guess I was overthinking it in the age of incredulous mass-surveillance who "only" look at your metadata. This book is not about that. Maybe couple of paragraphs.

What this book turned out to be about was librarians, library classification standards, ontology standards, schemas, XML and the whole history of that business. So yeah, a word of warning if anyone else is parsing books in the library... and of course a reminder for myself as well. Cover - don't judge!

André says

Review moved to: <https://datakadabra.wordpress.com/201...>

Chloe Noland says

This is a really informative, compact book about metadata and all its manifestations and insidious (or generic) uses. It's the kind of thing that would've been useful to read at the beginning of my MLIS, not at the end, but still a good refresher! <3 <3

Deane Barker says

Wonderful little book that covers the philosophical basis of metadata. This isn't a technical instruction manual. Rather, it talks about why metadata exists, what it is, and why it matters, which some more practical information tossed in.

James Townsend says

The great thing about the MIT Press Essential Knowledge series that I always pitch to people is that it tends to cover topics that a lot of people think they understand, or at least understand enough, but if you read these expertly crafted books, you realize "Oh, I guess I didn't really know much about this at all. Wow." which is a very nice, humbling experience. Also you learn some useful info in the process!

This book was no exception. I would characterize it as mostly a discussion of metadata as it relates to various topics of conservation, library science, and the like. At times this was a bit dry, to be honest, but overall it was very interesting and made me really think about the systems that underpin my life, especially online. It

also does talk a bit about the role of metadata in modern surveillance, etc. but not in a particularly central, let alone sensational way, though it does effectively drive home the point that collection of metadata is no small thing in any way.

Furthermore, the book does all of this in an extremely space efficient fashion and was a quick, fun read. Also, just a shoutout to MIT Press in general on this series--the layout and ergonomics of these books are GREAT. They're just a pleasure to read on a tactile, visual level. Try it, or other books in the series. (such as Paradox by Margaret Cuonzo, which was also awesome [side note: check out all the metadata I just employed in this review!])

John says

One of the most accessible introductions to metadata I've read. This is not a book for the library or information professional, but for students and others who are just beginning to delve into the topic. A good resource for undergraduate students.

Aryssa says

One of the better textbooks I've been assigned.

Farfignugen says

I found this to be a rather boring read, and only a bit of it was helpful for a project I am working on.

The book's audience is mainly librarians, judging from the content.

I was hoping for more discussion on Edward Snowden and the PRISM program, but I was disappointed.

Asa Wilder says

Now that I'm in library school, I don't get to read many books anymore. I read a lot of photocopied chapters or essays or academic articles. This book is not quite as boring as it looks, but also still pretty boring!

V says

This book got me an A on my exam, bless

Ivana says

The joy of reading well written, dense and clever book. It is an engaging introduction to < metadata >, every internet user should know at least all this.

Travis Wagner says

Necessary reading for anyone in the library and information sciences field. NECESSARY.

Emily Graham says

When I took metadata in grad school, I finished without ever actually understanding the semantic web or linked data. I read this book as a refresher before an interview, and feel like now I could probably explain them.

Nurganym says

Although it took me a while to finish this book, it is in fact a fairly quick read. I would highly recommend it to anyone in Library School. It is especially good for those who are pondering upon the idea of specializing in technical services. This book would also be invaluable prior to taking a metadata class . The author covers the basics of metadata formats, provides some information about the description of digital and physical objects, as well as touches upon the history of semantic web and linked data. Overall, the book is well-written, and provides a good background knowledge in an accessible and fun way. Bonus: in the end you will find a list of resources for the further reading.

Julia Kulgavchuk says

A concise and well-written book, coherent and rolling logically from the beginning to the end. Very informative and just enough dense, yet not at all dry.

There's this method, popular among non-fiction authors, to alternate theoretical parts with stories, where those theories are exemplified; it might be a strong method, but it got overused and patternized to the point that it's difficult to tell one book from another. I was happy to not see this pattern in Pomerantz' book. There are plenty of examples, but they are twined into the text in natural and non-banal way.

There are plenty of clear succinct definitions, explanations of concepts and connections between them. Pomerantz serves information in such a way that it settles nicely in the head and becomes knowledge.
