

## From the Ground Up Project: Notes for DESCRIPTION Metadata

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### Overview

The **Description** field or element consists of a brief note (a few sentences), detailing the content and context of the text, photo, video, or audio file.

It is a free-text field used to record information that may supplement, qualify, or further explain some of the other elements such as Title, Spatial coverage, etc.

Consistency of terminology is preferable. Consistent style, grammar, and sentence structure are recommended.

The note can include info such as characteristics (of an object, building or setting), historical significance or function of the work of art or architecture.

The field may also be used to cite a particular publication as the source of info about the work.

### EXAMPLE

#### [for an ancient Egyptian bas relief]

Mentuhotep II was the founder of the Middle Kingdom, ... This relief comes from his mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri in western Thebes. ...

**Source:** Hibbard, Howard. Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York: Harrison House, 1986; Page: 30.

### Brief Rules for Description

Explain the significance, function, or subject of the work.

Enter information clearly and concisely. Capture important points not already fully described in other elements.

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## EXAMPLE

### [for a building]

The Pantheon was dedicated to the seven planetary gods in 12e CE. It was consecrated as a Christian church in the early 7th century. It is the major surviving example of Roman concrete-vaulted architecture.

Use complete sentences

List info from general to specific, depending on which is appropriate

It may be helpful to formulate the Description by thinking of listing info in this order:

- **What** is the work - name the object, scene, event, etc.
- **Who** is responsible for it (historically?) or who is in the photo, video, audio
- **Where** was the object made or where is the scene/event happening
- **When** was it made
- **Why** – is there a special significance

Omit any of these if they are not significant or are explained adequately in other elements

Use sentence case and capitalize proper names. Avoid abbreviations.

Descriptions of multiple objects such as directional views of a statue should be numbered. File names should be numbered with an underscore and sequential number to correspond with the description.

Abstract: Description of first image [1]. Description of second image [2].

File name: defaultfilename\_1.jpg | defaultfilename\_2.jpg

## EXAMPLE

### [for a Maya pot]

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This straight-sided ceramic vessel with painted decoration comprising complex scenes was a common type in 8<sup>th</sup>-century Maya art. The codex-style painting depicts a scene in the realm of the Lords of Death, where a dancing figure holds a long-handled axe and a handstone. On a monster-head altar lies Baby Jaguar, a deity figure, and beside the altar is a dancing skeletal death figure. The meaning has been variously interpreted as depicting either sacrifice or celebration.

Write the note in English. Names and other words in East Asian languages may be used within the note. Use Romanization and diacritics as appropriate.

E.g., Small shrine within Takuhi Shrine (Takuhi jina 焼火神社) precincts

## EXAMPLE

### [for an Indian sculpture]

Chola-period bronzes were created using the lost wax technique, meaning that each sculpture is unique. Parvati wears her signature conical crown with karandamukuta tiers, and she stands in the tribhanga, or triple-bend pose. ...

## References

Adapted by Danielle Bugeaud from: *Cataloging cultural objects : a guide to describing cultural works and their images*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2006.

## Document Change Control

| Revision number | Date of Issue | Author(s)           | Brief Description of Change                                   |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|---|
| 0.1             | 2017-03-31    | Bugeaud, Danielle   | Initial Draft   |
| 0.2             | 2015-05-09    | Stephens-Kyte, Tara | Updated to reflect comments from Bruce Rusk and Amber Saundry |
| [1.0]           | [2012-11-13]  | Last, First         | [First Draft]   |
| [2.0]           | [2012-11-14]  | Last, First         | [Second Draft]  |

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## From the Ground Up Project: Notes for TITLES Metadata

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### Overview

For books and manuscripts, record title as seen on the title page. Punctuation and spelling should be preserved. These are referred to as transcribed titles.

Many works, including decorative art, cultural artifacts, maps, diagrams, archaeological works, ethnographic materials and some buildings, do not have titles or names. For these works, a descriptive title should be constructed or devised to facilitate identification by users. These are referred to as devised titles.

When constructing devised titles (images/photographs, audio, video, etc.), keep them simple and neutral. Less is more.

#### EXAMPLE

[A photograph that depicts a tree in a landscape]

**Title:** Landscape with Tree

Use a concise, descriptive title written in English.

If a work [subject] is commonly known by a name or title in a language other than English, qualify the English translation of the subject with the non-English term(s).

#### EXAMPLE

[A photograph that depicts a shrine]

Small shrine in precincts of Takuhi Shrine (Takuhi jina 焼火神社) built into rock wall with Buddhist deity and lion-dogs (koma-inu 狛犬)

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## BASIC GUIDELINES

Describe what the image is or what is depicted in it. Devised titles may refer to subject matter, materials, form or function of objects depicted

Use the following elements when possible:

- identify the type of image (person, place or thing) or form of material, e.g. view, sculpture, building
- identify main subjects(s) depicted (i.e. persons, events, activities, and objects)
- add geographical locations(s) depicted, if known
- if applicable, add year of the depicted object (if known)

### Other hints:

Title is a free-text field, meaning that retrieval on it will not be optimal. If there is important information in the title, index it (i.e. repeat keywords) in Subject, Spatial Coverage or Description

If photo contains an inscription, record it as a title IF it describes the scene/image. If not devise a descriptive title as indicated above

When a photo is part of a larger whole, record the Title about the whole

In an audio or video recording of a conversation, include what participants are talking about

Devised titles may express uncertainty, if necessary

### EXAMPLE

**Title:** Workers in a Field, probably from a French Book of Hours

### EXAMPLES

**Title:** Neko Harbor, Antarctica, 2007

**Title:** In Chinatown, Vancouver, B.C.

**Title:** Portrait of women posing with croquet equipment

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**Title:** Anarchist bombing, Union Square, New York City, March 1908

#### **MORE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES:**

[for an Indian sculpture]

**Title:** Seated Buddha Preaching the First Sermon

[for a sculpted head]

**Title:** Portrait Head of ... (add name of person or statue)

[for a Japanese screen]

**Title:** Screen with Night Rain on Lake Biwa

[for a vase decorated with flowers]

**Title:** The Magnolia Vase

[for a Chinese temple, title refers to the denomination and style]

**Title:** Taoist Temple

#### **Capitalization**

For devised titles in English, capitalize the first word and all nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and subordinate conjunctions; use lowercase for articles

For titles in other languages, follow capitalization rules of that language or appropriate scholarly conventions.

Avoid abbreviations.

Avoid initial articles.

#### **References**

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