

Description

[Meaning & purpose](#) | [Description attributes](#) | [Use in Research Data Australia](#) | [Best practice](#) | [XML encoding examples](#) | [Change history](#)

Meaning & purpose

Print publications such as theses, books and journal articles often contain an abstract or summary which describes the content succinctly. The abstract helps a reader decide whether the publication is likely to meet their needs. Descriptions of collections, activities, parties or services in the RDA Registry perform the same function, as well as providing searchable text for search engines.

Description attributes

Description Type

A Description Type is required. Preferably specify a type from the following Description Type vocabulary. Local types may also be used and are appropriate for recording important descriptive elements from the source metadata which are not present in RIF-CS, but which are essential to add context to the metadata.

Type	Explanation
brief	short account for selection purposes.
full	full account (The difference between brief and full descriptions is not governed by formal criteria but is contextual. The same amount of storage space is provided for both).
lineage	text describing the collection lineage such as process steps and source data used.
note	a brief informational message, not object metadata, to notify the record consumer of some important aspect regarding the object or its metadata.
deliveryMethod	(services only) information about how the service is delivered. Should be one of: 'webservice', 'software', 'offline', 'workflow'.
fundingAmount	(activities of type 'grant' only) The total amount of funding in Australian dollars approved by the funder for this particular research grant. It can also be used for activity records of type 'project' or 'program' supplied by a research institution or agency, where it would contain the total project budget if this information is available.
fundingScheme	(activities of type 'grant' only) The funding scheme under which the research funding was awarded.
researchers	(activities of type 'grant' only) The list of persons participating as a Chief Investigator, Partner Investigator or Fellow (to be used only if the nature of the grant information supplied to the RDA Registry prevents the creation of linked related party records for these researchers).
significanceStatement	(collections only) a statement describing the significance of a collection within its domain or context. Provides context to the collection and can assist researchers and other users in assessing the value of the collection.

- Pre-RIF-CS v1.3.0 (December 2011), rights information was described using Description Types "rights" (collections) and "accessRights" (collections and services). Existing feeds can continue to use these description element types, but use of the [Rights](#) element is preferred.
- Description Types "researchAreas", "researchDataProfile", "researchSupport" and "logo" were introduced in October 2012 to support the display of Contributor Pages in Research Data Australia. As of April 2015 (Release 15), the requirement for these Description Types has been negated by the implementation of a [Contributor Page](#) editing interface in MyRDA, which allows the upload of logos for automatic display on collection and service records and embellishment of Contributor descriptions. Therefore, these Description Types are no longer supported in Research Data Australia.

Language attribute

The language in which the description metadata is recorded may be included in the Lang attribute, but is not displayed or searchable in Research Data Australia. The RDA Registry accepts [language codes](#) consistent with IETF's BCP (Best Current Practice) 47: Tags for Identifying Languages (incorporating RFC 5646). Language codes may be selected from:

- [IANA Language subtag registry](#) (an [IANA Language subtag lookup tool](#) is available also)

Use in Research Data Australia

All descriptions are displayed and are searchable.

- For collections, Description Types display under a heading corresponding to the type in the following order:
 - Brief
 - Full
 - Notes
 - Significance Statement
 - Lineage
 - local type

Best practice

Writing good descriptions

Good quality descriptions will increase the chances of a record being discoverable through search engines, as well as helping researchers decide if it is likely to be useful for them. The following principles are recommended:

- Write the description for a reader who has general familiarity with a research area but is not a specialist—this will make data more accessible for cross-disciplinary use.
- Don't use specialist acronyms or obscure jargon.
- Don't assume a reader has specialist knowledge.
- Include important keywords within the text—this makes them accessible for search engines. Also include the keywords as [subjects](#).
- [Collection](#) descriptions should be consistent with the assigned collection type. If describing a dataset, the description should be about that dataset, not just a general description of the research that created the dataset.
- Reuse of abstracts or research proposals can be a useful source for a collection description, as long as it is appropriate to the collection being described. Headings (such as 'Abstract' or 'Executive summary') should not be imported along with the abstract if possible. Descriptions of projects themselves, as opposed to descriptions of the resulting collections, should be included in an [activity record](#).
- Include a description of the kinds of objects in a collection (e.g. database, printed photographs, digital images, lab notes) and the basis of selection for objects included in the collection (e.g. information about how data was analysed) as well as describing what the collection is about.
- Use authoritative sources for [party](#) descriptions, e.g. an institutional profile web page for a researcher or an official organisational web page for an institution.
- Hyperlinks may be used in the description field. These will display as links in Research Data Australia. Alternatively, provide links in [RelatedInfo](#).

Text formatting

[XHTML formatting](#) can be provided for text in the [Description](#) element to support better display in Research Data Australia.

XML encoding examples

Example showing the use of various description types for a collection of type "dataset"

```
<description type="brief" xml:lang="en">Data collection tracking the long term movement of fish and sharks in the Logan and Albert River with a primary focus on the influence of water flows.</description>
<description type="full" xml:lang="en">Information was collected on the movement patterns of fish and elasmobranchs in Logan River and Albert River as well as southern Moreton Bay, using an underwater sensor array. Acoustic tags with individually unique sound signatures were implanted into 80 teleost fish and elasmobranchs. A network of acoustic receivers recorded and stored the date and time of individual animals, which was used to monitor their movements. The majority of the receivers were based in the Logan and Albert River system, but a smaller number were also deployed within Moreton Bay.</description>
<description type="note" xml:lang="en">The contents of this collection are dynamic and will change over time as more data is deposited.</description>
```

Example showing a full description for a collection of type "catalogueOrIndex"

```
<description type="full">The JKLM catalogue contains descriptions of items held in the JKLM Archive of Goldfields Manuscripts which documents life on Australian goldfields during the late nineteenth century. All 18,000 manuscripts are described, and digitised images of 3,000 manuscripts and 1200 photographs are available to the public on the archive's searchable website. The catalogue includes all names mentioned in manuscripts, to support genealogical research. The archive contains documents, photographs, drawings and maps created in the X, Y and Z goldfields between 1880 and 1905, and is located in the town of JKLM.</description>
```

Example showing the use of various description types for a service

```
<description type="brief">This Public Open Space (POS) distribution browser is a web based Geographic Information System (GIS) POS data dissemination and data visualisation tool. The tool will provide access to output data from a new POS spatial layer and data on POS attributes and/or amenities. These will include access to basic descriptive data that summarises and characterises POS, and the level of service they provide.</description>
<description type="note">This service currently covers Perth Metropolitan and Peel Region.</description>
<description type="deliverymethod">Software</description>
```

Example showing the use of various description types for an activity

```
<description type="brief">Biodiversity faces an unpredictable cocktail of impacts and global environmental change, against which the best insurance is genetic diversity. We will develop genomic measures of ecological-genetic functions and evolutionary potential for managing Australian freshwater fish.</description>
<description type="fundingAmount">$445,000</description>
<description type="fundingScheme">Linkage Projects</description>
<description type="researchers">Sunnucks Dr Paul J; A/Prof Mark Lintermans; Dr Carla M Sgro; A/Prof Luciano B Beheregaray; Prof Fred W Allendorf; Mr Jarod Lyon; Dr Gordon Luikart</description>
```

Change history

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Date	Change history
April 2010	Consultation draft
26 October 2010	First web publication
25 January 2011	New description types 'deliveryMethod' and 'significanceStatement' added
15 April 2011	Added statement that descriptions are searchable
18 July 2011	Additional information about logos, link to activity record information
21 Nov 2011	Changed recommended method for describing rights, link to new rights element (RIF-CS v1.3.0) added, added link to information about text formatting
5 October 2012	New description types 'researchAreas', 'researchDataProfile' and 'researchSupport' added
11 January 2013	Character limit for Description element updated
3 August 2015	Updated information about use of description type 'logo'
23 Feb 2017	Character limit for Description element removed
24 Feb 2017	Additional XML examples added for description type 'full' and 'note', and for services and activities
3 March 2017	Detailed explanation of description types 'Rights' and 'accessRights' removed (used pre RIF-CS v1.3.0 and superseded by the Rights element)
3 March 2017	Detailed explanation of description types 'researchAreas', 'researchDataProfile', 'researchSupport' and 'logo' (Contributor pages) removed (superseded by implementation of the Contributor Page CMS in Release 15)