**Assignment 1 Write-Up**

This exercise was extremely valuable in getting more real-world experience with metadata, its schemas, and the difficulties that catalogers face with every item, and especially with items that have uncertain histories, or are atypical to the bulk of a repository’s collection. Personally, it was a very new experience, as I’ve had minimal exposure to metadata, and it has been focused on reading, not creating, records. What is surprising, from a relative novice perspective, is the huge role that judgment plays in the process, due to the gray area and uncertainty in the schemas themselves. While this is surprising, it’s not hard to comprehend after exposure to the schemas, which brings the realization of the sheer breadth and variety of metadata and the vastness of the categories and types of metadata for which even a more focused schema like CDWA Lite has to be able to account. Though I typically would prefer a simpler schema that puts the primary focus on the metadata structurally and visually, this exercise was important in helping me understand the complexity needed in function for a metadata schema to meet its needs.

I had been prepared to do this write-up as an ode to my love and devotion to Simple Dublin Core (henceforth “SDC”), but the complexity in the Stele exposed the limitations of such a stripped-down schema. Though SDC is visually simple, and relatively painless for use in successfully creating new records, the fields and attributes fall well short of fully recording metadata about most objects. In the case of the Stele, the use of a clean, simple record can be nearly completely negated if it falls short in vital areas. For instance, SDC gives a creator, but the complexity of the Stele—and other objects like it—where information is scarce, does not lend itself to a sing field of information about the Stele’s creation. When contrasted with CDWA Lite’s ability to include both the anonymous Greek who inscribed the Stele and Seikilos—the suspected man who commissioned it—chiefly employing SDC as a metadata schema for cultural objects/artwork could possibly result in much of an object’s context being lost. At the very least, all of this data will be lost to machine harvesting for discovery and research, should SDC become the primary metadata schema for a given collection.

CDWA Lite also has a definite advantage in structure of records and the nested category-element structure that helps to define areas that individual metadata elements will pertain to. This is very handy for understanding the richer levels of data available in this schema, and is a nice foil to SDC’s flat minimalism. The nested structure also helps in record creation, as there is a logical and systematic flow between elements and their attributes that aids in decision making and selecting and culling data for the record. The ability to use the extensive elements of the schema to seamlessly add information about connected resources and objects, such as the recording of the composition on the Stele and the photograph of the Stele, is a massive benefit. Without this, there is no logical way to go from a record to another related record, beyond finding it manually in a general search query’s list of results. Given the push for linked data and the explosion of the “internet of things,” this functionality is key for utilization and discovery of the huge amounts of data and metadata produced and cataloged every day.

Despite being stripped-down and lagging in some key functionality, SDC has some benefits, especially in comparison to CDWA Lite. SDC is easier for a human reader, and its elements are more clearly denoted due to the minimalist schema. Similarly, producing records with this schema is substantially easier and less time consuming than with CDWA Lite, or other more advanced schema. When creating the record, though there is less information, there was higher confidence that the information being asked for was both correct and in the correct location in the schema. This was a big plus for me, as right data in the wrong place of a schema is just as unusable as incorrect data in the correct element/attribute. Though CDWA Lite allows for richer and more complete records, the margin for error is much higher than with SDC.

Given the discussed benefits and shortfalls of each schema, the obvious conclusion is that Simple Dublin Core and CDWA Lite were created for distinct reasons and to address different problems. CDWA, being focused on artwork which some point in its life as a piece of a collection is put on display, has excellent built-in elements to cover the metadata that will be served up to users/patrons of its repository as well as the same data in a more functional format for catalogers, curators and researchers interested in accessing the back-end for their work. SDC allows for expeditious record creation, at-a-glance evaluation and debugging and a clearer conceptual understanding of the role of metadata, the very basic structure of xml, and the need and demand for standards. This exercise was a fantastic chance to come to the realizations and to get hands on two different schemas with different intents.