

# Framework for Discoverability: Metadata & Taxonomy in DAM



Metadata and Taxonomy form the core of all Digital Asset Management (DAM) systems. Digital assets contain a wealth of information that can provide insights into asset attributes and usage, while also enhancing search and discoverability. Organizing this information in a structured way unlocks your library's full capabilities, improving workflows, collaboration, and operations.

## Metadata: Data about Data

- Holds information about an assets' attributes, not so much as the content of the asset itself (Holmes, n.d.).
- Each piece of data is a *value*, and is associated with respective metadata fields, which can be standard or custom (Holmes, n.d.).
- Data values make understanding, organizing, managing, and using assets in a DAM system easier and more efficient (Chia, 2023).
- A system of metadata fields is a metadata schema (Holmes, n.d.).
- By leveraging metadata effectively, users can improve asset discoverability, ensure compliance, and streamline workflows.



**EXAMPLE METADATA**

<DATA FIELDS: VALUES>

- **File Format:** .PNG
- **Origin:** Procreate
- **Colour Space:** RGB
- **Usage:** Restricted
- **Expiry:** 12 / 01 / 2025
- **Keywords:** Coffee, latte, coffee beans, fall, cozy.

**Descriptive:** Title, subject, content, keywords, etc. These fields support discoverability of assets (Waldron, n.d.).

**Technical:** Format, dimensions, resolution, colour space, page order, etc. (Waldron, n.d.).

**Administrative:** Usage, creator, creation date, copyright, versioning, etc. (Solanki, 2024).

**Metadata Types**

## Brand Assets

### Print

Signage

Packaging

### Digital

Web Graphics

Social Media Templates

## Taxonomy: Clarity through Classification

- A taxonomy is an unseen structure integrated in a DAM system that uses consistent labelling and terminology to categorize and arrange assets into respective groups (Allouch, 2024).
- A well-structured, user-focused taxonomy streamlines asset discovery, keeps the library organized, and stays effective as it scales.
  - Users can search through customized categories instead of relying on traditional structures that may not be as intuitive (El Asaleh, 2025).

metadata describes data

taxonomies organize data

## The Core Framework of DAM Systems

Taxonomies rely on metadata to organize data, and together they make digital assets easy to find, manage, and use (Brain Traffic, n.d.). Without a taxonomy, assets lack structure and consistency; and without metadata, finding them becomes time consuming, especially within enterprise-level collections (El Asaleh, 2025). As taxonomies and metadata are interdependent, the design and evolution of each should be managed together (Hedden, 2018).

## Building the Schema

1. What key information categories would be useful for your organization to search and filter by? (Bynder, n.d.)
2. What kind of metadata or asset information would help end-users the most? (El Asaleh, 2025)
3. Collect feedback from end-users and determine asset categories (for taxonomy) and attributes (for metadata) (El Asaleh, 2025).

Remember to start small, then scale strategically

## Keep in Mind

- **Relevant Fields:** Metadata should be informative to the end-user (Bynder, n.d.), so be intentional and strategic.
- **Controlled Vocabularies** – Implement controlled terms to avoid spelling differentiation or errors in metadata.
- **Synonym Rings** – Bundle similar terms together to improve user search results (Garshol, 2004).
- **DEI** – Ensure your metadata framework supports diverse identity facets (Mizota, 2023).

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