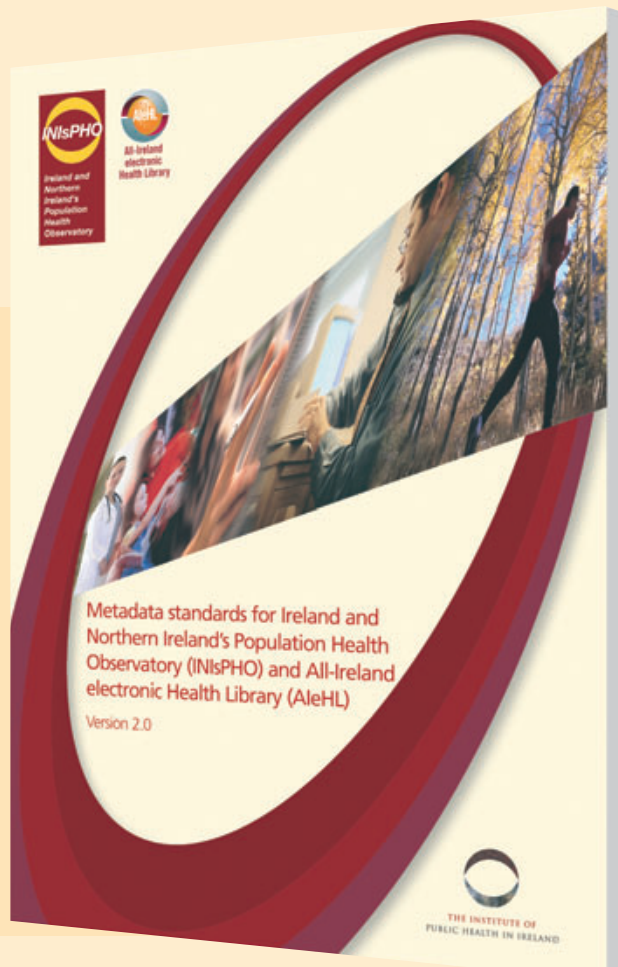


Metadata standards for Ireland and Northern Ireland's Population Health Observatory (INIsPHO) and All-Ireland electronic Health Library (AleHL)

Introduction

A key objective of Ireland and Northern Ireland's Population Health Observatory (INIsPHO) is to increase awareness, access and use of health information and health intelligence on the island. Amongst a range of other activities, it does this by identifying, collating and documenting knowledge resources needed to support evidence-based public health policy and practice. The observatory's website (<http://www.inispho.org>) is a key element of its strategy to making these more widely available.

Metadata are vital pieces of the infrastructure that enables knowledge resources to be described, managed, accessed, retrieved and shared. The metadata standards for INIsPHO and AleHL were published in November 2006.



What are metadata?

Metadata ("information about information") is a term describing the set of details used to catalogue a knowledge resource such as its title, its creator or its subject. Metadata standards define what details are to be recorded and how they are to be recorded.

Why are metadata useful?

Imagine how difficult it would be to find a book in a library which had no cataloguing system and did not store resources in a structured way. Similar problems exist in trying to access electronic resources which are not catalogued or stored in a structured way.

Just as information on a book e.g. title, author and publisher facilitates easy storage and future retrieval within libraries, so recording the metadata of all resources makes these resources easier to manage and find within electronic libraries.

The adoption of a single shared metadata standard across resource creators and providers also facilitates interoperability - the ability of a system to work with other systems without special effort on the part of the user. This enables large amounts of information and knowledge to be available in a quick, structured and easy manner to users.

How were metadata standards developed?

In terms of structure, the metadata standards developments in Ireland, the UK and Europe all follow the framework of the Dublin (Ohio) Core Metadata Element Set (DCMES). Version 1.0 of the Observatory's metadata standards was published in July 2005. Version 1.0 was compatible with DCMES and allows INIsPHO to interoperate with its main partners.

The "subject" of a knowledge resource needs to be described in a controlled and consistent way. The use of standardised terminologies for this purpose ensures that the understanding of concepts is the same within and between systems. Since July 2005, two vocabularies (PHITS and HDAT) used in Version 1.0 of the observatory's standards have been merged into the National Public Health Language (NPHL). The NPHL have been incorporated into Version 2.0 of INIsPHO's metadata standards. In addition, the Public Health Resource Type Encoding Scheme (PHRTES) has been used to design the different type of resources such as reports, datasets, collections etc.

The Metadata Element Set

The metadata element set for INIsPHO and AleHL is Listed below

Metadata Element	Obligation	Definition
Title	Core	A name given to the resource
Creator	Core	An entity responsible for making the content of the resource
Subject	Core	A topic of the content of the resource
Description	Core	An account of the content of the resource
Publisher	Supplementary	An entity responsible for making the resource available
Contributor	Supplementary	A entity responsible for making contributions to the content of the resource
Date	Core	A date of an event in the life of the resource
Type	Core	The nature or genre of the content of the resource
Format	Supplementary	The physical or digital manifestation of the resource
Identifier	Supplementary	An unambiguous reference to the resource within a given context
Source	Supplementary	A reference to a resource from which the present resource is derived
Language	Supplementary	A language of the intellectual content of the resource
Relation	Supplementary	A reference to a related resource
Coverage	Supplementary	The extent or scope of the content of the resource
Rights	Core	Information about rights held in and over the resource

How have the metadata standards been used?

Initially the metadata standards have been used in the INIsPHO Library. Core elements were then agreed with the Association of Public Health Observatories (APHO) and since March 2006 INIsPHO has been interoperable with its member websites. In November 2006 Phase I of AleHL was launched. It uses these metadata standards within the following websites:

- Archive of Irish Health Publications (HSE)
- www.healthdata.info (HSE)
- www.inispho.org (IPH)
- National Documentation Centre on Drug Use (HRB)
- www.wellnet.org.uk (IfH, EHSSB)

A number of other organisations across the island of Ireland have also expressed interest in using the metadata standards.