

Metadata in Computer Systems

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Abstract—An important role in modern computer systems is played by a special kind of information resources known as metadata. Numerous publications are available on metadata. Most of them deal with the standards of metadata used in various areas, while publications discussing the properties and functions of this kind of information resources are rather rare. Probably, for this reason, there is no sustained treatment of the term metadata in the literature. Rather frequently, metadata concerning publications involve obvious errors or no necessary comments are made in discussions of special kinds of metadata. As a result, their properties and functions are incorrectly extended to the general case. This paper offers a systematic view of metadata as information resources of special sort. The definition of this term is discussed, and examples of metadata used in various areas of information technologies are given. The general (domain independent) properties and functions of metadata are examined. Facilities for metadata representation, available generalized classifications of metadata, and activities related to metadata standardization are discussed.