



# VRA Core 4.0 Metadata Element Set Fact Sheet

Compiled by Ryan Spellman | 2021-09-18 | Logo Credit: Visual Resource Association, (n.d.)

## Brief History

The Visual Resources Association (VRA), through a partnership with the Library of Congress (LC), make the VRA Core 4.0 metadata standard possible. The VRA schema's original version was unveiled in 1996, and has undergone some significant changes on its path to the XML schema of VRA Core 4.0 that was released some eleven years later in 2007 (VRA Core, 2014).

VRA Core was developed specifically with description of visual entities, such as art objects and the images of them (Zeng & Qin, 2016). Initially, it followed Dublin Core's (DC) flat structure of describing a single object with an element set, adding separate element sets for works and images in version 3.0 along with qualifiers that enable the modification of the elements (Zeng & Qin, 2016).

VRA Core 4.0 sought to align other standards such as CDWA Lite, MODS, and EAD version 2002, which means it stepped away from the DC structure (Zeng & Qin, 2016). VRA Core 4.0 saw the addition of the entity type collection, shifting from qualifiers to sub-elements, the implementation of a relation element that allows one-to-many relationships rather than being limited to the one-to-one relationship of previous versions, and an unrestricted version that outlines basic structure alongside a restricted version that implements element type attribute and date format specifications (Zeng & Qin, 2016).

In VRA Core 4.0, elements are repeatable and it is recommended to still only have one element per object. The only element that is required is the ID attribute declaring the entity as a work, image, or collection (VRA Core, n.d.). VRA Core 4 is also expressible in XML, with the intention that the data is more easily transferable across different environments (VRA Core, n.d.).

## Types of Visual Entities in VRA Core 4.0

### WORK

"a built or crated object"  
*XML element: work*

### IMAGE

"a visual surrogate of [a work]"  
*XML element: image*

### COLLECTION

"an aggregate of [works]"  
*XML element: collection*

**Note.** Descriptions taken from VRA Core (2007b).

## VRA Core 4.0 Data Structure

**Table 1**

*VRA Core 4.0 general data structure, elements, and related sub-elements.*

Element	Sub-element
<b>work, collection, or image</b> (id)	
<b>agent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attribution</li> <li>• culture</li> <li>• dates (type)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ earliestDate (circa)</li> <li>◦ latestDate (circa)</li> <li>◦ name (type)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• role</li> </ul>
<b>culturalContext</b>	
<b>date</b> (type)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• earliestDate (circa)</li> <li>• latestDate (circa)</li> </ul>
<b>description</b>	
<b>inscription</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• author</li> <li>• position</li> <li>• text (type)</li> </ul>
<b>location</b> (type)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• name (type)</li> <li>• refid (type)</li> </ul>
<b>material</b> (type)	
<b>measurements</b> (type, unit)	
<b>relation</b> (type, relids)	
<b>rights</b> (type)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rightsHolder</li> <li>• text</li> </ul>
<b>source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• name (type)</li> <li>• refid (type)</li> </ul>
<b>stateEdition</b> (count, num, type)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• description</li> <li>• name</li> </ul>
<b>stylePeriod</b>	
<b>subject</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• term (type)</li> </ul>
<b>technique</b>	
<b>textref</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• name (type)</li> <li>• refid (type)</li> </ul>
<b>title</b> (type)	
<b>worktype</b>	

**Note.** Data structure from VRA Core (2007a). Global XML attributes *dataDate*, *extent*, *href*, *pref*, *refid*, *rules*, *source*, *vocab*, and *xml:lang* are available for all elements and sub-elements as outlined by VRA Core (2007b, pg. 1).

## VRA Core 4.0 Data Content & Value Standards Resources

**Table 2**

*VRA Core 4.0 provides two types of schemas, unrestricted and restricted. The restricted schema provides guidance on content use based on the element in question by incorporating standardized type values and date formats. The following table provides some examples of such best practices from VRA (2007c).*

Element	Type	Definition
<b>agent</b> (name)	<b>personal</b>	Proper noun for individual including any or all of that individual's forenames, surnames, honorific titles and added names.
<b>location</b>	<b>creation</b>	The place where creation, design, or production of a cultural work or its components took place.
<b>measurements</b>	<b>bitDepth</b>	In a digital file, the number of colors for an image; calculated as 2 to the power of the bit depth; for example, a bit depth of 8 supports up to 256 colors, and a bit depth of 24 supports up to 16 million colors.

**Note.** Examples taken from the [VRA Core 4.0 Restricted Schema Type Values documentation](#) (VRA, 2007c).

**Guidance on vocabulary can be found in the following resources:**

### **CCO: Cataloging Cultural Objects**

Rules for formatting data that describes, documents and catalogs art, architecture, and media of such works. Developed by VRA, who partner with LC to support VRA Core 4.0, with the intention for it to be mapped to VRA Core 4.0, CDWA, or CDWA Lite.

<https://vraweb.org/resources/cataloging-cultural-objects/>

### **DACS: Describing Archives: A Content Standard**

Provides direction on describing archives, papers, and manuscript collections in ways that can apply to all types of materials and used by any cataloging standard such as MARC21, EAD, and EAC.

<https://www2.archivists.org/groups/technical-subcommittee-on-describing-archives-a-content-standard-dacs/describing-archives-a-content-standard-dacs-second->

### **RDA: Resource Description and Access**

Descriptive cataloging standard for library and cultural heritage resources.

<https://www.loc.gov/aba/rda/>

## VRA Core 4.0 Crosswalk Resources

### **[Metadata Standards Crosswalk – Intellectual Map from Getty.edu](#)**

An intellectual mapping of elements across a broad range of standards, including VRA Core 4.0, can be found here. This can be helpful for planning purposes.

[https://www.getty.edu/research/publications/electronic\\_publications/intrometadata/crosswalks.html](https://www.getty.edu/research/publications/electronic_publications/intrometadata/crosswalks.html)

### **[Dublin Core to VRA Core 4](#)**

Crosswalk information for moving from Dublin Core to VRA Core 4.0.

<https://sites.google.com/site/dctovrc/home>

### **[Costume Core Crosswalk](#)**

Crosswalk mapping to move from VRA Core 4.0 to Costume Core, a metadata standard for cataloging and encoding costume information.

For more crosswalk resources, see the [VRA Crosswalks, Mapping, Database Design and Data Output resources page](#).

---

## Major Sources

### **[VRA Core 4.0 Element Descriptions](#)**

[http://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA\\_Core4\\_Element\\_Description.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA_Core4_Element_Description.pdf)

### **[VRA Core 4.0 Outline](#)**

[http://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA\\_Core4\\_Outline.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA_Core4_Outline.pdf)

### **[VRA Core 4.0 Restricted Schema Type Values](#)**

[https://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA\\_Core4\\_Restricted\\_schema\\_type\\_values.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA_Core4_Restricted_schema_type_values.pdf)

### **[VRA Core Official Website](#)**

<http://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/>

## References

- Visual Resources Association. (n.d.). *VRA logo* [Image]. <http://vraweb.org/>
- Zeng, M. L., & Qin, J. (2016). *Metadata* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). ALA Neal-Schuman.
- VRA Core. (n.d.). *Frequently asked questions*. Library of Congress.  
[http://core.vraweb.org/vracore\\_faq.html](http://core.vraweb.org/vracore_faq.html)
- VRA Core. (2007a, February 28). *VRA Core 4.0 element outline*. Library of Congress.  
[https://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA\\_Core4\\_Outline.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA_Core4_Outline.pdf)
- VRA Core. (2007b, April 5). *VRA Core 4.0 element description*. Library of Congress.  
[https://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA\\_Core4\\_Intro.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA_Core4_Intro.pdf)
- VRA Core. (2007c, April 4). *VRA Core 4.0 restricted schema type values*. Library of Congress. [https://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA\\_Core4\\_Intro.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA_Core4_Intro.pdf)
- VRA Core. (2014, October 28). *An introduction to VRA core*. Library of Congress.  
[https://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA\\_Core4\\_Intro.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA_Core4_Intro.pdf)
- Zeng, M. L., & Qin, J. (2016). *Metadata* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). ALA Neal-Schuman.