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# Chapter 4: Data Quality, Metadata, and Information Lifecycle Management

## 4.1. Introduction

Introduced here is a rigorous, evidence-based analysis that synthesizes data quality, metadata, and information lifecycle management using a formal, scholarly framework. The focus is on definitions, standards, governance, and lifecycle practices, supported by recognised data quality dimensions, metadata standards, and compliance considerations. Data quality related to both integrity and trustworthiness is an essential foundation for metadata. Metadata adds important context to data, information and knowledge to aid discovery, use and understanding; its governance and stewardship are key concerns of in any organisation. Information lifecycle management considers actions to be taken on assets during their lifecycle from creation through to disposal. The information lifecycle varies across asset type, and policies and procedures to define retention, archiving, and asset disposal provide organisations with essential support for compliance obligations.

Why is data quality important? Poor quality data increases risk and compliance costs, decreases revenue, reduces productivity and wastes time and resources. The lack of information quality increases operational costs and risk management costs. Poorly governed data can be a company's most poorly developed asset, eroding the value of other assets. Moreover, bad data severely limits the success of business initiatives like data mining, customer relationship management and enterprise resource planning. Hence, there are obvious reasons to be aware of these aspects. Any organisation that has quality issues with its data should want to know. Bad data might need to be managed, sourced from elsewhere, or fixed at the source. Having quality issues may lead to difficulty in doing business. Data governance should ensure quality of the related assets, especially a data-cleansing process.

### 4.1.1. Roles and Responsibilities

Managing these aspects of data requires effective leadership, clear roles and responsibilities, and appropriate governance structures. Where no specific governing structure exists, ownership of data quality, metadata, and information lifecycle management within an organization commonly falls to the chief information officer (CIO) or equivalent. The CIO may directly assume these responsibilities or delegate them to a dedicated chief data officer (CDO), chief records officer (CRO), senior vice president of information technology, or senior vice president for corporate strategy.

For organizations managing large volumes of critical, high-value data and information, a governance structure devoted to overseeing data quality, metadata, and information lifecycle management provides a formal means of ensuring these topics receive adequate attention. In such organizations, governance may be vested in a data quality steering committee or an information management committee. Responsibility for executing the day-to-day management of data quality, metadata, and information lifecycle management typically resides with the CIO and supporting staff, the CDO, or the CRO, often aided by designated data stewards.

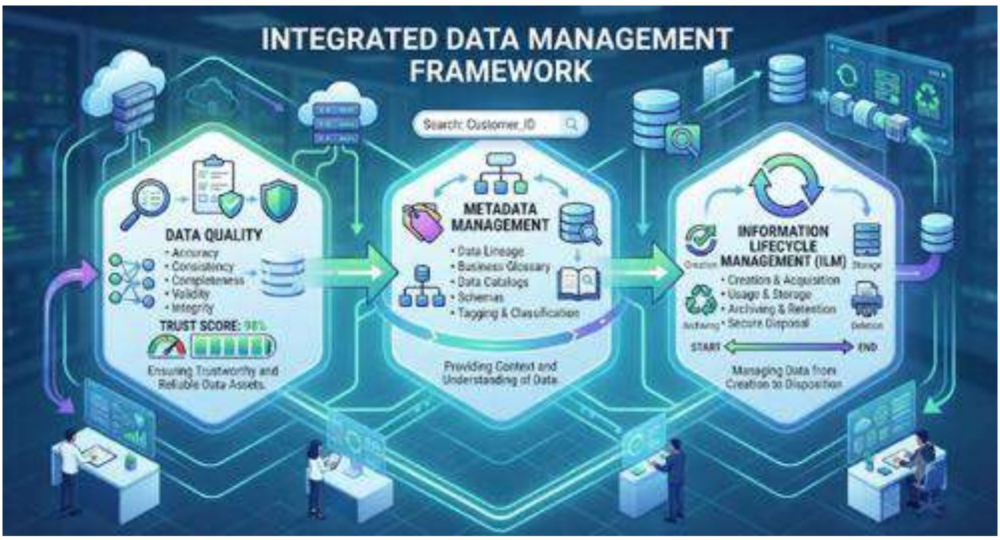


**Fig 4.1:** Data Quality, Metadata, and Information Lifecycle Management

### 4.1.2. Standards, Compliance, and Risk Management

Establishing data quality at an enterprise level requires an understanding of the most relevant data quality standards, compliance considerations, regulatory requirements, and risk appetite of the organization. Risk assessment frameworks (e.g. ISO 31100: 2014) will have specific criteria for such aspects as information controls, information integrity, and privacy. Risk management strategies and controls will stem from this foundation, which may vary across organizational divisions and levels. As a minimum, organizations should ensure consistency and transparency of requirements and levels of compliance against various data quality dimensions. Such transparency supports data governance evaluation, identification of gaps and weaknesses, and support for associated initiatives.

Organizations become increasingly vulnerable to data breaches and other crises that adversely affect corporate reputation and profits, not least because they fail to adequately secure their data assets and are not properly prepared to deal with consequential harm. Data governance constitutes a key enabler of such aspirations, serving to help ensure proper data controls and associated levels of compliance as a minimum. Regulatory requirements – e.g., for data protection, data privacy, and information security – will help define acceptable levels of data quality risk, the establishment of threshold values, and the architecture of controls.

### 4.2. Foundations of Data Quality

Data quality can be illuminated through an ongoing focus on definitions and standard dimensions of data quality, with particular attention paid to dimensional meaning, categorized consideration, operational context, and challenging quality areas. Concepts are supported by analysis of the Data Management Association International (DAMA) framework, Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) and International Organization for Standardization (ISO) metadata indicators of quality, and best-practice implementation of data quality dimension standards in Information Asset Ownership (IAO).

Data quality is defined by the proportion of world-class enterprise data whose value meets the needs of all stakeholders, all the time, while operating efficiently and at appropriate cost. Data quality assessments are made against many dimensions, including accuracy, accessibility, completeness, conformability, consistency, data-lineage representation, duplication, granularity, integrity, portability, relevancy, redundancy, reliability, security, speed, testability, timeliness, traceability, usability, and value. Sets of dimensions should be categorized into internal and external quality attributes, should be assessed together in real operational situations, and should take into consideration specific data-source characteristics. The aim of the assessment is to enable prioritisation of improvement efforts in the most important quality areas. Practical application of quality-dimension definitions and categories is demonstrated by grounding the analysis in the DAMA Data Management Body of Knowledge (DMBOK) overview of Data Quality Management (DQM).

### 4.2.1. Definitions and Dimensions of Data Quality

Data quality has been defined in various ways, but a simple and broad definition conveys the essentials: Data quality is the degree to which data meets business requirements. This definition shows that data quality is a concern of the business rather than the IT department, because the business determines the requirements. An important early contribution proposed a broad taxonomy of data quality dimensions: Accessibility, Accuracy, Completeness, Consistency, Integrity, Non-redundancy, Precision, Relevance, Security, Timeliness, Traceability, and Understandability. These dimensions can be grouped into three clusters: intrinsic, contextual, and representation quality.

Intrinsic data quality focuses on the inherent properties of the data as a measure of their soundness, including accuracy, objectivity, believability, and reputability. Contextual data quality considers the fit between the data and the situation in which it is used, in terms of the requirements of the specific task of the system user or consumer. Representation data quality relates to aspects of data presentation such as formatting, ease of manipulation, and dimensionality.

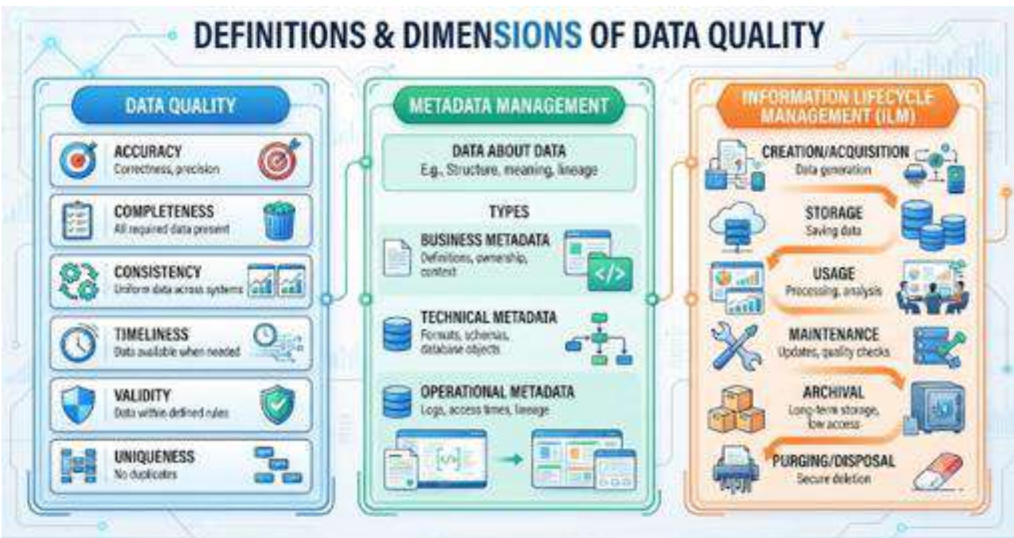


**Fig 4.2:** Definitions and Dimensions

### 4.2.2. Data Quality Dimensions in Practice

In a study of the quality of groundwork data in Austria, data quality was expressed using five dimensions (fitness-for-purpose, accuracy, timeliness, completeness, and consistency). Respondents ranked these dimensions in order of importance when assessing the quality of their own data. Purpose fitness (the extent to which the data fit the intended use) ranked first. Accuracy and timeliness are conceptually closely related and ranked second and third in this analysis. Completeness includes both the proportion of missing values and the degree of non-standardised values. Consistency (the process of checking data standardisation, duplicates, absence of constraints violations, etc.) was perceived as less important than the other quality dimensions. Completeness and consistency mutually influence accuracy and fitness, but the relation between accuracy and timeliness remains unclear.

The need for strategic planning to improve data quality on a national scale is highlighted in a 2017 study. Despite a Data Quality Strategy developed in 2008, implementation had remained on hold for years. The GAIA approach (governance, architecture, integration, application, and operation) provides the strategic direction, while the operations require responding to the needs. Implementing a Data Quality Strategy entails understanding the prerequisites and constraints for improving data quality in an affordable way. An Action Plan focuses on areas with the greatest need, using the concept of data quality dimensions as a strong motivation for the user community. The quality of analytical data on contaminants in soil has also been assessed. Design and implementation of an integrated and supported data quality management system has been proposed for the environmental sector, particularly for environmental monitoring data and assessments of data quality.

### 4.3. Metadata: Concepts and Roles

Metadata serves as a critical element in shaping the context of processed information. Metadata defines the content, context, and structure of data. Metadata enables data searching, discovery, exploration, and—when appropriately validated—also aids data quality assessments.

Three major types of metadata support these capabilities throughout an information ecosystem: structural, descriptive, and administrative. Other types of metadata support specialized analysis and interpretation, such as social or technical metadata. Metadata standards encourage consistency, enable precise data discovery and retrieval, minimize searching and merging costs, and permit advanced analyses. Organizations with established data standardization programs achieve higher data quality than those without. An enterprise metadata standard, therefore, is paramount in a data quality management program.

Standards development organizations maintain many widely used standard metadata sets, such as the Data Documentation Initiative, Content Standards for Digital Geospatial Metadata, and the Federal Geographic Data Committee Spatial Data Transfer Standards. The Dublin Core Metadata Initiative maintains an ontology that defines a metadata structure appropriately broad for many content types. A standard metadata model provides a consistent framework for metadata representation and reduces the individual cost of metadata management. Institutions adopt such models for use as a mutual agreement rather than enforced through a formal compliance program.

Governance of metadata is complex. Organizations with an expanding encounter list and a plan for deployment of UDDI must consider appointing a metadata steward. A metadata steward provides support to the data stewards regarding the standardization of metadata that shall be used to enable semantic interoperability across the organization and community. This contribution of expertise is vital. However, it enables data stewards to concentrate on the content and quality of the data rather than the details of the metadata.

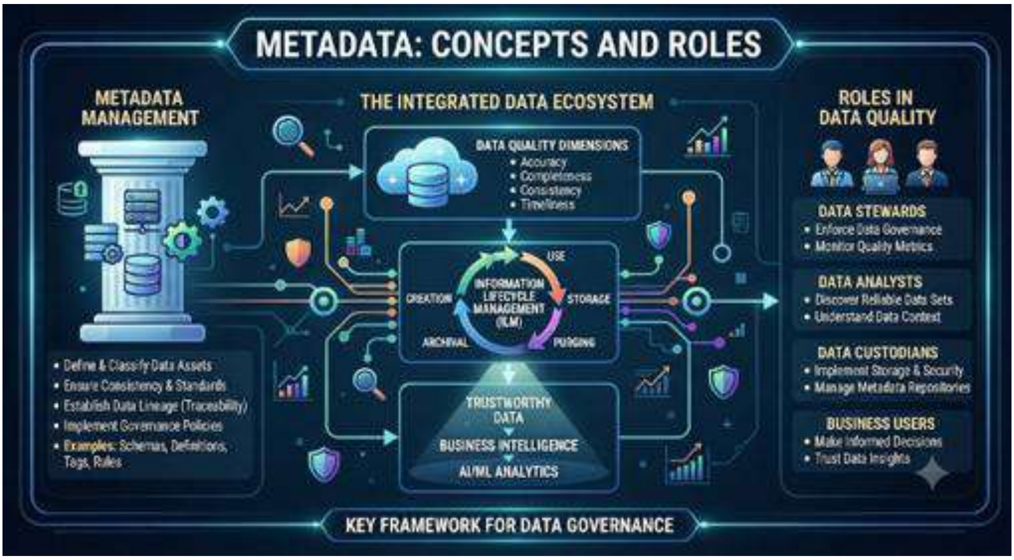


**Fig 4.3:** Metadata Concepts and Roles

### 4.3.1. Metadata Types and Standards

Metadata are generally classified as descriptive, administrative, structural, or technical. Descriptive metadata support the discovery, identification, and location of information resources; administrative metadata support the management of resources over their lifecycle; structural metadata support the internal organization of digital resources; and technical metadata support the access, use, and integrity of resources (Chudnov 2009). Descriptive and administrative metadata tend to receive the most attention and resources, but structural and technical metadata also contribute support for finding, understanding, and using information resources. Increasingly, the creation and maintenance of quality technical metadata, as well as support for the preservation and long-term access of digital resources, are seen as essential components of giving long-term value to digital information. (Ames & Holzer, 2009).

Six main categories of administrative metadata have been identified: use, rights, provenance, preservation, technical, and collection (Ames & Holzer 2009). Use metadata specify the restrictions and conditions under which the resource may be accessed and used. Rights metadata specify owners and copyright holders. Provenance metadata describe the creation and subsequent processing and changes to the resource, including changes in format or representation. Preservation metadata describe the actions taken or to be taken during the life cycle of a resource to support preservation in reasonable conditions for future use. Technical metadata describe the condition of a resource and may include file format, information about integrity-checking routines, the results of such checks, and so on. Finally, collection metadata, where applicable, describe the resource's role within a collection.

#### 4.3.2. Metadata Governance and Stewardship

The responsibilities for metadata management within an organization should be defined in roles and responsibilities documentation, and a data governance organization, operating with a framework for managing enterprise-wide data assets, is often responsible for the consistent management of metadata across the organization. Data stewardship is critical for all aspects of data management, including metadata management. Wherever data stewardship roles are defined, an individual or group assumes responsibility for the creation and continuous population of business-based, information-centric metadata; for the definition and management of business rules that affect data; and for the definition of security requirements for data usage and metadata access.

As with any information asset, metadata should also be actively governed. The development and implementation of a data-generic metadata model encompassing administrative, content, structural, and descriptive metadata—including representation and preservation metadata—require clear sponsorship and funding within an organization. The development of an enterprise-level information taxonomy can support key external metadata usage, as well as information and document retrieval. An organization seeking a more granular context for the definition of specific metadata types may look to guidelines such as business process modeling notation for process definition and modeling. The use of an approved set of metadata about metadata whenever possible will foster consistent implementation and facilitate improved tools and services.

### 4.4. Information Lifecycle Management: Principles and Practices

Information Lifecycle Management encompasses all activities related to the management of information as it moves through its lifecycle. Information and records are created, used, stored, and eventually become candidates for deletion or archiving. Managing these activities is critical to ensuring business continuity and risk management. Failure to manage these activities can leave an organization exposed to legal interventions and significant financial consequences owing to the inability to respond to e-discovery requests.

The Information Lifecycle refers to a series of stages through which information passes, from the creation and initial storage to the point of deletion or archiving. These stages include initial Classification, Use, Storage, Archiving/Retention, and Destruction. A well-defined Information Lifecycle ensures that information is available for business as usual operations and remains available for legal and regulatory purposes for as long as it is required. Lifecycle Definition, lifecycle Classification, and lifecycle Retention are necessary and sufficient to meet the principal quality dimensions of Availability, Integrity, Authenticity, and Reliability, as well as to satisfy Risk and Compliance requirements.

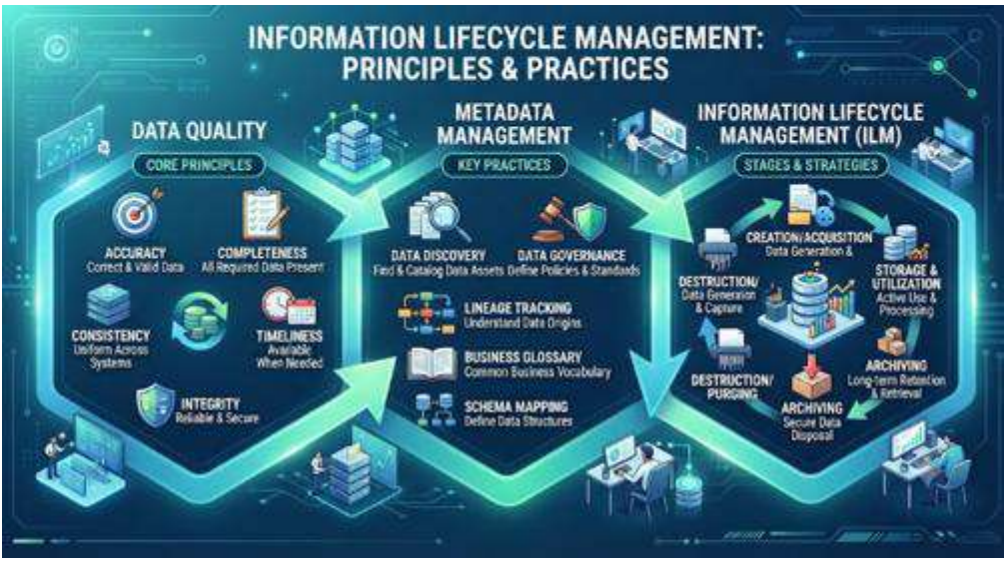


**Fig 4.4:** Information Lifecycle Management Principles and Practices

### 4.4.1. Phases of the Information Lifecycle

The information lifecycle encompasses the stages through which data passes from its initial generation or acquisition to its final disposition. The lifecycle is commonly understood to consist of several phases:

- Creation or Capture: Organizations create data and information for a variety of reasons, including supporting a decision or transaction or as a result of an automatic data-collecting mechanism for business processing, monitoring, or control.

- Use: Data and information are used for ongoing operational purposes, and, if useful and accurate, for tactical and strategic decision-making.

- Sharing: Organizations will often share data and information with trusted, external stakeholders.

- Maintenance: The quality of data needs continual monitoring and, if needed, rectification. Employees can recollect lost information during this phase.

- Archiving & Preservation: Data that provides lasting value should be preserved for a long time and can be accessed if needed.

- Deletion or Destruction: Data that has outlived its value or is costly to maintain should be deleted or destroyed, consistent with legal compliance requirements.

### 4.4.2. Lifecycle Policies, Procedures, and Compliance

Data lifecycle management principles dictate that appropriate policies and procedures for managing the information lifecycle must be implemented and documented. The scope of these policies primarily pertains to data storage, dissemination, and disposal. Various compliance frameworks in the public sector necessitate the documentation of data retention policies and schedules, specifying the duration for which data must be stored and the disposal mechanisms. These requirements are often determined by creator stipulations, applicable laws and regulations, risk assessments, privacy considerations, and other decision factors. Retention and storage limitations are equally vital in corporate governance regulations. Key areas for compliance enhancement incorporate records retention policies, practices for ensuring data integrity over time, and planned procedures for data archiving and disposal.

Nevertheless, formulating and enacting such policies and procedures are often difficult in practice. Organizations must also decide what data should be archived. An archive is defined as a repository for the storage of data that is no longer actively used but must be retained for future reference, either for a mandated period or until such time as it is legally permissible to destroy it. The architecture and implementation of a data archive should include full consideration of future access requirements, information integrity during the period of storage, compatibility with currently used systems and formats, and associated retrieval costs. Information archiving policies should define the purpose of the archives, their contents, rules for archiving data, mandated storage periods, and possible destruction criteria once storage limits have been reached.

### 4.4.3. Data Retention, Archiving, and Disposal

Data retention is concerned with how long information is kept and under what conditions, requiring the establishment of rules that reflect the current and future business environment and take account of legal and regulatory requirements. These rules need to take into consideration business needs and costs as well as the potential risks associated with retaining potentially sensitive information that is not required for business or regulatory purposes. Regulatory and legal data retention requirements also need to be reviewed on a regular basis and incorporated into data retention rules, especially those that apply to sensitive information such as financial records, medical records, call and log files, and email that can be used as evidence in legal proceedings.

Archiving is the transfer of inactive or infrequently accessed information to a store designed for long-term preservation that has the appropriate levels of protection, resilience, and skills for the dependable preservation and access of the information. Although archiving tends to be associated with data that is being retained for a longer period, it is also an effective strategy for preserving sensitive data that has exceeded its retention period, especially when archiving is supported by automated processes that can keep track of the period for which information has been retained.

Disposal refers to the destruction of information that is no longer required for business, regulatory, or legal purposes but needs to be fully eradicated in order to mitigate risk. Certain types of information, such as medical records, must be destroyed securely before disposal in a manner that prevents the sensitive contents from being reconstructed, and disposal methods are often mandated by law. Businesses can be subject to legal action if they do not demonstrate due care in the disposal of sensitive information and meet the relevant legislative requirements.

## 4.5. Conclusion

Data quality, metadata, and information lifecycle management are fundamental components of a well-functioning information governance strategy. Clearly defined policies, roles and responsibilities, and compliance considerations enable organizations to manage risks and protect their most critical assets. Information quality is a necessary condition for effective decision-making, and metadata is an essential enabler of quality, accessibility, and usability. Information lifecycle management goes beyond retention requirements, including keeping the right data for the right time and purpose in the right format. Information is distinctively valuable when it becomes knowledge enabling organizations to create products, improve processes, support strategic decisions, and ultimately increase profitability.

Organizations are, by and large, conducting more value-based interventions in their information asset lifecycles, but such interventions still constitute the exception rather than the rule. EMC, together with research partner IDC, estimates that the relative value of different information types throughout the lifecycle differs by a staggering factor of 1,500. Yet, even though only 23% of information is traditional records for retention, audit, and compliance, organizations continue to invest 87% of their information management budgets in those areas. Clearly, the challenges are twofold. First, how do organizations manage compliance effectively, and second, how do they make the leap toward enabling information to be recognized and invoked as a corporate asset? The faster organizations can answer those questions, the faster they can proceed toward becoming information-driven, with governance entrenched and compliance policy execution intrinsic.

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