

NISO Preliminary Committee

Annotation: Preliminary Definition

1. An annotation is a relation between types of content which also contains its own information.
2. The properties of an annotation are essential and inessential.
3. An annotation has both native and non-native contexts.
4. The target content of an annotation is the document, text or object to which it refers specifically.
5. The essential content of an annotation is any content it includes, or includes in itself by reference.
6. Essential properties of an annotation are necessary to display it in non-native contexts.
7. Essential properties allow the annotation to persist beyond the lifetime of its target content.
8. Inessential properties of an annotation are not necessary to it in other contexts, but may enrich it. Inessential properties may be mutable or immutable.
9. Mutable inessential properties include peripheral content, attachment locations, view selectors, and other qualities which may change as platforms, content and applications change. Mutable inessential properties may also include properties of secondary authors, contributors, distributors, or other transmitting and/or modifying parties or systems through which annotations may syndicate.
10. Immutable inessential properties include information about the origin of the annotation, such as timestamps, properties of the originating application such as name and version, and properties of the originating author such as authentication credentials.
11. The essential properties of an annotation are:
 - body - the substance of it (its own content, in toto, or by reference)
 - target - the focus of it (an excerpt or location)
 - context - the container of the focus (for example, a paragraph or section)
 - author - the creator of it (a few identifying attributes)
 - permissions - the rights and access to it (allowance for copying, original source)

12. Some of the inessential properties of an annotation are:

- the geographic location it was created from
- the IP address it was created from
- the device it was created on
- the application used to create it
- the authentication method for the identification of the author
- attachments of media or other secondary content
- the containing document's address (such as URL)
- the containing application's view (query or hash)
- the containing content's ID (such as ISBN)
- a location string (such as a selector or xpath expression)
- a version string

13. Annotations may be grouped by containing properties which describe collections, such as categories, groupings, channels, topics, service names, user names, or other filter strings.

14. Annotations may be serialized and syndicated via methods used for syndicating and serializing other content.