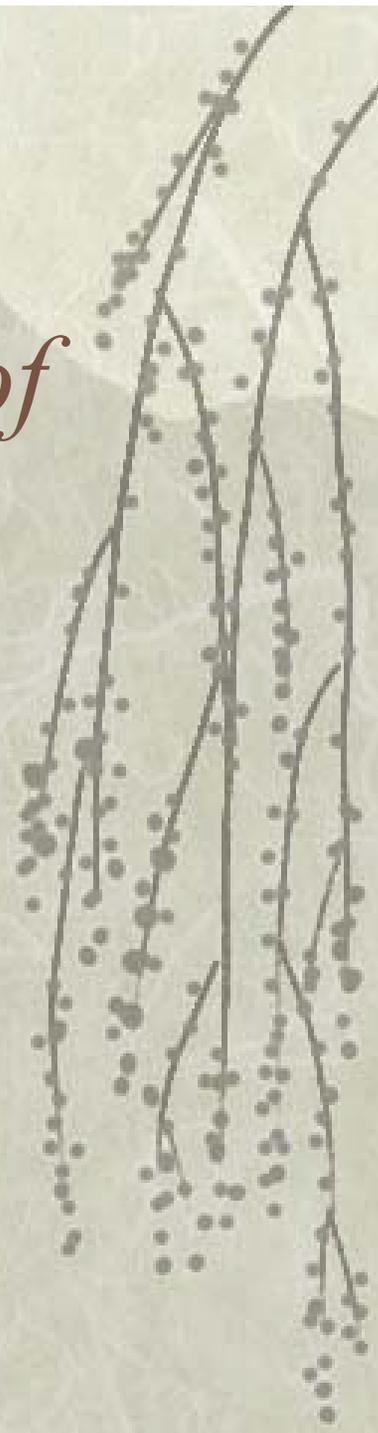# *Up to a Comparative Theory of Metadata*
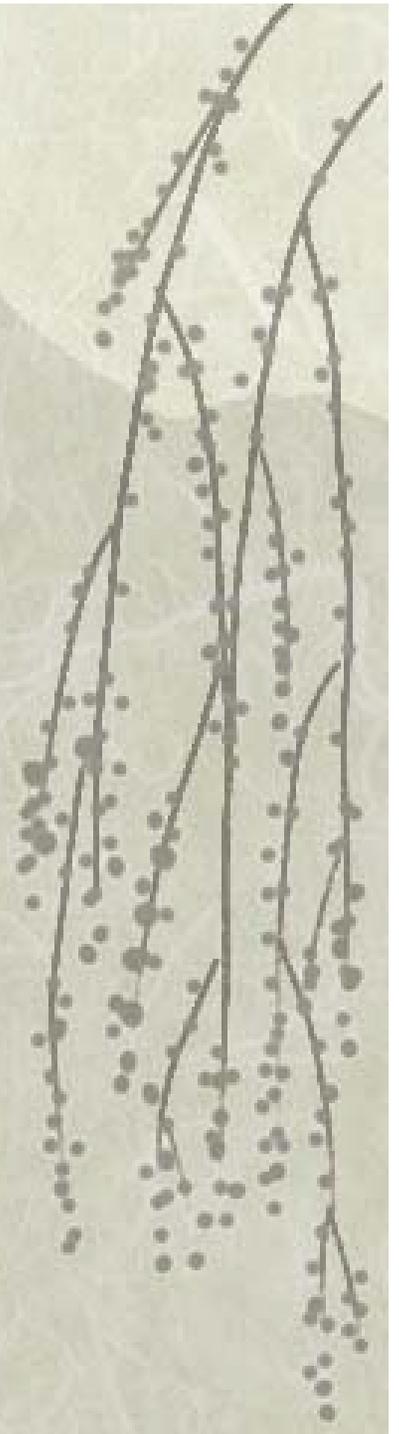
Some Findings InterPARES 2
The Description Cross-Domain

Outline

- ❖ Background

- ❖ Model of the Chain of Preservation

- ❖ Definitions of Metadata

- ❖ Function, Purpose and Context of Metadata - Toward a Comparative Theory and Conceptual Model

Background

Background

- ❖ InterPARES 2
- ❖ Description Cross-Domain
- ❖ Schemas, Standards, and Conceptual Models

Background

❖ InterPARES 2

– 2002-2006

– One of its objectives is:

"To identify and/or develop specifications for policy, metadata, and tools appropriate for the design of electronic infrastructures ensuring that these records are created accurate and reliable, and maintained and preserved authentic;"
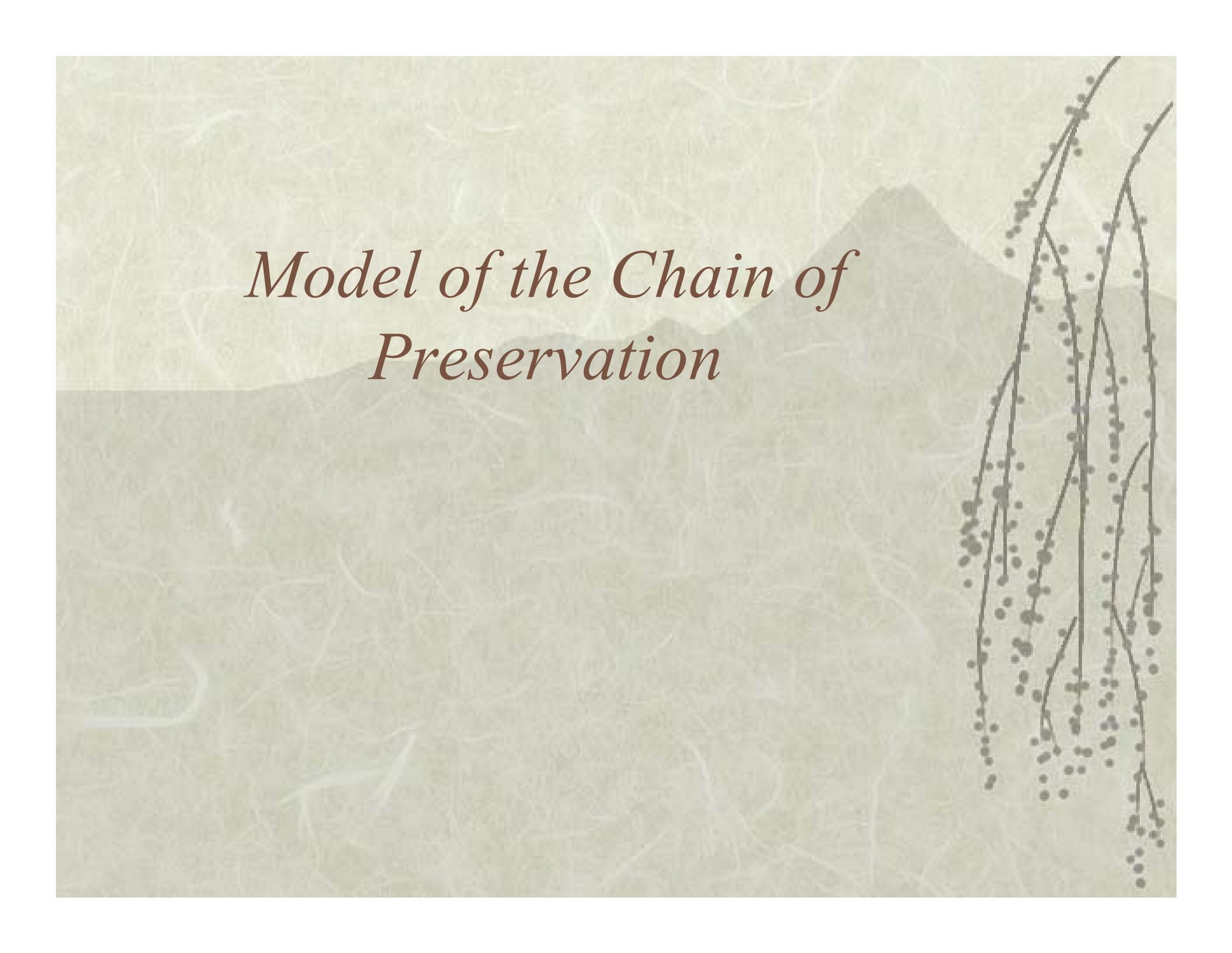
Background

❖ The Description Cross-Domain

(1) "To identify an overall set of metadata requirements that specify what metadata needs to be created, how, and by whom at all points within the Chain of Preservation and Records Continuum Models…"

Background

❖ **Description Cross-Domain**

(2) "To register unambiguously, relevant metadata schemes and sets; to evaluate each against the Benchmark and Baseline requirements generated by InterPARES 1; and to make recommendations for how each might be extended or otherwise revised to address the reliability, authenticity and preservation needs of records created within the domain, community or sector to which they pertain."

Model of the Chain of Preservation

Model of the Chain of Preservation

- ❖ InterPARES has completed a Chain of Preservation Model

- ❖ It outlines the processes and components in three major areas: in record creation, keeping, and preservation.

Model of the Chain of Preservation

See Handout or online:

❖ MMCP. (2005). Model of Manage the Chain of Preservation.

Available:

❖ http://tinyurl.com/82a3f

or

❖ http://www.interpares.org/display_file.cfm?doc =ip2_MCP_diagrams(complete).pdf

Model of the Chain of Preservation

- ❖ This model, in highlighting the processes and components of record creation, keeping, and preservation, seemingly outlines design plans for metadata. However, it is not that straightforward.

- ❖ In fact, this model throws into contrast two distinct ideas about what metadata is:

Model of the Chain of Preservation

❖ One school of thought says metadata is everything in the system that touches the record (the unit of analysis that moves through the whole model)

❖ The second school of thought says metadata is only those things which attest to the identity of the record - and as a consequence are attached to the record.
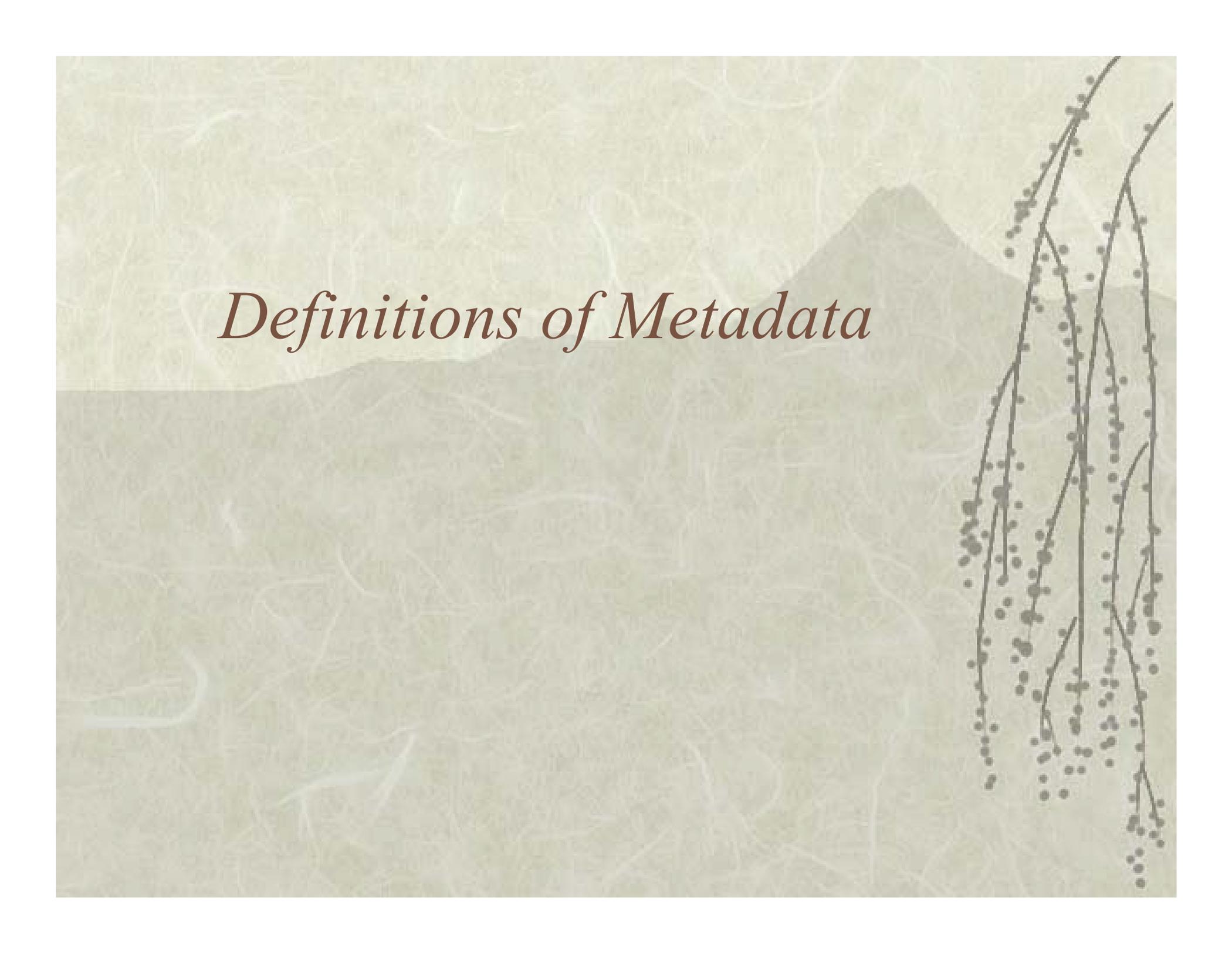
Model of the Chain of Preservation

- ❖ I shall call the first school of thought the "Total Articulation" school of thought.
- ❖ I shall call the second, "Benchmark requirements" school of thought.

Model of the Chain of Preservation

❖ What is the substantive difference between these definitions and schools of thought?

❖ And how does this affect the implementation of metadata?

The differences are differences of function, purpose, and context

Definitions of Metadata
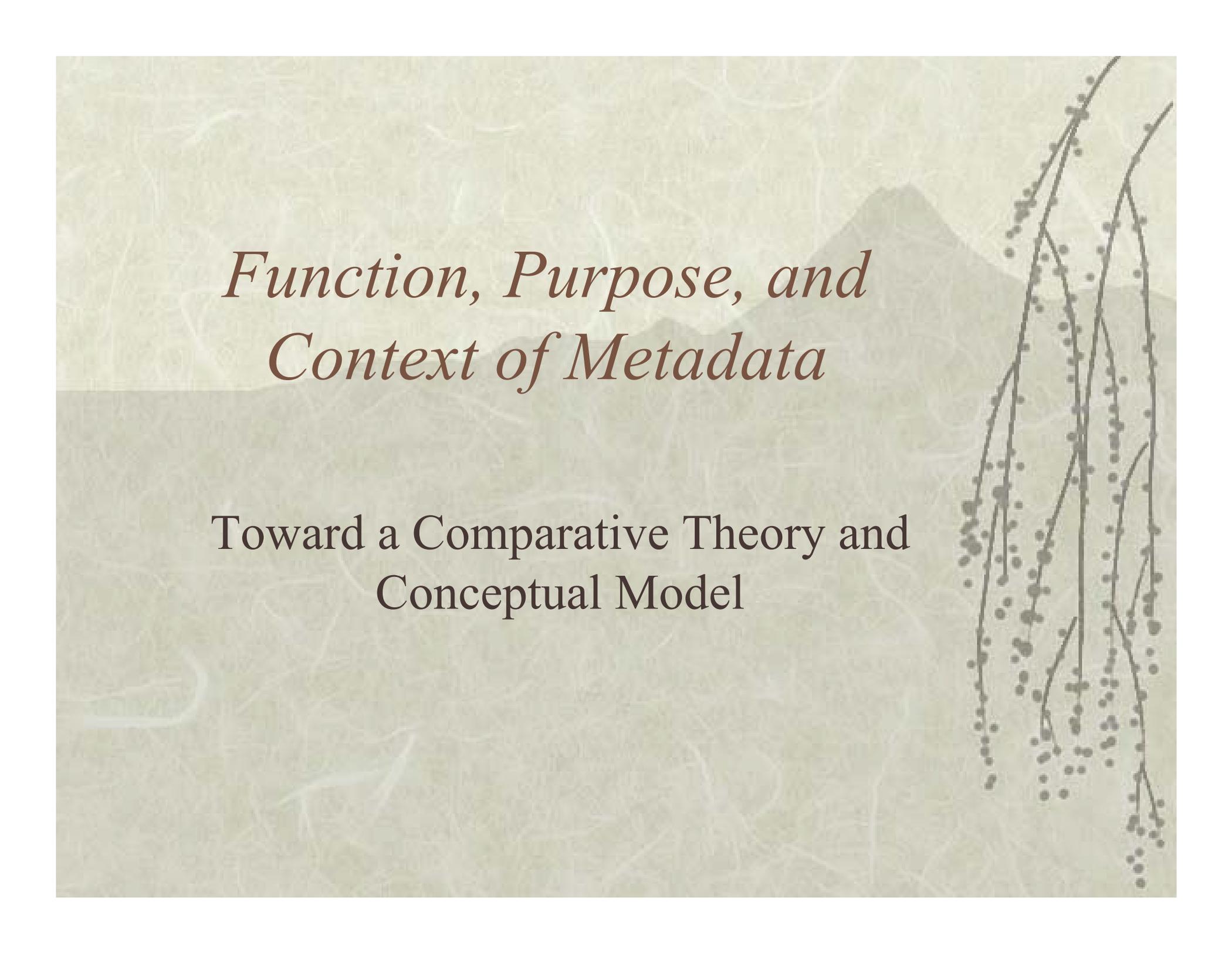
Definition of Metadata

- ❖ The disagreement between these two schools of thought brings us to question the definition of metadata.

- ❖ Is metadata an assertion about the identity of a record? (Benchmark School)

- ❖ Is metadata the articulation of all the components of an information system? (Total Articulation School)

Definition of Metadata

- This definitional question - what is metadata - requires an answer because…
- The answer shapes practice; it shapes how we work with metadata.

Definition of Metadata

❖ Can we then provide the framework for defining metadata?

Function, Purpose, and Context of Metadata

Toward a Comparative Theory and Conceptual Model

Function, Purpose, and Context of Metadata

- ❖ This question of definitions, drawn from this InterPARES 2 Description Cross-Domain, brings us to a new research question about metadata.

- ❖ What is the function, purpose, and contexts of metadata?

Function, Purpose, and Context of Metadata

- The Articulation School would say that you cannot have an information system without metadata

- Further, you could not have a Model of a Chain of Preservation that could be implemented without *articulation* metadata - metadata the glues together the components of the various components in the MCP information system

Function, Purpose, and Context of Metadata

❖ The *function* of metadata, is a conceptual and binding product - subservient to the business of creation, keeping, and preserving.

❖ The *purpose* can be retrofitted from this function. For the Articulation School, then, it is to glue the complicated conceptual and technical pieces of a record creating, keeping, and preservation system together

Function, Purpose, and Context of Metadata

❖ Against this the Benchmark School would say the *purpose* of metadata is to attest to the identity of the record - and the identity alone. And from here the function follows. Relegating the integrity of the document to some other tool of archival science - say the description or the register.
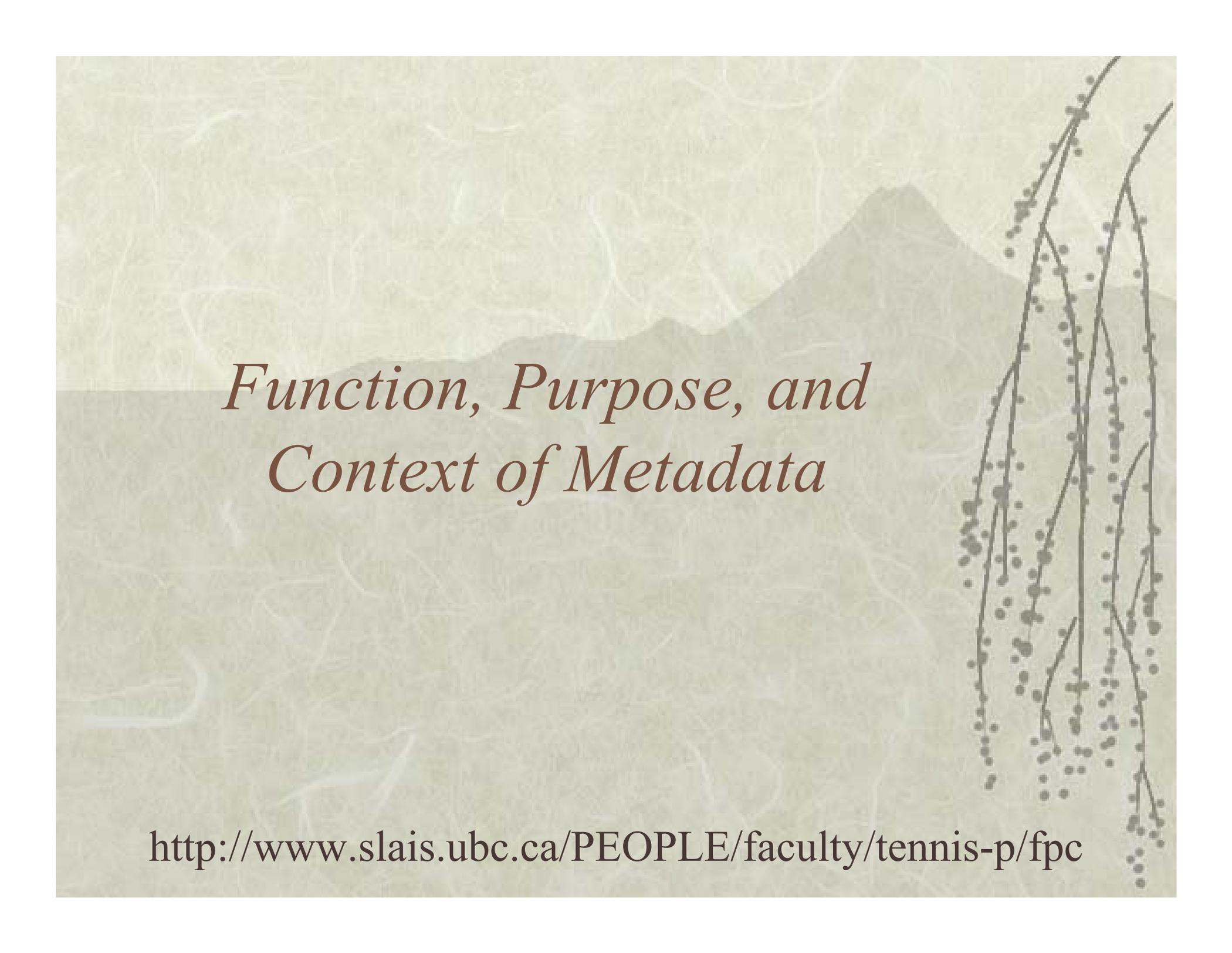
Function, Purpose, and Context of Metadata

- ❖ Both of these schools are built on an implicit *context* - a context which must be investigated for its assumptions
- ❖ And from there a full taxonomy of purposes and functions of metadata (and other tools) can be described.

Function, Purpose, and Context of Metadata

❖ And that is where the next comparative steps of research at UBC are taking - building on findings of InterPARES 2, research on benchmark requirements (MacNeil, 2000, 2002) and combining that with comparative theoretical work done by in Library and Information Science (Tennis, 2004a, 2004b, 2005).

Function, Purpose, and Context of Metadata

❖ And we hope our findings from this next comparative step will be relevant to organizations like LAC.

❖ As lines blur between records and other types of information in ever-evolving information systems it is important that we have a comparative understanding of the models of functions, purposes, and contexts of metadata.

Function, Purpose, and Context of Metadata

http://www.slais.ubc.ca/PEOPLE/faculty/tennis-p/fpc

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