SimpleMetadata: An interoperable format for sharing metadata
draft-dorfner-core-simplemetadata-01

Abstract

This document describes a standardized container format for storing serializable metadata. It does not describe any additional new format, but provides a shell for the exchange of arbitrary, structured data. It shall provide the possibility to store and share any kind of metadata, including encryption support. The idea is to create an open, universal and interoperable standard for storing and distributing every kind of metadata independent from media type or file format.

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1 Introduction

Nowadays a variety of media file are shared and published all over the world. Information about the origin, purpose or copyright of these files getting more and more important. There are already different standards which enhance files with metadata, like ID3 <http://id3.org/> , Exif <https://www.exif.org/> or Dublin Core [RFC5013] . SimpleMetadata shall create the foundation to unite these standards and provide an universal and open container format. The idea is not to describe any additional new format, but provides a shell for the exchange of arbitrary, structured data. Any metadata payload shall be created, stored and shared with an open standard, like JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) [RFC7159] in combination with schema validation <https://tools.ietf.org/id/draft-handrews-json-schema-00.txt> . Every data structure of metadata can be defined and distributed within schema definitions. Furthermore, SimpleMetadata can be extended by additional formatters or crypto standards.

1.1 Terminology

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in RFC 2119 [RFC2119].
2. Structure
The SimpleMetadata format consists of the three parts, Header, Schema URI and Metadata payload.

```
+-------------------------------------------------------------------+
|            Header (12 bytes) (fixed length)                      |
+-------------------------------------------------------------------+
|            Schema URI (variable length, optional)            |
+-------------------------------------------------------------------+
|            Serialized Metadata (variable length)              |
+-------------------------------------------------------------------+
```

2.1 Header Definition

```
+-------------------------------------------------------------------+
|         Identifier "SMD"           3 Bytes / string              |
+-------------------------------------------------------------------+
|         Version                        1 Byte / number            |
+-------------------------------------------------------------------+
|         Serialization                1 Byte / number            |
+-------------------------------------------------------------------+
|         Crypto                         1 Byte / number            |
+-------------------------------------------------------------------+
|        Schema URI Length    2 Bytes / number          |
+-------------------------------------------------------------------+
|        Content Length            4 Bytes / number          |
+-------------------------------------------------------------------+
```

2.2 Identifier

The first three bytes of the header are always "SMD" to check if SimpleMetadata is present.

2.3 Version

Defines the used version of the SimpleMetadata format.
1 = Current version

2.4 Serialization

Defines the used formatter for the metadata. A formatter serializes or deserializes the metadata with the corresponding procedure. The standard formatter uses Binary JSON (BSON) <http://bsonspec.org/> with the JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) [RFC7159].

0 = BSON

2.5 Crypto
Defines the used crypto standard for en/decrypting metadata.

0 = None encryption
1 = Advanced Encryption Standard (AES)

2.6 Schema URI length

Defines the string length of a schema or type. If no schema is defined the schema length is 0. The schema information is described in chapter 3.

2.6 Content Length

Defines the length of the serialized metadata, based on the selected formatter (Chapter 2.3). If the content is encrypted, the length is calculated over the encrypted string.

3 Schema information

The schema information can be used to validate the metadata against a schema or type. A schema information is an optional string with variable length encoded with UTF-8. It is recommended to use an URI, e.g. "http://exampleschemas.org/Person". Moreover a local file path or even a type definition (AssemblyQualifiedName) can be used. For interoperability, metadata should be based on public schema.

The length of the schema is stored in the header (See chapter 2.6).

4 Metadata Content

Basically every serializable content can be stored as metadata. It is highly recommended to use for interoperability and compatibility the JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) [RFC7159] for metadata and the according schema definition.

5 Notes

Adding SimpleMetadata to a file will damage it under circumstances, unless there is a suitable parser to handle the format!
6 Security Considerations

Sensitive metadata can be encrypted within a supported crypto standard (Chapter 2.4).

7 IANA Considerations

All data must be stored in UTF-8 [RFC2044].

8 References

8.1 Informative References

[RFC7159]  Bray, Tim
The JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) Data Interchange Format, March 2014,

The Dublin Core Metadata Element Set, August 2007

[RFC2044]  Francois, Yergeau
UTF-8, a transformation format of Unicode and ISO 10646, October 1996

[Internet-Draft]  Wright, A.
JSON Schema: A Media Type for Describing JSON Documents, November 19, 2017

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