User Story Template and Examples

The concept of user stories comes from the practice of agile software development, but requires no computer coding nor technical language to create. Rather, they are a series of simple statements, written in plain language, designed to guide the execution of a technical element within a software application. For more info, look at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Use_case or checkout any of the available literature on agile software development and other practices such as “scrum.” Bear in mind, however, that you don’t need to know any of that in order to write a good user story!

Format

Stories are usually short paragraphs consisting of at least three parts:

1. A user, such as an administrator, archivist, or public user
2. A desired action, feature, outcome, or limitation
3. A benefit or reason for the above action, feature, outcome, or limitation
4. A narrative (optional)
5. A benchmark for completion, i.e. “What does done look like?” (optional)

Additionally, user stories may have a narrative component that is written in paragraph form where the author can expound on deeper aspects to the story, or provide more context, but the narrative should be viewed as optional and that the three parts of the user story should stand on its own and be sufficient to explain everything.

Lastly, it’s sometimes helpful to include a brief statement that serves as a litmus test indicating a successful outcome. This is optional, but helps developers and managers know what to aim for when performing the work.

Examples

Short

As an archivist
I want to create folders of content
So that I can hierarchically arrange my content

Medium

As an archivist
I want to link digital content to my finding aids
In order to make my content appear within a collection
What does done look like?
When I see images appear in my finding aid that are part of that collection

Long

Narrative
The FBI showed up the other day and gave us a hard time about the some content that I was on one of our sites and issued a cease and desist order.

Story
As an administrator or archivist
I need to restrict access to specific components in my collections
Because I need to comply with copyright laws
What does done look like?
When I can't find any information that is marked as under copyright.