

5 CATALOGUES AND METADATABASES

Custodians are normally expected to document their datasets and to provide summary descriptions to potential users as required. It is generally considered to be **good professional practice** to document datasets, and custodians should aim to undertake this as a matter of routine (see Volume 7). Typical features to document include the theme, scale, completeness, currency, reliability, precision and pricing strategy of the dataset, plus details of how it was collected, its intended purposes, and the data standards and quality-assurance procedures which have been applied.

Within an information network, custodians may be encouraged to submit details to the hub on any datasets which are, at least potentially, available for use by other organisations. The catalogues which result — known as **metadatabases** in their computerised form — may be published and disseminated widely to assist users in locating the data and information they require. Due to the potentially large number of datasets available within a network, catalogues usually contain only a summary of the dataset's purpose and quality, plus the contact details of the custodian and advice on access procedures, including any costs involved.