

Spark funding instrument: Guidelines for the anonymization of the metadata of the project description

Introduction

In Spark, the SNSF has implemented a double-blind evaluation procedure for the first time. It allows for a funding decision that is strongly focused on the project idea rather than the track record of the applicants. Therefore, anonymous project descriptions are of utmost importance for this pilot funding instrument. Apart from the content of the project description, the requirements for anonymization also extend to the PDF document itself and the information stored in its properties. These so-called metadata contain additional information about the document (e.g. author, creation date, application used to create the file etc.) that are often conveyed from the authoring application (e.g. Microsoft Word).

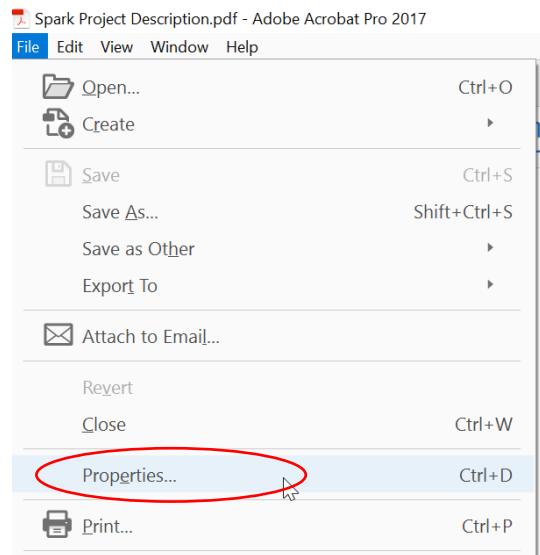
Due to the pilot character of the Spark funding scheme, the IT systems of the SNSF are not yet equipped to remove the document metadata on behalf of the applicants. For this reason, the SNSF has emphasized the applicant's responsibilities towards and obligations regarding the anonymity of their project descriptions including document metadata in all relevant documents, but unfortunately many applicants were not able to meet the specifications, as they would have liked to.

The present guidelines introduce two methods to remove metadata from PDF documents: The first one uses the software Adobe Acrobat Pro, the second one uses the software Microsoft Word. If you are using other programs, please search on the Internet how to remove the metadata of a PDF document. There is a multitude of free software at hand, suitable for different operating systems (PC, Mac, Linux). There are also free online tools available to remove metadata, such as <https://www.pdfyeah.com/remove-pdf-metadata/>.

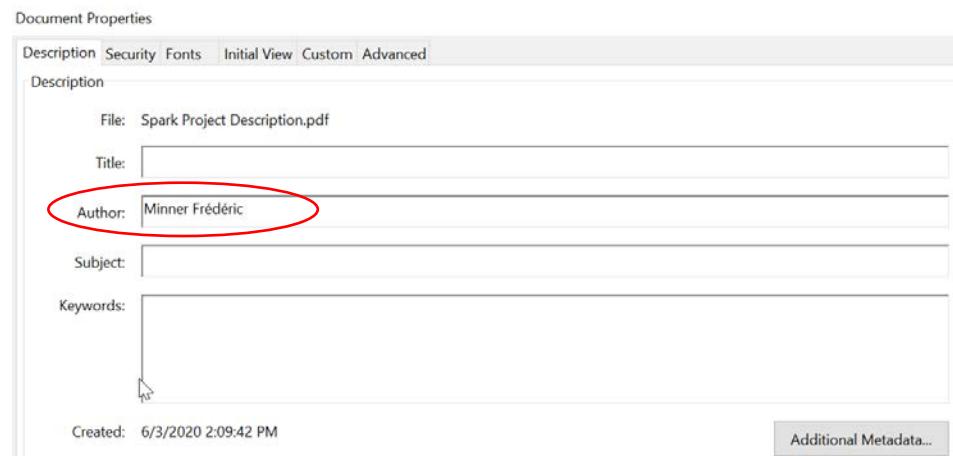
Regardless of the solution selected, always **ensure that the metadata were effectively removed** from your PDF file by **opening the PDF** in Adobe Acrobat Pro or Adobe Acrobat Reader and navigating to the document properties via **File → Properties**.

Method with Adobe Acrobat Pro

The metadata are visible in the properties of the PDF of the project description. To access these properties, open your PDF document and click on the menu **File**. This will open a new window, from where you can select **Properties**.



This will open the window **Document Properties** where you will see metadata such as your name in the author's field.



If you have Adobe Acrobat Pro installed on your computer, you can simply **delete your name** and click on **Ok**.

Document Properties

Title:	<input type="text"/>
Author:	<input type="text"/>
Subject:	<input type="text"/>
Keywords:	<input type="text"/>
Created:	6/3/2020 2:09:42 PM
Modified:	6/3/2020 2:09:43 PM
Application:	Acrobat PDFMaker 17 pour Word

Advanced

PDF Producer:	Adobe PDF Library 15.0
PDF Version:	1.5 (Acrobat 6.x)
Location:	\snffas02.snfbern.ch\home\\$fminner\Desktop\Spark\Metadata\
File Size:	7.14 KB (7,313 Bytes)
Page Size:	8.50 x 11.00 in
Number of Pages:	1
Tagged PDF:	Yes
Fast Web View:	Yes

Help OK Cancel

If your operating system does not allow you to edit the metadata in this window, you can navigate to **Additional Metadata** and remove it from there.

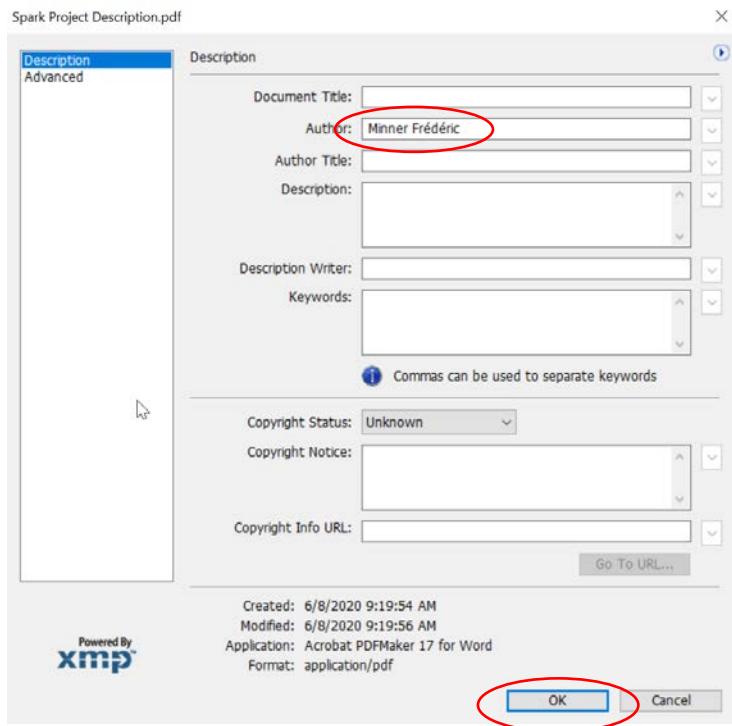
Document Properties

Description Security Fonts Initial View Custom Advanced

Description

File:	Spark Project Description.pdf
Title:	<input type="text"/>
Author:	Minner Frédéric
Subject:	<input type="text"/>
Keywords:	<input type="text"/>
Created:	6/3/2020 2:09:42 PM

Additional Metadata...



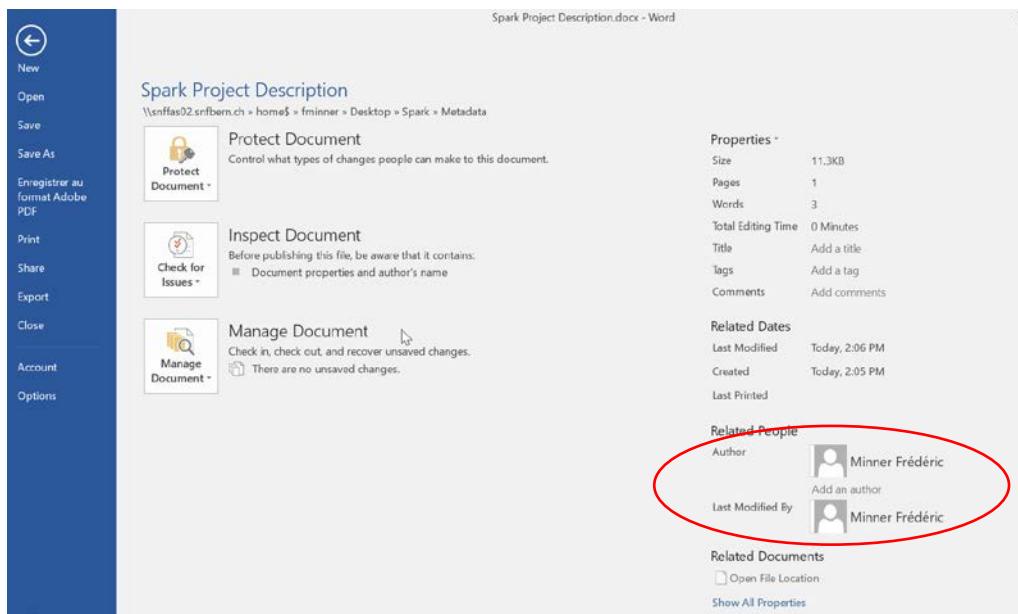
Save and close your document and **open it again to verify** under **Properties** that it **does no longer contain any information that may compromise your anonymity**.

Warning for PC users

Do not try to remove metadata from the document properties which you can access by right clicking on the PDF file in Windows Explorer and remove with the use of the “Remove properties and personal information” function. This method **does not work** and your PDF will still contain your metadata. As a general recommendation, always **open the PDF** of your project description in Adobe Acrobat Pro or Adobe Acrobat Reader after having used an **effective** method and verify under **File → Properties** that the metadata were removed.

Method with Word

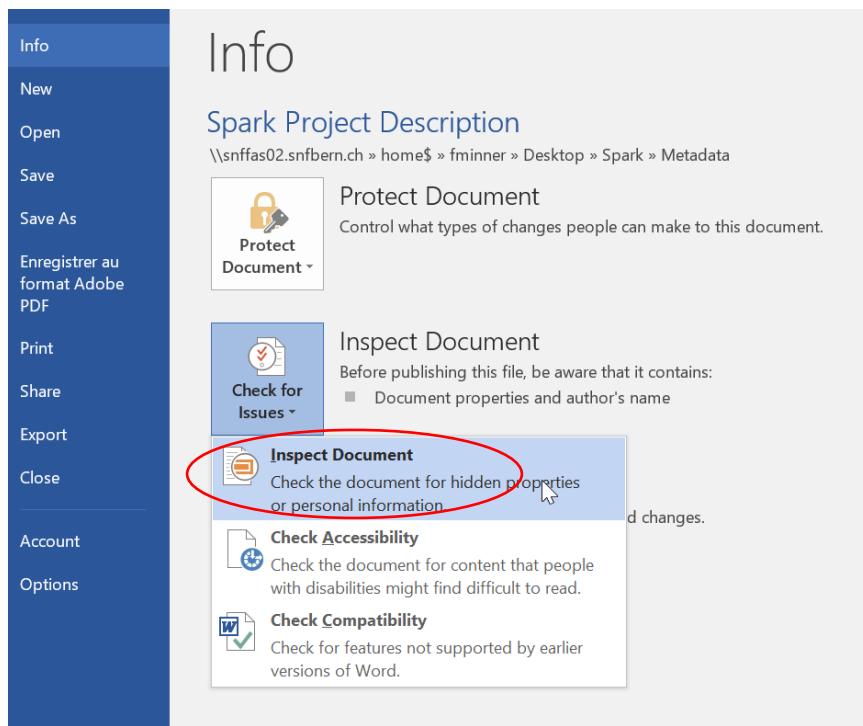
As the metadata are often conveyed from the authoring application such as Microsoft Word, a simple way to prevent metadata is to remove it in Word before creating the PDF document. The metadata are visible in the properties of the Word document. To access these properties, open your Word document and click on the menu **File**. This will open a new window, where you can see metadata such as the author's name in the **bottom right corner**.



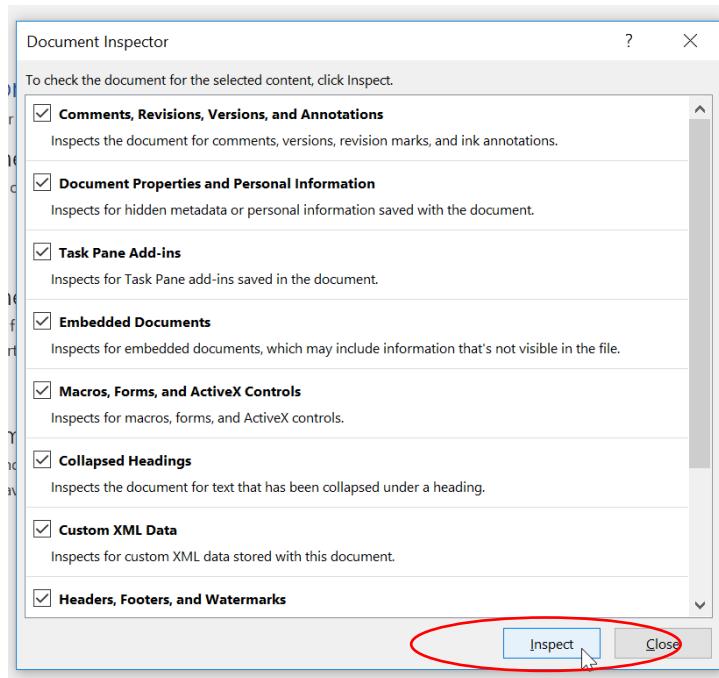
You can remove the author information directly by right-clicking on the name and clicking on **Remove Person**.

Properties	
Size	11.3KB
Pages	1
Words	3
Total Editing Time	0 Minutes
Title	Add a title
Tags	Add a tag
Comments	Add comments
Related Dates	
Last Modified	6/3/2020 2:06 PM
Created	
Last Printed	
Related People	
Author	Minner Frédéric Presence unknown
Last Modified By	Minner Frédéric
Related Documents	
<input type="button"/> Open File Location	

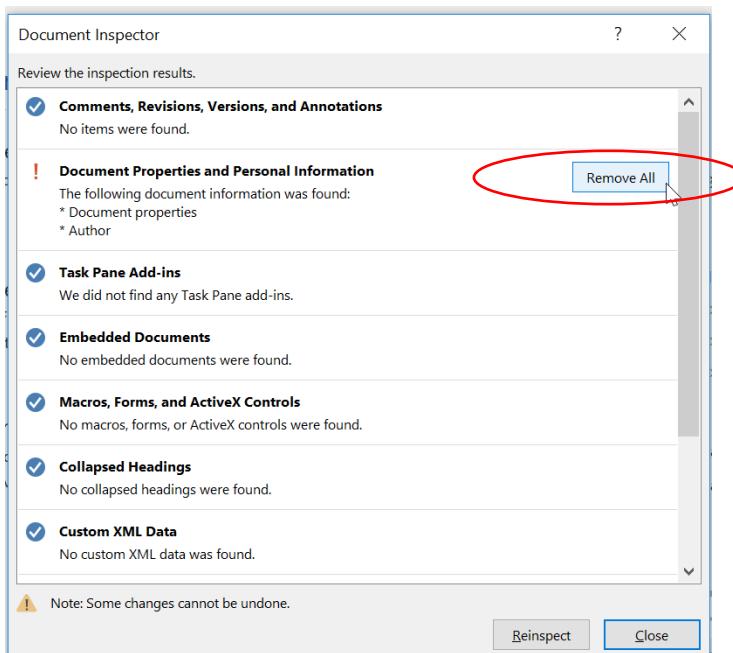
In order to remove additional metadata click on **Check for Issues** in the same window. This will open a small window. Click on **Inspect Document**:



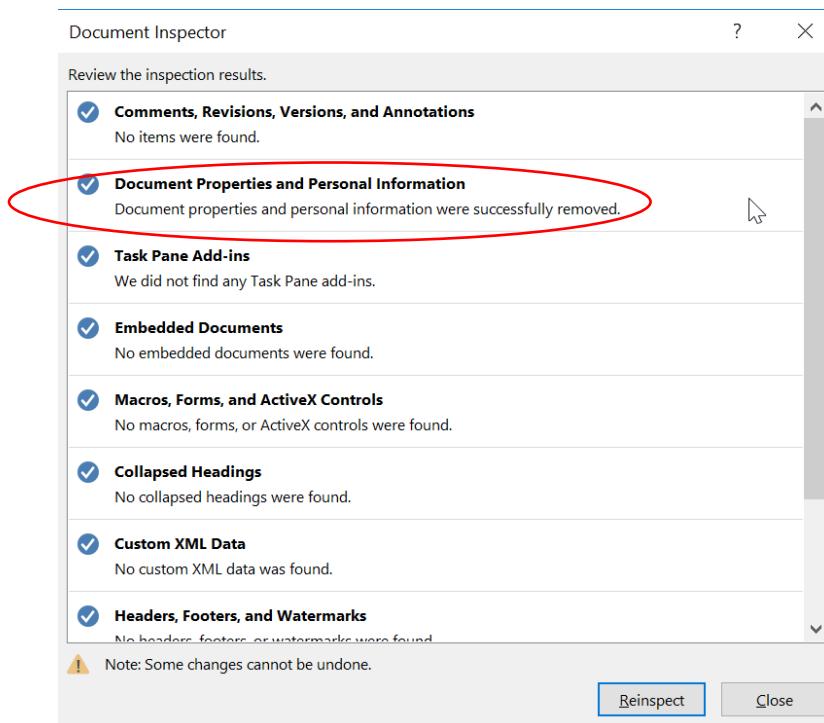
The window **Document Inspector** is going to open. Click on **Inspect**:



Click on **Remove All**:



A window confirming that the metadata were removed will appear:



Save and close your document and open it again to **verify that the metadata were removed**:

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Word 'Info' pane open on the left side of the screen. The main content area displays the following information:

- Spark Project Description**
- File path: \\snffas02.snfbern.ch\home\\$ \fminner\Desktop\Spark\Metadata
- Protect Document**: A section for controlling what types of changes people can make to the document.
- Inspect Document**: A section for checking what the file contains before publishing, including a note about automatic removal of properties and personal information when saved.
- Manage Document**: A section for managing check-in, check-out, and recovering unsaved changes, indicating no unsaved changes.
- Properties**:
 - Size: 16.0KB
 - Pages: 1
 - Words: 3
 - Total Editing Time: 0 Minutes
 - Title: Add a title
 - Tags: Add a tag
 - Comments: Add comments
- Related Dates**:
 - Last Modified: Today, 2:21 PM
 - Created: Today, 2:18 PM
 - Last Printed
- Related People**:
 - Author: Add an author
 - Last Modified By: Not saved yet
- Related Documents**: Options to Open File Location or Show All Properties.

A red oval highlights the 'Related People' section.

The author's name has disappeared and you can now export your Word document in a PDF file. This PDF document will not contain any metadata.

Important: Do not use the method “Print as PDF”, as this will add new metadata to your PDF document, which will have to be removed in the PDF afterwards.

After exporting, please **open your PDF file and verify under Properties (see page 2) that it does not contain any information that may compromise your identity.**