

Welcome to INLS 520 – Organization of Information!

In this version of INLS 520, we will focus on fundamental concepts of organizing systems that transcend particular implementations or professional contexts. We will not restrict ourselves to the traditional concerns of information science, narrowly defined, because organizing systems are not so restricted.

You will be able to use what you learn in INLS 520 in all information professions. INLS 520 will help you to understand, use, explain, create, assess, and interrogate any organizing system.

Although organizing systems are simple in the abstract, they become incredibly complex in practice. This is because organizing systems attempt to make an unruly, messy, and ambiguous world appear systematic and orderly—and, often, the world isn't having it. For INLS 520, this means that easy answers are impossible, and you cannot find refuge in following rules. But this is what makes organizing information fun—and fascinating.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, you will understand:

- Basic elements that constitute the structure and arrangement of organizing systems:
 - Things (entities, resources, items, ..).
 - Categories (attributes, dimensions, properties, elements, ..).
 - Values (terms, tags, descriptors, ..).
 - Relationships (between things, between categories, between values).
- The role of categorization in language and
- The ubiquity of organizing systems and categorization processes and their complex integration throughout our forms of life—social, cultural, scientific,
- The inherent instability, ambiguity, and arbitrariness of any organizing system.

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Design an organizing system.
- Implement an organizing system
- Explain how others should implement it.
- Assess an organizing system.
- Explain an organizing system.

Course Structure

The course meets once / week.

Every week I includes a pre-recorded lecture that you should watch before our discussion session on Thursday. We will meet for discussion and activities for an hour and a half, with the remainder of class time for project work either by yourself or with your group. Usually, the the lectures will emphasize more abstract and conceptual topics, and the discussion will emphasize more concrete and practical topics.

The semester calendar presents topics for each day in the course, along with associated readings and preparatory activities. A zip file of the readings is available in Sakai, and I've linked to readings on the course website: <https://inls520winget.web.unc.edu/>

Contact

For specific, concrete questions, e-mail is the most reliable means of contact for me. During the week (Monday 9 a.m. – Friday 5 p.m.) You should receive a response within 24 hours. Weekends or holidays might take 2 or 3 days. If you do not receive a response by Monday at noon, please follow up. Please keep this in mind when you are scheduling your own activities.

It is always helpful if your e-mail includes a targeted subject line that begins with “**INLS 520.**”

For more complicated questions or help, make an appointment via email (megan.winget@unc.edu) to talk with me at a convenient time. I cannot discuss grades over e-mail; if you have a question about grading, you must talk with me in via Zoom.

Off campus office hours:

You are welcome to call me by my first name (“Megan”). However, you may also use “Dr. Winget” or “Professor Winget” if that is more comfortable. Either is fine. “Ma’am,” “Miss,” and “Mrs.” are not appropriate.

Grading

The class has four graded components:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Schema | 30 points |
| 2. Taxonomy | 30 points |
| 3. Organizing system explanation | 30 points |
| 4. Participation | 10 points |

100 points total

For graduate students, course grades will be determined according to the following schedule:

- 96 or above H
- 80 – 95 P
- 60 – 80 L
- below 60 F

For undergraduate students, course grades will be determined according to the following schedule:

- 96 and above A
- 90 – 95 A-
- 87 – 89 B+
- 83 – 86 B
- 80 – 82 B-
- 77 – 79 C+
- 73 – 76 C
- 70 – 72 C-
- 65 – 70 D+
- 60 – 64 D
- < 60 F

Participation

The class will be mostly based around discussions, in-class activities, and project work, with relatively few lectures. Class participation is a vital component of the course.

The essence of good participation is in helping the class to attain a greater understanding of concepts, readings, and activities. Asking questions and talking about things that you don't understand are *excellent* forms of participation.

Grading criteria

Excellent participation involves these characteristics:

- You take responsibility for making our class sessions worthwhile and engaging by contributing to discussions and activities.
- Your contributions to discussions and activities demonstrate that you have prepared for class by doing the assigned readings and engaging in the preparatory activities.
- Your contributions to discussions and activities show evidence of thoughtful engagement with the material.
- You listen to others and respond to them respectfully and provide thoughtful feedback.

Attendance affects participation; if you have excessive absences, your participation will necessarily suffer.

Assignments

I assess students on 3 projects and in-class participation

Projects

All projects are turned in via the Sakai "Assignments" tool.

1. [Descriptive Schema](#)
 - Due Thursday September 24 by 11:55pm
2. [Taxonomy Development](#)
 - Due Thursday October 22 by 11:55pm
3. [Explanation of an Organizing System \(Zine\)](#)
 - Due Thursday November 12 by 11:55pm (we will share in class)

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Grading criteria - Participation

Excellent participation involves these characteristics:

- You take responsibility for making our class sessions worthwhile and engaging by contributing to discussions and activities.
- Your contributions to discussions and activities demonstrate that you have prepared for class by completing the assigned readings and preparatory activities.
- Your contributions to discussions and activities show evidence of thoughtful engagement with the materials and a willingness to share ideas with your peers.
- You listen to others and respond to them respectfully and constructively.

Descriptive Schema

In this project, you will define a set of things, detailing the set's domain, scope, and means for establishing that one item is different from another. You will then outline a structure of attributes and associated values to systematically describe your set of things.

Next, you will develop documentation to help someone else (not you) to use the schema to describe instances of the things in your set.

To assess your schema and improve it, you will use the schema to describe (i.e., create metadata for) five varied instances of the things in your set. In class, you will further assess your schema by having someone else use it to describe three things. After these assessments, you may decide to revise your schema or the instructions.

Finally, you will write a short essay that reflects on your experience developing and assessing the schema.

This project is NOT designing a database. Your project is merely to instruct other people how to describe a set of things in a systematic way. (A good database design requires this kind of conceptual thinking also, but this project is not specific to a database implementation.)

Project component 1: Your set of things

This part of your project includes three parts:

- Domain
- Scope
- Identification

Domain

You will *define a group of things to describe*. This could be anything: concrete, physical things, informational things, or abstract, conceptual things. Some examples that students have previously used:

- Spoons
- Historical sites in Beijing
- Programming
- Jerky
- Characters based on Sherlock Holmes in film and television
- Knitting
- Reality television
- Computer viruses
- Yoga poses.
- Visualization
- Representations of “the aztec” in popular culture.

As part of the domain, you will also articulate a *purpose* and associated *target audience* to motivate your description. For example, you might want to help novice knitters find patterns that make nice gifts, or you might want to interrogate stereotypes latent in “Aztec” imagery. Each situation will suggest a different set of attributes for the same set of things, so define the audience and purpose carefully.

Scope

Here you will clarify what is in, and what is out, of your set of things.

For example, is a yoga pose invented by your teacher a proper yoga pose? Is a ladle a spoon? What are central members of your set of things, and what are peripheral members? What doesn’t belong at all? Thinking about central and border cases will help you create attributes that apply equally to all members of your set of things.

Identification

Now that you’ve clearly defined your scope, you should be able to more precisely define your things.

This involves deciding on a level of *abstraction*: for example, are you organizing individual physical books, or abstract literary expressions that may be manifested in various forms and editions? Are you describing a specific package of jerky or all instances of a certain product?

You also need to think about *parts* and *granularity*: do your things have parts that need to be kept track of? Are your things themselves collections? What about the *persistence* of your things: do they change over time? How much can a thing change before it is no longer the same thing?

Explain how you will distinguish between two different things. Do they have some intrinsic property that you can rely on for identification? Will you need to assign identifiers?

Project component 2: Attributes, value parameters, and documentation

You will articulate a set of 10-15 attributes to define your things in support of your identified audience and purpose.

You will label and document each attribute in sufficient detail so that someone else can assign values for things of the type that you have described. For each attribute, you will set parameters for acceptable values and provide guidelines that show how values should be expressed.

Preliminary assessment

Once you have sufficiently defined your attributes, use the structure that you have developed to preliminarily describe five instances to represent both central and border cases of your entity set.

If there are cases where you are unable to satisfactorily describe an instance, use this as an opportunity to revise the schema and clarify your attribute definitions. (You might even need to clarify the boundaries of your group of entities and sharpen its description.) Then use your revised schema to create five final descriptions for your entity instances.

User assessment

You will further assess your schema by having someone else use it to describe three things.

We will do this in class, but you will include your assessors' results with your final submission.

Project component 3: Reflection essay

Finally, write a brief critical reflection on your design process and resulting product. You might discuss questions such as the following:

- Did designing the schema clarify or complicate any of the ideas we've been reading about in class?
- What was difficult about designing the schema?

- How did you decide which attributes to include in the schema?
- How do you know what makes an attribute good or useful?
- How do you know if you've defined an attribute well?
- What might you keep in mind when designing similar kinds of organizing systems?

These are *examples* of questions that you *might* discuss. To create a concise yet cohesive essay, you will need to concentrate on a few design issues of particular relevance to your project. *Do not merely answer the questions here.*

Note that the point of this reflective essay is *not* to justify why your schema is awesome. Clearly, it is awesome, and you don't need to persuade me of that. Instead, the goal of this essay is to explore how the practical experience of designing a schema provokes insight onto the conceptual foundations of information organization.

Deliverables

Your final assignment should include:

1. The domain, scope, and identification information for your set of things.
2. Your attribute descriptions, value parameters, and associated guidelines for using the schema to describe the things. The description for each attribute should follow a consistent format. (You can use something similar to the NISO standard for Dublin Core metadata elements or devise your own format. You may use tables if you like)
3. Your descriptions of five instances. Use a consistent format for each record (perhaps a table for each instance).
4. The instance descriptions created by your peer.
5. Your critical reflection. This should be written in narrative form, as a cohesive paper of about 1000 words (3-4 pages).

Grading criteria

A successful schema will exhibit these characteristics:

- The following are clearly described:
 - What constitutes a member of the defined set of things,
 - The schema's audience and purpose, and
 - How a thing should be identified and distinguished from other, similar things.
- The defined attributes effectively represent the selected things in the context of the described purpose, and the value space effectively represents the extent of the attributes.
 - For example, when describing yoga poses for students, an attribute that indicates level of difficulty might be appropriate. However, such an attribute might seem less appropriate if describing yoga poses in relation to the history of Hindu thought and culture. In addition, the values described for the potential level of difficulty attribute for yoga poses should encompass the full range of possibilities at an appropriate level of detail for the audience and purpose of the schema.
- The documentation is sufficient to describe actual things accurately and comprehensively within the context of the selected purpose.

- The critical reflection thoughtfully considers the design process, product, or both, using the experience of creating the descriptive schema to productively engage larger issues of theory and practice (that is, the reflection does not merely summarize or justify the design process or product; it interrogates it).
- All project components follow a logical document structure, are clearly written, and use correct grammar and usage.
- All the project components are present.

Taxonomy Development

In this project, you will develop a taxonomy of categories to relate and arrange the things that you described with your schema. You will document the taxonomy so that someone else can use it to put things within the categories that you define. In class, you will assess the taxonomy and its documentation by having others use the taxonomy to classify things. Finally, you will write a short essay that reflects on your experience developing and assessing the taxonomy.

Project component 1: Taxonomy

First, you will decide on a property to organize your things. This could be an attribute from your schema or it could be a new property.

To create a worthwhile taxonomy, the property that you select must be complex enough so that its values can be arranged in multiple levels of hierarchy. You might need to play around with several ideas before making your final selection.

To begin, select a property that has between 10-15 specific values that can then be organized under more general categories.

Here are some examples.

- If your entity set was *yoga poses*, you might create a taxonomy of *skills* associated with each pose: for example, arm strength, open hamstrings, balance, breath control, mental presence.
- If your entity set was *spoons*, you might create a taxonomy of *materials*: teak, silver, plastic, bone, glass.
- If your entity set was *still-life paintings*, you might create a taxonomy of depicted *objects*: lemons, oysters, goblets, petunias.
- If your entity set was *gardening implements*, you might create a taxonomy of gardening *activities* that the implements are used in: weeding, insect spraying, harvesting, sowing, mulching.

We will work on creating the basic taxonomy structure in class, but here are the fundamental steps for a bottom-up design approach:

1. Identify 10-15 specific values—the ones that you would have specified in your descriptive schema.

2. For each value, generalize it into a broader category. From lemons, go to citrus, or fruit. From teak, go to wood. From arm strength, go to upper body strength. From insect spraying, go to pest control.
3. For each broader category, go up another level, until you get to your top term: skills, materials, objects.
4. Now comes the hard part. Arrange, redefine, remove, add, and relabel your categories so that they are organized into proper hierarchical relationships with a single principle of division at each level of the hierarchy. (We'll talk about what this means in class)
5. Ensure that your taxonomy follows good design practice for hierarchies: at each level, categories are jointly exhaustive and mutually exclusive, and at a similar level of abstraction. (You'll get a set of design principles in class)

Your final taxonomy should include from 25-40 categories, dispersed throughout all its levels. It should be at least four levels deep (the root term, two intermediate levels, and terminating values). Arrange your final taxonomy in a diagram that shows the relationships between categories. (There is no advantage to creating a fancy diagram.)

Project component 2: Taxonomy documentation

To enable someone else to use your taxonomy to categorize actual things, you need to define each category in your taxonomy and provide guidance about which kinds of things to put where.

Here are some issues that you need to think about:

- Can things be placed into higher-level categories or only at the bottom level? If things can go into higher-level categories, when might this occur?
- Can things go into multiple categories or just one?
- If a thing seems to fall in between or outside the existing categories, where should it go?

Your definitions should explain what the categories mean in the context of your taxonomy. For example, if you had a category of Bone to describe materials that spoons are made of, you would not transcribe the dictionary definition for Bone; that would be silly. You might write something like this:

Bone: Place here any spoons made of animal bone, tusks, teeth, or horn. Do not use Bone for spoons made from shells of marine animals.

Project component 3: reflection essay

Finally, write a brief critical reflection on your design process and resulting product. You might discuss questions such as the following:

- Did designing the taxonomy clarify or complicate any of the ideas we've been reading about in class?
- What was difficult about designing the taxonomy?
- How did you decide which categories to include in the taxonomy?

- How do you know what makes a category good or useful?
- How do you know if you've defined a category well?
- What might you keep in mind when designing similar kinds of organizing systems?

These are *examples* of questions that you *might* discuss. To create a concise yet cohesive essay, you will need to concentrate on a few design issues of particular relevance to your project. *Do not merely answer the questions here.*

Note that the point of this reflective essay is *not* to justify why your taxonomy is awesome. Clearly, it is awesome, and you don't need to persuade me of that. Instead, the goal of this essay is to explore how the practical experience of designing a taxonomy provokes insight onto the conceptual foundations of information organization.

Deliverables

Your final assignment should include:

1. A summary of the set of things to be arranged with the taxonomy, and the audience and purpose associated with organizing these things (this may come directly from your schema project).
2. A diagram that includes all the categories in the taxonomy and shows their relationships.
3. Your taxonomy documentation, including general guidelines and category definitions.
4. The category assignments made by your peer tester.
5. Your critical reflection. This should be written in narrative form, as a cohesive paper of about 1000 words (3-4 pages).

Grading criteria

A successful taxonomy will exhibit these characteristics:

- The taxonomy itself includes an appropriate number of categories, arranged in well-formed hierarchical relationships, that follow best practices for taxonomy design and development.
- The selected categories represent the set of things well in the context of its identified audience and purpose (from the descriptive schema).
- The documentation is sufficient to categorize actual things accurately within the context of the selected audience and purpose.
- The critical reflection thoughtfully considers the design process, product, or both, using the experience of creating the taxonomy to productively engage larger issues of theory and practice (that is, the reflection does not merely summarize or justify the design process or product; it interrogates it).
- All project components follow a logical document structure, are clearly written, and use correct grammar and usage.
- All the project components are present.

Explaining an Organization System (Zine)

In this project, you will write and create a zine that explains and compares, in detail, how a set of things is presented in two or three organizing systems in the real world. These should be systems that are available to the public (that is, not the sock drawer in your house). You may organize physical or digital items. Your explanation will have several parts:

- A explanation of the category structure in each organizing system and the kinds of items placed in each.
- An interpretation of each category structure that attempts to understand the ideas it communicates about the entity set.
- A comparison of the different ideas presented in each organizing system.

Your goal in this project is to understand how each organizing system interprets the entity set: how it gives the entity set a particular meaning. Your goal is not to assess the effectiveness of the organizing system for retrieval. It doesn't matter if it's easy or difficult for you to find items in the entity set.

The real-world things

To write a meaningful, detailed, incisive explanation, you will need to focus on just one part of each organizing system. That is why you will keep your analysis to one type of things within the system.

Here are some examples:

- The organization of light fixtures at Home Depot and Target.
- The organization of chips at CVS and Harris Teeter.
- The organization of mystery novels at Flyleaf Books and at Barnes & Noble.
- The organization of Legos at the Southpoint Target and online, via the Lego Website.
- The organization of Japanese woodblock prints at two different online resources.

As with defining an entity set to organize with your schema, you will need to identify a set of things that is specific enough to analyze in depth but broad enough to enable you to say something interesting about it. So the entire supermarket would be too broad, but just the Cheerios would be too narrow. The cereal at the supermarket might be just right.

Explanation of category structure

Your zine will need to explain each category structure that you're investigating. Let's say you're looking at the cereal in a supermarket. Here are the kinds of questions you might ask:

- What different kinds of organizing principles are at play in arranging the cereal? Are the cereals arranged by size, price, brand, primary ingredients, level of sugar? How are these principles deployed—are the most expensive items on the top shelves or the bottom shelves?
- What principles inform the selection of items within the category? How many different kinds of cereal are there? What kinds are represented the most, and what kinds the least?

- Can you define central and peripheral members of the set of “cereal” each supermarket, and on what basis can you make that determination?
- How is cereal related to other entities? What is next to it?

Note that your set of things might be split up into multiple locations within the organizing system: for cereal, there might also be cereal in the bulk section, or in the International section. You’ll need to investigate these as well.

When you describe the category structure in your zine, focus on *explaining* it, not documenting it. There is no need to map out or transcribe each item in the cereal section! That would be silly. Your goal is to explain how the cereal section works, not to merely copy it down.

In creating your explanation, make use of the readings and class activities from throughout the semester.

Interpretation of category structure

This is the fun part. What does the category structure that you’ve explained tell us about the set of things? Here’s an example.

Let’s say my entity set is Noodles, and I’m looking at the Harris Teeter. Most of the noodles are in a section labeled Pasta that is near the tomato sauce. Indeed, based on the selection and arrangement of pasta varieties, the central idea of “noodle” is oriented around the notion of spaghetti and tomato sauce as a common meal. However, not all the noodles are in the Pasta section. Rice noodles are with other “Asian” foods in the International section. These noodles are not near the tomato sauce. Rice noodles might be similarly shaped to spaghetti, but in the organizing system of the supermarket, they are far away from spaghetti. They are, in a sense, more Asian than noodle. They certainly do not appear to be interchangeable, based on their placement within the organizing system of the supermarket. There are implications to this: the supermarket is saying, in a way, that if you invited a friend over for pasta and served pad kee mao, your friend might be surprised. And yet, aren’t rice noodles also noodles? (If you were defining “noodles” as an entity set for your descriptive schema, would you have excluded them?

(Probably not.)

While I encourage you to think deeply about the category structures that you’re investigating, *make sure to ground your interpretation within the evidence provided by your explanation*. You need to show how your interpretation arises from that evidence.

In making your interpretation, you should also make use of the readings we’ve done throughout the semester.

Comparison of different organizing systems

In comparing the two (or three) organizing systems that you are investigating, you might consider the following kinds of questions:

- What are the different ideas presented by each organizing system about the entity set? Are these ideas compatible or incompatible? (For example, rice at the Li Ming Global Mart is the foundation of one’s diet—it’s in its own section in 25-lb bags. But rice at the Harris Teeter is just an occasional companion)
- Would items from one organizing system take on a different character in the other organizing system? (For example, sugary cereal might be common at the Harris Teeter but uncommon at Whole Foods.)

- Would any items from one organizing system be excluded from the other system? (For example, spaghetti probably doesn't appear at the Li Ming Global Mart, although there might be wheat noodles of similar shape.)

Zine details

Your explanations, interpretations, and comparisons should take the form of a zine. This is a small magazine, with different sections, images, textures etc. There are typically 8 pages in a zine, but this does not equal the same number of words you'd have in an 8-page essay. Your zine should have a clearly identified argument and structure. For example, your theme might be "Noodles! Different things to different people!" or, "Cereal! More complicated than you might think!" or, "Have you ever noticed? Salad bars contain very little salad: based on evidence from supermarket buffets."

Although your zine needs to include your explanation of category structure, your interpretation of category structure, and your comparison of organizing systems, it does NOT need to put these into separate sections. You should structure your essay in the way that makes the most sense for your argument.

Peer review

In Week 12, you will bring two DRAFT copies of your zine to class. This is not the finished zine. This is the text / images you plan to put in the zine. Two people will be assigned to read your draft and provide written and oral feedback on it at the next class session in Week 13.

In your peer review, you will provide written answers to the following questions:

- What is the argument put forth by the zine?
- What is the evidence used to make this argument?
- What going well?
- How can the argument be strengthened?

You will give this feedback to the zine's author. (We will also discuss the drafts in class.)

Your goal in writing peer review feedback is to help make the argument better. Harsh criticism is not helpful; neither is mindless praise. Be honest, constructive, and compassionate. Also be a mindful and attentive reader: your feedback should not direct the writer to do things your way but help the writer to accomplish his or her goals more effectively.

Grading criteria

A successful organizing system explanation will exhibit these characteristics:

- The zine has a clearly identified topic and argument.
- The explanations of each organizing system are adequate and cogent.
- The interpretations of each organizing system are insightful and well supported by evidence.
- The comparison of the organizing systems is insightful and well supported by evidence.
- Material from course readings and activities is usefully employed to extend the argument.

- The zine follows a logical structure, is clearly written, and uses correct grammar and punctuation.

Policies

Instructor communication

For specific, concrete questions, e-mail is the most reliable means of contact for me. You should receive a response within a day or so, but sometimes it may take 2-3 days. If you do not receive a response after a few days, please follow up. It is always helpful if your e-mail includes a targeted subject line that begins with "INLS 520."

You are welcome to call me by my first name ("Megan"). However, you may also use "Dr. Winget" or "Professor Winget" if that is more comfortable for you. Any of these is fine.

Attendance

I do not take attendance. You do not need to inform me of absences, nor do you need to "make up" anything if you are absent. While participation is an important part of your grade, and attendance is important, there are no requirements for mandatory attendance.

Late work

Late work is not acceptable.

If an assignment is late, ten percent of the possible points will be deducted from the score.

Example

If the descriptive schema, worth 25 points, is one day late, the maximum number of points is 22.5, or $25 - 2.5$. An assignment is one day late when the time it is due is passed, and it continues to be one day late until 24 hours later (that is, if an assignment is due at 12 p.m., when class begins, it is late at 12:30 p.m., and it is one day late until 12 p.m. the next day).

Extensions

Extensions for project work may be granted under reasonable circumstances, *when negotiated with the instructor in advance*. A request for an extension minutes before a due date will likely be denied. A request for an extension made a month before the due date is likely to be accepted.

Students who anticipate difficulties with completing work on time, or who encounter unexpected and severe challenges, should consult with the instructor as soon as possible so that alternate solutions can be discussed.

Academic integrity

The UNC Honor Code states that:

It shall be the responsibility of every student enrolled at the University of North Carolina to support the principles of academic integrity and to refrain from all forms of academic dishonesty...

This includes prohibitions against the following:

- Plagiarism
- Falsification, fabrication, or misrepresentation of data or citations
- Unauthorized assistance or collaboration
- Cheating

All scholarship builds on previous work, and all scholarship is a form of collaboration, even when working independently. Incorporating the work of others, and collaborating with colleagues, is welcomed in academic work. However, the honor code clarifies that you must always acknowledge when you make use of the ideas, words, or assistance of others in your work. This is typically accomplished through practices of reference, quotation, and citation.

If you are not certain what constitutes proper procedures for acknowledging the work of others, please ask the instructor for assistance. It is your responsibility to ensure that the [honor code](#) is appropriately followed. (The [UNC Office of Student Conduct](#) provides a variety of honor code resources.)

The UNC Libraries has online tutorials on [citation practices](#) and [plagiarism](#) that you might find helpful.

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities should request accommodations from the UNC office of Accessibility Resources and Service. (<https://accessibility.unc.edu/>).

Schedule

Week 1: Course Introduction (August 13)

Readings

- Course Syllabus (Video)
- Walk-Thru of Schema Project (Video)
- Walk-Thru of Taxonomy Project (Video)

- Walk-Thru of Descriptive (Zine) Project (Video)

In-Class

- Introductions
- Syllabus / Assignments Q&A
- In-Class Activities

Week 2: Information, Language & Cognition (August 20)

Readings (Lecture) (Slides)

- Luciano Floridi. 2010. Information: a very short introduction. London: Oxford University Press. (Chapters 2-4, p. 19-59.) ([Floridi 2010](#))
- Phil Agre. 1995. Institutional circuitry: thinking about the forms and uses of information. Information Technology and Libraries 14(4): 225-230. ([Agre 1995](#))

Prepare for Class

- Brainstorm 1-3 ideas for your schema. Bring to class. Be prepared to discuss your ideas with colleagues.

In-Class Activities

- Games!
- Discussion of Readings
- Discussion of Schema Ideas
- Schema Project Overview & QA

Week 3: Information as Interpretation of Natural Phenomena (August 27)

Readings (Lecture) (Slides)

- Dupre, John. (2006) Scientific classification. Theory, Culture, and Society 23(2-3): 30-32. [[Dropbox](#)]
- Gould, Stephen J., "What, If Anything, Is a Zebra?" In: *Hen's Teeth and Horses Toes: Further Reflections on Natural History*. 1983. New York: Norton. p. 355-365. [[Dropbox](#)]

Prepare for Class

- Baca, M. (2016, July 20). Introduction to Metadata [InteractiveResource].
 - Anne Gilliland: Setting the Stage <https://www.getty.edu/publications/intrometadata/setting-the-stage/>
- Dublin Core Metadata Element Set
 - User Guide: Creating Metadata: https://www.dublincore.org/resources/userguide/creating_metadata/
- Handout: Attributers & Values ([DOC](#))
- ***Submit your schema proposal to Sakai via “Schema Proposal” Assignment on Monday of this week. This is a paragraph, not a paper.***

In-Class Activities

- Demonstrations
- Lectures
- Work on Project

Week 4: Information as Collective Memory (September 3)

Readings (Lecture) (Slides)

- Zerubavel, Eviatar. (1991) The fine line. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2. [[Dropbox](#)]
- Basso, Keith. (1996) Wisdom sits in places: landscape and language amongst the western Apache. ([Chapter 2](#) = required; [Chapter 4](#). = Optional)
- Watson, Helen, David Chambers, and the Yolngu community at Yirrkala. (2008) Signing the land, signing the land. (Available at <http://singing.indigenouknowledge.org/home/contents>) Look at Exhibits 1 and 4 only.

Prepare for Class

- Patricia Hapring (2010). Introduction to Controlled Vocabularies: Terminology for Art, Architecture and other Cultural Works. Online Edition: (Specifically [Chapter 1: Controlled Vocabularies in Context](#) / [Chapter 2: What are Controlled Vocabularies?](#) / [Chapter 7: Constructing a Controlled Vocabulary](#))
- XKCD. Color Survey Results (2010) <http://blog.xkcd.com/2010/05/03/color-survey-results/>
- Brainstorm ideas for attributes in schema

In-Class Activities

- Discussion
- Project Work

Week 5: Information as Recorded Intellectual Creation (September 10)

Readings (Lecture) (Slides)

- Wilson, Patrick. (1968) Two kinds of power: an essay on bibliographic control. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. [Chapter 2](#).
- Buckland, Michael. (1997) What is a “document”? Journal for the American Society of Information Science 48 (9): 804-809. [[Dropbox](#)]

Prepare for Class

- IFLA. Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records final report. Full report available at: <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/frbr.pdf> Read pages 13-14, 17-24, 31-49 only ([all that's in this PDF](#)). This is the material about Group 1 entities.
 - Handout: classification basics ([DOC](#))
- Document an initial set of attributes and value parameters for your schema and bring it to class. Bring to class three things (or a source of information about the things) to be described with your schema. One thing should be central to your set of things and one thing should be peripheral.

In-Class Activities

- Discussion
- Games
- Project Wrok

Week 6: Information as Evidence (September 17)

Readings (Lecture) (Slides)

- Gilliland, Anne. (2000) Enduring paradigm, new opportunities: the value of the archival perspective in the digital environment. Council of Library and Information Resources (CLIR).

Full report available at: <http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub89/contents.html> (Read: [The archival paradigm: the genesis and rationales of archival practices and principles](#)).

- Cvetkovich, Ann. (2003) An archive of feelings: trauma, sexuality, and lesbian public culture. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Ch. 7, 239-271. [[Dropbox](#)]

Prepare for Class

- Revise your schema and documentation based on last week's test.
- Kirkland, A. (2019). Costume Core: Metadata for Historic Clothing. VRA Bulletin, 45(2). [[Dropbox](#)]
 - Look: <http://www.ardenkirkland.com/costumecore/>

In-Class Activities

- Discussion
- Project Work

Week 7: Information as Sign (September 24)

Readings (Lecture) (Slides)

- John Fiske. 1990. Introduction to Communication Studies, 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge. (Excerpts: pages 6–12, 39–46, 56–58, 64–65.) [[Dropbox](#)]
- Scott McCloud. 1994. Understanding Comics. 1st HarperPerennial ed. New York: HarperPerennial. (Chapter 2, p. 24–59.) [[Dropbox](#)]
- Ereshevsky, Marc. (2007) The poverty of the Linnean hierarchy: a philosophical study of biological taxonomy. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 2 and 4-5; pp. 50-80 and pp. 129-193. [[Dropbox](#)] [[Notes on Ereshevsky – DOC file](#)]

Prepare for Class

- *Final Schemas DUE at beginning of class*

In-Class Activities

- Lecture
- Discussion
- Games
- Taxonomy Project Overview

Week 8: Organized Information Structures (October 1)

Readings (Lecture) (Slides)

- Mai, J.E. (2011). The modernity of classification. *Journal of Documentation*, 67(4), 710–730. [\(PDF\)](#)
- Ranganathan, S.R. (1962) Elements of Library Classification. Bombay, India: Asia Publishing House. [\[Dropbox\]](#)
- Hunter, Eric J. (2002) Classification made simple. 2nd ed. Aldershot, England: Ashgate. (Ch. 1-5) [\[Dropbox\]](#)
- [Lecture](#)

Prepare for Class

- ***Submit your taxonomy proposal to Sakai via the “Taxonomy Proposal” Assignment by Monday of this week.***

Examples:

- A proposal for the set of things you’ll arrange with your taxonomy (e.g., superheroes),
- The purpose your taxonomy will serve (helping MCU develop new characters)
- the property that the taxonomy is based on (e.g., superpowers)
- and a list of potential unorganized descriptors (e.g., telepathy, flying)
- Allinson, J. (2012). OpenART: Open metadata for art research at the Tate. *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 38(3), 43–48. [\[Dropbox\]](#)

In-Class Activities

- Lecture
- Discussion
- Game
- Project Work

Week 9: Expressive Information Structures (October 8)

Readings ([Lecture](#)) ([Slides](#))

- Lee, H.-L. (2012). Epistemic foundation of bibliographic classification in early China: A Ru classicist perspective. *Journal of Documentation*, 68(3), 378–401. ([PDF](#))
- Light, A., Shklovski, I., & Powell, A. (2017). Design for existential crisis. Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 722–734. ACM. ([PDF](#))
- Clifford, J. (1991). Four northwest coast museums: Travel reflections. In I. Karp & S. Levine (Eds.), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press. ([PDF](#))
 - Handout: Four Museums, Two Archives ([PDF](#))

Prepare for Class

- Bring your set of potential descriptors to class.

In-Class Activities

- Discussion
- Game
- Project Work: Test your taxonomies

Week 10: Structured Information Structures (October 15)

Reading ([Lecture](#)) ([Slides](#))

- Brookshear, J. Glenn., David T. Smith, and Dennis Brylow. (2010) *Computer science: an overview*. 11th ed. Pearson. (Ch. 9 Database Systems, pp. 383-424.) [[Dropbox](#)]
- Fun with SQL – Solve a Murder Mystery! <https://mystery.knightlab.com/>
- Bagui, Sikha, and Richard Earp. *Database Design Using Entity-Relationship Diagrams*. Boca Raton, FL: Auerbach Publications. Ch. 2 [[Dropbox](#)].

Prepare for Class

- Complete a draft of your taxonomy and descriptor definitions and bring it to class.
- Bring 5 items (or information about those items) to class, so that others can attempt to place those items within your taxonomy.

In-Class Activities

- Lecture
- In-Class Activities
- Project Work: Brainstorm ideas for project

Week 11: Automated Information Structures (October 22)

Reading ([Lecture](#)) ([Slides](#))

- M.E. Maron. 1961. Automatic indexing: an experimental inquiry. *Journal of the ACM* 8(3): 404–17. ([PDF](#))
- Rieder, B. (2017). Scrutinizing an algorithmic technique: The Bayes classifier as interested reading of reality. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(1), 100–117. ([PDF](#))
- [OBIT Data](#)
- Brookshear, J. Glenn., David T. Smith, and Dennis Brylow. (2010) *Computer science: an overview*. 11th ed. Pearson. (Ch 0 History of Computing / Ch 5 Algorithms / Ch 6 Programming Languages – skim, do not do the problems) ([Dropbox](#))

Prepare for Class

- *Taxonomy DUE tonight by 11:55*
- *Submit your Zine Proposal to Sakai via the “Zine Proposal” Assignment tool by Monday of this week:*
 - A proposal for your explanation project that includes the system’s you’ll compare and the set of things that you’ll be examining (e.g., hot sauce in two supermarkets or database courses at UNC and Coursera)
- Investigate the selection, categorization, and arrangement of one of the following at at least one supermarket:
Cheese. / Wine. / Tea. / Oil.
- Be sure to find all of the places where these things are located.
- Take notes! How does the selection, arrangement, and relationship of the instances in these categories present an interpretation of what this entity is?

In-Class Activity

- - Lecture
 - Game
 - Project Work – Supermarkets!

Week 12: Utopian Information Structures (October 29)

Reading ([Lecture](#)) ([Slides](#))

- Rayward, Boyd. (1994) Visions of Xanadu: Paul Otlet and hypertext. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 45(4): 235-250. [[Dropbox](#)]
- David Easley and Jon Kleinberg. 2010. *Networks, crowds, and markets: reasoning about a highly connected world*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1 (p. 1-20). ([Dropbox](#))
- Bush, Vannevar. (1948) As we may think. *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1945: 101-108. (Available at: <http://sloan.stanford.edu/mousesite/Secondary/Bush.html>)

Prepare for Class

- Investigate the selection, categorization, and arrangement of either men's or women's "work shoes" at the following Web sites:
Amazon / Zappos / Shoes.com
 - Be sure to find the categories associated with "work" shoes (in other words, what OTHER categories will return "work shoes"?).
 - How does the selection, description, and arrangement of "work shoes" present an interpretation of what "work shoes" are and what "work" is?
- Prepare draft of organizing system explanation and bring two copies to class to exchange with peer reviewers.

In-class Activity

- Discussion
- Game
- Project Work

Week 13: Complications & Frustrations (November 5)

Reading ([Lecture](#)) ([Slides](#))

- Marres, N. (2018). Why We Can't Have Our Facts Back. *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*, 4, 423-443. ([PDF](#))

Prepare for Class

- Prepare written comments on your colleagues' drafts.

In-Class Activity

- Discussion with peer reviewers

Week 14: Sharing is Caring (November 12)

Last day of class we will share our zines and celebrate the end of the semester with a Zoom Party!

Acknowledgements & Thanks

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