UNDERSTANDING AND SERVING USERS

INF 382C

# 27740

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School of Information
University of Texas at Austin

Fall 2010

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By appointment other times
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INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

INF 382C, Understanding and Serving Users, aims to understand people’s information behavior and practices beyond their role as users of particular information systems. The course explores how social theory and empirical research help us understand people, their information behavior, and information practices and how we can design information services and systems to greatest effect. These services and systems can range from the paper-based to the digital and from the institutionalized to the less formal. The course helps prepare students for more advanced study and for more informed evaluation of information services, as students and as practitioners.

To achieve those ends, the course looks at social, humanistic, system design, and other modes of investigation. We look especially at the interactions among interpretation, meaning making, identity, community, practice, narrative, information agencies, information policy, and information technologies.

How these and other material/social conditions interact in complex ways is of special interest to the course, as is how we learn and know as members of communities, in particular, situated circumstances. We will not make the common error of believing that membership in a particular community explains the totality of one’s information behavior or practices. Nor will we equate information behavior and practice with the more limited concept of “information seeking.”

One of the major goals of the course is an increased awareness of similarities and differences among disciplines interested in information practices and behavior: information studies, computer science, system design, communication, cognitive psychology, science and technology studies, education, sociology, cultural studies, intellectual history, anthropology, philosophy, and organizational studies. We will look at three modes of understanding and serving users:

- Empirical studies of users of all kinds; these studies will include the use of human, paper-based, and digital information systems and will be drawn from a wide variety of sources.
- The practice of the information professions, especially the provision of reference services in libraries and archives both in-person and digitally; this set of readings will feature research based in information studies.
- Examining and generating social theory related to understanding people and their use of information; this set of readings will be based on our discipline as well as a wider set of disciplinary perspectives.

These literatures and modes are not mutually exclusive.

Efforts to understand information practices and behavior have evolved in a number of ways:

- From system-centric to people-centric perspectives, an important step in the maturity of the information disciplines; this evolution has been accompanied by a growing recognition of the agency of users as co-creators of information systems and technologies of all kinds
- From an emphasis on scientists and engineers to the study of people more generally, especially the socially marginalized such as women, children, and the poor
- From the study of cognition in the early days of the “user turn” to the wider array of behaviors and practices involved with information and communication, especially the material and embodied
- From a focus on the atomistic individual to a focus on communities, their mutual negotiation of meaning, and creation of information and communication practices
- From a focus on professionals’ use of “information resources” to the study of people’s wider everyday information practices.
Structurally, the course comprises three units:

- Understanding information and people’s information behavior and practices (6 classes)
- Providing information services (3 classes)
- Students’ research, social theories of information work, and information policy (5 classes).

While all of the topics we address deserve more attention, there are a number that are especially pertinent that we cannot explore in any depth, e.g., browsing, so-called resistance to technology, genre studies, anomalous states of knowledge, problem-solving and bounded rationality (and the weaknesses of problem-based approaches to information behavior), information overload, boundary objects, information and referral services, reading studies, and social informatics. Students should engage these and other topics as their interests and professional goals dictate.

**EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS’ PERFORMANCE**

Students are expected to be involved, creative, and vigorous participants in class discussions and in the overall conduct of the class. In addition, students are expected to:

- Attend all class sessions. If a student misses a class, it is her responsibility to arrange with another student to obtain all notes, handouts, and assignment sheets.

- Read all material prior to class. Students are expected to use the course readings to inform their classroom participation and their writing. Students must integrate what they read with what they say and write. This last imperative is essential to the development of professional expertise and to the development of a collegial professional persona.

- Educate themselves and their peers. Successful completion of graduate programs and participation in professional life depend upon a willingness to demonstrate initiative and creativity. Participation in the professional and personal growth of colleagues is essential to one’s own success as well as theirs. Such collegiality is at the heart of scholarship, so some assignments are designed to encourage collaboration.

- Spend 3-4 hours in preparation for each hour in the classroom; therefore, a 3-credit graduate hour course requires a minimum of 10-12 hours per week of work outside the classroom.

- Participate in all class discussions.

- Complete all assignments on time. Late assignments will not be accepted except in the limited circumstances noted below. Failure to complete any assignment on time will result in a failing grade for the course.

- Be responsible with collective property, especially books and other material on reserve.

- Ask for help from the instructor or the teaching assistant, either in class, during office hours, on the telephone, through email, or in any other appropriate way. Email is especially appropriate for information questions, but the instructor limits access to email outside the office. Unless there are compelling privacy concerns, it is always wise to send an additional copy of any email intended for the instructor to the TA who has access to email more regularly.
Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, cheating, or academic fraud, is intolerable and will incur severe penalties, including failure for the course. If there is concern about behavior that may be academically dishonest, consult the instructor. Students should refer to the UT General Information Bulletin, Appendix C, Sections 11-304 and 11-802 and *Texas is the Best . . . HONESTLY!* (1988) by the Cabinet of College Councils and the Office of the Dean of Students.

The instructor is happy to provide all appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. The University’s Office of the Dean of Students at 471.6259, 471.4641 TTY, can provide further information and referrals as necessary.
STANDARDS FOR WRITTEN WORK

You will meet professional standards of clarity, grammar, spelling, and organization in writing. Review these standards before and after writing; I use them to evaluate your work.

Every writer is faced with the problem of not knowing what her audience knows; therefore, effective communication depends upon maximizing clarity. Wolcott in Writing Up Qualitative Research (1990, p. 47) reminds us: "Address . . . the many who do not know, not the few who do." Remember that clarity of ideas, of language, and of syntax are mutually reinforcing.

Good writing makes for good thinking and vice versa. Recall that writing is a form of inquiry, a way to think, not a reflection of some supposed static thought “in” the mind. Theodore Dreiser’s Sister Carrie shows how this process of composition and thought works (1994, p. 144):

Hurstwood surprised himself with his fluency. By the natural law which governs all effort, what he wrote reacted upon him. He began to feel those subtleties which he could find words to express. With every word came increased conception. Those inmost breathings which thus found words took hold upon him.

We need not adopt Dreiser’s breathless metaphysics or naturalism to understand the point.

All written work for the class must be done on a word-processor and double-spaced, with 1" margins all the way around and in either 10 or 12 pt. font.

Some writing assignments will demand the use of notes (either footnotes or endnotes) and references. It is particularly important in professional schools such as the School of Information that notes and references are impeccably done. Please use APA (American Psychological Association) standards. There are other standard bibliographic and note formats, for example, in engineering and law, but social scientists and a growing number of humanists use APA. Familiarity with standard formats is essential for understanding others’ work and for preparing submissions to journals, funding agencies, professional conferences, and the like. You may also want to consult the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2001, 5th ed.).

Do not use a general dictionary or encyclopedia for defining terms in graduate school or in professional writing. If you want to use a reference source to define a term, use a specialized dictionary such as The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Philosophy or subject-specific encyclopedia, e.g., the International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences. The best alternative, however, is having an understanding of the literature related to the term sufficient to provide a definition in the context of that literature.

Use a standard spell checker, but be aware that spell checking dictionaries have systematic weaknesses: they exclude most proper nouns, e.g., personal and place names; they omit most technical terms; they omit most foreign words and phrases; and they cannot identify the error in using homophones, e.g., writing "there" instead of "their," or in writing "the" instead of "them."

It is imperative that you PROOFREAD YOUR WORK THOROUGHLY AND BE PRECISE IN EDITING IT. It is often helpful to have someone else read your writing, to eliminate errors and to increase clarity. Finally, each assignment should be handed in with a title page containing your full name, the date, the title of the assignment, and the class number (INF 382). If you have any questions about these standards, I will be pleased to discuss them with you at any time.

Remember, every assignment must include a title page with:
• The title of the assignment
• Your name
• The date
• The class number – INF 382C.
Since the production of professional-level written work is one of the aims of the class, I will read and edit your work as the editor of a professional journal or the moderator of a technical session at a professional conference would. The reminders below will help you prepare professional written work appropriate to any situation. Note the asterisked errors in #’s 3, 4, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 21, and 25 (some have more than one error):

1. Staple all papers for this class in the upper left-hand corner. Do not use covers, binders, or other means of keeping the pages together.

2. Number all pages after the title page. Notes and references do not count against page limits.

3. Use formal, academic prose. Avoid colloquial language, *you know?* It is essential in graduate work and in professional communication to avoid failures in diction – be serious and academic when called for, be informal and relaxed when called for, and be everything in between as necessary. For this course, avoid words and phrases such as "agenda," "problem with," "deal with," "handle," "window of," "goes into," "broken down into," "viable," and "option."

4. Avoid clichés. They are vague, *fail to "push the envelope," and do not provide "relevant input."*

5. Avoid computer technospeak like "input," "feedback," or "processing information" except when using such terms in specific technical ways.

6. **AVOID USING "CONTENT" AS A NOUN.**

7. Do not use the term "relevant" except in its information retrieval sense. Ordinarily, it is a colloquial cliché, but it also has a strict technical meaning in information studies.

8. Do not use "quality" as an adjective; it is vague, cliché, and colloquial. Instead use "high-quality," "excellent," "superior," or whatever more formal phrase you deem appropriate.

9. Study the APA style convention for the proper use of ellipsis*. . . *

10. Avoid using the terms "objective" and "subjective" in their evidentiary senses; these terms entail major philosophical, epistemological controversy. Avoid terms such as "facts," "factual," "proven," and related constructions for similar reasons.

11. Avoid contractions. *Don’t* use them in formal writing.

12. Be circumspect in using the term "this," especially in the beginning of a sentence. *THIS* is often a problem because the referent is unclear. Pay strict attention to providing clear referents for all pronouns. Especially ensure that pronouns and their referents agree in number; e.g., "each person went to their home" is a poor construction because "each" is singular, as is the noun "person," while "their" is a plural form. Therefore, either the referent or the pronoun must change in number.

13. "If" ordinarily takes the subjunctive mood, e.g., "If he were [not "was"] only taller."

14. Put "only" in its appropriate place, near the word it modifies. For example, it is appropriate in spoken English to say that "he only goes to Antone’s" when you mean that "the only place he frequents is Antone’s." In written English, however, the sentence should read "he goes only to Antone’s."
15. Do not confuse possessive, plural, or contracted forms, especially of pronouns. *Its* bad.

16. Do not confuse affect/effect, compliment/complement, or principle/principal. Readers will not *complement* your work or *it's* *principle* *affect* on them.

17. Avoid misplaced modifiers; e.g., it is inappropriate to write the following sentence: As someone interested in the history of Mesoamerica, it was important for me to attend the lecture. The sentence is inappropriate because the phrase "As someone interested in the history of Mesoamerica" is meant to modify the next immediate word, which should then, obviously, be both a person and the subject of the sentence. It should modify the word "I" by preceding it immediately. One good alternative for the sentence is: As someone interested in the history of Mesoamerica, I was especially eager to attend the lecture.

18. Avoid use of "valid," "parameter," "bias," "reliability," and "paradigm," except in limited technical ways. These are important research terms and should be used with precision.

19. Remember that the words "data," "media," "criteria," "strata," and "phenomena" are all PLURAL forms. They *TAKES* plural verbs. If you use any of these plural forms in a singular construction, e.g., "the data is," you will make the instructor very unhappy :-(. 

20. "Number," "many," and "fewer" are used with plural nouns (a number of horses, many horses, and fewer horses). "Amount," "much," and "less" are used with singular nouns (an amount of hydrogen, much hydrogen, and less hydrogen). Another useful way to make this distinction is to recall that "many" is used for countable nouns, while "much" is used for uncountable nouns.

21. *The passive voice should generally not be used.*

22. "Between" is used with two alternatives, while "among" is used with three or more.

23. Generally avoid the use of honorifics such as Mister, Doctor, Ms., and so on when referring to persons in your writing, especially when citing their written work. Use last names and dates as appropriate in APA.

24. There is no generally accepted standard for citing electronic resources. If you cite them, give an indication, as specifically as possible, of:

   - responsibility (who?)
   - title (what?)
   - date of creation (when?)
   - date viewed (when?)
   - place to find the source (where? how?).


25. *PROFREAD! PROOFREED! PROOFREAD!*

26. Citation, quotation, and reference are nouns; cite, quote, and refer to are verbs.
27. Use double quotation marks ("abc.") not single quotation marks (‘xyz.’), as a matter of course. Single quotation marks are to be used to indicate quotations within quotations.

28. Provide a specific page number for all direct quotations. If the quotation is from a Web page or other digital source, provide at least the paragraph number and/or other directional cues, e.g., “(Davis, 1993, section II, ¶ 4).”

29. In ordinary American English, as ≠ because.

30. Use "about" instead of the tortured locution "as to."
31. In much of social science and humanistic study, the term "issue" is used in a technical way to identify sources of public controversy or dissensus. Please use the term to refer to topics about which there is substantial public disagreement, NOT synonymously with general terms such as "area," "topic," or the like.

32. On a related note, avoid the locution of “public debate.” Such a locution makes a series of faulty assumptions:

- It presumes that a public policy issue has only two “sides.” There are usually three or four or more perspectives on any topic of public dissensus that merit consideration. “Debate” hides this complexity.
- “Debate” implies that one “side” and only one “side” can be correct; that presumption ignores the fact that the many perspectives on a public policy issue have contributions to make to its resolution.
- “Debate” implies that there can be and will be one and only one “winner.” This presumption naively ignores the fact that some public policy issues are intractable, that these issues are often emergent as are their resolutions, and that compromise is success rather than failure or “surrender.”

33. Please do not start a sentence or any independent clause with “however.”

34. Avoid the use of “etc.” – it is awkward, colloquial, and vague.

35. Do not use the term “subjects” to describe research participants. “Respondents,” “participants,” and “informants” are preferred terms and have been for decades.

36. Do not use notes unless absolutely necessary, but, if you must use them, use endnotes not footnotes.

37. Please adhere to these orthographic (spelling) conventions:

- Web with a capital “W.”
- Web site, two words, with a capital “W.”
- Internet with a capital “I” to indicate the TCP/IP-compliant computer network with a shared address convention. Otherwise, internet with a lower-case “i” simply means any of the many millions of networks of networks.
SOME EDITING CONVENTIONS FOR STUDENTS’ PAPERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>number OR insert a space; the context will help you decipher its meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWK</td>
<td>awkward and usually compromises clarity as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLOCK</td>
<td>make into a block quotation without external quotation marks; do so with quotations ≥ 4 lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caps</td>
<td>capitalize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLOQ</td>
<td>colloquial and to be avoided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dB</td>
<td>database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRAG</td>
<td>sentence fragment; often means that the verb or subject of the sentence is missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITAL</td>
<td>italicize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lc</td>
<td>make into lower case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lib’ship</td>
<td>librarianship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>org, org’l</td>
<td>organization, organizational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q’nai re</td>
<td>questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF?</td>
<td>what is the referent of this pronoun? to what or whom does it refer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>research question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sp</td>
<td>spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SING</td>
<td>singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w/</td>
<td>with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w.c.?</td>
<td>word choice?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The instructor also uses check marks to indicate that the writer has made an especially good point. Wavy lines indicate that usage or reasoning is suspect.
## GRADING

Grades for this class include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>University Recognition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Extraordinarily high achievement</td>
<td>not recognized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Barely satisfactory</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unacceptable and failing.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See the memorandum from former Dean Brooke Sheldon dated August 13, 1991, and the notice in the School of Information student orientation packet for explanations of this system. Consult the iSchool Web site (http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/programs/general_info.php) and the Graduate School Catalogue (e.g., http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/grad07-09/ch01/ch01a.grad.html#The-Nature-and-Purpose-of-Graduate-Work and http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/grad07-09/ch01/ch01b.grad.html#Student-Responsibility) for more on standards of work. While the University does not accept the grade of A+, the instructor may assign the grade to students whose work is extraordinary.

The grade of B signals acceptable, satisfactory performance in graduate school. The instructor reserves the grade of A for students who demonstrate not only a command of the concepts and techniques discussed but also an ability to synthesize and integrate them in a professional manner and communicate them effectively, successfully informing the work of other students.

The grade of incomplete (X) is reserved for students in extraordinary circumstances and must be negotiated with the instructor before the end of the semester. See the former Dean’s memorandum of August 13, 1991, available from the main iSchool office.

The instructor uses points to evaluate assignments, not letter grades. He uses an arithmetic – not a proportional – algorithm to determine points on any assignment. For example, 14/20 points on an assignment does NOT translate to 70% of the credit, or a D. Instead 14/20 points is roughly equivalent to a B. If any student's semester point total \( \geq 90 \) (is equal to or greater than 90), then s/he will have earned an A of some kind. If the semester point total \( \geq 80 \), then s/he will have earned at least a B of some kind. Whether these are A+, A, A-, B+, B, or B- depends upon the comparison of point totals for all students. For example, if a student earns a total of 90 points and the highest point total in the class is 98, the student would earn an A-. If, on the other hand, a student earns 90 points and the highest point total in the class is 91, then the student would earn an A. This system will be further explained throughout the semester.
There are three required and three recommended texts for this class: Brown & Duguid (2002), Bruner (1990), Norman (2002), and Suchman (2007) are at the Co-op (476.7211 http://universitycoop.com/). As many of the readings as possible will be on Reserve at PCL; many are available online.

The required texts are:


The recommended texts are:


The course Blackboard site, as well as direct email messages, will inform students about changes in the course schedule, discuss assignments, and so on. All course participants can use both means to communicate with each other, notify the class about interesting events and sources, and the like.

While I always have reservations about readings that I assign, I want to mention some particular concerns I have with the texts for this semester’s course.

Brown & Duguid’s *The Social Life of Information* (2002) is a widely cited and influential book, but there are two concepts important to their argument and problematic in the context of this course:

1. The “content/conduit” distinction – although the authors explicitly discuss this mistaken dualism’s ill effects and how it misleads us, like all English speakers, they allow this metaphor to seep into their analysis. Be aware of its use and sensitive to how it tends to obscure important questions.

2. On a related note, Brown & Duguid talk about information as if it were exclusively a “thing.” They talk about how it is “transmitted,” “acquired,” and the like, and they do the same to knowledge. This way of speaking, as we know, is controversial and problematic, especially for those of us who do not limit the concept of information to the mathematical/message context and those who do not support the supposed distinction between information and knowledge. See Buckland (1991) for a contrasting view.

Remember, however, that I think that *The Social Life of Information* is an excellent book and well worth our attention.
Jerome Bruner’s *Acts of Meaning* (1990) is another of our texts, and, while it is an outstanding piece of work, my main reservations about that book stem from Bruner’s earlier status as one of the forebears of the so-called “cognitive revolution” with its misplaced emphasis on people as primarily cognitive beings and on computation as an adequate analogue for thinking. We will discuss these and other themes as the semester progresses.
LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS

The instructor will provide additional information about each assignment. Written assignments are to be word-processed and double-spaced in 10- or 12-point font, with 1" margins. Assignments are due in class unless otherwise indicated. **GRP** indicates a group assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and participation</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formation of research teams <strong>GRP</strong></td>
<td>SEP 2</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of user group <strong>GRP</strong></td>
<td>SEP 9</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral History of TX Oil Industry synchronization</td>
<td>SEP 23</td>
<td>see DEC 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulation work (4 pp.)</td>
<td>OCT 7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral History of TX Oil Industry annotation</td>
<td>OCT 21</td>
<td>see DEC 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated bibliography <strong>GRP</strong></td>
<td>OCT 28</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of a research paper (5-7 pp.)</td>
<td>NOV 4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation on user group <strong>GRP</strong></td>
<td>NOV 11 or 18</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral History of TX Oil Industry annotation</td>
<td>DEC 2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of design for human-machine communication (6-8 pp.)</td>
<td>TUE, DEC 7</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All assignments must be handed in on time, and the instructor reserves the right to issue a course grade of F if any assignment is not completed. Late assignments will be accepted only if:

1. At least 24 hours before the date due, the instructor gives explicit permission to the student to hand the assignment in late.
2. At the same time, a specific date and time are agreed upon for the late submission.
3. The assignment is then submitted on or before the agreed-upon date and time.

The first criterion can be met only in the most serious of health, family, or personal situations.

All of your assignments should adhere to the standards for written work; should be clear, succinct, and specific; and should be explicitly grounded in the readings, class discussions, and other sources as appropriate. You will find it particularly useful to write multiple drafts of your papers.
## OUTLINE OF COURSE

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**Unit 2: Providing information services**

| **7** | **OCT 7** |
| | Communities of practice |
| | Invisible and articulation work |
| | • DUE: Articulation work (4 pp.) (15%) |
| **8** | **OCT 14** |
| | GUEST – Interfaces |
| | Considering Suchman (2007) (1) |
OCT 21  PANEL – The information intermediary
Considering Suchman (2007) (2)

• DUE: Oral History of Texas Oil Industry annotation
Unit 3: Students’ research, social theories of information work, and information policy

10 OCT 28  Information policy issues (1): Privacy and social networking
What are documents?
• DUE: Annotated bibliography (20%) – GRP

11 NOV 4  Information policy issues (2): “Censorship”
• DUE: Analysis of a research paper (5-7 pp.)(20%)

12 NOV 11  Students’ presentations
Considering Suchman (2007) (3)
• DUE: Presentation on user group – GRP

13 NOV 18  Students’ presentations
Considering Suchman (2007) (4)
• DUE: Presentation on user group – GRP

NOV 25  No class – Happy Thanksgiving!

14 DEC 2  Course evaluation
Considering Suchman (2007) (5)
Summary discussion
• DUE: Oral History of Texas Oil Industry annotation (10%)

TUE DEC 7  No class – assignment due at 12:00 N
• DUE: Challenges of design for human-machine communication (6-8 pp.)(25%)
SCHEDULE

DATE TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Unit 1: Understanding information and people's information behavior and practices

AUG 26 Introduction to the course
Review of the syllabus
Introduction to the history of user studies (1): Scientists and engineers

READ: Brown & Duguid (2002), Acknowledgements, Preface, Introduction,
Chapters 1, 6
Borgman (2007b) CD
Dervin & Nilan (1986) CD
Tenopir et al. (2005) online

AS: Delamont & Atkinson (2001) online
Garvey (1979)
Israel (2001)
Maher (1986)
Norman (2002), Prefaces to both editions, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4
Subramanyam (1979)
Turnbaugh (1986)

SEP 2 History of user studies (2): Beyond professional work to ordinary people
and ordinary tasks

READ: Bates (2005a) CD
Borgman et al. (1995) online
Eisenberg & Berkowitz (2008) online
Hersberger (2005) CD
Kline & Pinch (1996) online
Kuhlthau (2005) CD
Lowe & Eisenberg (2005) CD

AS: Barton & Hamilton (1998a)
Bishop et al. (2001)
Cooper (2002a)
Eisenberg & Spitzer (1991)
Fidel et al. (1999) online
Large (2004)
Large et al. (2002) online
Marcum (2002) online
Sharp et al. (2007), Foreword, Preface, and Chapter 1 CD
Walter (1994)

• DUE: Formation of research teams – GRP

SEP 9 Zack Vowell – Introduction to the Oral History of the Texas Oil Industry
Quinn Stewart – GLIFOS to support Oral History of the Texas Oil Industry
READ: Pettigrew et al. (2001) CD

AS: Norman (2002), 5, 6, and 7

• DUE: Choice of user group – GRP

SEP 16

Exploring the concept of information (1): Cognition, mentalist metaphors, and the “content/conduit” distinction

READ: Brown & Duguid (2002), 2 and 3
       Bruner (1990), Preface, Acknowledgements, and Chapter 1
       Bates (2005b) CD
       Belkin (2005) CD
       MacMullin & Taylor (1984) CD
       Weaver (1949) CD
       Wilson (2000) online

AS: Cole (1994)
     Cornelius (2002)
     Losee (1990a)
     Losee (1997)
     Scarrott (1994)

SEP 23

GUEST – Exploring the concept of information (2): Information retrieval and relevance

READ: Bruner (1990), 2
       Suchman (2007), 6
       Kuhlthau (1991) online
       Saracevic (2007a) online
       Saracevic (2007b) online

AS: Barry & Schamber (1998) online
    Choi & Rasmussen (2003) online
    Ruthven (2008) online
    Sharp et al. (2007), 2 and 3 CD

• DUE: Synchronize Oral History of Texas Oil Industry transcript

SEP 30

Exploring the concept of information (3): Materialist and practice-oriented views and critiquing the “content/conduit” distinction

READ: Bruner (1990), 3
       Buckland (1991) online
       Nunberg (1996b) online
       Reddy (1993) CD
       Schiller (1988) CD
       Tidline (2005) CD
       Van House (2003a) CD
Belkin, Oddy, & Brooks (1982 a and b)
Case (2002) passim especially 6
Enser (2008)
Harter & Hert (1997)
Kuhlthau (1993a)
Schamber (1994)
Swanson (1988)
Vakkari & Sormunen (2004) online
Unit 2: Providing information services

OCT 7  Communities of practice
Invisible and articulation work

READ: Brown & Duguid (2002), 4, 5
Suchman (2007), 7, 8
Brown & Duguid (1991) online
Davenport & Hall (2002) CD/online
Davies (2005) CD
Ehrlich & Cash (1999) online
Nardi & Engeström (1999) online
Star et al. (2003) CD
Star & Strauss (1999) online
Suchman (1995) online
Suchman (1996) CD

AS:  Daft & Weick (1984)
Dervin (1976)
Granovetter (1973)
Lave (1988) passim
McKechnie et al. (2007) CD
Nahl (2007) CD
Lave & Wenger (1992) passim
Parker & Berryman (2007) CD
Sharp et al. (2007), 5 CD
Wenger (1998) passim

•  DUE: Articulation work (4 pp.) (15%)

OCT 14  GUEST — Interfaces
Considering Suchman (2007) (1)

READ: Suchman (2007), Chapters 2-5

AS:  Sharp et al. (2007), 6 both parts CD

OCT 21  PANEL — the information intermediary
Considering Suchman (2007) (2)

READ: Suchman (2007), 6-8
Taylor (1968) CD
Yakel (2000) CD

Abbott (1998) online
Duff & Johnson (2002) online
Edwards (2005) CD
Nunberg (1998) online
Ortega y Gassett (1975)
Palmquist (2005) CD
Schön (1983)
Taylor (1986a)
Taylor (1986b)
Tissing (1984)

• DUE: Oral History of Texas Oil Industry annotation

Unit 3: Students’ research, social theories of information work, and information policy

OCT 28 Information policy issues (1): Privacy and social networking
What are documents?

READ: Brown & Duguid (2002), 7, 8. Afterword
Bishop (1999) online
Buckland (1997) online
EPIC (2010a) online
EPIC (2010b) online
Grassian (2006) online
Levy (2003) CD

AS: Heins et al. (2006) online

• DUE: Annotated bibliography (20%) – GRP

NOV 4 Information policy issues (2): “Censorship”

READ: Asheim (1953) CD
Asheim (1983) CD
Curry Jansen (1991) CD
U.S. v. ALA (2003) on Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) online
[the plurality opinion by Rehnquist, the two concurring opinions by Kennedy and Breyer, and the two dissenting opinions by Stevens and Souter]

AS: Preer (1994)
Tucker (1981)

• DUE: Analysis of research paper (5-7 pp.) (20%)
Geertz (1983) CD
Leckie (2005) CD

• DUE: Presentation on user group – GRP
NOV 18  Students’ presentations
Considering Suchman (2007) (4)

READ:  Bruner (1990), 4
Suchman (2007), Acknowledgements, Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1, 11, 12
O’Day & Nardi (2003) CD

AS:  Cornelius (1996a) CD
Long (1993) CD
Nagel (1986)
Toms & Duff (2002) online

• DUE: Presentation on user group – GRP

NOV 25  No class – Happy Thanksgiving!

DEC 2  Course evaluation
Considering Suchman (2007) (5)
Summary discussion

READ:  Hauptman (1998) online
Karat (1998) online
Marchionini (2008) online
Norman (2007) CD
Petroski (2003) CD
Schweikardt (2009) online
Suchman (2007), 13, 14, 15

AS:  Augst (2001)
Augst & Wiegand (2001)
Wiegand (2003)

• DUE: Oral History of Texas Oil Industry annotation (10%)

TUE  DEC 7  No class – assignment due at 12:00 N

• DUE: Challenges of design for human-machine communication (6-8 pp.)(25%)
ASSIGNMENTS

Articulation work – Due October 7 (15%)

In her paper about digital libraries and collaborative knowledge construction, Nancy Van House (2003a, p. 281) discusses articulation work, borrowing the concept from Star and Strauss (1999) and Suchman (1996). Strauss et al. (1985) first developed and explored the concept.

1. What does the term “articulation work” mean in Van House’s chapter, Star & Strauss (1999), and Suchman (1996)?
2. How does the concept of articulation work shed light on the design, implementation, and evaluation of information services?

Please write a paper 4 double-spaced pages long in response to these questions, submitting it in class on October 7. Please be specific and direct in addressing the questions. Consult the standards for written work both before and after writing your paper and feel free to use other sources, especially things we have read and class discussion, as you consider them appropriate.

Adding value to the Oral History of the Texas Oil Industry (OHTOI) through the use of rich-media – Due various dates

Librarianship has a long and rich history of aiding users in their search for information. Librarians and other information professionals have developed indices, finding aids, tables of contents, and other finding aids for many years for print materials, as well as producing guides to audio and video collections. The arrival of the World Wide Web in 1989 provided new opportunities for as well as new challenges to connecting users to sources of information. This project seeks to combine the best of the analog print world with the realized potential of digital distribution. It builds upon a similar project done in recent semesters at the iSchool that culminated in an award for the Briscoe Center for American History and the School of Information as The Most Innovative Archive on the Web (http://www.archivesnext.com/?p=1580).

The Oral History of the Texas Oil Industry (OHTOI) began in 1951 in Beaumont, Texas, at a reunion for the oil pioneers present at the discovery of oil at nearby Spindletop in 1901, which marked the beginning of the modern oil era. Estelle B. Sharp, wife of one of the early drillers, recognized the need to preserve these early pioneers’ stories before they were lost, and provided support for the University of Texas to begin recording the pioneers’ recollections in the summer of 1952 on magnetic tape. Magnetic tape recording developed in Germany and was secret during WWII, but it and other Axis power technologies came to U.S. and became commercialized in the late 1940’s, making it a new technology in 1952.

Later, someone made transcripts of the tapes, and, in 1982, 10 students in the Indexing and Abstracting course taught by Professor Eugene B. Jackson at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at UT created an index of 179 of the transcript recordings. Evaluation of this index and a sample of recordings was part of a School of Information Capstone Project in 2008, but technical problems with the tapes prevented further work on them.

Now, it’s INF 382C’s turn. The majority of these recordings are digitized and available online. Students in the Survey of Digitization class this semester will be scanning and using optical character recognition (OCR) software on the original transcripts, and they will make an electronic version of the 1982 index available. Each student in the users class will then utilize online
training tutorials in Glifos Social-Media at the iSchool to work directly on the project server at the Briscoe Center, to perform the following tasks. These tasks will involve approximately 40-60 minutes of audio interview in the OHTOI collection assigned by Quinn and the instructor. Each student will:

1. Divide and synchronize the transcript text with the audio recording. **IT IS IMPERATIVE TO PRESERVE** the page numbering information!
2. Create a chronological Table of Contents (ToC) based upon the particular interview(s).
3. Create an alphabetical index for the interview(s) by searching for and using entries from the existing collective index.
4. Evaluate the interview(s) for geographic information; use Google Earth to create a Maps iText for each interview. Each interview should have at least one entry, showing where the interview was conducted.
5. Work with the original comprehensive index in a format to be determined and link each entry from the index to the appropriate point in the interview(s).
6. If the student desires, update the Student Credit section of the interview(s) to get public recognition for the work.

Today, if a patron wants to hear one of these recordings at the Briscoe Center, she probably cannot. She can access the index online, and determine the transcript number and page number of a desired section, but must then go to the Briscoe reading room and request the transcript to read. This has been the case for some 50 years now.

At the conclusion of this project, people worldwide will be able to access the original recordings online in a rich-media format; use the ToC, index, and maps; and search within each individual interview as well as across all of the interviews. Further, they can search across all of the rich-media holdings at the Briscoe Center. A search for a specific geographic location across collections at the Briscoe could retrieve an interview with a conservationist in 2001 from the Texas Legacy collection, as well as an interview from an oil pioneer from the same geographic area in 1901.

In addition, an online, rich-media version of the Oral History of the Texas Oil Industry would help expand research into how rich-media can aid scholars, researchers, and students of this important age in Texas history.

• **Individual Oral History of the TX Oil Industry interview annotation** – due Thursday, September 23; Thursday, October 21; and Thursday, December 2, 2010 (10%)

Students will do this assignment individually. Quinn Stewart and the instructor will assign each student about 40-60 minutes of audio interview from the TX Oil Industry Oral History that has not yet been annotated. Then, using GlifosMedia and Google Earth as demonstrated in class and in the online tutorials, each student will complete the six annotation tasks described above:

1. Synchronize the pre-existing transcript with the interview(s) using GlifosMedia Creator.
2. Create and synchronize a table of contents (ToC) for each interview using GlifosMedia Creator. These first two parts of the assignment are due on **Thursday, September 23**.
3. Create an alphabetical index for the interview(s) using entries from the collective index.
4. Using Google Earth, create appropriate links from each interview to some large or small areas on earth. These third and fourth parts of the assignment are due on **Thursday, October 21**.
5. Link each entry from the collective index to the appropriate place in the individual interview(s).
6. Take credit for the work completed as the student wishes. These final two parts of the assignment are due on the last class day, **Thursday, December 2**.

Quinn Stewart has created online tutorials that will walk students through each phase of this assignment. The tutorials can be used remotely, and require a broadband Internet connection and the latest Firefox, Safari, or Chrome browser. Please note that GM does **NOT** support the use of Internet Explorer. You can do the annotations on your own machines or on Windows or Mac computers in the iSchool IT Lab, UTA 1.210. See [http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/labs/it_lab/](http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/labs/it_lab/) for lab hours. The IT Lab also provides Windows and Mac laptops that students can check out and use to complete this assignment.

Please recall that parts 1 and 2 of the assignment are due September 23, three and four on October 21, and five and six on December 2. Students will complete their files following instructions from Quinn.

**Studying the information behavior of particular user groups – due various dates GRP**

This multi-part assignment will be done in research teams. The class will self-select into teams of four or five students each and choose one of the communities from the list below or provide some alternative that the instructor approves. No more than one team may choose any particular user community.

- Agricultural field agents
- Architects
- Cartographers
- Chemists
- Civil engineers
- Economists
- Hang gliding enthusiasts
- Electrical engineers
- Elementary school history teachers
- Engineering educators
- Environmental engineers
- Environmental research centers
- Geoscientists
- Gerontologists
- Home schoolers
- Hydrologists
- Managers in for-profit enterprises
- Managers in not-for-profit enterprises
- Mechanical engineers
- Middle school geography teachers
- Military field commanders
- Nurses
- Persons with “disabilities”
- Physicians
- Print makers
- Public safety specialists, e.g., police officers
- Public utility regulators
- Real estate professionals
- Skilled crafts persons, e.g., roofers, plumbers, auto mechanics (choose one group)
- Soil scientists

**Community of users – Due Thursday, September 9 – GRP.** Each self-selected team will select the proposed community of users and notify the instructor of the choice by **September 9**. Since the choices will be strictly first come, first served, the sooner you tell the instructor which communities you are interested in the better.

**Annotated bibliography – Due Thursday, October 28 (20%) – GRP**

Each team of students will produce a **double-spaced** annotated bibliography of twenty (20) items we have **not** read in class but are related to the user community in question and its information behavior. Include the twenty items you consider most valuable to understanding this
community. This bibliography should be distributed in print form in class, including two (2) copies for the instructor, and should have annotations that:

1. Explain specifically how the resource is of value to understanding the information behavior of the user community and its identity as a community of practice.
2. Are two to three sentences long.

Presentation on user group – Due Thursday, November 11, or Thursday, November 18 – GRP

Each team will make an in-class presentation no more than 20 minutes long about their chosen user group. Each student will do roughly 4-5 minutes of the presentation, and the team should clearly identify the interviews used, the intended user group, the external sources and other material linked to the interviews, important sources about that user group’s information behavior, and the like. All members of the team will earn the same grade for the presentation. Students should plan to use visuals, e.g., PowerPoint, and handouts as appropriate. The classroom is equipped with Mac and Windows computers, an Internet connection, and projector.

In your presentation, please be sure to consider the following questions and concerns:

1. What are the most important elements of the community’s information behavior and practice? How do you know?
2. What are the noteworthy ways in which this community is like and unlike others in its information behavior and practice?
3. How can you characterize this group as a community of practice? Rely on sources from earlier classes on communities of practice and focus on the group’s information behavior.
4. How have the things we have read and discussed as a class helped you understand this particular user community and its similarities and dissimilarities when compared to others?
5. Be sure to discuss at least some of the sources noted in your annotated bibliography in your presentation.

Post the full presentation and annotated bibliography in the appropriate forum in Blackboard. Make the presentation and annotated bibliography available at a public URL and notify the class of the URL in your class handouts and in the appropriate Blackboard forum.

Analysis of a research paper – Due November 4 (20%)

Please choose one of the following papers to write about. No more than five students can choose any paper; consult the course Web site for the availability of the papers, and see the first part of the references in this syllabus for their complete citations.

Please address the following questions:

1. What are the most important contributions the paper makes to our understanding of the users of information services? Why are these contributions important? (3-4 pp.)
2. Choose any one of the papers we have read as a class and explore how it compares to the paper you read for this assignment. What are the papers’ most important similarities and differences for our study of users? As always, please be as specific and as you can in addressing this question. (2-3 pp.)

Because these papers come from a variety of disciplines, it is essential to pay special attention to their conceptual frameworks, assumptions, terminology, and other characteristics that we usually
elide when reading in our own discipline. Also be especially sensitive to their bibliographies – whom do they cite, and what disciplines are represented among their sources?

Candidate papers:

Bielawski, “Inuit Indigenous Knowledge and Science in the Arctic” (1996) online

Latour, “Visualization and Cognition: Thinking with Eyes and Hands” (1986) online

Myers, “Stories and Styles in Two Molecular Biology Review Articles” (1991) online

Pierce, “Communication” (1972) CD

Taylor, “Information Use Environments” (1991) CD

Weick & Roberts, “Collective Mind in Organizations: Heedful Interrelating on Flight Decks” (1993) online

Westbrook, “Information Access Issues for Interdisciplinary Scholars: Results of a Delphi Study on Women’s Studies Research” (1997) online

Each student will produce an essay 5-7 double-spaced pages long addressing the questions above. Please ensure that the paper is as specific as possible and adheres to our usual standards for written work.
Challenges of design for human-machine communication– Due Tuesday, December 7, 12:00 N (6-8 pp.)(25%)

This assignment is intended to help students more fully integrate several of the concepts and texts important to understanding and serving users, focusing on Lucy Suchman’s *Human-Machine Reconfigurations: Plans and Situated Actions* (2nd ed., 2007).

In addition to Suchman’s book, students should use these sources in addressing the questions below: Petroski (2003) and Norman (2007) on the difficulties of design, particularly for communication between machines and people, and Marchionini (2008) on human-information interaction.

Students must address these questions as explicitly and specifically as possible, using the page guidelines in parentheses to help shape their responses:

1. Why is clear communication between people and even quite sophisticated machines so difficult? (2-3 pp.)
2. What are some useful strategies for addressing the difficulties identified in question 1? (2-3 pp.)
3. How does considering the previous two questions help us understand and serve users? (2 pp.)

Students should use Suchman (2007) as the primary source to address these questions.

At the same time, however, besides Petroski (2007), Norman (2003), and Marchionini (2008), many of the concepts and sources we discussed earlier in the semester may prove quite useful in completing this assignment, e.g.:

- Articulation and invisible work
- Communities of practice
- Presentations and readings about information retrieval and interfaces
- Various theories about information and information behavior generally
- Bruner’s *Acts of Meaning*
- Students’ own team research about specific user groups’ information behavior
- Classmates’ presentations.

Students must put a hard copy of a paper 6-8 double-spaced pp. long engaging these questions into the instructor’s mail box on the fifth floor of UTA no later than 12:00 N, Tuesday, December 7, 2010. This assignment is worth 20% of the course grade, and the instructor will not accept late papers.
REFERENCES

Many required readings are available online, as indicated below and in the class schedule. Some of the course readings are in the Course Documents section of the Blackboard site (CD).

Some of the readings require you to be logged in with your UT EID through the UT libraries. Those journals are usually available online for only part of their publication run; further, UT often has more than one arrangement through which to get these journals online, so there may be more than one URL for each journal. Feel free to explore the various online journal packages – the more familiar you are with such arrangements, the better researcher you will be.

I. Readings in the class schedule

http://staging.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/wo/woissues/civilliberties/cipaweb/cipa.cfm


Dervin, Brenda, & Nilan, Michael. (1986). Information needs and uses. In Martha Williams (Ed.), *Annual review of information science and technology* (pp. 3-33). Medford, NJ: Learned Information. CD


Marchionini, Gary. (2008). Human-information interaction research and development. *Library & Information Science Research, 30*(3), 165-174. Also available at http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=PublicationURL&_tockey=%23TOC%232577%232308%232399699996%232698481%23FLA%23&_cdi=6577&_pubType=J&_auth=y&_acct=C000059713&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=108429&md5=d0e78297f252f6d50f36cb0e9625d9b6


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Westbrook, Lynn. (1997). Information access issues for interdisciplinary scholars: Results of a Delphi study on women’s studies research. *Journal of Academic Librarianship, 23*(3), 211-216. Also available at http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=PublicationURL&_cdi=6556&_pubType=J&_acct=C000059713&_version=1&_userid=108429&md5=3308d1ff90f5e150c06f76415d8b5a5d&jchunk=23#23


II. Selected ARIST chapters 1966 - 2008


III. Useful digital sources for evaluating digital information


IV. Additional sources


Harris, Roma, & Dewdney, Patricia. (1994a). Information transfer failures, or why it’s so hard to locate the information you need. In Barriers to information: How formal help systems fail battered women (pp. 1-6). Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Harris, Roma, & Dewdney, Patricia. (1994b). Theory and research on information seeking. In Barriers to information: How formal help systems fail battered women (pp. 7-34). Westport, CT: Greenwood.


Hilden, Julie. (2002). A recent Supreme Court decision allowing the government to force public libraries to filter users' Internet access is less significant than it might at first appear (FindLaw Legal Commentary). http://writ.news.findlaw.com/hilden/20030701.html


Matson, Lisa Dallape, & Bonski, David J. (1997). Do digital libraries need librarians?: An experiential dialog. Online, 21(6), 68-76. Also available http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/results?vid=2&hid=108&sid=ed77ad4a-2aa8-4380-9157-e8dad186fc30%40sessionmgr111&bquery=(JN+%22Online%22+and+DT+19971101)&bdata=JmRiPWE5aCZ0eXBIPTEmc2l0ZT1aG9zdC1saXZl


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