

Comprehensive Exam Questions - 2007

Note: In Spring 2007, two sets of questions were administered. Both sets have been included below.

Spring 2007 Set A

1. Some reference librarians have observed that there is a substantial decline in the number of “right-answer” factual questions brought by patrons because they are easily answered on the Web. At the same time, librarians report an increased number of genuinely challenging “stumper” type questions. If this trend continues, what impact might it have on (1) how librarians are educated and (2) how information agencies are organized?
2. Many years ago, Lawrence Clark Powell stated that librarianship involved love of books, love of people, and a need to bring the two together. Does this seem true today? Why? What elements of that statement, if any, would you change to reflect the realities of professional practice in the early 21st century? In your response, please address all three elements of Powell’s original statement.
3. In a traditional print world, libraries purchased books and other materials. Once purchased, the materials were owned by the library until a decision was made to sell or discard them. In an electronic world, many books, journals and other materials are leased rather than purchased. Librarians are thus faced with a variety of management issues, including dealing with licensing issues, developing infrastructure, and providing different kinds of customer services.

Discuss the major issues surrounding the “ownership” versus “access” debate. What are the advantages and disadvantages of both the purchase/ownership and lease/access models? Discuss the short-term and long-term implications for an information agency of your choice.

4. Michael Buckland has asserted that providing access to information is the central and defining principle of library and information science. Demonstrate that you understand this central feature of the field by identifying three major components, or facets, of the concept "access to information" and describe their significance to the provision of access to information.
5. Digital libraries and collections are receiving increasing attention in the literature and at professional meetings. Some argue that traditional hard copy collections will soon

be a thing of the past. However, in the current environment, access systems simultaneously hold metadata for hard-copy and digital items, thus creating challenges for the organization and representation of information.

First, summarize, compare and contrast the roles of descriptive, administrative, and structural metadata. Then, considering a collection that combines both physical objects (e.g., books, DVDs, slides) and purely digital assets (e.g., datasets, blog content, digitized journal articles and books, video files), provide the rationale for differences in the design of one descriptive metadata element, one administrative metadata element, and one structural metadata element for each type of item (i.e., physical object and digital asset) in the collection.

Spring 2007 Set B

1. Ranganathan's Third Law states "every book its reader." What does this mean? Choose one kind of information agency and describe how this law might (1) affect the values that guide the information agency and (2) be applied to the design of policy, services, and organizational structure in that information agency?
2. All professionals hold a "world view" of their work and the standards associated with their practice, which is shaped by a variety of experiences. When you entered the Information Sciences program at UT, you were likely not aware of the important theories and theorists that guide contemporary research and practice in our field. Which particular theories and theorists shape your work with users and the use of information? Which specific theories guide your understanding of the structure and organization of intellectual content, regardless of format, including creation, exchange, and storage of content?
3. In a traditional print world, libraries purchased books and other materials. Once purchased, the materials were owned by the library until a decision was made to sell or discard them. In an electronic world, many books, journals and other materials are leased rather than purchased. Librarians are thus faced with a variety of management issues, including dealing with licensing issues, developing infrastructure, and providing different kinds of customer services.

Discuss the major issues surrounding the "ownership" versus "access" debate. What are the advantages and disadvantages of both the purchase/ownership and lease/access models? Discuss the short-term and long-term implications for an information agency of your choice

4. The development of the Internet and the rapid development of new applications from

search engines (e.g., Lycos, Altavista, Google) and directories (e.g., Yahoo!) to e-commerce sites (e.g., Amazon, eBay) to digital libraries (e.g., American Memory, JStor) to collaborative, social information spaces (e.g., Web 2.0 / Library 2.0, MySpace, Wikipedia, Flickr) makes it possible to envision a world without information professionals and libraries. These developments have led to speculation that information professionals will no longer be needed to mediate access to information. Others argue that the information landscape is becoming more complex, making it increasingly difficult to find high quality information without consulting an information professional.

Taking a specific information environment as your starting point (e.g., academic library, school media center, public library, special library, etc.), and making explicit use of what you know about the roles played and the value added by information intermediaries, discuss how information professionals remain relevant in an environment where users can obtain the information they need from their desks or their homes.

5. You have been asked to develop a multi-lingual, accessible Web-based information system for your information agency. You will be making the decisions about technology selection, information architecture, usability / accessibility, metadata design, and content management. Select an information environment of your choice and discuss the following questions:
 - 1) How will you determine the technical and cognitive capabilities of your audience(s)?
 - 2) Which LIS theories and principles will guide your decision-making process?

Summer 2007

1. We live in a country that consists of many people of different backgrounds, cultures, values, and preferences. From the core values statement of the American Library Association, we read:

“ALA recognizes its broad social responsibilities. The broad social responsibilities of the American Library Association are defined in terms of the contribution that librarianship can make in ameliorating or solving the critical problems of society; support for efforts to help inform and educate the people of the United States on these problems and to encourage them to examine the many views on and the facts regarding each problem; and the willingness of ALA to take a position on current

critical issues with the relationship to libraries and library service set forth in the position statement.”

In addition, we read, “We value our nation's diversity and strive to reflect that diversity by providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we serve.”

From the ALA code of ethics we read, “We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.

Why is valuing diversity important to the information professional?

How can an information professional promote behaviors that comply with the above values and ethics?

2. A variety of commentators have noted that Google’s search engine interface is far superior to what is found in a typical on-line catalog or database and often yields better results. Using one or two examples of your choice, discuss the assets and liabilities of the “Google way” contrasted with the way that librarians have both traditionally provided and currently guide intellectual access to content.
3. Many disciplines of the information professions have codes of ethics, but there is as of yet no one overarching ethical code that includes a variety of information professionals. Discuss the major principles that might be included in such a code.
4. The OCLC surveys continue to report that many Americans, as well as others, automatically associate "library" with "books and book reading.” These findings support the notion of the library as the "book place." Discuss the assets and the liabilities of the popular notion that libraries are a place to go for books and book reading.
5. As a professional, with a degree from an ALA accredited institution, you have acquired and assimilated many different perspectives of seeing and understanding professional practice.

Selecting an area of information work, discuss the views or perspectives that will inform your work, support your decision-making and guide your professional judgment.

Fall 2007

1. Developments in the 21st century require information professionals to respond to various changes and challenges. Selecting an information environment,
 - Identify at least one technical or socio-cultural change for information professionals in their domains of work
 - Discuss some of the significant challenges faced by information professionals owing to the above identified change(s)?
 - Describe the new skills and competencies required to effectively meet the challenges

2. Facilitating intellectual and physical access to resources is important to information professionals. Nevertheless, sometimes information organizations establish physical, cultural or technical rules, procedures or standards that may become barriers that prevent or constrain information access by the communities they serve. Selecting a specific context or environment,
 - Discuss three concrete examples of these barriers
 - Explain why they are barriers in your selected environment
 - Propose solutions to at least one of the identified barriers

3. Relevance has been a topic of research interest in information science for more than three decades. What is relevance? Why is relevance a central concept in information science? What are the conflicting views of relevance and their implications for information retrieval?

4. Researchers and scholars of information seeking and use (for example, Carol Kuhlthau) have described the importance of “affect” (feelings, emotions or moods) with respect to the user’s experience in the process of information seeking. The classic triad of thoughts, actions, and feelings central to any constructive process is rarely taken into consideration in information-seeking processes. A holistic view of information seeking encompasses the affective experiences of users. Selecting a specific context,
 - Describe the impact of affect (users’ feelings) in the information-seeking process
 - Discuss how information professionals can reduce the impact of negative emotions in information seeking

5. There are many environments in which information is organized to facilitate access. To effectively organize information, we need principles, methods, and tools. Selecting an information environment,

- Discuss why representation of information is important in this environment
- Describe how information is represented in this environment
- Give concrete examples of such representations and their specific purposes

Comprehensive Exam Questions - 2008

Spring 2008

1. Using controlled vocabulary terms from authority lists in thesauri or subject heading lists can have powerful effects on search success. What features of controlled vocabularies affect search success? Identify and describe three of these significant features and discuss how each feature affects search success positively and/or negatively.

2. Information professionals are faced with many challenges in light of the fast developments in information technologies. Emerging technologies are reshaping information access and delivery. Many users expect information systems and services provided by commercial sites (e.g., Google, Amazon.com) to be available in libraries or information agencies. Information professionals are concerned about losing their roles and/or presence in the digital information environment.
 - a. Discuss your role as a future information professional in this changing environment, and
 - b. Discuss methods or strategies you would consider to make your library/agency competitive in relation to providing cutting edge technologies and services that satisfy user needs.

3. Information literacy is perceived by many information professionals as a critical ability for individuals to possess in order to flourish in the Information Age. Identify a specific information environment or library type and
 - define what information literacy is within the context of the chosen environment,
 - identify and discuss three characteristics of an ‘information literate’ person within that environment, and
 - discuss how advances in information technology within that environment have influenced the importance of information literacy.

4. What is copyright? Identify and describe three key features of copyright law in a digital environment. Describe and discuss the implications of copyright law with respect to access and use of digital content.

5. S.R. Ranganathan proposed several essential truths about library and information science in his Five Laws of Library Science (1931):
 - “1. Books are for use.

2. For every reader, his [or her] book.
3. For every book, its reader.
4. Save the time of the reader.
5. A library is a growing organism.”

Ranganathan created these laws over 75 years ago. Since that time there have been many changes to our profession and our practices resulting from developments in information technology, standards and communications. Select any two of Ranganathan’s five laws, and for each (1) discuss what the law meant during Ranganathan’s time in a ‘traditional’ library environment, and (2) discuss what the same law means today.

Summer 2008

1. Many people use the internet to address their information needs because they feel all answers can be found on the web by googling or on wikipedia.
 - a) Does this diminish the importance of librarians and information professionals? Why or why not?
 - b) Is this an issue for all information providers (public, academic, school, corporate, others etc)? Name two and address issues related to information access, information organization, and information quality.
2. Different kinds of information needs are best responded to by different types of sources and media. Specify an information environment (public, academic, school, special library, or other) and identify
 - (a) At least three different information needs that might be encountered.
 - (b) Discuss the factors that determine the selection of the type of source and type of media to meet that need. Be sure to give examples of each kind of need.
3. Information professionals believe that well designed information systems contain structured access points and vocabulary and that recall and precision must perform at certain levels. Usability and convenience are also important so that these systems often provide different interfaces for expert and novice users. However, many users instead use an Internet search engine and accept the results of “googling” as satisfactory without even considering the use of databases available to them.
 - (a) To what degree are databases relevant for the user of an information resource in the subject of your selection? Support your statement by comparing the

- strengths and weaknesses of a search in a structured information system (e.g., ERIC etc.) with a Google search of the Internet.
- (b) Discuss issues such as resource availability and quality, search vocabulary options, search logic, and ranking of results as well as searcher time and effort.
- (c) When should a user use an internet search engine instead of a more scholarly database instead of a search engine?
4. Many disciplines of the information professions have codes of ethics, but there is as of yet no one overarching ethical code that includes a variety of information professionals. Discuss three major principles that might be included in such a code.
5. One of the interesting developments in library services has been the notion of the “information commons” where the traditional reference desk and the computer services help desk have been brought together in one integrated service point. This trend also builds on the fact that many libraries are now responsible for a large number of public-use computers.
- (a) What are the assets and the liabilities of moving from the “library” to the “information commons” model?
- (b) What are the assets and liabilities of keeping them separate?

Fall 2008

1. Many years ago, Lawrence Clark Powell stated that librarianship involved love of books, love of people, and a need to bring the two together. Does this seem true today? Why or why not? Justify your answer and explain what elements of that statement, if any, would you change to reflect the realities of professional practice in the early 21st century? In your response, please address all three elements of Powell's original statement.
2. The information profession is undergoing change due to the new digital environment and technological developments. In the library environment, reference services for users typically include, but are not limited to
- Interviewing for information needs
 - Helping with access to resources
 - Teaching information literacy

Discuss THREE differences or similarities between traditional reference service in the library and reference service in the new online environment. Include in your answer, a discussion of tools or methods that information professionals can create or acquire to help them offer effective reference services to the community of virtual users.

3. Electronic information sources are transforming library information services and creating new challenges for the organization and representation of information. Identify THREE challenges that have been created for organizing and representing information by the presence of different types of electronic resources in online library catalogs. How have information professionals approached each of these three challenges? Provide specific examples to substantiate your points.
4. All professionals hold a “world view” of their work and the standards and policies associated with their practice, which is shaped by a variety of experiences. When you entered the Information Sciences program at UT, you were likely not aware of important theories or technical standards or policies that guide contemporary research and practice in our field. Identify and discuss THREE theories, standards OR policies that you’ve learned about that will shape your practice as an information professional. You may include any mix of theories, standards, or policies in formulating your answer.
5. Researchers and scholars of information seeking and use (for example, Carol Kuhlthau) have described the importance of “affect” (feelings, emotions or moods) with respect to the user’s experience in the process of information seeking. A holistic view of information seeking encompasses the affective experiences of users. Choose ONE library environment (academic, school media center, public, special) and identify and discuss THREE methods that can be used to reduce the impact of negative emotions in information seeking in that environment.

Comprehensive Exam Questions - 2009

Spring 2009

1. The traditional methods for information organization include indexing and classification. Professionally trained indexers and catalogers assign subject headings (also called index terms or descriptors) and classification codes (such as LCC or DDC) to documents as controlled subject access points in bibliographic records. Classification also adds browsing capability to allow searchers navigating through hierarchical subject arrangements as an alternative to searching. Today, the Web is becoming a popular information search system; social indexing (also known as collaborative tagging, folksonomy, etc.) has emerged as an alternative to traditional professional subject indexing. In your answer,
 - Compare the traditional information retrieval system with the Web.
 - Discuss TWO pros and TWO cons of the Web as an information retrieval system.
 - Provide a balanced view on the new phenomenon of social indexing in terms of its TWO advantages and TWO disadvantages.

2. Relevance has been a topic of research interest in information science for more than four decades. There are two major conflicting views in the debate: the system-centered perspective vs. the user-centered perspective. In your answer,
 - Define what is relevance from each perspective.
 - Discuss the implications for information retrieval and/or the design of services from each perspective.
 - Propose THREE strategies to help users in finding relevant information.

3. Libraries are being asked by the FBI and other Federal agencies to divulge information about the reading habits and Internet use of library clients whom the FBI suspects of being "terrorists." What kind of problems does this raise for libraries? What would be a good "privacy policy" for library records? Select a type of library or information agency (e.g., academic, public, school media center, special, other) and describe the key elements of a privacy policy regarding client information from the agency's perspective. First identify the principles that you would consider in drafting such a policy, and then identify the sources that you might draw upon in doing so. For example, the ALA Code of Ethics.

4. Publicly funded information agencies—libraries are a good example—are created as a public good that is they support and enhance the quality of life in a

community. Increasingly, critics argue that those interested in the services and collections provided should pay for them and that those who are not interested should not pay. Thus, information agencies would be privately funded.

To what degree should community information agencies be publicly funded? In particular, what public good do they or might they create?

5. Information is defined in so many ways by users, LIS professionals, and researchers. In your essay:
 - Discuss the THREE definitions of information provided by Michael Buckland with adequate examples.
 - What is the relationship between information and communication?
 - Describe the important elements of a typical information system. Illustrate with an example of an information system from your everyday life.

Summer 2009

1. All professionals hold a “world view” of their work and the standards associated with their practice, which is shaped by a variety of experiences. When you entered the Information Sciences program at UT, you were likely not aware of the important theories, models and theorists that guide contemporary research and practice in our field.
 - a. Which particular theories or models and theorists shape your work with users and the use of information?
 - b. Which specific theories guide your understanding of the structure and organization of intellectual content – regardless of format – including creation, exchange, and storage of content?
2. The following quotation has been attributed to Marshall McLuhan: “We become what we behold. We shape our tools and then our tools shape us.”
 - a. Discuss what McLuhan meant by this statement, and
 - b. Discuss whether you agree or disagree with it. In your discussion, provide at least two concrete examples of a ‘tool’ used in the library and information professions that supports your agreement/disagreement with the quotation.
3. What is the doctrine of ‘fair use’? Why is it important? Describe two uses for which reproduction of a part of a work (under certain conditions) is considered “fair use”.

Identify a specific information environment or library type and describe the appropriate strategies you would use to educate your patrons about fair use.

4. The development of the Internet and the rapid development of new applications (e.g. search engines and directories, e-commerce sites, digital libraries, and collaborative, social information spaces) makes it possible to envision a world without information professionals and libraries. These developments have led to speculation that information professionals will no longer be needed to mediate access to information. Identify a specific information environment as your starting point (e.g., academic library, school media center, public library, special library, etc.) then:
 - a. note at least two major challenges facing librarians in an environment where users can obtain information from their desks or homes,
 - b. discuss how information professionals can remain relevant, and
 - c. make explicit use of what you know about the roles played and the value added by information intermediaries to illustrate your point.

5. Metadata plays a crucial role in organizing and representing information resources. In your essay, address the following:
 - a. What is metadata? (You should go beyond the simplistic definition: “data about data”).
 - b. Why is metadata crucial to organizing and representing information objects?
 - c. Some metadata schemes are being developed for specific disciplines. Identify a metadata scheme developed for a specific discipline, and using this scheme as an example discuss the strengths and weaknesses of having discipline specific metadata schemes.
 - d. What developments in information technologies have made metadata crucial and why?

Fall 2009

1. One of the critical competencies in the 21st century is information literacy.
 - Define information literacy
 - Select an information environment and discuss why information literacy is important to its users
 - Propose strategies or programs to improve information skills

2. Researchers of information seeking and use (for example, speakers at SIS Lazerow Lectures and Research Forums , Peter Ingwersen, Carol Kuhlthau, Tefko Saracevic, and Donald Case) have examined important factors affecting a user's interaction with information (such as, work tasks, cognitive factors, feelings, relevance, and avoidance of information). Select a specific information context or use scenario.
 - Describe two to three factors and how they impact the information-seeking process
 - Discuss what information professionals can do to help users satisfy their information needs

3. Ranganathan has suggested that a guiding principle should be to "Save the time of the reader." In your answer, discuss if library catalogs and indexing databases actually save the time of the reader.
 - If they do, describe how they accomplish this; include at least three features of these information sources to discuss how they succeed in saving the reader's time
 - If they do not, argue why they do not accomplish this; describe their functions and how they fail in saving the reader's time

4. Both libraries and bookstores collect books and audiovisual materials for their patrons.
 - Compare how they each develop their respective collections
 - Identify the differences and similarities in the ways these two institutions describe and represent materials in their collections
 - Discuss how and why each institution arranges its collections differently

5. The notion "digital libraries" is conceptualized in different ways by researchers, system developers, and users.
 - Define the term "digital library" from at least two perspectives
 - Compare a digital library with a traditional library
 - Discuss the challenges and opportunities that digital libraries bring to diverse users

Comprehensive Exam Questions - 2010

Spring 2010

Question 1: Social Media

In a recent article, Erik Qualman noted that Social Media is the biggest shift since the Industrial Revolution.

- a) Define “social media” and discuss how it is changing the nature of user expectations of information services in libraries and/or information agencies.
- b) Identify a specific information environment or library type. Select three examples of social media and discuss how they can be used to deliver (or improve) information services and resources to clients/users.
- c) Discuss the negative impact that could result from implementing social media to deliver or improve information services and resources to clients/users.

Question 2: Living Digital

“Living Digital: The Future of Information and the Role of the Library,” was the theme of a Symposium hosted at ALA 2010 midwinter conference. Topics in this theme included how the digital environment has introduced new materials, new partners, and new user expectations into the information arena. Answer the following:

1. What does “living digital” mean to you as a future information professional?
2. What strategies should libraries and/or information agencies adapt to:
 - a) deliver effective information/reference services to virtual information consumers,
 - b) determine reference collections that meet the information needs of virtual consumers, and
 - c) empower information professionals so that they are able to meet the challenges of the digital information environment that is constantly changing.

Question 3: Information Retrieval Systems

Information professionals believe that well designed information retrieval systems (IRs) such as online databases that contain structured access points and controlled vocabulary will facilitate user information access and retrieval. Many libraries have made online databases available for their users free of charge. However, many users prefer to use web

searching engines such as Google, Google Scholar, Bing, and Yahoo to find information of interest. Answer the following:

- a) Select a library or agency of interest to you. Compare the strengths and weaknesses of a search conducted in a structured IR system that you feel most comfortable with (e.g., ERIC) with a Google, Google Scholar, Bing, or Yahoo search.
- b) Discuss how the evaluation of retrieval performance of a structured IR system may vary from that of a web search engine.
- c) Discuss issues in using precision and recall ratios as measures of retrieval performance in IRs and web search engines.

Question 4: Information Representation

The pace of change seems to increase relentlessly, especially change involving information technology. User generation of content has become the “norm” in many information environments. In order to meet changing nature of user expectations, libraries or information centers are taking measures to provide collections and services that are more user-centered.

- a) Discuss issues and challenges involved in using controlled vocabulary to organize and represent items in collections vis-à-vis user tagging of such items.
- b) What is the future of controlled vocabulary as a practice for providing a standardized or structured representation of items in collections?
- c) Should catalogers continue to use controlled vocabulary? If yes, how will they meet the evolving expectations of user information needs in the digital environment?

Question 5: E-Government

According to the 2008 United Nations E-Government Readiness Index, The United States is ranked number 4 among the top 50 countries that are E-Government ready.

- a) What does the term, “E-Government,” mean?
- b) What role do the information professions play with respect to citizens and “E-Government”?
- c) Discuss the benefits of E-Government?

Summer 2010

1. Libraries have always been hailed as essential institutional supports for democracy, that is, library service is seen as a "public good."
 - a. In what way does the idea of "information-as-a-commodity" undermine this idea?
 - b. If the idea of information-as-a-commodity becomes the accepted wisdom in the United States, discuss TWO significant implications and/or challenges this would have for the development of national information policy?
 - c. Finally, present your own arguments for or against the idea of library service as a "public good."

2. Select an information environment of your choice (e.g., public library, academic library, special library, school library/media center, other) and answer ALL the following parts separately:
 - a. What is cataloging? Identify TWO skills/competencies information professionals need to be a successful cataloger in your selected environment and provide specific examples to prove your point.
 - b. What is the connection between cataloging and metadata? Why is cataloging and metadata crucial to organizing and representing information objects?
 - c. Why is knowledge of cataloging important for ALL information professionals in the 21st century? Identify TWO challenges in developing effective cataloging practices in contemporary times.

3. Researchers and scholars of information seeking and use (for example, Carol Kuhlthau) have described the importance of "affect" (feelings, emotions or moods) with respect to the user's experience in the process of information seeking. The classic triad of thoughts, actions, and feelings central to any constructive process is rarely taken into consideration in information-seeking processes. A holistic view of information seeking encompasses the affective experiences of users. Selecting a specific context,
 - a. Describe the impact of affect (users' feelings) in the information-seeking process.
 - b. Discuss how information professionals can reduce the impact of negative emotions in information seeking.

4. You have been asked to develop a multi-lingual, accessible Web-based information system for your information agency. You will be making the decisions about technology selection, usability and access, metadata design, and content management. Select an information environment of your choice and discuss the following questions:
 - a. How will you approach issues of providing access to materials in multiple languages and multiple formats (e.g., large print; audio)?
 - b. Which LIS theories and principles will guide your decision-making process?
 - c. What role will information and communications standards and recommendations play in your development approach?

5. S.R. Ranganathan proposed several essential truths about library and information science in his Five Laws of Library Science (1931):
 - i. Books are for use;
 - ii. For every reader, his [or her] book;
 - iii. For every book, its reader;
 - iv. Save the time of the reader;
 - v. A library is a growing organism.

Ranganathan created these laws over 75 years ago. Since that time there have been many changes to our profession and our practices resulting from developments in information technology, standards and communications. Select any TWO of Ranganathan's five laws and discuss how each is relevant in today's information environment. Include examples in your discussion.

Fall 2010

1. Ranganathan has suggested that a guiding principle should be to "Save the time of the reader. In today's environment, do library catalogs and databases "save the time of the reader"? If so, how do they accomplish this? If not, why do they not accomplish this? Include in your answer at least three features of those information sources that relate to saving the reader's time. Describe how they function and how they succeed or fail in saving the reader's time today.

2. Historically, information and subject specialists have taken on the task of creating intellectually generated metadata to describe information resources and enhance information access. More recently, it has been suggested that social tagging would better serve those functions. Discuss this issue. In your discussion, define the terms metadata, intellectually generated metadata, and social tagging. Discuss

the differences between the process of generating metadata by information and subject specialists and by social taggers, including strengths and weaknesses for each approach to description.

3. Information technology has penetrated all domains of human life: education, workplace and home. More and more people are adopting the Internet for shopping, learning, finding information, and communicating with people. One of the critical competencies in the 21st century is information literacy.
 - a. Articulate the meaning of information literacy in the digital age
 - b. Select an information environment to discuss issues related to information literacy
 - c. Propose strategies or instructional programs to improve information competency

4. Relevance has been a topic of research interest in information science for more than four decades. There are two major conflicting views in the debate: the system-centered perspective vs. the user-centered perspective. In your answer,
 - a. Define “relevance” from both perspectives.
 - b. Discuss the implications for information retrieval and/or the design of services from both perspectives.
 - c. Propose THREE strategies to help users in finding relevant information.

5. You have been asked to develop a multi-lingual, accessible Web-based information system for your information agency. You will be making the decisions about technology selection, information architecture, usability / accessibility, metadata design, and content management. Select an information environment of your choice and discuss the following questions:
 - a. How will you determine the technical and cognitive capabilities of your audience(s)?
 - b. Which LIS theories and principles will guide your decision-making process?

Comprehensive Exam Questions - 2011

Spring 2011

1. All professionals hold a “world view” of their work and the standards associated with their practice. This worldview is shaped by a variety of factors, including training, experience, and both formal and information education. When you entered the Information Sciences program at UT, you were likely not aware of the important theories, models and theorists that guide contemporary research and practice in our field.
 - A. How have the theories, models, and thinkers you’ve been exposed to during your SIS coursework influenced your thinking about working with users as an information professional? Please identify at least two specific models or theories.
 - B. Which specific theories guide your understanding of the structure and organization of intellectual content – regardless of format – including creation, exchange, and storage of content?

2. Relevance has been a topic of research interest in information science for more than four decades. There are two major conflicting views in the debate: the system-centered perspective vs. the user-centered perspective. In your answer,
 - a. Define relevance from each perspective and provide examples that substantiate the definition from each perspective.
 - b. Discuss the implications for information retrieval (IR) of each perspective.
 - c. Discuss criteria users employ in assessing relevance of information retrieved from search engines along with issues involved in this assessment.

3. Changes in the structure of information systems and access to information require that 21st Century information professionals respond accordingly. Consider a specific information environment (public library, school library media center, special library or information service) and
 - a. Identify at least one technical or socio-cultural change in the last decade that influences the activities of information professionals in their domains of work.
 - b. What are some of the specific challenges facing information professionals as a result of the changes you identified in part a.?

- c. Describe the new skills and competencies information professionals require in order to required to effectively meet these challenges

4. Although information professionals operate under the assumption that information retrieval systems should provide structured access to information with a degree of recall and precision, many users prefer a simple interface and readily accept the “quick and dirty” results of a search engine like Google.
 - a. Do you feel that “Googling” is usually an adequate method for information seeking?
 - b. Defend your statement within a specific information environment (i.e., academic libraries, school library media center, special library or information service, etc.). Describe the information seeking behaviors and activities most typical of the environment’s constituents, comparing the results of searching the free Internet with the likely outcome of using the information tools germane to your chosen environment.

5. The pace of change seems to increase relentlessly, especially change involving information technology. User generation of content has become the “norm” in many information environments. In order to meet changing nature of user expectations, libraries or information centers are taking measures to provide collections and services that are more user-centered.
 - a. Discuss issues and challenges involved in using controlled vocabulary to organize and represent items in collections vis-à-vis user tagging of such items.
 - b. What is the future of controlled vocabulary as a practice for providing a standardized or structured representation of items in collections?
 - c. Should catalogers continue to use controlled vocabulary? If yes, how will they meet the evolving expectations of user information needs in the digital environment?

Summer 2011

1. S.R. Ranganathan proposed several essential truths about library and information science in his Five Laws of Library Science (1931):
 - 1) Books are for use;
 - 2) For every reader, his [or her] book;

- 3) For every book, its reader;
- 4) Save the time of the reader;
- 5) The library is a growing organism.

Ranganathan created these laws over 75 years ago. Since that time there have been many changes to our profession and our practices resulting from developments in information technology, standards and communications. Select any TWO of Ranganathan's five laws and discuss how each is relevant in today's information environment in general and in a specific library environment. Be sure to note what has changed and how that has changed the relevance of the law you are discussing. Include examples in your discussion.

2. Select an information environment of your choice (e.g., public library, academic library, special library, school library/media center, other) and answer ALL the following parts separately:
 - a. What is cataloging? Identify TWO skills/competencies information professionals need to be a successful cataloger in your selected environment and provide specific examples to prove your point.
 - b. What is the connection between cataloging and metadata? Why is cataloging and metadata crucial to organizing and representing information objects?
 - c. Why is knowledge of cataloging important for ALL information professionals in the 21st century? Identify TWO challenges in developing effective cataloging practices in contemporary times.
3. *Living Digital* is a phrase that's currently creating a buzz in the library world. For example, "Living Digital: The Future of Information and the Role of the Library," was the theme of a Symposium hosted at ALA 2010 midwinter conference. Topics included discussion of how the digital environment has introduced new materials, new partners, and new user expectations into the information arena.

Answer the following:

- a. What does "living digital" mean to you as a future information professional?
- b. What strategies should libraries and/or information agencies adopt or adapt to:
 - 1) Identify and deliver effective resources and services to patrons in the digital environment while maintaining "traditional" services and resources for patrons who are not currently "living digital" (by choice or circumstance), and
 - 2) Empower information professionals to meet the challenges of a constantly changing digital information environment.

4. Although Researchers of information seeking and use (for example, speakers at SIS Lazerow Lectures and Research Forums , Peter Ingwersen, Carol Kuhlthau, Tefko Saracevic, and Donald Case) have examined important factors affecting a user's interaction with information (such as, work tasks, cognitive factors, feelings, relevance, and avoidance of information).

Select a specific information context or use scenario. Describe three information seeking factors and how they influence the information-seeking process in your chosen scenario or context.

5. Explain the concept of the “digital divide.” What impact might the digital divide have on individuals, institutions, and communities? Provide supporting examples. What role will information professionals play in helping individuals, institutions and communities address the digital divide? What effect will the digital divide have on information agencies in the future?

Fall 2011

1. In response to the challenges of economic downsizing and budget crunches in the 21st century, librarians and other types of information professionals in the United States have had to extend themselves to show greater relevance of their work to the communities in which they are embedded. Select ONE information environment of your choice (e.g., public library, academic library, special library, school library/media center, other) and answer ALL the following parts separately:
 - a. Discuss in detail TWO ways (services and/or programs) that the selected library or information agency has extended itself to show greater community relevance. Provide an example of each service and/or program.
 - b. Discuss how the selected library or information agency would use metrics to show that it is relevant to the respective community and to show that it is making an impact on the everyday lives of stakeholders.
 - c. Discuss in detail at least TWO new competencies (patterns of skills, knowledge, abilities, and behaviors) that are required of librarians or other types of information professionals in the 21st century to effectively deliver the services and/or programs identified above in section(a).
2. Metadata plays a crucial role in organizing and representing information resources. In your essay, address the following and provide examples to illustrate your point for each section:

- a. What is metadata? (You should go beyond the simplistic definition: “data about data”).
 - b. How is metadata important in information representation and information organization respectively?
 - c. Some metadata schemes are being developed for specific disciplines. Identify a metadata scheme developed for a specific discipline or community and, using this scheme as an example, discuss at least TWO strengths and TWO weaknesses of discipline-specific metadata schemes.
- 3.** As a professional, with a degree from an ALA accredited institution, you should have acquired and assimilated many different perspectives of seeing and understanding professional practice and information-related, creation-organization-management-dissemination processes. The assumption is that your perspective on these practices and processes has changed significantly over the duration of your study for the master’s degree.
- a. Identify THREE examples of how your understanding of information-related work has changed from the time you joined the program. Be sure to include in your answer the limitations of your prior understanding, the processes that led to new insights, and your current understanding.
 - b. Use an important (different for each example) library/information theory and/or concept to frame each of the THREE examples identified in 3a.
- 4.** Many disciplines have codes of ethics, but there is as of yet no one overarching ethical code that covers a variety of information professionals.
- a. Discuss TWO major principles that might be included in such a code. Discuss the need for each principle.
 - b. Discuss at least TWO different scenarios (occurring in libraries or other information environments) in which each of these principles might be tested.
 - c. How would you deal with both of these scenarios based on what you have learned in this program?
- 5.** In a traditional print world, libraries purchased books and other materials. Once purchased, the materials were owned by the library until a decision was made to sell or discard the materials. In an electronic world, many books, journals and other materials are licensed rather than purchased. Librarians are thus faced with a variety of management issues, including dealing with licensing issues, developing infrastructure, and providing different kinds of customer services.

- a. Discuss the major issues surrounding the “ownership” versus “access” debate. Discuss THREE pros and THREE cons of both models.
- b. Discuss the implications (of your answers to question 5a) for ONE information agency of your choice.