

## 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.
  - Discuss your role as a future information professional in this changing environment, and
  - 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.