

## 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.