

THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

Fall 2003

Class Meetings:

Monday: 5:15–7:45
HSS 111

Instructor's Office:

401G Student Services Bldg.

Telecommunication:

Instructor's SIS Office: 423-974-6509 (with voice mail)

Home Office: 423-693-8907 (with answering machine)

Fax (SIS): 423-974-4667

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as normal fax; fax overtakes voice)

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imainc@mindspring.com (avoid using jpember1)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Generation, production, management, dissemination, and use of information. Roles of information in society, information seeking and user behavior, information industry, economics of information products and services, technological and organizational change, information professions, and issues. The course is not about libraries per se, but libraries will be the example used most often.

COURSE STRUCTURE

At the beginning of the course, which moves from the general to the specific, we will examine the concept of “information environment” and some historical insight into the larger profession and attempt to understand where our future lies. One purpose of the course is to enable the student to understand how the information professions fit into the larger information environment in political, social, and economic terms.

Another objective is to understand how the field is made up of both technical areas and professional issues. Understanding the professional model and the information life cycle will be valuable here. Hopefully, there will develop the beginnings of a vision of the larger field of information sciences and of the future: where we are now and where we are going. Throughout the course, lectures and discussions will focus on trends and issues and the role of information in society and how the information professions must examine our direction. We must better understand crucial issues such as censorship, ethics, and intellectual property, for example, since

social relevance—how we are of value to the larger society--depends on professional activity in such areas, not on techniques.

To achieve our direction, there are—roughly—three large facets of the course’s content, and they will develop, mostly, as shown below:

I. **Concepts** (e.g., information and communication models; information creation and the information professionals’ roles; communication; knowledge; value addition; the information life cycle, evolution of information management)

II. **Values/issues** (e.g., intellectual freedom, censorship, ethics, information literacy, intellectual property/copyright)

III. **Information disciplines and professions** (e.g., professionalization model, convergence of the disciplines, metadisciplines, the major fields, some minor fields, emergent fields)

OBJECTIVES

The course content reflects its purposes:

- To enable the student to understand different stages and environments in which information is created, transferred and used,
- To enable the student to compare processes through which information is transferred,
- To introduce the student to general technological and professional issues, those handled more in more technical depth within the SIS curriculum, and
- To enable the student to interpret and evaluate the impact of a particular technology in an information environment,
- To prepare the student to move on to more advanced levels of study in the information sciences.

METHODS OF TEACHING

The course offers a combination of lectures, exercises/problems, and participation.

ASSIGNMENTS/GRADED WORK

There are 6 graded efforts: 4 papers and 2 exams.

Assignment 1: Application of Information Life Cycle. 10% of course grade. Due: September 22.

90% of white-collar work involves information processing. In this exercise, you will choose some type of white-collar information environment, such as a **unit within** a library (e.g., interlibrary

loan), archives, doctor's office, newspaper operation, insurance company, etc and (a) find examples of the elements there of the information life cycle and (b) describe how technology supports these activities. These will be presented in a 3-5 page report.

SEE ASSIGNMENT SPECIFICATIONS FOR ASSIGNMENT 1 AT END OF THIS DOCUMENT

**Assignment 2: Appraisal of Non-bibliothecal Information Systems – A Comparison---
15% of course grade. Due October 20**

Most librarians are familiar with several types of publicly accessible information systems; typically, these include bibliographic-textural-numeric databases (e.g., those in DIALOG), online public catalogs (OPACs), and internet search engines that users need to understand. Students will encounter these technologies in other courses. Also important in helping users locate non-bibliothecal information resources (we are about "access" to all information types) of all types are resources to meet other types of needs.

1. Two sources of clip art sources
2. Two sources for photographic images for insertion into and use in intellectual products of all types (e.g., Getty Images vs. Corbis)
3. Two online sources for books available for purchase (e.g., Amazon, Barnes and Noble)
4. Two association Web sites (e.g., ARMA International, Special Library Association, American Society of Information Science, and Technology, American Library Association)

**Assignment 3 : Impact of a Technology on Society: 15% of course grade. Due:
November 3**

Each student will choose a topic for exploration, one focusing on the political, social, economic and cultural impact of an information technology. The technology may be one mentioned in class but may be something else. Please understand: this is not about the performance specifications of a technology.

**Assignment 4: Nontraditional Information Work: 15% of course grade: Due
November 17.**

Each student will be assigned a non-traditional information profession or vocation and develop a description (3-4 pages) of that field and how, if at all, it relates to a field you already understand to some extent (librarianship). The end ungraded product will be made available to all students in the class.

Assignments discussed in more detail in class

The instructor is willing to talk with students about assignments and review drafts if

needed. The LIS collection at Hodges is good for your research. There is a link that offers some resource suggestions; it is at <http://www.lib.utk.edu/refs/infosci/printres.html>

GRADED WORK SUMMARY:

There are six (6) graded items; they are:

Two (2) exams @ 20% = 40% of course grade (October 6, December 1). The first exam covers all material to that point; the second covers material after first exam to the end of the term (i.e., it is not comprehensive in scope).

Assignment 1 = 10% of course grade (September 22)

Assignment 2 = 10% of course grade (October 20)

Assignment 3 = 10% of course grade (November 3)

Assignment 4 = 10% of course grade (November 17)

First exam = 20% of course grade (October 6)

Second exam = 20% of course grade (December 1)

Class Participation = 10% of course grade

TOTAL = 100%

TEXT AND COURSE CALENDAR

The primary text is Richard E. Rubin, *Foundations of Library and Information Science* (New York: Neal-Schuman, 2000). At bookstores.

August 25: First class meeting

September 1: **Labor Day--No Class**

September 8: Read John Feather, *The Information Society: A Study of Continuity and Change* (London: The Library Association, 2000, pp. 1-26 (Hodges Library, Electronic Reserves, Information Sciences, 490 Pemberton, select appropriate .PDF file

September 15: Read Rubin, Chapter 1

September 22: Read Rubin, Chapter 2 and Appendix G

September 29: Read Rubin, Chapter 4 and Appendices B and C

October 6: Read Rubin, Chapter 5

October: 13: First Exam

October 20 – **No class; instructor on professional travel (leave voice mail if needed)**

October 27: Read Rubin, Chapter 3

November 3: Read Rubin, Chapter 8 and Appendixes E and A

November 10–Read Rubin, Chapter 7

November 17–Read Rubin, Chapter 9

November 24–Read Rubin, Chapter 10 and Appendix H

December 1–Second exam (non-comprehensive); course/instructor evaluation.

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CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR

I definitely want to be as available as reasonably possible for consultation about your work. I have listed for you three (3) phone numbers (two with remotely addressable answering machines which I check regularly). (This works better than “dropping by” or leaving message with the SIS office—as I’m not there every day.) Please contact me by phone or by e-mail to discuss your needs or to make an appointment. When calling me at work or at home, please leave at least your name and the number where I can reach you if I am not immediately available. Your needs are important; you are not “bothering” me to call at home--or elsewhere--when the need is class work--or advising--related.

NOTE ON "IN COMPLETES"

Based on adopted University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and SIS policy, an "Incomplete" is granted only under "the most unusual of circumstances." Power to grant an "Incomplete" resides wholly in the instructor and is not a student right. In the event that an "Incomplete" is even to be considered, the student will be required to petition for an "Incomplete" by filling out a SIS approved form used for that purpose (contact instructor), and the student will agree to the conditions and date set by the instructor for the removal of the "I" ("Incomplete"). In any event, an "I" not removed within one semester automatically becomes an "F." For students who simply "disappear" without contacting the instructor and without completing the required form, an "F" is submitted.

NOTE ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism in any of its several forms is intolerable, and attention to matters of documentation in all written work is expected and required. Inadvertence (i.e., "carelessness"), alleged lack of understanding, or avowed ignorance of the various types of plagiarism (including lack of proper attribution of sources and use of quoted material and

mechanics for same) are not acceptable excuses. Students who may be unsure of the nature of plagiarism should consult a source on writing research reports, such as "Section 34," Harbrace College Handbook (Hodges Library, Reference: PE 1112 .H6 [latest edition]). Infractions of academic integrity are penalized according to the severity of the infraction but **may include a course grade of "F" and the instructor's recommendation to the UTK Dean for Graduate Studies that the student be dismissed from the University.**

Each student's work is to be the product of his/her own study and/or research, not a joint effort of any sort unless previously approved. The UTK Honor Statement, adopted in 1987, and subscribed to, *de facto* by all entering students reads in part: "As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity." (See also *Hilltopics*.)

METHODS OF DOCUMENTATION

The standard SIS resource for matters of documentation is Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 5th edition [or later] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). (Paperbound copies abound in local bookstores.) Turabian is derived from the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 13th ed. For matters not covered in Turabian or where there is ambiguity, the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* is ultimately authoritative.

Use of footnotes at the bottom of pages is unnecessary. One may use superscript note numbers--in text--linked to endnotes, a collection of notes with corresponding superscript numbers collected on separate pages at the paper's end. Easier still--and perfectly valid as well--is the use of internal, parenthetical documentation, such as ". . ." (Jones, p. 98) or . . . [one's paraphrase of Jones' text] (Jones, p. 98). The reader then refers to the alphabetized "Bibliography" at the end of the paper for the first and only **full** reference to "Jones." Papers containing references to more than one work by "Jones" simply use an abbreviated short title and the name parenthetically; e.g., ". . ." (Jones, "If Today," p. 98) or author's name and date of the cited work; e.g., ". . ." (Jones, 1990, p. 45).

FORMAT OF PAPERS/EXAMS

Unless otherwise indicated--or negotiated under special circumstances--all required papers (not reading log) will be typed, or printed out, on 8 ½" X 11" paper, with 1.25" left margin and 1" for all others. Paper through which the text of the next page can be easily read is inadequate as is "erasable" paper which smears or bleeds when written on in ink. If word processed, do not right justify as this causes eyeball stretching internal spacing. Pages will be numbered. Do not use clasps, binders or folders; simply staple paper in upper left corner. If necessary, papers are acceptable on 3.5" disc in WordPerfect 6.1 or higher format or Word 6.

For *examinations*, please bring two (2) fresh "blue books" and write in black or blue/black ink, not pencil; use "white out" for erasure--or use pen with erasable ink. Write on back of

pages and in margins if need be.

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The language of instruction, written work, and examination(s) for this course is Standard English.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The University of Tennessee intends to comply with requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and those of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Students with special needs should consult with the instructor as early as possible in the term about possible accommodations under these regulations.

GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

UTK and class policy is that instructor and students should strive for gender neutral, or gender inclusive, language where possible in written and oral speech. That is, "humanity" is preferred over "mankind," "men/women" vs. "men/girls," etc.

STUDENT EVALUATION

Work in the course assumes post-baccalaureate analytical, thinking and writing skills. Work is be evaluated **at a graduate level** on appropriateness of content and strength and creativity of response; ability to follow directions and adhere to assignment specifications; accuracy; clarity; organization; consistent use of Standard (i.e., correct) English in areas of grammar, style, mechanics, use of sources, etc. Additional criteria are noted in the "Grading Scale," below.

Grading is on the following scale

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|----|---|
| A | =90-100--indicates <i>superior</i> competencies, exceeds expectations for adequate work; simply meeting minimal or basic expectations of assignment specifications is not "A" work. "A" work is normally found to contain additional critical, analytical, or creative insight. |
| B+ | = 85-89--indicates that all basic competencies have been met and surpassed. |
| B | = 80-84--indicates that all basic expectations have been met. |
| C+ | = 75-79--indicates that some expectations have been met. |
| C | = 70-74--indicates that an inadequate number of expectations have been met. |
| D | = 65-79--indicates that work is unsatisfactory |

F = 0-64--indicates that work has not met any expectations of the assignment.

PENALTY FOR LATE WORK

Except by **prior agreement**, ½ letter grade per working day may be deducted for written work not submitted by 5:00 p.m. the day due or 6:30 p.m. if a night class. For example, a paper which would normally receive the letter grade of "B" may receive a "C" if two working days late--and so forth. The same type of penalty may apply to scheduled oral reports except that they are assessed an automatic penalty of two letter grades' reduction for each class period for which they are scheduled and are not delivered--except by **prior arrangement**, which must be arrived at least 24 hours prior to the original time scheduled for the presentation.

CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY

Clearly, class attendance is recommended, but attendance per se does not directly effect a student's grade--positively or negatively.

CLASS CANCELLATIONS

Should it be necessary to cancel a class meeting, every effort will be taken to do so in advance. Look for announcements on the SIS list-service.

COURSE AND INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION

The instructor considers course/instructor evaluation a student right and, perhaps, even a responsibility. Toward the end of the term, students are given an--optional--opportunity to evaluate course and instructor using a combination of university mandated and SIS-specific questions. Evaluations are turned in, by a student and in a sealed envelope, to the SIS main office, where they are tabulated, comments extracted and typed, and all the information is reviewed by the Director. Later--at a point normally three weeks into the next semester--the results are given the instructor. The instructor appreciates students' time taken to do the evaluation and does review and consider them for course and instructional improvement.

490 -- Information Life Cycle Assignment

Purpose of the Assignment

The life cycle presents the different stages in the life of a knowledge or information product or item for consumption. Purposes of the assignment include causing students to

- Understand the life cycle as presenting different stages in the life of a piece of knowledge or information.
- Think analytically about documents in a dynamic manner rather than static (e.g., plucking a physical book—a package--off shelf),
- Appreciate how “information” is essentially a **process** and has a describable work flow understood by information professionals,
- And consider the possible actions—if any--of information workers/professionals on that information during its cycle.

Different technologies support these stages, and different technologies may be used between the stages of the cycle. For example, in the Creation stage, an individual may

- Use a telephone to gather information from people,
- A computer workstation to assemble and write the draft of a document, and
- Then the technologies of the post office to send the draft to the editor of a journal for review.

In the first Review stage, the editor may—or may not--use a fax machine to send a draft in paper form to reviewers and may use computing technologies such as e-mail to receive comments. This feature of the information cycle should suggest that players in the Cycle often have a variety of options and technologies at their disposal, including collaborative features of products such as Adobe Acrobat.

To further your understanding of the Information Life Cycle, apply it to information in an information-providing environment such as a library (or unit of a larger library, e.g., interlibrary loan), bookstore, counseling service, trade or professionals association, medical facility, newspaper, or similar agency.

Task

Identify as many of the 12 elements of the life cycle as apply to your environment—they may not all appear or be discoverable through your efforts. Be sure to label each stage in some way (e.g., bold centered headings).

Not all will apply directly, and some may apply only indirectly. For example, a library does not create the bulk of its information resources—authors do—but the library may “create” guides to the library, instructions on using CD-ROM databases, annual reports, and the like. You would want to note both these aspects but focus on what the library creates. Remember that this focus is on what happens to the information rather than merely on actions of staff or users.

Then, briefly describe how technologies support these stages, and the passage from one step to another. Some stages may need to be treated together—this is OK.

Focus on the information—what happens to it—rather than staff or users. You may find it useful—but not required—to interview someone in the agency in which the information is handled.

Your position or point of view most likely will be the "interface" in the particular cycle that you are investigating, but find examples of the other stages of the cycle as they relates to your environment.

Be careful to stay focused: for example, do not begin by discussing the creation of a piece of art and then shift to talking about a book that contains an image of it. Rather than trying to handle all information resources in an environment, take one, e.g., a newspaper article done by a journalist, a database, a pleading from a law firm (vs. **all** documents in an attorney's office).

Result

Your result will be a 4-5 page paper that identifies each stage, including examples, technologies involved, and interconnections.

Be sure to label each stage in some way; e.g., numbers bold, centered heading, etc.

Be sure to consult the general instructions on written assignments in the 490 (Pemberton) syllabus/handout.

Based upon G. Whitney, "Application of the Information Life Cycle."