

Architecting "Information" **How do We Render an Ambiguous Concept Accessible?**

by Laura McAvoy

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I joined Indiana University's (IU) academic community in the fall of 2003 with the intention to pursue a Masters/Ph.D. degree in literature, but I soon found that my love of books was much broader than I had first realized. It was not limited to literature but spanned all forms of information. This newfound self-awareness led me into my current dual-Masters degree program in literature and library science, which allows me to apply my analytical literary skills and practical organizational skills toward my ultimate career goal of information architecture.

This rising field seems to reside at the heart of librarianship. It recognizes the users' need for expedient and effective information retrieval; the importance of organization, categorization, labeling, and structure in this process; and, finally, the inherent causal relationship between well-architected information and better service. In a sense, information is the lifeblood of the library and information science community, as, quite simply, we would have nothing to organize without information, and one of the best ways to display successful librarianship is through a clearly articulated source of information that fulfills users' needs. This continuous push for faster and successful access to information without sacrificing service is the nature of information architecture and is the constant goal of the library and information science field.

Nevertheless, the concept of "information" is itself contested, serving as a heated battleground within the library and information science community, for its ambiguous nature frustrates the temptation towards simplicity which in part historically defines our profession. We want to pin down this indistinct term, but we need to realize that the very ambiguity of this term is precisely what fits "information" perfectly with the art of librarianship. After all, our field is vague: we have such a variety of distinct occupations vying for the title of librarian, that it allows our field to garner an expanding assortment of unique individuals.

Librarianship is certainly a melting pot profession, and "information," for better or worse, encourages this variety to continue. We have gone to new lengths to achieve a more inclusive librarianship with "information" spanning from traditional literary works to catalogued stuffed animals. The great thing about "information" is that it can span everything; the problem with "information" is that it can span everything. Information architecture serves as a viable information control profession in that it attempts to harness (not limit) the unwieldy nature of this term so that it remains accessible to users.