 IMS1603 Lecture 7

The documentary web

Outline of today’s lecture

1. The documentary web
2. Personal webs
3. Organisational webs
4. Some examples

We are surrounded by documents

‘There is barely a moment in our waking lives when we are not engaged in either creating new documents or accessing existing ones.’
Document intent

- to inform
- to communicate
- to entertain
- to convey knowledge
- to authorise
- to control or regulate relationships between people
- to represent an action or deed
- to provide evidence

The web of documents

These documents are commonly linked together through a mutually-supporting network or web

The web of documents

In other words, these documents exist in inter-related patterns that trace relations between people
Personal ‘webs’

Which documents do you carry with you most of the time?

Why?

Personal ‘webs’

Which of these exist in isolation?

- driver’s licence
- library card
- student ID card
- membership cards
- credit card
- receipts
- tickets for a bus/train
- scribbled notes containing phone numbers, mobile ‘phone books’, SMS messages etc

Personal ‘webs’

Which documentary webs converge on your desk?

- bank statements
- letters
- emails
- birth certificate
- a novel or encyclopaedia
- a music CD
- an assignment on floppy disk/HD/CD
- a video or DVD
- a newspaper article
- a personal homepage
- the WWW itself
Personal ‘webs’

Most of these documents are connected to:

- your life
  - allowing you to work, socialise, amuse yourself, identify yourself etc.

- other documents
  - which are parts of other nodes in other ‘webs’:
    individual and organisational webs

A student ID card is linked to:

- Enrolment records
- receipts for payment
- qualifications – course prerequisites
- VCB records
- exam results etc.

- Studio swipcard access
- requests for access
- SIMS student database
- enrolment records

- Request for studio access
- SIMS
- access policy
- Faculty policy

Using the documentary web to prove who you are

- birth certificates
- family photos
- letters
- certificates
- school records
- application forms
- medical records
- exam papers
- tax files
- passports
- ID cards
- tax files

- licences
- diaries
- customer nos.
- product registrations
- credit card statements
- bank accounts
- mortgages and loan contracts
- emails
- home pages
- chatroom logs

How many of these could you provide?
Organisational ‘webs’

The documents (information products and by-products) used and generated by organisations form threads and nodes within:

– internal webs (no department or employee works in isolation)
– external webs (no organisation works in isolation)

Internal
– Student records ➔ Faculty records ➔ School records ➔ Degree/course-related records ➔ Unit records ➔ tutorial/lab enrolments ➔ tutor assessment records …

External
– Student records ➔ Uni accounts ➔ HECS reporting ➔ DEETYA ➔ Federal Treasury …

Documentary web = society?

Human societies haven’t always been permeated at every level by webs of documents
Impetus for documentary webs

Under modernity, the emergence of documentary webs has been driven by
– the self-perceived needs of governing power structures
– the pressures of market relations
– popular responses to these processes

Some state initiatives

• Surveying
• Standardisation of measures
• Street numbers
• Surnames

Louis XIV, France's Sun King

‘Would it not be a great satisfaction to the king to know at a designated moment every year ...
... considers a census

... the number of his subjects, in total and by region, with all the resources, wealth and poverty of each place ... [Would it not be] a useful and necessary pleasure for him to be able, in his own office, to review in an hour’s time the present and past condition of a great realm of which he is the head, and be able himself to know with certitude in what consists his grandeur, his wealth, and his strengths?

[Scott 1998: 11]

Think of the documentary webs involved

‘There was $1.2 trillion in currency exchange and $500 billion in bond transactions per day in 1992, 25 times the amount of commodity trade …’

(Walker 1999: 266)

‘Events’ are also captured in ‘webs’

The Titanic’s provisions

- Fresh meat 75,000 lbs
- Fresh fish 11,000 lbs
- Salt & dried fish 4,000 lbs
- Bacon and ham 7,500 lbs
- Poultry and game 25,000 lbs
- Sausages 2,500 lbs
- Onions 3,500 lbs
- Potatoes 40 tons
- Fresh eggs 40,000

How do we know?
How can we establish the accuracy of this information?

Look at other things stated as ‘facts’ in the Titanic story (see titanic.doc on unit website)

What documentary sources can be referenced to check these ‘facts’?

Briet’s antelope

- Remember the antelope I mentioned at the end of the last lecture?
- What web of documents is formed around it?

Further reading