Today’s lecture

- Are there new kinds of documents in a digital environment?
- ICT capabilities
- ‘Fluid’ documents and the need for ‘fixity’
  - Digital information products versus digital records
- Some examples

What’s new on the WWW?

- Plenty of new **content**
- Plenty of content that was once **difficult to access**
- But have these assumed new forms?

Documentary forms persist over time

- An application form is an **application form**
- A catalogue is a **catalogue**
- An encyclopedia is an **encyclopedia**
- A medical record is a **medical record**
  
  Regardless of the medium it is **re-presented in**

Forms persist ...

if the necessary conditions are in place, such as
  - an audience
  - a medium
  - a fast reproducing technology (particularly for information products)
  - suitable economic/business/social motives
  - an appropriate political/social climate

Forms persist ...

- from one technology and medium to another
- if there is a continuing demand or need for them
- with relatively little change
  - unless the new technology/medium is held to enhance functionality
So, what is new?

New documentary forms:
- Blogs?
- Personal homepages?
- What else?

New functionalities:
- Rapid, inexpensive distribution
- Multiple access points
- Absence of time/space constraints
- Compound and ‘hybrid’ documents
- Ease of editing

ICT and information distribution
- Info creators can now more easily be publishers
- Lessened dependence upon physical media can lead to savings
- Greatly reduced lead times in publication
- Rapid access to much broader audience

ICT and access to information
- Information can be accessed from almost anywhere
- More and more institutions and agencies have a virtual dimension
  - Shops, banks, government departments, offices, libraries and archives etc.

ICT and access to information
- May be easier to work from/at home
- Emergence of national or global ‘cyber communities’
  - that share information, arrange real time/real space events, co-ordinate actions etc.

ICT and time/space
- Geographic borders/distances often less relevant
- Real time (and other) collaborations across distances facilitated
ICT and time/space

• Information can be more ‘current’ more quickly

• Information transfer between nations/agencies/communities etc. – easier, faster, less expensive
  – e.g. international banking and markets, international policing, diasporas, political activity

ICT and compound/hybrid documents

• Easy to merge documents of different types into one
  – copy/paste, insert or hyperlinks

• A single document can be made up of any combination of text, graphics and animation, images (moving and still), sound

ICT and ‘editability’

• Most current information can be easily incorporated by addition or substitution
• Creators and publishers can easily revise
• Key for information products and records where currency is a priority
• And mistakes are easily rectified

In sum, the capacity for considerable fluidity

Fluid documents

• Can be changed at any time

• May contain dynamic, constantly changing data
  – Stock market updates, real time images, hit counters etc.

• New material can be added as required

Fluid documents

• Interactions with users are possible
  – postings to email discussion/feedback etc

• Changes are usually ‘seamless’

All very admirable, but …

Fixity can be essential

• Fixity gives confidence that data/information will be the same at repeated ‘viewings’
  – e.g. checking the ‘facts’, knowing that a web-based resource will still be available

• This is particularly important with information by-products ie records
Fixity can be essential

- If *evidence* is not fixed, how much use can it be?
- Providing appropriate guarantees of fixity for electronic records is a major IM challenge

Newspapers

Emerged in late 18th century thanks to:
- Suitable technologies (movable type press / steam or electric powered presses)
- Cheap medium (newsprint)
- Increasing literacy and a growing market
- Growing impetus for a new public sphere

Newspapers

Structural Elements Include -

- COLUMNS
- NEWSPRINT
- ARTICLES
- PHOTOGRAPHS
- BYLINES
- ‘JOURNALISTIC’ FEATURES
- EDITORIAL
- WEATHER
- CLASSIFIEDS
- SECTIONS: (sports, food etc)
- NEWS (international and local)
- COMICS
- CARTOONS
- HEADLINES
- MASTHEAD
- DATE
- ADVERTISEMENTS
- FINANCE

Many were in place from the earliest days

Boom in the 19th and 20th centuries

- A business world and professional circles in need of information and news
- A rising working class with its own needs
- Compulsory education
- A state keen to regulate the media

Boom in the 19th and 20th centuries

- Paper available in large rolls
- Telephone, telegraph, transatlantic cable
- News agencies (e.g. Reuters)

Challenge of new media

Competition from: radio (1930s) television (1950s)

Leveling off of circulation figures

Owners respond by using new technologies to cut production costs:
- Photocomposition (no more typesetters and compositors)
- Automation of processes
The contemporary newspaper

- Journalists with desktop terminals connected to a server
  - Online editing, research, story placement
- Online transmission to photo-compositors, then to hard copy
- Web-based versions of most major papers are now available

Web-based versions …

- retain many features of the paper-based newspaper
  - story content and style
  - masthead
  - weather
  - sections
  - cartoons
  - editorial
  - letters etc.

Web-based versions …

can also add:

- interactivity
- different ways of navigating
- audio and video content etc.

Advantages of online papers

- easily and frequently updated
- low costs of delivery
- sponsors/advertisers can link to their web sites

Disadvantages

- Links can be slow
- Finding yesterday's paper?
  - emergence of online 'archives'
- Physically inconvenient

McAdams (1994) – pre-WWW concerns

- 'Think about footnotes.'
- 'Think about length restrictions.'
- 'How did I get here?'
- 'Keep the good, throw out the rest.'
- 'Blaze trails through the forest of information.'
McAdams (1994) – pre-WWW concerns

- ‘Bring along some design principles.’
- ‘Encourage skimming and scanning.’
- ‘Don’t make it difficult.’
- ‘Build a friendly interface.’

Online newspapers: Boczkowski (1999)

What has the WWW meant for:

- audience-generated content?
- how reporters collect information?
- the profile of newspaper readers?

Online newspapers: Deuze (2003)

The WWW has seen the emergence of:

- a ‘fourth’ kind of journalism (after print/radio/TV)
- mainstream sites that often replicate print editions
- new kinds of news sites (e.g. meta, alternative)
- widely varying levels of interaction

Online newspapers: He & Zhu (2002)

In China,

- PCs remain expensive
- the state has an ambivalent attitude to the WWW
- most WWW users are young professionals
- online papers are growing in number, but continue to run at a financial loss
- online papers are more commonly ‘brochure-ware’ than focal points for interactive communities

Exercises for Lab 6

Evaluating:

- online telephone directories
- online newspapers
- online CD catalogues

Exercises for Lab 6

- Evaluating online telephone directories:
  - How long does it take to find the information you seek?
  - How does this compare with a hardcopy telephone directory?
  - In what ways is using the online version the same as using a paper-based directory?
  - What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of each format?
  - What information and services can be accessed online that cannot be conveniently found in the paper form?
Exercises for Lab 6

Assessing the nature of online newspapers using some of the criteria identified by Dibean (1999):
- Discussion Forums
- Chat Rooms
- Related Information for stories
- Video
- Audio
- Flash
- Other plug-in based technologies

Exercises for Lab 6

Assessing the nature of online newspapers using some of the criteria identified by Dibean (1999):
- Java Applets
- Electronic Mail
- Polls with Instantaneous Results
- Search Tool
- Consumer Services
- Sign-up for electronic delivery of a personalized newspaper
- Instantaneous Updates of Information

Exercises for Tute 6

- Read and summarise an article chosen from this web site:
  http://www.well.com/user/mmcadams/online.articles.html
- Discuss and compare the arguments made in these articles.
- How would you customise an online paper/phone directory/CD catalogue?

Further reading

R. Williams (1976) Keywords. Glasgow: Fontana.