Today's Lecture

- Looking critically at sources
- Next week's tute/lab exercises
- Unit objectives
- But first …

4c. Defining an information system

‘a linked and related system of entities that acts as a mechanism through which individuals can inform other people or become informed’

(Allen 1996: 6)

4d. Defining an information system

‘entities/mechanism’:
- Holding information as things, such as books, computers, records, photographs, sounds
‘linked and related’:
- To allow coordinated storage and retrieval
‘can inform people’:
- Information as process, information as knowledge

4e. Defining an information system

Information systems can be:
- As simple as a shopping list
- As complex as a search engine

Use is a crucial factor in terms of definition

4e. Final thoughts on systems

- ‘delivering information is not in itself sufficient for becoming informed’
  (Buckland 1991: 200)
- information management involves much more than the handling of information-as-things
Looking critically at sources

**Critical/critique/criticise:**
‘a careful and exact evaluation and judgement’

**Evaluation/evaluate:**
‘to examine and judge carefully’

Evaluating WWW sources

There is a wealth of material on the web.
‘within the morass of networked data are both valuable nuggets and an incredible amount of junk’ (Tillman 2003)

Evaluating WWW sources

• Esther Grassian (2000) has provided some criteria for determining the usefulness of such material:
  – Content and evaluation
  – Source and data
  – Structure
  – Other

Content and evaluation

• Audience
• Purpose
• Content
• Completeness and accuracy
• Relative value compared to other sources

Source and date

• Author/producer
• Authority/expertise
• Bias
• Date of production, revisions
• Reliability of links

Structure

• Graphic design
• Purpose of graphics/art
• Icons
• Grammar/spelling/literary composition
• Usability
Other

- ‘Appropriate interactivity’
- Data security
- Links to search engines
- Also see her thoughts on ‘discipline-based’ web resources

Exercises for Lab 2

Searching for information online is often a juggling act.

1. Searching for information online

- Use search terms that are too broad, and you may receive a large number of documents, many of which are not relevant to your purposes.
- Use terms that are too narrow, and you may receive a small number of relevant documents, but miss out on other vital sources.

2. Applying Grassian’s criteria to a website

- Audience
- Purpose
- Content
- Completeness and accuracy
- Relative value compared to other sources

Exercises for Tute 2

- Understanding information in context
- Conveying information at a glance
1. Understanding information in context

How can we find out the meaning of the word in red?

‘Dan is very murped about the Grand Prix’

2. Conveying information at a glance

‘How much information can actually be conveyed in a glimpse that lasts only a few seconds?’

‘And how likely is it to result in the viewer purchasing or using the advertised product or concept?’

(Case 2000: 295)

Unit objectives

• At the completion of this unit the students will:
  – have knowledge of:
  – have an understanding of:
  – have the skills to:
  – have developed attitudes which enable them to:

have knowledge of:

• basic ICTs and IM tools developed to manage information and meet user needs
• the information-seeking behaviour of users
• the range of information sources
• human computer interfaces to information
• the forms that information can take

have an understanding of:

• the fundamental concepts of information, and its use by individuals, organisations and societies
• information creation, representation, storage, access, retrieval, and use
• the impact of organisational and social contexts upon information needs and uses

have knowledge of:

• the range of information sources by authority
  – Hearsay
  – Official report
  – Participants’ notes
  – Sworn testimony
have the skills to:

- evaluate information and its sources critically
- identify particular information needs
- evaluate ICTs and IM tools in terms of meeting user needs
- use basic ICT and IM tools to create, represent, store, access, retrieve and use information

have developed attitudes which enable them to:

- be aware of the role and responsibilities of information professionals
- be aware of the role of ICTs and IM in human activity

Further reading

E. Grassian (2000) "Thinking Critically about World Wide Web Resources*
E. Grassian (2000) "Thinking Critically about Discipline-Based World Wide Web Resources*
R. Jizba (2000) "Measuring Search Effectiveness*
Queens University (nd) "Evaluating Information*
D. Sisson (2002) "Useful Search Links and Reference*

Survey of IS managers in 96 US small and medium businesses:

- Ethically acceptable to copy commercial software for purpose other than backup or archive? 29% said Yes
- IS ethics means a lot more than software piracy and data confidentiality? 13.8% said Yes

(Phukan & Dhillon 2000: 242)