

Research Agenda

0. Introduction

My research agenda raises questions with broad implications for library and information science while working to build theory in the domain of classification. My goals are to engage in research that bridges the disparate streams of the LIS field, and to enable partnerships with others who share my interdisciplinary perspective. My work examines three intersecting areas of inquiry outlined below.

1. Navigating information spaces

Humans have an exceptional ability to recognize information that is relevant to them, even if they cannot specify this information in advance. This situation differs sharply from standard search-engine models that force users to articulate a level of knowledge they may not have. My interest is to explore the importance – and perhaps even necessity – of navigable information spaces designed to support more organic browsing and discovery. Creating this type of multidimensional information architecture requires decisions that are not strictly algorithmic. Rather, these organizing processes rely on the intellectual efforts of people. Building empirical evidence and demonstrating the value of these navigable systems bolsters support for their ongoing maintenance in a networked environment. This area of inquiry also compares and evaluates user satisfaction with and benefits from different kinds of syndetic structures.

2. Expanding information interoperability

The historical expansion of information landscapes has resulted in a fragmented universe of data constantly in need systematic solutions to build coherence and intelligibility. As libraries, archives, and other heritage institutions exploit the Web for content migration and management, this digital environment becomes a shared arena for collaboration, joining information from a wide range of socio-culture endeavors. Creating systems that manage this information in meaningful ways requires robust conceptual models of complex data. Only then can automated processes adequately decrease the burden on users, helping them find resources more effectively. I see Semantic Web technologies, combined with the philosophy of the Linked Data movement, transforming the nature of LIS reference and information services. This area of research asks how to create rich metadata for machine-actionable relationships that better meet user needs.

3. Sharing information curation

Cooperative cataloging among librarians predates online networks. Given the same resources are often held by multiple libraries, sharing metadata eliminates unnecessary duplication of effort. These principles and practices can be expanded in digital environments in both participatory and informational scope. Publisher data can and should be incorporated into LIS workflows, at the same time that readers/listeners/ viewers can serve as critical sources for opinion, commentary, and analysis. Much of this information is already being captured on myriad social networking sites that are public, open, and ripe for remixing. My research asks how LIS can successfully adapt to this environment, whether synchronizing information from distributed sources or opening systems to direct enrichment by users.