



LIS 2000 Understanding Information¹

Fall 2012

School of Information Sciences

University of Pittsburgh

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LIS 2000: Understanding Information is one of the "core" courses in the Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) program. It is designed to serve as an introduction to the major ideas and concerns of the information professions, as well as an introduction to the balance of the MLIS program.

"For centuries the library has been a repository of the written record and a powerful symbol of human intellectual achievement, but today, as perhaps never before, fundamental questions are being raised concerning its nature as an institution." (From the Introduction to ***University Libraries and Scholarly Communication: a Study Prepared for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.***)

The purpose of *LIS 2000: Understanding Information* is to examine the key ideas that have emerged, with particular emphasis on the ideas that affect librarians and archivists in professional practice, and address many of the fundamental questions about the nature and role of the organizations in which archivists and librarians work. Students in the course read a wide variety of materials and discuss various issues, working from the premise that libraries and archives are important parts of a vast, complicated system dedicated to the formal communication of

¹ The official and final version of the syllabus for *LIS 2000 Understanding Information* resides on CourseWeb.

relevant ideas, information, and knowledge. To borrow from Jesse Shera, it is about "knowing books, computers, and people, too."

Libraries/librarians and archives/archivists are challenged today as perhaps never before. On account of new technologies, changes in intellectual property law, and even broader changes in economies and social policies, the circumstances under which libraries and librarians conduct their business are changing both dramatically and fundamentally. The full consequences of these changes are today unclear, but it does seem certain that in order to survive and flourish in the 21st century, librarians and archivists will be compelled to reconsider the policies and practices of the 20th century, in the process rejecting many of the ideas that have lately defined the information professions and embracing new notions about the nature and aims of information services and new facts about the information seekers that they serve. One of the basic aims of this course is to provide an intellectual framework that helps each of you better understand the contemporary information environment, with an emphasis on the socioeconomic and technological conditions that influence your careers.

Conduct of the Course

For Fall 2012, *LIS 2000 Understanding Information* is a blended course, meaning that it combines students who are resident students at the University of Pittsburgh with students who are pursuing their MLIS degrees through the online program.

Panopto Recordings

Each on-campus session is recorded, using the [Panopto lecture capture system](#). Links to the recordings should be available by the following business day and will be posted under SYLLABUS | Course Schedule and in the folder for the week at issue. In order to play Panopto recordings, users must install the [Microsoft Silverlight](#) plugin. (Microsoft does not provide a plugin for the Linux operating system, so Linux users should install [Moonlight](#). Also be advised that students using older Apple computers based on the PowerPC microprocessor will be unable to view Panopto recordings on those machines.) The site from which the recordings are streamed is password protected; in order to gain access to the recordings, you should employ the userID "sis" -- without quotation marks -- and the password "(Multi42Media)" -- also without quotation marks.

Attendance

On-campus students are required to attend the classroom sessions. Online students are required to review the Panopto recordings of the on-campus sessions.

Papers and Discussion Questions

Each student is required to submit three papers on specified dates during the course of the term. Taken together, the papers represent 60% of the grade for the course. In addition, students are required to participate in five graded discussion forums. The grades for the discussion forums represent the balance of the grade for the course, or 40% of the final grade.

Papers must be submitted on the dates specified. Exceptions will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances and with the explicit permission of one of the instructors; otherwise, students will receive no credit for the work at issue.

Similarly, the discussion forums depend on timely submissions. Failure to observe the relevant requirements for submission to the forums will result in the assignment of zero points for the discussion. Students who obtain an exception relating to participation in a discussion will be required to undertake a special assignment in order to earn the points entailed by the assignment.

Your papers should be submitted via CourseWeb's Assignment Manager as Microsoft Word documents. (Both the *.doc and *.docx formats are acceptable.) In naming the documents you should observe the following form: *Smith_Paper1_LIS2000.docx*. The name of the document should not include blank spaces, because CourseWeb will treat files so named as binary entities and render them unreadable. The name of the document must include your surname in order to attribute the work to you; documents that do not include the surname of the author in the filename will not be graded.

Online Meetings

Online meetings will be conducted most weeks on Sunday Evenings from 7-8 using CourseWeb's Chat. Because the holiday weekend occurs at the start of the term, we will be available Sunday AND Monday this week. The meetings are intended to function primarily as Q&A sessions for online students, but all students are welcome to participate.

Synchronous participation is optional; all sessions will be recorded and archived so that they may be consulted asynchronously. Online students will find participation in these chat sessions critical to success in the course.

Course Schedule

- August 30: Introduction & Overview; Library and Technology Orientation
- September 6: The Information Infrastructure: Evolution of Scholarly Communications
- September 13: The Information Infrastructure: Emergence of Digital Libraries
- September 20: The Information Infrastructure: Economic and Technological Imperatives
- September 27: Organizing Information for Access
- October 4: Reading Day (No Class)
- October 11: Information Retrieval and the Problem of Relevance
- October 18: Google and the Development of 21st Century Information Services
- October 25: Library Preservation
- November 1: Library Effectiveness; Costs of Library Operations; Library ROI
- November 2-3: Fast Track weekend for online students. Schedule TBA. Not required for on campus students, although all students are welcome to attend.
- November 8: Library Effectiveness; Costs of Library Operations; Library ROI
- November 15: Copyright and Fair Use
- November 22: Thanksgiving

- November 29: Open Access Publishing; Open Source Software and Its Impact on Library and Archival Services
- December 6: Library's Role in Teaching and Learning
- December 13: Changing Philosophies of Library Service; Changing Role of Librarians

Required Texts

- Baker, Nicholson. ***Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper***. Vintage Books, 2002. ISBN: 0375726217 (paperback edition).
- Borgman, Christine. ***Scholarship in the Digital Age: Information, Infrastructure, and the Internet***. MIT Press, 2007. ISBN-10: 0262026198; ISBN-13: 978-0262026192.
- Gleick, James. ***The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood***. Pantheon, 2011. (ISBN-10: 9780375423727; ISBN-13: 978-0375423727)
- ***Introduction to Information Science and Technology***. Edited by Charles Davis and Debora Shaw. ASIS&T/Information Today, 2011. ISBN-10: 157387423X; ISBN-13: 978-1573874236. (paperback edition)
- Levy, Steven. ***In The Plex: How Google Thinks, Works, and Shapes Our Lives***. Simon & Schuster, 2011. ISBN-10: 1416596585.
- Paltry, William. ***How to Fix Copyright***. Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN-10: 0199760098; ISBN-13: 978-0199760091.
- Weinberger, David. ***Too Big to Know: Rethinking Knowledge Now That the Facts Aren't the Facts, Experts Are Everywhere, and the Smartest Person in the Room Is the Room***. Basic Books, 2012. ISBN-10: 0465021425; ISBN-13: 978-0465021420.

Students are required to read each of the books listed above and in accord with a schedule that is embedded in the online version of the syllabus, in the folder for each week under the SYLLABUS tab. In addition, students will be required to undertake other readings, mainly in the form of journal articles or reports, and view a select set of video presentations. The video presentations are listed under COURSE DOCUMENTS and will be included in the lists of weekly assignment.