COURSE DESCRIPTION

Catalog Description of Course:

Introduction to general principles and features of organizing and providing access to information, including varieties and numbers of information-bearing objects, different traditions of practice, user concerns, metadata and metadata formats, document representation and description, subject access, and information system features and evaluation.

Purpose and Objectives:

The main purpose of the course is to provide a foundation for understanding the basic issues involved in providing access control for "Information Entities" (IEs), such that

- one will understand the major likenesses and differences among such different traditions of practice in IE control and access as library cataloging, indexing and abstracting, archival enterprise, records management, museum management, bibliography, and to a lesser extent, web information activity and IE database construction;
- one will have a theoretical basis upon which to expand one's knowledge and expertise in the specific provisions and practices of one or more of those same traditions.

General Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, each student will have been enabled to:

1) Develop an awareness of the variety of information entities in the universe of such entities;
2) Develop skills in viewing information entities for the purposes of their representation in systems of access;
3) Gain practice in identifying information entity names, titles, and other attributes that are used for their identification and retrieval;
4) Become familiar with categories of metadata in metadata formats and develop elementary skills in creating metadata;
5) Develop an appreciation of the process and difficulties of determining such content attributes of information entities as their subjects, forms, genres, intended audiences, etc.;
6) Develop an appreciation of the interplay between information entity attributes and their appearance in both structures and systems of access;
7) Provide evidence of having synthesized the elements of information entity access.
8) Provide evidence of having become aware of the intellectual problems of representing information entities.

General Approach to the Course:
1. This course will stress principles or commonalities among different traditions and methods for organizing and providing access to information, with illustrations of techniques and ideas taken from the various traditions and methods.
2. This course will combine a central focus on representing and providing access to information entities with an appropriate introduction to concerns about information form and content, clients, connections, and cultural context.
3. This course will attempt wherever possible to follow a "learning by exploration" mode on the part of students by focusing on student discovery of issues, ideas, and practices. The means of this approach will be exercises designed to encourage students to identify essential issues and assess the questions and potential answers that such identified issues yield.

Concepts to be Emphasized:

- The uses and users of information are important at every point in organizing and providing access to information, although how knowledge of users can be made to affect systems is not well understood.
- Matching the terms of information requests to terms in an information organization system is basic to the process of organizing and providing access to information.
- Informational entities are phenomena in their own right; therefore, observing their attributes lies at the root of adequately representing them.
- Data and metadata, much of it based on the attributes of informational objects, are fundamental in organizing and providing access to information.
- The two basic processes that underlie the representation of informational objects are describing the objects and providing access points (index terms, search keys, etc.) for them, although these two processes are not necessarily kept separate in an actual system.
- An understanding of the fundamental nature and operational characteristics of information retrieval systems is critical in organizing and providing access to information.
• The display of information and other features of interface design are separable from information system elements and structure.

Questions to be Encountered:

1. What is an information entity (an IE) ?
2. What varieties and numbers of IEs inhabit the universe of such entities?
3. What are IE attributes and which ones are useful for the retrieval of such entities in a system?
4. What searching goals on the part of IE users shape the kinds of IE attributes that are important?
5. How do different traditions of practice (i.e., bibliography, library cataloging, indexing and abstracting, museum organization, archival organization, records organization, and documentation/information retrieval organization) define what is a single IE?
6. What does it mean to identify and describe an IE?
7. What constitutes an adequate description of an IE and in what ways is an IEs self-description important for that task?
8. What is metadata and how do information system metadata formats serve the purposes of IE description and access?
9. How do different traditions of practice go about describing and providing access to IEs?
10. What are the comparative strengths and weaknesses of controlled and uncontrolled languages in IE access systems?
11. How does one determine IE content attributes such as subject, form and genre, audience, etc.?
12. What is the value of providing structure in subject systems for IE access?
13. What kinds of structural properties are common in subject systems for IE access?
14. What are the chief elements of IE access systems as systems?
15. How might IE user's needs affect IE access system creation and development?

Class Conduct:
Since the success of this course greatly depends upon class interaction and joint exploration of ideas, attendance in each class is critical. This course will consist of several interwoven parts:

• Class lectures & Discussion
• Readings--Textbook and other (See schedule/syllabus)
• Six Graded Assignments
• Two Essay Examinations

Class Lectures and Attendance:
It is important that all classes be attended because they will serve as the principal basis for exploring and explaining issues that arise in readings and
assignments. Should a student find it impossible to attend any given class, notice of this should be sent to the instructor before the class begins.

Textbooks & Readings:
Required:


The main bulk of the readings in this course will be from these textbooks. However, other readings will also be required, most available on Blackboard, some available over the Internet, and one supplied in paper format. This material could be printed as a course packet, but that will be determined only at the start of the class.

Grading:
Specific grading elements of the course will have the following values in determining the course grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Element</th>
<th>Value (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignments 1-6 (10 % @)</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay examination #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay examination #2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these items, including each assignment, will be graded on a 100 point scale that has the following distribution of points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-99 %</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-93 %</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92-91 %</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-89 %</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-83 %</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82-81 %</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-79 %</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78-73 %</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72-71 %</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and so on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of total points earned on a unit of grading will be multiplied by the value that that unit of grading has for the course. Thus, if the scores on the six assignments are 90, 89, 96, 95, 86 and 90, and these are worth 10 % each,
what would be applied to the course grade would be 9.0, 8.9, 9.6, 9.5, 8.6 and
9.0. When totaled they would total 54.6 pts towards the course grade.

Again, a score of 91% on the first Essay examination (for all practical purposes,
an A- on that examination) will earn 91 x 20% or 18.2 points towards the course
grade. And, a score of, say, 90 (i.e., a B+) on the second Essay examination
would earn (90 x 20%) 18.0 points toward the course grade.

Given the foregoing grades, the total of the scores would be 54.6 + 18.2 + 18.0
or 90.8. It would be appropriate at this point to round off the score to an even 91,
so that the course grade reported to the university would be an A- on the scale
provided above.

Instructor Accessibility: My formal office hours will be Tuesdays from 10:00 to
11:00 a.m. and on Wednesday’s from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. But other times may be
arranged by appointment. The very best way for students to contact either
me or the TA, besides talking to them in class or during stated office hours, is to
contact them via email. My email address is miksa@ischool.utexas.edu

Course TA: This semester, my Teaching Assistant for the course will be Mr. Don
Drumtra, a doctoral student in GSLIS. His email address is drumtra@aol.com.
His office hours are provided on the course Website listed above.

Blackboard:
The class will have most of its materials made available, along with other
communication and discussion opportunities via Blackboard. To gain access to
the course, you must be a registered student in the University such that your
name and userid are registered with the Blackboard system. All you need do is
go to http://courses.utexas.edu and the Blackboard system will come up. When
you login, you will be asked for your university electronic ID (EID) and password.