

Assignment 3

Introduction

The aim of this assignment was to build a collaborative collection of books and other published sources, which we have gathered in our group. We have chosen to use Zotero instead of Calibre, since we found it to be a more efficient software to work with collaboratively, and had earlier, good experiences with the software. We all have a part in both gathering the different texts and in writing the paper, since we sat together and discussed it.

We have imported our Zotero library and imported it to Excel for ease of reading. You can find it in appendix 3.2, and an image of the Zotero library in appendix 3.3.

Methodological Considerations

The texts chosen for our assignment are primarily literature from the course, supplemented with literature from our individual bachelor projects, which we are currently writing. These secondary texts of course have some meaning to us in the context of Curating Data, hence the reason we chose them. Furthermore, these texts are what we are currently working with, meaning there is a hidden gain in this assignment, in being forced, by this process, to think about our projects and texts in the light of Curating Data.

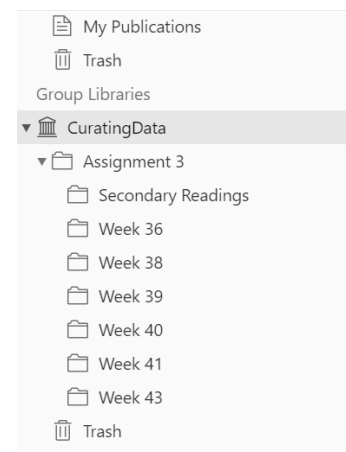
With this aim however, we ran into issues, since some of our texts were born physical. This does not mean, as investigated in assignment 1, that these objects cannot be transformed, but some value to these works ought to be lost in the process, though new ones may be gained.

Hierarchy

As to categorization of the texts, we first decided on this hierarchy (see picture and appendix 1.1) since it made a clear distinction between self-chosen texts, and the ones provided by the course. Each folder contains the readings for that specific week provided by our teacher. The folder with Secondary Readings are texts that we have gathered from other courses, our individual bachelor projects and other texts, that we believe are relevant for the course.

This was done to easier navigate and sort the texts. This does not necessarily bring meaning to others than us, but as said in “Curating Online Exhibitions” (Connor, Michael 2020): “Digital culture is ‘more about practices than objects.’”, meaning that the hierarchy, and tags of course, has to be bound in our own understanding and practices, since we are the ones working with these texts.

zotero



Zotero and its Software Limitations and Possibilities

Zotero as a software is used to share and cite texts. The only hierarchy present of Zotero would be its folder layout, meaning you can make some categories subordinate to others. We used this function, as shown in the previous section. The tags itself in Zotero are however not hierarchically divided. This makes for a great experience in our opinion, abeling us to divide the text both hierarchically and not. To further expand on Michael Connor’s quote about digital objects, the non hierarchically part of Zotero makes it possible to search for tags, in this instance of the text’s content, and making it possible to go back, in our instance to a specific week, and check what this week’s courses was all about. However in the process of tagging and categorizing our texts Zotero affords us several built in features, whenever importing a text it will scan the metadata that is already connected to the PDF or EPUB file, which it will then try and import. Whenever this process is successful we end up with a file that has saved us some time on tagging, with the tags we’ve already decided to use, but further inspired us with tags that according to the author or distributor of the text, find useful. These tags are not always what we want to portray with our collection, but as previously mentioned, they can help inspire and improve on the quality of the tags we have chosen.

Tags

We've chosen a wide variety of tags in order to categorize the texts to the best of our ability. We've already utilized the hierarchy and sorted the texts into different folders. However, in order to specify each text even further, we've come up with the followings tags:

Algorithms - A well defined sequence of specific instructions

Curating - a selection, presentation and organization of things

Social Media - Digital tool to share content and messages with other people

 Facebook - A social media website

Business - Commercial activity

 Marketing - Business action of promoting and selling products

Politics - The governance of countries or areas, also associated to power

Art - Various expressions of creative activity

Big Data - Collection, Storage and Analysis of large amounts of data

 Datafication - The process of more and more things being turned into data

 Dataveillance - Surveillance and collection of online data

 Metadata - Data about the data

Digitization - The process of making artifacts digital

Machine Learning - Computers that improve through experience

Cognitive - Relating to conscious intellectual activities, for instance thinking

 Perception - The way in which, or the ability to, understand and interpret things

Feminism - A belief in women's rights based on the equality of the sexes

These tags were all chosen because of their relevance to the texts' content, and how they could potentially help us create a library of texts, where we could easily access information concerning any subject regarding the course. The process of coming up with the tags was a process that evolved as we worked with it. We had come up with an original list, which we then expanded upon as we were tagging each text, realizing that there were several other tags that the different texts could make use of.

The sheer tagging of the texts also made for some debates on whether one category was subordinate to the other, or if they held the same meaning. This only serves to further underline that tagging and curating in itself, is a biased and subjective task, which does not necessarily bring the same meaning to an outstander, as it would to the curator itself. This is the difficult part of creating any database, as tagging is essentially "a map" of your world view. As Bowker and Star (2000) puts it:

This mutual process of constructing and shaping differences through classification systems is crucial in anyone's conceptualization of reality; it is the core of much taxonomic anthropology. (p. 230)

The way such a project is situated (Harraway 1988) is therefore key, and understanding the use of the database is essential when considering tagging and hierarchy, which we have expanded upon in our method. You could therefore either view our hierarchy and tagging as a “snap shot of time”, on how we viewed each text at the moment of creation, or you could argue that a database is a continuously developing tree, which changes, extracts, and expands depending on users, situations and time.

Inside the tagging itself, a pattern also emerges, as we have visualized, since some categories never come without the other. For instance, if a text is to be tagged with “Facebook”, it also must involve “Social Media”, since Facebook is a social media.

If you dive deeper into this, you would also find other patterns, such as “algorithms” often go together with “Facebook”, since Facebook revolves so much around algorithms. So you could argue for a restructuring of our “tags”, based on the correlation between them, which you can see below, where green indicates that the tags have been used together, and red

indicates that they have not.

	Algorithms	Big Data	Business	Datafication	Dataveillance	Digitization	Facebook	Social Media	Marketing	Machine Learning	Politics	Cognitive	Perception	Art	Curating	Feminism	Open Data	Metadata
Algorithms	X																	
Big Data		X																
Business			X															
Datafication				X														
Dataveillance					X													
Digitization						X												
Facebook							X											
Social Media								X										
Marketing									X									
Machine Learning										X								
Politics											X							
Cognitive												X						
Perception													X					
Art														X				
Curating															X			
Feminism																X		
Open Data																	X	
Metadata																		X

You can say that we in a way have tried to create our own “system”, as Foucault (2007) describes was done with plants, dividing them into kingdom, genera and species. This way of categorizing makes each text able to be placed without having to be described. We do however stray away from this, by assigning it different tags with different lineages, which does prove troublesome, as the whole idea of “the system” is to precisely label each instance. The question could then be asked, whether “the system” has a use case in regards to texts (which are read differently depending on situations), or whether we just have not succeeded in creating a large nor precise enough tree to fulfill “the system’s” purpose?

Literature

Bowker, Geoffrey C., and Susan Leigh Star. 2000. *Sorting Things out: Classification and Its Consequences*. First paperback edition. Inside Technology. Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: The MIT Press.

Connor, Michael. 2020. "Curating Online Exhibitions." *Rhizome* (blog). May 13, 2020. <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2020/may/13/curating-online-exhibitions-pt-1/>.

Foucault, Michel. 2007. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Routledge. p. 150-158 (chapter 5/Classifying, section IV/Character)

Haraway, Donna J. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>.