

ITR5

Information Usage

2002–02–08

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Course Description

Information usage is a subject that is most often treated in theoretical terms by writers from a sociological background. Their writings tend to be codified common sense.

This course tries an alternative approach to information usage through the use of both practical and theoretical work. In its first part, we study principles of useability of web sites. This is important because graduates will be likely to become involved in the provision of web-based services. If they have no such involvement, they will at least be intensive web users. An appreciation of web useability is important for them. In the second part, the course will be examining information as a commodity. Crudely speaking, it deals with how to make money with informational commodities. This part will be applied managerial approach to information, rather than pure economics of information. The latter is highly theoretical and very hard. The third part of the course will be introducing information and communication theory. This theory, going back to a classic paper by Shannon, has been applied in a range of disciplines, as diverse as chemistry, computer science. There may be a fourth part to the course, depending on time available.

This is a preliminary syllabus, changes are still possible.

Course objectives

After completing the course, students will be able to

- know principle elements of user-centred design;
- evaluate web sites for usability;
- develop strategic thinking about informational commodities;
- understand rudiments of information theory.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Readings

There are two texts used in several lectures.

Morville and Rosenfeld (1998) , henceforth M&R will be followed closely in the first part of the course. It is not worth purchasing the book, because its substance is rather thinly spread over the pages.

Shapiro and Varian (1999) , henceforth S&V will be used in the second part of the course, but not all the chapters. Again, contents is relatively thinly spread over the pages but may be more interesting for people who have not seen economic reasoning before.

Class structure

Classes will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays between 15:30 and 17:20. Many classes will be shorter than this. The overall aim, however, is to work overtime in the beginning of the semester and take the rest off.

	<i>date</i>	<i>topic</i>	<i>reading</i>	<i>assignment</i>
01	1–24	introduction to the course		
02	1–28	sensitivity exercise and IA intro	M&R ch. 2	
03	1–30	overall site organization	M&R ch. 3 and 4	
04	2–04	labelling	M&R ch. 5	
05	2–06	practical case studies		quiz
06	2–11	search interfaces I	M&R ch. 6	
07	2–13	search interfaces II	M&R ch. 6	miniexam
08	2–19	search interfaces III	M&R ch. 6	
09	2–20	web site discussion I		prepare presentation
08	2–25	search software	swish++ docs	
09	2–27	web site discussion II		prepare presentation
10	3–04	indexing software	swish++ docs	
11	3–06	relevance ranking	google docs	miniexam
12	3–11	information as a commodity	S&V ch. 1	
13	3–13	personalization	S&V ch. 2	miniexam
14	4–03	versioning of information	S&V ch. 3	
15	4–08	usage and value	S&V ch. 3	miniexam
16	4–10	lock-in	S&V ch. 4	
17	4–15	measurement of information		miniexam

Assessment

The final grade will be composed out of quizzes (weight 1 each), presentations (weight 1), and an optional final project (weight 2).

Instructor

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References

- Morville, Robert and Louis Rosenfeld (1998). *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web*. O'Reilly.
Shapiro, Carl and Hal Varian (1999). *Information Rules*. Harvard Business School Press.