

WHAT IS INFORMATION?

INFO 300 Intellectual Foundations of Informatics

BUCKLAND, AND MEADOW ET AL. READINGS (for lecture Thursday, October 3)

Please read carefully here and take notes (you'll need these notes for lab on Friday, October 11). Both of these articles are hard going, so take your time.

Here are some questions to keep in mind as you read the article "Information as Thing" by Michael Buckland. Try to do two things here: Think about how Buckland would answer each of these questions. Then decide for yourself how you would answer each of these questions.

1. For something to count as information does there need to be a "receiver" or "listener"?
2. For something to count as information does there need to have been a communicative intent?
3. In terms of information, what is the difference between the retrieval of the results of an old analysis and the presentation of the results from a new analysis (assuming the results are the same in both cases)?
4. What things (if any) should not be regarded as information?
5. Can you have information if no one recognizes it as such? That is, if there is a listener, but all the listeners judge the content not to be important.

Now read the article by Meadow and Yuan titled "Measuring the impact of information: Defining the concepts". In contrast to Buckland who advocates a particular definition of information, Meadow and Yuan provide a compilation of definitions for information as well as several related terms such as data, knowledge, and impact. Keep these questions in mind while you read the Meadow and Yuan article:

1. Why do Meadow and Yuan provides lots of different definitions for information (and data and knowledge) rather than a single correct definition? Does this help or hinder a meaningful discussion of information?
2. What is the range of definitions for *data* that Meadow and Yuan catalog? Which of these definitions do you find most compelling? Why?
3. What is the range of definitions for *information* that Meadow and Yuan catalog? Which of these definitions do you find most compelling? Why?
4. What is the range of definitions for *knowledge* that Meadow and Yuan catalog? Which of these definitions do you find most compelling? Why?
5. What is the relationship among *data*, *information* and *knowledge*?
6. Why do Meadow and Yuan consider the ideas of *impact* and *development* to be important to their discussion of information?