

Read this first. Or listen to the audio [www.dsoergel.com/ublis571](http://www.dsoergel.com/ublis571) , Lecture 1.1a audio slides

## **Lecture 1.1a. General introduction to the course. (10 min)**

Hello. I am Dagobert Soergel and I welcome you to the online course on *Information Organization* (formerly *Organization and Control of Recorded Information*).

We talk about organizing information for one purpose and one purpose only: to assist users. The needs of the users are central to what we do. We need to assist users in answering questions and solving problems.

This entails, first of all, assisting users in finding information. Many informational professionals think their job ends there, but that is only half the story. We need to assist users with understanding the information; that means assimilating information, digesting it, and processing it to answer the questions they have and to apply those answers to solve the problem at hand.

We know pretty well how to find information. The new frontier is to assist users in making sense of it. It may be even better to have a system to process all the raw information and provide a ready-made answer that the user can apply directly, taking a lot of work off the user. Or a system that can read a document and extract the pertinent information, so the user does not have to read the entire thing. These advanced user-friendly functions require sophisticated systems, and we will talk about that as part of the course. Lecture 1.2 is about an expert system that processes various kinds of information to decide on drug prescriptions. Later we will talk about systems for information extraction from text

We also organize information to assist students and others with learning. As every educator knows, learning is much more successful if the information to be learned is well structured. We will discuss principles of information design or document design that include structuring information to support learning, that is assimilating information and making sense of it, as I said before.

Finally, many people these days are not just users of information but also producers of information. Some of them are volunteers, like in social tagging; people tag images on Flickr or documents in LibraryThing and so on. They produce information. Many people produce information as part of their job. In many organizations there are people writing many different types of documents, they produce information. We can help them to produce those documents more efficiently, if we understand and organize the structure of these documents. We will talk more, among other things, about document templates that do that. Say you are hired in a company as a librarian. You see they create all these documents but not very efficiently. So you go to management and say "I know a way to produce these documents more efficiently and to make them better structured." It might just happen that you get yourself promoted one level up in the hierarchy of the company in charge of organizing the creation and organized storage of all their information.

This course is not mainly about cataloging. As the first page of the syllabus states: The course will make you a better searcher. It will also start you off on cataloging by giving you a fundamental understanding of modern principles of knowledge organization. Even though in many jobs you will not need to catalog, an understanding the catalog is essential for good searching.

Many think that this course teaches only theory and don't see the connection to practice. It is true that this course has a lot of theory, but as Plato and many after him remarked "Nothing is more practical than a good theory." Now, we could have a course that just talks about the practice of cataloging books for libraries. All you could do with that course is go in a library and catalog books. But there are so many other things out there that require a good knowledge of how to structure information, how to organize information such as database management or information architecture on the Web. With the course that is being offered, you are going to be prepared to enter any of these; you will have the theoretical base needed to acquire the specific practices and skills needed in the specific area you want to enter. The course provides a basis for lifelong learning for whatever job opportunity you can find or make for yourself in a wide arena.

Part of this course is, as I said, how to present information so it is easily assimilated. I am always working to apply these principles to the course materials, to improve and streamline the presentation with the help of students and TAs. If you can see things that are not clear to you or could be presented better, please let me know. Now, if you tell me "I didn't understand the instructions on the assignments", that by it self doesn't help me. If you tell me "I didn't understand this sentence for this assignment" then I can work on clarifying it. I have worked hard over time to make the assignment instructions clear, but I still get feedback that students do not understand them. Read the assignments before the day they are assigned, and if you have questions email me.

No course is the work of the instructor alone. It is also the work of the students that help with suggestions and comments to each other.

The course is a graduate course so you have to work as graduate students and cope with a graduate student workload. And I hope you will find it interesting enough to find that your effort is repaid in what you learn and what you can do with what you learn and how you can get your mind stretched as we go along. Thinking of structure is not everybody's cup of tea but you will have to learn it, so you have to stretch and we will help you to do that.

You will work with the TA for the course, Amy Miller, and with me. I am very accessible through e-mail; if you have any questions, anytime something is not clear or you do not see how a concept applies to practice, just send me an email message. Some e-mail messages I will answer individually; if I think the answer will be of interest to the entire class I will send the answer to the entire class (without the name of the student who posed the question. I am also available to talk on the phone or by Skype, including eve and weekends; sometimes it is easier to explain something in conversation.

### For Library Media Specialists (School Librarians)

As a solo librarian in a school library, you sometimes may need to catalog (even though most of your books should be cataloged centrally). More importantly, as a school librarian you need to help your students to become information-literate. Students need to learn how to search well - facets, hierarchy, and Boolean operators are important for good searching, so is the idea of chained searching. How can you teach these concepts if you barely understand them yourself. Students need to learn how to organize information well and work with it. Frames and templates are important here. They provide one format for graphic organizers that are used to help students work with information and, in a broader sense, to think. Semantic networks provide the format for another kind of graphic organizers, bubble charts and concept maps. They help students to relate ideas to each other. You need to understand entity-relationship modeling to fully support them in this. Students need to learn how to present well-reasoned arguments in well-organized papers. Concepts of knowledge organization covered in UBLIS 571, adapted to an elementary student's or high-school student's understanding, will help with that. As a school librarian, you will need to design and/or maintain the school library's website. You may even be asked to be in charge of the website for the school. This is not mainly a matter of HTML or using Dreamweaver. It is a matter of deciding what information and other elements (a place to submit comments, for example) are most important and how to arrange these elements clearly on the page. School librarians should also be able to assist with problems of information management in the school, for example, making sure there is a computer system that supports creating lesson plans using a template that is standardized for the school.

Continue with

**Lecture 1.1b. Overview of the course and course materials (25 min)**

Download Lecture 1.1b audio slides from [www.dsoergel.com/ublis571](http://www.dsoergel.com/ublis571).

Have all course materials received so far and the textbook handy.

Turn to the next page (the course title page) and start the slides.

Next

**Lecture 1.1c. Information professionals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Read Lecture Notes p. ~7 (Learning objectives for Lectures 1.1a - c),  
continue from there to Lecture 1.1c.

