

Digital Records Curation Programme

Week 1:

Digital Culture and the Information Society

Learning outcomes

At the end of this class, students should be able to:

- explain the concept of the ‘information society’
- give some examples of the ways in which information is used in different sectors and activities
- explain the role of record-keeping professionals in the information society

Information Society

The 'information society' refers to the large-scale shift in contemporary societies where processes and practices of information production, analysis, and consumption take on an increasingly dominant role in social life.

Shelton & Zook International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (Second Edition) 2015

Consider information in...

- Economics
- Politics
- Civic life
- Social life
- Art

Information in economics

- Since the 1970s, the field of ‘information economics’ has radically changed dominant Western economic models by demonstrating the impact that quantities and qualities of information could have on markets
- Associated ideas include:
 - “perfect information” – previous economic thought had made an assumption that all actors in a market were operating with perfect (correct and full) information. Information economics surfaced the reality of;
 - “information asymmetry” – different actors have access to information of differing accuracy, completeness, etc., giving some people an advantage
 - lack of trustworthy information can damage markets and even cause them to fail.

Information in politics

- Political life depends on information
 - Party manifestos, campaign promises, Hansard
- Misinformation (false information in general) and disinformation (false information propagated intentionally, usually for political ends) are currently major political problems in some countries

Information in civic life

- Public sector work depends on information
 - Formulation of policy requires data, implementation of policy requires exchange of information
- Accountability depends on information
 - Freedom of Information, free press, open government data and civic technologies

Information in social life

- How we interact with friends and family is now frequently mediated by information technologies
- Consider social media, dating apps, watch parties, online events – all of these involve the transmission and often storage of digital information

Information in art

- From physical artworks that use or reference written records, to data visualisations presented online, information can be a basis or key element in all kinds of artistic endeavours.
- Music and films that we stream or download are digital files composed of bits and bytes – they are information.

Digital Archivists

In the context of this digital culture / information society:

- Is the traditional role of the record-keeper still necessary?
- What can we bring to the information society?



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