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Documents, dialogue and the emergence of tertiary orality

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Abstract

Introduction. This investigation opens with a description of why studying non-traditional, oral documents can inform efforts to extend traditional library and information science practices, of description, storage, and retrieval, to artefacts made available through emerging media.
Method. This study extends the method used to identify a document, by determining whether an artefact incorporates one or more properties of documents, to identify how a document can incorporate a dialogue.
Analysis. One type of oral document, a managerial decree, a video blog, and an oral history, made up each of three cases. Analysis of one property that each document incorporates facilitates an explication of how dialogue contributes to evidence of that property emerges. Results are also analysed across cases.
Results. Analysis reveals that dialogue contributes to a property of document in each of the three cases examined. Results lead to discussions regarding the extension of library and information science practices to information that becomes available in non-traditional media; formal and informal information sources; the information life cycle;

oral information and context; and, the ideas of oral information literacy and tertiary orality.
Conclusions. The author recommends future research to (1) determine whether the way in which dialogue occurs in the data analysed proves exemplary across other instances of oral information provision; (2) increase understanding of oral information and documents that become available in emerging formats; and (3) determine how to extend library and information science practices to that information.

Introduction

Increasingly, technology makes it possible to record information as it emerges and is exchanged in a dialogue. This capability differs from traditional ways of recording information that capture a single contribution to a discourse (Frohmann 2004a: 239-240). An example of the latter lies in how research findings are prepared, presented orally, written up, reviewed, and edited before emerging as a scholarly document. Review involves a social inspection to ensure accuracy, validity, and more. These types of traditional documents are sequential contributions to a dialogue, even when articles are published years apart. Technological advances, especially those capable of making oral information available, now make it possible for such exchanges to occur within a document.

Information behaviour researchers are aware of oral information and typically categorize it as informal (Auster and Choo 1993: 250; Case 2007: 12-13; Taylor 1991: 229). However, library and information science practices for making information available have not consistently been extended to informal information. And, sharing information while speaking face-to-face persists (Meehan 2000; Sole and Edmondson 2002; MacKenzie 2009; Turner 2009). Whether face-to-face or technology-mediated, oral information can involve dialogue.

Despite the increased indication of the importance of oral information, professional library and information science (library and information science) practices that ensure access to information, regardless of medium, have yet to be extended consistently to oral information and any dialogue it may incorporate. Leveraging what is known about documents, including oral ones, that make up a singular contribution to a dialogue may help shed light on emerging forms of oral information that encompass a dialogue.

What is known about oral information? Constructionism theory provides insight into oral information, specifically that it leads to knowledge. The theory holds that knowledge becomes available through actions, writing, or talking, which are all ways of contributing to a dialogue (Lankes 2011; McKenzie 2003; Talja, Tuominen, and Savolainen 2005; Tuominen, Talja, and Savolainen 2002). In light of this theory, some library and information science researchers call for increased understanding about what is involved in the action of becoming informed (Frohmann 2004a: 239, 242-243; McKenzie 2009: 163, 171). Next, information behaviour researchers suggest oral information is preferred when one needs new information (Auster and Choo 1993; Daft and Lengel 1983; Huotari and Chatman 2001; Mackenzie 2005; Wilkinson 2001). By contrast, researchers find that people perceive mediation involved in making written information available can render that information outdated (Auster and Choo 1993: 250; Wilkinson 2001: 271). This perception may be explained by how traditional

documents can adhere to contextual norms in ways that restrict information from emerging (Frohmann 2004a: 239-240). These observations make oral information worthy of deeper investigation.

This exploration builds on a recent explication of how an utterance can be considered a document. The explication makes it possible to observe oral information, which emerges from documentary practice rendered orally, in ways that more traditional documents are viewed even when an oral document involves an exchange of utterances, or a dialogue. Three types of oral documents, involving face-to-face and technology-mediated information, are examined to respond to the research question: How does a document incorporate a dialogue?

Method

One type of oral document-a managerial decree, a video blog, and an oral history-makes up each of three case studies analysed for evidence of a dialogue.

In this study, dialogue and discourse are used interchangeably to refer to spoken or textual interaction involving two or more persons (Cameron 2001: 10). While simplified, this definition (Bamberg, De Fina, and Schiffrin 2007: 3-4) serves as a basis for numerous approaches used for studying discourse including conversation analysis (Wooffitt 2005), content analysis (Krippendorff 2004), and discourse analysis (Cameron 2001; Fairclough 1992). Of the three approaches listed, this study aligns most closely with discourse analysis, or the analysis "of language as it is used to enact activities, perspectives, and identities" (Gee 1999: 4-5). Discourse analysis and the approach to document identification being used both stem from constructionism (Frohmann 2004b; Talja and McKenzie 2007; Wooffitt 2005).

The term document similarly stems from constructionism defined in information science literature by relying on formal definitions or by noting practices that inform this type of artefact (Buckland 1991; Briet in Day and Martinet 2006: 48; Day 1997; Frohmann 2004b). Frohmann (2004b: 396-397) refers to evidence of this type of practice as a property of document, conveyed in three ways: through a document's content; embedded in the action(s) of furnishing that content through some delivery mechanism; or, by incorporating one or more properties of documents. Finally, as its name suggests, an oral document is a document made available orally (Turner 2012a: 860; 2012b: 872).

Given the definitions of oral document and dialogue being used, one property of document was analysed in each case to observe whether a dialogue led to that property being incorporated. The three oral documents analysed reflect a purposive selection from three different sets of randomly sampled data (see Analysis and results). Analysis in the three cases focuses on dialogue and the property of document to which that dialogue contributes. Explained in another way, the case study approach (Yin 1994: 12-13) and semi-selective sampling facilitate the identification of documentary practice that can involve a dialogue.

While the method outlined helps explain how dialogue occurs, it does not convey how frequently dialogue occurs (Cameron 2001: 15) nor does it predict when it will occur. Having three cases with three different types of oral data mitigates this weakness. While small, this sample of data, once analysed, will inform on-going study to determine whether observations made herein represent patterns that may be found in other oral information.

Next, the method used raises concerns about how information conveyed is interpreted. This concern is mitigated in several ways. The observation data in the first case study is augmented by interview data gathered immediately following the observations. Similarly, the analysis of the video blog in the second case study takes into consideration how additional, related data helps to interpret technologically-mediated oral information conveyed in the video blog. The historical and high profile nature of events described by oral data in the third case helps ensure that the data are interpreted as intended.

Finally, the few cases studied are not generalizable and cannot be used to predict what may occur in other types of documents (Yin 1994: 10). That stated, future research that builds on this study may eventually lead to ways to predict when a document will incorporate a dialogue and how.

Strength of the case study method focuses on how individuals use information within a context and how an artefact becomes a document (Cameron 2001: 15). Moreover, the method used makes it possible to compare how an artefact becomes a document in three different contexts, two of which occur in settings chosen by the participant. A number of researchers note how this type of user-centered approach can lead to greater understanding about how artefacts, practices, and resources are used in a given context (Courtright 2008: 291; Frohmann 2004a).

Analysis and results

Dialogue and managerial decrees

The first case involves a type of oral document, a managerial decree that emerges from a naturalistic setting, which is cited as most appropriate when exploring a new topic (Fidel 2011: 72). A managerial decree is an oral document that incorporates the provisionality property of document, or a conditional change in a method used to assess some information (Turner 2012b). The managerial decree analysed was selected from among a set of observations of information institution managers meeting routinely with staff who report to them. Data analysed for this case focuses on information about requests for equipment. A site manager (SM) at a public library, Pat, explains that the procedure for obtaining information about equipment requests is not working and changes it. Staff had obtained it directly from central library staff member. The following managerial decree begins after the manager responds to a staff member's, Chris', question and-more important to this discussion-continues by responding to a second question made by a different staff member, Sam:

> Chris: Um, do you know where we are with getting a bar code scanner for the workroom computer?
>
> Pat: Well, you know, ah that was one of those things that I've asked several times about and it's fallen into the IT black hole every time. Um, their basic answer was that they don't have any. Um, so, ah, a lot of these things are gonna come back up afresh now that we kind of have semi new management ah structure. Um, so, what I think we should do is ah start making these requests anew and make them, make sure that [a central library administrator] is aware of them, and see what happens. So...
>
> Sam: So, should we be or should I be doing that? or is that something--
>
> Pat: [interrupting Sam] No, I would do it through your SM. So, do it through me ah and I'll, I'll ask again...

What is important to notice in this managerial decree is that clarification regarding this circumstantial change in access to information, or provisionality, about equipment requests emerges from an exchange between two people. Sam asks about one aspect of the change being introduced. This question prompts the manager to clarify. In other words, this managerial decree provides evidence of dialogue being used in the practice of ensuring continuous access to equipment-related information.

Dialogue and video blogs

The second case study involves technology-mediated oral data in the form of a video blog. Video blogs, commonly called vlogs, combine traditional journaling, video making, and more recently blogging.

The videoblog selected originated from a data set generated using quasi-random sampling measures of videoblog content. Briefly, the initial set of video data selected from YouTube channels had "vlog" or "videoblog" in the title. Using the YouTube Application Programming Interface (API), we arbitrarily selected one video from each of the channels returned in the search, skipping content that appeared to be commercial productions, contained inappropriate or non-English content, or included minors or at-risk individuals.

Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) was initially used to analyse the original set of video blog data (Turner and Warren 2013). This methodological approach to data analysis, like discourse analysis and the document identification approach being used, emerges from constructionist theory and facilitates the identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns or themes within a data set (Braun and Clarke 2006: 81). Although not all video blogs are oral documents, the video blog analysed, "Message to [a journalist], [another vlogger], and CEOs," is an oral document because it incorporates the institutionalization property (Frohmann 2004b: 396-397; see also Taylor 1991: 228). Meaning, this video blog adheres to emerging norms that perpetuate the (then) still-forming context for video blogs.

The vlogger explains how he has come to understand vlogging vis-à-vis more traditional sources for information. He also shares the story of what inspired him to make the vlog under investigation. Specifically, he had learned about a newspaper article that critiqued a fellow vlogger's recent post (Sutherland 2006) and that vlogger's response to the article. His way of discussing a topical event and sharing stories helps distinguish this video as a video blog instead of as a how-to video or sketch-style story (Frobenius 2011). Emerging research that explores other characteristics of what videobloggers say and do help explain how the vlog under examination perpetuates this medium:

- Vloggers, in general, explore and express self, at times narcissistically (Griffith and Papacharissi 2010). Data of the vlog analysed show how the vlogger describes and quotes from his first video blog, "...months ago ...I actually posted a very short video blog saying 'you know, we old people had to be able [chuckles] ta learn how to do this sort of thing-ah, to be able to stay up with the kids, you know'..." [sic]
- Vloggers also explore video blogging identify as reflected in efforts to better themselves and society (Griffith and Papacharissi 2010). Consistent with this finding, analysis shows that the vlogger reflects on the nature of an authoritative source for information, how information conveyed via YouTube varies in quality, and the value of YouTube postings, "...It's the crazy stupid junk produced by people who today have a sense of their own power to produce such things... I'm sure that the very first stone tablet writings were not the classics." The vlogger

continues to encourage vloggers by comparing early video blogs to early silent films before the medium matured and asserting that resources like YouTube video blogs will similarly mature.
- Finally, vloggers engage in visual factors, like looking directly into the camera, that correlate positively with audience attention (Biel and Gatica-Perez 2010). The data reveal that the vlogger engages with viewers visually in part by leaving to the screen to retrieve the issue of newspaper to which he had referred, returning to the screen, showing viewers the retrieved issue, then reading it to them while commenting on it.

These types of activities on the part of the vlogger are important to this discussion in two ways. First, the activities perpetuate emerging understandings of what makes a video blog, which is evidence of the institutionalization property of document as noted above. Second, the activities reveal how the vlogger interacts with others including another vlogger's initial vlog, the journalist who wrote about that vlog, the other vlogger's video blog response to that article, and viewers of the vlog under investigation. (It is likely that subsequent vlogs posted by this or other vloggers continue this dialogue, but such activity falls beyond the scope of this analysis.) Evidence of the latter appears in form of comments posted under the video on the YouTube website:

- "...I aggree entirely, youtube is still in early days..." [sic];
- "So true. The medium is the beginning of something huge...;" and,
- "...Ur so boring..." [sic].

Evidence of these interactions reflects asynchronous dialogue, for which video blogs are increasingly known (Harley and Fitzpatrick 2008: 14-17). Therefore, this video blog incorporates a dialogue that is integral to the institutionalization property of document informing this video blog's document status. It is also interesting to note that the dialogue of which this video blog is a part occurs across time and across media.

Dialogue and oral histories

The final case study involves oral data in the form of an oral history, which involves a person reminiscing about her or his life (Hesse-BiberLeavy 2006: 147-148). The data analysed were selected from among publically available oral histories that include audio recordings and written transcripts. The case data analysed was an oral history of Michael Collins, a U.S. astronaut who participated in two missions that left the earth's orbit (Apollo 8) and landed on the moon (Apollo 11; Kelly and Collins 1997). The following segment from the data was made after the interviewer (Kelly) asks Collins to reflect on the detailed descriptions he had provided about his experience having been selected as an astronaut, his preparation for space travel, and his first flight into space:

> Collins: ...That's an interesting question, the historical importance of Apollo 8 versus Apollo 11. To summarize that [sic], I think Apollo 8 was about leaving and Apollo 11 was about arriving, leaving Earth and arriving at the moon. As you look back 100 years from now, which is more important, the idea that people left their home planet or the idea that people arrived at their nearby satellite? ...even though today we regard Apollo 11 as being the showpiece and the zenith of the Apollo Program, rightfully so, because that was President [John F.] Kennedy's mandate, to, as he said, land a man on the moon, not two or not a woman, but just a man on the moon. ...but, as I say, 100 years from now, historians may say Apollo 8 is more significant; it's more significant to leave than it is to arrive...

> Kelly: I think that's a very interesting way of describing it. I'd like to go back a little bit to Apollo 8... (Kelly and Collins 1997: 12-23 - 12-24).

This oral history incorporates the social discipline property (Frohmann 2004b: 396-397; Turner 2012: 857); it incorporates evidence of collaborative practices used to produce oral histories. Analysis of the data reveals how this property emerges through dialogue. Kelly uses the phrase, "a little bit," and listens actively repeating Collins' words like, "interesting" and "Apollo 8." Kelly uses these techniques to guide Collins through his reminiscences and facilitate his becoming aware of a new perspective of his life work (Hesse-BiberLeavy 2006: 150). In another example, Kelly asks Collins about his EVAs, or extra-vehicular activities or maneuvers outside a spacecraft while in space. He replies that his three (3) are, "pretty well documented," and asks if she has specific questions (Kelly and Collins 1997: 12-7). Kelly replies, "...you mentioned in one of your books that you got something in your eyes and your eyes started watering. Did they ever find out what that was?" (Kelly and Collins 1997: 12-8). Although Collins had previously written about this incident (Collins 2001: 222-224), he provides details not included in his published book including how closing a spacecraft hatch (or door) depended heavily on being able to see it (Kelly and Collins 1997: 12-8 - 12-9).

Analysis of this latter interaction not only reveals evidence of the social discipline property emerging through dialogue, it also reveals how the interviewer uses oral information to augment information provided in a traditional information resource. Of interest here is this demonstration of how the collaborative practice used to produce oral histories also guides the generation of knowledge (Hesse-BiberLeavy 2006: 151).

Discussion

Dialogue is observed contributing to a property of document in each of the three cases examined. Results lead to discussions regarding the extension of library and information science practices to information that becomes available in non-traditional media; formal and informal information sources; the information life cycle; oral information and context; and, the ideas of oral information literacy and tertiary orality.

First, recognizing that a document can incorporate a dialogue or part of one creates tension in library and information science practices. The results raise questions including, how can traditional library and information science practices be extended to documents, like video blogs, in which social inspection of its validity occur both simultaneous and subsequent to its dissemination? Should all voices that emerge within the document or a dialogue be treated as authors? Are items across which a single dialogue occurs a single document, a collection, or something different? Should some version of a 'see also' reference be used to ensure access to an entire dialogue when it emerges across media? Research is needed to articulate how library and information science practices can support access to oral information including dialogue it may incorporate.

Moreover, traditional views of information service provision view oral information as a tool for providing information, as in the reference interview. However, data reveal how oral information, indeed dialogue is used to augment information stored in available collections (in the third case). In other words, an information professional guides the emergence of new knowledge. The results reveal a blurred division between providing access to information (in collections) and extending information provision services (in a reference exchange). This outcome leads to questions like, how can oral information be used in ways other than augmenting collections as can be done with oral histories?

Similarly, should oral information be used in different ways when extending information services? Additional research is needed to address these and related questions.

Next, one understanding of documents and how to identify them lies in how information behaviour researchers have traditionally distinguished between formal and informal information or information sources (Case 2007: 8, 12-13; Taylor 1991: 228-229). Documents tend to be considered formal; oral information, informal. Given that the results show how an oral document can incorporate a dialogue, this investigation supports two studies indicating that oral information can be a formal (Leckie et al. 1996: 183-184; Taylor 1991: 229). This outcome suggests that the categorization of information and information sources as formal or informal should not be based on the medium through which information becomes available. Further research is needed to determine how to distinguish between formal and informal categories of information and information sources. Anticipated outcomes may help guide changes in professional practices needed in the wake of emerging ways of becoming informed, like with the video blogs analysed in the second case.

Research notes how traditional ways of recording information capture episodes within or the end of a discourse (Frohmann 2004a: 239-240). The results reveal how a discourse is captured as it emerges. For example, Pat's staff member Sam helps to create the oral document by asking a relevant question. And, a dialogue allows an astronaut to expand on information that had already been disseminated. This research outcome suggests that there may be new ways of negotiating the information life cycle. It is possible for the creation and dissemination parts of the information life cycle to occur simultaneously or in reverse order. Further research is needed to substantiate this observation and, if need be, to determine its impact.

The outcome of this study facilitates observations about interactions with context in two cases. In the first case, the public library branch manager speaks definitively about events that impact the broader institution, but only makes changes that impact those at the branch library in the meeting observed. Next, the video blogger speaks directly to those with whom he is in dialogue and to his (asynchronous) audience that, according to limited information available, is small. However, he speaks in a way that suggests vlogs will have a broad impact, by comparing his and others' initial vlogs to the first stone tablets and early silent films. In other words, analysis provides insight into how different contexts, beyond the location of the dialogue, are negotiated. More research is needed to understand the role of context at the intersection of discourse and document, especially given the observation that context can be a factor in how traditional documents can restrict information from emerging (Frohmann 2004a: 239-240). This observation lends support to Courtright's assertion (2008: 292-293) that comparative research is needed to increase understanding about the dynamic, interdependent relationship between actors and context.

Information literacy refers to the ability to recognize a need for, locate, evaluate, and use information effectively (Spitzer, Eisenberg, and Lowe 1998: 226). Research is needed to determine how current understanding of information literacy can be expanded to address the idea of oral information literacy (see also Spitzer, Eisenberg, and Lowe 1998: 25-32) and what this means for document creation and information dissemination. Related, research is needed to compare a document that incorporates a dialogue to the concept of a genre, described as a way of expressing structured discourse that embeds communicative tools (Andersen 2008: 346).

Although it has a small selective sample, this study raises questions about how orality, including oral information made available via modern technology, is used vis-à-vis print and writing. To explain, consider Walter Ong's concepts of primary and secondary orality, or talk by those in oral and chirographic (writing) cultures, respectively. Practical predictability, social connectedness, and

participation characterize primary orality (Ong 2002: 23; Farrell 1991: 197). Consider how easy to recall rhyming instructions to ocean-going vessels in the old adage, "Red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky in morning, sailor's warning." Words uttered by members of oral cultures are akin to thoughts, because memory was dependent on spoken words prior to the emergence of print and writing (Ong 2002: 25-26). By contrast, abstract, disembodied, and individually-oriented spoken word characterizes secondary orality (Farrell 1991: 197). This latter type of orality depends on the existence of literacy and its systems that facilitate the transmission of information over time and space.

Orality in all three cases involves comments, that more reflect thinking out loud than formal information in traditional texts, about details of an organizational request process, the role of an emerging medium, and space expedition. This observation includes how the oral information in the second and third case is characterized by abstract thought true of secondary orality. That is, thinking and remembering seems to occur on the parts of the video blogger and the astronaut; within systems used to record related utterances, events, information, etc.; and, on the part of the listener as is evidenced in dialogueic responses to the speaker.

This study begins into bring into view how talk can depend on the existence of technology, but technology does not just provide access to the information as in the case of traditional documents. Technology facilitates interaction and the generation of new perspectives or new knowledge. These observations and questions to which they lead echo observations of technology-mediated orality in a new format for teaching and learning, specifically a massive open online course (or a MOOC). Technology-mediated orality and information in other formats combine to support networked learning or a "distributed knowledge base" in which new ideas can develop and different viewpoints can co-exist (Cormier *et al.* 2010). In other words, observations from this study - about how a single document can incorporate or be a part of a dialogue across media - combine with emerging understanding of other modern media and lead to questions about whether technology can have a more active role than it now plays in secondary orality.

The distinction between primary and secondary orality is marked by the introduction of literacy and writing (Ong 2002); Is the distinction between secondary orality and the technology-mediated use of orality observed in this study marked by collaborative externalization of what has until now been considered internal thought processes? Do the results begin to suggest that a tertiary orality, or an orality that is actively interdependent with technology, may be emerging? Technology does not just convey information; it presents information in ways that stimulate thought, in particular new ideas or learning. Does our interdependence with technological affordance inform orality in ways to similar how the introduction of literacy did? The emergence of secondary orality eventually led to Western advancements from romanticism to the industrial revolution and more. Has the information age brought with it new ways of interacting with information that may potentially inform future stages of modernity and consciousness (see also Floridi 2010: 12-14, 119; Lynch 2009: 182-183; Schement and Curtis 2004: 9-10, 211-221)? Additional research is needed to determine whether advances in technology are leading to the emergence of a new type of orality.

Conclusion

This investigation examined three types of oral documents and revealed that the provisionality, institutionalization, and social discipline properties of document that each incorporates, respectively, involves dialogue. Moreover, the results identify that the dialogues in two of the documents analysed span across documents in other media (and not included in the scope of this study). Subsequent discussion based on these outcomes considers their practical and conceptual impact.

In oral data from the third case analysed, a former astronaut argues that leaving the Earth's orbit for the first time was at least as, if not more, important than landing on the moon for the first time (Kelly and Collins 1997). Similarly, this discussion contributes to efforts to leave behind traditional views of documents (Buckland 1991; Briet in Day and Martinet 2006; Frohmann 2007; Otlet in Day, 1997; Turner 2012a, 2012b) by showing how it can incorporate a dialogue. Articulating how to extend traditional library and information science practices to documents in emerging formats may not be entirely unlike reaching the moon. Works like this study help identify the nature of new types of documents emerging such that information professionals can begin to determine how to describe, organize, store, retrieve, or articulate new practices needed to ensure access to emerging documents.

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