

socioeconomic barriers to widespread use of information. South Africa exemplifies an incomplete transformation from the highly developed, bureaucratic, and secretive apartheid state to a country with explicit freedom of information rights but low citizen use and sporadic data collection. African countries, however, are “not a basket case.”

This book more than meets its objective of interrogating common assumptions about the universal application of freedom of information rights. The nonideological stance of its authors is one of its strengths, along with their superb research and mastery of theory, history, and politics in many domains. It leaves a rather dispiriting impression in the end, as if freedom of information were not merely an unattainable ideal but possibly a mistaken one. In the final chapter, the authors propose a tentative solution: movement toward nonjuridical, nonadversarial practices (break the “hermeneutics of suspicion”), toward a culture of access in which governments recognize that secrecy leads to bad policy. The Wikileaks model is mentioned too, where technology enables direct action against an authoritarian state. Truthfully, however, the authors have no solution or policy recommendations to offer, which may be just as well given their distrust of universal solutions. Readers should be grateful for their temperate and stimulating treatment of a subject that largely has gone unexamined by library professionals.—*Jean Alexander, Carnegie Mellon University.*

June Abbas. *Structures for Organizing Knowledge: Exploring Taxonomies, Ontologies, and Other Schemas.* New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2010. xxi, 248p. alk. paper, \$85.00 (ISBN 9781555706999). LC2010-024861.

Organization is at the heart of the library profession: without organization both physical (as on shelves) and virtual (as in databases and OPACs), users cannot access information and materials. As the

library grows to include more digital resources and users begin to create their own metadata, librarians must expand their concepts of knowledge organization beyond traditional means of description and classification.

June Abbas's *Structures for Organizing Knowledge: Exploring Taxonomies, Ontologies, and Other Schemas* discusses the many ways in which human beings organize objects and how librarians and other information professionals can make use of these tendencies to design effective tools for organizing information. The book is not a practical guide for designing and developing said tools, nor a detailed explanation of the schema used therein; rather, it is an overview of the underlying concepts that shape human organizational behavior and, thus, tools for organizing knowledge.

Abbas divides the book into three “threads”: Traditional Structures for Organizing Knowledge, which covers organizational structures commonly used in libraries and the academic world and the history thereof; Personal Structures for Organizing Knowledge, which covers organizational structures developed by individuals; and Socially Constructed Structures for Organizing Knowledge, which covers organizational structures that are developing as a result of Web 2.0 technologies, such as folksonomies, tagging, and bookmarking. Each chapter begins with “Focus Points” that present the basic concepts to be presented in that chapter and concludes with “Thought Exercises,” a series of questions about the concepts discussed; there are also ample bibliographical references. Abbas notes in the preface that the book is written for library and information science students as well as practicing professionals and researchers, for whom the “Thought Exercises” might serve as assignments; for others, discussion points.

The first “thread” encompasses chapters 1–4, which include an introduction to the concept of knowledge organization as well as the historical development of

knowledge-organization structures, current standards and best practices, and uses and applications of knowledge-organization structures. Chapter 2 provides a historical outline of knowledge organization, discussing contributions from the library world (such as Panizzi and Cutter) and from those of philosophy, natural science, and cognitive science. Chapter 3 discusses the development of and need for standards within knowledge-organization structures, focusing chiefly on those used in libraries, museums, and other educational institutions. Chapter 4 extends this discussion by looking at specific knowledge structures within specific disciplines, with further exploration of how said structures translate into the digital environment.

Chapter 5 represents the second "thread," focusing on individually created knowledge-organization structures: how people organize knowledge in personal and professional contexts. Abbas outlines the formal areas of research involved in researching how people organize their personal information: human-information behavior (HIB), knowledge organization (KO), human-computer interaction (HCI), and personal information management (PIM), and how each can provide a framework for the organization of personal knowledge spaces. What follows is a fascinating overview of research in said fields, including analysis of calendaring, to-do lists, e-mail categories, and digital photo collections, as well as application of the same fields to how one organizes one's professional knowledge, ranging from e-mail folders, "filers vs. pilers," to formal taxonomies and ontologies designed for use within a specific industry or corporation.

The third "thread," chapters 6–8, extends the concepts behind personal knowledge-organization behavior to socially constructed knowledge organization. Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the organization systems created on social sites such as Flickr, Delicious, YouTube, and LibraryThing, examining how these

systems not only reflect users' natural organizing behavior and personal knowledge organization but also how they can blend with traditional, standardized knowledge-organization structures, especially in the cases of LibraryThing and the integration of folksonomies and tagging into OPAC displays. Chapter 7 examines the possibility of connecting traditional knowledge organization, personal knowledge organization, and socially created knowledge organization to create structures for organizing knowledge that "reflect the actual information practices and engagement needs of users," with chapter 8 discussing possible scenarios for achieving this in the library world, ranging from a merged structure blending traditional bibliographic records with socially constructed fields added to creating an entirely new structure for bibliographic records. Abbas concludes this chapter by noting:

"We are indeed at a crossroads ... this is an exciting opportunity for the knowledge organization community! ... Perhaps it is also time for library and information science educators and professionals to revisit lessons we have learned in the past (or should have learned) about melding the traditional, present, and future practices so that we take this opportunity to fashion structures for organizing knowledge into integrated, multidimensional, but enriched tapestries."

Structures for Organizing Knowledge is detailed without being overwhelming; ample illustrations aid in clarifying potentially difficult concepts, and the "Thought Exercises" that close each section guide the reader in personalizing the concepts discussed. An excellent primer on expanding one's concepts of knowledge organization, Abbas's book is important reading for library and information science students learning about the organization of knowledge, as well as library professionals working in the cataloging and metadata fields, who have both the opportunity and the expertise to revitalize knowledge-organization

structures.—*Deborah DeGeorge, University of Michigan.*

Controlling the Past: Documenting Society and Institutions: Essays in Honor of Helen Willa Samuels. Ed. Terry Cook. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011. 434p. \$56 (ISBN 9781931666369).

In 1986, Massachusetts Institute of Technology archivist Helen Willa Samuels published an article in *American Archivist* entitled “Who Controls the Past.” Invoking George Orwell’s lines from 1984: “who controls the past, controls the future,” Samuels noted that in “a modern, complex, information-rich society... only a small portion of the vast documentation can be kept... archivists are challenged to select a lasting record, but they lack techniques to support this decision-making.” She proposed an appraisal process called “documentation strategies... to respond to these problems.”

The plight of the modern archivist in today’s information-saturated society is, to put it mildly, daunting. Given the staggering number of physical and electronic documents generated by institutions in particular, and society at large, how does an archivist go about creating order and accessibility to this mountain range of information? Cutting to the crux: how does an archivist decide what to keep and what to destroy?

Helen Willa Samuels grappled with these questions and sought to answer them in a body of work that helped define the role of archivist as much more than merely a collector of the past. Rather, Samuels described how, through the careful, collaborative, and thoughtful appraisal and selection of what materials should be archived, archivists have an active role in shaping societal memory.

As a testament to her stature in the archives community, editor Terry Cook has compiled *Controlling the Past* as a *festschrift* that celebrates the work and legacy of Helen Willa Samuels. *Controlling the Past* contains 16 essays by noted

archivists, as well as an introductory overview by editor Terry Cook, an annotated bibliography of Samuels’s work, and an autobiographical essay by Samuels.

There’s a lot to unpack and digest in Samuels’ work, and these essays do a wonderful job of providing context and insight to her body of work. A number of these essays address and expand upon Samuels’ documentation strategy/ activist archivist literature, as well as one of Samuels’ concept of archival functional analysis. Outlined in her 1992 book *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities*, functional analysis suggested that institutions such as universities were best understood by looking at what they do—their functions.

The essays are broadly categorized under two main divisions: “Documenting Society” and “Representing Archives/ Being Archival.” The former category focuses on appraisal and related issues and includes essays on electronic records management, oral history, problems presented by digital records, corporate archives, archiving photographs, and the “complication of color in an academic archive,” an examination of the monochromatic nature of archival work.

The second section addresses the role of the archivist within Samuels’s documentation/appraisal/activism model. Included are essays on the importance of collaborative work among archivists, the interrelated role between creators, archivists, and users of information, the philosophical and ethical role of the archivist as “controller of the past,” and the changing nature of the archivist in relation to the historical research process.

For the nonarchivist, *Controlling the Past* sheds some light on the archival profession from a theoretical and practical perspective. For archivists, this volume is filled with thought-provoking essays that mingle theory, observation, and practice. It’s one of those books that you’ll return to, one that will lead you back to Samuels’s original work with fresh insight.—*Gene Hyde, Radford University, Radford, Virginia.*