

DESIRE IN SIGHT: THE AESTHETICS OF KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION

Melissa Adler, Marnie James, & Greg Nightingale

Among the consequences of standardized global knowledge organization systems are the rewriting, erasure, and loss of local knowledge and culture, as well as a flattening of the multidimensionality of human experience. This panel will report on SSHRC-funded research that explores a variety of models for creative knowledge organization practices by examining methods that reside at the intersections of art, story-telling, poetry, and craft. The aim of the research is to privilege personal and local knowledge organization practices, and to find creative ways to augment, revise, repair, or resist global standards. It also explores how some private organization systems become national or global in reach. If we understand knowledge organization and classification as creative endeavours that reflect and animate intellectual and affective terrains, we might view them as more than mere tools that facilitate access to information. We can appreciate them for the ways that they arrange and circulate knowledge along lines of desire, fear, love, hatred, mourning, and curiosity. The panelists will discuss their participation in this project, including their own creative interventions, critiques, and interactions with knowledge organization techniques of Judy Chicago, Jorge Luis Borges, Thomas Jefferson, and Audre Lorde.

Thomas Jefferson's "Peculiar Satisfaction," Melissa Adler

Melissa Adler is the Principle Investigator on the project and will describe its context and aims. She will also situate the project as a response to "universal" systems, using Thomas Jefferson's book classification as an exemplar of colonial knowledge organization techniques. Jefferson sold his collection and classified catalogue to the Library of Congress in 1815 after the existing library was burned in the War of 1812. In correspondence with the Librarian of Congress regarding the transfer of his book collection, Jefferson said that there was a "peculiar satisfaction" to arranging books according to subject, which derived from "seeing at a glance the books which have been written on [a subject], and selecting those from which we expect most readily the information we seek." Indeed, the reduction of complex phenomena to subject categories is instrumental to technologies of domination. Studying Jefferson's book classification in dialogue with Audre Lorde's poetry and commentary on systems of oppression reveals ways that a colonial library and archive are established and codified, how heteropatriarchy and race are inscribed, and how one personal system led to the formation of a global standard.

Jefferson, Thomas to George Watterston, 7 May 1815," Founders Online, National Archives, last modified June 29, 2017, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-08-02-0376>.

Borges & the Library as Hell, Greg Nightingale

The Book of Sand, the eponymous tome eventually hidden in Argentina's National Library in Jorge Luis Borges's short story, is one example of many from his writings of the library and its "diabolic book[s]" (Borges 2007, 91). This paper examines this and other recurring themes (infinity, unreality, librarianship, the burning of libraries, the arbitrariness of classification), representative characters (Hermann Sörgel from "Shakespeare's Memory", the Simurgh, Borges himself), and improbable objects (the Book of Sand, Shakespeare's memory). I present a broad summary of Borges's writings related to the impossibility of truth and order, the impossibility of the library, the hiding of nightmarish objects in the library as hell, the willful nature of the phantasmagoria, and the chance for redemption. Our fictional systems of order,

control, cataloguing, and classification are the very means by which we can recognize their illusory nature. Borges's writings, especially his metafiction, introduce nightmarish objects while also calling into question the nature of reality, therefore offering a dialectical path to seek refuge from those same nightmares. Salvation is an ongoing process, not a definitive system. The nightmare library, that of the underworld, is the one that exists, offering us a fleeting glimpse of paradise: Borges's imaginary library.

Borges, Jorge Luis. *The Book of Sand and Shakespeare's Memory*. Translated by Andrew Hurley. New York: Penguin Books, 2007.

Judy Chicago Meets Thomas Jefferson, Marnie James

Cataloguing Jefferson's catalogue data regarding his books on geography, history, and ethics revealed Jefferson's organizing principles with regard to slavery, indigeneity, and whiteness. The critical inquiry into his classification led to a creative intervention inspired by the feminist artist Judy Chicago. She is best known for her "Dinner Party" installation, executed between 1974 and 1979. The piece is important for its symbolic representation of women throughout Western history. Chicago has since created a series of collaborative projects, many of which are textiles and needlework. A catalogue raisonné is a definitive, scholarly annotated listing of all the known works of an artist, and Chicago has been intimately involved with the management of her own catalogue. As reported in the February 7, 2018 *New York Times*, she has "meticulously documented every piece she's made since the early 1960s on some 6,000 index cards, which she and her assistant are organizing for her eventual catalogue raisonné." The creative piece used for the "Desire in Sight" project uses embroidery and the same types of textiles and dyes made on Jefferson's plantation, as well as catalogue cards, to re-envision the organization of subjects in his catalogue.