

abstract:

We are information collectors. The online information collector operates in fixed structures, databases and lists. The construction of the list as an outcome of classification systems brings a specific way to look at things and a flat online experience. Moreover it can be seen as a technology of the self and as an ideological constraint. Lists now are interfaces to online information. It seems useful to approach the politics and the aesthetics of the list to explore its effect on the information collector. And to extract insights that would be important to take into account in the design of a different online experience as a response/alternative to the experience with the list.

introduction:

The formation of the human subject is related to the act of collecting. The contemporary subject is formed through **information collecting in online space**. Inherently, humans share collecting instincts, and exercise collecting and classifying skills in their everydaylife. **How does the information collector produce his own self and the world around?** How does this collecting happen? Nowadays, online information collecting is possible mainly through huge online databases or indexes and their online catalogues, their lists.

Chapter 1:

I am interested in **the list as a construction of culture related to the act of information collecting and that enforces order**. Moreover, as an outcome of classification systems that brings a specific way to look at things and their relationships.

As a librarian I have been exposed to the functionalities of the list during information collecting, research or entertainment. I have also seen how information access, use, evaluation and creative use skills reshape a person in different extends.

As an artist working with online collections , I am exercising an extreme example of an online information collector. **I have been observing that I actually collect within collections and that these given structures decrease the possibilities of an accident, the sense of play and hunt, the sense of space.**

To me its important to be open to the accidents of categorisation within the database. In my practise, **recontextualising classified items becomes a means of playing with categories and the fixed properties that they assign to objects.**

The format of the list somehow contradicts to the associative nature of human thinking, and **stands as a model of abstraction and normalisation of things.**

What is the list, what is classification and how are they interconnected? And how does a list stand as a technology of the self, after Foucault's concept, (quoted in Luther, 1988) that forms us, gives us identity and classifies us?

How do the politics of list can be approached ? According to Eco(2009) we create lists in order to comprehend the unexplainable, to defeat the idea of death and so on. There is this certainly a logical and useful side of the list but where does it have its origins? Cultural theorist Stuart Hall(1997) pointed out that it's in our nature to classify things, but classification systems in each society are learned. As lists reflect classification systems, it seems that they both can be seen as means of **training**. Psychedelic philosopher Terence McKenna (n.d.) talks about the "western game", the creation of **boundaries and their maintenance through categorical divisions**. How do the ideas of classification and boundaries together with the need to comprehend the unknown, get materialised in the formation of the subject?

Chapter 2:

I am focusing in the experience with lists in online space. particularly in the lists of results in online archives and search engines. How they become an ideological constraint. They reflect the ideas of efficiency and productivity. And how they lead to a flat experience in online space, in fact I see lists as the flattest in a sense expression of online space.

The interfaces to online collections and databases are all lists, (from online library catalogues, to online archives like Internet Archive, to web indexes like Google) therefore **the aesthetics of it define a big amount of our online collecting experience.**

What are the aesthetics of the list online? And why do they seem to be so persistent?

The list is as a hierarchical, static, box structured form to be filled with content. It is a pure linguistic, textual form in its back and front end, from the programming of it to the textual search of the user. It constructs a highly ordered and white cubed online space. It is formed through lines and empty spaces. It is a two dimensional structure that manages white space in order to create boxes out of it, dividing it in smaller segments. It is also linear, a top to bottom structure that can be navigated through vertical scrolling and page-by page clicking.

How do the aesthetics of the list together with its politics lead to a flat online space and a boring online collecting experience?

Borrowing some situationist approaches towards the experience in the urban environment, and possibly concepts and practises like the derive, but also positions of the group ("We are bored in the city space, one gets exhausted to find a mystery"), I will explain **the idea of the flatness of the online space** (of search results) trying to approach its characteristics, in order to be able to propose a more playful, mysterious and accidental online information space.

Chapter 3:

In the last chapter I would like to bring the idea of a **psychedelic experience in online space**, an extreme experience as response to the list . How can we add ambiguity against clearness and order? Can we oppose to the flatness with an opening in new spatial and sensational possibilities that is supported by the design of an audiovisual navigation into online collections?

I think of the online psychedelic experience as a 3d multisensational experience that is open to different paths of retrieving information. It supports possible accidents in searching and doesn't emphasize a certain order of things. One is not looking for information through textual searches, but rather finds information while exploring online 3d space.

Depth, colour, light, sound and animation seem that are elements that do not fit in the aesthetics of the list. An list interface with these characteristics would be a psychedelic search interface. It would undermine the domination of textual search and give more importance to audiovisual elements.

A space of information that would be more dynamic, fluid, playful, weird and explorative.

Bibliography of thesis outline:

Umberto Eco. The infinity of the lists. Rizzoli, 2009

Terence McKenna. The importance of psychedelics [lecture], transcript available here <http://www.matrixmasters.net/podcasts/TRANSCRIPTS/TMcK-ImportancePsychedelics.pdf>

Stuart Hall. Media and representation [lecture], transcript available here http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/409/transcript_409.pdf

Luther H. Martin. Technologies of the self: a seminar with Michel Foucault, Tavistock, 1988.

Structure approach:

Introduction: human becoming and (information) collecting
(or as a chapter within part 1)

Part1: the list and its politics

a.what is the list

b.the concept of classification, its goals and problematics

c.the list as a technology of the self

d.the politics of the list

Part2: the list and its aesthetics

a.the list as interface to online collections

b.the list and the flatness of online space

part3: navigating in psychedelic online space

psychedelic search interfaces

Key sources:

Michel Foucault. *The order of things*. Panteon, 1971

Luther H.Martin (ed.). *Technologies of the self: a seminar with Michel Foucault*.
Tavistock Publications, 1988

Mark Dery. *Escaping velocity: cyberculture in the end of the century*. Grove Press, 1996

Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star. *Sorting things out : classification and its consequences*. MIT Press, 1999.

Ken Knabb. *Situationist international anthology*. Bureau of public secrets, 2006.

Alison Adam. *Lists*. In "Software Studies: a lexicon". MIT Press, 2008.

Soren Pold (ed). *Interface Criticism: Aesthetics Beyond the Buttons*. Aarhus University Press, 2011

