

Classification defined: taxonomies, ontologies and folksonomies

I was very honoured to be chosen to attend the Advancing Business Classification Conference held recently in Sydney. My application was a call from the heart, a plea to spend some time with industry experts and colleagues with a common goal—to better serve up and make sense of the information, records, data etc in our care.

On day one, we were welcomed by Joy Siller followed by presentations from Phil Lloyd from Deloittes, and then Richard Mukyumbira from Blue Scope Steel, who outlined their organisations’ enterprise-wide initiatives and the challenges associated with implementing classification schemes across large and diverse businesses.

Patrick Lamb’s presentation entitled *Your metadata strategy is your taxonomy strategy* linked the effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness of an organisation to the management of business information collections and the use of descriptive, management, structural and relational metadata. Patrick identified four environments: chaotic, known, knowable, and complex, and defined the characteristics of each. He then encouraged participants to place their organisations into the one of these four environments.

Philip Keane defined classification, outlined the advantages of a good schema and provided examples of the different schemes used in library, records and other information management environments and was followed by Chris Hurley who outlined how the Commonwealth Bank uses a business classification scheme to manage the retention and disposal program.

The day finished with a thought provoking session on ontologies. Simon Milton explained the different types of classification: controlled vocabularies, taxonomies, thesauri, and ontologies. An ontology classifies what exists and represents knowledge about a domain through a rich array of associations between entities. Having tried to classify ‘what exists’ in an information sense in a number of large organisations, I was particularly taken with Simon’s insightful comments.

Day two began with Keith De La Rue explaining how a simple alphabetical index was all that was required by a sales team to increase the knowledge available to the team and the information provided to customers.

Joy Siller introduced us to the anarchic realm of folksonomies. Folksonomies are user or consumer generated metadata to identify and categorise online content and are also known as collaborative tagging and social classification. They are an unconstrained way of tagging information so that it makes sense to the author or the viewer examples include Flickr, Del.icio.us, Penntags and Etsy.

Trish Hyde bought us all back to reality with her refreshing case study about Delta Electricity and their endeavours to ensuring user needs were met in an environment of regulatory constraint. The final speaker, Sha Reilly, outlined the strategy used to engage stakeholders and maintain support for the implementation of a classification scheme highlighting the importance of clear communication, stakeholder involvement, ongoing review and flexibility to the successful implementation a new classification scheme.

The conference was well organised, the presenters knowledgeable and the program a good mix of strategic vision and operational good sense. The most interesting element was listening to the wide variety of experience in the room, a real mix of practising librarians, records managers, knowledge managers, business analysts and technologists. They came from across the nation and New Zealand and as hoped, provided good company, fresh ideas, inspiration and I got back on the plane to Perth all fired up.

I would encourage all members to take advantage of the professional development opportunity offered by this fabulous ALIA/ARK program. Just fill your application in with passion, cross your fingers for luck and be willing to share your experience—that’s true knowledge sharing and everyone in our profession gains!

Thanks ALIA!

Debra Rule
Knowledge Manager
Department of Corrective Services
Debra.Rule@correctiveservices.wa.gov.au

Annual audit of the ALIA PD Scheme

The annual audit of the ALIA PD Scheme will be starting soon.

So what does this mean to participants in the scheme?

Each year ALIA randomly selects 10% of PD Scheme participants and conducts an audit of their PD activities and records. This is to ensure participants are complying with the scheme requirements.

The upcoming audit will focus on the PD period **01/07/2007 to 30/06/2008**.

More information about the audit process and requirements of the

ALIA PD Scheme can be located on the ALIA website at

<http://www.alia.org.au/education/pd/scheme/audit.html>

<http://www.alia.org.au/education/pd/scheme/requirements.html>

Remember—the selection of participants to be audited is random.

Take the time to review your PD activities now.

This year it could be **YOU**.

<http://www.alia.org.au/education/pd/>

THE COLLECTION CLEANING SPECIALISTS



**DUST REMOVAL
 MOULD REMOVAL & MONITORING
 BULK CLEANING
 MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS**

**(03) 9511 8321 or 0407 815 722
 www.jopa.com.au**