

Disc Jockeys and Information – A Model of Interaction

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Disc Jockeys (DJs) gather information into personal collections and from these produce unique sets of material. The process involves research, collecting, and organization of digital collections to aid browsing and memory recall. Two behaviors generate the output: selecting and mixing. The model of information interaction facilitates learning and creative production.

A schematic view of the model can be viewed at: <http://tiny.cc/2f9kqw>. An auto-ethnographic diary study was employed to observe each stage of the DJ process. The completed diary study was analyzed by developing a simple interface that integrated one key aspect of the DJ's interaction: simultaneous engagement with original material *and* digital folder structure. This enables analysis (categorization, grouping, ordering, selection), and synthesis (alternative routes through information, new combinations by mixing). The study can be viewed here: <http://ablab.org/pd/artsIT/>.

Newness is seen to enter the DJ's model in two behaviors: *Selecting*, and *mixing*:

Selecting is the principle interaction with material. It occurs when collecting, deleting, organizing, preparing sets, and in live presentation. Selection, and the associated re-contextualization of material, is a key creative behavior in a process that reuses content throughout.

Mixing works with the potential of combination. The mix is used to disguise transitions, emphasize transitions, and to build completely new sound information between articles. Links between articles are crucial sites for invention and discovery.

Selecting and mixing, used to develop new information from the archive, is analogous to library scientist Don Swanson's theory of *Undiscovered Public Knowledge* and the methods he developed for building newness from the archive. Swanson suggests:

"The significance of the "information explosion" (...) may lie not in an explosion of quantity per se, but in an incalculably greater combinatorial explosion of unnoticed and unintended logical connections." [1]

The DJ's model of information interaction facilitates creativity in the reuse of content, through selection (context/sequence), and the mix (combinatory play/links). It employs the personal digital collection as memory aid and creative tool. The interface enables responsive live improvisation directly from the collection. The whole process transfers archived information into real social space. It is a read/write process of interaction whereby the archive is read, learnt, and written to: in digital structure, metadata, and the mix.

The DJ model offers significant implications for how we interact and communicate with digital information, libraries, and archives.

[1]"Undiscovered public knowledge: A ten-year update." In: *Data Mining: Integration & Application* (KDD-96 Proceedings, AAAI) 295-298. (with Neil R. Smalheiser) 1999
<http://www.aaai.org/Papers/KDD/1996/KDD96-051.pdf>