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## Review of The Organization of Information

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## THE ORGANIZATION OF INFORMATION

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THE ORGANIZATION OF INFORMATION. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Arlene G. Taylor. Library and Information Science Text Series. Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, 2004. xxvii, 417 pp., ISBN 1-56308-976-9, 1-56308-696-6 (pbk.), \$65.00. Hardcover (\$65), Softcover (\$50).

In this major revision to Arlene Taylor's first edition of *The Organization of Information*, she accomplishes her goal with what I believe is mind expanding success – "The goal of this edition remains to enable students, practicing librarians, and others interested in organizing information to understand the theory, principles, standards, and tools behind the organization of information in all types of environments." This book was on my reading list and I am delighted to have had an opportunity to dig into it in some depth.

As a technical services librarian with intimate experiences with the MARC Format and systems administration, I appreciated Taylor's approach to broaden the umbrella for organizing information beyond the sphere of MARC codes and OPAC displays. The paradigm is shifting for technical services librarians; this book helps move one's thoughts about information organization to a different place, which may include other schema (such as EAD or Encoded Archival Description) or organizing principles (such as FRBR or Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records).

Taylor covers four broad areas in twelve chapters: concepts and current practices in organizing information, systems that hold information/data for retrieval, metadata and its relationship to everything, and subject analysis. Taylor's concise writing style enables her to distill complex concepts into manageable pieces, if taken at a deliberate pace. Extensive notes and suggested readings are offered in each chapter for more in-depth consideration. She provides a significant number of illustrations and lists to help orient the reader. A useful glossary, selected bibliography and index comprise the last 64 pages.

My favorite chapter was about subject analysis and the process of determining the “aboutness” of an information package. The process and questions articulated are very clear. She provides the kind of tools one needs when working with the FRBR model, for example.

The chapters on metadata provide a good description for various kinds of metadata and its varying roles at an introductory level. She places MARC Formats, AACR2 and ISBD into the bigger picture, which is an essential perspective in the paradigm shift.

This book was highly recommended at two meetings I attended in fall 2004. Experienced librarians attended both meetings – librarians who would have understood the old context for organizing information. I cannot speak for individuals new to the field of librarianship. This book would be very valuable to them, but probably in a different way.

I have a wonderful poster in my office. It is a picture of an untitled sculpture with a paraphrased quotation from *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table: Every Man His Own Boswell* by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. “A human mind, once stretched to a new idea, never returns to its former dimensions.” Taylor’s important contribution in *The Organization of Information* does just that!

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