

# Book Review

---

***The Organization of Information, Fifth Edition.*** By Daniel N. Joudrey, with the assistance of Emily Baldoni. New York: Bloomsbury Libraries Unlimited, 2025. 688p. \$79.95 softcover (ISBN 978-1-440878-61-9); \$130.00 hardcover (ISBN 978-1-440878-59-6); \$71.95 ebook (ISBN 978-1-440878-60-2).

Now in its fifth edition, *The Organization of Information* has long been a mainstay of library and information science (LIS) education. This latest edition provides numerous much-needed updates and additions as the information landscape has changed drastically since the release of the fourth edition in 2018. Changes made in this edition are outlined in the preface and include an updated chapter structure, additional figures and vocabulary definitions, new discussion questions at the end of each chapter, and many content additions. Daniel Joudrey, who co-authored the third and fourth editions, was assisted by Emily Baldoni in the fifth edition.

*Organization* provides a comprehensive overview of the information landscape and the ways cultural heritage institutions describe and search their collections. Readers will come away with a strong understanding of the history of library and information sciences as a whole as well as specific knowledge of modern systems, conceptual models, and standards. In general, the volume is organized to move from broad treatment of a topic through to more specific information. A balance is struck between providing contextual and historical information while also describing current practices in many areas. Extensive citations for further reading are also provided following each chapter.

Early chapters provide a foundation of historical and contextual information about general approaches to information organization and a concise history of recorded information and its systematic organization in the West going back to antiquity. Chapter 1 provides a philosophical foundation for why and how humans organize information and connects these broad concepts to cultural heritage practices and literature. Joudrey and Baldoni provide useful and concise overviews of information organization principles and procedures in libraries, archives, museums, and digital spaces. Each of these sections is dealt with in greater detail in other parts of the book, but this introductory chapter provides a solid overview that LIS students in particular will find invaluable in orienting themselves to the discipline. Chapter 2 constitutes an overview of the history of information organization, especially in libraries, and provides further context for several principles that persist in libraries today, such as uniformity in description and literary warrant.

Chapters 3 and 4 delve into retrieval tools and searching technologies. Resources such as bibliographies and catalogs are given more fulsome definitions; finding aids and museum directories are each given their own sections as well. Chapter 4's overview of the challenges and shortcomings of information retrieval systems is especially well written. This is a topic where it would be easy to get bogged down in technical details, but the authors do an excellent job of providing just enough detail to give readers an understanding of system architecture in the library context and its impact on search tool usability. If there is any criticism to be made in this section, it is only that chapter 3 could have gone into

further detail about the ways that generative artificial intelligence (AI) has influenced expectations around search and retrieval tools. This topic is addressed briefly here as well as in later chapters, and it is admittedly still difficult to draw firm conclusions about the extent and means of AI's influence. However, some readers may find it strange to not see it mentioned more prominently in the context of internet searching.

Taken together, chapters 5 through 9 provide a detailed picture of the various ways in which collections are described. These chapters provide overviews of the major standards and content models used in the cultural heritage sector. Again, libraries receive the most attention in this section, but archive and museum standards are highlighted as well. This is another area where it would be difficult to balance creating a concise overview and providing enough detail to give readers a useful understanding of the evolving landscape of descriptive and other metadata standards, but the authors manage this challenge well. The chapter organization along with plentiful tables and examples help to make these chapters readable and useful as a reference tool. Some of the frameworks covered are notoriously difficult to understand even for seasoned professionals, but *Organization* handles them very well. To name two examples, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' (IFLA) Library Reference Model (LRM) in chapter 7 and Resource Description and Access (RDA) in chapter 9 are covered in detail and given a great deal of useful historical context. A description of the evolution from the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and its associated models to LRM is among the best overviews on the topic. Similarly, the description of RDA and its long history and relationship to FRBR and LRM is handled well. As libraries shift to adopting Official RDA, this section and its references to the RDA Toolkit could be a helpful resource for librarians to orient themselves to new practices. Beyond specific standards, chapter 6 ("Introduction to Metadata") is an especially useful primer on types of metadata and their application. Its concise summary of the unique challenges in digital information organization is well written and a much less daunting read than other metadata overviews in the literature, though a good selection of more comprehensive introductions is also included in the "Suggested Readings" section of the chapter.

The final chapters of *Organization* cover authority control, subject access, controlled vocabularies, and categorization. This section goes into detail about approaches to these topics in libraries, archives, and museums and provides exhaustive examples and references to standards and vocabularies. A great deal of guidance on authority control standards and approaches to subject analysis is included; these sections may be particularly useful to early career catalogers. Other relevant topics are handled in this section as well if relatively briefly—such as cataloging ethics, authority control on the web through tools such as the Virtual International Authority File (VIAF) and International Standard Name Identifiers (ISNI), and the role of subject analysis in the face of AI. Overall, these chapters, while dense in some areas, provide a useful picture of the state of authority work and classification.

While this volume is primarily geared toward LIS students, it is also meant to serve as a reference for information professionals. The fifth edition's expanded chapter and section numbering system makes

the volume very easy to navigate and contributes to its utility as a reference volume that will be relevant beyond the classroom. The robust glossary is also a useful resource for a broad audience.

It goes without saying that information organization is rapidly evolving, especially as the impact of AI on libraries and other information professions has yet to be fully understood. Even in this context, *The Organization of Information* is an ambitious and relevant resource for elucidating the work of the cultural heritage sector. LIS students and others who wish to learn about the history and modern challenges of information organization will receive an excellent introduction to the discipline and a rich bibliography for further reading.—*Lisa Lorenzo (lorenzo7@msu.edu), Michigan State University Libraries, East Lansing, Michigan*