

MAKING THE UNSEEN VISIBLE: THE READING ACT

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Notes:

“But who shall be the master? The writer or the reader?” (Denis Diderot).

How the writer wants to be read compared to how the reader reads their writings.

The place/role of the indexer or publisher not just as indexer or editor, but as *readers*.

In-between the writer, the text and the reader = the indexer. Who are we indexing for? The reader or the writer/author?

The reader is the *intended audience*, but do we pay more attention to the demands of the writer, editor, publisher?

Structure within another structure:

- Text – content
- Table of Content – linear order of content organisation
- Index – non-linear access

Complex interaction of reading and writing: *how* reading takes place and the purpose it serves. Human organisation process – language and symbol (De Beer 2016).

No reading and no text can ever be final; “[e]very reading act is born of a search for knowledge” (De Beer 1999:458-459).

Who this reader we say we write for, edit for, index for; their experiences, expectations? What does the act of reading involve?

“If we do not know how readers actually approach indexes, how can we produce a product that they will want to use” (Coe 2015:92).

Mary Coe (ISC/SCI Annual Conference 2021): “In my mind’s eye, I’m turning a page: how do readers make sense of active e-book indexes?”

The ‘new’ reader and the *nonlinear reading path*; why we read = *kinaesthetic, emotional, intellectual* (Coe 2012). Could we be underestimating the imagination?

Bachelard (1997:10): “a gift of the imagination ... in the simplest of intimacies ... between a book and its reader offered by the writer to a lover of books ... [It is] the chance, respectively, to speak and listen, a renewal of language in the raising of a new voice.”

The practice of reading, or the reading act, as an interpretive act can be seen as understanding meaning in *search of knowledge* (De Beer 1999).

The moment humans started to assemble documents and records they have been interested in ways of arranging them, a preoccupation with the question of systematic grouping.

It has assumed a complexity, with the purpose to guide or trace *intellectual content* contained in a source (key to knowledge):

- propensity of humans to search for scientific or philosophical reasons for the processes they utilise (Maltby 1975)
- increase in documents dealing with highly specific themes and overlapping disciplines

The quest to acquire knowledge includes the ability to think and make connections, it is what organises, structures, combines, imagines and directs insight and understanding.

Open thinking: allow space and place for the *new and the other*, activate and inspire a particular way of thinking.

Modalities of reading and modes of thinking as inclusive frameworks: understand how humans think and read, the implicit and explicit ways of knowing; reject the objective-subjective distinction (Polanyi 1964).

Allow for *complexity of language*, whether that of the original author or that of the reader, in the use, contexts and interpretations of the meanings of words. The type of thinking necessary to counter disjunctive approaches to knowledge is independent, inventive and creative (De Beer 2016).

- functional reader: skills, training, development
- comprehensive reader: cultivation of thinking, ecologies of knowledge

How we approach the possibility of exciting encounters and challenges, could determine whether the path ahead may bring stagnation or growth.

Indexers and indexing should not have to be apologetic about taking a central place in making the unseen visible, while retaining sensitivity to the living, breathing nature of the reading act.