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## Information is Everywhere

This assignment focuses on the ubiquitous nature of information. Part of this project was to spend at least one day collecting, browsing, and experiencing information without the use of the internet. The sources of my work included newspapers, magazines and medical journals. The diverse subjects related to the information field range from internet security to job marketing.

Newspapers alerted me to the ever-present topic of information. When walking to school, the first page of a newspaper jumped out at me. In one of those newspaper stands, the word “Microsoft” caught my eye. On the first page I read, “Microsoft Feels the Squeeze.” I put 50 cents in the machine and I started to read about the news. According to Joseph Tartakoff, journalist for the Seattle Post Intelligence newspaper, Microsoft plans to lay off 5,000 employees<sup>1</sup>. Microsoft’s decision to reduce its personnel greatly impacts the technology field. Prior to the current economic crisis, the general impression in the technology field was that employment at Microsoft offered one of the safest places to work due to this company’s predominant status. Microsoft’s necessity to lay off 5,000 workers demonstrates that working in the information technology field is not safe anymore. Another related news article from The Seattle Times, discusses how to preserve American jobs in the current job market crisis. According to the author Benjamin J. Romano, one senator’s approach to this problem involves laying off foreigner workers while favoring American jobs<sup>2</sup>. Microsoft decides not to follow this advice and will not be discriminated based on nationality. Lately, as the dismal economy occupies most of the media headlines, it is not surprising that job lay offs comprise a large proportion of the mention of information in the media.

The second topic about information surprised me while I was scanning through a Newsweek magazine in my doctor’s office room. The article related to the Apple Company states that the future of this company is uncertain without Steve Jobs’ direction. According to Daniel Lyons’ article “Apple’s Core Problem,” Apple without Steve Jobs would generate a fear in the Apple stockholder and customers<sup>3</sup>. The question is whether Apple will be as successful as it was when Jobs was in charge. If the answer is no, the impact to computer users will be considerable. In this scenario, the Windows operating system will rule the market leaving us with only one product to choose. As result, the quality of the product will be lower and more expensive. Information related to big corporations such as Microsoft and Apple appears often in the media. These media companies such as TV, radio or newspapers know that people are interested to hear about Microsoft and Apple because of the big repercussion that these companies possess to the public. For example, stockholders want to be informed about the changes that occur in Apple and Microsoft. Furthermore customers like to know about new upcoming products such as iPods, iPhones or even new operating systems like Windows 7. However, during this period of crisis, the media focus regarding these information field powerhouse companies is more related to their monetary situation, including stocks and layoffs,

and how these will affect the employee and investor. Innovations apparently have taken the backseat.

In addition to Microsoft's latest layoff problems, one of its products fails to be a top seller. According to Joseph Tartakoff's article "Microsoft explains why Zune sales dropped 54 percent", Zune's sales dropped about fifty-four percent last year<sup>4</sup>. The economic crisis comprises the main reason why Zune's sales dropped. The author also states that sales of the iPod mp3 player manufactured by Apple dropped sixteen percent last year. According to the author, Zune's sales decreased because it is only sold in United States and Canada. Again, the economic crisis is the topic in this article.

The next topic encountered during my observations relates to information security. According to Judy Vue who writes for the Seattle Post Intelligencer, hackers breached personal data from credit and debit cards from banks in Washington state<sup>5</sup>. According to the author, a malicious program captured data while flowing across the network. This kind of news about stealing and breaking out into personal information in banks always worries the online users. Even though we know that websites are hacked and information is stolen from our online accounts, online customers still perform operations through the Internet because of the convenience. In these busy times, the ease of using these online banks outweighs the fear of being stolen from over the web. In the case of the online banks, the information floats everywhere; someone will always attempt to access the personal data. An important continuing emphasis ensures information security. Even though I just found one mention about information security during my observation day, data protection remains one of the most discussed and relevant topics in the information field. This is ever more true as more data processes are carried out on line.

Social networking services are a contemporary topic found all over the media, including Newsweek magazine. Online social networking consists of building online communities where users share activities, interests and acquaintances. The Newsweek article titled, "See You at Reunion. Or Maybe Not," explains the effect of these social networking services, such as Facebook, on our lives. According to Adam B. Kushner, sites like Facebook allow users to discover what old friends do eliminates the need for school reunion events<sup>6</sup>. Users can find out through Facebook what happens to old friends without the necessity of traveling every ten years to meet in person. In my opinion, online social networking services will have a big impact on our social life. Very soon if we continue to use technology to substitute old values such as school reunions, we will not need to go out with friends anymore if we can chat and have videoconferences via Internet. Another social network service that is in vogue these days is Twitter. According to Time magazine Twitter is winning the race for the number one social network service. Lev Grossman, author of the article "I Can't Believe Twitter Is Winning," writes that Facebook is losing its popularity against Twitter<sup>7</sup>. The reason for Twitter's popularity, according to Lev, is that it is not cool enough to be on Facebook anymore. This is a very personal statement without any information or data to prove his conclusion, making this article not very credible. On the other hand, as a Facebook and Twitter user I can compare these two services and I feel that Facebook is the winner. The amount of friends and family members that use the latter social networking service is much larger than Twitter. In my opinion Facebook will continue to be the winner on the social networking race by many heads. The reason for

Facebook's popularity is its applications. Facebook contains a big number of applications where users send, ask or even test their personality compatibility with other users. The topic of social networking systems appears with the most frequency compared to any other topics. For example, I found these two articles and personally accessed my Facebook account at least fifteen times in one day. People's interests, love lives, and photos have become the information itself.

The next example of information consists in a MensHealth magazine report<sup>8</sup>. The information relates to open source software. Table 2 suggests that open source software is important for computer users. According to the article "The Best Software Substitutes," another option exists besides licensed software programs. The article cites several type of software free of charge; some examples include GIMP, OpenOffice or Scribus. These types of software represent good substitutes to Microsoft Office or Adobe Photoshop software. Again, the information of this article relates to the economic crisis suffered during this period of time. The main focus of the information is to save money.

Lastly, information is increasingly important in the medical field. Scanning one of my wife's medical journals I discovered a very interested paper about a new tool designed to link electronic chart to available medical resources online. According to the article by Guilherme Del Fiol, MD, the aim of this new tool is to aid doctors to quickly meet their information needs<sup>9</sup>. This new tool facilitates linking information between two applications in a shorter amount of time, thus helping doctors obtaining information and completes their task faster. Due to the large amount of medical data available, this new feature directs users directly to the correct source of information with less searching. This example shows the importance of accessing information fast. In medicine like in other fields, the information stored continues to grow, therefore accessing data quickly and easily is a priority for designing effective information retrieval applications such as search engines and linking tools.

After spending about forty-eight hours browsing and gathering data related to the information field, the result was very conclusive; information is everywhere. One of the instructions of this assignment was not to use the Internet as a reference. However, the internet is the easiest way to find data making this assignment harder. Nevertheless, you can find all kind of information in other types of media such as newspapers, radio or magazines. My observations indicate that most prevalent topic currently is the economic crisis impact in the information field. Examples range from lay offs in Microsoft to concern about Apple economic future. The hottest information topic now is related to the social networking services. Thousand of users gather together in a common place where sharing information is the main purpose. Some examples of these online places are Facebook and Twitter. While one article questions the success of Facebook, millions of users will disagree. Some disadvantages of these social networking services include the annulment of social custom such as school reunions. Another interesting topic describes the importance of searching and retrieving information in the medical field in an efficient and rapid manner. Due to the continuous grow of data in medicine, new applications are necessary to retrieve and access information faster, which has led to the development of new search and linking tools. These innovations can be applied to all aspects of information access and retrieval. In conclusion, the amount of information surrounding us is overwhelming. While an unfortunate current focus in the information field involves the economic crisis, exciting

advances in social networking and data information search and retrieval systems make the information field interesting.

Table 1. Date Collection Table

| <b>Job Market</b>   | <b>Information Security</b>                | <b>Bioinformatics</b>  | <b>Social Networking</b>             | <b>Apple vs. Microsoft</b>                             | <b>Software</b>                 |
|---|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| “Microsoft Feels the Squeeze”   | “Massive Credit Card Date Breach Hits Home | “Effectiveness of Topic-specific Infobuttons: A Randomized Controlled Trial” | “See You at Reunion. Or Maybe Not”   | “Apple's Core Problem”                                 | “The Best Software Substitutes” |
| “Senator wants Microsoft to preserve American jobs over those of foreign guest workers” |  |  | “I Can't Believe Twitter Is Winning” | “Microsoft explains why Zune sales dropped 54 percent” |                                 |

Table 2. Data Analysis Table

| <b>Item Found</b>   | <b>Importance of the item to society</b>              | <b>Issues or controversies</b>                    | <b>Currency</b>                | <b>Credibility</b>   |
|---|---|---|--------------------------------|--|
| “Microsoft Feels the Squeeze”   | Very Important  | 5,000 jobs will be cut. 1,400 immediately         | Very current. January 23, 2009 | Seattle Post Intelligencer. TV, King 5 news. Very credible |
| “Senator wants Microsoft to preserve American jobs over those of foreign guest workers” | Very important for American and foreign guest workers | Microsoft company will not follow this suggestion | Very current. January 23, 2009 | The Seattle Times newspaper. Very credible                 |
| “Massive Credit Card Date Breach Hits Home”   | Important for online buyers                           | Reliability of the security of the online systems | Current                        | Seattle Post Intelligencer. Very credible                  |
| “Effectiveness of Topic-specific  | Important for medical                                 | Connection data between two medical               | Very Current                   | JAMIA. Very credible                                       |

|  |                                       |  |                               |                                      |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Infobuttons: A Randomized Controlled Trial”            | professionals                         | applications   |                               |                                      |
| “See You at Reunion. Or Maybe Not”                     | Important for social networking users | People do not go to reunions because they use social networking for updates of former classmates | Current                       | Credible. Newsweek Magazine          |
| “I Can't Believe Twitter Is Winning”                   | Not Important                         | Twitter vs. Facebook   | Current                       | Credible. Newsweek Magazine          |
| “Apple's Core Problem”                                 | Important for Apple stock holders     | Steve Jobs steps aside. Now what?  | Very Current. January 15 2009 | Credible. Newsweek Magazine          |
| “The Best Software Substitutes”                        | Important for computer users          | Open Source software Vs. Licensed programs   | Current                       | Credible? MensHealth Magazine        |
| “Microsoft explains why Zune sales dropped 54 percent” | Important for mp3 users               | Zunes vs iPod  | Current                       | Credible. Seattle Post Intelligencer |

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