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Building a Discipline, Creating a Profession: An Essay on the Childhood of “Dokvit”

In their book *Science and passion* (1985), Frans Gregersen and Simo K ppe define a scientific discipline by the following characteristics:

- a specific field of the world/reality
- a specific empirical and methodological tradition
- a specific conceptual framework
- a period of constitution
- a process of institutionalization
- a dimension of practice/societal relevance (32f).

Within this definition, I will study the first 10 years of existence, the “childhood”, of “Dokvit”, Documentation Studies, which was established in 1996 at the University of Troms  in Norway. I will ask and try to answer the question of whether and to what extent it is possible to talk about Dokvit as a full scientific discipline according to the criteria mentioned by Gregersen and K ppe.

1 Documentation studies: a specific field of the world/reality?

If one sees the scientific disciplines as a coherent mapping of the world, dividing the world into disciplinary “countries”, one could in principle expect that each discipline would cover a certain part of the world. But as everybody knows, neither in the “real” world with its nations, nor in the scientific world, are things that simple. Borders are changing, small countries as well as empires or super-states have been emerging and collapsing through history. The same is the case in regard to scientific disciplines, including attempts at inter-, multi- and transdisciplinarity.

One possibility is to see how scientific disciplines have emerged through history, just like nations, defining their territory and see how much power they can achieve in relation to other disciplines and in this way survive long enough to have a period of constitution and institutionalization and demonstrate a relevance for society, in other words to achieve legitimacy to become members of the United Disciplines of the world.

So if Documentation Studies is worth having a place in the United Disciplines, it should be able to define the territory, documentation. This approach implies not only answering the question of what is documentation, but also at a certain point to define the borders of documentation, to say what is *not* documentation.

Before the program at Tromsø started, a committee of librarians and faculty members from different disciplines formulated the general conceptual framework for the program, at this point without much knowledge of the documentation theorists such as Paul Otlet or Suzanne Briet. The choice of the name Documentation studies was not based on a paradigmatic critique of Library and Information Science, but on a much more pragmatic and general political interest in relation to the establishment of a National Library in Norway in 1989 and the closely related launching of a very broadly defined act of legal deposit in Norway, including documents of all kinds, including the new digital documents, but also broadcast television, radio and movies. Albeit unaware of the Otletian utopia of one large collection of all kinds of documents, the Norwegian act of legal deposit made the Otletian ideal explicit and challenged the Norwegian Library system in two fundamental ways, regarding open and free access and preservation. As long it is a matter of individual printed written documents, the library system is well suited for handling all kinds of documents in relation to open and free access. But when it comes to, for instance, recordings of broadcasted television, one may consider if the user should pay the producers and the actors for watching it like buying or renting a video. Next, in the case of preserving old film rolls as well as accessing and preserving the new digital documents, one has faced an immense challenge, due to the “intrinsic” nature of the documents.

This practical challenge created the perfect political justification and environment for the documentation program. At the same time, it did not only challenge the library system, but it also challenged the whole disciplinary system of the University. At the end Documentation Studies became a part of the Humanities in Tromsø, but locating it at the school of Social Sciences was also considered. In principle it could just as well be placed at the natural sciences. The question of whether Doc.Studies belongs to the natural sciences, the social sciences or the humanities is not that easy to answer. The paradoxical problem is that the answer could be positive in all three cases. When you are dealing with books in a library, you are dealing with the ideas expressed on the pages of the book, as well with a physical item to be shelved, as well as a socio-economic entity with a certain price. None of these dimensions of the books can be neglected since all three dimensions will be an issue some way or another in the library. In the case of digital documents the situation is more or less the same. In order to use a digital document, you have to have the right program and a running machine as well as access to the document. The latter may not be free, but may be managed by some media company requiring some kind of subscriptions. Finally you have to be able to under-

stand it, for instance to understand a certain language. That means that you need traditions from all three scientific worlds in order to deal with these documents in the proper way.

One of the reasons for allocating the program of documentation to the humanities was that the overall theme for the program was how humans deal with documents. However, one may ask if humanities are dealing with what humans are doing in totality? If the program had been located in France or in other parts of a Latin/francophone world, this might have been the case, since the French notion of “Sciences humaines” covers sociology as well as medicine, psychology and studies of human expressions like linguistics and literary studies (Foucault 1966). In the anglophone world humanities is first and foremost the studies of human expressions like linguistics, literary studies, and art history. This is also the case in the Scandinavian countries including Norway.

The whole field of humanities in the anglophone sense is structured according to two main principles. One is the principle of medium, like the division between art history, literary studies, musicology and game studies as one of the newest disciplinary additions. The other principle is the geographical principle combined with the linguistic principle, dividing disciplines into English, Scandinavian, German studies, French/Romance languages, Slavic, Chinese/Asian studies and so on. Both main principles are very different in nature compared to the guiding principles of especially the social sciences but also the natural sciences. While the principles especially in social sciences and to a certain degree in natural sciences are dividing according to a certain perspective on a common object like sociology and psychology, dealing with two different dimensions of human life, or physics and chemistry, dealing with two properties of the natural world, the division in the humanities attempts to make a more concrete empirical division of separate objects either like a piece of literature, a piece of music or a painting or by a division between the English language and a Scandinavian language. The major problem facing Dokvit in this environment of the humanities is that it is more like sociology or physics, having a special perspective on human expressions, no matter if it is a painting, a book or a webpage. For Dokvit, a painting, a book or a website are all documents and they can all be analyzed as documents. There is no human expression that has unique privilege of being a document. It will always be a special kind of document, but not the only document! This implies an important difference between documentation studies and most of the disciplines in the humanities. The latter are generally interested in studying the unique qualities of their special kind of expression, for instance the uniqueness of novels, painted portraits or symphonies. The major reason for developing a special discipline for game studies, ludology, has been the uniqueness of games compared to literature or to visual art. In contrast to these disciplines, documentation studies is interested in comparing the different kinds of expressions, for instance comparing games

and novels, to see the differences just as much as their common features. If you consider all expressions as different kinds of documents, you may study how they differ and how they are alike.

In addition to the comparative perspective, one may also add the important fact that many expressions nowadays are combinations of expressions like illustrations and text in printed publications as well as several media such as words, sound, still and moving images on webpages and so on. This is an increasing challenge for the classical disciplines, leading to a number of interdisciplinary attempts of studies of mixed media, like media studies and cultural studies. A crucial problem in these attempts is very often how to conceptualize the common object. Disciplines are mostly defined by their separate objects or methods and when an object goes across several disciplines, it becomes a dispute between the different disciplines whether one should use one or the other concept for the whole object. This can be illustrated by a recent discussion in the journal *Word and Image*. In volume 17 (no. 1 & 2), the theme is “Printing matters”. In the introduction, the guest editors Graham Larkin and Lisa Pon emphasize how “the materiality of printed texts in early modern Europe is inseparable from that of images that were often produced by the same methods and the same people – often even on the same page” (Larkin and Pon 2001, 1). Later in the introduction they say: “While we have divided texts and images for reasons of conceptual clarity, we urge the reader to bear in mind the extent to which these stories are intertwined” (2). In a circular diagram, the two editors have tried to summarize their introduction. They have not distinguished between words and images regarding the history of both production and reception, but there is a division between descriptive bibliography/sociology of texts and connoisseurship/sociology of images. Why is this division necessary?

The idea of a sociology of texts in a broad sense derives from D.F. McKenzie. In his lectures on “Bibliography and the sociology of texts” he defines texts as including

verbal, visual, oral, and numeric data, in the form of maps, prints, and music, of archives of recorded sound, of films, of videos, and any computer-stored information, everything in fact from epigraphy to the latest forms of discography (McKenzie 1999, 13).

Although Larkin and Pon appreciate the work of McKenzie and his focus on the history of production and reception of texts as recorded forms, they state the following argument for a separate sociology of images alongside a sociology of texts:

As art historians, we are interested in proposing a similarly expanded

role for connoisseurship; for present purposes we are calling this a sociology of images in order to reinforce the parallel with McKenzie's outlook" (Larkin and Pon 2001, 4).

When McKenzie argues in favor of a broad concept of text, "text" is constituted by the efforts of weaving a meaning together, no matter what kind of means you are using, in other words it becomes a matter of coherence. On the other side, when Larkin and Pon demand a conceptual distinction between visual and verbal means, it is due to the "inevitable" differences between images and words, becoming a matter of diversity and of recognizing the uniqueness of each medium. From this follow the traditional conflicts in the humanities between general disciplines like semiotics or cultural studies, covering all expressions of meaning, and separate disciplines for each kind of medium, words being dealt with by literary scholars and images taken care of by art historians. One may ask if it is the same kind of questions different disciplines are posing to their objects. What are the important questions for a document scholar in contrast to a literary scholar or an art historian?

Many students in documentation studies have been asking these questions through the years.

2 Documentation Studies: a specific empirical and methodological tradition

Following from the discussion whether Dokvit is a discipline within one, two or all of the three different scientific worlds, one may also ask if there is a special methodological tradition. If there is one, it is an attempt to develop a kind of complementary method drawing on all three scientific worlds. This development is closely related to development of the curriculum of Dokvit through the last decade, making guidelines for courses and projects in the programs.

Even if changes have been made, the main characteristics of the Dokvit tradition may be already seen in the introductory course in the first year 1996.

The very first students were asked to select a document and then approach it with the following questions:

1. who made it? (producer)
2. what kind of means are used? (media)
3. in which ways are these means being used? (traditions/modes)
4. what does the document actually document? ("content"/field/domain)

All four questions posed a huge challenge for the students. The first question about the producer became a challenge, for example when a childrens book was chosen and the question arose if the producer only was the author, or if the term also included the illustrator and, last but not least, the printer and publisher. It touches the whole paradigmatic traditions in literary and art studies, where the author and artist is in focus and the other human agents involved in the material and social process of production are excluded and considered as inferior to the analysis of the book as art or literature.

A similar problem arises when the second question about the means being used is addressed. In literary studies you might only consider, for instance, words used as metaphors or omissions which affect the reading, leaving it to readers to create the missing words. It becomes a bit more doubtful whether you should consider colors or the sizes of letters and the fonts being used as interesting for a literary analysis. This touches on another problem, the issue of the "content" of the document. Does the size of letters have any impact on the meaning or content of the book?

It was and still is a problem to truly define what means are. Means must be related to some kind of end or purpose. It requires that one goes into the very process of creating the document. This leads to the third question of how these means are being used.

If you have defined the means as letters, size of letters, colors, special words, illustrations, quality of paper, etc., then you may go further by looking at how letters are being used in combination with size, fonts and special words, in other words at how you construct a book. The same could be said about a painting, concerning how to use the brush, pigments and canvas in order to construct an artistic document. The major problem of studying the use of these means within the humanities is that the very practical use of the means is not the primary concern for the humanist, but rather to the contrary.

Erwin Panofsky wrote in 1938 about the object of Art History:

In defining a work of art as a "man-made object demanding to be experienced aesthetically" we encounter for the first time a basic difference between the humanities and natural science. The scientist, dealing as he does with natural phenomena, can at once proceed to analyze them. The humanist, dealing as he does with human actions and creations, has to engage in a mental process of a synthetic and subjective character: he has mentally to re-enact the actions and to re-create the creations. It is, in fact, by this process that the real objects of the humanities come into being. For it is obvious that histori-

ans of philosophy or sculpture are concerned with books and statues not in so far as these books and sculptures exist materially, but in so far as they have meaning. And it is equally obvious that this meaning can only be apprehended by re-producing, and thereby, quite literally, “realizing”, the thoughts that are expressed in the books and the artistic conceptions that manifest themselves in the statues. (Panofsky 1955, 37-38.)

It is this attitude towards studying works of art which creates a serious problem for a document scholar working as a librarian or an art museum curator. The librarian as well as the curator cannot avoid dealing with the physical properties as well as with the thoughts embedded in the physical works in order to do their job properly. A teacher in high school as well as a university professor may be able to keep a distance to the physical realities of the works of art and keep an abstract relation to the world of art, but this also comes to an end when one moves into the digital world and takes a walk into a virtual library or museum. In that case, one has to handle physical means like a digital device in order to access the works of art.

Up till now it has been possible for many humanists to talk about content without mentioning or dealing with the physical properties or means, in other words to follow the path of Panofsky. The question now is whether this is also the case in a document analysis. The answer may at the first glance appear self-evident, but this is one of the most difficult questions, since it is a matter of defining what the document is about, in other words making an interpretation. This is what academics do in the other disciplines in the humanities, and one may leave it to them to do that job. But one may also claim that by doing this, one is defining and placing the material document in a specific cultural and social context, made possible by the producers and means being used in different ways as demonstrated by the three other preceding questions. Again one returns to the complexity of the production of the document. The problem is that content is not something inherent and essential within a physical document. The content of a novel or a short story is an interpretation according to a certain tradition for reading a novel or a short story. The whole hermeneutic tradition and most of literary studies are about searching for the best interpretation of a piece of art, whether it is a novel or a poem or a piece of music. The novel or poem is not different from other kinds of documents like photographs, music or paintings. A photograph may be considered a documentation of a famous person as well as one of your relatives, depending on who you are in relation to the person on the photograph. One may claim that words have more inherent content than photographs, but the only difference is that words are more general expressions and have been through a more general interpretation than is the case with more individual photographs. One may characterize the method used by a document scholar as a kind of deconstruc-

tion of the apparent or “obvious” content, followed by a more explicit placing of a document in a specific environment making it into a specific document.

This is also demonstrated in the two other projects of the first disciplinary semester. The second project was about doing fieldwork using the tradition of anthropological fieldwork, studying the production of documents in a specific field or organization or institution within a short period of time.

If one takes an art museum as an example, one may observe that a lot of different documents are made. The exhibitions can be considered as multimedia and complex documents, in which several works of art form parts of the total document. In addition to the exhibit itself you may have a catalogue, advertisements for the exhibits, postcards, and so on. Some of these documents may be considered worth studying in other disciplines, like the works of art exhibited, but the catalogue, the postcards and the letters between the curator and the artists, the sponsors, and the public authorities about the organization of the exhibits, will not be studied. This means that you not only have complexity regarding the exhibition itself, but also regarding the documents relating to the exhibit, more directly and indirectly. This also demonstrates the complexity of the sheer number of people involved in a production, and not just the few persons usually considered the main creators of the most important document, in this case the artists in the exhibit.

Finally, students in the first semester of the undergraduate program in documentation studies were asked to organize a database for some particular documents. This is not only a necessary qualification for being a librarian, but it also trains people in organizing their own documents on a laptop and being able to annotate documents in order to retrieve them when they are needed. This leads again to the repeated question of the content of the document. The answer to this is quite simple: it very much depends on who you are and for what purpose you are using a document. In saying this, I am not claiming that the circumstances around the production of the document do not play any role in this. They are important, but it is mainly a kind of negotiation between the circumstances of the production and the actual current use of the document which forms the basis for an interpretation of what the content may be considered as. One example of this is the creation of a database of photographs in an interdisciplinary environment like the Norwegian Institute of Classical Studies in Rome, which serves students of Archeology as well as Art History. The very same photos of buildings may be interpreted in two distinctly different ways in relation to either Archeology or Art History. In the first case, it might be a matter of historical events or social organisation and in the latter case it might be a matter of style and special techniques of construction. Both interpretations are correct according to the different traditions within the two different disciplines. A third and different interpretation would be made if it

were a database for educating photographers, where it might be important to focus on the angle and perspective of shooting the building. The most challenging task may be to make a database for a general library serving the general public. It is exactly in that situation, one may believe it is possible to make some kind of “general” description of the content. But it is only a matter of degree compared to the more specific databases. It is still a specific interpretation made within a specific culture, whether it is Norwegian or French or North American culture.

The result of this training should hopefully be that document students are aware of the complexity of documentation and that a document can never be completely isolated and considered to be essentially about one specific issue; instead, it must be viewed within a certain environment and how it has turned into a document analyzed.

This basic training in the first semester of undergraduate studies in Dokvit has been the elementary foundation for a larger student project on documentation. This project is undertaken in a selected field and approached from all three basic perspectives in Dokvit, embracing a physical dimension as well as social and cultural dimensions.

The students have so far been free to choose their specific field for the project. It has led to a large range of diversity of fields and themes, like “tombstones as documents”, “horses as documents”, “Picasso’s *Guernica* as a document”, “candles as documents”, “concert as a document”, “museum exhibition as a document”, “management of an archive in a fishery factory”, “comparative studies of the Bible in print and online”, and many more. The very diversity of the projects demonstrates that the field of Dokvit may not be defined as a specific empirical field, but rather by taking a special perspective upon the world, viewing human life from a documentation perspective.

One may ask if it is at all possible to find any common issues in these projects which enable a common discussion among students and teachers. It seems to be possible, and three main themes have turned out to be crucial for the students and the beginning of development of a more specific field of research for Dokvit.

The first theme is the selection of materials, means or media of documentation. When you want to honor a dead relative, you ask for tombstone made of stone in order to keep it for many years instead of asking for a marker made out of wood; you would certainly not request one made of plastic or steel, even if these two materials may last just as long as stone. When you hold a concert, you also want the best instruments to play on in order to make the concert as good as possible. On the other hand, you may also use objects as instruments that are not usually used for music in order to make a new kind of music. In the latter case, it is a de-

liberate choice of material and means for the specific documentation process. No matter whether you are conscious of the consequences of the selected materials, the latter have always an impact on the resulting documents. When we ask the Dokvit students to consider what kind of materials have been used in the case they are studying, they also have an opportunity to follow up that question with a so-called contrafactual question: “what would have happened if one had used another kind of material”. In one case study, two students studied a transformation of a printed book into a CD-Rom and realized that the possibilities inherent in the printed book and the CD-Rom were not the same. At the oral exam for this project, the students were asked about the possible consequences in the case of an opposite transformation, where a CD-Rom would be converted into a printed book. This unexpected question clarified not only the importance of materials used in different kinds of documentation, but also that the historical development of new kinds of documentation does not necessarily imply a simple increase of possibilities, but more a change of more or less dominant possibilities, the relations of power between different kinds of documentation. This is perhaps most clearly expressed by the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, who states that it is only digital data which really counts today.

We can predict that anything in the constituted body of knowledge that is not translatable in this way will be abandoned and that the direction of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being translatable into computer language. (Lyotard 1979, 4)

The second theme emerging in Dokvit studies is that of the human agent involved in the documentation process. If one takes the case of museum exhibition as a document, one may ask about the role of the architect in relation to the scientific curator in the case of archeological exhibitions. In the case of the reconstruction of an environment, one may make a compromise between a coherent presentation for the audience and the extent to which it is proved by the scientific observations. In the case of an art museum, one has the relationship between the artists and the curator to consider. In one exhibition in Oslo, a curator challenged the traditions of the art museum by bringing old works by some of the best-known artists like Munch together with very modern artists. This challenged not only the tradition of art museums, but also the hierarchy of agents involved in art production. If one goes into the fields of music or film, one can also follow an ongoing struggle between different roles among the multiple agents involved in music (composer, musicians, conductor, manager, technicians) and film (director, artists, photographers, producer, playwright, cutter).

Finally, the third theme dealt with can be formulated as traditions for documentation in different fields. Following from the two previous mentioned themes,

throughout history strong traditions for how you document in different parts of society have developed. As mentioned by several document scholars, document types may be developed through a kind of negotiation of how to create a proper document (Briet, Brown and Duguid, Frohmann, Pedauque) inventing traditions for how to document in specific fields, like in arts, health care, religion, business, public administration and so forth. This offers the opportunity to go back in history and make historical studies of documentation tradition in various fields. At the same time it also creates the platform for a future-oriented experiment by asking if it is possible to change the tradition and to make an enquiry into the possible consequences of that change.

These themes lead all to one common approach, a comparative approach going beyond many traditional disciplinary borders that have become increasingly outdated due to the development of society as well as the development of new technology. But it was not only the borders that were not in accordance with new kinds of documentation; there was no updated conceptual framework to match the new forms of documentation, which were often a mix of formerly separate media made by new types of professional agents in new social settings. The creation of such a framework was one of the main challenges for Dokvit and still is one of the most important tasks for development of a useful discipline for documentation studies.

3 Documentation Studies – a specific conceptual framework

One of the questions coming up repeatedly through the first 10 years is of course whether documentation studies really makes a substantial difference and is not just saying the same things in other words by using a new specific conceptual framework.

In order to do documentation studies and write articles and theses, one needs a distinct disciplinary language. One may ask why this is so urgent. Why cannot we just borrow concepts and theories from other disciplines? One reason could be that it might be difficult to see the difference from previous studies done within traditional disciplines, and then it could be argued why Dokvit studies could not be done in other departments. But the crucial thing here is that this conceptual framework is not supposed to provide a framework for a new kind of objects not dealt with in other disciplines. It is more a framework for making an analysis of the same empirical field, but from a different perspective and thus actually not focusing on the exact same objects. It is rather like in natural sciences, where you make a controlled experiment by defining the conditions for the experiment and the criteria for what you are studying, making the very character of the phenomena dependent on how you study them. This means that a book may be studied as

literature as well as a specific form of documentation. This is one of the major differences compared to the other disciplines in the humanities which relate to specific empirical fields like literature or music.

Based on a general theory of documentation, a main conceptual framework has been formulated as consisting of three concepts on three different levels: documentation forms, documents and docemes (Lund 2004).

In order to create a coherent field for studies and research in documentation studies, it has been necessary to develop a general concept, *documentation form*, with a primary purpose to sort different kinds of documents in human life and society and thus to make some kind of classification of certain repetitive forms of documentation according to different fields and spheres as well as to different dimensions and features in relation to more inherent properties and qualities of certain kinds of documents. One may for instance consider books, journals and pamphlets with novels, short stories, poems and so on as having similar characteristics, all repetitively using letters in different ways to create texts, and thus belonging to a group of documents which may be characterized as literature, a relatively stable distinctive form of documentation different from film or theater which use bodily gestures and speech instead of letters. But you can also consider artistic documentation forms like literature or theater as distinct forms of documentation from political or administrative documentation forms like speeches, reports and forms.

One may wonder what the difference is between documentation form and the next analytical concept, the *document*? A book containing a novel is both a certain form of documentation as well as a certain document. When you primarily consider the book as a specific document and not as a form of documentation, you can make a more detailed analysis of the specific documents you are producing and see how they are made, using a more specific analytical model focusing on the producer, means and modes as described above. In this way it becomes possible to make more exact studies of different documents and still keep the analysis within a general and comparative framework of documentation studies.

Moving down to the specific analytical level of the single document, one faces a new problem regarding how to deal with the smaller parts of the document in a systematic way. In this regard, many students have turned either to semiotics or the more specific empirical disciplines as sources of inspiration or models for detailed analysis.

The predominant conceptual framework of semiotics with its system of signs, the sign and, last but not least, the pair of signifier and signified, has been used by many students as an analytical tool on the microlevel of the document. One might consider a document not as a sign in itself, but more like a system of signs. But at the same time the use of the notion of signification creates a problem, because that way one more or less automatically moves towards a dependency on the theories of semiotics. This is typically shown in the discussions on the relationship between the so-called content and form/expression equal to the distinction between signified and signifier in the semiotic framework. If you in contrast this divide between an abstract “meaning” and physical “form” with talks about a meaningful formation whenever you express something or are impressed (that is, formed in a physically, socially and mentally distinctive way), you can go into that form and see how it is made up of a number of smaller distinctive parts.

This argument made it relevant to develop another analytical concept for the part of a document, resulting in the concept of the **doceme**. It is close to the concept of the document and relates to the same basic Latin verb and suffix as document, “docere” and “mentum”. One may define a doceme as a part of a certain document. A certain doceme, like a photograph in a newspaper, may be a document in itself if it is made outside the newspaper. At the same time, the newspaper is not the same document if it does not have any photographs as illustrations. This leads again up to the first and general level of documentation forms, talking about newspapers as certain repetitive kinds of documentation. Some of them may have articles with illustrations, commercial ads and letters from the readers, but some may also have been formed without illustrations, or the opposite may be the case, with a lot of photos.

As a whole, you have a conceptual framework for documentation studies on the most general level as well as on the most specific level providing a kind of analytical scaffold for students and scholars in Dokvit, which creates something different from other studies of human life and society so far. One may ask whether this difference is just a matter of naming things differently or whether Dokvit has made a substantial difference in our knowledge about, for instance, how we express ourselves and communicate with each other. This may still, even after 10 years, be difficult to answer. It is a matter of constituting a corpus of knowledge labelled as documentation studies.

4 Documentation Studies – a period of constitution?

If one takes a look at either some of the projects made by students at Dokvit in Tromsø or at the issues dealt with in this book, it may be difficult to see a clear profile of questions and themes that contrasts to other disciplinary fields. Actually

one might claim that there is nothing new in Dokvit and that everything it deals with has already been dealt with in many different disciplines including Library- and Information Sciences, Communication Studies, Media Studies, Cultural Studies and so forth. Nevertheless, if one claims any novelty for Dokvit, one will point to three major issues that also dominate this article.

The first main issue can be formulated in one question: “what is a good document?” This question goes into the practical craft dimension of making a concrete document using different kinds of physical means, but it goes equally into the social and cultural dimensions of documentation, regarding what is considered to be of high or low quality as well as efficient.

Next, Dokvit also cuts across a lot of different domains and related disciplines. It may be considered a kind of meta-discipline bringing a new kind of knowledge hidden inbetween the existing disciplines. In this way, it should not be considered as competing with, for instance, Art History or Literary Studies, but more as a supplement providing a comparative perspective to different kinds of expressions and media.

Finally, it also goes beyond the traditions of documentation studies related to libraries, archives and museums, from which it grew 10 years ago. It does not only focus on documents already made, but also on the very process of creation of documents by artists, doctors, bureaucrats, politicians and so on, considering the selection of the best means in the specific situations of documentation.

Two of the most important factors in this process of constitution of Dokvit knowledge are first of all to produce Dokvit-publications like this book, but it is just as important to educate Dokvit candidates, identifying themselves as Dokvit-scholars, ready to develop, sustain and implement this new kind of knowledge in society. For that reason it is important to have a certain degree of institutionalization of Dokvit.

5 Documentation Studies – a process of institutionalization

Dokvit or Documentation Studies became institutionalized in 1995 when it was officially agreed to establish a program of documentation studies at the University of Tromsø and to establish a number of faculty positions all devoted to documentation studies, but with different emphasis regarding the technical, social and cultural aspects of the field.

During the first decade of its existence in Tromsø, Dokvit has grown to a full-scale program with B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. levels, and about 200 students have graduated on different levels and moved out into society as document scholars.

It has also started to develop an independent field of research on an international level within an international network called The Document Academy. So far, the Document Academy has organized a number of workshops and summer schools together with other document-oriented scholars and research communities. The most important of these is an annual conference for documentation studies, DOCAM (cf. www.thedocumentacademy.hum.uit.no), which has been held at UC Berkeley since 2003. DOCAM is a relatively small, but continually growing conference with an open agenda, exploring the possibilities of a document approach in research, business and the arts. Through these kind of activities, a kind of international document research community has emerged; one result of this is the fact that most of the contributors to this book are actually scholars regularly attending DOCAM or some of the other activities.

6 Documentation Studies – a dimension of practice/societal relevance

But at the very end, the criteria for whether a discipline of documentation studies will be sustainable in the future is a matter of whether it will be considered as relevant for society. One indication of relevance is the fact that candidates from the program get jobs not only as librarians, but also in many different kinds of fields with a documentation dimension, like in marketing, administration and health care, but also in the arts.

Almost in any corner of society, it becomes more and more important to document that you are doing what you are supposed to do, that you have not done anything wrong, and how good you are in doing what you are doing. Sometimes, documentation becomes more important than the very activity or person it is documenting!

7 References

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