

INVISIBLE STRUCTURES FAILING ORDER

**and much more on:
chaos, disorder, libraries,
metanoise, antisystemics,
dark oceans of endless
trivial material, google
netsceptics, information
garbage, understanding
design and connectivity.
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introduction

This is an essay on structuring and ordering information, or actually about the disorder of information, the invisibility of design, connectivity and chaos and the role of the designer and 'design', all within the boundaries of the library.

First of all, here is an overview of some of the questions that were asked in order to explore the various aspects of importance which are strongly related to the field of interest treated in this essay:

- Should we embrace disorder, why do we need it anyway and what are the possible advantages of 'chaos' in the library environment?
- Could disorder and the scale of chaos be considered as something that is purely psychological and something that has to do with personal perception and experiencing?
- What is the role of the design of information structures -visible or invisible- in the process of creating order out of chaos or the reversed process and leave these structures enough space for thinking or are they dictating and rigid?
- When functions a invisible structure well and where is the thin line between invisible structure or unstructured systems?
- Are the postmodern ideas of disordered libraries and the expected personalization of information realized since the introduction of hypertext environments, free-tagging and Google?
- What is the relation between 'The Library of Babel' and the new virtual universal library?
- What are the influences of the object relational based bottom-up library on connectivity, disorder and accessibility in comparison with the top-down collection based traditional library?
- Has the transition from a physical library catalog to a virtual one, increased or decreased the experience of disorder?
- Is the simplified representation of the complexity of the web as a hypertext-based library with Google as the interface of the library's catalog something that can be seen as a positive and a succeeded attempt to create order out of disorder?

The reason of interest in this specific topic is the fact that I have been trained exhaustively the past four years to structure everything I design. During the course we could not think of any reason why something should not be structured at all. The work-field of information design exists by the grace of the existence of disorder. In other words: if there was no such a 'thing' as disorder or chaos, structures were not needed. To narrow it down to the field of the thematic project: the library. The question of 'what if then' immediately came up. What if we did not structure or classify the information in the library (although that could be seen as a cliché)? Since I have been walking the path of 'structuring the information' very often (although it was always in a practical, non-theoretical 'design'-way); this essay is about 'the other side'; reasoning the unstructured.

This essay is part of the 'work in progress' for the practical part of the thematic project; a collaborative project with fellow student Marc de Bruijn. We have been working the past months on a library 'Netlorelib', which contains articles and objects on net-related myths and folklore.

The structure of this essay is developed without an imposed order by forcing texts into separate chapters, the text is guided by terms and keywords which describe in short what the specific paragraph is about.

Rotterdam, March 2006.

“Design is invisible, until it fails”, while referring to Bruce Mau (graphic designer of so called “big brick book” - quoting Peter Lunenfeld during a lecture about ‘The Mediawork Project’ at the Piet Zwart Institute; ‘S,M,L,XL’) in his publication ‘Massive Change’ (not a publication about the world of design; it is about the design in the world), realized in collaboration with ‘The Institute without Boundaries’, is a relevant and interesting statement to begin this essay with. I will explain why.

If one considers a classification system -within the boundaries of a library- as information design (seen from the perspective of the Amsterdam-based information designer Gerlinde Schuller): “the act of communicating complex data with clarity, precision and efficiency, by planning out and invent in systematic form”, then the conception of the original statement of the Swiss sociologist and chairman of the ‘Deutsche Werkbund’ (organization where Functionalism was ‘invented’) Lucius Burckhardt done in his influential publication ‘Design ist Unsichtbar’ in the 1980’s; could be applied also to the library classification system, seen as an invisible designed structure.

An invisible designed system, which forms the actual framework of ordering the libraries content, theoretically as well as physically. This by nature -referring to Simon Ford (author and art historian) in his article ‘The disorder of things: the postmodern art library’- “inflexible” and -referring to Clive Phillpot’s (at the time library director at the MoMA in New York) statements in his text ‘Art, Anarchy and the Open Library’- “linear” and “inadequate” system has a constant and continuous presence and influence on ones working method when searching for information within the environment of the library.

Most of the time this system is hardly noticed, since we are very familiar with using these systems in for instance public libraries; where the classification system is translated into the simplified physical arrangement of books. An invisible system of design (classification), makes the invisible (order) visible (books). But when adding such a system to a collection of information -in a library- one solves a specific set of problems (finding what you have been searching for), while creating another set of new problems (not finding what you have been searching

for), and sometimes an accidental by-product (finding what you have not been searching for). To clarify that: creating a specific order, can result in a rigid system which is not useful to everyone. The attempt to make something accessible, can result in the opposite.

By making the parallel with the original context of this addressed problem, Lucius Burckhardt made his statement regarding the design of products. But one could apply it or bring it into the context of other fields of 'design' as well. In this case the 'design' of the informational structure for the library. Burckhardt's conception is as follows: "the designer makes the mistake of categorizing the world in terms of objects", instead in terms of relations; as I may complete his statement. So one divides the collection (library) of information into separate islands (in search of the differences), instead of the search of similarities or relations between objects (or books). Max Bruinsma, a well-known Dutch design theorist clarifies this statement of Burckhardt in one of his essays 'Beyond the object'.

Bruinsma translates the statement of Burckhardt as follows: "In the traditional designers' practice a problem is directly translated into a product or a form". Burckhardt names these 'single solution solving' designs (or systems), which do not bother about their relational and organizational context, as 'Böse Objecte'. An object that is damaging. As Bruinsma continues in his essay on 'We do not need new forms, we need a new mentality', he interprets again some words from Burckhardts book 'Design ist Unsichtbar'. According to Bruinsma these designs Burckhardt is writing about do function isolated and solve a single problem: "Out of this grows a world of egotistic products that clone themselves endlessly - monomaniac things that sometimes slightly mutate". Most relevant is that Bruinsma wrote as well that these 'isolated' designs have to function in a world of vast growing connectivity and complex relations(hips): "everything is connected with everything else".

Bruinsma continues with the statement that "in our culture, the realization is growing that things do not have a one-on-one relation with function or a user, but that each object individually is a component of a much more extensive realm". In other words, although I think Bruinsma is very clear,

objects are not isolated in their function or meaning; but form all together actually one relational context. If one would connect this statement with what Jorge Luis Borges (Argentine writer and librarian) states in one of his writings on George Bernard Shaw (literary critic and a socialist spokesman): "a book is not an isolated being: it is a relationship, an axis of innumerable relationships", this would give a clear view that theoretically the concept of a 'closed' and fixed library (or classification system) is something -also due to technical progression- that could be considered as an old definition of the term, the meaning and the function of 'the' library as a collection of objects.

Interesting to see as well is that Phillpot stated that a library should not try to create order in a particular way at all. Since there is no 'correct' way of ordering information. Ordering of information in a linear way, as he describes in this text, is by definition wrong; it is functional in only one way. To quote him literally: "a library must fail in providing order". What Phillpot also stated is that the actual classification systems which are used within most of the western public libraries are very arbitrary; since the system that is used is at least a hundred years old. And besides that, it is very "Eurocentric". Although Phillpot is stating that a library must fail in 'imposing' order, later on in his text he is more subtle and he clarifies that the ordering of the system should be user-dependent. I agree with him when he writes "each user of a library requires a different order to satisfy their needs - every time they visit the library". A very understandable statement, since most of the time when visiting a library the user is searching for something different. Phillpot is mentioning the aspect of 'failure' within the structure of the library. As a result he sees a positive outcome; but he is not providing a real solid answer how the arrangement of information or objects should take place in his vision on the 'failing' library. He mentions "some kind of conceptual order is necessary to arrange the contents of a library". Further back in the article he answers my question: "within an environment of hypertext". The order of information in the art (and scientific) library -according to Sandra Scheltjens, an art librarian who gave a presentation during the thematic project at the Piet Zwart Institute- the order is imposed by something that has nothing to do with the content or some kind of relation between the objects which are stored within the structure of the library. The order

is a number. One could consider that is linear, if you compare it with the interrelational ideas on the ordering of libraries from Borges.

What I consider as interesting in the text of Phillpot is that he is addressing the issue of 'finding things by accident'. Phillpot claims that the rigidity of the structural organization of the library -when failing in the actual task: providing order and the information- is the reason for this so called 'serendipity finding'. It is some form of distraction during concentration and while being distracted one "find something unexpected and useful while one was searching for something else entirely", according to the definition of Wikipedia. The encyclopedia mentions a large amount of 'great discoveries' done due to this form of distraction. Changing the rigidity of the library, breaking the order and letting the design deliberately fail, could rule out the serendipity 'search method'. One can not 'create' the aspect of serendipity or pre-fabricate it ('Manufactured accidental discoveries') as a build in feature of the library. But one could create an environment in which these accidental discoveries can occur; whether that is virtual or physical. Some consider the 'I'm feeling lucky'-button within the interface of Google as a kind of serendipity automation.

Besides Phillpot, a professional user of the library, more users wrote about the reasons why ordering in a library should deliberately fail. The viewpoint from Phillpot and Ford is a rather 'technical' one, from the profession of a librarian. What about the normal, 'regular' user of a library? Serendipity-wise I found a small booklet 'The wings of the library'. A publication with contributions of writers, museum directors, architects and designers. It contains stories about the influence of internet on the various and diverse functions of the library, the influence the visitors have on the shape, place and function of the library as an institution in "a world of digital and physical mobility".

Former director Chris Dercon of the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam states in his contribution some relevant issues regarding the order in libraries, which may have influenced the new structure for the (recently) re-structured library. Dercon questions the function and the usefulness of strict arrangement based on alphabetic order. According to Dercon the relation of the book is all that matters; one books content

is the result of another. The invisible system of relational order has to be accessible on personal bases. Names and titles do not matter, it is not about "who wrote something", but "what has been written". The place of every book in particular has to initiate the possibility to get distracted. By ordering books in such a way (how that is practiced is not mentioned in his writings) a book one has not been searching for, could provide the answer one actually has been looking for. Dercon names his way of searching a "diversion practice". Although it might be a time consuming way of finding, Dercon declares that his 'a-systematic' approach also works when it comes to exploring unknown cities. The cathedral or museum one planned to visit is probably not the most interesting thing. According to Dercon, meeting people and other unexpected happenings can be considered as the things one has not been searching for, but which seem the ideal result; while traveling through deformed time and virtual space. The ordering functions as a "reason" and a "diversion", which asks for "focussed and unfocussed search methods".

Ashok Bhalotra (Indian architect), also contributing to 'Wings of the Library', wrote an interesting personal piece on "disorder and confusion". In his text he claims that the library is an institution that has to translate knowledge into wisdom. "Knowledge means power", Bhalotra adds to that statement that "wisdom means authority". He thinks that in order to make that specific 'transition', the library should be a place that causes debate and discussion. In order to realize that, the library should not be linear arranged; there must be "disorder and confusion". Bhalotra thinks that the library must be a Babylonian speech-misfiring ("that keeps alive the discussions on language and the wide variety of people that live in our modern day society"), clearly his approach is much more a philosophical one in comparison with the practical and cultural historical approach of Ford and Phillpot.

Bhalotra is stating that the library should be less accessible. The library is not a place to withdraw information from, by computer or virtual interface. It must be a pool; something one could drown in. Get lost in the labyrinth of knowledge, in real books; with the physical qualities of real life. The ones who escapes the labyrinth is richer. Creating wisdom by chaos.

In our presumption we think the virtual world has entered our existence, since the introduction of the computer. According to Bhalotra it was always present in our "invisible dreams and secret desires". Providing insights into processes, seeing things in other perspectives. "Libraries need to get rid their rigid ordering system! Order thwarts all possible spontaneousness, it means depression". After stating that, Bhalotra writes in addition a sketch of the current situation in bookshops and libraries: "There is no need to search, no need to discover". Everywhere there are signs, pictograms, information panels, lists, categories, short lists, arrows, bullet-points and what ever more. You can not get lost in a library. As a visitor, "you just walk right to the exact place in a library for what you have been looking for". No stimulation to act, think, search, or to sense. The order should be therefore "to help librarians, not visitors". "Creativity demands chaos". Chaos means unpredictability, unrestrictive creativity or unrestrictive destructiveness -it derives from the original Greek word- with the meaning of "primal emptiness, space" (Wikipedia). Order causes intellectual laziness, the thinking has already been done. Bhalotra emphasizes librarians' role as Phillipot and Ford do in their writings as well. The librarian should be able to help visitors of the library with finding their query, through virtual systems that provide a non-obligational ordering layer for the physical library. Bhalotra mentions that libraries are often very sterile, clean, 'white' and empty spaces. "If you want to be 'everything' as a library, why all the physical limitations of borders and rooms?"

It remains a question wether Bhalotra means that the concept of 'disorder' within the boundaries of the library should be considered as purely a theoretical, philosophical idea which is only realizable within an infinite virtual space. Quite a 'Borgean' approach: "A library should be an infinite labyrinth, where one could search, stray, get lost, find, live and where possibly -besides all the complex and necessary things on everyday life are stored- find irrelevant information on and descriptions of our universe as well."

Infinite libraries where everything is stacked and stored in a physically impossible utopia is something that recursively finds its way through the writings of Bhalotra and many others. The virtual world which exists

in our minds provides the space to think freely and to store information based on personal preferences. Besides the virtual world in ones mind, an addition to our personal one could be seen in the internet. Davin O'Dwyer wrote an interesting and quite heavy paper on 'Searching for Cyberspace' in the writings of twentieth century works of Jorge Luis Borges, Thomas Pynchon and James Joyce. The outcome in general is that the internet was -of course- not predicted in the form and shape as we know it now. The approach of those three authors was more metaphoric. Not the internet, or the internet as a library was foreseen, nor was the subject of writing, but the works can be seen as descriptions of how 'we' as humans consider the internet as "merely a continuation of our intellectual inquiry into the nature of the universe". O'Dwyer also questions wether the internet is a place to store information or a 'thing' that could be used to organize all the information the universal library contains. Is the internet a place with a lack of order and predictability and where leads that to anyway?

In some ways the internet is our new universal library, our new virtual world, our library which contains -although not in the hexagonal galleries as Borges' one- "the definitive collection of all learning and knowledge; it satisfies our desire to understand and control our world" (O'Dwyer) and seems to form a "collection of all human learning and writing". The internet is the "latest manifestation" of these ideas, the comparison between 'The Library of Babel' and the internet as the newest representation has been made by many.

Often because the story of Borges underlines and describes the "intimidating" scale and complexity and perhaps the inscrutability of its 'being' very well. The physical description of Borges' imaginary universal library is replaced by an invisible infrastructure of cables and connectors, modems and transmitters, with the computes as our place in the virtual universe and as the only access points to this metaphorical labyrinth of Borges. No such thing as an overview by walking through it and standing by "low railings, looking out over the upper and lower floors". The internet seems flat, but can let one travel through time, it has dark spaces and mainstream areas and functions for lot as a surrogate world where one can represent itself as someone else. "Real" and "irreal" play on important role, in our world a well as in the world of Borges. The library

defines the “human characteristics”, according to O’Dwyer. Internet explains us. Understanding ourselves demands for information, and “information needs design”. Design is order. Order needs to be “of any use”. What is the order in the ‘Babel Library’ and the internet?

In an essay -by the author Christopher Rollason- on the comparison of the ‘Library of Babel’ and the internet, a French author and editor (Ignacio Ramonet) is cited when Rollason practices the comparison. Ramonet states that users of internet are confronted with their own ignorance, due to the excess of information and the lack of any form of editorial checking or order. The users are confronted while having difficulties trying to organize the amount of information and disinformation which they surf into on the “ocean of information”. Ramonet compares this with the so called “The Library of Babel syndrome”. This library contains all the books ever written or yet to be written, in every language and every script. All these vast amounts of information, “with all their variants and approximations; nothing can guarantee the reliability of data”. Later on in the analyses is stated that it would be probably hard to find any readable book in the ‘Library of Babel’, since “its shelves register all the possible combinations of the twenty-four orthographical symbols, in all languages, in all scripts”. Rollason makes the comparison with internet and how some “net-sceptics” see the internet as a world full of virtual noise, with the possibility that it is very hard to find something useful within the useless, by ‘nature’ chaotic, disordered and dark ocean of “endless proliferation of trivial, ephemeral or downright harmful material as acres of dross render the few genuinely useful texts all but invisible”. Something quite recognizable, using the web: since the web has no imposed order, has no centralized editorial headquarter, it has no quality standards, or classification; pre-defined shelves nor is the web ‘equipped’ with a tool to overview the contents of it all. And there is also the difference spotted between what Borges has been writing about in his ‘The Library of Babel’ and the manifestation of the universal library in the form of the internet. The ‘Babel Library’ is there already, just like the virtual worlds in ones mind. It pre-existed. The new universal library is a growing thing, continuously expanding. We all fill this library, it is something that could be classified as a collaborative ‘universe’. Rollason sees that as well as the crucial difference in the often compared ‘two’ libraries. The internet

is something that is part of our “collective potential” as the human race to be able to “express, communicate, have dialogues and have democratic participation” which all come together during the realization of the web.

Rollason continues by citing Borges and pointing out the difference between the ‘two’ by stating that in ‘The Library of Babel’ one is in pursuit for “the book which would justify the existence of the individual who read it.” Interestingly enough “today’s virtual world” offers the possibility to write a book, to justify ones existence in that virtual world. With the option than others “read – or rewrite, improve, illustrate, refute, contradict, forget, or simply ignore it.” Ironically enough the new cyberworld contains most of the works, writings, analyses, essays, visualizations, studies and stories of the author of the original ‘Labyrinth’. Written by everyone, questioned by others, edited by amateurs, analyzed by scientists, adopted by students. The “ghost” of Borges, according to Rollason. To re-find the connection with modern day functioning of the universal library, Rollason writes: “If today’s cyberuniverse is a Library of Babel, it is a library which you who read and I who write are building up each day, with our own hands and minds.”

**Justified existence
Building cyeruniverse**

An interesting -not really practiced- example of disordered, decentralized and internet-based collaborative libraries is an initiative from the London Action Resource Centre (“collectivity run space for people working on self-organized, non-hierarchical projects for radical social change”). Their initiative is the ‘Antisystemic Library’ (shortened as ‘ASL’). Their vision has to do with the structure of the library as an organization instead of the library as a collection of objects. They have a motivation to organize knowledge which is absolute contrary with the visions of Phillpot and Ford on the library as one large network of knowledge instead of small ‘incompatible’ and slightly bad connected islands of librarianships. To refer literally to what Phillpot states: “a library is not an island”. He addresses that cooperation and connectivity are key issues when it comes to form a knowledge network, or as he describes it more expressive as a “vast interlocking crystalline structure of resources”.

**Anti Systemics
Library ≠ island**

The vision of the ‘ASL’ has much more to do with the structure of the library instead of the objects in the collection of a library that contain the

information, which justify the existence of the library in particular. The 'ASL' does not have a library catalog, that is part of their ideology on non existing 'systems'. Quite a radical decision, comparing it with the ideas and concepts on the 'disordered' libraries; where the physical collection would provide disorder and the catalog some kind of "conceptual relational order", based on a personal preference. The 'ASL' works not from the viewpoint of the user of the library, or from the viewpoint of the library as a collection of objects. Within the 'ASL' there is no such thing as a hierarchical organization (of knowledge). Further on in their statement on the 'anarchy library': "the system consists of people, researchers, archivers with their own working methods and their own systems for searching and archiving". Every individual who is part of that 'not existing system' uses "their own bibliographies, languages, interests, politics and codes", according to their website. The question about 'how to connect those individuals with their knowledge' comes up immediately, when getting notice from their 'system'.

The 'ASL' states that the original principles of Sir Tim Berners-Lee 'Semantic Web' would provide a solution for connecting the individual collections of knowledge from the various researchers and archivists. The author gives some practical examples on how a 'robot' could connect computer readable formats (Resource Description Framework) which describe a specific category, which contains for instance a specific set of books. Although the various collaborators on this project may have different category names, when the specific category would contain similar books, the robot could make the semantic connection. The complete ideology of the 'ASL' is based on the idea that every researcher should be able to work with their own methods; instead of being forced to work within a rigid framework.

"The Rise of The Semantic Web" is for the 'ASL' an important process for the further development of their ideas on sharing the knowledge. The 'ASL' is inspired by software written in 2003 by a American hacker. The software functions as a shared catalog for books, is labeled as 'The Distributed Library Project' and is spread already around the globe. Slowly but steady the options of sharing more than books only are growing. The 'ASL' is busy with further developing this software to share collections

of e-zines, movies, music and maps to this distributed system as well. The shift from institutionalized libraries to personal, decentralized individual and shared collections is an interesting one. Technical solutions provide options for interconnecting the cataloguing systems from all the users. On another scale this shows some resemblance with the relational aspects of the book Borges wrote about.

Beside the conceptual side of 'disorder' in a library, the technical side is relevant as well. The concepts and ideas mentioned above have that in common. Referring again to what Ford stated in his text about the disorder of things: one should "embrace disorder" in the library environment and find a solution in an interconnected environment. Although the ideas of 'Folksonomy' and 'freetagging' did not exist at that time, Ford mentions the idea of creating "personal order" by the usage of hypertext, the tagging concept seemed predicted.

Nowadays common tools use the advantage of 'tagging' or 'labeling' individual objects in a library. On the internet a lot of shared libraries -contents varies- like 'flickr', 'citeulike' and 'del.icio.us', are fulfilling the dreams of Phillipot, Ford and maybe even Borges. These user contribute based systems (bottom-up) -which have the function to work on a collaborative bases with the goal to organize the information on the internet (Wikipedia)- are designed in such a way that the users can act as librarians. In these 'libraries' there is no imposed order, the order is based on the information which is added to the specific individual object. The user has the freedom to choose words from either a 'fixed vocabulary' or use their own specific keyword as tags.

Relevant is that the "personal order" is not only part of the search and retrieve method, even more important, the 'personal' issue plays a vital role in the process of adding metadata to objects. The fact that when someone can choose a word, or a sentence to describe the contents of an object, the information is more than a 'cold' and 'linear' term. The personal approach to a specific subject which is stored in the object is becoming part of the system of these 'modern libraries'. Wikipedia describes this as "a folksonomic category arises from an individual's engagement with the tagged content, such that the created category is simultaneously

personal, social, and (to some degree) systematic, in an imperfect and provisional way.” This results in the possibility -if one likes the particular ‘personal order of things’- one is triggered to browse more information that has been tagged by a specific user. The discovering drift is stimulated in such a way that it becomes more easily to find the unexpected and get lost in the “exploration for wisdom” (Bhalotra). The search methods used on the internet (browsing), are based on that principle, according to research that has been done in the field of data retrieving. This more scientific approach instead of the philosophical describes the search methods on the internet as “unstructured” and “exploration-based”. This principle of unstructured searching seems to be -although it might be considered as a time consuming method- very effective when it comes to “discovering the unexpected”, according to William Arms in his text “Information Retrieval and Descriptive Metadata”.

Browsing and “discovering the unexpected” can also mean confusion, when it is the result of faulty labeled information within a “folksonomy”-based environment. The strength and the weakness is that ‘normal’ users with an expected engagement can categorize their information. Abuse and misuse can result in tags which do not cover the content or are added intentional to mislead. The strongest point of our collaborative universal library is the weakest as well, this issue is brought up very often by those who are ‘against’ these bottom-up, object based relational systems.

To zoom out to the scale of the collection of objects again: the internet as a library itself. Browsing through the infinite amount of pages is not a difficult thing to do. Where to start is a tougher question. Lack of order nor having an overview of the entire universal library and the flat space it forms, make it even more unaccessible. The only connection one has with this library is through a computer, starting the browser will deliver an empty white page, often with a search bar implemented. That is our first ‘meeting’ with the new virtual universal library. Not quite an exiting one.

Since one has no overview of the library or a real ‘starting point’, another tool must provide access to the hidden information. A tool that is ‘born’ in the library, and lives there ever since. A tool that has to function as the web librarian: Google. Walking through a physical library and using Google to

'walk' through the virtual library makes a difference. The problem with the web in comparison with the traditional library is that there are no visible structures, no shelves with 'books'. Walking through a library can cause unexpected findings by the way the books are organized, physically arranged; as Dercon wrote. To state again what Bhalotra wrote on the structure of libraries: there should not be a specific order. Order is therefore to help the librarian. The user must be confronted with disorder and chaos and the visitor can get access through a virtual space to the ordered information. If necessary.

So the order is therefore to help the librarian. For Google that is entirely true; that search engine demands for order. Order in the code. Google is not only ordering the information for us -wether that is done in a good way or not- it also demands for specific structures in the content of the library. As Bhalotra states: searching a library could be compared with exploring. Providing order makes people lazy, let them order the information based on their personal preferences.

The ordered looks of Google appeal to many, since one is not aware of the 'mess' behind it, looks can be deceiving. The "dark ocean" is hidden and the "garbage of too much information" is invisible (artist and author Bill Viola). Internet is the interconnected library to store the information in, Google functions as the librarian to order it and as a catalog to find things with. Disorder could be considered as a specific phase during a process. It is not a useful 'end product'. The user must be able to "organize the garbage collection" (Gerlinde Schuller), it must not be done fore them. With the problems of information overload within the increasing labyrinth, the strength of the structure of the web becomes in this case also its weakness. The fact that the internet environment is a connected one -objects are not isolated- has also the consequence that disorder grows and the lack of an overview is becoming an increasing problem. It is the so called "double-edged sword of the information technology age", according to professor Jonathan Potter from the Gonzaga University Library in his 'The Library as the Center of the Web'. Potter states in his text that everything is becoming "increasingly connected, accessible and searchable". The side effects are that everything becomes "increasingly dispersed, disordered, overloaded and out of control". Potter concludes

Wen Librarian

Double-edged sword
Organize garbage

that the web lends itself to anarchy and that there is no “central brain or authority”. In his vision the library must function as the central brain of the web -a library in a library- as the “unifying center where all strands of knowledge connect”. Whether that is a virtual infinite sized thing or a physical place, that is something that could be influenced by the evolution of technology.

Maurits de Bruijn (media designer) refers to Google as if it is something one can not mess with. If one wants to be visible in the library, there is no room for ‘anarchy’. Google is built on the principle “fit in or drop out”. The Google-standards demand basic marginal webdesign of the libraries content; otherwise a website is not part of the catalog. The growing popularity of Google and the willingness to comply to the set standards is a threat to the free design issue. De Bruijn observes a strong reduction in the visual quality and the complexity of the structure of designs and labels the process marginalizing design as the ‘Googleism’-effect. The invisible structure that is needed to be ‘Google-compatible’ becomes visible through the design of simplified structures.

The search for something is often more interesting or delivers more interesting answers than the original query asks for, according to all cited authors. Google is hiding itself behind a clean and sterile interface, not showing what it does and especially how it is searching. A funny approach to this issue is written by usability guru Donald Norman: “Google is deceptive, it is hiding what it is doing”. Google is not simple at all. Norman states that Google hides the chaos and replaces it by a design which is not reflecting the complex task and function. “Google hides all the complexity by simply showing one search box on the main page”. The complete process remains mystical and magical. By adding the simple and clean design to the process of the exploration, the actual functioning of Google is simplified. It has nothing to do with exploring. Could Google be considered as one of the so called “Böse Objecte” which I referred to in one of the first paragraphs, when quoting Bruinsma and Burckhardt?

To return at last to what Bhalotra stated about disorder and intellectual laziness. Google causes intellectual laziness, from the viewpoint of Bhalotra. The search engine does not demand for any form of creativity

or thinking: "you just walk -in this case surf- right to the exact place in the library for what you have been looking for". No stimulation to act, think, search or to sense. Google let's one find information easily, maybe too easy; so questioning the found information and the methods of using specific search queries are less relevant. Since one thinks that the desired information already has been found. Like what Ramonet wrote, cited by Rollason: the internet is 'just like' the 'Library of Babel', possibly there is hardly anything useful to find in the disordered and dark ocean of "endless proliferation of trivial, ephemeral or downright harmful material as acres of dross render the few genuinely useful texts all but invisible." To cite Borges from the text of Rollason again: "The impious maintain that nonsense is normal in the Library and that the reasonable is an almost miraculous exception".

Visiting pages by accident, or finding things serendipity-wize, is minimized with Google (although it is a rigid linear system) and the presentation of the search results. Exploring the information is rolling the scrolling bar on screen or wheel on mouse. Linear scrolling the results: best on top. Cleaning the interface results in hiding functions; otherwise the clarity is at stake. Not functional, by trying to be functional. Not accessible, by trying to be accessible. How does it work, what is 'it' hiding, can we trust 'it'. In this case disorder, or the presence of some kind of conceptual chaos would create understanding and insight into the working method of the ordering and arrangement process Google does. Now it could be considered as deceptive, although the only reason why Google has legitimacy is the fact that there is chaos; otherwise one does not need an impersonal ordering tool like Google. By simplifying the interface and hiding the process a gap of 'not understanding' is created. While design should be the intermediary between 'information' and 'understanding' (Richard Grefé, director American Institute of Graphic Arts).

Maybe for a few days -just as an experiment-, the results of Google or the main interface of Google as the entrance for the internet as a library, should be attached to the Shredder from Mark Napier on the website of Patatoland. That will bring back the exploration drift, the chaos, the need for thinking, acting, searching (instead of using the ctrl-F keys) and the ability to walk into unexpected beautiful results. •

short recap

Disorder plays a relevant role in the process of searching for and finding a specific query within the environment of a library. It can even stimulate the process of finding something, one was not searching for in specific: the art of serendipity. Visions on disorder and chaos of various library directors can be translated into the wish for a hypertextual (postmodern conception of interconnectivity of 'all' literary works) library, with the options for the user to order the information on a personal preference.

Distraction often leads to better focussing. The (scale of) order -or disorder- of things could be considered as something that has to do with the personal perception of the 'user'. Order and disorder are things that have a strong connection with experiencing. What for one is order, could be for another a labyrinth. The wish for a specific order differs. From person to person, from time to time. A physical answer is impossible. One can not arrange the library based on the specific wishes of an individual. The virtual environment can provide the personal order in the library.

Technique should provide the final solution in creating the order to transform the "information into understanding", on a relational level. In general the library changes from centralized institutionalized top down organizations to decentralized relational bottom up individual collections of objects. By shifting that, the structure of the content of the collection also seems to shift. The internet as a universal library, contains interconnected separate libraries, which contain individual relational objects instead of islands or large collections of linear organized information.

A library reflects our culture, internet is the new universal library and therefore the new reflection, or explanation of our being as humans. To understand and to learn from that library, exploration is needed. Gaining knowledge, transforming knowledge into wisdom means that there is a certain intellectual or creative level required. Explaining everything, pointing out exactly what you need to learn, means one becomes lazy. By exploring the content of the universal library, one should walk upon unexpected things. Exploring means in essence going through the wilderness -wether that are plants or knowledge. Searching and exploring our new universal library requires tools. Google is not the ideal catalog, not the catalog which embraces disorder and provides the tools

to create order on a personal bases. I can not think of a system which provides the conceptual approach on chaos and disorder, translated into a modern tool for a virtual environment. Using Google, one is actually excluded from the search process. The user is only confronted with the starting stage and the end stage, in between their is the 'magic of the machine'. Simplifying the process too much -in the case of Google- the creativity of searching and finding and the 'art of serendipity' are limited down. Searching has become a business. Finding a dull task. Killing creativity, causing intellectual laziness. Searching should be transfered back to exploring. Make exploring challenging again, like the shredder from Mark Napier does!

With this theoretical background in mind, the latest 'Netlorelib' (a 'folksonomous' library dedicated to internet folklore, a significant but largely undefined and undocumented part of online culture) has been developed. Providing a system of disorder, some filters and tools to order the information on a personal bases; done by the visitors of 'Netlorelib'. And the system challenges the user to explore its content which has the visual and almost physical qualities of the original material. No imposed rigid classification system or order in this revised version of the 'Netlorelib'. The designers became curators and guiders of the project.

But after all it is still a library, which will find its position within the "dark ocean" together with many others, forming the constantly growing new universal library of libraries of libraries of libraries.

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**FAILING ORDER
STRUCTURES
INVISIBLE**