

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)

Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

---

October 2022

## Toward a New Approach to Information Science: Intertextuality

Narges Neshat

narges\_neshat@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac>



Part of the [Scholarly Communication Commons](#)

---

Neshat, Narges, "Toward a New Approach to Information Science: Intertextuality" (2022). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 7362.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/7362>

# **Toward a New Approach to Information Science: Intertextuality**

**Narges Neshat**  
**Associate Professor**  
**National Library & Archive of Iran,**  
**Information Management & Organization Research Group**

## **Abstract:**

Intertextuality is the meaning of the text that is formed by other texts. It means the formation of a new text based on contemporary or previous texts, so that the new text is a compact of a number of texts, the border between which is blurred, and its structure is renewed in a new way, so that nothing is left of the previous texts except its substance, and its essence is in the new text is hidden and only experts can recognize it. No text can be understood on its own without relying on other texts, because it is impossible to avoid using expressions and things that others have already used. Therefore, intertextuality shows that all events are somehow related to previous events and benefit from them. Intertextuality idea is emerged effectively in various operations of librarianship. Although it is a relative modern idea, despite its history and librarians' awareness of the idea, intertextual relationships have been implicitly circulating in professional librarianship operations, either intrinsically or ideally, so the position of the idea can be traced in practices of this field. This paper aims to represent three technical aspects in information science and librarianship including Collection development, cataloging and information retrieval from an intertextual perspective.

## 1. Introduction

Intertextuality, considered as the basis of the text generation and interpretation, is a complicated mutual relationship between a text and others. This term was first used by Julia Kristeva, a French famous semiologist, in the late 1960, and was distinctly used again in her article about Bakhtin's work in 1969 (Allen, 2000). The fundamental concept of intertextuality is that a text, appeared in any form, may not be authentic and unique but a texture of prior shredded texts (Allen, 2000). Intratextuality theory, in fact, is based on the assumption that "Any idea cannot be separated from previous ones, ... rather it is born and grows up on its preceding ashes, like a phoenix" . Thus, the theory resists this thought that knowledge could be comprehended from individual texts (Lee and Poynton, 2000).

According to all practices which have been done in library field for many years, it would seem that intertextuality idea is emerged effectively in various operations of librarianship. Although it is a relative modern idea, despite its history and librarians' awareness of the idea, intertextual relationships have been implicitly circulating in professional librarianship operations, either intrinsically or ideally, so the position of the idea can be traced in practices of this field.

### 1-1. Term Definition

Before starting the discussion, it may be helpful to express the definition of some terms:

"Librarianship" refers to the management of the books. "Book" in a broad sense is structurally attributed something in which an idea is written down with a tool on a page. This description of book has been always accurate, despite its form, capacity, and writing style. Constituently, "book" contains a knowledge which is confined and a combination of experiences, emotions, beliefs, and values in lingual abilities and competencies. Therefore, "book" is considered a manifestation of written or recorded knowledge and, in other words, confined knowledge as well. Librarianship also refers to management . Thus, librarianship means "recorded knowledge management". The management may include all steps of a library tasks from recognition and development to organization, presentation, and propagation.

"Text" refers to "work" content, and a "work" is a physical representation of content. According to Palmer, "work" is an inherent entity possessing its own abilities and movements (Palmer, 2000). "Work" might physically and in media appears in different independent forms (such as books, journals, compact disks, and web resources), but "text" is a flowing, independent phenomenon that has been happening. "Work" can be exchanged, distinguished from other works, or placed in a bookshelf, but "text" bears different situation. It is a multi-sided, evasive, and hard-finding phenomenon.

In the intertextuality attitude, no "text" is unique but a mixture of previous texts, whether these records have been referred to or not in a text.

A "library" is a space that can recognize, collect, organize, and prepare books (through a comprehensive sense of "book") based on particular goals and policies, despite the library holds inscription, papyrus, written copies, printed works, documents, pictures, art works, audio/

video tapes, CD, electronic files, or mainly what is called digital library.

In a library three major issues of practices may be realized in which other measures will be classified, including acquisition, organization, and retrieval that are discussed here.

## **2. Collection Development**

No library can be found that holds just one book. A library inherently has a collective ground. A complex must be established upon a defined goal and specific policy in a space to be called library. Type or structure of a library cannot change its collective characteristic. This collectiveness causes the intertextuality attitude to govern librarianship, or management of recorded knowledge. But on what validity and indices will the complex be formed? And what is the extra idea of tendency to a particular complex? The response to these questions must be found in the "text" definition.

The typical perspective has constantly been that a text consists of a single sense and reader tries to discover it. But modern theoreticians believe that a text may not hold an independent sense. To their opinion, a text, in fact, contains what is called intertextuality. They claim that reading a text makes us enter a network of intertextual relationships. Interpretation of a text and discovery of its sense or senses is just tracing these relationships (Allen, 2000). Roland Barthes believes that the text idea as well as intertextuality depend on paradigms of a texture network and also will be a woven textile of "pre-writings" and "pre-readings" (Barthes, quoted in Allen's, 2000). And the sense of author's utterance derives from the utterance in linguistic-cultural systems. An author appears in the role of a compiler or facility-organizer through pre-existences in the linguistic system (Allen, 2000). In the Persian language the term "author" also represents intertextual procedure: An author is the one who creates intimacy and syntagma between pre-existences by arranging them.

A text contains a set of quotations that are partly obvious and have references but mostly anonymous and according to Barthes: "They are quotations with no quotation mark" (Barthes quoted in Allen's, 2000). Thus, to understand a text, its background must be recognized, the background whose trace will be present in a reading text. Therefore no text can be evaluated independently and free from its background. Text in an intertextuality context will be identified. The context is a network of previous texts emerging, explicitly or implicitly, in a reading text.

The attitude to develop of a library collection is based on context type that is a book will be reviewed upon complicated bonds and network ties that are far from or near it at different levels, so a book is measured on this ground and collectively considered in library policy and book selection. Librarianship attitude to a book may never be abstract and uncontextual, but its position is specified in a network of former relevant texts. Because it is impossible to select a text heedless of the backgrounds that have created it and assure readers' understanding by only the individual text. A text can be comprehended in a cluster of texts and each cluster can be understandable on a ground of other clusterizations.

The syntagma way of the texts and clusters specifies their nearness or distance degree to each

other. On the internet, websites expand and accelerate intertextual relationships. Since, a text gains its sense from the relationship with other texts; it will be hard to understand a text that contains an individual meaning and does not concern pre/ post texts.

Acquisition tends to create an intertextual network in a library space, in such a way that all texts in a library allocate positions for themselves in the network based on nearness or distance. Although the ideal network cannot be perfectly accomplished because of infinite extent of backgrounds, the horizon which a library portrays for itself contains this feature and tends to form an intertextual collection.

Sometimes a library steps into the paratextuality scope to support knowledge and create more understanding of a text. Genette believes that paratextualities include factors to facilitate understanding a text for readers (Allen, 2000). Some types of these paratextualities are interviews, advertisements, reviews and ideas, and correspondences relevant to a text.

In libraries with particular goals and audience, even pretexts can find special position in collections including rewritings, recreating, adaptations, and sometimes translations, playing roles to produce an intertextual network. Therefore, a library concerned for users' comprehension and understanding of texts, thinks about Para/ pre-textuality besides intertextuality.

### **3. Cataloging and indexing**

Lacking a conceptual network between a text and its back/ fore grounds on one hand and paratextual factors on the other, no intertextual relationship will be discovered. In a non-network state, texts are independent and suspended points in a library space that their semantic communications with each other cannot be established. The bond between the points helps them become a network to reveal a relationship between a text and its back/ fore grounds. Organization practice in libraries is to establish this network.

The appearance characteristics of a work are shown in descriptive cataloging and textuality make sense in both analytical cataloging and subject indexing respectively. What happens in descriptive cataloging may occasionally confront the intertextual idea in some cases.

The modern structure of descriptive cataloging has been affected by modernism, the attitude causing an author to seem a god. As if, all hidden ideas in a text belong to him. To this attitude, semantics would rise from the author's mind so his work will be authentic and monologic. Roland Barthes, on the contrary, believes that the sense of an author's utterance is rooted in a network of intertextual and also linguistic-cultural systems (Barthes, quoted in Allen's, 2000).

Barthes states that "An author's image is a modern one, in fact, a figure born in capitalism that changes works into goods by giving them names . . . in the modern market system, an author's name will be transformed into a merchandise deserving the value of transaction, so reading is considered a consuming production, simply put, reading means consumption of a work. In the capitalistic market system, works are encouraged as disposable goods or at least with limited competencies. A read book is sold at a low price" (Allen, 2000).

Modern librarianship in Iran is influenced by modern western tradition, that is why an author is on the top of a work in descriptive cataloging, whereas in old Islamic tradition , the main entry of a work has been the title of a book and the author has never claimed to possess the work. Specially book writing tradition in classic time, like today, has depended on intertextual relationships with texts and intersubjective communications with scholars or thinkers.

Barthes, indicates that an author, based on a traditional image, is considered god-like. Perhaps he refers to the Bible that says "at the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God". In religious western tradition, God is believed the authenticated author of two books: Holy Scripture and Holy Nature. Similarly a human author is thought the origin of work sense (Allen, 2000).

Therefore, what make the conceptual network powerful in intertextual communications are linguistic signs. Words, idioms, and expressions bear such role. But how could the signs reveal semantic relationship among texts?

A linguistic sign of catalogues and indexes looks for the segments related to themselves in a text. Textual analysis is being searched by a librarian for the structure, fundamental elements, and integrative units. But it considers the structure in such way it holds intertextual ground. Library subject analysis tends to recognize separated parts forming a single work, destruct them, select a sign for each part, and label it . Thus this part located in a text causes the recognition of all similar parts under a single sign to be organized. A librarian starts to conceptually segment the "text" because she/he is unable to manipulate material uniformity of a "work".

The librarian's practice of labeling separated parts of a seemingly single text, indeed, is considered virtual destruction of a work into a collection of parts that can also be traceable in other texts. To the organization perspective, a text consists of a string of words developing a multidimensional space in which a spectrum of various scripts is blended. Therefore, organization is a function releasing woven pieces and retrieving them in a new entity by using verbal (or non-verbal) signs.

In this function, librarians follow intertextual structuralism, because they believe that the signification of a text or a text collection can be explained by describing its primary units and systematic relationships, the idea supported by Gerare Genette (see Allen, 2000).

To this attitude, "in many knowledge-representation systems, language is defined as a phenomenon bearing the role of reality representation, thus, the systems are not to describe objects to the real world but linguistic manner"(Neshat, 2003).

#### **4. Information retrieval**

Retrieval means bring back and thematic retrieval means finding a content of a text again happening twice along with two different approaches; once library-oriented and once again user-oriented retrieval. Library-oriented retrieval resulting from subject analysis tends to collect conceptually scattered pieces in various texts and locate them under specific linguistic signs to help a user to recognize distributed but relevant concepts scattered in any parts of

different texts. But user-oriented retrieval is to recognize and measure the pieces collected by the user so their relevance to her/his needs will be signified and where necessary they will be used.

But these approaches are both deconstructive, because despite that a "work" is considered constructive, that is an or some individual(s) put conceptual pieces together based on a purpose to suggest different utterance and might think of an audience or some audiences, this structure will be destroyed while retrieving and its audience-oriented will change into user-oriented. Potential and actual users are considered in library-oriented and user-oriented attitude respectively.

Although library-oriented retrieval obtains verbal signs from a text, it states concepts while using the signs based on probability and unclear type of usage. This probability depends on the audience who is implicitly or explicitly predicted in a work. According to Bakhtin, utterance is a bridge relying on someone who addresses at one side and another one who is addressed at the other side (Bakhtin, 2006). Therefore, the audience is present in the texture and structure of a work, but the user even could not be predicted through searching because the collection of former operations is unable to determine the latter one. Thus, to the library-oriented perspective, a potential user will be an actual audience reflected in a work, the similarity between them is not certain, though. As a result, the library perspective has no way except for probability, because what has not happened is unknown.

But user-oriented approach is something else. A user is a kind of text which is a texture of his pre-knowledge. There is an empty space in his mind tending to find an appropriate piece to fill, and this piece needs to be obtained from formerly available texts. The texts are on the basis of other people's pre-knowledge (or partly pre-knowledge). It is not easy to find a user's accurate piece in a pile of the others' scrambled pre-knowledge. Because a text is considered human statements and manifestations that must be comprehended by an understanding factor and, on the other hand, this factor himself, is a collection of meanings, values, and attitudes (Neshat, 2003).

A librarian thinks that his task of text analysis is called interpretation; similarly a user thinks that interpretation is his observations of texts. But these two sorts of interpretation bear neither external nor internal consistency between users and librarians and in each individual group respectively. The data of 16 studies done in the world indicate that the average of subject consistency attributing texts among catalogers and indexers is below 60% . The two studies performed in Iran also relatively confirm this (Neshat, 2002 & Azizian, 2004). That is why it can be unanimously expressed with Barthes that "analysis is pluralistic" (Barthes, quoted in Allen's, 2000).

But, librarianship tries to facilitate accessibility by developing a logical relationship between incorporeal segmentation (textuality) and corporeal unity (work centerism) of resources , so it follows up the task as much as human capacity and competency go.

## 5. Conclusion

Variety of texts has roles to create directly or indirectly a new text, therefore, understanding a new text will depend on comprehension of former texts generating it. Collection-building tends to develop an intertextual network in a library. That is why it avoids pluralistic attitude.

In organization language, terms cross beyond a text bound, recognize pieces of a relevant pretext, and virtually assemble a collection of relevant pieces, scattered in different texts, in a pond to facilitate variety of users' investigations, although they are unpredictable, as much as possible. The organization function is to influence on the depth of texts.

Subject retrieval of texts depends on field realization/ representation that a text allocates a certain subject position for itself in an intertextual network. Preparation to optimally retrieve texts is one of the librarians' retrievable efforts struggling to develop it by using intertextual attitude in a library space.

Finally it could be mentioned that since a text's identity depends on the texts producing it, librarianship observes any text in a relevant context and network, in all professional practices, and opposes the idea that a subject can be comprehended by simply reading a single text.

**Acknowledgement:** The writer would like to present this article to Dr. Abbas Horri ( 1937-2013), a prominent professor of librarianship in Iran

## References

- Allen, G. (2000). *Intertextuality* , London: Routledge.
- Azizian ,M. (2004) . "Consistency measure of CIP in Iranian National Library". Master Thesis, Islamic Azad University. (in Persian)
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination* . Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. (1993). *Toward a philosophy of the act*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail (1984). *Rabelais and his world*. Bloomington. Indiana University Press.
- Barthes, R. (1977). *Image-music-text*. London, Fontana.
- Genette, G. (1997). *Paratexts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, A. and poynton, C. ( 2000). *Culture and Text*. Maryland: Roman & Littlefield pub.
- Neshat, Narges. (2002). "Consistency measure of cataloguing among Iranian Academic Libraries and comparing Iranian National Library Research Centers criteria". PhD Dissertation, Islamic Azad University(in Persian).
- Neshat, Narges. (2003). "Hermeneutics and information retrieval". *Informology*, Vol.1, no. 2, pp. 31-46(in Persian).
- Palmer, R. ( 1969). *Hermeneutics*. Northwestern Univ.