

## How does the way that we organise or classify knowledge affect what we know?

This exhibition explores this prompt by reflecting on how an individual's knowledge can be enhanced or restricted through: logical organisation, visualisation and control of access. It also reflects on how personal versus universal classification of knowledge may affect what others know.



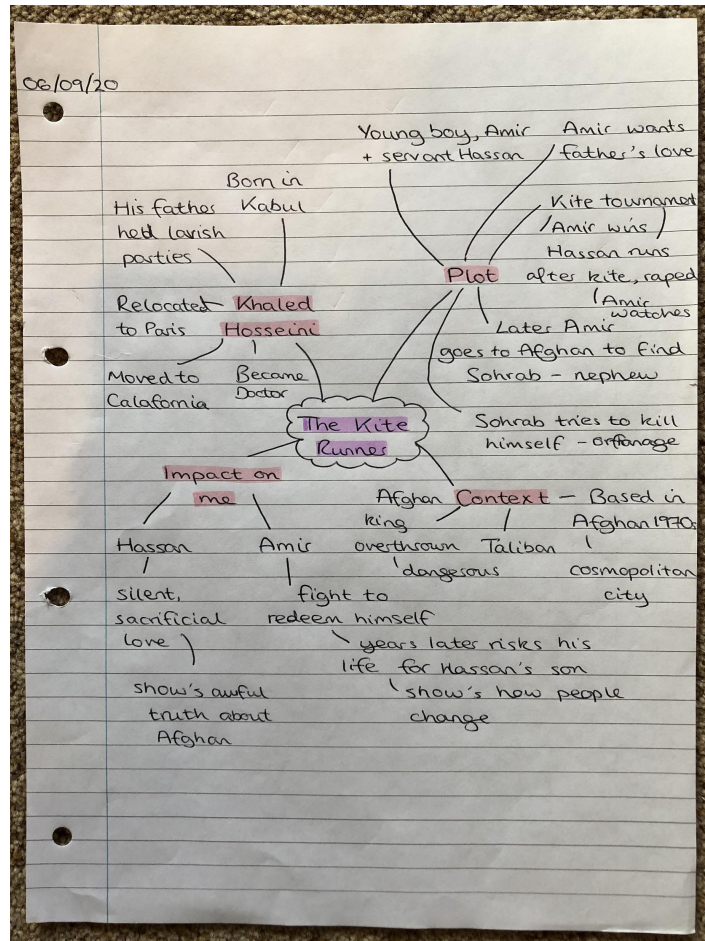
This object is the bookcase in my bedroom, where I keep my textbooks and reading books. The reason that I have chosen this object is because it demonstrates how by organising the books according to my personal logical method of classification enables me to quickly find what I am looking for, but would probably be limiting to other knowers.

Classification of knowledge using personalised logic, rather than universal logic, is likely to be influenced by subconscious emotion unique to an individual knower. For example, my favourite books are at eye level on my bookcase, but these may not be everyone else's favourites.

For knowledge to be truly accessible to all knowers, it requires standardised and agreed attributes and classifications to be applied. This standardisation assists the retrieval and exploration of new knowledge because people and technology know where to look and find it. Whilst I may have applied some universal application, such as genre of book, my subsequent organisation by size and pastel shades are unlikely to help others find the text they are looking for, and would certainly not work in the British Library!

Organisation by universally agreed logical taxonomies requires consensus and collective objectivity. As we learn to apply these organisational rules and knowledge attributes, often without thinking, we begin to logically store, retrieve, share and build our knowledge. By applying personal logic one knower is assuming that another knower thinks and behaves in the same way.

Inconsistent and illogical organisation of data limits the extent to which knowers can find and expand their knowledge. If knowledge is not logically grouped the learner could be unaware of other knowledge relating to their chosen subject. The lack of universal logic may not be material in the organisation of my bookcase, but could be hugely costly in wider society.



The next object is a mindmap that I created to support me when I needed to give a presentation to my class on a book, *The Kite Runner*, that I had found meaningful. The reason I have chosen the mindmap is because it demonstrates the hierarchical ordering of my thoughts and knowledge relating to the book.

I used the mindmap in two dimensions. Initially, I used the mapping technique to help me explore and create four key concepts that I would talk about: the plot, the context, the impact on me, and the author. The mapping created hierarchical connections between my ideas and encouraged me, the knower, to keep exploring these ideas whilst maintaining relevance to the concept and core topic. These types of maps encourage the knower to delve deeper into topics and their personal understanding by asking the “so what?” of each concept. In this way, the organisation and expansion of a mindmap encourages the knower to move beyond simply restating facts and move to linking and expanding the relationships between ideas and facts. Having developed my concepts, the second dimension was using the mindmap to assist my recall of the information as I presented. My ability to be able to picture the layout of the mindmap on the page, and specifically use the hierarchy of concepts, meant that each word or phrase prompted the next set of related thoughts. This visualisation allowed me to recall ideas and talk freely rather than following a script.

My use of the mindmap to prepare my presentation positively affected my knowledge of the book. It took my more natural logical thinking and encouraged me to explore and expand concepts with my more creative side.



My final object is my diary that I use to capture my thoughts, perspectives, opinions and information personal to me. I have chosen my diary because it demonstrates how the classification of knowledge directly affects what we know. Knowledge can be classified as open to everyone and publicly available; this type of knowledge could be considered to be the least sensitive and most shareable. At the other end of the scale is knowledge classified as confidential, private or secret; this type of knowledge is only available to a limited community of knowers.

When I started to write my diary, I used it to record everything from what I had done during the day, which was not really private, to my very personal views on people and events in my life which I would not want to share. By padlocking my diary I was informing others that they were not entitled to this knowledge. The knowledge was privileged and affected what others knew about me and my thoughts.

All information is classified into a hierarchy of privilege. In some instances the sensitivity of the knowledge might be determined by the risk of that information being misused - for example if my diary contains passwords. In some instances the sensitivity might be determined by the way in which knowers may mislearn or misinterpret the content without understanding the context, for example my views on a particular person or subject.

Access to privileged or classified information requires the knower to understand the responsibility and accountability for using that knowledge, so that it is used appropriately. I would not have wanted my sister to read my diary in case she wrongly interpreted something I had written and that affected her view of that knowledge. Classified knowledge requires knowers to know how to use and interpret the knowledge.

939 words

## References

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Pictures of objects from Author's own collection