Book Review

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Niels Windfeld Lund. 2024. *Introduction to Documentation Studies: Complementary Studies of Documentation, Communication and Information*. London: Facet Publication. Price 50£ (paperback); 100£ (hardback). Also available as eBook.

Introduction

For more than three decades, Niels Lund has been one of the leading forces in establishing documentation studies as a field of research and education. He became the first employee and full professor in Documentation Studies at the *Arctic University of Norway*, Tromsø, in 1996. He founded the *Document Academy*, an international network with annual conferences, and he is a productive author and his main contribution is probably his "Document Theory" in the *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* 43 (2011). The present book has been long awaited, but, as communicated in the preface, it was delayed because the author suffered a brain stroke in 2017, which reduced his work capacity considerably. The author is now professor emeritus, and still actively engaged in documentation studies.

The book is organized in three main parts: 1. Documentation theory, 2. Documentation in practice, and 3. Documentation in theory and practice. The first part consists of three chapters introducing core concepts, outlining the complementary theory of documentation and providing a model for complementary document analysis. The second part comprises six chapters with case studies from music, literature, art, science, politics and identity documentation, exemplifying single documents in their various subsystems. The third part consists of two chapters on documentation from a comparative perspective and a suggested complementary discipline of documentation, information, and communication.

The relation between documentation studies and LIS

The central claim in the book is that library and information science (LIS), documentation studies and communication studies are three complementary disciplines, which are all necessary. The book's main argument is that documentation studies is a field of study and a profession, which is complementary to information science and communication studies. However, for different reasons, it is difficult to understand the book's arguments about this central claim. The book seems unclear whether it is arguing for documentation studies as a discipline or, as in Chapter 11, for documentation, information, and communication studies (DIC studies) as one (complementary) discipline. As the discussion of information and communication studies is not well developed in this book it is here understood as defending documentation studies as a separate field.

This reviewer has also for many years argued for the understanding of the concept of "document," rather than "information" as the core concept for library and information science (LIS), although information, as stated by Buckland (1991, 351), can also be considered a thing, and thus a document:

> *Information-as-thing*: The term "information" is also used attributively for objects, such as data and documents, that are referred to as "information" because they are regarded as being informative.

The reviewer agrees with Lund on the importance of the concept of "documents" but disagrees on whether documents should replace information or whether there should be separate fields for information and documentation (in addition to other fields like communication studies). Here, readers should be reminded that what is today called "information science" was formerly called "documentation" (LIS is a merging of library science with information science). One of the most important indicators of the relationship between documentation and information science is the change in the name of the American Documentation Institute (founded in 1937) in 1968 to the American Society for Information Science (today, the *Association for Information Science & Technology*, ASIS&T). It can be hard to understand (or to accept) that this naming shift was a mistake and that the name "information science," therefore, must be considered a misnomer. However, the name "information science" was mainly due to the expectations that Shannon's "information theory" could serve as the theoretical basis, which was later given up. Therefore, this confusion of documentation and information science is serious. Often it is acknowledged that information science is about documents, e.g., by Lancaster (1968), who wrote,

> An information retrieval system does not inform (i.e., change the knowledge of) the user on the subject of his inquiry. It merely informs on the existence (or non-existence) and whereabouts of documents relating to his request.

In other words, LIS works with *documents*, for example, with their selection, indexing, classification, description, retrieval and recommendation (see further in Hjørland 2018a, 2018b and 2023).

How does Lund's book argue about the distinction between documentation and LIS? The answer is not a coherent argument, but consists of pieces scattered around in the book:

In Chapter 1 (p. 3), the terms "documentation," "communication" and "information" are defined based on their etymology. Then, the chapter outlines the documentation tradition and contains brief sections on communication and information. The best part is that the author describes the documentation tradition, which comes as no surprise. The section on communication starts: "While documentation has been very much about an object, about a document, the notion of communication, since antiquity, has been about making something *common*, sharing something with others." Perhaps this quote reveals a deeper problem in the book. Documentation may alternatively be understood as *the process of documenting something*, for example, clinical trials document that vitamin C cures scurvy. Therefore, Lund's attempts to distinguish documentation and communication fail. The sections on both communication and information do not help to provide an understanding of the distinction between documentation studies, communication studies, and LIS but are inconclusive in this respect.

In Chapter 2 (p. 20), Lund presents three different angles for describing, for example, his own book, focusing on respectively materiality, mentality, and sociality:

> For example, we can study this book as a material phenomenon with pages made of paper with printed letters, etc. We can talk about book printing, book binding, typography, illustrations, and, not least, how new digital technology has had an impact on book printing and made it possible to make an e-book, without any paper, readable on a digital device.
> This book can also be described as a mental phenomenon with a cognitive configuration in the shape of a narrative consisting of three parts: an introduction to my theories; my case studies; and how they can be used as a model for other case studies in documentation studies.
> A third possible view is to see the book as a social phenomenon, being a part of the scientific world, and to talk about publishers, editors, academic institutions, etc.
> Each approach can provide a relevant description without mentioning or acknowledging the other two angles. One could talk, like Bohr, about three complementary but exclusive descriptions of the book.
> [...] The three dimensions – the materiality, mentality, and sociality – are in reality all intertwined and interacting with each other, but the book does not partly bear any one of these three features. It is 100% a material phenomenon, 100% a social phenomenon, and 100% a mental phenomenon.

I find that there are three problems with the mental perspective.

(1) It is unspecific what it is about. It could be about the genre of the book, is it a textbook on documentation, is it a treatise, or is it something else? Alternatively, we could speak of the book's theoretical point of departure and conceptualization of its object; is it informed by some specific theories, or is it eclectic? A third option is to place it in the intellectual landscape of disciplines, for example, as a work in the tradition of neo-documentation. A fourth option is to characterize the book's composition and the structure of its arguments. The book has not properly described what kind of descriptions are important to consider in relation to LIS or documentation.

(2) Regardless of whether it is conceived as about genre, conceptualization, theoretical outlook, disciplinary affiliation, or composition, this perspective is social rather than mental. For example, the composition of documents follows historically developed social norms rather than individual mental choices.

(3) Lund (p. 24) connects the material perspective with documentation, the social perspective with communication, and the mental perspective with information, thereby defining information science as a mental phenomenon. However, it is hard to understand the existing LIS as about mental phenomena, and Lund has not outlined a realistic vision of how such a discipline can look.

Because of these problems with "the mental perspective," it is not helpful to distinguish documentation studies from LIS. As already said, the book focuses on documents as material entities, which seems to be the basis of Lund's understanding of the relationship between documentation studies and LIS.

The case studies

Part II has the headline *Documentation in Practice*, but rather consists of six examples from different domains demonstrating the book's suggested model of document analysis.

Chapter 4 is about Mozart's Requiem. Read as an independent text, it is a brilliant chapter, a fascinating and crystal clear masterpiece, which teaches us much relevant knowledge about Mozart's Requiem as a complex of documents, and about one way in which documents can be understood and analyzed from a historical and social perspec-

tive. It describes the situation in 1791–2, with a documentation process starting in one social subsystem, the nobility subsystem, in which the composers work as subordinated servants delivering music for the nobility. From here, it moved into a new social subsystem, the classical music subsystem, in which the composer is the master of the music and has intellectual property rights to his own music. All the different subsystems, agents, means/instruments, and modes are described with the resulting radical changes in the resulting documents. Many of the concepts used in the analysis have been introduced in former chapters, and the idea is that they represent Lund's contribution to the analysis of documents.

That said, the chapter does not consider how Mozart's Requiem should be classified or indexed in relation to its subjects (or any of the issues suggested above when discussing the "mental perspective"). The reviewer suggests the domain-analytic point of view, which would be first to consider the Requiem in relation to different paradigms in the history of music (cf., Ørom 2003 on paradigms in art history). Lund does briefly describe Mozart's Requiem from a socio-cultural perspective but without any indication of its purpose in relation to knowledge organization. It seems that Lund's association of documentation studies with material phenomena (excluding what he calls "mental phenomena") limits his model of document analysis by excluding important dimensions such as subject analysis and genre studies.

Another issue is to which degree the analysis of Mozart's Requiem demonstrates a general model for document analysis, or if it, so to speak, gets lost in the concrete example. (This question is relevant for all six case studies). Lund's intention is clearly to exemplify the general analytic model described in Chapter 3. The impression is, however, that the model is too thin because the most interesting aspects of the analysis in each case are not used in the other examples; the cases, therefore, are more about their specific contents than exemplifying general document theory. The model has some very general elements, such as identifying the subsystems, in which the documents are produced. One example is the way Mozart as the author was presented in the context of the status of authors in the nobility subsystem, and its subsequent system is not used in chapter 7, exemplifying science. However, historically situated social, economic, and ideological conditions under which scientists work are also important for the documents they produce, and if such conditions are considered in one case of document analysis, why not in all?

That said, the case studies are interesting in themselves, and they illuminate the broad perspective of documentation studies.

What is a document? What is documentation?

As formerly noted, Lund focuses on documents as objects rather than on documentation as a process. An example of a document throughout the book is a baby's scream (p. xxv):

> When the umbilical cord is cut immediately after their birth, the baby screams, and by that action creates their first document. The scream demonstrates that they are alive and have a voice. It documents that they are a human being.

The purpose of this example is to demonstrate the generality of the document concept, as Lund defined (p. 25):

> Based on the general assumptions of how human life is constituted, described above, and this understanding of *doceo* + *mentum* = *documentum*, I will define a document in the following way: any results of human efforts to tell, instruct, demonstrate, teach, or to produce a play, in short to document, by using some means in some ways. In this way one can view human actions as documentative actions, that they all demonstrate, perform, and prove a person's life every single second.

While the idea of defining terms in relation to a broad theoretical frame is fruitful, some further specifications are needed. A document (= "information as thing") is a document *relative* to what it documents. Compare Buckland's (1991, 356) conclusion:

> If anything is, or might be, informative, then everything is, or might well be, information. In which case calling something 'information' does little or nothing to define it.

Correspondingly, almost every act is, or might well be, a document. Therefore, Lund needs to consider *when* something is a document because being a document is situational, just as being information is, according to Buckland. The problem is associated with Lund's focus on documents as things in themselves rather than as means of documentation processes. An example that, in my view, seems directly wrong is the claim (p. 119) that his middle name "Jørn" (after his father): "documents my relation to my father". No, that a person has his father's first name is not documentation that there is a father-son relation between persons sharing identical given names.

The above demonstrates a missing perspective in the book: the discussion of socially recognized criteria for documenting claims (such as X is the son of Y). Such criteria are well-developed in many fields. In genealogy, birth certifi-

cates used to be considered sufficient documentation but are today increasingly supplemented or replaced by DNA analysis. In biology, Carl Linnaeus documented the discovery of a new species by keeping a specimen in his herbarium. If he later found a "better" exemplar, he replaced the first. In 1794, his student Martin Vahl argued about the importance of the original herbaria-material for determining a scientific name. He insisted on independently examining the preserved material from the botanist, who first discovered and named the species. Vahl's practice facilitated the development of the modern methodology for exact scientific nomenclature. A species name is no longer considered the essence of the species but is associated with one permanently preserved specimen from the original material. As described by Daston (2004, 155–156):

> Like art historians writing a monograph on van Eyck or Cézanne, who travel to the museums holding original paintings, botanists travel to the herbaria containing the ur-specimens of the species under study—the type specimens or 'holotypes' to which the original description and name is anchored.

These examples from genealogy and biology illustrate socially recognized criteria for documenting kinship relationships and species names. Compared to these examples, the examples given in Lund's book sometimes seem too speculative and far-fetched.

Documentation as a profession

In the book's introduction (p. xxvii), we got a brief description of what documentation might be as a profession:

> "Likewise, the documentalists that we need in the 21st century must be qualified to:
> – support and guide people in all sectors to create satisfactory documents;
> – support and guide people in all sectors to manage their documents;
> – collect, organize, and make documents available in different kinds of documentation centers.

Unfortunately, the book almost completely lacks a discussion of how this should be done. Lund's suggestions about analyzing documents do not relate to these professional tasks, thereby leaving the relevance of these descriptions unanswered.

Lund (2024, 13-14) writes:

> The name [documentation studies] was not chosen to credit Briet, Otlet, and other documentalist pioneers, but as a pragmatic acknowledgment of the importance of the document dimension in relation to the Norwegian National Library's challenging task to curate the legal deposit in Norway of all published documents, irrespective of medium, all the way from printed paper, leaflets to websites, CD-ROM, film, CDs, tapes, etc.

This quote does not contain sufficient reasons to prefer the name documentation studies rather than the commonly used name LIS because LIS also refers to all published documents, irrespective of medium. The quote demonstrates that documentation studies in Tromsø were originally intended to serve practical, professional tasks, which are internationally associated with library and information science.

Lund (1999) described how the education in document studies included an elective course in librarianship, which did not include analysis, storing, and retrieval of documents because this was supposed to be dealt with in documentation studies. However, as argued in this review, Lund's suggested model of document description is, unfortunately, not related to document storage and retrieval (with one exception to be discussed below). It would have been extremely helpful if the book under review had discussed the relationship between the aims of education in documentation studies and the theory presented in the book (these two things should, in my opinion, be developed in tandem.)

As said, it would have been extremely helpful, if Lund had discussed how his conception of documentation is related to professional tasks intended for documentalists. However, the book is very silent on practical issues. The only suggestion seems to be the discussion of IFLA's Library Reference Model (LRM) (p. 140-142), where it is suggested how an alternative model based on the complementary documentation might look. But this example needs to be developed if readers should be convinced that LRM's concepts "res," "work," "expression," "manifestation," and "item" fruitfully can be transformed into "documents, agents, means," "subsystems," "documentation forms," and "documentation complexes — history — documentation chain."

This example confirms my feeling that Lund's model of document analysis (and, e.g., the chapter on Mozart's Requiem) might be relevant in relation to so-called descriptive cataloging but not to subject cataloging. Limiting its focus on documentation forms and leaving the contents and conceptual relations (corresponding to subject analysis, classification, indexing, and metadata assignment) what does he conceive as the complementary field of information?

Lund's first example of a document in the book is a newborn baby's scream. In the task for professional documentalists to "support and guide people in all sectors to create satisfactory documents," I guess the aim is not that professional documentalists should support and guide babies to scream in better ways. Therefore, there is clearly a need for

a deeper discussion of what documentalists should be educated to do, and how to develop documentation studies to support practical tasks.

Conclusion

Lund writes (p. xxii): "I look forward to the discussions that I hope will arise from reading this book." In this review, I have given my two cents. I share with Lund the importance of the concepts "document" and "documentation," but consider it unproductive to define documentation and LIS as separate fields because LIS only makes sense if it is understood as being about documents. The way Lund delimits documentation from LIS also has the (unintended) implication that one of the tasks he suggests for documentalists, "collect, organize, and make documents available in different kinds of documentation centers," falls outside documentation studies. This is the case because central parts of this task (subject indexing, classification, and knowledge organization) are not parts of Lund's document analysis as described in the book but are about what Lund calls "mental phenomena" and are considered part of the complementary study of information.

The absence of discussions of practical/professional tasks in the book is a problem. Primarily, this absence tends to make the book's suggested concepts, ideas, and methods free-floating, and, as shown above, sometimes with unintended implications, which seriously limits their applicability.

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