

## Praise for *Introduction to Documentation Studies*

‘Niels Lund’s insightful ideas about documents have had a profound influence for nearly three decades, but we have lacked an overall account. Finally, here is a complete and coherent explanation, his testament. Lund provides not only a compelling theorizing of documents, but also an elegant harmonizing of the complementary roles of communication, information, and documentation. What the humanities had to offer information science used to be a mystery. No longer! His charming, well-written explanations and case studies – two decades in the making – form a mature opus, a classic.’

**Michael K. Buckland, Emeritus Professor, School of Information, University of Berkeley, USA**

‘A timely and important contribution to a flourishing scholarly field, Lund’s book on documentation theory aspires to offer a unifying approach to human communication and documentation. Building on key figures in communication and information theory, and elaborating on established concepts in the field as well as adjacent disciplines and traditions, he develops a theory and a model of documentation analysis which has the potential to synthesize the many diverse approaches found in existing theories of documentation and communication. It is historically informed, theoretically solid, and well done – a joy to read.’

**Professor Anne Mangen, Norwegian Reading Centre, University of Stavanger, Norway**

‘This long-awaited book by a foundational documentation scholar clearly and accessibly articulates Lund’s theory of documentation and his method of complementary document analysis. It applies these methods through six diverse and lively case studies. The result is a clear map for document analysis for students and new scholars. But the book does more than that. Crafting together many disparate threads and speaking to disciplinary traditions in documentation, information, and communication studies, it demonstrates the centrality of documents to the conduct of human life and makes a strong case for complementary documentation as a discipline and tool to uncover it.’

**Pam McKenzie, Professor, Faculty of Information and Media Studies, The University of Western Ontario, Canada**

‘This intriguing book proposes a new theoretical approach – a theory of complementarity – that is necessary for our understanding of the material, mental and social contexts within which the existence of documents and documentations is constituted. It illuminates the analytical complexities involved by a brilliant in-depth discussion of a number of examples that range

historically from Mozart's unfinished manuscript of his "Requiem Mass" to the March on Washington in which Martin Luther King Jr delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech. The book comes out of the "neo-documentalist movement" promoting a reorientation of thinking about library and information science studies in which Lund has played a major role.'

**Emeritus Professor W. Boyd Rayward, University of Illinois, USA and University of New South Wales, Australia**

'In the complementary trinity of information, communication, and documentation, this book focuses on the often underestimated last concept. It is an excellent introduction for newcomers to document theory and practice, and an excellent overview for those who are part of communities that reflect on documents. Use it in courses and enjoy it after accepting the reading contract this document offers!'

**Professor Karl Heinrich Schmidt, Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Germany**

'I highly recommend Lund's book to everyone interested not only in documents and documentation, but also in communication, information, and bordering concepts. The three parts of the book – Document Theory, Documentation in Practice and Documentation in Theory and Practice – provide the reader not only with an historical understanding of the concept and a way forward to what might be called "DIC studies", but also with practical examples for complementary document analyses with cases from disciplines as different as music, literature, art, science, politics, and our daily lives.'

**Professor Roswitha Skare, UiT - The Arctic University of Norway**

'Niels Lund presents us with an extremely important work for studies on documentation. His document theory encompasses the perspective of the complementarity of disciplinary approaches involving documentation, communication, and information. The central category for document understanding is the concept of docemes. Documents in their different types, in different forms of manifestation, are formed by docemes. For example, each brush stroke on a canvas constitutes a doceme. Through them, the materiality of documents is expressed.

For the field of Brazilian information science, Lund's reflections make us understand how much information studies need to get closer to the theory of documentation, resuming the centrality of the document, its expressions (forms of conception) and manifestations (forms of materialization) as objects of analysis: aspects still little explored in the curricula of Brazilian library schools.'

**Professor Elisabete Goncalves de Sousa, Institute of Art and Social Communication, Fluminense Federal University, Brazil**

'Niels Lund's complementary theory of documentation is the result of a 22 year-long effort to bring together documentation (physical act), communication (social act) and information (mental act). Be careful! If you read this book, your perspective on documents may be deeply challenged, in a very simple, rigorous and original way. Dive into complementary documentation analysis, exploring diachronic, synchronic, comparative, and experimental dimensions. You will be fascinated by six case studies on Mozart's *Requiem*, a Hemingway short story, Munch's "Girls on the Bridge", a Danish doctoral dissertation, the march on Washington in 1963, and identity documentation. I warned you.'

**Professor André Tricot, Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier and CNAM, Paris, France**

'My initial question "What documentation actually is?" was posed when I was recruited by the Indonesian National Scientific Documentation Center in 1973. The working definition at that time was "any effort to build scientific literature databases". There is the need for a general theory of documentation and I greatly appreciate the arrival of Professor Lund's book, *Introduction to Documentation Studies*. I believe it will make it easier for us to introduce the new documentation concept in library schools, and documentation communities in general. This book is a must for academics, students, and everyone who will dive into documentation work. It is my opinion that documentation concepts and practices are essential in human life, its culture and environment.'

**Blasius Sudarsono, Founder of Kappa Sigma Kappa Indonesia**



# **Introduction to Documentation Studies**

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information professionals.

# **Introduction to Documentation Studies**

## **Complementary Studies of Documentation, Communication and Information**

Niels Windfeld Lund

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## About the Author

**Niels Windfeld Lund** became the first employee and full professor in Documentation Studies at UiT The Arctic University of Norway between 1996 and 2014. He was Associate Professor at the Royal School of Library and Information Science in Denmark from 1975 to 1988 and has twice been Visiting Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. In 2001 Dr Lund founded The Document Academy, an international network for documentation studies organizing annual DOCAM conferences around the world. He is still active as professor emeritus.





# Foreword

David Bawden and Lyn Robinson

A simplistic account suggests that ideas of documentation began with Otlet and his colleagues, as a way of providing better access to the content of the greatly expanded volume of printed documents, and that the concept of a document was expanded by Briet with her talk of pebbles and stars and antelopes. This is, of course, grossly over-simplified; the documentary nature of diverse entities was recognized long before Briet, though documentary terminology was not used; see, for example, Strauß's (2023) analysis of mineral collections in the early 19th century. But nonetheless, it is true that we have witnessed an expanded understanding of what a document – an item, physical or virtual, conveying meaningful information – might be, encompassing, *inter alia*, artworks and performances, landscapes and persons, buildings and oral utterances, human bodies and human remains, textiles and clothing, and more (Bawden and Robinson, 2022). For examples of this expanded horizon of documentation in the context of art, and with careful theoretical underpinning, see Gorichanaz (2019) and Kosciejew (2023).

This expansion owes much to the digital transition, and to the move into the informational environment of what Luciano Floridi (2014) has termed the *infosphere*. The new information reality of the infosphere, in which we spend our time *onlife* in seamlessly blended physical and digital information spaces, generates and supports new forms of document, differing both in quality and in quantity from what has come before. These may include documents which are multisensory, immersive, ephemeral, and 'unreal' (Robinson, 2015; Skowron and Stacewicz, 2023). Furthermore, many documents of all kinds, perhaps the majority, will be generated by artificial intelligence, rather than by humans, leading inevitably to 'an immense spread of semantic garbage' (Floridi and Chiriatti, 2021, 692).

In this emerging informational landscape, we cannot rely on pragmatism and common sense, nor even on professional precedent and good practice,

to know how to deal with the documents of the present and the future. Theories and concepts of documentation are needed more than ever. These have been developed over the decades by scholars such as Otlet, Briet, Buckland, Frohmann, Day, Gorichanaz, Latham, Koscieljew, and Skare, and, by no means least, by the author of this book. Sometimes, theoretical perspectives may come from outside the information sciences. The philosopher Karl Popper's concept of a 'World 3' of objective knowledge, to go alongside the physical and mental worlds, has had a major influence on the theoretical basis of information science. We might see an analogy here with the material, mental, and social aspects presented by Niels Lund in his analyses of the nature of documents in this book. Also used by Lund, and an intriguing example of the fruitful use of concepts from other disciplines, is his application of Niels Bohr's ideas of complementarity. More insights of this kind will be needed as we deal with the diverse document landscape of the future.

This is not to say that the traditional concerns of the information sciences, particularly the provision of appropriate metadata models for description of, and access to, documents, are no longer of value. On the contrary, they are needed more than ever, and Lund's account in this book of the relevance of the Library Reference Model shows that they are being created. But our striving to keep, access, and ultimately understand the record of human endeavour, encapsulated in documents, demands a solid theoretical and conceptual basis, of which this book gives us an excellent example.

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## Preface

With this book a long journey has reached its destination. It started in October 1990 after a trip to Tromsø, Norway, where I read a proposal for a program in documentation studies. Subsequently, I wrote down my first thoughts on what such a program could look like and how documentation studies could be outlined as a discipline. This paper was published in Norway in 1991 and, after some back and forth, I was asked in 1995 both to prepare the program in documentation studies and also to draw up a new outline of documentation studies to function as a curriculum for the program, which was aimed at educating librarians, archivists and other document managers.

The first students started in 1996 and graduated in the following years. Many asked what they would learn and what kind of competence and qualifications they would gain from the program. They were not formally educated as librarians per se, nor in library and information science, but they were just as capable and qualified to work as librarians as their colleagues educated as librarians/LIS professionals. As I mentioned at the Nordic–British LIS conference in 1999: ‘Documentation Studies is close to LIS, but not quite the same.’ Graduates of the program became documentation scholars and in this way contributed with a new perspective to the LIS field as well as in other areas where they eventually worked.

To sustain and support this position it was important to have an ongoing discussion on how to define and conduct documentation studies. To that end, this book should have been published many years ago, but along the way, not least within our international forum, The Document Academy, and its annual meetings, DOCAM, there have been many discussions on what is documentation studies, what is documentation, and what is a document.

The core of this book was drafted during my first sabbatical at UC-Berkeley in the spring of 2001. In the following years, and until my retirement in 2014, in order to test my basic thinking I made many detours through all kinds of projects around a general discipline in documentation studies. Finally I began

to travel less and spend more time at my desk, writing. In 2017 I suffered a brain stroke, which reduced my work capacity considerably, but it slowed my life down more generally, which in fact turned out to be very productive, even if everything took a long time.

Looking back, I am surprised that the ideas I had in 1990 about a general discipline in documentation studies are basically the same and have survived 33 years of testing. I look forward to the discussions that I hope will arise from reading this book.

## Acknowledgements

There are many who have helped me to finish this book and get it out in the world, but the first to thank are my two dear friends, whom I met for the first time in a coffee break in 1996. Michael Buckland, my mentor, friend, and colleague, emeritus professor at UC-Berkeley, for the many conversations, co-teaching sessions and coffee breaks at cafés around the world, especially in the Bay Area, inspiring and pushing me forward to get the job done. Boyd W. Rayward, emeritus professor at the University of New South Wales and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign was ‘nagging me to get this book done’, as he put it himself, while at the same time challenging and supporting me all along. I am also indebted for the early support of my dear Finnish friend and colleague, the late Vesa Suominen, who organized the SCARLID conference in 2001.

For supporting my work on a grand theory, I am grateful to one of my first mentors, Jørgen Schoubye, professor emeritus of the Danish University of Education for backing me in my initial ontological work on a general theory of human history and life; and for supporting and pushing me to keep my focus on a general theory of documentation, no matter the enemies I would meet, I am grateful to the late professor Patrick Wilson at University of California Berkeley (UC-Berkeley).

I want to thank all my colleagues and students, both at the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø and at UC-Berkeley. You have all been a constant inspiration for me to continue working on this, despite my many detours of all kinds. I could name a long list of names, but I will especially thank professor emeritus Helge Salvesen for the initial support in Tromsø to promote my ideas, professor Roswitha Skare, professor Geir Grenersen and professor Andreas Vårheim for all the collaboration and discussions we have had as colleagues and friends, as well as two of my PhD students, Trond Søbstad and Bernt Ivar Olsen, for many discussions and contributions on the details of the model and theory presented in this book.

Thank you to all my colleagues and friends in the DOCAM network for their participation and contribution to making our documentation field a broad and creative academic environment for exploring all kinds and forms of documentation and documents from many perspectives. I am grateful to have met so many of you across continents and linguistic borders and especially thank Maribeth Back, Geoffrey C. Bowker, Carol Choksy, Matts Dahlström, Ron Day, Johanna Drucker, Niels-Ole Finnemann, Dian Novita Fitriani, Helena Francke, Bernd Frohmann, Timothy Gorichanaz, Joacim Hansson, Fidelia Ibekwe, Jodi Kearns, Mark Kos, Kiersten Latham, Pamela McKenzie, Bhuva Narayan, Asy Sanches Neto, Brian O'Connor, Sabine Roux, Jean-Michel Salaün, Catherine A. Smith, Blasius Sudarsono, Deborah Turner, and Manuel Zacklad for their inspiration and support in the writing of this book.

A special thanks to Professor David Bawden for promoting and supporting my book project to Facet Publishing and for writing the foreword with Dr Lyn Robinson, in an excellent way placing my book in the current discussions in the documentation and information field.

I am very grateful for the institutional support from the Arctic University of Norway, for granting my sabbaticals in 2001, 2005–6, 2011 and 2013, enabling me to work full time on my book, and from UC-Berkeley, School of Information Systems and Management, now the Information School, for two appointments as Visiting Professor in 2001 and 2005–6, providing me with a research environment of the highest international standard.

Deeply felt warm thanks go to Facet Publishing and its team, to its director, Pete Baker, for giving me as much time as I needed and for not giving me any deadline at any point. Without that unconditional support, I would never have made it.

Finally, I thank my family, especially my wife, Bodil Kappel Schmidt, for her tireless proofreading, trying hard to teach me basic grammar, etc. I now look forward to working more in the garden, hiking more, and spending more time with our kids and grandkids.



# Introduction

## **Documentation in human life: a scream as the first document in life**

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 baby uses their voice to show the world that they are a human being. They will probably use their eyes, body and gestures in addition to their voice, but if they were mute it would be difficult for other people to be aware of them if they were not right next to each other. The voice matters as an instrument for a human being's survival. If one is not able to use that instrument, one needs other instruments to document to other people that one is alive: to one's parents, siblings, grandparents, to nurses, etc.

Just as much as the baby needs their voice to scream, their mother and father need to be able to listen, to have a hearing organ and not to be deaf. The act of listening and hearing the scream is just as much an act of documentation as the screaming. The mother creates her own document by distinguishing the sound waves as a scream in contrast to chaotic noise, using her ears and her brain to hear and to identify it as a scream. If the mother is in another room, it may be difficult to hear the baby scream and she may use a microphone and a small loudspeaker to transmit the scream. If she has impaired hearing, she may use hearing aids to hear her baby. Both the embodied voice and the microphone are instruments for documentation, just as pen, paper, and computer are for writing and reading stories and messages beyond one's immediate surroundings.

If you cannot document, you cannot communicate. Communication is about making something common, to share something with other people, to create a community. To share something with other people, to be a part of the community, it is necessary to get their attention – by screaming, for instance; and people need to be able to hear it. The very first community that a human is a part of is their family, and the next community will be either the

local community or the nation they will belong to. A baby abandoned by their mother on the roadside is very vulnerable and will not survive for long if they are not taken care of. They may scream, but they will only be heard and taken care of by accident. In that case, they will become a part of a community, depending on who finds them.

If people know that a person cannot scream, they may try looking at the person's eyes or gestures so as to figure out what that person thinks – to discern a language.

A complementary situation emerges in which three dimensions come into play, acting simultaneously in a process of communication, information, and documentation. All three dimensions – the social environment, the mental configurations, and the physical and gestural order, are necessary and depend on each other.

Out of this complementary process come documents which play an essential role in human life. That is what this book is about – why and how all these processes and documents work.

### **Documentation studies: a discipline**

Since documentation is a general phenomenon of human life, a general scientific discipline is needed. It cannot be limited to only one of the three general scientific worlds, like the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, or to the applied sciences world of engineering/technology. All four scientific perspectives are needed in order to fully explore, understand, and develop documentation in general.

The humanist can understand how a human being is thinking by conceiving their language. The humanities include many different disciplines, theories, and methods, but they are all based on the Cartesian assumption that a human being is human due to its ability to think. The core issue is how a human being is thinking and expressing themselves in a certain language or other kind of semiotic system, a system of elements making sense in some way by the relative difference between elements. These systems can be expressed in different ways and the humanist's job is to explore these systems and discover how they have evolved and work.

The social scientist can explore the social environment in which a human being is communicating by using a cognitive framework. While the humanist explores the very creation of the cognitive framework, the social scientist will study how it is embedded in a social environment, in a social organization, or an institution. The same cognitive framework can work completely differently in two different social environments, like a family or a hospital. It

depends on who is using the cognitive framework, and the social position of the person who is communicating.

The natural scientist and the technologist can develop and test instruments for use in documentation processes, that is, all kinds of media technology, such as the typewriter, microphone, camera, computer, and so on. By experimenting with different kinds of instruments one can test their value and efficacy and determine the suitability of the documents they produce.

By drawing on all four scientific traditions, it becomes possible to understand how complex documentation is, and this may provide a scientific basis for a profession in documentation.

### **Documentation: a profession**

The French documentalist Suzanne Briet stressed the character of documentation as a technique, as a specialized skill, and cited Robert Pagès' words, 'Documentation is to culture as the machine is to industry'. She went on to say that for her the profession of documentation is half intellectual, half manual, and the profession of documentation is an auxiliary to practical research; that is, it is a 'servant to the servants of Science'. If one follows the claims in this book, documentation can not only be considered a technique serving science and culture: it is a process encompassing all human life. What does that mean? It means that it can be the object of a scientific discipline called Documentation Studies, studying the processes of documentation and the resulting documents. Based on general studies of documentation, one can develop a profession in documentation, serving society in the same way as medical doctors, psychologists, and sociologists serve it, and contribute to the best ways to document, communicate, and inform people. Doctors, psychologists, and sociologists have all their practical techniques that they can use in the practice of their professions alongside their scientific research in diseases, mentalities, and social structures.

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.

### **The book**

In this book, I aim to show how documentation is a general dimension of

human life, occurring whenever humans interact with each other. Documentation is an object for a new general scientific discipline and a dynamic field for a broad profession. The book is divided into three parts, looking at documentation theory and practice.

Part 1 provides a historical background, looking at the conceptual history of the notions of documentation, communication, and information, and how a growing interest in documentation studies has emerged. I then present my general complementary theory of documentation and a general analytical model that can be used in any instance of documentation.

Part 2 begins by showing how the general theory and model can be used in practice, taking six very different cases of documentation covering the arts, science, administration, politics, and personal life.

The first case is a Requiem from 1791, when Count von Walsegg had a need to document his grief and sorrow on the death of his wife, and needed to do so in a way befitting a nobleman. He asked a composer, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91), one of the many who served the nobility over the years, to compose a Requiem. The same process was followed as in many other cases when a nobleman or noblewoman had died, but in this case, times had begun to change. Around the late 18th century/beginning of the 19th century, the classical music world was emerging and gave composers a new position as independent artists. They claimed ownership to their work as a piece of art, not just a document for use by the commissioner, the nobleman, on a single occasion. When the score became the ‘Mozart’ *Requiem*, it became the autograph document and part of a never-ending complex of documents related to that work by Mozart – copies, editions, performances, recordings, and books.

We have had musical documentation since ancient times, just as we have had literature. Literature is basically letters combined in a systematic way by an author to make stories, to document stories. I will look at a special genre of literature, short stories, and in this case Ernest Hemingway’s ‘Indian Camp’. At the beginning of his career Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961) struggled to make a living as a writer without needing to have a day job as a journalist. He constantly asked his friends, publishers, and editors to publish his stories. One of these was a story published for the first time in 1924, without a title, as ‘work in progress’, in a literary review. Later the title ‘One Night Last Summer’ was considered, but it ended up with the title ‘Indian Camp’ when it was published in 1925 as part of a collection of short stories, and became one of the best-known of Hemingway’s short stories.

Usually, a painting has its own unique title, but in the case of the Norwegian visual artist Edvard Munch (1863–1944), one title, like *The Girls on the Bridge*, covered not one work, one document, but in fact several works

executed in different techniques, using different materials and instruments, made in the period of 1901–35. Together, all these works challenged the conception of the single, unique artistic masterpiece. They also provide us a special opportunity to follow how Munch tried out different ways of documenting one of his favorite subjects, the girls on the bridge at Aasgaardstrand in Norway. Each version was a document with its own life, being shown at different exhibitions, having different titles, and being bought by different art collectors, galleries, or museums and yet being a part of an overall document complex of Edvard Munch's works, being catalogued in the Munch catalogues and studied by art historians.

The title as an important documenting instrument is used not only in the arts, but also in the sciences. The fourth case, the dissertation by the Danish historian Thorkild Kjærgaard entitled 'The Danish Revolution', is a scientific dissertation on the agricultural history of Denmark from the 17th to 19th centuries. By drawing on the dual character of history as narrative and scientific discipline, Kjærgaard set out to tell a story around the concept of revolution, covering almost three centuries of Danish history and presenting evidence of a revolutionary development by using maps to show the development of the cultivation of domesticated clover.

Politicians in a broad sense, people engaged in politics, may write letters, books proclaiming their political goals, wishes, and demands, but they may also use their bodies to show their power and demonstrate their strength of political force. Throughout history people have gathered in their thousands in marches. On such occasions the thousands of marchers and the size of the crowd serve to document their political strength. That was the case with the Civil Rights movement march on Washington in 1963, which is my fifth case study. The human bodies became part of a political document, marching with their banners, hats, badges etc. As well as the significant role that it played in documenting the power of the Civil Rights movement, the march also showed the challenges in creating a coherent political document, through the intense discussions among the organizers regarding the choice of speakers, songs, and slogans. Finally, the memoirs of the day's events, the speech by Martin Luther King 'I have a dream', and so on created a legacy document of importance for the future of the movement.

Each of the foregoing represents a unique case of documentation having a specific history, but documentation processes take place all the time: documents are created every day all over the world. The sixth and last case study looks at one of the most common everyday documentation processes and documents: the identity document (ID). Naming is one of the oldest and most widespread forms of documentation in human life, determined by different naming traditions in different societies. Due to the administrative

needs of society, it is not sufficient to give your name in order to document that you are the person you claim to be, to prove your personal identity. You also need a document with a personal number in addition to your personal name, as in a passport, bank ID, driver's license, or social security card. I will look at the social security number as one of the many ID documents one gets when one lives in the USA, in order to be eligible to apply for social support. A person who does not have a name or a number is *undocumented* and not able to participate in society.

Part 3 comprises a comparison of the six case studies to see how documentation processes differ through history, in different fields, and at the same time; to identify what kind of features the different documentation processes and their resulting documents have in common; and to show how documentation is an essential and general part of human life and interaction, being complementary with communication and information processes.

Finally, I will outline how one can develop a new general scientific discipline of documentation studies across the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

In the Epilogue I will discuss the possible consequences of the view of documentation presented in this book, for the understanding of how we interact with each other in society.