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Book Review: The Discipline of Organizing, by Robert J Glushko

For many new LIS students, learning how to classify and organize information can be a daunting task, especially for those of us who have come from a background less involved with numbers and classifications. *The Discipline of Organizing* was first recommended to my class before the finished copy was published. Our professor, a very technical woman who taught classes on metadata, information organization, and information architecture, sent along a copy to us, with the suggestion that we read it for assistance in understanding the material. In hindsight, now that I've finally read it, I wish she had made this our required textbook instead.

Because the organizing of information, especially in an institution as huge as an academic library, can seem a little alien, the introduction of *The Discipline of Organizing* is very strong and easy to understand. A common feature of books I had read on information organization before was that they were either very dry or very difficult to process (often both), relying on nothing but technical vocabulary. This is where I feel that this text shines, as the author often offers easy-to-understand, real-life examples for how information is used in the real world: SKU numbers in retail environments, the differences between formats of a play; these are explanations that simplify information organization into a process that many of us can identify with, even if we have not been on the data side of the library system. This is a trend throughout the text, and a very helpful one – after all, the most effective way to teach a new subject is to make it relatable. Even better, the constant examples and explanations make the text more engaging, without sacrificing a sense of expertise.

There are 10 chapters in total. These delve into a number of topics, from metadata to relationships to descriptions, and each chapter is very thorough, ending with a list of key points that can be reviewed. Similar to the use of examples, certain tasks in information organization are broken down very effectively as well. For example, section 4.3 The Process of Describing Resources is first broken down into a basic set of steps with a short paragraph description of what that step entails. Then, each step is described further, highlighting the importance of the step and explaining how to proceed. The detail and clarity are ideal for students, who sometimes do not yet have the experience or understanding necessary to jump straight into new jargon.

The Discipline of Organizing is definitely the best book on information organization that I've had the pleasure of reading so far. I would recommend it to any LIS student who is struggling with an organization of information class or looking to improve their skills.