

## Information R/Evolution

**Michael Wesch, PhD, Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology, Digital Ethnography Working Group, Kansas State University**

Many of our assumptions about information have been shaped by the forms in which we encounter it. Information on paper and in other material forms have led to notions of information as an object that must be placed within a logical order. Such assumptions have shaped how we have dealt with digital information, even though digital information offers many alternative possibilities. Only in the past decade have a number of uniquely digital techniques for dealing with information emerged. This video highlights many of those techniques, from search to social tagging, and illustrates the ways in which they challenge our traditional assumptions about information. Ultimately the video attempts to demonstrate that we (and especially our students) now live in a different kind of information environment that emphasizes participation and collaboration. Literacy in this new information environment is more important than ever, as the quality of the information environment itself is increasingly determined by the quality of its users.

### **Author's contact information**

Michael Wesch, PhD, Kansas State University  
Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology, Digital Ethnography Working Group  
[mwesch@ksu.edu](mailto:mwesch@ksu.edu), <http://mediatedcultures.net>

### **Editorial comment by Al Valleau, Kwantlen University College**

It is natural to assume that knowledge is logically organized, that catalogues and classifications define and help us understand the world around us. That is why when a dynamic shift in classification or a challenge to authority or order does occur, it is easy to dismiss the change as lacking quality or validity. We are perplexed when our way of organizing information and its dissemination is challenged. Over the past two decades, we have been increasingly confronted with shifts in the storage, access, and categorization of information and the way that information is disseminated. As well, we have been faced with challenges to validity and to authorship rights. The information revolution has challenged the concept of authority and has broad implications for scholarship and publishing. It is not surprising that this revolution has been accompanied by a rise in plagiarism and challenges to copyright.

The video you are about to watch questions some of the assumptions we have about information, how it is organized and how it is accessed. Information Revolution presents a fast moving collage of images thrown onto an ever-changing canvas. Its images become metaphors for both the energizing experience of the shift in information access and a warning about its dynamic capricious potential that can be both liberating and confusing. How we make use of the possibilities of this revolution or how it changes the way we access information is yet to be fully realized. We offer this video to you as a commentary on the shift and as a challenge to our way of thinking about information, authority, source, validity, categorization, collaboration and point of view, all facets of scholarship.