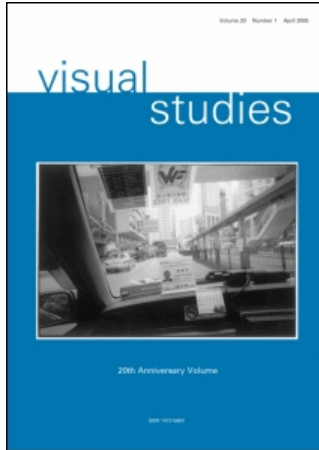


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### Pro forma arrangements: the visual availability of textual artefacts

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# Pro forma arrangements: the visual availability of textual artefacts

ANDREW P. CARLIN

*In this paper I discuss “at-a-glance” properties of textual materials in a series of work environments, including hospitals, libraries and ticket offices. I describe how members visually orient to mundane textual materials (“pro formas”) as constituents of courses of action. From the analysis of texts-in-action, I suggest that the organization of administrative texts, including blood-test requests and missing-item reports, is amenable to formal descriptions (“apostolic function”, “career”); and situated descriptions (sequencing of activities and use of membership categories). Information is rendered visually available through (a) the spatial arrangements of textual artefacts in social settings; (b) the spatial arrangements or layout of specific documents. These “visibility arrangements” of textual materials are reflexively related to the recognition and retrieval of particular documents.*

## INTRODUCTION: TEXTS AS TOPICS OF INQUIRY

Form filling is both a feature of ideal-typical bureaucratic organizations (Hughes 1984) and an aspect of everyday life. This paper contains discussion of ordinary, everyday textual materials as mundane phenomena. An ordinary kind of document that we all, as members of society, have occasions to use is the “pro forma”. Pro formas are forms that members are required to fill out for particular purposes, documents that get things done. For example, when doctors write out a prescription, they do so on a pro forma. If they wrote out a prescription on a blank piece of paper, members would find, when handing it to the pharmacist, that it was invalid. Pro formas are the authorizing forms as part of a course of action, in this case, filling a prescription.

In his ethnography of a U.S. welfare agency, Zimmerman (1969a) notes how some texts were invalid for bureaucratic purposes. An example he gives is the birth certificate: agency staff told an anecdote about a woman who, when asked for her age in writing, had taken a scrap of paper and wrote her date of birth on it. This prompts the question, what documents count as authoritative documents?

In order to borrow a book from a public library, members have to be in possession of a reader’s card. This presupposes certain conditions have been fulfilled, e.g. residency requirements. Proof of identity and residency is confirmed with other authoritative documents, e.g. driver’s licence, utility bill. However, entry to some libraries may be conditional upon production of a library card, which confirms members’ entitlement to visit the library (e.g. as staff or student). The library card documents a member’s status as a “ratified participant” (Goffman 1974:565).

Pro formas, as authorized constituents of procedures, contain relevant information. Some boxes can be left blank, but some boxes must contain relevant information. In the case of the prescription, there are certain boxes that *must* be completed. The main box identifies the particular drug that the doctor is prescribing: this tells the pharmacist what drug to hand over. (Members do not expect the pharmacist to dispense a drug that the doctor has not prescribed.) If the doctor has not itemized a drug, the pharmacist cannot fill the prescription. Also, the prescription form requires the doctor’s signature. If the doctor has not signed it, it is of no use to present at the pharmacy counter. So pro formas are constituents of courses of action. In order to obtain prescription drugs, members have to take the correct and correctly filled pro forma to the chemist, where they fill in the other side of the pro forma by ticking certain boxes that apply to their current circumstances. Once a properly filled out, signed and dated pro forma is submitted to the chemist, members receive their prescription.

Different forms of sociology afford the analyst conceptual frameworks for the analysis of textual artefacts. The philosophical and methodological bases of the sub-field of sociology, known as ethnomethodology, entails the rigorous study of materials as reflexive or constitutive of people’s practices; that is, as part-and-parcel of the activities in which the textual materials are employed. Such level of detail demonstrates the “right here, right now” character of mundane textual materials. For example, a

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bus ticket is valid for the specified journey; after the journey's end the ticket may become litter, or a receipt for an expenses claim. The constitutive features of textual artefacts can be referred to as *haecceities* – the in situ use and situated properties of textual artefacts to those persons who are ratified users (Goffman 1974) of such textual artefacts.

The analysis of pro formas as organizational-documents-in-use demonstrates resemblances between worksite practices, such as the location of documents, at-a-glance availability, at-a-glance recognizability and at-a-glance readability. These considerations are not insignificant: pro formas used to document changes in levels of unconsciousness for patients with head injuries – the Glasgow Coma Scale (Figure 1) – demonstrate the at-a-glance readability of documents (Stewart 1996; Watson et al. 1992).

### A NATURAL SOCIOLOGY OF TEXTUAL ARTEFACTS

Members' making sense of "visual" features of everyday life is difficult to separate from members' making sense of "textual" features. This difficulty is apparent in observations of a "cluster" of people at a bus shelter (Watson 1997a:92). Upon the arrival of a number 16 bus, some members of the cluster re-arranged themselves into a queue, while others "disqualified" themselves from this arrangement. In this paper I do not attempt to discriminate between textual and visual features of everyday life either, preferring instead to regard these features as reflexively related, each elaborating the other. The very subject matter of this paper lends itself to this procedure. I am not neglecting a responsibility to treat textual and visual features as analytic objects in their own terms. Rather, a feature of textual materials reported in this paper is, according to members who had occasion to use them, that they are visually recognizable materials.

Previous studies indicate the relations between textual and visibility arrangements, e.g. reading a newspaper (Lee 1984), reading a judge's verdict (Watson 1994), reading a coroner's report (Garfinkel 1967a), reading a transcript of talk (Watson 1997b), reading "pages" of HTML (hypertext markup language) documents (Have 1999). Studies of work-site practices point to the reflexive relation between the visual and textual aspects of textual artefacts in the work of an organization, for example the visual availability of textual features observed in emergency call centres. Pencil and paper call-taking practices of fire dispatchers included the use of "standard abbreviations for both location and

status" to "save time and ensure that the essential information could be gleaned at a glance" (Whalen 1995:167). Aside from textual matters such as the status of quotations (Clayman 1990) and the uses of quotation marks (Richards 1942), there are sense-making practices involved in how we read texts. For example, the temporal organization of reading and how we use the Documentary Method of Interpretation (Garfinkel 1967b) in making sense of written materials (Livingston 1995; McHoul 1982).

Conversation Analysis marks its contrast with conventional forms of sociology through its use of retrievable data, derived from and representing in vivo interactions. Transcripts are technical devices for increasing the visibility of talk, which can be further refined in detail to increase the visibility of a particular phenomenon. Practices of transcription (Psathas and Anderson 1990) have been developed for *the phenomena*, that is, for making auditory and visual materials available in textualized form (Goodwin 1993), and to show the coincidence of talk-in-interaction with activities, such as the manipulation, transfer and display of objects (Goodwin and Goodwin 1992; Streeck 1996). Aligning the transcription of talk with musical notation and the music-as-played presents its own problems, and requires textual arrangements that are "uniquely adequate" for the representation of verbal and musical aspects (Weeks 1990). Practices of transcription are visible in terms of interactional features as textual features, e.g. bracketing and line spaces (Kaplan 1982; Pack 1986). The reflexivity of the textual and visual aspects of transcripts provides for the critique of the use of transcripts as a literary genre and as persuasive devices, wherein "the transcript secures the authenticity of the 'instance' in and as the sheer visibility of talk's *surplus detail*" (Bogen 1992:281, emphasis supplied).

Workplace studies detail documents as intrinsic to work practices, e.g. time-sheets (Brown 2001), invoices (Anderson and Sharrock 1993) and chalkboards in the allocation of space and retrieval of products (Kawatoko 1999). This paper looks at formal-organizational trajectories of documents as constituent features of organizational work. The phenomena of form filling and their arrangement provide connections between workplaces studied over a period of years. These settings include hospitals in England and Scotland, railway station ticket offices in Scotland, and university libraries in England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. Combining reports on periods of observation and participant observation in these workplace

Surname: .....  
 Forenames: .....  
 Address : .....  
 .....  
 Date of Birth: .....  
 Hospital No: .....  
 Consultant: .....

### NEUROLOGICAL OBSERVATION CHART

WARD		DATE														DATE
																TIME
<b>C O M A</b>	EYES OPEN	Spontaneously	4													Eye closed by swelling = C
		To Verbal Command	3													
		To Pain	2													
		No Response	1													
<b>S C A L E</b>	BEST VERBAL RESPONSE	Orientated	5													Endotracheal tube or tracheostomy = T
		Disorientated	4													
		Inappropriate Words	3													
		Incomprehensible Sounds	2													
		No Response	1													
<b>S C A L E</b>	BEST MOTOR RESPONSE	Obeys Commands	6													Usually record the best arm response
		Localises pain	5													
		Withdraws from stimulus	4													
		Generalised Flexion to pain	3													
		Generalised Extension to pain	2													
		No Response	1													
Total		G.C.S.														
		Pupil Scale (mm)	240													40
		Respiration	230													39
		Blood Pressure	220													38
		And Pulse Rate	210													37
		Pupils	200													36
		Right	190													35
		Left	180													34
		Size Reaction	170													33
		Size Reaction	160													32
		Normal Power	150													31
		Mild Weakness	140													30
		Severe Weakness	130													
		Spastic Flexion	120													
		Extension	110													
		No Response	100													
		Normal Power	90													
		Mild Weakness	80													
		Severe Weakness	70													
		Spastic Flexion	60													
		Extension	50													
		No Response	40													
		Normal Power	30													
		Mild Weakness	20													
		Severe Weakness	10													
		Spastic Flexion														
		Extension														
		No Response														
<b>PUPILS</b>		Right	Size Reaction													+ reacts - no reaction c . eye closed
		Left	Size Reaction													
<b>L I M B M O V E M E N T</b>	<b>A R M S</b>	Normal Power														Record right (R) and left (L) separately if there is a difference between the two sides. S = same for both limbs.
		Mild Weakness														
		Severe Weakness														
		Spastic Flexion														
		Extension														
	No Response															
	<b>L E G S</b>	Normal Power														
		Mild Weakness														
		Severe Weakness														
		Spastic Flexion														
Extension																
		No Response														

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FIGURE 1. The Glasgow Coma Scale form, used to record regular observations in a patient's condition. This form provides medical staff with an at-a-glance monitoring of subtle changes in acute head-trauma cases.

environments, this paper uses ethnomethodological and sociological approaches and concepts where relevant and appropriate to the phenomena of study.

Problems with the use of formal concepts include the imposition of aprioristic schemes of interpretation and seeing phenomena in terms of existing models of description, rather than attending to the unique, first-time-through qualities of phenomena as they happen. Further, pre-existing conceptual schemes are used to re-describe the phenomenon. This procedure traduces the phenomenon, by substituting the description of the phenomenon with description on its own terms.

A natural sociological approach enables analysts to attend to general features of work-site practices, rather than (what Becker 1998 describes as) the “imagery” of sociological notions, e.g. “social (dis)organization”. The analyst can attend to the local ad hoc administrative practices, which are specific to the office within the organization, as well as the generic aspects of formalized and ad hoc administrative procedures.

Taking mundane texts as organizational objects, analysis moves from the local features of object use and the “symbolic history of things in a situation of interaction” (Streeck 1996) to the general features of textual objects as visual documents. That is, how the unique details of settings, or “interactional what-ness”, or object use, work to sensitize the observer to “family resemblances” between materials and practices (Heap 1976:114). Hence, this paper presents a non-cognitivist, social organizational approach to recognizing thematic issues, or relevance.

Occasionally, objects feature as topics of analysis. Objects may be identity-rich and feature in memories as non-cognitivistically conceived, i.e. in the act of remembering (Fairhurst 1997). This paper looks at textual materials as objects in the course of “doing the organization’s work” (Watson 1986). This does not refer to the “perception” of textual artefacts as “physical” objects (Mead 1932:119–139; Merleau-Ponty 1962:299–345) but their intersubjective use as “cultural” objects (Smith 1978). That is, textual artefacts not as “elements of the generalized other”, as Mead (1934:154) suggests, but as materials that are inextricable features of cultural practices. Data for this study include textual materials endogenous to the everyday problem of “getting things done”, i.e. that are part of the work itself, which occasion a division of labour (Anderson and Sharrock 1993).

I do not set out to categorize forms or texts e.g. (Jacobs 1967) but suggest how identifying family resemblances (Wittgenstein 1968) between forms and the use of forms as work practices may enable analysts to move from the study of situated practices to formal properties. Such an epistemological and praxeological move cannot be adduced from the formal to the situated. Identifying formal properties is informed, then, by the explication of situated practices.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES AND PRO FORMA ARRANGEMENTS

The anticipatory collation of pro formas and medical materials is described as an activity to fill “quiet times” or lulls in the hospital ward routine to build up reserve stores of “mortuary bundles” (Sudnow 1967:34). Such preparations are observable in the preparation and textual arrangements of multiple copies of sheets for suspects’ statements (Arther and Caputo 1959:155). The identification of “family resemblances” in workplace orientations to pro forma arrangements, e.g. the proximate location of textual documents, affords the potential for formal analysis.

### The Hospital Clinic

Unless otherwise stated, forms at an orthopaedics clinic at a hospital were located in a white plastic-covered rack on a wall in the consultation room. Some forms were situated on the desk, and these were collected into separate, small, neatly arranged piles. Each discrete set of forms was visible. Pro forma sets were photocopied on to different shades of coloured paper, which made certain forms instantly recognizable. Likewise, solicitors’ bundles are tied with pink ribbon; bundles tied with white ribbon pertain to the Official Solicitor, i.e. the Government, only. White ribbon indicates without equivocation that the bundle relates to the Government.

Members’ practical orientations towards textual materials in these settings indicate how pro forma documents are instantly recognizable within a “maximally appropriate unit” (Sudnow 1972:260), i.e. “at a glance”. Further, that documents are spatially organized “at a glance” for ease of location and retrieval.

I have listed the colours and departmental destination of “dedicated” request forms. The point of this exercise is to indicate that certain forms are recognizable, and instantly recognizable, as possessing specific trajectories within the hospital. Upon completion, the specific details contained within the pro forma, e.g. the patient’s

name, hospital number and medical number and the department of origin, obtain less significance in terms of the pro forma's intrinsic significance. If a completed pro forma is dropped along the corridor, any competent (i.e. cognizant with the organizational routines and procedures) member of staff, upon finding the mislaid form, recognizes that the form is a request for a specific department to do something. To the finder, the patient's identity is less important than ensuring that the form progresses to its intended location.

Hence as one informant told me, the textual arrangements of forms, such as colour coding, helps to "streamline the organization". A member of staff may not be competent to deal with the specifics of the form itself, but is competent in the procedures of the organization to ensure that the form is directed to a staff member who is competent to use the form. So, a dropped form is not "litter" but is posted to the relevant department.

Contained within the wall-mounted form rack were the following items (the designation "ALS" refers to "Area Laboratory Service", an external laboratory facility used by various regional medical institutions):

Arthroscopy Record (off-white); Culture Request (blue) [Bacteriology] ALS; Blood Transfusion (pink) ALS; Clinical Notes (white); Pain Drawing (white, containing outlines of the human body from front and behind, designed to allow the patient to indicate the location of pain to the consulting physician); Orthopaedics folders (brown manilla); Serology Request (blue) [Bacteriology]; attendance cards; envelopes (separate collections of plain brown envelopes and small brown envelopes with address windows); Outpatient Service booklet; letter-headed paper; "with compliments" slips.

Small piles of forms were situated on the desk, alongside the desk tray. On the desk could be found Dressing Request form (white); Haematology Department (pink) ALS; Plaster Room form (white); Appliance Prescription form (white). The in-tray held the following: Diagnostic Imaging Request Card (green) [X-ray Department]; Physiotherapy Request (white) [Physiotherapy]. A more comprehensive selection of forms, including duplicates of forms found in the Consultation Room, is located in the filing compartments beside the Reception Desk of the Orthopaedics Department, beside the waiting area.

### The Ticket Office

A further case of recognizability of textual artefacts is found in railway station counters. The use of colours

provides for the at-a-glance recovery of tickets in frequent use by counter staff. An informant told me that the colour-coding of tickets was not deliberate but did save her time searching for the appropriate documentation as required.

Tickets are green and white, with coloured "flashes" along the longer edges, which distinguish different types of ticket printed out by the machines at the counter. The flashes on travel tickets purchased within a period before the day or time of travel are orange; this colour applies to the categories of ticket, or "ticket type" (e.g. single, return, cheap day return, etc.). Dark blue flashes distinguish tickets bought before this purchasing period. "Excess" travel tickets are also orange, with the highly visible marking XS printed in the green and white space between the flashes at the long edges; "Supplement" tickets are cerise; "Season" tickets, dark green. The long edges on reservation tickets have differently coloured flashes, blue and white, for purchase with travel tickets.

"Complimentary Seat Reservations" and "Group Reservations" are not inserted into the automatic printer on the till, but are filled out by hand by counter staff; these tickets are blue with coloured flashes along the upper long edge only (dark blue and green, respectively). The ticket counter also vends "Parking" tickets for use in the car parks (purple flashes), and the "Platform ticket". Platform tickets have black flashes along the edges, which are easily recognizable when presented to station employees at the gates, and bear the caveat "Valid for 60 minutes from time and on date shown only". Unlike travel tickets, receipts are predominantly white (but like platform tickets, they have black flashes).

Staff at station counters also deal with rail-cards, which passengers purchase according to incumbency of membership category. Pre-paid and discount travel-cards are available for incumbents of various membership categories (using the Membership Categorization Devices [MCDs] "family" and "stage of life"), e.g. "Senior Railcard", "Young Persons Railcard" and "Family Railcard". The design and interpretation of categorially defined travel-cards reflects the ordinary, intersubjectively organized nature of MCDs as users of particular travel-cards. The Senior Railcard bears a pastel picture of a lake among rolling hills. The Family Railcard bears a pastel picture of a sunny day at the beach, where a man and a woman (*the parents*) encourage a boy and a girl (*the children* – to be seen as *the children of the parents*) to hurry up with the picnic hamper; the seaside is presented as a destination for a family. The Young Persons Railcard has an out-of-focus

picture of an audience (a crowd at a football match? or a crowd at a concert?); sporting and musical events, i.e. category-related activities, are depicted as destinations for young persons travelling by train.

### FORMS, FORMAL PROPERTIES AND FAMILY RESEMBLANCES

Family resemblances are observable between these settings, as general features are displayed in the location, layout and physical orientation to textual materials. The orthopaedics department at a hospital – the reception area and consultation room – demonstrated a comparable spatial organization of pro forma and stationery items. The retrieval systems were ordered and organized: in these settings the observer could gloss the physical features of pro forma organization as “a place for everything and everything in its place”.

The Orthopaedic Surgeon could retrieve necessary documentation as and when required during the course of a consultation. The Orthopaedic Surgeon routinely requires immediate access to requests for X-rays, physiotherapy, appointments at the plaster room, and other activities associated with the treatment of injured bones. Neurologists would also require X-ray requests and blood-testing procedures, but they would have recourse to more department-specific diagnostic measures, e.g. arteriographic examinations, myelograms and electroencephalographic (EEG) tests. Cardiologists have instant access to, dedicated forms ordering e.g. electrocardiographic (ECG) tests.

Rail passengers are familiar with “orange” tickets for rail travel. The “orange” tickets are used more often than others; a greater supply of orange tickets is available, and at the front of the wooden box (like an open-top card-index catalogue) for ease of retrieval.

The hospital pain template is paralleled by the crime prevention schemes in areas to prevent horse thefts. Horse owners collect a leaflet from their local police station, which contains advice and information on various measures designed for the security of their horse. On the reverse side of the leaflet is a pro forma, which consists of a form and “horse identification diagram” (Figure 2). This form is to be completed by a veterinary surgeon, and confirms the description and identifying details of any particular horse, e.g. its name, sex, date of birth, (adult) height, colour and description. The diagram complements the descriptions of the head, neck, body and legs. A series

of blank outlines or projections of a horse are provided for the veterinary surgeon, who annotates the projections with identifying details, e.g. position, shape and extent of markings in pied and dapples; brands or freeze marks; natural markings and scars. The projections include views of the right and left sides, face, muzzle, underside of neck and throat; and rear views of fore and hind legs. Validated by the surgeon’s official stamp, the horse identification diagram can be used in police searches for a horse that may have been stolen or rustled, and in determining legal ownership of a horse in case of dispute, e.g. that a horse is a specific horse, that a horse claimed to be owned has been stolen. Thence, whether the new owner knowingly or unknowingly purchased a stolen horse.

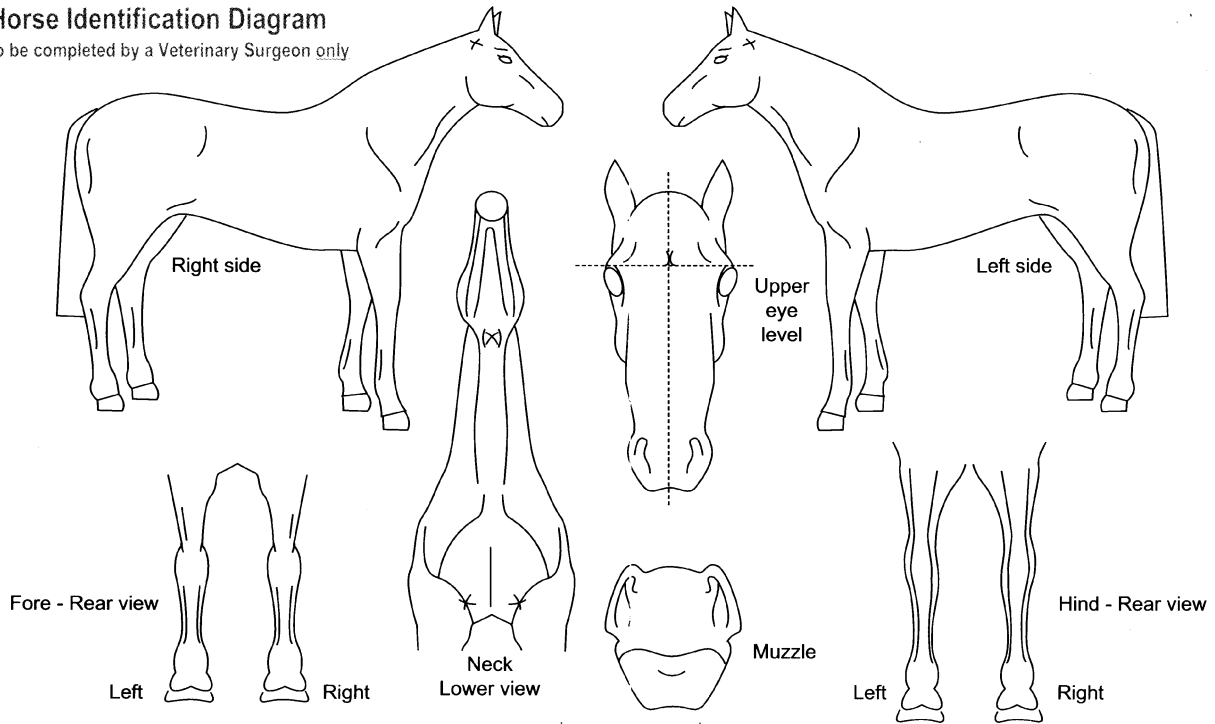
### Careers

Overlaps between common-sense connotations and sociological conceptions of “career” are exhibited in a study of the alternate career paths available to artists, between fine art and commercial art, and the stages or turning-points in these trajectories that artists experience (Griff 1960). Although careers can refer to moves between and within occupations, Hughes (1937) suggested that a person’s career could be used as a wider concept in sociology. Hughes provided the programmatic and generic potential of career as a sociological concept, which has been applied to different areas of social life (Becker 1963; Weinberg 1994:73 et seq.). The notion of a career is suggestive in its potential for a variety of situations, such as the stages in the “patient’s career” – stages that may be differentially available according to doctors and patients (Roth 1963). Or, where the “career” of organizational records, e.g. complaints, are implicated in the recording practices and textual presentation of documents (Goldsmith 1996). That objects may have “careers” in this sense has also been suggested (Sharrock and Turner 1980:25).

Hughes’ concept was adapted for an ethnographic study of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Harper 1997). Harper identified a “document career”, where documents passed from person to person, department to department within the organization. Each member of a team acts upon the document; each activity produces a change (e.g. additions, editing, corrections, re-wordings, manipulations of text). There was thus a trajectory or chain of activities with each document. This circulation of documents resulted in them not remaining single-authored documents –

### Horse Identification Diagram

to be completed by a Veterinary Surgeon only



Freeze mark/Brand	Signalment key								
Name of animal						No.			
Colour			Sex		Date of birth		Approx. Adult height		
Head									
Neck									
Legs	LF								
	RF								
	LH								
	RH								
Body						V. S. Stamp and signature			
Place and Date									

FIGURE 2. The Horse Identification form. Authorized by a veterinary surgeon, this form provides police and insurance companies with a visual description of the horse in case of theft.

rather, authorship was accomplished via the work of teams.

In their study of clinic folders, Garfinkel and Bittner (1967:186) see the "patient career" beginning when the patients initially present themselves to the clinic. The career of a library book does not begin with its accession to the library catalogue. Prior to this, its career may begin at the point of the library receiving an

order for the book. The book-order form itself has a career, as has the book itself in the activities of processing (Thompson 1979:87 et seq.) and in its circulation, as has a query docket in case the book goes missing, as has an application form or request from another library for the book to be borrowed through the inter-library loan system. So in the library there are multiple document careers that constitute the career of a book.



**COUNTERSIGNED by**

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**UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - INTERLIBRARY LOAN - PERIODICAL APPLICATION**  
**BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE - Please PRINT Clearly: All sections to be completed if possible**

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PERIODICAL TITLE

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Title of Article					
Source of Reference in full				Not required after	
Applicant's Name <u>PLEASE PRINT</u>				Library Barcode <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
DEPARTMENTAL ADDRESS ONLY				Departmental Code	

Please tick category      Staff       P/G Research       P/G Taught       4th Yr Hons       RS/10/96

FIGURE 3. Academic libraries provide readers with inter-library loan facilities. While the practices of individual libraries may vary, the principle is constant between libraries. In this case, the paper-based system has been replaced by an electronic request system. Electronic forms do not accommodate signatures: forms still have to be made available in hard copy for this purpose. In order to complete the copyright requirements of document delivery, this form has still to be filled on receipt of the item in order to acknowledge legal responsibilities.

## LIBRARIES AND PRO FORMA ARRANGEMENTS

As sites of *sociological* research, studies of libraries are dominated by cognitive-scientific abstractions and information-processing models; the potentialities of the “digital library” are being explored before the libraries per se are subjected to rigorous research. Whilst focusing on the development of e-books and digital libraries, libraries themselves remain understudied environments. The physical library provides a readily accessible site for exploring practical actions in organizational settings.

### Forms, Categories and Careers

The use of electronic documents does not render textual materials redundant, as one reader observed:

You get everything electronically now. It used to be that you had to specially request an electronic copy of your order but now they send you it automatically. The strangest thing is that they send you an e-mail when it

arrives, complete with a space for signature and date. So you print that out and take it down to the ILL (or Document Delivery Service as it is now known) to get the book and they don't want the slip you printed out. They give you another slip (the same one they've always used) [Figure 3] and you sign that. They also issue a slip in the book, telling you when it is to be returned by.  
(22 March 2000)

Paper-based pro formas are important for sociological investigation in other ways. Administrative materials make available the use of administrative categories and ordinary, situated, endogenous categories. Examining library forms highlights the inscription of organization-relevant categories in administrative protocols and documents. For example, the generic category “library user” glosses administrative categories such as borrower, graduate borrower, staff and reader. Incumbents of these categories possess different library privileges.

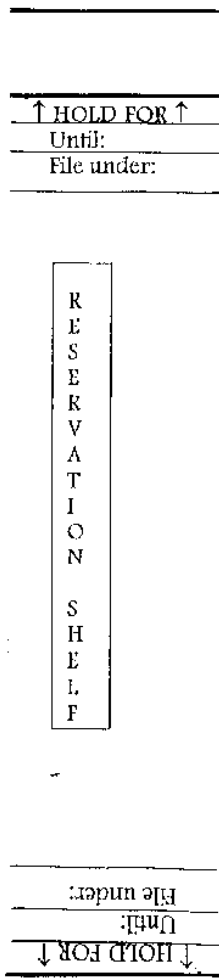


FIGURE 4. Reservation slip. When the library management system alerts the librarian to a reservation placed on an item, the item is held back rather than re-shelved. The librarian inserts a reservation slip into the book. To aid retrieval, the requester's name and library-card number are visible at-a-glance among the reserved books.

Documents, to be filled in by the reader, require the provision of information for administrative purposes. Such pro forma documentation present boxes to the user, which presents information in an at-a-glance format for library staff. Information includes “user name” and “user number”, category of user (undergraduate, postgraduate, graduate borrower, staff, contract staff, external membership, etc.) and title (Prof/Dr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Mr/Rev). There are further boxes for “staff use only” or “library use only”.

That “documentary traces” (Zimmerman 1969a) are produced is a feature of organizations. As Taylor (quoted by Thompson 1979:83) says, “A large part of the work in a library is concerned not with books, but with records of books”. The material portfolio or related documents provide a textual account of whatever the organization has had to do with (e.g. passengers, patients or books). For the organizations

considered in this paper, these traces are located in patient records, files and in library catalogues. Electronic catalogue systems store information such as the status of items, the loan history of items, and the identities of staff members that had dealings with the item at temporal stages of ordering, cataloguing, classifying and processing items. The routine production of documents – documents relevant to the task in hand (Zimmerman 1969b) – is intrinsic to the organization’s work. Through documents it is possible to ascertain whether members of the organization have executed their duties with due care and attention at each stage of the organization’s dealings with material (people or books) (Zimmerman 1971:226–227).

Members’ dealings with materials are transformed into official records of procedures via the use of official or sanctioned forms. Pro formas are regularized: the pro forma exhibits the expectable features which are pertinent to the case, e.g. author, title, date, edition, publisher, ISBN/ISSN number, rather than contingencies of the case; contingencies are listed in spaces allocated for “miscellany” or “other comments”. So rather than copying down statements of responsibility and publication details on a sheet of paper, the librarian marks the relevant and required information in the appropriate spaces for the particular purposes of the task in hand, be that ordering, cataloguing, processing, requesting an inter-library loan, etc. Thus, pro formas are self-explicating to competent members of the organization: “anyone who is familiar with the culture of the office can see at a glance where things stand and why” (Anderson and Sharrock 1993:144–145).

Further, pro formas constitute transformations of information as official records of an item’s career. For example, a book may be returned to the circulation desk. In discharging the book (through the electronic library management system, accepting the book from the current reader or “on loan” status and returning it to the shelving or “in stock” status), a message prompt tells the librarian that the book has been reserved. In such a case, the librarian will enter the details of the reservation (name of borrower and ID number, along with a holding date beyond which the book will be returned to the shelves) on a pro forma (Figure 4). That is, information is transferred and transformed from the screen to a recognizable form. This form is placed inside the book, qua bookmark; the details of the reservation are visible at the top of the form, which protrudes above the cover of the book, and is placed on the reservation shelf behind the circulation desk. The form, and the spatial arrangements of the desk,

informs other members of staff that this book has been reserved and is waiting collection by a specific reader. Further, that any competent member of the organization will know where to retrieve the reserved item when the reader who placed the reservation arrives to collect it.

### Forms and Apostolic Function

A further level of conceptualization can be introduced from observing in situ interaction phenomena between librarians and readers, and librarians' textual practices, including the "normal progress" (Anderson and Sharrock 1993:244) of library forms. These phenomena are glossed as the "apostolic function" (Balint 1964).

The librarian's "apostolic function" is witnessable in face-to-face interactions with members using the library (who are frequently referred to as "users" or "library users"; "borrowers", "patrons" and "readers" are also common references, which are categorial features within specific libraries). Librarians take inquiries seriously, that is, in answering a question the librarians observed attempted to provide an answer for a "family" of questions. For example, if someone approached the desk for assistance in finding a specific book, the librarian provides the inquirer with the means with which to locate any book within the library, by applying these searching methods to that particular book. Likewise, someone looking for a specific thesis is not just told where to find the thesis they require but is shown how to find any thesis, by utilizing the paper-based thesis catalogue files or the "thesis collections" search facility on the electronic catalogue. Hence, the librarian's "apostolic function" involves a form of "procedural knowledge" (Watson and Weinberg 1982): in answering a question the librarian shows the inquirer how to use the library. The apostolic function instructs the reader in practices for using the library, and these practices are reproducible; the apostolic function explicates the "reproducibility features" of library work.

The librarian's apostolic function is expressed on and through pro forma documentation. In the case of query docket or "missing item report" forms (Figure 5), the librarian at the counter instructs the user of the contingencies of locating books. A book that, according to the catalogue, is not on loan but is not on the shelf, is not necessarily lost. It could be in use by another reader, it could have been returned and awaiting re-shelving, it could be on one of the trolleys currently used in re-shelving. It could also have been mis-shelved, whether accidentally or deliberately

QUERY (BOOK OR JOURNAL)	ANSWER
Class No.	
Title	
Author	
Bar Code No.	
Name/Faculty/Year	
Date	UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN IOS. 1.

FIGURE 5. A missing item report form, or query docket. In detailing the workings of a library, this is a perspicuous form. The filing of a missing item report initiates a chain of events on the part of library staff. These events are courses of action, which document the division of labour within the library. The possibilities of library materials are manifold, and the missing item report form was a locus for librarians to educate readers of these possibilities. In large academic libraries, locating an item that actually has been mislaid takes considerable time and work. Readers are instructed of the possible whereabouts of a book that is not on the shelf before a formal search is initiated.

hidden for future use. Using their "know how" or apostolic function, librarians instruct the reader not to report a book as missing immediately, but to take time to scan the surrounding shelves within which the book had been collocated, to see if the book had in fact been misplaced. The Warburg Institute has a unique system of tracking the use of books within the library. Readers leave a sheet of paper in the place of the books taken from the shelves, detailing their location and reader details (Figure 6).

The librarian's apostolic function is expressed also through the work of processing inter-library loan requests. To expedite the task of processing requests, the librarian collects together all request-forms submitted by the same reader; this enables the librarian to avail of the "copy" routine in the program used to request items, which stores the last entry's details (name, address, code numbers and details of the requested item).

It is at this point that the librarian inspects the form (Figure 7), ensuring that all the relevant information has been provided in order to process the request. These include, on the front page of the application form, the requester's name and address, a contact number/e-mail address, a complete identification number, author/title and reference details (those details needed for retrieving the requested item), token, authorizing signature and, on the rear of the application form, that the copyright declaration has been signed.

Before sending out an inter-library loan request, the librarian verifies that the item requested is not held on



FIGURE 6. The Warburg Institute. When a book is removed from the shelf, readers replace it with a form that details the name of the reader, and their whereabouts within the library (floor, carrel number or desk number). Although this system is based on trust – it relies on individual readers to record their details – other readers, and librarians, are able to locate books that are not currently on shelves.

a library site at the university, e.g. its main library, its campus libraries, or held in store. Should the librarian find that the requested item is on the catalogue, or contained within library holdings, the request is blocked; the inter-library loan form is returned to the requester unprocessed. The librarian provides an account – an organizationally relevant account – as to why the request has not been processed. Further, this account is a gloss usually written in a box marked “library use only”. Such glosses take the form of a classmark, indicating where the requested material is located within the library. This gloss tacitly instructs the requester that they should have looked, or “looked harder”, at the holdings listed on the library’s catalogue. Thus, the apostolic function may be bound up with the document career, expressed at “stages” in the career.

In cases where the same requester (as mentioned above, the librarian has sorted the forms according to requester) has submitted several requests for materials that may be found on the library catalogue, the librarian “unpacks” the gloss (see Jefferson 1985). Underneath the gloss or classmark the librarian inserts

messages to the requester. The gloss is no longer tacit, or inferentially available, but is explicated as the apostolic function: the librarian tells the requester how to proceed in future cases of requesting inter-library loan items (Figure 7). These instructions are available in textual form and witnessable during the librarian’s work of “processing” inter-library loan requests. (As one librarian commented, “When will they ever learn?”)

Once the librarian has identified that the requested item is not held anywhere on the library catalogue, the librarian opens a specific webpage at the British Library. This site is searched for the requested item, allocating, as a control number for the item, its pre-given ISBN/ISSN number. The librarian checks the locations for the item, which are abbreviated through codes (or “libcodes”); these libcodes are recognized throughout the library network. The librarian selects libcodes from the list of locations and enters these into the “Locations” box on the application form. (These selections are judgements based on previous experience, e.g. if they have experienced a poor response time with requests from a particular library, this becomes a dispreferred option.) So the career of the inter-library loan form is mediated by reference to electronic resources.

The apostolic function refers, then, to the explicative nature of librarian’s work. That is, the “explicative transactions” (Pollner 1979) that instruct readers of requirements in order to obtain services from the library, and in order to locate materials within the library. In borrowing the notion of “apostolic function” I do not intend to suggest a formal-analytic conception of library work but to highlight recurring practices observable within the library environments visited for this study, practices that were expressed through talk and text.

### Forms and Processes of Triage

Lastly, we may also observe a family resemblance between the organizational, situated use of documents in terms of “triage”. The notion of document careers informed an innovative project on the arrangement of mail in households, and (to use Rod Watson’s phrase) the “processes of triage” in sorting mail according to the priorities and interests of members (Evergeti forthcoming). In cases of civil litigation, claims are subject to a “sorting system” which is conveyed through documents, and the textual-visual arrangements of these documents. The sorting system is mediated by the use of “track allocation” forms: the

Req. No: <b>INTER-LIBRARY LOAN APPLICATION U.C.D.</b>							For Library Use Only
Title of Periodical/Book:							Date Acc:
Author/Book or Article:							Locations:
Title of Article:							
Year	Vol	Part	Pages	Place of Publication	Publisher	ISBN	
Source of Reference:							
Name:							
Address:							
Barcode No.:							
Course:							
Copyright Declaration. Please sign rear before handing in request.							
Status	Please Tick	Staff	Postgraduate Student	Student	Registered Ex-Reader		
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

FIGURE 7. This form has to be completed accurately by the requester of a loan, an ILL token attached (as proof of payment to the requester's department) and counter-signed or authorized by their supervisor/head of department before the inter-library loan department will process the request. Contact details are required in order to send the item to the requester on arrival, or ask the requester for further details about the request, e.g. to confirm the source of reference if the item cannot be located. Forms afford the librarian spaces in which to annotate control numbers and document numbers for administrative purposes; spaces also provide room to give instructions to the requester, or reasons why the request cannot be fulfilled.

return of these forms determines which “type” of court will hear the particular claim according to the “type” and amount of the claim (Inns of Court School of Law 2001). These forms, and the protocols of filing forms, expedite the process via the visual availability of track allocation or decision-making factors. Thus, the work of the “legal system” – how the system works – is “textually mediated” (Smith 1984) by pro forma materials. The district judge decides who would be available to “hear” the case, based on the pro forma materials to hand. What the district judge needs from allocation forms is where to allocate the case, and from this allocation who would be suitable to hear the case. Thus, track allocation forms are endogenous to the division of labour within the judiciary.

In the library, a sorting system or triage is evident in the selection of books for cataloguing. Quantities of books arrive at the library, which derive from several sources: orders, donations and student theses. Before books are shelved, a triage system separates books according to category (Figure 8). Pro formas make these categories textually and visually available at a



FIGURE 8. Books for cataloguing. Books are sorted according to type (new acquisitions, donations, add-ons, or extra copies of books already held within the library collection). The different types of items influence the item-specific cataloguing and classification process, and the order in which different types of items are processed. Differently coloured forms facilitate the at-a-glance sorting or process of triage that each book goes through. This trolley makes available the sequential order of work of cataloguing new books. Books marked with yellow input forms (acquisitions) are prioritized over items marked with pink forms (donations). Donations are prioritized over theses, which are marked with green forms.

glance. The triage of books works in the following way: book purchases or acquisitions (yellow form), donations (pink form) and theses (green form). With forms visible at a glance, the process of triage is influenced by forms – separating out yellows, pinks and greens, and processing (inputting, marking) them in turn – acquisitions are prioritized over donations, which are themselves prioritized over theses.

## CONCLUSION

It is possible to formulate the analysis of pro forma materials using the notion of “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer 1954). The noticing of an occurrence or phenomenon in worksite settings brings the phenomenon into relief: it alerts or sensitizes the analyst to the recurrence of the phenomenon within that and other settings. However, this paper prefers to use Wittgenstein’s (1968) notion of “family resemblances” because the researcher is indifferent to conceptualizing and theory building, focusing on the study of settings on an individual basis rather than the blanket application of organizing principles. Instead of accepting Blumer’s characterization of methodological devices as sensitizing “concepts”, this paper reports the observation of *sensitizing practices*. The isolation of a phenomenon, which is collaboratively produced by participants, works to make available, i.e. visible, further occurrences of the phenomenon to the researcher.

Whilst the need for and the filling out of specific forms may be occasioned by the contingencies of work routines, pro formas are designed for anticipated or regularized occurrences. As such, pro formas are not occasioned qua direction maps (Psathas 1979) but, like such interactionally produced materials, family resemblances between them indicate some formal properties of textual materials in worksite settings.

As courses of action, forms exhibit “document careers” – the different status of a document within the organization according to its current use. This gives purchase on the division of labour, i.e. who does what, and when. The division of labour, as a situated order, can be respecified as a categorial order (Carlin forthcoming). The division of labour is not an analytic device but a member’s concept: the division of labour is known and oriented to by members from within the setting (Anderson et al. 1991). Pro formas occasion a sequencing of activities in the production and reproduction of the division of labour: the missing item form is received by the librarian at the information

desk, who passes it on through the organization, shelves and trolleys are searched, etc.

In tracking the use of pro formas within the library, it is observable that pro formas have document careers that are constitutive of the careers of other materials. This is noticeable within sorting systems or the “triage” of books for processing. Stages of a document career highlight the librarians’ “apostolic function” or pedagogic reasoning, which is expressed through textual and verbal communication.

Members’ uses of pro formas as courses of action are identifying characteristics of “doing the organization’s work.” The visibility, layout and retrievable nature of forms affords analysis of the arrangements of documents. The description of family resemblances in members’ use of pro forma materials makes available the reflexive relation of visual and textual aspects of everyday life.

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