Genre systems in organizations: the role of genres on tasks coordination

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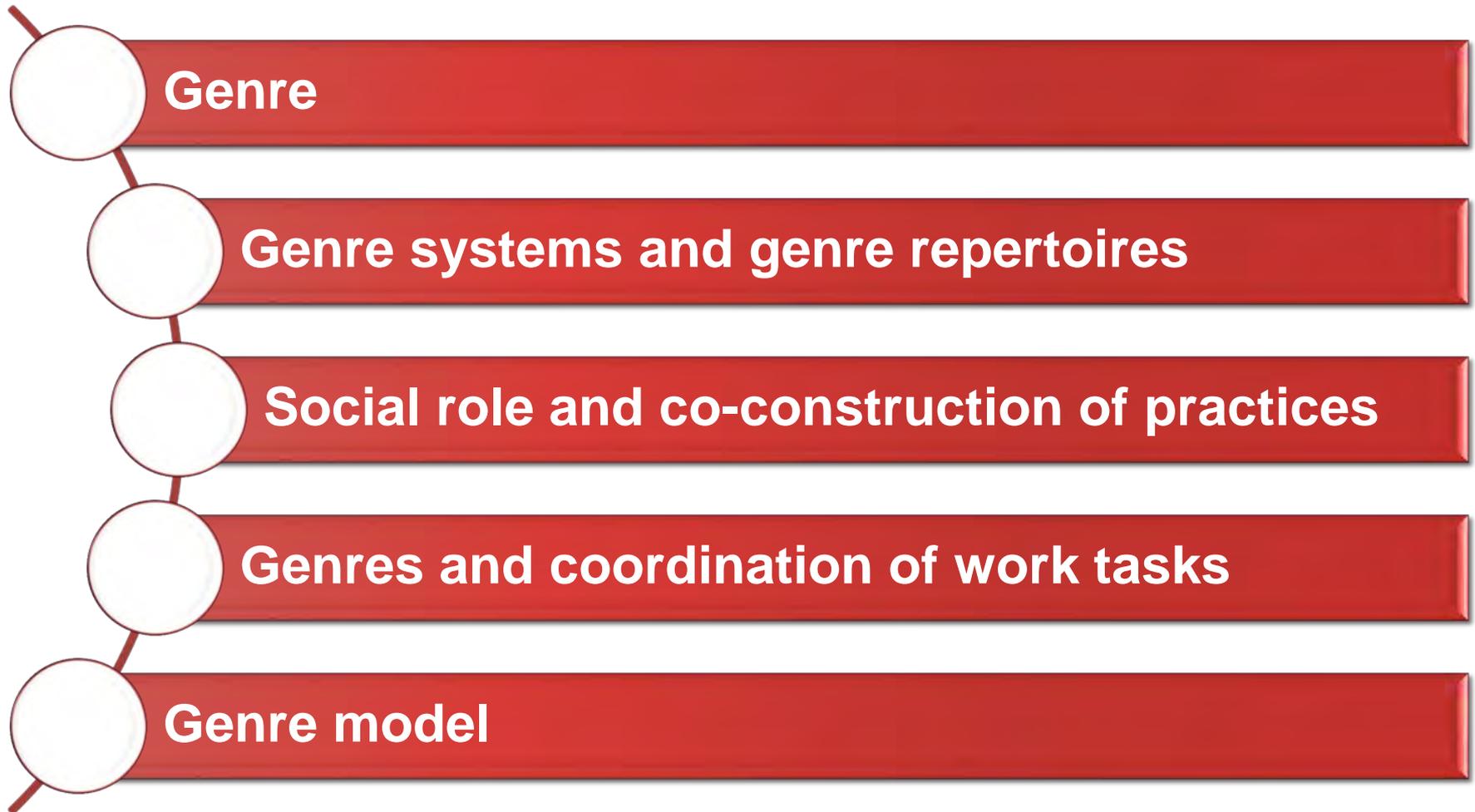Université de Montréal

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Pilot project – Objectives

- Examine the dimensions of genres as tools for coordinating work tasks
- Review information practices in the management and preservation of records within a genre system
- Discuss some impacts on recordkeeping

Conceptual framework

- Genre
- Genre systems and genre repertoires
- Social role and co-construction of practices
- Genres and coordination of work tasks
- Genre model

Genres

- **Genres**
  - Types of communication actions or speeches invoked in response to a recurring situation, which are socially recognized and characterized by conventions (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992)
  - Elements of form, content and standard function
- **Records as genres**
  - Types of socially recognized communication actions recorded on a medium that are used by members of a community for a particular social purpose
  - Socially recognized in a community
  - Caracterized by structural or lilnguistic conventions or rules (form), a theme (content), and a normative function (action)

Genre systems

- **Genre systems in organizations**
  - Set of records as genres that are organized around business systems ➜ business process tasks
  - Created and used in a community
  - Dimension of sequentiality or overlap in the order of the genres within a system

Genre systems and coordination of work tasks

- Complex networks records used in the realization of work processes and which support work coordination and regulation

- Role of structuring devices:
  - Articulation of "appropriate" behaviours
  - Prescriptions for action

- Evolution of records as genres according to the evolution of work processes (business processes)
  - And reciprocity?

Genres social role and and co-construction of practices

- **Collective approach of genres**
  - Sociocognitive dimension
  - Discursive skills developed on the basis of social practices specific to a community
  - Co-construction of records as genres by members of a community on the basis of shared work practices
  - **Co-built by members of this community**
  - **Dual status in a community**
    - Coordination of appropriate behaviours
    - Prescription for action
- **Social role and values of genres**
  - In connection with the context of creation and use – organizational culture
  - Impact on information practices – shared information culture

Genre model

Why

How

What

6 facets

Where

To whom / By whom

When

(Yoshioka *et a*l., 2001; Yates & Orlikowski, 2002)

Preliminary results –

Analysis based on the genre model

Methodology

- Genre system under study:
  - Academic (universities) course file
  - Business or work process: teaching – planning, planification, preparation and delivery of university courses

- Main records in an average course file:
  - Syllabus
  - Lecture notes
  - Class presentations
  - Assignments and exams protocols
  - Correction grids and corrections of assignments and exams
  - Instructions for use in digital learning environments

Analysis of the genre model: syllabus

1. Why
   - To inform
   - To plan
   - To agree ("contract")
   - To witness, to act as evidence, to record
2. What
   - General information
   - Administrative information
   - Pedagogical information
   - Scientific information
3. To whom / by whom
   - Organizational actors: key actors, others

Analysis of the genre model: syllabus

4. Where
- In the classroom (*to inform, to agree to*)
- On the Internet (*to inform*) and/or Intranet (*to inform, to agree to, to plan, to witness)*
- On the desk (or the computer desktop) (*to plan*)

5. When
- In the classroom (*to inform, to agree to, to witness*)
- On the Internet and/or Intranet (*to inform*)

6. How
- Organizational culture: implicit, tradition
- Academic freedom
- Administrative formalism

Preliminary results –

Work methods and information practices

Example for the syllabus: work, writing, and information practices

WORK AND WRITING PRACTICES

Conforming to a request

Planning the syllabus / the course
- Collecting information, documents

Processing information
- Assessing information available and further information needed

Creating / updating / editing syllabus
- a) For 1st class: Opening previous syllabus and updating it
Deliverable : official version of the syllabus
- b) For 1st class: Opening previous syllabus and updating it
Deliverable : detailed version of the syllabus, for day-to-day pedagogical purposes
- c) Thoughout the semester: Updating current syllabus
Deliverable: updated version for the next year (WIP)

Disseminating the syllabus
- To students, speakers, department, …

Making decision/Taking action based on information contained in the syllabus
- To inform, to plan, to agree to, to record

PERSONAL INFORMATION PRACTICES

Organizing information/documents collected
- On personal (computer) or on external information systems (DropBox)
- According to personal classification scheme

Creating / updating / editing syllabus
- According to existing models (structure and content)
- Managing versions of the syllabus (preliminary, final, detailed, WIP, etc.)

Organizing syllabus
- On personal (computer), organizational information systems (Moodle platform), or external information systems (DropBox)
- According to personal classification scheme (computer, DropBox) or more or less personal classification scheme (Moodle platform)

Disseminating the syllabus
- On organizational information systems: department and/or university

ORGANIZATIONAL RECORDKEEPING PRACTICES (Records & Archives Division)

Organizing syllabus
- According to institutional classification scheme (1st hierarchical level) [rarely]

Disseminating the syllabus
- According to the respondent's unit or the organization's procedures

Capture of the final version of the syllabus
- Department: capture and preservation should be according to record retention schedule
- Records & Archives Division: according to record retention schedule
- Department: organization should be according to institutional classification scheme
- Archival classification and indexing, according to institutional classification scheme
- Archival description, according to national standards and institutional procedures
- Dissemination, according to institutional procedures

Work practices and information practices

- Work practices
  - Meet administrative, pedagogical, organizational requirements
  - Include a sequence of actions
    - Include writing methods (structure and content)
      - Complying to a request; planning the course and thus the course syllabus; processing information in order to plan the course and create/update the syllabus; disseminating the syllabus (sharing of information); creating and editing the syllabus; making decisions during the creation process; making decisions/taking action in class based on the syllabus; filing the syllabus in digital and/or paper format
    - Include information practices
      - Collecting information or records + organizing them + naming them
      - Creating / updating the syllabus + naming and managing multiple versions
      - Organizing versions of the syllabus: information systems, classification method
      - Disseminating the syllabus: to students, department, recordkeeping & archives division

Discussion – Coordination of actions and practices

- Dimensions inherent to genres

  - Coordinate design (writing) practices of course materials (structure, form)

  - Coordinate teaching practices in the professord community of discourse

  - Coordinate information practices?

    - Institutionals practices (recordkeeping, archival): yes, although …

    - In the departments: not always

    - Individuals: not always

Discussion – Sequentiality or overlap of actions, and role of organizational actors

- To better understand functions and values attributed records within a system of genres
  - Necessity to take into account the creation of genres from the persepective of business (or work) processes
    - what records are created, received, used, shared
    - by what organizational actors
    - who intervene at what time and in what sequence
    - in the context of what business (work) processes
    - given that these processes can be transverse
    - Ex. syllabus: department, registrar (eg. course equivalence), finance (eg. reimbursement of parking fees for an invited lecturer in a course)
- A record trajectory analysis could be relevant at this point

Discussion – Support for information and recordkeeping professionals

- Understand the genesis of records (link with contemporary diplomatics) that are not fixed but evolving over time and depending on members of communities of discourse
- Better understand records creation context that is not only administrative or operational, but also related to individual or collective information practices, technological environment, work requirements, etc.
- Have a more comprehensive view of the records that belong to a genre system in the context of work processes

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Thank you

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