Visual Analysis Through Four Lenses

Jenna Hartel
**Visual Analysis Through Four Lenses**

Abstract

The iSquare Research Program is an arts-informed, visual study of the concept of information, utilizing the draw-and-write technique (Pridmore & Bendelow, 1995). Participants are asked to respond to the question, “What is information?” by drawing upon a 4” by 4” piece of paper, coined an “iSquare.” The ongoing research program explores three questions: 1.) How do people visualize the concept of information?; 2.) How do visual conceptions of information differ among populations?; and 3.) How do these images relate to the traditional conceptions of information made of words? Since 2011, more than 1,000 iSquares have been collected from around the world and fresh insights into the nature of information have been reported in journals of information science (Hartel, 2014a, 2014b, in press), and the drawings have been showcased as exhibitions at international conferences (Hartel, 2012, 2013a, 2013b). This paper will introduce the study to the
visual methods community and then take a critical look at the visual analysis process by describing, comparing, and problematizing the four analytical strategies used on the iSquare data thus far: *compositional interpretation* (Rose, 2007), *thematic analysis* (Guest, 2012), *content analysis* (Krippendorff, 2012), and *pictorial metaphor analysis* (Forceville, 2009). As cast upon the iSquare data set, each analytical technique will be profiled to reveal its disciplinary roots, epistemological and ontological commitments, application process, and quintessential findings. The audience will gain a heightened critical awareness of the power of analytical techniques to determine findings and will stand better able to select and use such devices.

**Key Words**
Arts-informed methods; draw-and-write technique; visual analysis; information theory

**Biography**
Jenna Hartel is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto. She conducts research in three related areas: information phenomena in leisure; ethnography and visual methods; and the history and theory of information studies.
References


Hartel, J. (2013b). *The Concept formerly known as information*. Panel presentation and exhibition at the ASIS&T Annual Meeting, Montreal, QC.


