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The Importance of Intertwingling

- Lynn Yarmey (CCE/PAL)

Morville, Peter. Ambient Findability . O'Reilly. Cambridge, 2005.

"Intertwingling" Aristotle and Edward O. Wilson, primitive hunter-gatherer societies and the Google experience, Peter Morville's *Ambient Findability* puts today's information age in the context of the vast human experience. Part philosophical treatise ('What is information?'), part history lesson (tracing the notion of a 'landmark' from the songlines of the aboriginal Australians through lighthouses and maps to a GIS marker) and part technology magazine (Subchapter Wayfinding 2.0 discusses specific SMS, RFID, and GPS technologies), he ties direct links between diverse facets of life and the design, usability and ramifications of technology and the internet. The many meanings of 'findability' become apparent as Morville blurs the line between the digital and the physical.

Many parts of this fast-paced book delve into the business end of information and it's architecture. Additionally there are chapters on such topics as language and representation, information retrieval, ontologies and 'The Social Life of Metadata' which certainly have import to the LTER community. Amongst other topics including economics and many mathematical considerations, the book also takes a close look at the human and social side of 'information,' expanding on the idea that technology alone cannot solve the challenges faced in today's information age. After a discussion on the nuances and development of language, including all of the ambiguity and personal perspective inherent to understanding, Morville notes, 'For as long as humans use language to communicate, information retrieval will remain messy, imperfect business.'

The text maintains it's lighthearted tone and easy-to-read style while giving an amazingly broad overview of our current information landscape, though unfortunately leaving little space to address specifics. *Ambient Findability* provides the larger picture and long-term path of the internet, from its grounding in basic human instincts to upcoming applications and uses, couched squarely in the middle of a complex and fascinating history of The User.