Knowledge Cartography: Software tools and mapping techniques

Edited Book

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Knowledge Cartography: Preface

The eyes are not responsible when the mind does the seeing.
Publilius Syrus (85-43 BC)

Maps are one of the oldest forms of human communication. Map-making, like painting, pre-dates both number systems and written language. Primitive peoples made maps to orientate themselves in both the living environment and the spiritual worlds. Mapping enabled them to transcend the limitations of private, individual representations of terrain in order to augment group planning, reasoning and memory. Shared, visual representations opened new possibilities for focusing collective attention, re-living the past, envisaging new scenarios, coordinating actions and making decisions.

Maps mediate the inner mental world and outer physical world. They help us make sense of the universe at different scales, from galaxies to DNA, and connect the abstract with the concrete by overlaying meanings onto that world, from astrological deities to signatures for diseases. They help us remember what is important, and explore possible configurations of the unknown. Cartography — the discipline and art of making maps — has of course evolved radically. From stone, wood and animal skins, we now wield software tools that control maps as views generated from live data feeds, with flexible layering and annotation.1

“Foundational concept, fragmented thinking, line of argument, blue skies research, peripheral work” — we spatialise the world of ideas all the time with such expressions. Maps can be used to make such configurations tangible, whether sketched on a napkin or modelled in software. In this book we bring together many of the leading researchers and practitioners who are creating and evaluating such software for mapping intellectual worlds. We see these as new tools for reading and writing in an age of information overload, when we need to extract and construct meaningful configurations, around which we can tell different kinds of narrative.

For a visual generation of children who have never known a world without ubiquitous information networks, we might hypothesise that knowledge maps could have particular attraction as portals into the world of ideas. Moreover, the network is not only dominant when we think about our social and technical infrastructures, but almost an ontological stance in postmodernity, where we hold our viewpoints to be precisely that: always partial and contextualised. Weaving connections between nodes in the network is the most flexible way to bring ideas and information into locally coherent relationships with each other, knowing that there is always another viewpoint on the validity of these patterns. Modelled in software, the vision is that intellectual continents, islands and borders can be invoked and dissolved at different scales, as required.

1 Our sister volume in this series, The Geospatial Web, explores the convergence of spatial data, mapping tools and the social web (Scharl and Tochtermann, 2006).
Knowledge Cartography can be defined as:

- the art, craft, science, design and engineering of different genres of map to describe intellectual landscapes — answering the question how can we create knowledge maps?
- and the study of cartographic practices in both beginners and experts as they make and use such maps — answering the question how effective are knowledge maps for different kinds of user?

The particular focus of the authors in this volume is on sensemaking: the process by which externalising one’s understanding clarifies one’s own grasp of the situation, as well as communicates it to others — literally, the making of sense (Weick, 1995: p.4). While “sense” can be expressed in many ways (non-verbally in gesture, facial expression and dance, and in prose, speech, statistics, film…), knowledge cartography as construed here places particular emphasis on digital representations of connected ideas, specifically designed to:

I. Clarify the intellectual moves and commitments at different levels. (e.g. Which concepts are seen as more abstract? What relationships are legitimate? What are the key issues? What evidence is being appealed to?)

II. Incorporate further contributions from others, whether in agreement or not. The map is not closed, but rather, has affordances designed to make it easy for others to extend and restructure it.

III. Provoke, mediate, capture and improve constructive discourse. This is central to sensemaking in unfamiliar or contested domains, in which the primary challenge is to construct plausible narratives about how the world was, is, or might be, often in the absence of complete, unambiguous data.

Our intention with this book is to provide a report on the state of the art from leaders in their respective fields, identify the important challenges as they are currently seen in this relatively young field, and inspire readers to test and extend the techniques described — hopefully, to think more critically and creatively. Many of the tools described are not sitting in research labs, but are finding application in diverse walks of life, with active communities of practice. These communities represent the readership we hope for: learners, educators, and researchers in all fields, policy analysts, scenario planners, knowledge managers and team facilitators. We hope that practitioners will find new perspectives and tools to expand their repertoire, while researchers will find rich enough conceptual grounding for further scholarship.
Genres of knowledge map

A range of mapping techniques and support tools has evolved, shaped by the problems being tackled, the skill of mappers, and the sophistication of software available. We briefly characterise below the main genres of map. The appendix summarises at a glance which mapping approaches and software tools are presented in each chapter.

**Mind Mapping** was developed by Tony Buzan in the early 1970s when he published his popular book “Use Your Head.” Mind Mapping requires the user to map keywords, sentences and pictures radiating from a central idea. The relatively low constraints on how elements can be labelled or linked makes it well suited for visual notetaking and brainstorming.

![Mind Map created with Buzan’s iMindmap](image)

**Concept Mapping** was developed by Joseph Novak around 1972, based on Ausubel’s theory that meaningful learning only takes place when new concepts are connected to what is already known. Concept maps are hierarchical trees, in which concepts are connected with labelled, graphical links, most general at the top. Novak and many others have reported empirical evidence of the effectiveness of this technique, with an international conference dedicated to the approach.
Argument and Evidence Mapping was first proposed by J.H. Wigmore in the early 1900s to help in the teaching and analysis of court cases. The objective is to expose the structure of an argument, in particular how evidence is being used, in order to clarify the status of the debate. Still used in legal education today, the idea has been extended, formalised (and reinvented) in many ways (Buckingham Shum, 2003; Reed et al., 2007), but all focused on elements such as Claims, Evidence, Premises and supporting/challenging relations.
Issue Mapping derives from the “Issue-Based Information System” (IBIS) developed by Horst Rittel in the 1970s to scaffold groups tackling “wicked” socio-technical problems. IBIS structures deliberation by connecting Issues, Positions and Arguments in consistent ways, which can be rendered as textual outlines and graphical maps. “Dialogue Mapping” was developed by Conklin (2006) for using IBIS in meetings, extended as “Conversational Modelling” by Sierhuis and Selvin (1999) to integrate formal modelling and interoperability with other tools.

Web Mapping appeared relatively recently as a result of the rapid growth of the internet. Software tools provide a way for users to capture, position, iconify, link and annotate hyperlinks in a visual space as they navigate, creating a richer trail which comes to have more personal meaning than a simple bookmark list.
Thinking Maps as defined by Hyerle (Chapter X) contrasts all of the above with a set of abstract visual conventions designed to support core cognitive skills. Hyerle’s eight graphic primitives (expressing basic reasoning about, e.g. causality, sequence, whole-part) are designed to be combined to express higher order reasoning (e.g. metaphor, induction, systems dynamics).

Figure 6. Thinking Maps created with Thinking Maps © tool

Finally, a note on what we might term Visual Specification Languages, which are designed for software interpretation by imposing constraints on how links and often nodes are labelled and combined. This is a huge field in its own right, with schemes such as Unified Modeling Language (UML) supporting user communities far larger than any of the others listed here, plus innumerable other notations and tools that exploit the power of visualization for modelling processes, ontologies and organizations. These are not, however, heavily represented in this book (though see Chapters X[sierhuis] and Y[basque]) for the simple reason that this book’s interest in sense-making focuses on the analytical work required at the upstream phases in problem solving, or in domains where formal modelling is contentious because of the assumptions it requires. Once the problem, assumptions and solution criteria are agreed and bounded, there is a clearer cost/benefit tradeoff for detailed modelling.

Overview of the book

This book has 17 chapters organised in two parts, defined by whether the primary application is in formal learning or the workplace. However, while this distinction reflects two large audiences, readers will find ideas cross-fertilising healthily between chapters. The first half, Knowledge Maps for Learning and Teaching, focuses
on applications in schools and universities. We start with tools for learners, opening
with a literature survey, followed by examples of different approaches (concept
mapping, information mapping; argument mapping). Attention then turns to the
kinds of maps that educators need. In the second half we broaden the scope to
Knowledge Maps for Information Analysis and Knowledge Management, examining
the role that these tools are playing in professional communities—but with great
relevance also to more formal learning contexts. We start with an analysis of the
knowledge cartographer’s skillset, followed by three case studies around issue map-
ing, one on evidence mapping, concluding with case studies on two additional
approaches.

1. Suthers, in “Empirical Studies of the Value of Conceptually Explicit Nota-
tions in Collaborative Learning” reports on a series of studies which show
that differences of notations or representational biases can lead to differences in
processes of collaborative inquiry. The studies span face-to-face, synchronous
online and asynchronous online media in both classroom and laboratory set-
tings.

2. Canas and Novak present “Concept Mapping Using CmapTools to Enhance
Meaningful Learning”. After briefly introducing the pioneering concept map-
ing approach and CmapTools software, they provide an update to what is
probably the world’s largest systematic deployment of concept mapping, the
“Proyecto Conéctate al Conocimiento” in Panama, reflecting on their experi-
ences introducing concept mapping in hundreds of schools to enhance meaning-
ful learning.

3. Marriott and Torres, in “Enhancing Collaborative and Meaningful Language
Learning Through Concept Mapping” describe how concept mapping can
help develop students’ reading, writing and oral skills as part of a blended
methodology for language teaching called LAPLI. Their research was first im-
plemented with a group of pre-service students studying for a degree in English
and Portuguese languages at the Catholic University of Parana (PUCPR) in
Brazil.

graphical language comprising eight cognitive maps called Thinking Maps®
and Thinking Maps® Software. These tools have been used from early grades
to college courses to foster cognitive development and content learning, across
all disciplines

5. Zeiliger and Esnault, in “The Constructivist Mapping of Internet Informa-
tion at Work with Nestor”, present the Nestor Web Cartographer software and
the constructivist approach to mapping Internet information. They analyze a
case study in Lyon School of Management (EM LYON), to show how the fea-
tures of the software, such as a hybrid representational system, visual widgets
and collaboration, help in constructing formalised knowledge.
6. Rider and Thomason, in “Cognitive and Pedagogical benefits of Argument Mapping: L.A.M.P. Guides the Way to Better Thinking”, show that in dedicated Critical Thinking courses “Lots of Argument Mapping Practice” (LAMP) using a software tool like Rationale considerably improves students’ critical thinking skills. They present preliminary evidence and discussion concerning how LAMP confers these benefits, and call for proper experimental and educational research.

7. Okada, in “Scaffolding School Pupils’ Scientific Argumentation with Evidence-Based Dialogue Maps” reports pilot work investigating the potential of Evidence-based Dialogue Mapping to foster young teenagers’ scientific argumentation. Her study comprises multiple data sources: pupils’ maps in Compendium, their writings in science and reflective comments about the uses of mapping for writing. Her qualitative analysis highlights the diversity of ways, both successful and unsuccessful, in which dialogue mapping was used by these young teenagers to write scientific explanations.

8. Rowe and Reed, in “Argument Diagramming: The Araucaria Project” describe the software package Araucaria, which allows textual arguments to be annotated to create argument diagrams conforming to different schemes such as Toulmin or Wigmore diagrams. Since each of these diagramming techniques was devised for a particular domain or argumentation, they discuss some of the issues involved in translating between the schemes.

9. Sherborne, in his chapter “Mapping the Curriculum: How Concept Maps can Improve the Effectiveness of Course Development” argues that ‘curriculum development’ is a process that naturally lends itself to visualisation through concept mapping. He reviews the evidence for how mapping can help curriculum developers and teachers, by promoting more collaborative, learner-centric designs.

10. Conole, in “Using Compendium as a Tool to Support the Design of Learning Activities”, reports work to help multimedia designers and university academics create and share e-learning activities, by creating a visual language for learning design patterns. She discusses how learning activities can be represented, and how the maps provide a mechanism to supporting decision making in creating new activities.

11. Opening the second half, Selvin, in “Performing Knowledge Art: Understanding Collaborative Cartography” focuses on the special skills and considerations involved in constructing knowledge maps with and for groups. He provides concepts and frameworks useful in analysing collaborative practice, illustrating them with a case study.
12. Buckingham Shum and Okada, in “Knowledge Cartography for Controversies: The Iraq Debate”, use the debate around the invasion of Iraq to demonstrate a knowledge mapping methodology to extract key ideas from source materials, in order to classify and connect them within and across a set of perspectives. They reflect on the value of this approach, and how it can be extended with finer-grained argument mapping techniques.

13. Ohl, in “Computer Supported Argument Visualisation: Modelling in Consultative Democracy around Wicked Problems”, presents a case study where a mapping methodology supported the analysis and representation of the discourse surrounding the draft South East Queensland Regional Plan Consultation. He argues that argument mapping can help deliver the transparency and accountability required in participatory democracy.

14. Sierhuis and Buckingham Shum, in “Human-Agent Knowledge Cartography for e-Science: NASA Field Trials at the Mars Desert Research Station”, describe the sociotechnical embedding of a knowledge cartography approach (Conversational Modelling) within a prototype e-science work system. They demonstrates how human and agent plans, data, multimedia documents, metadata, discussions, interpretations and arguments can be mapped in an integrated manner, and successfully deployed in field trials which simulated aspects of mission workload pressure.

15. Lowrance et al., in “Template-Based Structured Argumentation” present a semi-automated approach to evidential reasoning, which uses template-based structured argumentation. These graphical depictions convey lines of reasoning, from evidence through to conclusions. Their structured arguments are based on a hierarchy of questions (a tree) that is used to assess a situation. This hierarchy of questions is called the argument template (as opposed to the argument, which answers the questions posed by a template).

16. Vasconcelos, in “An Experience of the Use of the Cognitive Mapping Method in Qualitative Research”, analyzes concept mapping as a tool for supporting qualitative research, particularly to carry out literature reviews, concept analysis and qualitative data examination. He uses his own experience in applying CmapTools software to understand the concept of partnership.

17. Basque et al., in “Collaborative Knowledge Modelling with a Graphical Knowledge Representation Tool MOT: A Strategy to Support the Transfer of Expertise in Organizations”, present a strategy for collaborative knowledge modelling between experts and novices in order to support the transfer of expertise within organisations. They use an object-typed knowledge modelling software tool called MOT, to elaborate knowledge models in small groups composed of experienced and less experienced employees.
Towards human-machine knowledge cartography

To summarise, *Knowledge Cartography* is a specific form of information visualization, seeking to represent spatially intellectual worlds that have no intrinsic spatial properties. We have emphasised the challenge of helping analysts craft maps of information resources, concepts, issues, ideas and arguments as an intrinsic part of their *personal and collective sensemaking*. As with all artistry and craft, the *process and product* should interweave: the discipline required to craft a good map should clarify thinking and discourse in a way that augments the analytic task at hand, and the emerging map should in turn provoke further reflection on the rigour of the analysis. We are interested in mapping the structure of *physical phenomena* (e.g. a biological process), of *intellectual artifacts* (e.g. a curriculum), and of *intellectual processes* of inquiry (e.g. a meeting discussion, or a scientific or public debate).

This orientation complements the work that has emerged in recent years in Domain Visualization within the information retrieval community, and Meeting Capture from the multimedia analysis community. In Domain Visualization (e.g. Chen, 2003; Shiffrin and Börner, 2004), “maps of science” are generated from the analysis of text corpora and related scientometric indices (e.g. co-citation patterns in literature databases), with the analyst then able to tune parameters to expose meaningful patterns (e.g. emerging research fronts; turning points in the literature), and interactively navigate the visualization as they browse trails of interest. In Meeting Capture research (e.g. the European AMI and US CALO Projects), the analogous goal is to extract significant moments from audio and video meeting records (e.g. decisions; action items; disagreements), including generating argument maps (e.g. Rienks, *et al.* 2006) in order to index the meeting and support follow-on activity.

We envisage that human and machine knowledge mapping will eventually converge. Software agents will work continuously in the background and on demand, generating maps and alerts that expose potentially significant patterns in discussions and publications (e.g. term clusters; hub nodes; pivotal papers; emerging research fronts; supporting/challenging evidence; candidate solutions). Analysts will assess, further annotate, and add new interpretive layers. While some of the authors in this book focus on mapping domains where objective, “hard” science data can be used to decide whether a map is correct or not, other authors are interested in how maps can support modes of interpretation and discourse across “softer” disciplines within the arts and humanities, and for teams confronted with wicked problems in policy deliberation and strategic planning, where there is no single, knowable solution.

The layers that analysts will add to machine generated maps will, therefore, also reflect the community’s deliberations—whether in meetings or the literature—adding important connections and summaries that are not in the source documents/datasets. Human and machine mapping should be synergistic. Machines will play a critical role by filtering the data ocean, extracting increasingly higher level patterns, and acting on those semi-autonomously. People will, however, sense connections between experiences and ideas, and constantly read new connotations into their physical and information environments, in ways that are hard to imagine in machines. Crafting maps by hand will, in this view, continue to be an important
We are confronted today by ever more complex challenges at community, national and global levels. As we learn almost daily of new, unexpected connections between natural and designed phenomena, we have to find ways to teach these rich, multilayered webs to our children. More than ever, we need to find ways to build common ground between diverse groups as they seek to make sense of the past, the immediate challenges of the present, and possible futures. It would trivialise the dilemmas we face to declare a technological silver bullet. However, we cautiously propose that rigour and artistry in Knowledge Cartography has a significant role to play in shaping how stakeholders, young and old, learn to think, listen and debate.

Alexandra Okada, Simon Buckingham Shum and Tony Sherborne
Milton Keynes, October 2007
Companion website with supplementary resources: kmi.open.ac.uk/books/knowledge-cartography

References
AMI: Augmented Multimodal Interaction project: publications.amiproject.org
CALO: Cognitive Assistant that Learns and Organizes: caloproject.sri.com
Appendix: Mapping approaches and software by chapter

*Part 1: Knowledge Maps for Learning and Teaching*

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Author Biographies

Josianne Basque is professor in educational technology at Tele-universite, Montreal, a French Canadian distance university. She designed online courses in the fields of learning and cognitive science, technology in education and instructional design. She is also a researcher at the LICEF Research Center, dedicated to research in the field of Cognitive Informatics and Learning Environments. Her current research interests include knowledge modeling applied to learning, knowledge management and instructional design, the design of e-learning scenarios, collaborative learning and self-evaluation of competencies.
Email: basque.josianne@teluq.uqam.ca
Homepage: www.teluq.uqam.ca/~jbasque

Simon Buckingham Shum is Senior Lecturer at the Knowledge Media Institute, Open University. B.Sc. Psychology University of York. M.Sc. in Ergonomics from University College London and Ph.D. from the University of York. He is interested in technologies for sensemaking, specifically, which structure discourse to assist reflection and analysis.
Email: sbs@acm.org
HomePage: http://kmi.open.ac.uk/people/sbs/

Tom Boyce is an Emeritus Consultant in the Representation and Reasoning Program at SRI International’s Artificial Intelligence Center. He has an engineering degree from Stanford and an MBA from Santa Clara University. He is interested in using AI software for corporate business intelligence applications, such as creating and tracking future scenarios. He has a long standing involvement in complex project management applications as well.
Email: boyce@ai.sri.com
Homepage: http://www.ai.sri.com/people/boyce/

Alberto J. Cañas is Co-Founder and Associate Director of the Institute for Human and Machine Cognition – IHMC. Bachelors Degree in Computer Engineering from the Instituto Tecnologico de Monterrey, Mexico, and a Masters Degree in Computer Science and a Ph.D. in Management Science, both from the University of Waterloo, Canada. He is interested in the theoretical aspects and in the implementation details of concept mapping in education. His research includes uses of computers in education, knowledge management, and human-machine interface.
Email: acanas@ihmc.us
Homepage: http://www.ihmc.us/users/acanas

Gráinne Conole is Professor of e-Learning at the Open University. BA. Chemistry PhD. X-Ray Crystallography at North London University. Her interests are in the use, integration and evaluation of Information and Communication Technologies and e-learning and impact on organisational change.
Liliane Esnault is Associate Professor in Information Systems management, e-Business and Project Management at E.M.Lyon. B.Sc. and Doctorate in Fundamental Molecular Physics from Ecole Supérieure de Physique et Chimie de Paris (ESPCI). She is currently involved in the European Research project PALETTE (Integrated Services for Communities of Practice), after several other European projects in the same area.

Email: esnault@em-lyon.com
Homepage: http://www.em-lyon.com

Ian Harrison is a Senior Computer Scientist with the Representation and Reasoning Program at SRI International's Artificial Intelligence Center. He received his Ph.D. in Engineering Rock Mechanics from Imperial College of Science, Technology, and Medicine, University of London, and his MSc. in Artificial Intelligence from the University of Edinburgh. His research interests have primarily focused on the development and deployment of software tools to aid intelligence analysts.

Email: harrison@ai.sri.com
Homepage: http://www.ai.sri.com/~harrison/

David Hyerle is the Developer of the Thinking Maps® model and the Founding Director of Thinking Foundation, a nonprofit research organization supporting participatory research on models for facilitating cognitive processes and critical thinking in schools. B.A. English Literature on literacy. M.Ed. Urban Education and Ed.D. Curriculum and Instruction at U.C. Berkeley and Exchange Scholar at Harvard College. His research focuses on the areas of thinking, learning, and leadership.

Email: designs.thinking@valley.net
Homepage: http://www.thinkingfoundation.org

Michel Léonard is a professional researcher at the LICEF Research Center. He worked in many areas: hospitals, industrial maintenance, video and audio RF, as a technician, coordinator, test and development engineer, production engineer and manager. Since January 1994, he has contributed to the development and validation of instructional design methods and support systems. He also contributed to the development of the knowledge modeling software MOT. He is involved in the preparation and the delivery of training sessions on knowledge modeling and on instructional engineering with tools and methods developed at the LICEF.

Email: leonard.michel@licef.teluq.uqam.ca

John Lowrance is the Director of the Representation and Reasoning Program at SRI International's Artificial Intelligence Center. He received his A.B. in Computer Science and Mathematics from Indiana University, and M.S. and Ph.D. in Computer and Information Science from the University of Massachusetts. His re-
search interests have primarily focused on evidential reasoning, a methodology for representing and reasoning from evidence (i.e., information that is potentially uncertain, incomplete, and inaccurate). His most recent work attempts to make evidential reasoning accessible to practicing analysts and decision makers.

Email: lowrance@ai.sri.com
Homepage: http://www.ai.sri.com/people/lowrance/

Rita de Cassia Veiga Marriott is a Language Tutor at the University of Birmingham / UK and a member of the Research Group on Education, Communication and Technology at the Catholic University of Parana (PUCPR) / Brazil. She was a lecturer in English as a Foreign Language and Meaningful and Collaborative Learning Online at the Postgraduate Education course at the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUCPR), where she attained her MA in Education. She was responsible for teacher development programmes related to Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) providing support for the implementation of Distance Learning Courses at the Language Centre at the Federal University of Parana (UFPR) in Brazil. She is interested in methodologies for language teaching / learning, e-learning, collaborative learning and concept mapping.

Email: r.marriott@bham.ac.uk

Janet Murdock is a Computer Scientist in the Artificial Intelligence Center at SRI International. She holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in Chemical Engineering from Purdue and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She also holds M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Computer Science from Stanford University. Prior to coming to SRI International, she worked in industry (Design Power, Inc., Praxis Engineers, Inc., and GE Power Systems) creating artificial intelligence applications that solve engineering problems. Her research interests include representation and reasoning, evidence management, and multimedia-based user interfaces.

Email: murdock@ai.sri.com
Homepage: http://www.ai.sri.com/people/murdock/

Ken Murray is a Senior Computer Scientist in the Representation and Reasoning Program at SRI International's Artificial Intelligence Center. He holds a Bachelor degree from the University of Iowa, and Masters and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Texas at Austin. His interests include the design, construction, and application of large knowledge-based systems with particular focus on interactive methods for knowledge acquisition and knowledge integration.

Email: murray@ai.sri.com
Homepage: http://www.ai.sri.com/people/murray/

Joseph D. Novak is Professor Emeritus at Cornell University and a Senior Scientist at the Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, and President of the Joseph D. Novak Knowledge Consultants, Inc. B.S. in Science and Mathematics, M.S. in Science Education, Ph.D. at Science Education & Biology at the University of Minnesota. His interests focus on meaningful learning and concept maps in education and knowledge management.
Alexandra Okada is Researcher in Knowledge Mapping for Open Content Initiative at the Knowledge Media Institute, Open University. Visiting Lecturer at the Fundacao Getulio Vargas FGV Online and the Pontificia Universidade Católica PUCSP COGEAE Online. B.Sc. Computer Science at the Instituto Tecnológico de Aeronáutica – ITA, MA and PhD in Education at PUCSP. She is interested in how knowledge maps can be used to facilitate research, investigation and learning.
Email: a.l.p.okada@open.ac.uk
HomePage: http://kmi.open.ac.uk/people/ale/

Ricky Ohl has gained broad experience from involvement in various businesses over 30 years. He holds degrees in Business Management and in Commerce with Honours. His earlier published research examined “The Implementation of an Internet Management System into a Virtual Private Network.”, a pioneering project with unknown risk factors. He is currently completing his PhD research on “CSAV Modelling for Consultative Democracy around Wicked Problems.” His teaching, in both advanced masters and undergraduate courses at Griffith University has focussed on areas including knowledge management, business management, information visualisation, information systems, informatics and IT governance. He also performs corporate consulting in knowledge management, business systems and web presence.
Email: rickynneblue.awardspace.com/
Email: rickyohl@gmail.com

Gilbert Paquette is professor at Tele-universite, Montreal, and the holder of the Canada Research Chair in Tele-Learning in Cognitive Engineering. He founded the LICEF Research Center in 1992 and initiated many strategic and large projects on instructional engineering of e-learning environments and on knowledge management. He is the main designer of the knowledge modeling software MOT. He is the author of three books and of hundreds of articles and communications in those fields. He is presently the director of the cross-Canadian project LORNET (Learning Objects Repositories Network).
Email: paquette.gilbert@teluq.uqam.ca
Homepage: http://www.licef.teluq.uqam.ca/gp/

Béatrice Pudelko recently finished her doctoral studies in Cognitive Psychology at the University Paris VIII. In her thesis, she examined, with a Vygotskian approach, the epistemic mediations of a graphical knowledge representation tool during a text comprehension activity. In the last years, she participated in many research projects at the LICEF Research Center. She is also a tutor in an online course on cognitive science and learning offered at Tele-universite. Her current research interests are related to the use of knowledge modeling for learning and for knowledge elicitation, to the development of cognitive skills and to artifact-mediated activity.
Email: pudelko.beatrice@licef.teluq.uqam.ca

Yanna Rider is Consultant and Trainer at Austhink. She holds a PhD in Philosophy from The University of Melbourne. She is interested in the conceptual underpinnings of Argument Mapping and its relationship to critical thinking, as well as in applying Argument Mapping in professional contexts.
Email: yxr@austhink.com
Homepage: http://www.austhink.com

Andres Rodriguez worked as a Computer Scientist with the Representation and Reasoning Program at SRI International's Artificial Intelligence Center until 2006. He is now an independent consultant. He holds a Bachelors in Computer Science from the University of Los Andes and a Master of Science in Computer Science from Stanford University. His research interests include machine-learning, reasoning under uncertainty, and web enabled user interfaces.
Email: rodriguez@ai.sri.com
Homepage: http://www.ai.sri.com/~rodriguez/

Albert M. Selvin is a Director in the Information Technology Group at Verizon Communications, USA, where he leads web design, software development and business process redesign teams. His research interests are on the practice of constructing hypermedia representations, practice in participatory hypermedia construction and collaborative hypermedia authoring. He is the original developer and member of the ongoing core team for the Compendium approach and toolset and has facilitated over 500 sessions for industry, academic, and public groups. He received his B.A. in Film/Video Studies at the University of Michigan (1982), and an M.A. in Communication Arts from the University of Wisconsin (1984), and is currently a PhD candidate at the Knowledge Media Institute, Open University, UK.
Email: alselvin@gmail.com
HomePage: http://kmi.open.ac.uk/people/selvin/

Tony Sherborne is Creative Director for the Centre for Science Education at Sheffield Hallam University, curriculum developer and a NESTA Fellow Researcher. B.Sc. and MA. in Science from Cambridge University. He is interested in using maps to enhance teachers’ creativity in the design of curricula and pedagogical materials.
Email: tonysherborne@dsl.pipex.uk

Maarten Sierhuis is Computer Scientist and Senior Researcher at RIACS/NASA Ames Research Center. His research focuses on multi-agent systems and artificial intelligence. His early work discusses about knowledge modelling and expert systems. His work area comprehends developing tools for modelling situated human behavior in organizations.
E-mail: msierhuis@mail.arc.nasa.gov
Dan Suthers is presently Associate Professor in the Department of Information and Computer Sciences at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, where he directs the Laboratory for Interactive Learning Technologies and is chair of the interdisciplinary Communication and Information Sciences Ph.D. program. He holds a B.F.A. from Kansas City Art Institute, and an M.S. and Ph.D. in Computer Science from the University of Massachusetts. His research focuses on the design of educational technologies for collaborative learning and online learning communities.

Email: suthers@hawaii.edu
HomePage: http://lilt.ics.hawaii.edu/suthers/

Neil Thomason is Senior Lecturer in the Department of History & Philosophy of Science at The University of Melbourne and holds a doctorate in the Philosophy of Science from the University of California at Berkeley. He has taught Critical Thinking at Reed, Vassar and The University of Melbourne. He is interested in everything except professional sport.

Email: neilt@unimelb.edu.au
HomePage: http://www.hps.unimelb.edu.au/about/staff/neil_thomason/

Jerome Thomere is a Computer Scientist in the Representation and Reasoning Program at SRI International's Artificial Intelligence Center. He holds a Masters in Applied Mathematics from Ecole Centrale Paris and a Masters (DEA) in Artificial Intelligence from Universite Aix Marseille. His research interests include the representation of knowledge, techniques for approximate reasoning, and user interface design.

Email: thomere@ai.sri.com
HomePage: http://www.ai.sri.com/people/thomere/

Patricia Lupion Torres teaches at the Masters and Research Degree Courses in Education at PUCPR (Pontificial Catholic University of Parana/Brazil) whilst is the Director of Distance Learning at the same institution. A Pedagogue, she is a Specialist in Psycho-pedagogy and in Sociological Theories, she holds a Master in Education from PUCPR and a doctorate on Production Engineering from UFSC (Federal University of Santa Catarina/Brazil). She is also the Pedagogical Coordinator of the National Service on Rural Learning – SENAR-PR/Brazil. Her interests are e-learning, virtual universities, collaborative learning and concept mapping.

Email: patorres@terra.com.br

Mário Vasconcellos, is a Lecturer at University of Amazonia (Centre of Social and Economic Studies) and Federal University of Pará (Centre of Environment), both in Brazil. He holds a Mphil from the Centre of High Amazonian Studies, Federal University of Pará (Brazil), and Phd from the Centre for Development Studies, Swansea University (United Kingdom). His research focuses on development management, local development and sustainable development in Amazonia.
Emails: mariovasc@unama.br ; mariovasc@ufpa.br

Eric Yeh is a Software Engineer with the Representation and Reasoning Program at SRI International's Artificial Intelligence Center. He holds a Bachelors in Computer Science from the University of California at Berkeley. His interests lie in the use of artificial intelligence techniques, including machine-learning and natural language processing, to augment human decision making.
Email: yeh@ai.sri.com
Homepage: http://www.ai.sri.com/people/yeh/

Romain Zeiliger is Computer Scientist and Research Engineer at GATE Groupe d'Analyse et de Théorie Economique at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS-GATE) and Université Lumière Lyon2. He is the author of the Software Nestor Web Cartographer. He is also researcher at the European Research project PALETTE. B.Sc. in Computer Science at University Claude Bernard Lyon1. His interests are Navigation, CSCW and Web based Learning.
Email: zeiliger@gate.cnrs.fr