

“www.pensive.eu/uid/0203”

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“www.pensive.eu/uid/0203”

‘Oh, that’s the name of the presentation, is it?’ Alice said, trying to feel interested at 9 o’clock on a Friday morning.

‘No, you don’t understand,’ the Knight said, looking a little vexed. That’s what the name is **called**. The name really *is* “Sex, context and topic maps – three things you can never get when you want”

‘Then I ought to have said “That’s what the presentation is called”? Alice corrected herself.

‘No you oughtn’t: that’s quite another thing! The **presentation** is called...

Alice and Pooh, and Topic Maps too...

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But that's only what it's **called**, you know!

'Well, what **is** the presentation, then?' said Alice, who was by this time completely bewildered.

'I was coming to that,' the Knight said.

'The presentation really is...



Keeping it all in context

Context and large-scale Information Sharing with Topic Maps

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What was that all about?

- ▶ Take some random slides
 - ▶ Take them “out of context”
 - ▶ Then try to work out where they came from... **
- ▶ We all use different cues to recall things
 - ▶ Problem is: We don't always know what those cues might be
- ▶ Company project to manage “information assets”:
 - ▶ “chunked” to the most semantically useful size
 - ▶ +ve: can use each asset individually
 - ▶ -ve: lose context of where each chunk is created, consulted, referred to, used...

** They are actually slides adapted from my closing keynote at TMRA 2007 in Leipzig, Germany

Some context ☺

- ▶ Pensive “Think-in”, Vienna 2007
- ▶ Looked at 2 main concerns:
 - ▶ Managing context
 - ▶ Large-scale information sharing
- ▶ (How) can we manage this in Topic Maps?



What is context?

- ▶ “I have no idea, but I’ll know one when I see one”
- ▶ A major (scientific) concern is whether context is subjective or objective
 - ▶ Looking at it as subjective:
 - ▶ It is the “private experience of meaning” of some “thing”...
 - ▶ and so, entirely personal
 - ▶ But we refer to “context” more commonly when we attempt to recreate a situation in which that experience took place:

Our favourite semiotician

“When you are a Bear of Very Little Brain, and you Think of Things, you find sometimes that a Thing which seemed very Thingish inside you is quite different when it gets out into the open and has other people looking at it”



Managing Context

- ▶ Why should we bother?
- ▶ Simply trying to remember why one wanted to remember something - “I bookmarked it, but why?...”
- ▶ Finding back the “raison d’être” for some action
- ▶ A “way back when machine” – what exactly was going on “around” a particular subject at a particular moment

Managing Context

- ▶ All require some attempt to recreate a setting “outside the skull of any reasoning individual”:
 - ▶ either to trigger and call up a “mental model” of a previous context (“subjective”)
 - ▶ or to “share some understanding” of a situation (“objective”)
- ▶ Are they both the same?
 - ▶ The context must surely trigger a similar mental model (or as close as possible) for another person
- ▶ Danger of “shallow informationalism”
 - ▶ Context cannot be reduced to a few elements of data, however well intentioned

Representing context

- ▶ A greater proportion of our interactions with the world are via digital user agents
 - ▶ chances are increasing that we can capture context more and more accurately (“Vantage Point” again**)
- ▶ Topic Maps provides the “scope” construct:
 - ▶ “represent the context within which a statement is valid”
 - ▶ a “bag” of topics that together represent the “setting” of a particular statement
 - ▶ scope can be represented also as a topic, but which does raise the spectre of recursion

**Context: Monday’s “thing” that had no versions, see www.pensive.eu/uid/0217

Questions raised

- ▶ We can reify and navigate a Topic Map by topic, association or role, but are there situations where it would make sense to navigate by context?
- ▶ Are TM associations more adaptable and better suited to represent context?
- ▶ What topics are relevant to a particular context?
 - ▶ Is it knowable? (At least, in advance. “Hindsight always offers 20/20 Vision”)
 - ▶ Is it more than data? (Vinegar as metadata, for example**)
 - ▶ Can it ever be complete?



Problems and responses

- ▶ URLs dereferencing dynamically generated content:
 - ▶ the scope bundle contains the wrong things
- ▶ Re-examine Situation Theory?
 - ▶ Devlin's "infons"
 - ▶ could they be expressed using TM?





Large-scale information sharing

- ▶ If information is well managed, the “information territory” will have reasonably well-defined edges
 - ▶ Sharing requires nodes at the boundary edges of one territory to permit traversal to similar nodes in another
 - ▶ Contrast:
 - ▶ “information management” environments, that aim to promote an organization’s own strategic goals, and
 - ▶ “information sharing” environments that extend beyond organizational boundaries
- 



Problems and responses

- ▶ Most Topic Maps implementations are “proprietary” systems running under a centralized model
 - ▶ Need to make XTM screen-scraping possible, as a minimum
 - ▶ The Topic Map merge construct is too centripetal
 - ▶ share characteristics of hypermedia systems from the 1980s
 - ▶ learn from the blogosphere – create and syndicate
 - ▶ “topic merge by ID” should become a connector between separate maps, not an excuse to merge and ingest whole maps
- 

Problems and Responses

▶ Topic Map Fragments

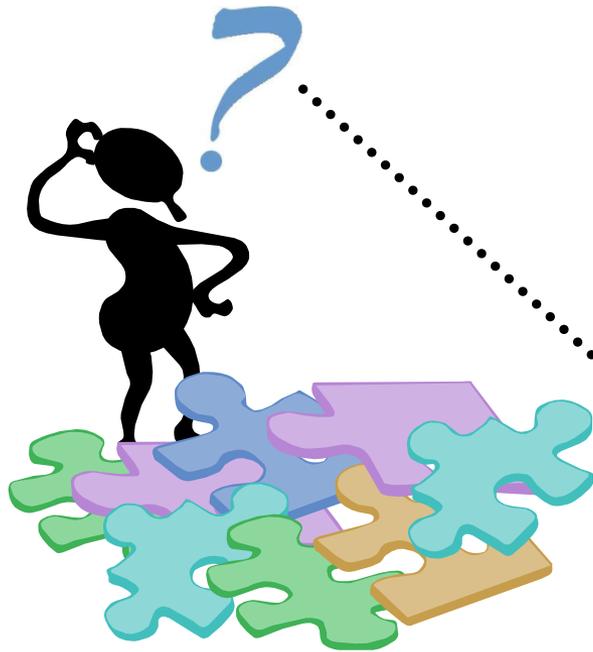
- ▶ encouraging work coming out of EU projects
- ▶ combination of:
 - ▶ ATOM “push” for notification and syndication, and
 - ▶ RESTful “pull” for “topic merge on demand”

▶ Topic Maps as “semantic networks”

- ▶ networks of networks must be possible
- ▶ any topic must be recognizable as a network node

Keeping it all in context

Context and large-scale Information Sharing with Topic Maps



Warning: The contents of these slides are context-dependent.

Different expressions of this work will be available after the conference via:

www.pensive.eu/uid/0203

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...because “Artificial Intelligence” is neither