

Eliciting Attributes

		POSTCARDS									
Attribute	Logical Opposite	15	26	40	11	24	43	19	42	10	23
Photo	Not photo	X	X	X	X	LO	X	X	X	X	LO
Buildings in image	No buildings in image	LO	LO	X	LO	LO	LO	X	LO	X	X
English language	Non-English language	LO	X	X	X	X	X	X	LO	X	LO
Beach scene	Not beach scene	LO	X	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	X	LO
People present	No people present	LO	X	LO	X	LO	LO	LO	LO	X	LO
Set in Hawaii	Set not in Hawaii	LO	X	LO	LO	LO	LO	X	LO	X	LO
Oriented horizontally	Oriented vertically	LO	X	LO	X	X	LO	X	X	X	LO
Personal message incl.	No personal message	X	LO	LO	X	X	LO	LO	X	LO	X
Black & White	Color	X	LO	X	X	LO	LO	LO	X	LO	LO
Postage stamp present	No postage stamp	LO	LO	LO	LO	X	LO	LO	X	LO	X
Ink stamp present	No ink stamp	LO	LO	LO	LO	X	LO	LO	X	LO	X
Holiday themed	Not holiday themed	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO
Recipient address in California	Recipient address not in California	LO	LO	LO	LO	X	LO	LO	X	LO	X
Snowy scene	Not snowy scene	X	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	X
Description of scene	No description of scene	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Barcode present	No barcode present	LO	X	LO	LO	LO	LO	X	LO	LO	LO
Water in scene	No water in scene	LO	X	LO	LO	LO	LO	X	X	X	LO
Portrait	Not portrait	LO	LO	LO	X	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO
Single image on card	Multiple images on card	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Card dated	No date on card	LO	LO	LO	LO	X	LO	LO	X	LO	X
Photograph of single object	Photograph of multiple objects	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	X	LO	LO	LO	LO
Location of image noted on card	No location of image noted	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

(Based on work by Virginia Tucker)

Postcard Data:

Field Name	Field Values
Language	English, French, German, Other, None
Postage Stamp?	Y, N
Location of image noted?	Y, N
Photo?	Y, N
Color	Color, Black & White, Sepia
Dated?	Y, N, Unclear
Portrait	Single person, Multiple people, Not a portrait
Personal Message?	Y, N
Ink Stamp?	Y, N
Orientation	Horizontal, Vertical

Lessons Learned:

1. What problems did you encounter as you elicited attributes and reworked them into fields?

Once I had a list established I reviewed my attributes to see which ones could possibly work as a consolidated field. The only option for consolidation that I saw was with “beach scene,” “snowy scene,” “buildings present,” and “water in scene.” All these attributes deal with the setting of the image, and yet, I couldn’t think of a good way to create a data structure that was comprehensive; setting was too broad of a field for this situation.

2. Were there attributes you elicited that you decided to omit from your data structure? Why did you omit them?

I purposely omitted several attributes from my data structure: “holiday themed,” “photograph of single object,” and “single image on card.” “Holiday themed,” I decided, was not a particularly useful attribute for my data structure. I meant for “photograph of a single object” to help pick out the few cards that had pictures of historical artifacts (the Rosetta Stone, and a statue), but I could not find a wording that I liked, and the wording I used was too unclear to be useful. In retrospect, I maybe could have used “Historical object? Y/N,” but that also seems like too broad of wording... I elicited “Single image on card” from the one postcard that was split into four images rather than just one, but in my data structure I decided that, again, this was a relatively useless attribute.

3. Are there ambiguities in your data structure? Can you think of any ways to remedy this?

I don’t see any ambiguities in my data structure from my perspective, but if someone else were to enter data using my fields they would need the fields defined. For instance, for “Location of image noted?” I was counting a value of “yes” for any card that had the location noted in either the postcard itself (printed or handwritten) or within a personal note on the card. Some people may prefer to only count location as being noted if the location is on the card itself, so it would be important to explicitly explain my field values.

4. What changes did you make to address any issues of mutual exclusivity?

I specified more field values for the fields of “Language,” “Color,” “Dated?” and “Portrait.” For language, I wanted to make it clear that the primary languages were English, French, and German, but in order to make the field comprehensive I had to include “Other” and “None.” For color, I originally had the field values “color” or “black and white,” but I added “sepia” because there was one postcard in sepia and I wasn’t sure where to put it. For date, I added a value of “unclear” because on some cards I could not read the handwriting, or the handwriting was in another language and I could not understand it. For portrait, I wanted the field to be defined “as a photo primarily of a person or people,” and by distinguishing between “Single person” and “Multiple people” I think I helped make this definition clear.

5. How does what you have learned relate to the broader issues in information retrieval discussed in lectures and readings so far?

Much of what we've discussed in lectures and readings so far goes back to having a well-designed structure to increase findability. Part of this design includes controlling vocabulary, as Morville touched on in Chapter 6 of *Ambient Fidelity*. Through this homework assignment, the importance of planning and revising a design before launching it is clear. If I created a data structure before eliciting attributes from my target documents, or began entering data before refining my fields and field values, then I would end up wasting a lot of time re-doing work. By going through the process of planning and refining, I can design a mutually exclusive, yet comprehensive, data structure that won't need constant tweaking as I am using it. Additionally, the controlled vocabulary that I determine in my mutually exclusive, yet comprehensive data structure will make my data more findable.