Concept mapping and dialogue mapping in information seeking practices: a case study

There are huge possibilities for using concept and dialogue mapping tools in information retrieval. With the help of the software the subjects can be analysed and divided into smaller conceptual parts. Then the actual task is easier to carry out.

In the past two years the Helsinki University of Technology TKK library and the Department of Computer Science and Engineering have co-operated with an interesting project. New software for making mind maps, concept maps and dialogue maps are being used for structuring information retrieval. These methods have been studied together, taught on separate courses and presentations about the methods have been given. This project has got a warm reception because the idea can be adapted throughout the university and therefore several departments may benefit.

The paper will discuss the experiences of the project and highlight the possibilities incorporating the concept and dialogue mapping techniques in information literacy activities. Visualization of information seeking increases creativity. Illustrations can also capture complex entities, as demonstrated below in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Information literacy training at TKK](image)
Biographical statement

Jouni Nevalainen
Information Specialist, M.Sc, Mr.
M.Sc. in Engineering 2005. Helsinki University of Technology, Dept. of Electrical and Communications Engineering, Espoo, including Information Research (35 credits).
Helsinki University of Technology Library
jouni.nevalainen@tkk.fi

Kirsi Heino
Information Specialist, M.Sc, Ms.
M.Sc. in Engineering 1993. Helsinki University of Technology, Dept. of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Espoo.
Helsinki University of Technology Library
kirsi.heino@tkk.fi

Virpi Palmgren
Information Specialist, M.Sc, Ms.
M.Sc. in Engineering 1984. Helsinki University of Technology, Dept. of Chemistry, Espoo.
Helsinki University of Technology Library
virpi.palmgren@tkk.fi
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Who are we
Virpi Palmgren
Jouni Nevalainen
Kirs Heino

Where are we from
Helsinki University of Technology in Finnish Teknillinen korkeakoulu = TKK

Main point of our presentation
A new course idea
Information retrieval
Mapping tools

Course producers
Teaching and learning development unit
Laboratory of Software Technology

THJAA (2006-2007)

Mind mapping
For teachers
Topic analysis
Relevant search terms / structures

For master's thesis' students
Concept mapping in use
Eight double lectures once a week
An hour with an information specialist
Optional
Will be organised four times a year

Mapping tools
Mind map (Freemind)
Best suited for explaining things as a whole
Defines relevant concepts
Outlines relations between different concepts related to the topic
Enables identifying, widening and defining search terms
The more you know about the topic the more difficult it is to make the map
English better than Finnish language

Concept map (CmapTools)

Dialogue map (Compendium)
Possible to present questions, answers and reasons
Suitable for planning, problem solving and knowledge creating

Future
Feedback
Was the concept map useful for structuring your master's thesis topic?
Did you utilise the concept map in the information search?
Was the concept map useful when discussing with the instructor or supervisor?
Did the concept map affect the writing process?
How and in which direction did the map develop during the work?
In what kind of situations would you use concept maps in the future?

In conclusion
Using the programs is easy, analysing topics difficult
Takes a lot of time
Requires a lot of practice

Contact information
Jouni Nevalainen (jouni.nevalainen@tkk.fi)
Kirs Heino (kirs.heino@tkk.fi)