Documentary tools in everyday life: the wedding planner

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Abstract
Purpose – This paper aims to analyze documentary planning tools for an everyday life project, the wedding, to study how “document work” is constructed in this setting.

Design/methodology/approach – Using Law and Lynch’s study of birdwatching guides for novices as a framework, nine commercially-available wedding planning guides targeted toward the primary planner, almost universally the bride, were analyzed.

Findings – As Law and Lynch found, part of a novice’s apprenticeship requires learning how to “see” in ways that are socially organized in and through texts. The paper shows how characteristics of birdwatching guides (naturalistic accountability, a picture theory of representation, and the strategic use of texts) are also evident in wedding planners, and how the very features that make these guides usable also occasion troubles for their users. Wedding planning guides treat the bride as a novice and instruct her in seeing wedding-related tasks and times as amenable to management. However, planning a wedding requires multiple tasks and times that may be intertwined in ways that make both their representation and their execution highly complex.

Research limitations/implications – The need for both temporal and thematic access highlights more general problems of knowledge organization in presenting a complex planning project in a linear and paper format.

Originality/value – As workplace principles of time and project management are increasingly applied to everyday life, this paper provides a needed case study of the ways that everyday recordkeeping contributes to the novice bride’s gendered apprenticeship and embeds her work within broader organizational and ideological systems.

Keywords Records management, Information management, Project planning, Time-based management, Marriage

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction
Time pressure has become a way of life in much of the developed world. Individuals and families are advised to (Allen, 2003; Covey, 2004; Larsson and Sanne, 2005) and indeed do (Darrah et al., 2007; Southerton, 2003) actively work to manage the pace of twenty-first century life. One significant component of time management is document...
work (Trace, 2007), including the keeping of records for oneself and for others to plan and organize tasks and to coordinate individual and family schedules.

Numerous documentary planning tools (calendars, daybooks, planners, worksheets) exist for coordinating day-to-day life and for managing larger everyday projects such as undertaking a job search, training for an athletic competition, or planning a social event such as a party or a reunion. This article presents an analysis of nine examples of the organizer/planner genre (Montesi and Owen, 2008) for one such everyday project, the wedding. Wedding planning guides for brides have a dual focus of instruction and personal information management. They therefore provide both a shape and structure to the bride’s organizational work and a site for her own personal record-keeping.

One characteristic of wedding planning guides is that they assume that the reader is a novice. As Trace (2007, p. 146) demonstrates, document work requires the situated understanding of how documents are and ought to be produced and used in a particular setting. Understanding document work is therefore a fundamental part of a novice’s apprenticeship in textually mediated settings, and documentary competence may be a necessary prerequisite to the novice’s acceptance as a full member of a community of practice (Lloyd, 2005, 2007). Knowledge of how to read, write, search, and use documents appropriately is therefore constituted and evaluated through the practices of a specific community (Lloyd, 2005); it is a sociopolitical skill (Andersen, 2006).

Our analytic framework is drawn from Law and Lynch’s (1988) study of guides for novices of another sort: neophyte bird-watchers. While we do not intend to claim that birdwatching and planning a wedding have any significant similarities as activities, we do argue that novices approaching both tasks must learn socially accepted ways of being and acting, and that guidebooks in each setting share some similarities in the ways in which they attempt to present these socially organized activities to novices.

Law and Lynch argued that the ability to identify a bird as a particular type requires competence in a socially organized way of seeing. They described specific characteristics of birdwatching guides and identified some inherent troubles with form and organization that have implications for their use as the novice birdwatcher learns to see in ways appropriate to birdwatching culture. We apply their analytic approach to the study of wedding planners, identifying instead the ways that wedding planners are organized to support the bride-to-be in the process of learning to see the wedding as a project in need of planning, and to see time in ways that allow it to be managed. Our analysis therefore goes beyond a critique of individual tools to consider the inherent challenges in knowledge organization and the affordances of the paper book (Harper and Sellen, 1995), and we consider how this genre of document represents both the project to be organized and the reader/organizer. We pay particular attention to the ways that the guides construct both tasks and times as things to be discerned, planned, and managed. We concur with Suchman (2007, p. 20) that plans are “deeply consequential for the lived activities of those of us who organize our actions in their terms,” and that an analysis of documentary planning tools can be an important first step toward the socially-situated analysis of documents (Frohmann, 2004).

2. Literature review
In 1998, Davenport and Cronin (1998, p. 266) challenged library and information science (LIS) scholars to attend to “the interaction and intersection of the diverse texts
that constitute work in a given domain.” Since that time, LIS studies of document use have been sensitive to the ways that documentation practices intertwine with the organization of work (Davies, 2008; McKenzie, 2006), the accomplishment of accountability (Trace, 2007; Yakel, 2001), and the social construction of subjects such as scientists (Frohmann, 2004; Shankar, 2004, 2007, 2009) and future adults and workers (Trace, 2007, 2009). There has also been a focus on time in information-seeking (Savolainen, 2006), and some analysis of the ways that documents may co-ordinate multiple time lines (Davies and McKenzie, 2004; Yakura, 2002) in complex work environments.

Research into the ways that document work is organized shows that recordkeeping is closely tied to the form and function of the record itself (Shankar, 2009, p. 161). The very nature of records and the ways they are arranged and used give shape to and sustain organizational systems. Recordkeeping acts on privilege and power (Shankar, 2009, p. 161), making some things visible and others invisible. A list or calendar orders chaos (Shankar, 2007; Latour and Woolgar, 1986) in ways that make that order seem natural.

The everyday practices of organizational recordkeeping are therefore embedded in and reproduce the social structures of organizational settings, including science labs, classrooms, and homes, and shape the work that goes on there. Individual recordkeeping both draws its conventions from and contributes to the persistence of larger infrastructures (Star, 1999) that scrutinize norms and build edifices of scientific (Shankar, 2004, 2007, 2009) and institutional (Trace, 2007) memory. Document work follows specific forms, genres, and conventions; identity as a competent member of a community (Shankar, 2009; Trace, 2007; Lloyd, 2007; Law and Lynch, 1988) is contingent on learning and applying these norms, even when they form part of a “hidden curriculum” (Trace, 2007) that is not explicitly articulated (Shankar, 2009).

While several studies have considered the role of documents in paid work of various kinds (Shankar, 2007, 2009), there has been less analysis of recordkeeping in work associated with everyday life (Trace, 2009). A recent focus on personal information management (Jones, 2007, 2008; Jones and Teevan, 2007) has focused attention on personal collections of documents (e.g., Hartel, 2006). To date, however, apart from a vigorous debate about the role and function of personal records (McKemmish, 1996; Harris, 2000; Upward and McKemmish, 2000), and Kalms’ (2008) study of the characteristics of the household information environment, little work has considered the organizational recordkeeping associated with everyday life.

The “white” or “traditional” wedding is one everyday life project that has received a great deal of attention both from publishers of guidebooks and from the academic community. In 2009, the Global Books in Print database showed more than 500 books with the subject term “wedding planners.” The flourishing of wedding planning guides is part of a larger phenomenon, a “wedding ideological complex” (Ingraham, 2008) of transnational production and media messages that tells girls from early childhood that their wedding is the most important day of their lives and provides them with models of how it should be done. While brides themselves cannot be considered to be members of a wedding-related community of practice (see, for example, Freed, 1999), they interact with communities of practice comprised of wedding planning professionals, florists, owners and employees of bridal salons and others who form part of the
wedding ideological complex and therefore have specific and well-defined opinions about wedding planning.

Several sociologists, anthropologists, and feminist scholars have demonstrated that the twenty-first century white wedding co-opts a toothless “traditionalesque” (Mead, 2007) in order to add color to a wedding ceremony while ignoring the wedding’s origins in institutionalized male dominance and heterosexuality (Geller, 2001; Ingraham, 2008; Kingston, 2004). For example, although wedding planning guides overwhelmingly target the bride and explicitly instruct her on how to plan her wedding, she is assumed to have been dreaming of, if not actively planning, her wedding since childhood: “A film reel of your wedding has probably been playing in your head ever since you dressed up Barbie and Ken and walked them down the aisle. Now’s your chance to star in your own production . . .” (Gerin and Rosenbaum, 2001, p. 5). Even wedding guides for same-sex couples acknowledge that two women will potentially have an easier time planning than two men because women have often grown up fantasizing about their weddings (Ayers and Brown, 1999, p. 40). The bride is also considered to be the person most invested in the outcome of successful wedding planning because it is she who gains in social status (Pepin et al., 2008, p. 340). While Pepin et al. (2008) found that the few wedding books targeted toward grooms convey conflicting ideas of masculinity, we argue that wedding planning guides targeted to the primary planner (the bride in all guides for heterosexual couples) treat the wedding as a project in need of management. In doing so, they simultaneously structure time and provide an appropriately gendered identity for the bride-to-be as “both ethereal icon and micromanager” (Geller, 2001, p. 296; see also Boden, 2001; Sniezek, 2005).

3. Research methods

Law and Lynch (1988) identified and described in detail several characteristics of three popular field guides for novice birdwatchers. Our analysis applies their framework to our larger sample of wedding planning guides. Law and Lynch’s (1988) analysis rests on the premise that the novice birdwatcher experiences what Wittgenstein called “aspect blindness” insofar as he/she can recognize that a bird is a duck but cannot yet specify what kind of duck it is (Law and Lynch, 1988). Aspect blindness, then, is the defining characteristic of a novice, and the task of the novice birdwatcher is to learn the “descriptive organization of seeing” (Law and Lynch, 1988, p. 270) with the goal of being able to contribute to collectively-constructed bird lists. There is a concomitant concept – “aspect dawning” – that occurs when a viewer finally “sees” although more correctly “perceives” or “interprets” an object differently (Glock, 1996, p. 39). In the birdwatching context, aspect dawning occurs when the novice looks at a specimen and “sees” for the first time that it is a particular species. As Amerine and Bilmes (1988, p. 333) state, “competence in dealing with instructions is at the same time a very situated competence in ‘viewing the world,’ or ‘seeing what is there,’ according to the account of things embodied in the instructions.”

Law and Lynch extended Wittgenstein’s concept of the “language game” to include the textual guides as a party to a “literary language game” that incorporates “textual expression within the socially organized competency” of seeing a bird as a distinct variety (Law and Lynch, 1988, p. 295, ref. 2). “Naturalistic” observation therefore requires an apprenticeship in a social organization of reading and writing, and
“natural” kinds and characteristics of birds are discovered and organized through the texts.

The bride-to-be as reader of a wedding planner is also construed as suffering from aspect blindness. We take wedding planning guides as one of the “parties” to the literary language game of planning a wedding. We argue that planning a wedding requires a similar apprenticeship that organizes the discovery, management, and documentation of seemingly “natural” and taken-for-granted temporal sequences, periods, and rhythms; the novice bride must be taught to “see” the wedding as something that must be planned, to see herself as the rightful planner, and to see time in the many different guises it assumes in successful wedding planning. Where Law and Lynch consider the characteristics through which novice guides construct “seeing” as a socially organized set of practices, we consider these same characteristics in relation to seeing and documenting time.

Law and Lynch also observed that, no matter how well-organized the field guide, it occasioned “troubles” for the novice user, which they saw as deeply imbedded in the organization of the novice’s learning. Troubles did not reflect deficiencies of the novice, but were rather inherent to the tools designed to guide the novice. Troubles were both ubiquitous (e.g. troubles with the actual bulk of the manual), and specific to each manual (e.g., access points, organization, indexing, different forms of representation, absences and omissions). “The representational conventions which give each text its distinctive advantage as a field guide can therefore simultaneously be sources of trouble” (Law and Lynch, 1988, p. 287). As they analyzed the troubles inherent in fixing a moving, physical bird in space through diagrams and illustrations, we analyze the troubles that emerge as wedding planners and organizers attempt to fix a fluid, ever-changing set of activities in time through the use of checklists, worksheets, and calendars.

Our overarching research questions are:

- What are the characteristics of the literary language game of planning a wedding?
- How are the characteristics of birdwatching guides identified by Law and Lynch (1988) (naturalistic accountability, a picture theory of representation, and the strategic use of texts) also evident in wedding planners?
- How do the very features that make these guides usable also occasion troubles for their users?

Our sample consists of nine commercially-available, English-language wedding planning guides, published within the previous ten years:

The wedding planning guides were available to a potential bride-to-be in local bookstores in London, Ontario and Halifax, Nova Scotia, or available through online booksellers. Within this constraint we purposively sampled for maximum variation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 102). Variations were selected for North American country of origin: seven were American publications, two were Canadian; six of the planners were for weddings considered “traditional”; that is, heterosexual, Christian (or possibly Jewish) or secular. Three planners were selected because they seek to represent alternative viewpoints including gay weddings (Ayers and Brown, 1999), pagan rites (Rhea, 2001), and the “anti-bride” who declares herself against everything mainstream wedding planners advocate (Gerin and Rosenbaum, 2001). Except for the lesbian and gay guide, the sampled books considered the bride both the principal organizer and the primary audience. The selected guides were neither “destination wedding” planners nor guides for people re-marrying.

We divided most titles for analysis as was most convenient for purchasing and shipping between our two cities. We selected one title, The Knot, to be analyzed by both researchers. According to Plunkett Research Online (Plunkett, 2009), the parent company, The Knot, Inc., is one of the world’s leading wedding media and services companies. Its web site, TheKnot.com, receives over 2 million unique visitors per month and The Knot Wedding Shop is one of the largest online wedding retailers in the world. The company sells over 1,000 products and publishes several national- and regional-level periodicals that cover “every major wedding planning decision.” In January 2009, the company acquired WedSnap, a developer of online social networking applications for weddings. As a publication of a comprehensive wedding business, The Knot’s wedding planning guide is an exemplar of the wedding ideological complex.

We developed an analytic template that listed and described the characteristics and troubles identified by Law and Lynch. Individually we systematically analyzed each guide for the applicability and characteristics of each of Law and Lynch’s conceptual categories. We then compared notes, noting similarities and resolving differences in interpretation and identifying areas where deeper analysis might be necessary. Through this inductive, iterative, and interactive process, and by paying particular attention to our analyses of The Knot guide, we developed confidence that we were working from a common understanding of the analytic framework.

4. Findings
While Law and Lynch devoted a great deal of attention to the individual characteristics of their guides, we provide an overview of the ways that these same characteristics appear in wedding planners, and then move on for a fuller consideration of the troubles
occasioned by these characteristics, highlighting the implications of the decisions made in each guide and the troubles inherent in representing the times and tasks of a multifaceted planning project in a linear and paper format (Harper and Sellen, 1995).

4.1 Characteristics

This section shows how wedding planners exhibit characteristics common among birdwatching field guides (Law and Lynch, 1988, pp. 273-4): naturalistic accountability; a picture theory of representation; and a strategic use of texts.

4.1.1 Naturalistic accountability

Birdwatching guides (and their novice users) operate on a set of commitments: that bird species exist in nature; that they can be identified and indexed on the basis of sensory (mainly visual, but also audible) evidences; that separate species can be identified and named; and that species can be represented in paradigmatic illustrations and described in texts. The entire literary language game relies upon and testifies to these naturalistic assumptions (Law and Lynch, 1988, pp. 273-4).

Wedding planners can likewise be understood to operate on a set of commitments. The naturalistic accountability of wedding planners is predicated on the socially-determined facts that there is an event called a wedding and that weddings require planning and managing. Further, the literary language game works on the assumption that a wedding will be a disaster if planning is not done both properly and in a timely fashion. Although many people might be involved, planning is presented as really the bride-to-be’s responsibility. Each component of the wedding has its unique qualities that must be discerned and understood so that the bride can: make appropriate decisions and manage logistics (Lluch and Lluch, 2004).

The literary language game relies on this division of labor and provides the mechanisms for both effecting and documenting it. Planning can be (and in some cases will inevitably be) stressful but is promised to be less so if the bride is organized:

Once the initial surprise and excitement of the engagement has subsided, it is time to settle down, put your nose to the grindstone, and, like a field general, start mapping out a battle plan for your wedding. Make no mistake about it, planning your wedding will be a battle: a battle to get everything as coordinated, beautiful, on time, and generally perfect as your most important day should be. It’s often a challenge, but take heart; if you go about it the right way, you will get it all done (Hagen, 2006, p. 17).

Good recordkeeping is taken as a crucial component of good planning and, indeed, several of the guides contain instructions for their own use. Wedding Bells, for example, begins with a section entitled “How to use this planner” (Stewart, 2000, p. 5) which instructs the reader to: browse through the book to get an idea of what is in it, begin with the Countdown Checklist called a “chronological reminder list,” which refers the reader to the other sections of the book, record contact notes in the Personalized Wedding Planning Directory at the back of the book, jot down Must-Do’s at the end of each section, and write appointment dates on Reminder pages.

4.1.2 Picture theory of representation. Law and Lynch (1988, pp. 273-4) describe the picture theory of representation as “an idealization of the potential correspondence that can be achieved between a representation in the text and ‘the bird in the field.’”. Wedding planners likewise contain pictures and other graphical representations that are taken to correspond to some aspect of the planning process. Planners adopt
conventions in representing time and steps in the planning process. Lists are the most common representations of tasks to be done, however many other forms exist. These include charts, worksheets, tables, floor plans, diagrams, as well as color and black-and-white photographs, illustrations, and blank space that is meant to be filled in by the user of the planner. The Pagan guide contains an appendix advising on how to word invitations and create information sheets for non-Pagan participants and guests. Very Best provides a form to record the seating arrangements for a church wedding. The form devotes one page to the bride’s family section and one to groom’s. Each “section” contains eight pews with room for seven people in each. There is no explanation of where these paper sections might be located in a physical church. In fact, the “tradition” of seating the bride’s family on the left side of a church and the groom’s on the right is not mentioned: it is assumed that the reader (or at least the ushers) will know where to seat people.

4.1.3 Strategic use of texts. Captions and descriptions make birdwatching guides usable “in the field” (Law and Lynch, 1988). Texts are likewise used strategically in wedding planning guides. Photographs tend not to be captioned: journalistic detail is avoided in favor of constructing a depersonalized image of a timeless fairy-tale wedding. The reader must be able to see herself in the same or similar setting, dress, hairstyle, shoes, reception, etc.

In wedding planners, the descriptive text may or may not interact with the instructions presented in other forms. Sometimes, the text serves to reinforce and expand upon the instructions given in checklists or tables. The descriptive text of Rich Bride expands on the items on its master organizing checklist. An example from the master checklist is to book the florist up to one year in advance of the wedding. The chapter called “Coming up roses” provides reasons for the long lead time: the popularity of certain florists and the ability to see the flowers that will be in season when the wedding takes place. Planners do not always use the potential of their descriptive text to explain, however; indeed, a functional planner like Wedding Bells has very little descriptive text compared to the number of worksheets and tables provided.

4.2 Troubles
Although novices are typically presented as unskilled or precompetent (Trace, 2007), Law and Lynch (1988, p. 287) argued that the troubles experienced by users of bird identification guides are related to the organizational conventions of the field guides rather than to the novice birders themselves. Wedding planners’ organizational conventions also create troubles for the novice bride.

4.2.1 Troubles with multiple times. While purporting to adhere to the linear, project time of project management guides, wedding planners in fact represent time in a multiplicity of ways that may be very difficult for the bride to navigate. There is universal, astronomical time with its standard measures of seasons, days, and minutes. Social time is constituted by the interaction of human beings with their environment, particularly their interaction with one another (Adam, 1995, p. 80). Biological or embodied time is often placed in contradistinction with the “clock time” of industrial work (Adam, 1998). Indexical time is time that is dependent upon a situation for significance (Suchman, 2007). For example, the “last minute” is universally represented as the worst possible time to do something. However, the last minute is rarely 60
seconds long. It may be measured in weeks or months if a wedding dress has to be re-ordered, for instance.

While countdown checklists are presented in years, months, weeks and days, the “to-do” items on the lists reflect different temporalities. References to June or July weddings in these planners are for a northern hemisphere readership expecting more daylight and warmer temperatures. The Pagans planner, while suggesting that certain periods of the pagan calendar are inappropriate for heartjoinings, such as the Time of Chaos, also incorporates biological time in measuring intervals during the rite in number of heartbeats.

Fairly standard to all the planners are the indexical times associated with traditional weddings. Engagement is the time between the couple’s agreeing to marry and the official ceremony. It is referred to variously as a time that “provides you with the opportunity to prepare yourself for married life” (Ayers and Brown, 1999, p. 25), and a period of one year (Roney, 1999, p. 1) which will aid in acquiring the best vendors. While all weddings can be considered to have an engagement period, the length of time is highly variable, though woe betide the bride-to-be whose engagement is too short. She is told cheerfully that she will need to telescope the process:

“If you have less than a year to plan your celebration, you can combine the activities in multiple months and still have a workable plan – although a somewhat abbreviated one!” (Smolen and Ross, 2004, p. 7).

Lesbian and Gay (Ayers and Brown, 1999, p. 82), however, indicates that a “quickie” wedding can be run with a minimum of three weeks’ lead time.

The day of the wedding ceremony is often called “the big day,” “your big day,” or “your day.” “Day” refers to a particular date on a calendar chosen in an important planning step known as “setting the date.” Calendar time in this case is vital as a boundary object (Star and Griesemer, 1989; Yakura, 2002; Davies and McKenzie, 2004) for co-coordinating activities as well as distributed groups and individuals who are in consensus about the calendar. The “big day” is a regular workday for the vendors and the musicians, and it may be an extra workday or even overtime for the officiant. The day of the ceremony will continue being marked and remarked upon in the couple’s future as the day of their “anniversary.” “Day” is also commonly used to refer to the date when wedding ceremonies occur even if the ceremony is in the evening. Time of day is also significant in planning because, according to the planners, wardrobe, the reception, and the type of food are all affected by time of day. Bridesmaids may wear black, for instance, if the wedding is held in the evening. Guests will expect a full meal and a dance if the wedding is held in the evening. Guests will expect a full meal and a dance if the wedding is after a certain time of day.

Planners try to “fix” a fluid and ever-changing set of activities in chains such as checklists and countdowns. What is required for this to happen successfully is that a consensus must emerge around the “seeing” of linear time, despite the often confusing multiplicity of times that are in fact presented and not always acknowledged. The players in the literary language game must adopt the same perspective and not question the “naturalness” of linear time – “the time of project and history” (Ermarth, 1989, p. 42).

4.2.2 Troubles with temporal and thematic access. Planning a wedding requires that many decisions be made, information may need to be gathered, and records kept, before, during, and after the decision-making process. While each planner takes a
slightly different approach to fixing topics in time pre- and post-decision, not all planners are successful in ordering, combining, and cross-referencing the tasks and decisions both thematically and temporally. Allowing for both kinds of access requires duplication, which increases the bulk and decreases the portability of the planners, while also increasing the complexity of way-finding for the reader. Organizing tasks and decisions into lists of detailed steps imposes priorities and linearity (descending order) even if the decision-making and planning are not linear processes.

A large portion of planners is devoted to the many products and services the bride is advised to purchase. Most of these purchases must be initiated well in advance of their consumption. In its simplest form, the purchasing process has several steps in more or less the following order:

1. Identify vendors providing the product or service.
2. Research vendors, identify which specific products or services they offer.
3. Explore the offerings of each vendor.
4. Select specific vendor/service/product.
5. Place order or make reservation.
6. Communicate with vendor to make final adjustments as needed.
7. Receive product or service in its final form.

Each of these many stages might require decisions to be made and the bride might wish to keep a documentary record both of prospective (possibilities considered) and retrospective (decisions made) details.

For example, the wedding dress is an item that is universally presented as requiring many months of advance planning and decision-making. First, the bride-to-be must explore specialist “salons” (Corrado, 2002) or other sources for dresses, then she must explore designers and styles. At some point, she must select both a supplier and a gown. Then, if going the salon route, the bride puts herself in the hands of the salon owners who order, alter and fit, and re-alter and refit the dress and then sell her accessories. There are multiple decisions in this process but the planners do not always support multi-step decision making.

The planners pinpoint a particular moment, or occasionally two moments, in the process and freeze it in time with a single worksheet or checklist. Everything pinpoints a moment after the dress has been chosen and allows for recording the fittings, payments, and pickup, but would be useless for someone scouring the telephone directory for salon names and addresses. The Knot has a checklist recommending neckline styles for different face and figure characteristics, so it seems to be designed for earlier in the process. Wedding Bells recommends shopping for a wedding dress anywhere from six to 18 months in advance and refers the reader to a tabbed section called “The bride.” The first page is a series of tips on “Working with a bridal salon” (Stewart, 2000, p. 33). No alternative path to a wedding dress is presented. The following page is a “Bridal Fashion Worksheet” reflecting decisions already made, such as the contact details for the salon where the dress was purchased. The page facing the worksheet is blank and is meant for a picture or sketch of the chosen gown. The various decisions will either need to be left unrecorded, or recorded elsewhere. Neither the Everything planner nor Wedding Bells dedicate space for a list of possible styles or designers or even vendors. Somewhere in Wedding Bells’ amorphous time
“six to 18 months ahead,” a lot of evaluating, deciding and possibly even fittings have occurred but they are not listed, and the guides do not provide places for the bride to record her plans or decisions.

The planners in our sample took very different approaches to structuring the steps for documentation. The Knot has a very regular and predictable series of worksheets for each product or service to be considered: worksheets for recording names and addresses of several potential vendors, worksheets of questions to ask when selecting a vendor, and then worksheets to support working with a single selected vendor: profiles of the chosen vendor’s offerings, then listings of the final details of the selected services or wares. Both BYA and Very Best are thicker, provide multiple pre-vendor-selection worksheets to compare details point-by-point about the products and services offered by multiple vendors, then provide other pages to write in the details that have been finally decided upon. Very Best has both pre-selection and post-selection worksheets.

The other planners that even provide space to be filled in regarding vendors do not consider the pre-decision stage. Wedding Bells directs the reader from an entry reminding the bride to start thinking about the wedding cake on the initial countdown checklist at “Three months ahead” (Stewart, 2000, p. 15) to an awkwardly-organized single-page “Wedding cake worksheet” (Stewart, 2000, p. 139) with the baker’s name and contact information at the top of the page followed by the number of guests to be served, the type of cake ordered, and payment and delivery details. The middle third of the page is a paragraph titled “Things to discuss with your baker” and focuses on topics that might have influenced which baker would have been selected such as the shape and style of decoration of the cake, although it only provides space to record these details about the baker who was eventually selected. This guide telescopes the decision-making process and goes straight to providing a record of decisions made.

This crucial trouble in the organization of wedding planners reflects a “[pause] in the midst of fluent practice which reflexively [calls] forth taken-for-granted organizations of activity” (Law and Lynch, 1988, p. 287). Since the worksheets tend to document decisions made rather than reflect the decision-making process on paper, the term “worksheets” is misleading and, to the uninitiated eye, might even serve to make the selection, ordering, and purchasing process seem more straightforward than it actually is.

4.2.3 Troubles with consistency across representational forms. The descriptive prose text of the planners also includes instruction, which may or may not be fixed into the charts, checklists, worksheets, diagrams. The strategic relationships among these various types of presentation are inconsistent. Other forms variously repeat, expand, compress/contract, stand in for, or fail to acknowledge what is in the textual portions.

For example, a description of the wedding dress from Rich Bride advises: “don’t do too much research”; “Before you go [shopping], check the rules at your ceremony venue”; “a dress can take up to eight months to manufacture, and you should allow two months after that for alterations” so the bride is advised to start shopping a year in advance.

The overall checklist from the same guide contains the following elements:

- Nine months to one year: order the wedding dress.
- Two months: make appointments for dress fittings; schedule the final dress fitting.
- One week: pick up the wedding dress (Buckley, 2008, pp. 18-19).
Advice about when to start shopping is not on the checklist, and neither is anything about checking venue rules about exposed cleavage or shoulders. The first mention of the dress on the checklist is simply “Order dress.”

4.2.4 Troubles with co-ordination of multiple timelines and resources. Like mapmakers, the creators of wedding planning guides use projection that situates the planner in one time and the reader in another, and lets the reader assume that what is not listed can be known based on what is listed. The use of various kinds (and multiple) timelines and checklists gives a patchwork picture of the interconnected components for which the bride is held responsible. Wedding planning involves multiple timelines that may be individually coherent but when managed together become unduly complex. Both Anti-bride and The Knot present tasks late in the book as “to-have-done” rather than “to-do,” with no reference to them in the context in which they ought to have been done. For example, the bride is advised that the ornateness of the venue should complement the flowers. This is mentioned during the relatively-late-in-the-process discussion of flower planning but the reader is not reminded to be to be thinking about flowers as she evaluates potential ceremony and reception sites a year or more before the event. The final chapter of Anti-bride concerns the honeymoon, and presents several tasks to which the bride should already have attended (e.g., buying wedding things with a credit card that collects airline bonus points and then using these to pay for the honeymoon, insuring all belongings, including wedding gifts before departure, booking the honeymoon for off-peak travel times) but none of these issues are raised in the other relevant chapters. Advice about choosing the wedding date makes no mention of the relationship between the wedding and the honeymoon, and “peak” wedding times are presented in relation to demands on ceremony and reception sites, not to travel trends. Although the descriptive chapters and checklists present themselves as stand-alone, the reader must in reality read and absorb the entire book in order to make each section workable.

4.2.5 Troubles with illustrations. Some of the planners, Rich Bride, The Knot, Very Best, and BYA are lavishly illustrated and one – Pagans – not at all. Photographs are not instructional, nor are they illustrating styles or techniques. They seem to be offered as inspiration for fantasy. Photographs tend to be of brides and grooms on their wedding day. Rich Bride includes photographs of planning but they are limited to the day of the ceremony and depict the bridal party getting dressed or made up. The bride-to-be is never depicted as doing any of the organizational tasks delineated in detail in the planners: there are no photographs of her on the telephone or the computer, choosing china patterns, or consulting with a reception band or bridal salon staff. In a style reminiscent of home decorating magazines, Wedding Bells’ photographs do not depict people. Instead, flowers, champagne flutes, and food are pictured.

The purpose of the photographs may be connected with the recurrent theme of vision and envisioning, (“dream,” “picture yourself,” “imagine,” “your wedding vision”). Wedding planners invite fantasy and imagination. Other kinds of project management guides, on the other hand, prefer more concrete language: develop, construct, facilitate, manage, implement, initiate, clarify, achieve, deliver (e.g. Hill, 2003, p. 99). Regardless of the language used, the end result is clear in the mind of the person principally responsible for planning. Being able to see the end result is vital to willingness to follow instructions and instructions are indeed what the wedding planning guides contain. Instructions “by their very nature lead us to expect that,
assuming we have followed them correctly, the projected outcome will occur” (Amerine and Bilmes, 1988, p. 335).

Other troubles arise from the use of any type of paper guide. These “ubiquitous” (Law and Lynch, 1988, pp. 291-3) troubles are discussed below.

4.2.6 Troubles with the actual bulk of the manual. Birdwatchers find themselves juggling identification guides and binoculars while in the field (Law and Lynch, 1988). Brides-to-be are expected – at least judging by the instructions and marketing blurbs – to carry their planners with them at all times and to inscribe the details leading up to the wedding. The planners we analyzed had physical characteristics that made portability and usability challenging, despite a wide variety of shapes and sizes being described as “purse-sized.” Four of the nine have perfect binding – pages glued to the spine – which means that they do not fold back or lie flat easily and they take up more space when opened than when closed. Another four of the planners are spiral-bound, supposedly allowing the book to fold back on itself and use its own bulk to support the writing surface. Very Best is ring-bound, and although its instructions advise the bride-to-be to photocopy worksheets to distribute to her wedding party, the large rings would make it physically very difficult to position the page close enough to the photocopier’s platen to make a legible copy. Bride’s Year Ahead is the heaviest planner at 1.17 kilograms (about 2.5 pounds).

Writing in the planners “in the field” is limited not just by the binding and dimensions of the book but by the blank space provided for the bride’s contributions. Some planners, like The Knot and Wedding Bells, have a number of blank forms and seem to invite a more interactive relationship between themselves and the bride-to-be. However, the Rich Bride and Lesbian and Gay planners have little or no dedicated space for inscription. One’s own wedding is forced to become marginalia.

4.2.7 Place-finding in the text. Anti-Bride and BYA provide physical tools (satin ribbons or color-matched elastic) to mark one’s place. As discussed earlier, temporal and thematic access are often at odds with each other in navigating one’s way through the wedding planners. Chronological order is quite different when looked at from a planning perspective than it may be while it is being experienced. For example, the reception site should be chosen early in the planning stages because a lot of other decisions are framed as being dependent on that one (number of guests, decorating for the reception, type of music, food, etc.) but the reception itself happens later in the day of the wedding. Few planners are organized to reflect either the order in which things should be planned or the order in which they will be experienced on the wedding day. The early chapters of the Everything guide proceed more or less consistently with the order of tasks listed in the earliest days of the 12-month countdown checklist, and the text itself provides guidance on the order in which to read the chapters. However, this correspondence breaks down quite quickly. As it does, the in-text guidance on ordering falls flat and the checklists and the text in the chapters move gamely on as two solitudes.

Only BYA orders chapters in “countdown” fashion, starting from “Twelve months ahead.” However, a month-by-month organization of chapters requires that a chapter’s worth of activities be assigned to each month. The other guides indicate a relative lull between the twelve-months-before arrangement of reception space and the flurry of activities that begin six to nine months before the wedding. BYA, with a structure that requires filling this gap, prescribes a detailed physical and psychological
self-assessment and makeover for the bride at ten months ahead: “Your personal best: Assess your looks, set goals for personal improvement, design a beauty and fitness plan, practice the art of managing stress.” The structure of this guide both allows for and provides time for singling out the bride’s personal characteristics for direct scrutiny in a way that is not evident in any of the other guides: this is the only guide in which cosmetic surgery is mentioned.

4.2.8 Troubles with specimens not in the book. An assumption underlying the wedding planners’ organizational discourse is the bride’s biographical trajectory. The assumed reader of most of the planners is a first-time bride, who is heterosexual and without children. Although the Knot guide mentions family commitment ceremonies for step-parents and -children to-be, very little attention is given in the traditional planners to second marriages, what to do with any children the engaged couple may already have together, a pregnant bride, and gay marriages. With respect to planning and organizing time, there are also some omissions. The Knot explains that the week before the wedding is full of wedding-related tasks; there is no indication that the happy couple might have other things to be doing this week, such as work, school, military service, or tending to a sick child.

Although attendants may be charged with taking the gown to the cleaner or returning rented formal wear, and thank-you letters are still to be written, time essentially stops for the bride at the end of the reception. A wedding lasts for hours and a honeymoon, potentially, for weeks. However, when measured in terms of pages rather than minutes the honeymoon is much shorter than the wedding. Very Best does not mention a honeymoon at all, so any content related to timing of the ceremony/honeymoon planning in the course of the engagement period, and the transition from the wedding/reception to the honeymoon itself (the “getaway”) is not provided. Rich Bride devotes a small entry on the last page of the text advising the couple to “go on a honeymoon” (Buckley, 2008, p. 203). Honeymoon planning appears in the checklist at the beginning of the book but lacks specificity: “Plan your honeymoon” (Buckley, 2008, p. 18). The only other advice in the text relates to thinking ahead about packing for the honeymoon and advice not to leave it to the last minute. Anti-Bride does acknowledge that the honeymoon might be limited by the amount of time the couple has off work. Only the Lesbian and Gay planner, published before same-sex marriage was legalized anywhere in North America, makes any mention of thinking about or planning for the marriage that comes after the wedding.

5. Discussion
If we consider guidebooks in relation to their role in instructing novices in the socially organized competencies associated with a particular setting, it is possible to identify common characteristics of novice guides as a documentary genre even across settings as diverse as birdwatching and planning a wedding. We have demonstrated that Law and Lynch’s analytic criteria do in fact apply in a very different kind of domain. The concepts of naturalistic accountability, a picture theory of representation, and the strategic use of texts are useful for discussing forms of knowledge representation in novice guidebooks generally. Whether by picture, list, or worksheet, novice guides use graphical representations in a way that purports to map onto reality. But not just any reality: reality as understood and taken for granted within a community of
practitioners. One of the novice’s tasks is to learn to see this reality as they do, as a naturalistic representation of life as it is.

Some troubles are likewise ubiquitous, inherent in the affordances of bound paper guidebooks (Harper and Sellen, 1995) regardless of domain. Guidebooks must trade off comprehensiveness for manageable size and ease of access. Access points may be multiple and it may be difficult to identify and locate the appropriate one under the constraints imposed “in the field.” Finally, a single guidebook cannot represent all cases; there will always be specimens not in the book.

Despite these similarities, there are also important differences between Law and Lynch’s birdwatching guides and our wedding planners. The most significant is perhaps that wedding planning guides both instruct and provide a place for the user to document her progress through the instruction. While birdwatching guides may provide margins in which to write notes about observations, or blank lines or checkboxes through which to compile a life list, recordkeeping is not a primary function. Wedding planning guides both instruct a bride how to plan and keep records and provide a place for her to do the planning and recordkeeping. This combination both shapes and documents the bride’s planning work. Another important difference is wedding planners’ combined attention to time and task. Understanding the multiplicity of times represented in planners and attending to the troubles inherent in providing both temporal and thematic access can provide a basis from which LIS researchers can increase their understanding of temporal issues in information seeking and documentation (Savolainen, 2006).

6. Conclusions
As workplace principles of time and project management are increasingly applied to everyday life, this article has provided both a case study and a framework for analyzing tools for recordkeeping in the service of an everyday life project. An analysis of wedding planning guides provides insight into the ways that wedding planners instruct novice brides to do document work (Trace, 2007) and into the broader characteristics of planners as a genre (Montesi and Owen, 2008). Insights in these areas can help to show how documentary planning tools give shape to and sustain the practices of larger communities of practice (Lloyd, 2007) and broader organizational systems (Shankar, 2007, 2009), and how the role of the novice bride is constituted within those communities and systems (Trace, 2007).

As Law and Lynch (1988) found, the ability to observe seemingly “natural” categories is the result of an apprenticeship in a particular social organization of reading and writing in which these categories are discovered and organized through texts. Wedding planners structure tasks, times, and events in ways that indicate their relationships to one another and their importance to the overall goal, although, as has been seen, with varying degrees of success. The planning instructions also reveal much about the way the bride herself ought to behave, the expectations she must meet, and the ways that her own recordkeeping practices contribute to her emerging identity as fully competent in the socially organized practices associated with planning a wedding. Wedding planning guides communicate the not-so-hidden curriculum (Trace, 2007) of the wedding-ideological complex (Ingraham, 2008), introducing the modern bride “to the classic role of the upper-middle-class wife of the 2000s: a woman who has both a fulltime career and primary responsibility for supervising social events and other
domestic tasks” (Jellison, 2008, p. 234). In order to plan a wedding successfully, brides-to-be using commercially-available wedding planners must learn to see and navigate the multiple times of a social rite of passage in which they are both the star and the director, whose organizational skills must never be seen to overpower their fairy-tale glamour.

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