

Restoring Sagacity to Common Sense



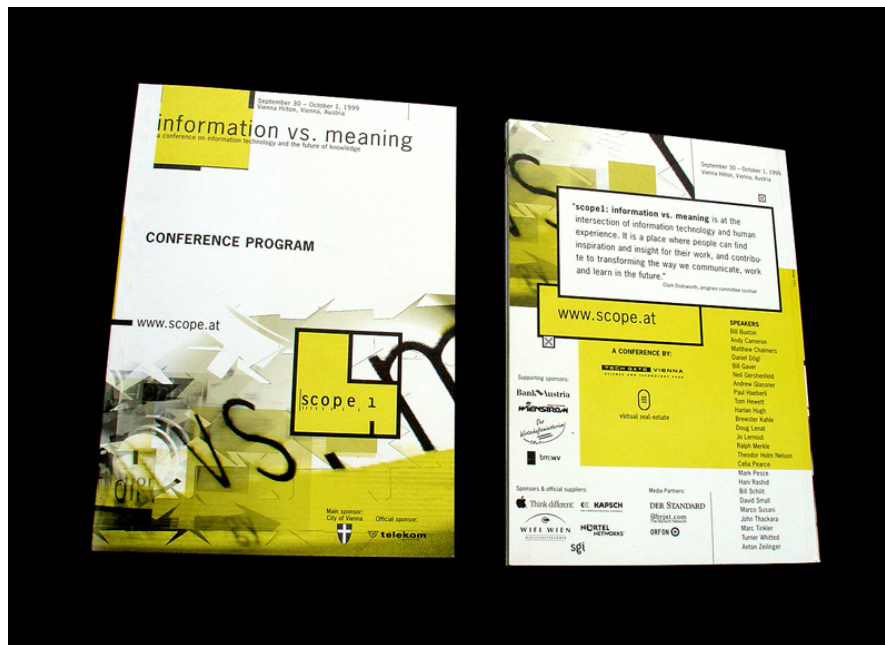
Evoking a new way of thinking.

Evidence: "Meaning" versus "Information"

Intuitively, it's hard for us to separate information from meaning. Informally, we consider them to be the same thing. But in information theory, they're very different. Meaning is what happens when you interpret a piece of information in some context.

Shannon, Kolmogorov-Chaitin information theory is focused on quantification – that is, on being able to measure the quantity of information in a string of characters. It doesn't care what the string means. Information theory cares about how much information is in a string; it doesn't care what the string means. In fact, you can say something much stronger about information theory: if you consider meaning at all, then you're not doing information theory. A truly abstract string could mean many different things: information theory's measurement of its information content must include everything that could be used relative to any possible system of meaning to determine the information content of a string.

Thus to find meaning in information is to consider context.



“We now live in a world where information is potentially unlimited. Information is cheap, but meaning is expensive. Where is the meaning? Only human beings can tell you where it is. We’re extracting meaning from our minds and our own lives.”

- George Dyson