

Robert Coords

Database Management

Professor Labouseur

### Short Essay: Data vs. Information

One imagined database that could be in use today would be a database used by Arkham Asylum to document the names of the prisoners Batman has incarcerated there, associating each individual with a Prisoner ID. The Prisoner IDs are integer values and the associated prisoners' names are stored as strings. An example might be the Prisoner ID 94701 and the String "Hugo Strange", which is associated with the given Prisoner ID within the database. In the database the integers that are the IDs and the Strings that are the names represent the "data" stored within the database. The database organizes these meaningless pieces of "data" into significant pieces of "information" by giving the data context. The data is organized into tables, such that anyone who sees an integer in the Prisoner ID column recognizes it as Prisoner ID, not just a random integer. The same goes for the Strings in the Names column. The integers in the Prisoner ID column are also given additional context by being associated with a name in the Names column of the database. This is how the data within the database is organized into information.

The data within the above-mentioned database is meaningless without context. For example, the integer 94701 is meaningless without context. However, when it is observed within the context of the Arkham Asylum database, the integer 94701 represents the Prisoner ID for an incarcerated prisoner whose name is listed as "Hugo Strange". When this piece of data is given context and organized into information, it can be very valuable to the individuals who reference this database. As mentioned before, the Prisoner ID 94701 is connected to the name "Hugo

Strange”, allowing anyone who is referencing files associated with the Prisoner whose ID is 94701 to know that the file is about that man. Additionally, if the database system used by this prison was designed intelligently, the Prisoner IDs should be consistent between databases used at the facility. Thus, the information associated with Prisoner ID 94701 in other databases used by the facility could be connected to the prisoner whose name is “Hugo Strange”.