

Sketch Your Mind 2025

How I Write My Books

Visual Structures That Help You Think

Jorge Arango
jarango.com/speaking

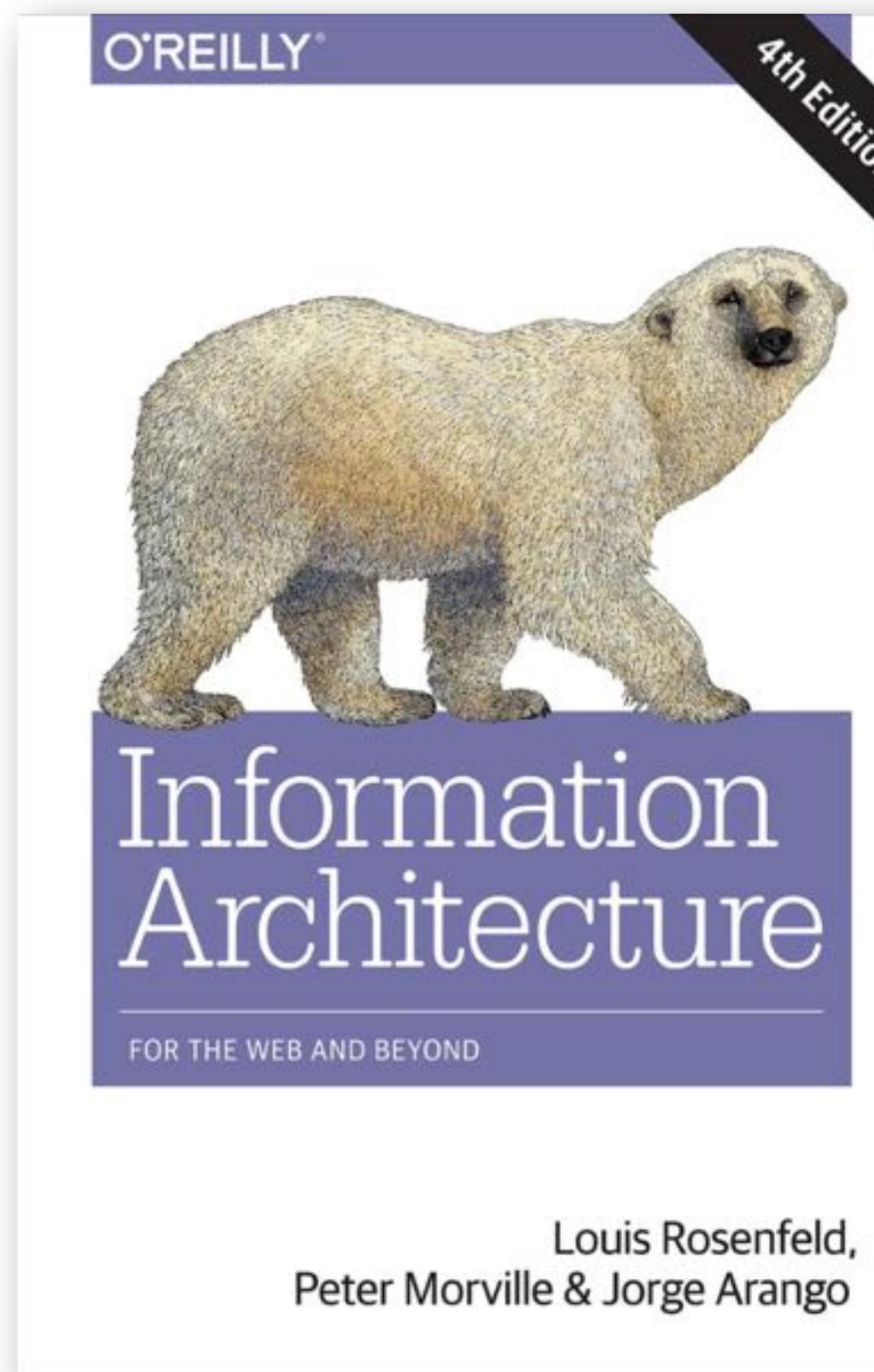


@jarango

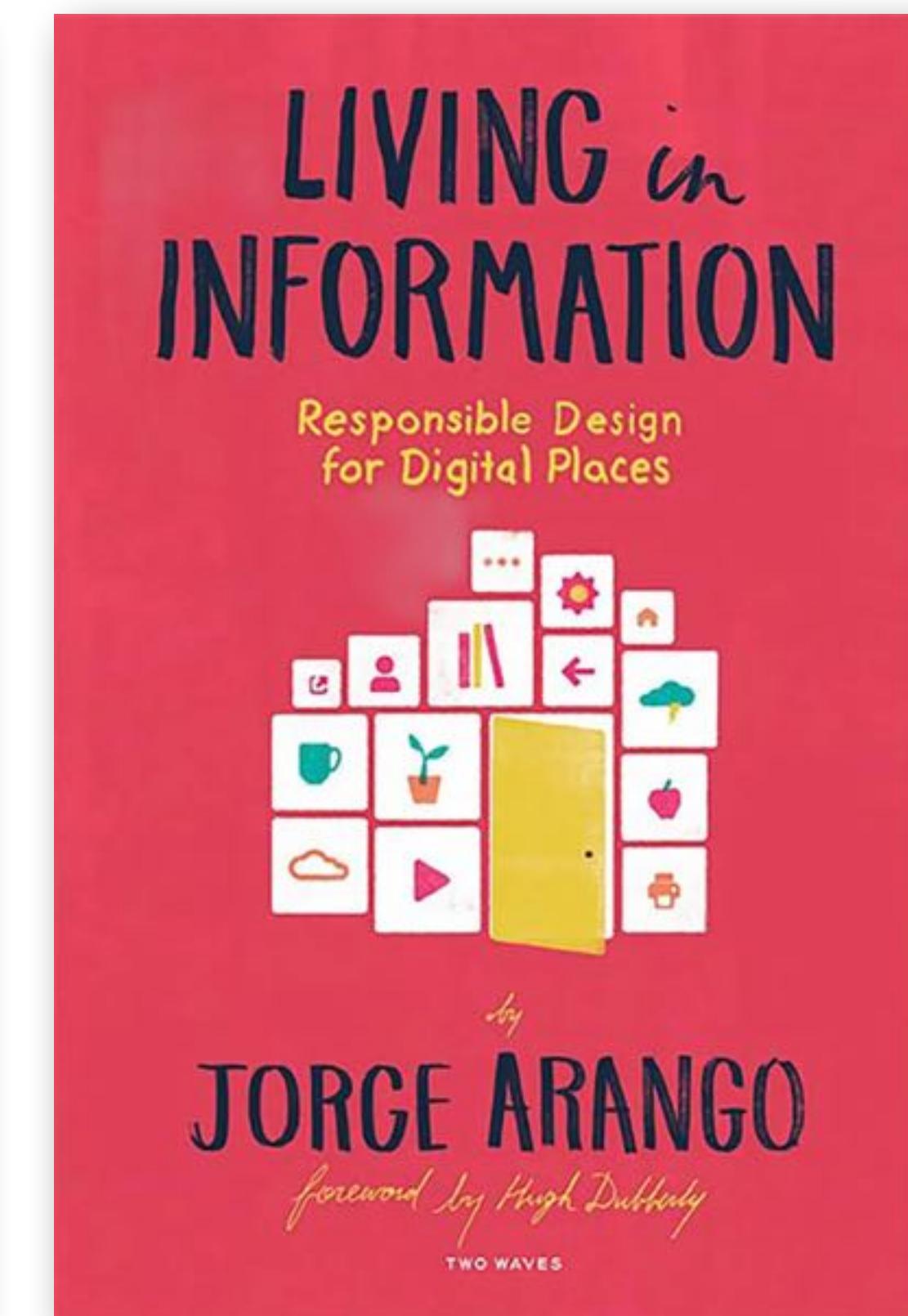
A bit about me:

- Information architect
- Author
- Educator

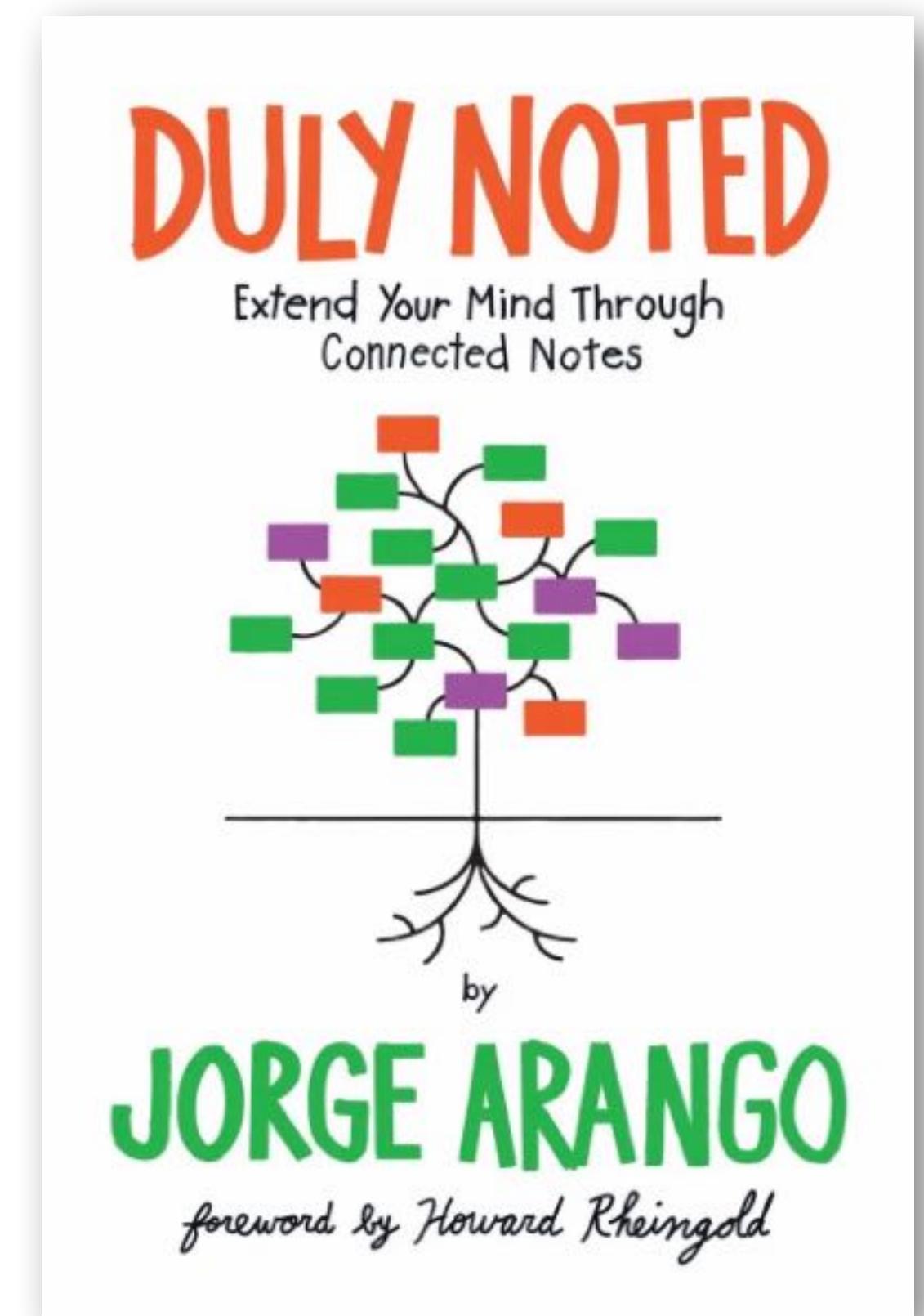
2015



2018

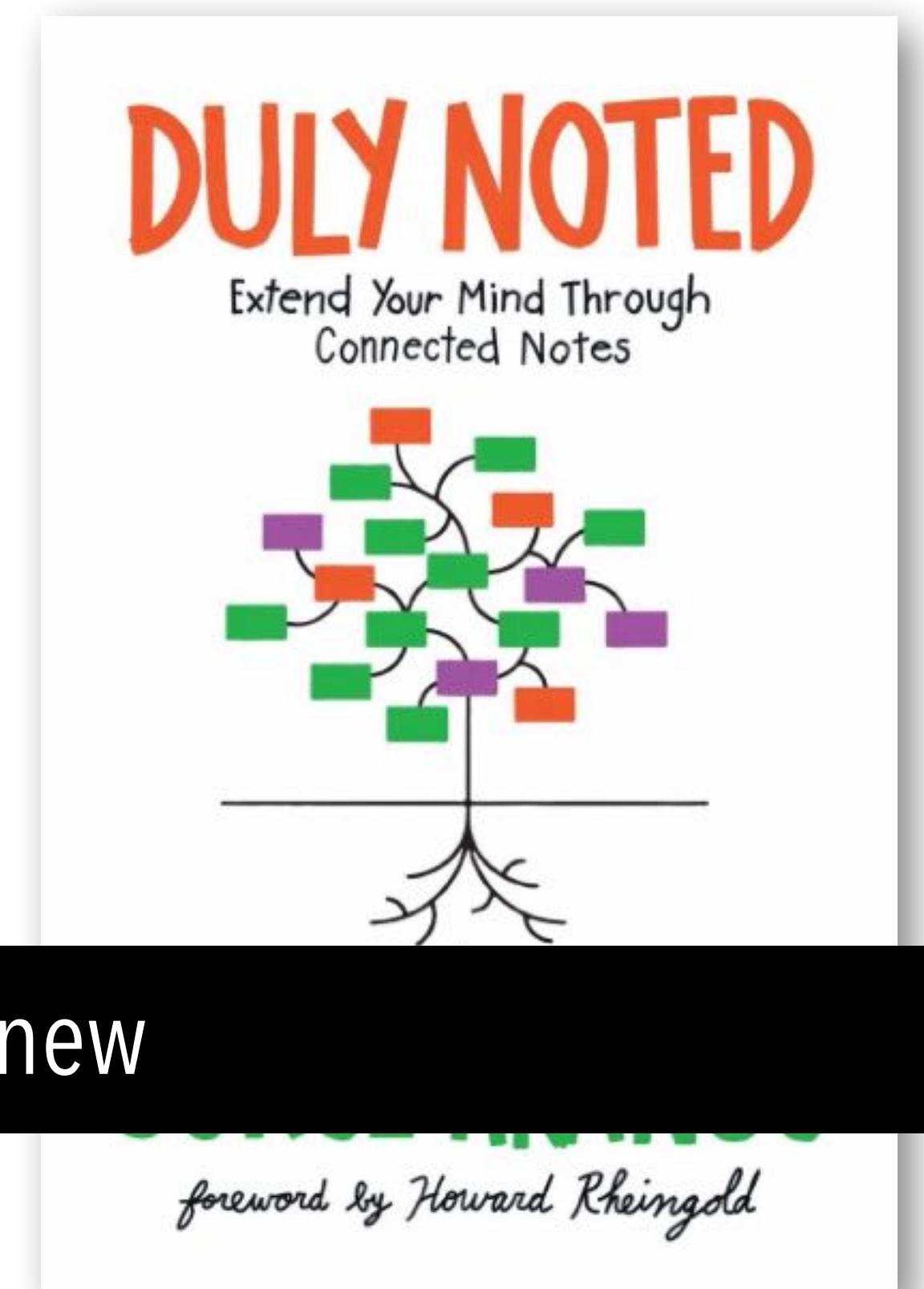
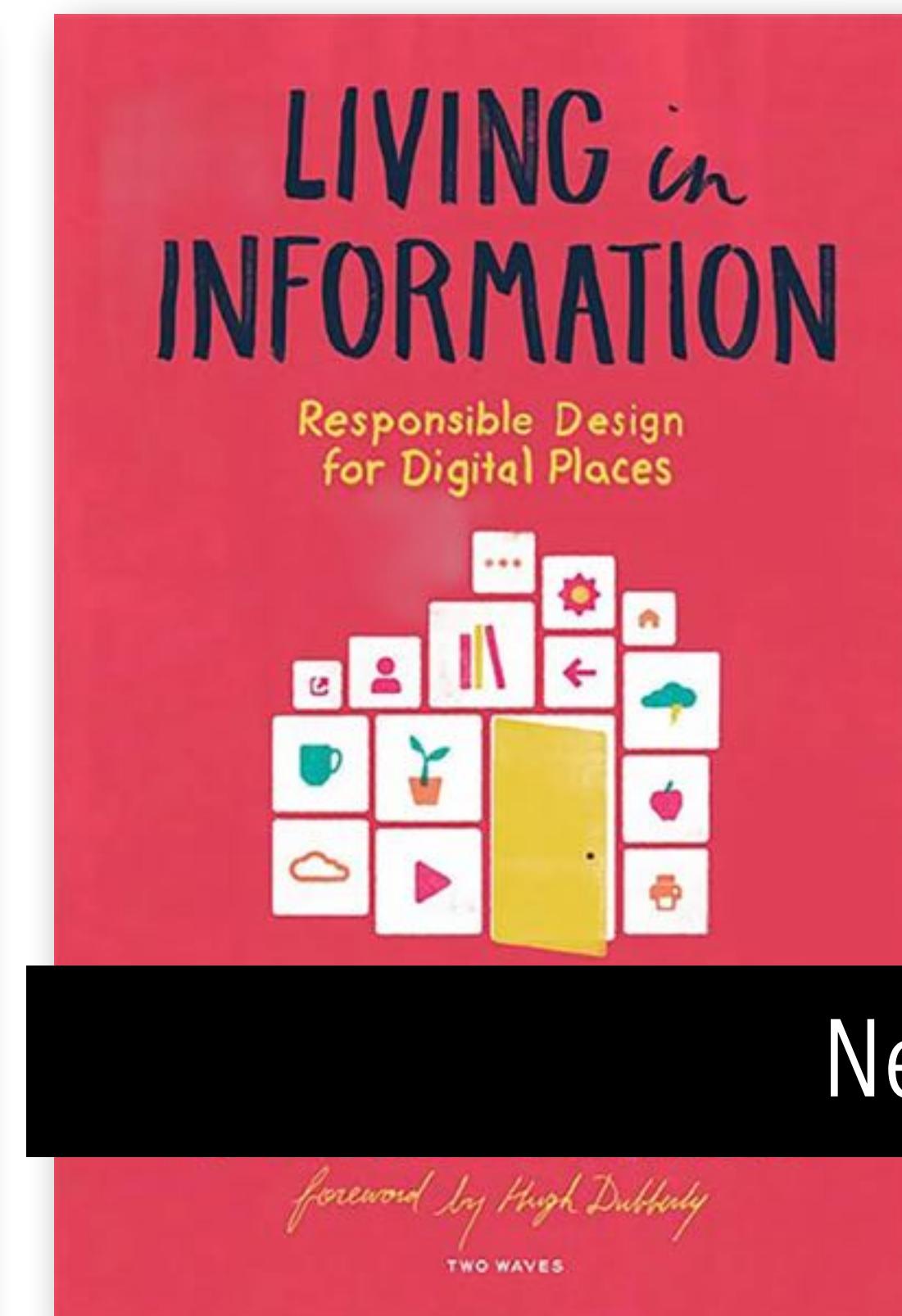
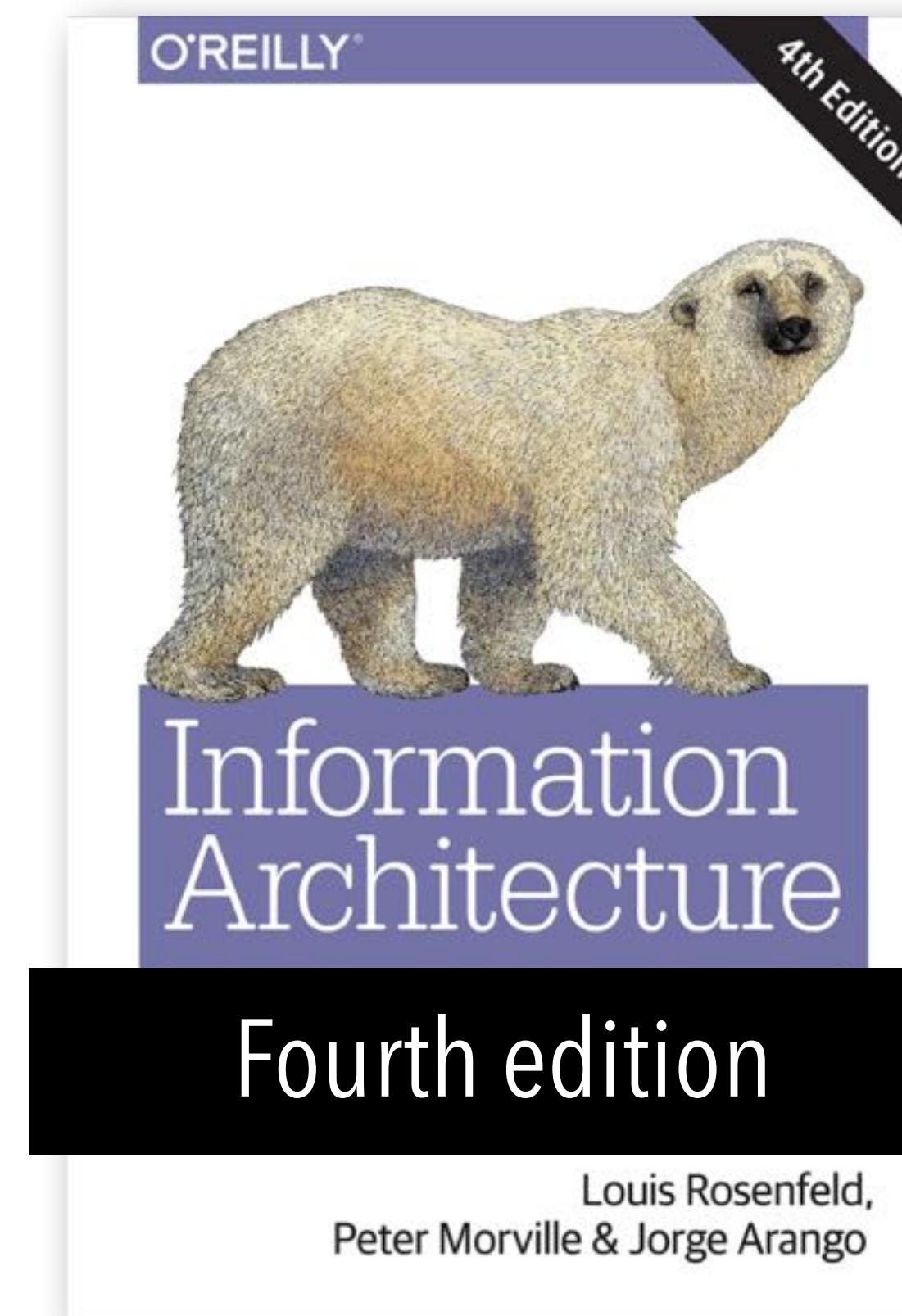


2024



The first book – a fourth edition –had a different process.

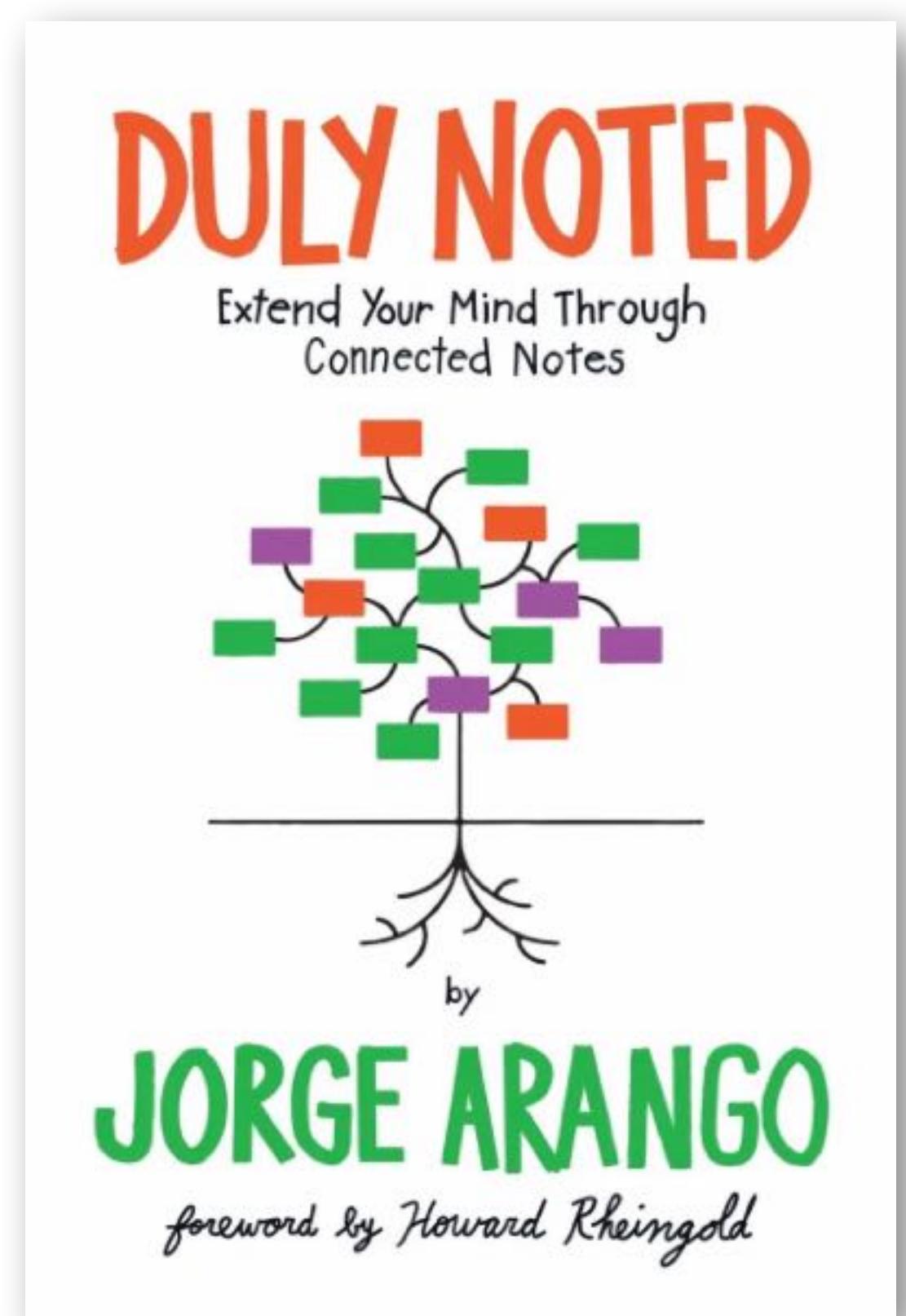
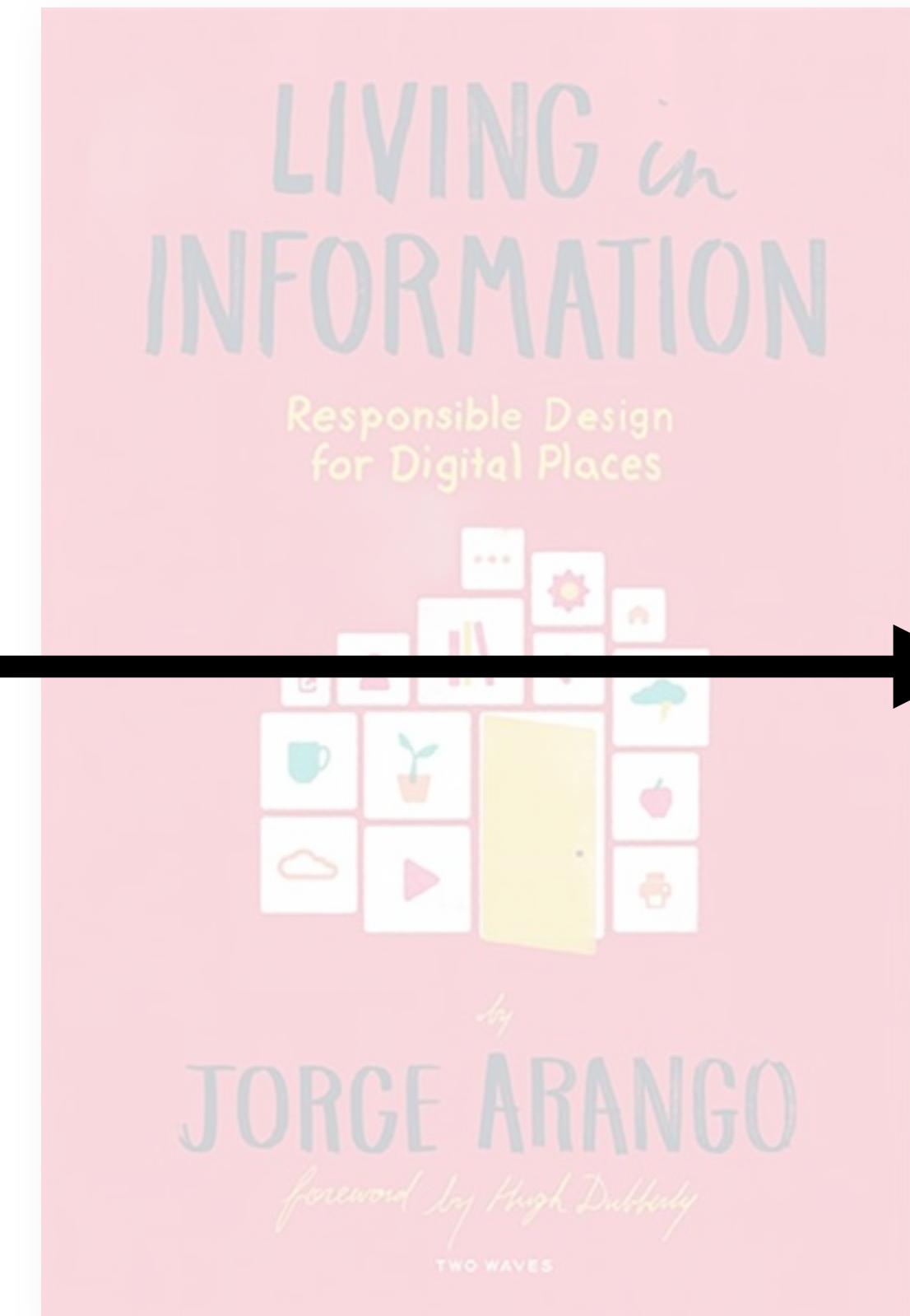
Today, we'll focus on the two most recent, which were net new.



We'll pay special attention to *Duly Noted*.

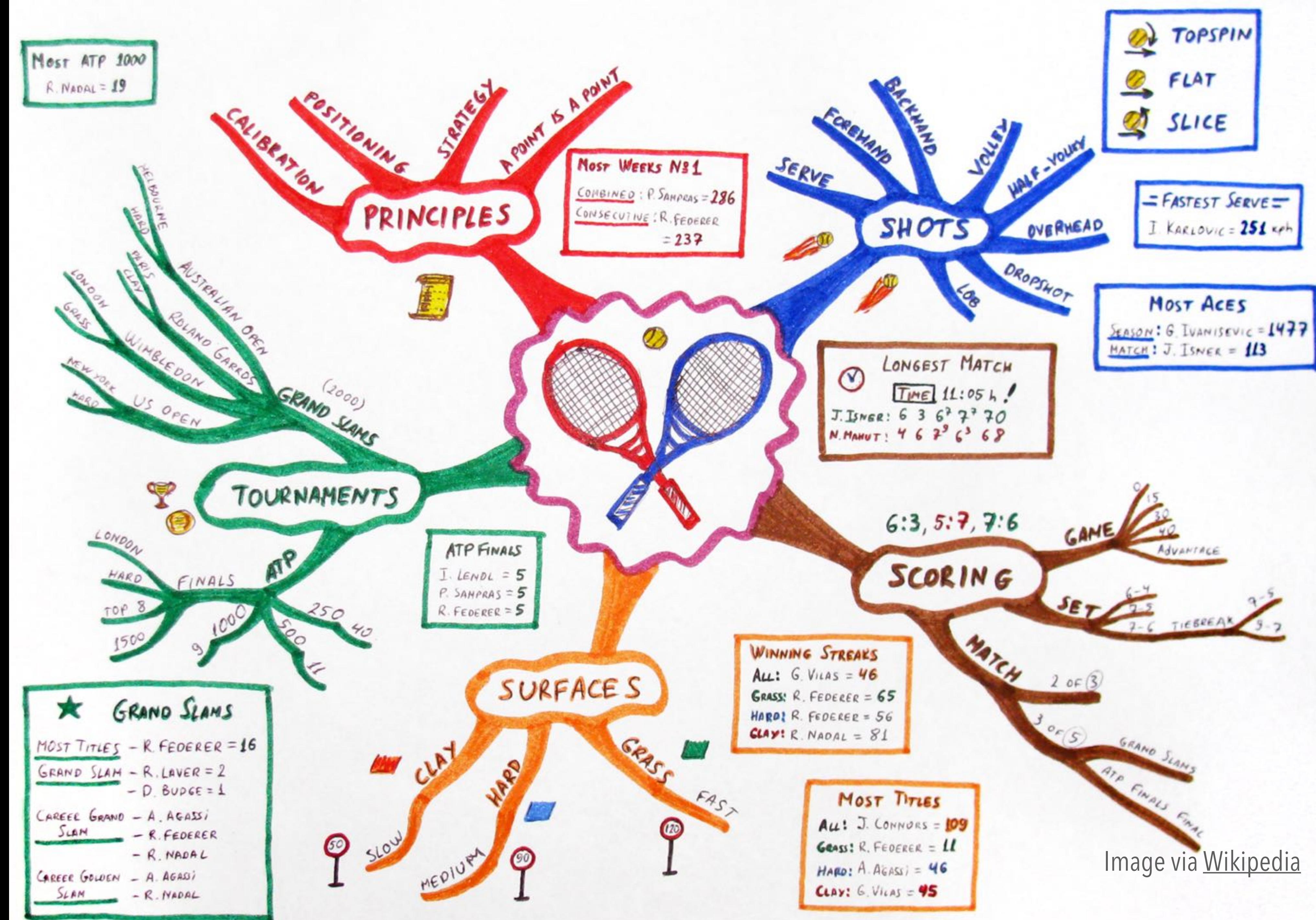
Many of the ideas we'll cover today are in this book.

This one

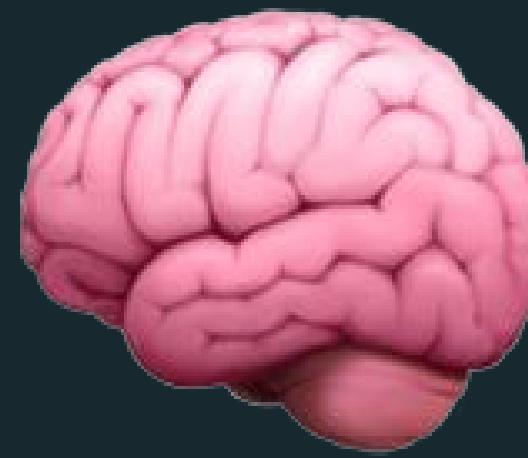




Louise
And Pip



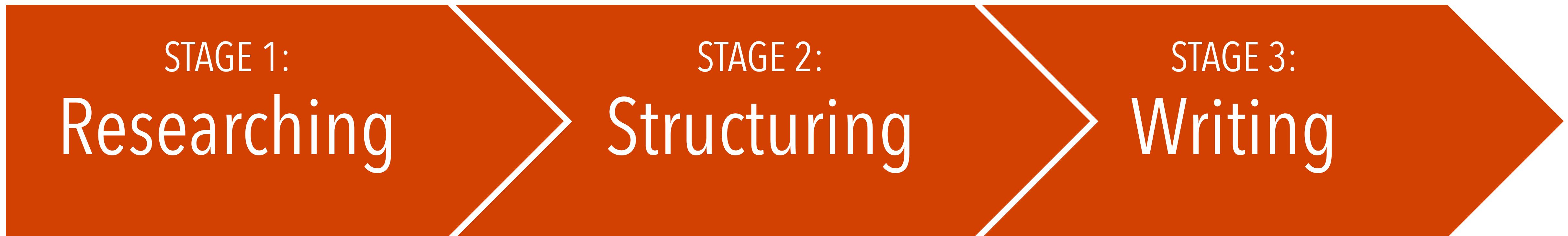
Thinking >



We think with things.

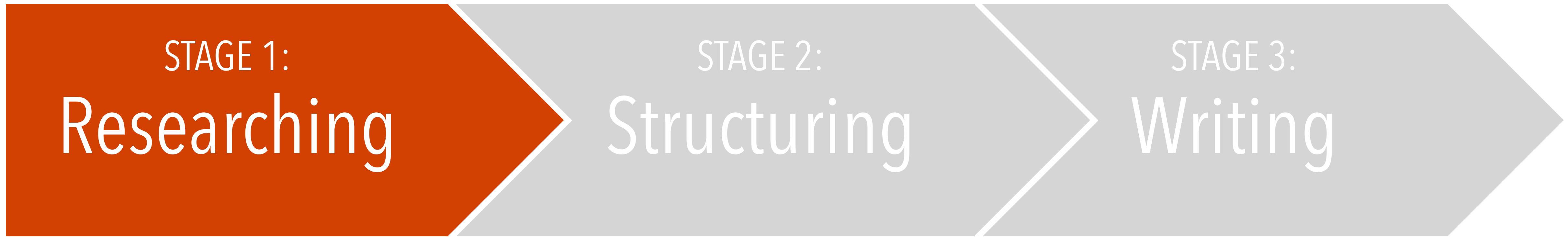
Three stages of the authoring process.

(Remember: we're talking nonfiction!)

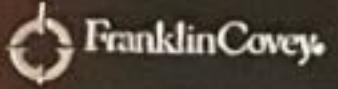


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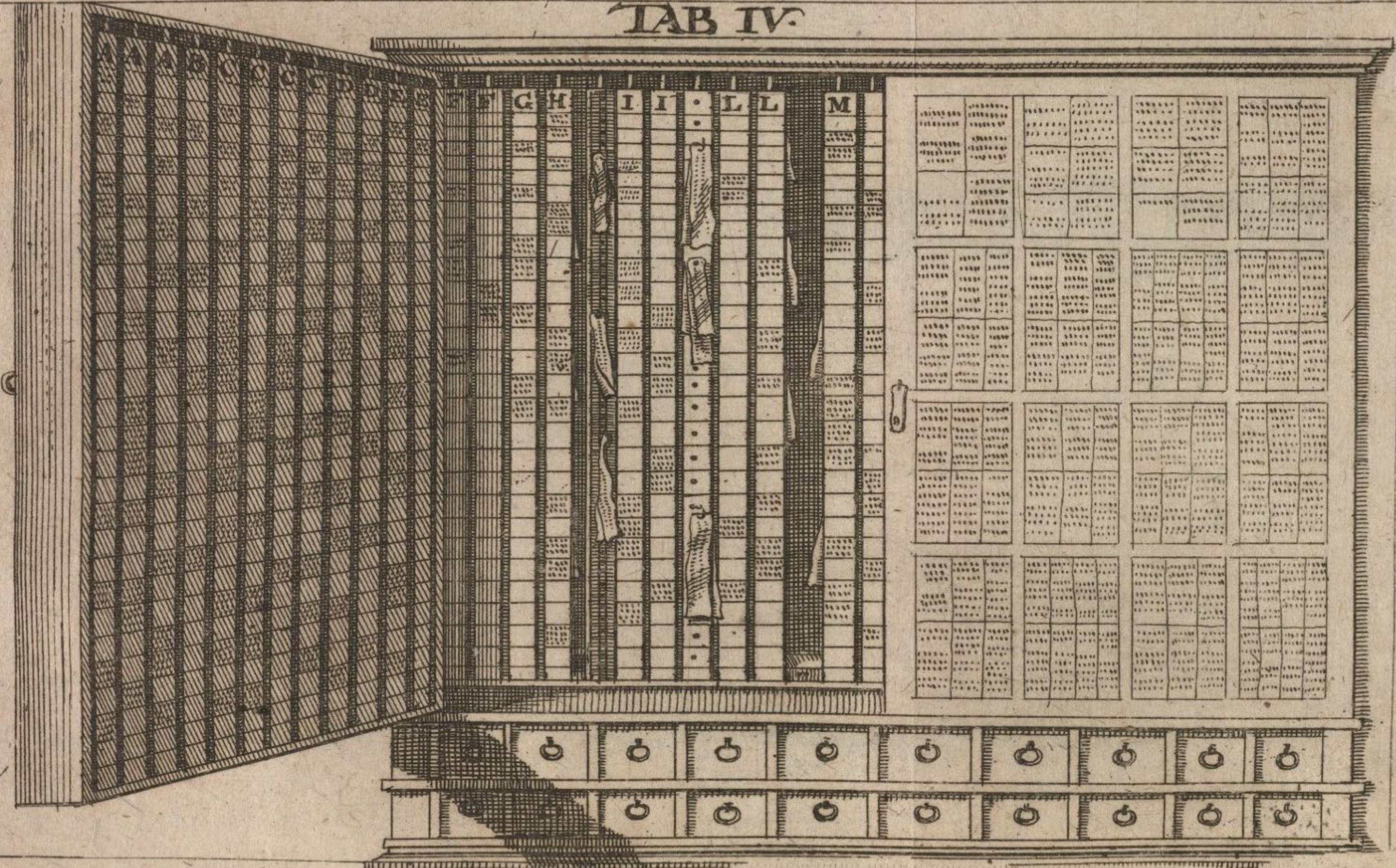
2005



A row of 24 black leather-bound notebooks standing upright, each with a white label showing a date range. The labels are arranged from right to left as follows:
2018-12-19 — 2019-01-15
2018-10-21 — 2018-12-14
2018-08-10 — 2018-09-12
2018-07-02 — 2018-08-10
^ .. - - - -
2018-04-17 — 2018-05-15
2018-03-04 — 2018-04-17
2018-02-02 — 2018-03-15
2017-12-27 — 2018-02-01
2017-10-06 — 2017-11-08
2017-08-15 — 2017-10-06
2017-06-12 — 2017-07-14
2017-03-10 — 2017-04-12
2017-02-05 — 2017-02-14
2017-01-20 — 2017-02-15
2016-12-12 — 2017-01-12
2016-11-18 — 2017-01-12
2016-10-17 — 2016-11-08
2016-09-17 — 2016-10-17
2016-08-14 — 2016-09-18
2016-05-06 — 2016-06-13
2015-10-30 — 2016-01-27
2015-03-10 — 2015-10-27
2013-09-25 — 2015-03-09
2012-02-09 — 2013-08-23
2006-08-11 — 2007-11-16

A close-up, horizontal view of a bookshelf filled with books, showing their spines and titles. The books are arranged in a dense, overlapping stack. Some titles visible include "David K. Reynolds, Ph.D.", "THE TAC SEX, & I", "Ep", "Sogyal Rinpoche", "in Monk", "The Buddha", "Lou Marinoff", "JO CAN", "ou", "LH", "Niske", "Icons", and "Kin".

TAB IV.



Quote - Tactics is what you do when there is something to do

Quote - Tactics is what you do when there is something to do

Tactics is what you do when there is something to do; strategy is what you do when there is nothing to do.

- Savielly Tarkatower

References

- 2022-04-21 Dan Hill videoconference

#quote #strategy

hierarchy - Pace Layers

Shearing Layers Applied to the Web (Dorian Taylor)
The Speed of Information Architecture (Peter Morville)

References

- Brand, *How Buildings Learn* (Penguin, 1994)
- Brand, *The Clock of the Long Now* (Basic Books, 1999)
- R. V. O'Neill, D. L. DeAngelis, J.B. Wade, T. F. H. Allen, A Hierarchical Concept of Ecosystems (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 98.
- Brand, *Pace Layering: How Complex Systems Learn and Keep Learning* (Journal of Design and Science, 2016)

5 Linked References

- January 29th, 2021
 - I'm writing about [Pace Layers](#)
- Frank Duffy
 - Originated the concept of [Pace Layers](#)?
- Open questions
 - Relationship with [Stewart Brand](#) — how did Brand learn about [Pace Layers](#)?
- Stewart Brand
 - Articulated the concept of [Pace Layers](#)
- Social Systems
 - Relevant sub-sub-domains
 - [Pace Layers](#)

Unlinked References

Slipbox > Slipbox > litnotes 532 items, 1 selected by Date Modified

Name	Modified	Kind
Information Behaviour An Interdisciplinary Perspective	10/8/22, 8:43 AM	Mark...n Text
Figure It Out	10/6/22, 3:45 PM	Mark...n Text
Serendipity and information seeking	10/6/22, 8:33 AM	Mark...n Text
Information Systems and the Stimulation of Creativity	10/5/22, 11:26 AM	Mark...n Text
Create Your Own Economy	10/5/22, 9:15 AM	Mark...n Text
Seeing What Others Don't	9/26/22, 7:18 PM	Mark...n Text
Hypertext & Cognition	9/17/22, 8:02 PM	Mark...n Text
Hypertext & Hypermedia	9/16/22, 8:59 PM	Mark...n Text
Hypertext (book)	9/16/22, 8:23 PM	Mark...n Text
How the World Really Works	9/12/22, 6:19 PM	Mark...n Text
Inventor of the Future	9/5/22, 1:07 PM	Mark...n Text

Hypertext (book)
2013-01-26 Hypertext

Created: 2013-01-26
Saturday, March 12, 2016
11:45 AM

By George P. Landow

This book had been on my reading queue for more than twenty years. Finally finished it in preparation for the IAS presentation. Wish I had read it earlier, but I think I wouldn't have gotten as much out of it as I did now.

The book covers how hypertext (pre-web, in this case), makes manifest many of the concepts discussed by critical theorists like Derrida, Barthes, Lyotard, Baudrillard, etc. Particularly useful in understanding the changes in power relationships between the different agents involved in textuality: the reader, author, and publisher, the educator, the lawmaker, etc. Also gave the reference to what will probably be the next book I read: Foucault's "Order of Things".

Groups

- Projects
- litnotes
- Documents

- Hypertext (book)
- 2013-01-26 Hypertext
- Foucault's Pendulum
- Hypertext & Hypermedia
- hypertext
- Language In Thought And Action By Si Hayakawa
- 2022-05-10 Information 2
- 2022-05-10 Information
- A Conversation With Alan Kay - ACM Queue
- Media Lab's New Head MIT Technology Review
- Content Strategy for Mobile

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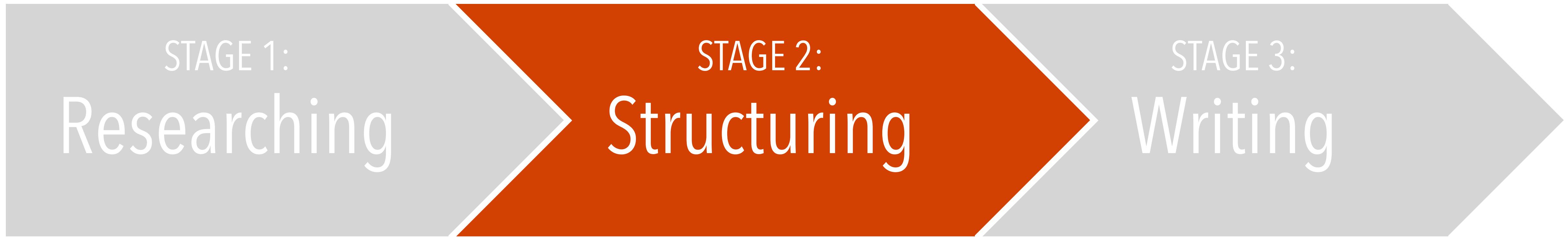
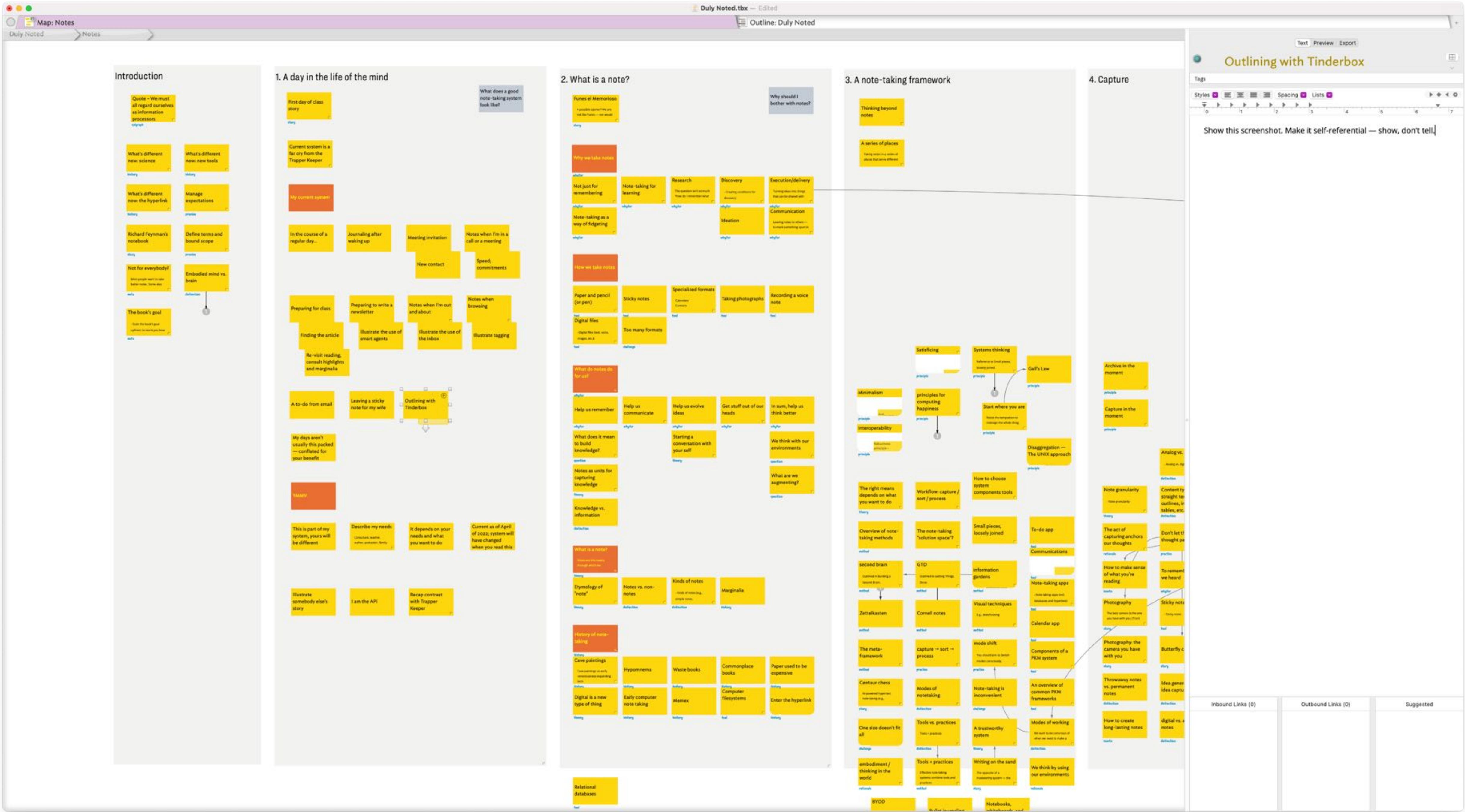


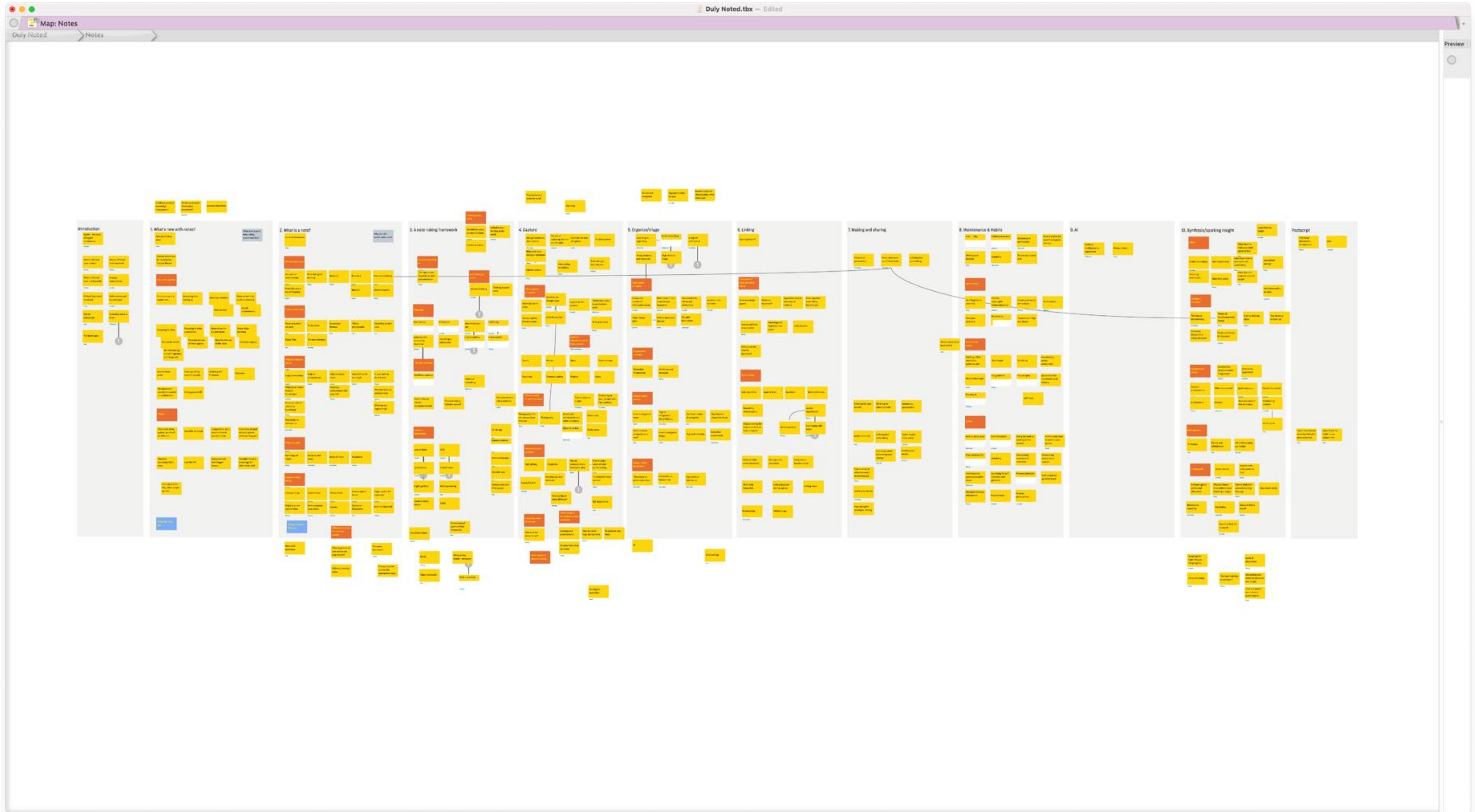


Photo by Hans-Peter Gauster on [Unsplash](#)



Photo: Justin Lane/Los Angeles Times





Who is THE BOOK FOR?

- Scholars
- Knowledge workers
- Exploring beyond Evernote

PENDANT

- Revisit each chapter
- Pull out 3 main points
- Contrarian/provocative takes

PRINCIPLES and PRACTICES

OPEN QUESTIONS

- Epilogues - Y/N?
- Center examples on Obsidian?

EXERCISES

- Encourage the reader to take notes about the book itself
- Have this as a thread throughout the book.

Half the length of a regular chapter

DISTINCTIONS

- Evergreen Δ Transitory
- Remembering Δ Generating

Some of what we've written here might move to ch. 2

This fq needs work

Cant end on the speculative stuff



Half the length of a regular chapter

Introduction	What is a note?	First principles	A note-taking framework	Capturing notes	Organizing notes	Connecting notes	Sparking insights	Making and sharing	Housekeeping	Thinking augmentation	Epilogue — A lifelong endeavor
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Notes aren't new - but hyperlinks are	Trapperkeeper				Indra's net?					Note-taking in the early modern era	The life of the mind
Living a life of the mind / Knowledge work	What is a note? / Anatomy of a note	Note-taking first principles	Don't think systems	Capture modalities	Hypertext	What is an insight?	The role of feedback	Maintaining the garden	Collaboration	Nice contrast with modern toolchains??	Political implications
The point of tools for thought	How do you take notes now?	Start writing a note for this book	Inventory your current setup	Clear your inbox	How to make a link	Tools for thinking vs. producing	The production process	The scanner in your pocket	EVENING THE GARDEN	WHAT instead? People, neurons or reference frameworks??	The book as a snapshot in time
Structure of the book	Types of notes	It's ok to go back and forth b/w 2+ formats	Different media for different needs	Plan for a knowledge garden	Templates	Metadata	Types of links	EVENING THE GARDEN	AI	Trapperkeeper code	It's all information architecture anyways
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What are notes for?	Remembering & Generating	Minimally viable notes	If nothing else, what do we transition to first?	Principles for building a good knowledge garden	Put everything in the right inbox	Tips and recommendations	Strategies for reviewing insights	Non-linear writing	Building good habits	I have some principles.	Your collaborating with people long distance.
Trapperkeeper code				Funes code	Indra code	Periodic table code			Bearbute code		Groenutus code ??

No how-tos in the intro - but perhaps we can add Obsidian? Setup.

Looking to expand the reader's understanding of what notes can be.

Principles that are useful regardless of what tool you're using

Is there room to highlight better Nicole & Elizabeth Filips?

Move Matuschak here? Maggie Appleton Smith? Anne Laure Le Guiffre on Sols? Jerry Michalski on The Brain

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Half the length of a regular chapter

Introduction

What is this book about and who is it for?

Notes aren't new – but hyperlinks are

Living a life of the mind / Knowledge work

The point of tools for thought

What is a note?

What is a note?

TrapperKeeper

What is a note? / Anatomy of a note

How do you take notes now?

1

2

3

4

5

DISTINCTIONS

- Evergreen \triangleleft transitory
- Remembering \triangleleft Generating

Some of what I've written here might move to ch. 1



2

First principles

What do I need to know to get started?

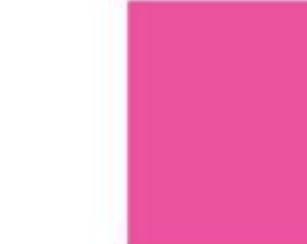


Note-taking first principles

Start writing a note for this book

A note-taking framework

How do I build a "knowledge garden"?



Don't think notes; think systems

Inventory your current setup

4

Capturing notes

How do I keep ideas from getting away?



Capture modalities



5

Organizing notes

How can I ensure I find stuff later?



Piles, files, and tags

Clear your inbox

This fq need

Connect notes

How do I connect related ideas

Indra's net

Hyperte

How to make links

It's ok to go

Remembering \triangleleft

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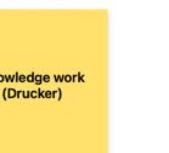
DISTINCTIONS

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Can't end on the speculative stuff



Half the length of a regular chapter

Introduction

1

What is this book about and who is it for?

Notes aren't new - but hyperlinks are

Living a life of the mind / Knowledge work

The point of tools for thought

Structure of the book

Install Obsidian

What are notes for?

TrapperKeeper coda

What is a note?

2

What is a note?

TrapperKeeper

What is a note? / Anatomy of a note

How do you take notes now?

Types of notes

Install Obsidian

What are notes for?

TrapperKeeper coda

First principles

3

What do I need to know to get started?

Note-taking first principles

Start writing a note for this book

Different media for different needs

Minimally viable notes

Principles for building a good knowledge garden

I'm talking about visual, how do we transition to text?

Funes coda

A note-taking framework

4

How do I build a "knowledge garden"?

Don't think notes; think systems

Inventory your current setup

Plan for a knowledge garden

Readwise and Zotero

Put everything in the right inbox

Put tips and recommendations

Indra coda

Capturing notes

5

How do I keep ideas from getting away?

Capture modalities

Piles, files, and tags

Clear your inbox

Add metadata to your template

Indra's net?

Indra's net?

Organizing notes

6

How can I ensure I find stuff later?

Hypertext

Hypertext

How to make a link

How to use transclusion

Obsidian canvas view

Obsidian publish

Periodic table coda

Connecting notes

7

How do I connect related ideas?

Indra's net?

What is an insight?

Tools for thinking vs. producing

The production process

Non-linear writing

Obsidian canvas view

Baobabs coda

Sparking insights

8

How do I generate new ideas?

The role of feedback

Maintaining the garden

Where do you think?

Write a review of the book

Tag management

ChatGPT

Erasmus coda ??

Making and sharing

9

How do I share what I've learned?

Start by laying out the point of sharing

The role of feedback

Collaboration

The scanner in your pocket

Evolving the garden

AI

TrapperKeeper coda

Housekeeping

10

How do I keep my garden productive?

Note-taking in the early modern era

Maintaining the garden

Building good habits

Tag management

ChatGPT

Good wishes for the reader

Thinking augmentation

11

What does the future hold for smart note-taking?

Nice contrast with modern technologies

Collaboration

Political implications

AI

TrapperKeeper coda

Epilogue — A lifelong endeavor

12

Why should I continue down this path?

The life of the mind

Political implications

It's all information architecture anyways

The book as a snapshot in time

Good wishes for the reader

Yours collaborating with people long distance

Review your notes on the book — take it forward

Chapter not flowing properly — start with insights? Or tools?

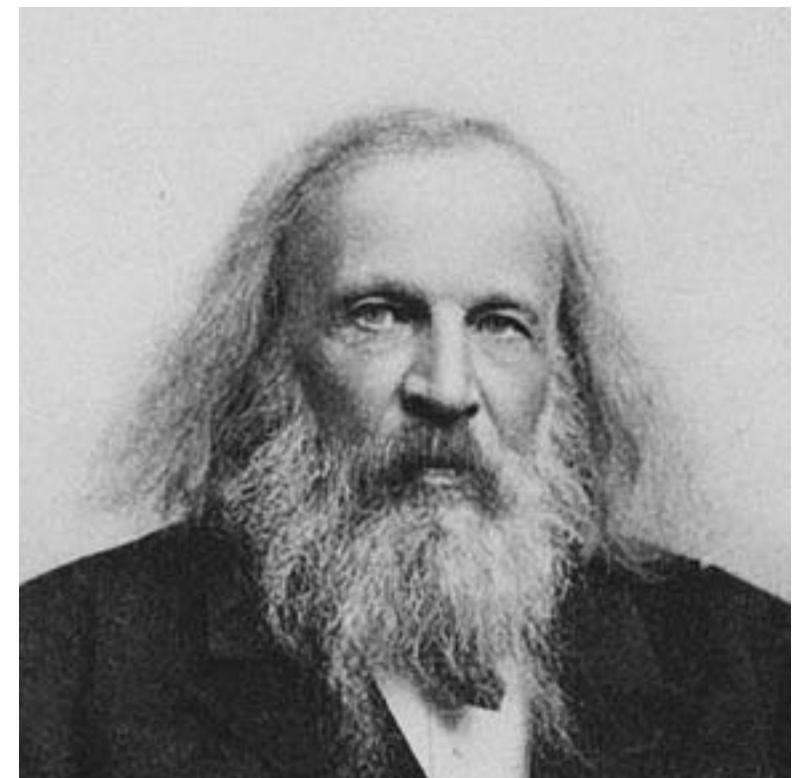
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We think with structures.

The periodic table suggested elements that hadn't yet been discovered.



Dmitri Mendeleev
1834–1907

Group →	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
Period ↓	1	1 H																2 He	
2	3 Li	4 Be																	
3	11 Na	12 Mg																	
4	19 K	20 Ca	21 Sc	22 Ti	23 V	24 Cr	25 Mn	26 Fe	27 Co	28 Ni	29 Cu	30 Zn	31 Ga	32 Ge	33 As	34 Se	35 Br	36 Kr	
5	37 Rb	38 Sr	39 Y	40 Zr	41 Nb	42 Mo	43 Tc	44 Ru	45 Rh	46 Pd	47 Ag	48 Cd	49 In	50 Sn	51 Sb	52 Te	53 I	54 Xe	
6	55 Cs	56 Ba	57 La	*	72 Hf	73 Ta	74 W	75 Re	76 Os	77 Ir	78 Pt	79 Au	80 Hg	81 Tl	82 Pb	83 Bi	84 Po	85 At	86 Rn
7	87 Fr	88 Ra	89 Ac	*	104 Rf	105 Db	106 Sg	107 Bh	108 Hs	109 Mt	110 Ds	111 Rg	112 Cn	113 Nh	114 Fl	115 Mc	116 Lv	117 Ts	118 Og
	*	58 Ce	59 Pr	60 Nd	61 Pm	62 Sm	63 Eu	64 Gd	65 Tb	66 Dy	67 Ho	68 Er	69 Tm	70 Yb	71 Lu				
	*	90 Th	91 Pa	92 U	93 Np	94 Pu	95 Am	96 Cm	97 Bk	98 Cf	99 Es	100 Fm	101 Md	102 No	103 Lr				

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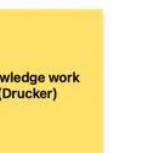
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										Maggie Appleton Smith? Anne Laure Le Cunff? Review your notes on the book – take it forward	How will you remix this book? What evergreen notes energized for you?
TrapperKeeper coda				Funes coda	Indra coda	Periodic table coda			Baobabs coda	Erasmus coda ??	

No how-tos in the intro – but perhaps mention Obsidian? Setup.

Looking to expand the reader's understanding of what notes can be.

Principles that are useful regardless of what tool you're using

Is there room to highlight both Nicole & Elizabeth Hills?

Move Matuschak here? Maggie Appleton Smith? Anne Laure Le Cunff on silos? Jerry Michalski on The Brain

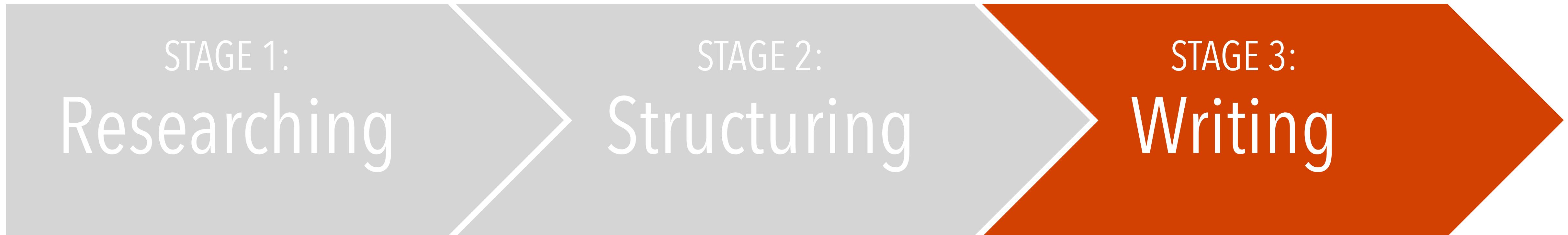
Chapter not flowing properly – start with insights? Or tools?

Who is the most productive person I know? Could I highlight them?

Start a new note

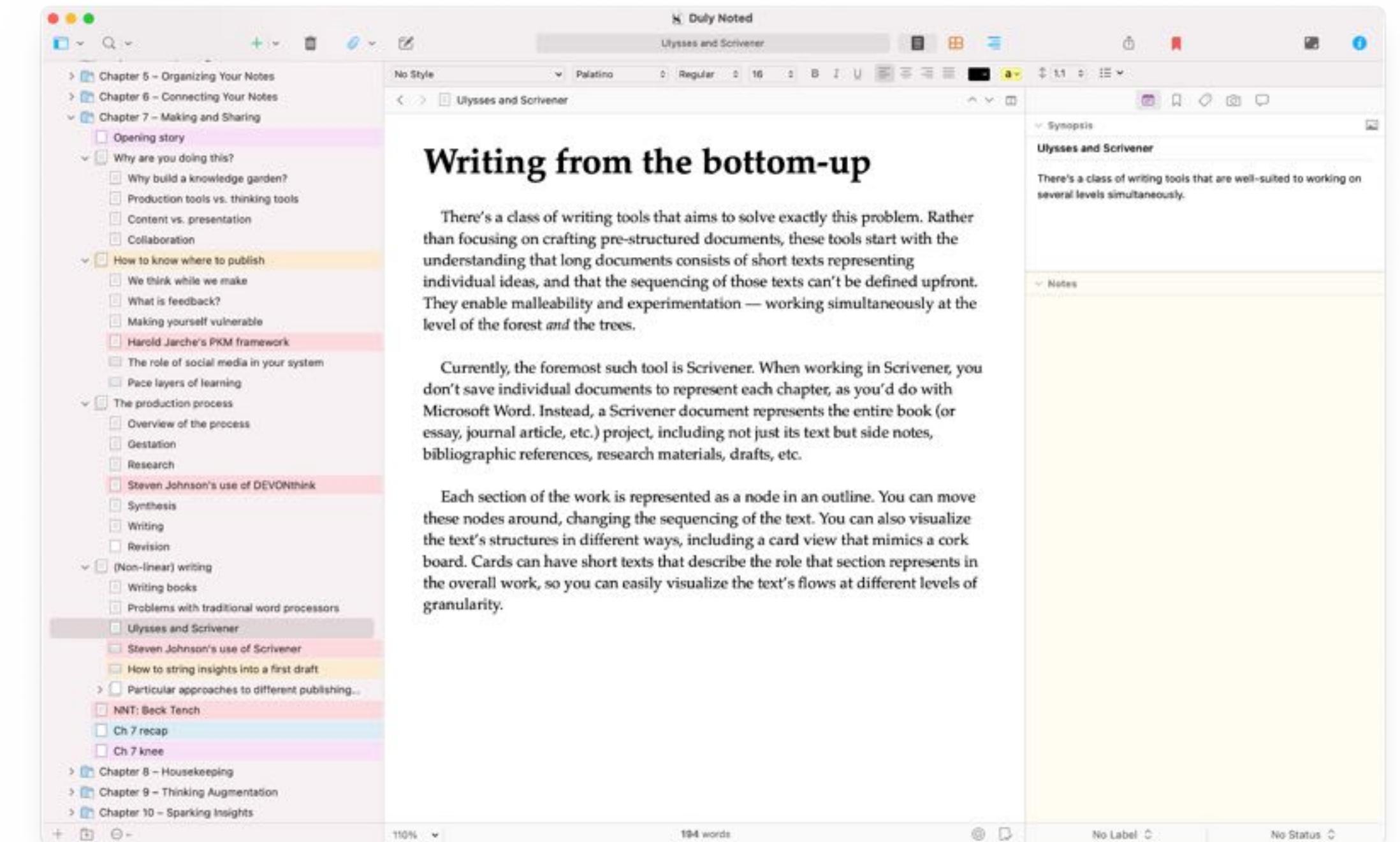
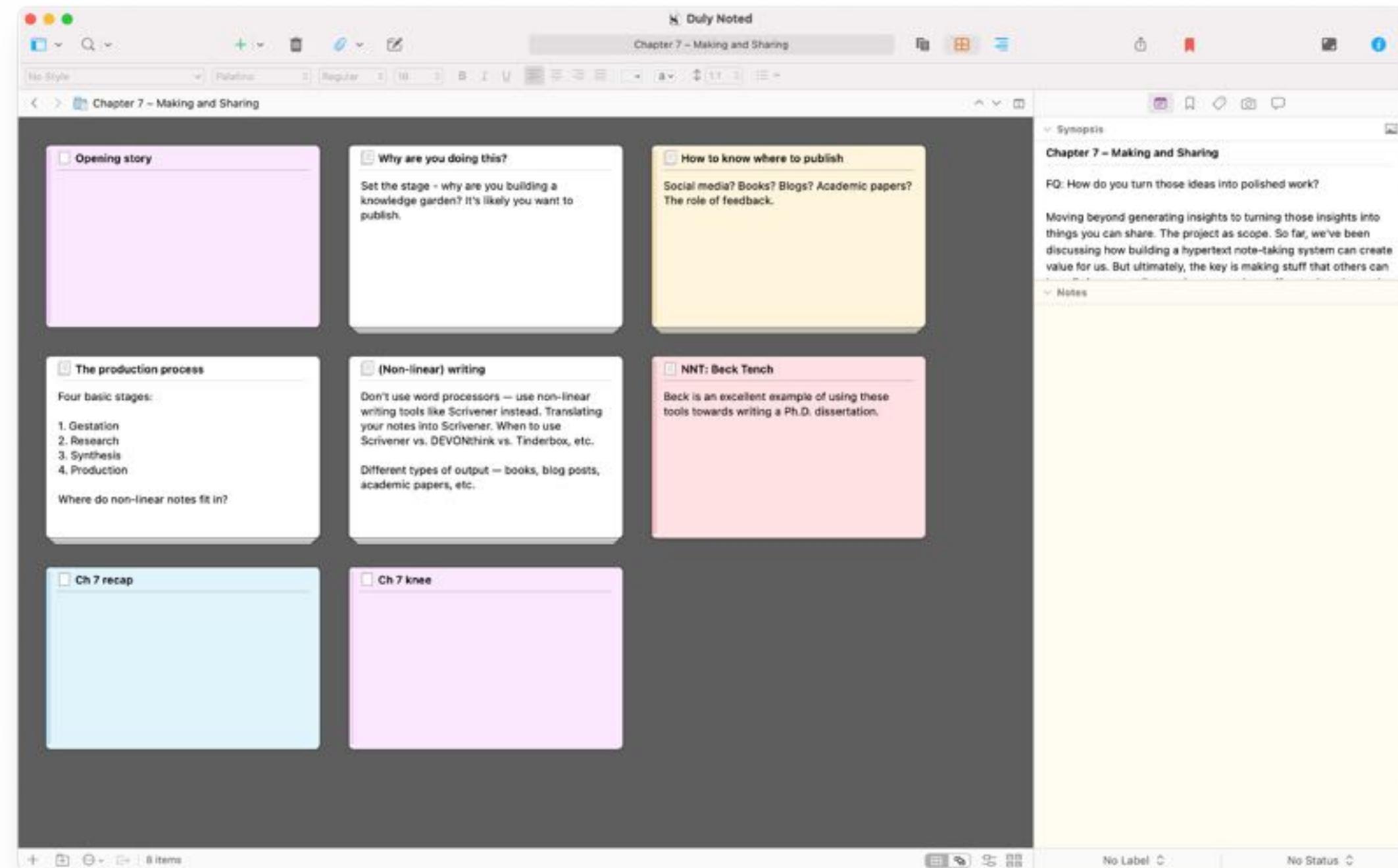
Three stages of the authoring process.

(Remember: we're talking nonfiction!)



Select tools that support the process.

Scrivener lets you work at different levels of abstraction.



Select tools that support the process.

Ulysses also facilitates exploring alternative structures. Plus, it shows you where you stand vs. your word count targets.

The screenshot shows the Ulysses application interface. On the left, there's a sidebar with a list of notes: 'Duly Noted' (Archived, Read-Only, 50,000 words), 'Content' (Introduction, Chapter 1: What Is a..., Chapter 2: First Princi..., Chapter 3: Plan for a..., Chapter 4: Capturing..., Chapter 5: Organizin...). The 'Chapter 2: First Princi...' note is selected. The main area displays the note content: 'Chapter 2: First Principles' followed by a summary paragraph. Below the summary is a section titled 'Why do you take notes? redundant?' with a partial paragraph. At the bottom of the note is a section titled 'Working Notes: Take note of this' with a partial paragraph. A green sticky note is overlaid on the note content, containing the text 'Notes: Take note of this'. To the right of the note, there's a separate panel with the heading 'Notes: Take note of this' and a list of bullet points: 'student pursuing a degree, a professional learning a tool, picking up a new skill, reading is a time-tested way to ex...', '• Writing down ideas allows you to "make them your own" by in your own words. You can start connecting the ideas in t...', 'deas.' The interface includes standard Mac OS X window controls (red, yellow, green buttons) and a toolbar with icons for file operations.

Duly Noted

- Archived
- Read-Only
- 50,000 words

Content

- Introduction
- Chapter 1: What Is a...
- Chapter 2: First Princi...**
- Chapter 3: Plan for a...
- Chapter 4: Capturing...
- Chapter 5: Organizin...

Chapter 2: First Principles

Chapter 2: First Principles
On the morning when I sat down to write the introduction to this chapter, there was a bright pink sticky note on my computer's display. The...

Why do you take notes? redundant?
As you saw in chapter 1, putting pen to paper or typing on a computer aren't merely ways of making marks in the world; they're means for e...

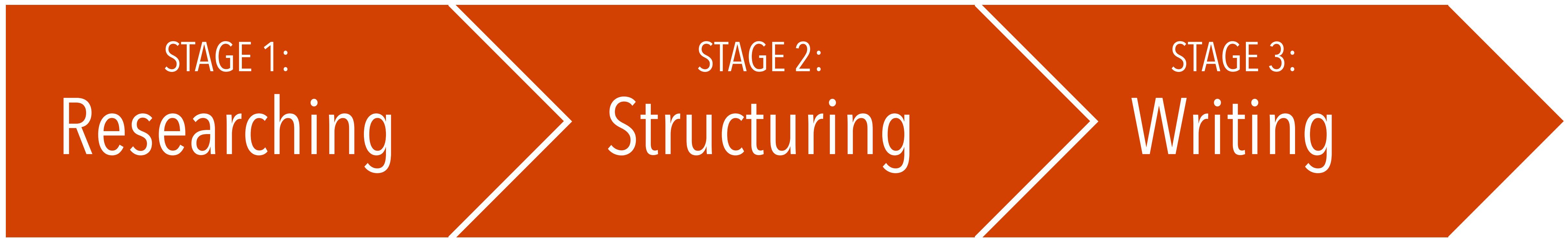
Working Notes: Take note of this
Whether you're a student pursuing a degree, a professional learning a tool, or a dedicated amateur picking up a new skill, reading is a tim...

Notes: Take note of this

- student pursuing a degree, a professional learning a tool, picking up a new skill, reading is a time-tested way to ex...
- Writing down ideas allows you to "make them your own" by in your own words. You can start connecting the ideas in t...
- deas.

Three stages of the authoring process.

(Remember: we're talking nonfiction!)



Three takeaways:

1. Set up environments that support you
2. Structure first – but be flexible
3. Switch modalities

Sketch Your Mind 2025

Happy writing! 🙏

Jorge Arango
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