Visualize your research: Show off your work with concept mapping

At some point we will all need to communicate our research and present what we might consider our works of art.

As we learn about concept mapping together, we'll show this researcher that there is a creative element involved. Concept mapping is a great tool for articulating your understanding of your research, and also graphically representing all of the main ideas.

We will begin with four basic steps to building a concept map.
First of all, every good map responds to a focus or research question. The focus question spells out the problem that we are working on. For example, the artist is interested in degradation of oil paint and has the question:

How can we prevent degradation of Titanium White paint?

Step 2 is to choose concepts that describe the objects or events involved. On average, we would try to come up with 15 to 25 concepts that are important for answering the question.
The artist already has two broad concepts, degradation and Titanium White paint, but he'll need to add others. It's okay if he doesn't have as many as 15 in the beginning.

Step 3 is to arrange the concepts hierarchically, from general to specific.
The map is starting to shape up.

The last step is to connect concepts with words or phrases to define the relationships. This is actually the most difficult part of concept mapping. Concepts on their own are not as meaningful and don't demonstrate understanding, unless we describe how they are related.
Back to the artist's map. It's important to be as brief as possible when connecting concepts.

The concepts and linking words will form propositions, or statements, so that the map can be read at any point.
Maps are always works in progress, but the artist can already see how concept mapping can be used as a presentation tool. He is ready to take it a step further and add images and links to resources. He'll work on making the map more presentable and more effective for communicating the results of his research.

Let's take a closer look at the free program, CmapTools.
You can make a concept map with pen and paper, or by moving around post-it notes with concepts on them. However, there are also programs, like CmapTools, that provide more options.

Documents and links to websites can be added directly to concepts.
Styles can also be applied to make it more colourful.

Additionally, CmapTools allows you to save your concept map on one of their public servers. This gives you a URL that you can share with others to demonstrate your research and link to resources.
The artist is feeling inspired. The creative block is over and he is ready to incorporate results of his recent study. The map will be ready for input from colleagues in no time.

Okay, now it is your turn. You put so much into your research and now it is time to communicate your results and show off your works of art.

You are welcome to make an appointment to come by for help one-on-one.

We look forward to seeing your maps!

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