Building on the Classics: Current Trends in User Studies

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Impact of Digital Age on User Studies

- Library and Information science opened up to the larger world of the changing information environment called the information age or digital age.

- By the beginning of 21st century there was no going back to controlled, contained library world as we knew it.
Three Changes in User Studies

1. User studies have evolved as an important area of Information science. Developing into a branch of IS

ASIS&T siguse
LIDA – Libraries in Digital Age
ISIC – Information Seeking In Context
Three Changes in User Studies

2. Closer relation between user studies and information retrieval.
Ingwesen and Jarvelin. The Turn: Integration of Information seeking and retrieval in context. Springer.

The divide is narrowing between information seeking, information retrieval and information services.
3. Building on the Classics

Evidence that user studies are moving into a mature generation by building on earlier foundational research.

Current trends in user studies are grounded in classic scholarly work of the mid to late 20th century.
Current researchers are building on foundational work of the mid to later 20th century to address pressing problems in the digital age of the 21st century.

Important themes are emerging in user studies as the divide narrows between information seeking, information retrieval and information service.
Six Themes in User Studies

- Everyday Life Information Seeking
- Context and Task
- Authority – expertise, perspective, bias
- Group Information Seeking
- Problem Solving in the Workplace
- Learning and Knowledge Construction
Everyday Life Information Seeking

Classic work – Rejio Savolainen
   Brenda Dervin – sensemaking theory
   Elfreda Chapman – small world/information poverty

Noted scholars – Karen Fisher – information grounds
   Sanda Erdelez – information encountering

New work of interest
   Jenna Hartel – leisure pursuits
   YaLing Lu – Information seeking and use of children and teens coping with everyday life problems
Context and Task

Classic work – Pertti Vakkari – Information Seeking in Context (ISIC) published papers in Information Research

Noted Scholars
Katrina Bystrom – Task complexity
Louise Limberg – Information task and Perception of task
Ross Todd – Information intents
Authority – expertise, perspective, bias

Classic work
Saracevic–Relevance judgments
Marcia Bates – Berry picking
David Ellis – Information search patterns

Current work of interest – How people evaluate information credibility and cognitive authority
Soo Young Rieh
Olof Sundin
Group Information Seeking/Social Construction

Classic work – Birger Horland encyclopedia/wikipedia

Noted scholars – Marija Dalbello almanac–cultural memory/digital records
Diane Sonnenwald – collaborative work

Current work of interest
Denice Agosto–social networking of adolescents
Jette Hyldegard – group search processes
Rebecca Reynolds–social construction in gaming
Problem Solving in the Workplace

Classic work – Tom Wilson
   Model of Information behavior
Noted scholars
   David Allen – Information behavior and decision making – example police studies
   Chun Wei Choo – Constructing meaning in large organizations
   Claire McInerney – Community infomatics
Influence of user studies on knowledge management
Learning and Knowledge Construction

Classic work– Kuhlthau
  Information search process

Noted scholars
Ross Todd – knowledge construction/inquiry
Andrew Large – Learning on the web
Charles Cole – information to knowledge
Jannica Heinstrom – Personality/information traits
Violet Harada – Inquiry and learning

Guided Inquiry: Learning in the 21st Century
Study reports and readings

- Center for International Scholarship for School Libraries, Rutgers University – Ross Todd user study reports on CiSSL website
Current Trends – All Positive?

Distracted: the erosion of attention and the coming dark age
Maggie Jackson, Prometheus books.

Cautions about multitasking and interruption that erode capacity for deep focus and sustained awareness. Ability to connect, reflect and relax in a world of distractions.
Application of user studies to improve information seeking, information retrieval and information services in digital age.

Examples –
Operationalizing user studies for improving Information Retrieval and Information Services.

Application of ISP in Guided Inquiry for improving learning from information.
## Model of the Information Search Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Initiation</th>
<th>Selection</th>
<th>Exploration</th>
<th>Formulation</th>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>uncertainly</td>
<td>optimism</td>
<td>confusion</td>
<td>clarity</td>
<td>sense of direction/</td>
<td>satisfaction or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(affective)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>frustration</td>
<td></td>
<td>confidence</td>
<td>disappointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts</td>
<td>vague</td>
<td>focused</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>increased interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(cognitive)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions (physical)</td>
<td>seeking relevant information</td>
<td>exploring</td>
<td></td>
<td>seeking pertinent information</td>
<td>documenting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Kuhlthau, 2004, p. 82.)

Kuhlthau, C., Maniotes, L., Caspari, A. GUIDED INQUIRY © 2012
## Guided Inquiry across the ISP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry Process</th>
<th>Information Search Process</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open &amp; Immerse</td>
<td>Initiation &amp; Selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Formulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather</td>
<td>Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create &amp; Share</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Comprehensive reviews


- Christine Borgman. Scholarship in the Digital Age. MIT Press.

User studies matter

User studies provide insight on pressing problems in the digital age.

- Everyday Life Information Seeking
- Context and Task
- Authority – expertise, perspective, bias
- Group Information Seeking
- Problem Solving in the Workplace
- Learning and Knowledge Construction