Information behavior of university students: review

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Main topics

• History of research
• Perspectives of research
  • Research into individual information behavior
  • Research on the patterns of usage of resources
• Information behavior models and research philosophies
• Research questions for further research
• References
History of research

- beginning of 70s – students' use of library services and problems in using services
- from 90s – the focus of research has expanded:
  - disciplinary differences in information seeking and use,
  - the impact of curriculum on students’ information-seeking behavior;
  - affect of personality attributes on students' information seeking behavior, etc.

Case (2006)
- categorize students in the area of information seekers by role (non-employment roles),
- studies of students make up 19% of the literature on information seeking
Perspectives of research

Rowley & Urquhart (2007) – two main standpoints of research in studies:

1. Research into individual information behavior
   - smallscale studies of student information behavior
   - studies that examine the information behavior of students in specific universities or colleges and disciplines

2. Research on the patterns of usage of resources
   - the studies that focus on the quantitative usage of particular resources or services
   - focus recently has been on use of the Internet and electronic information
   - often including implications for training and support
1. Research into individual information behavior

- usually qualitative and small scale (interviews, focus groups)
- often build on different models of information behavior
- investigate student search behavior and other factors
- many of the studies concern postgraduate or doctoral students

The research studies can be divided into three main groups - Rowley & Urquhart (2007):

a) studies of information seeking;
b) studies that examine disciplinary differences in information seeking and use;
c) studies that look at information behavior in a wider context that often includes learning and teaching
Studies of information seeking

- often they are influenced by a particular model of information seeking
- Cole (1997); Kennedy, Cole & Carter (1999) - Kuhlthau’s ISP model (1993) as information seeking for learning and information seeking as a process of seeking meaning
- Limberg (1999) - phenomenography, information seeking and learning as intertwined process,
- Whitmire (2003) - the relationship between individuals’ epistemological beliefs and their information-seeking behavior
- information literacy models – impact of user education programme on students’ information seeking behavior, e.g. Zondi (1992)
b) Studies that examine disciplinary differences in information seeking and use

- **Eskola (1998), Wlidemuth et al. (1994, 1995)** - studies on medical students' information behaviours
- **Urquhart & Crane (1994)** - information seeking skills and perception of information sources for nurses
- **Talja & Maula (2003)** - disciplinary differences in the use of e-journals and databases
- **Liu & Yang (2004)** - distance-learning students

Disciplinary differences are close related to curriculum, e.g. problem-based
c) Studies that look at information behavior in a wider context that often includes learning and teaching

- **Eskola (1999, 2005)** – problem based learning of medical students, information literacy

- **Heinström (2002)** - influence of personality and approach to studying on students’ information-seeking behavior (three types of behavior: fast surfing, broad scanning, and deep diving), motivation

- **Kwon (2008)** - relationship between critical thinking and library anxiety among undergraduate students in their information search process
2. Research on the patterns of usage of resources

- the studies that focus on usage of particular information resources and often including implications for training and support
- most of current studies research the use of electronic resources (often in relation to information literacy programs)
- **Carlson (2006)** - student citation behavior - the affect of the class year, the academic discipline, the level of the course; some studies also research relation to information literacy programs
- **George et al. (2006)** - people play a central role in graduate students' searching and finding information - professors and advisers
- methods: log analysis, bibliographic analysis, focus groups, interview, etc.
Information behavior models and research philosophies

- **Constructivism** – Kuhlthau: ISP model (Kuhlthau 2004)
- **Realism / Objectified approach to context** – Wilson & Walsh (1996): the global information-behaviour model
- **Critical realism** - Wikgren (2005) - to understand some causes and relations, and then to make change
- **Epistemology** - Whitemire (2003) – undergraduates’ epistemological beliefs influence the decisions they make as they seek information and evaluate information sources encountered during the information-seeking process
Instead of conclusion
Research questions for further research

- Urquhart & Rowley (2007)
  - the holistic approach - evolutionary psychology, historical aspect with the current strengths of LIS concepts, approaches and models
  - longitudinal studies

- Limberg, Louise (1999)
  - the phenomenographic approach - to describe variation in stead of one general model or process of information seeking

- Carlson (2006)
  - “Do students take what they have learned from one course and apply it to another, building on their research skills as they progress through college?”
Instead of conclusion
Research questions for further research

- Erdelez, Basic & Levitov (2011)
  - the impact of information encountering-enhanced models of information literacy on the students' learning outcomes and instructional processes

- The impact of new teaching methods and resources on students' information needs, seeking and use of information!
References


