

Presenter: Nancy Baker

Date: September 7, 2004

Paper: Ellis, David (1993). Modeling the information-seeking patterns of academic researchers: A grounded theory approach. *Library Quarterly* 63(4), 469-486.

Summary of paper:

This paper presents David Ellis's research on the information-seeking patterns of academic researchers. Here he looks at three groups: social scientists, scientists, and humanities researchers. What is different about the paper is his methodology. He uses the grounded theory approach. In this approach the subjects are interviewed in-depth. The interviews are open-ended and pre-planned questions can be followed up with other questions if the researcher wants to know more. The researchers end up describing their research in detail. These research activities are then pulled out, categorized by type and coded. Models were then derived by looking at the types that appeared in patterns. The sort of information-seeking activities which resulted were *starting, chaining, browsing, differentiating, monitoring, interacting, initial familiarization, chasing, verifying, ending*, etc. Ellis characterized the information-seeking behavior of each group using these categories.

Discussion:

Much of our early class discussion focused on understanding Ellis's methodology: grounded theory approach. Many of the participants had not seen this approach used before. Dr. Marchionini was a visitor that day and was able to provide some interesting insights into how use of the methodology was accepted and built on since Ellis's work.

We were able, too, to hear interesting observations and anecdotes from K.T. Vaughn on her experiences with scientists and how they differ and how they are similar in their information-seeking activities.

At the end of the class Dr. Hemminger polled the class participants on how we seek information. We came up with a long list. It did include libraries, but Internet resources, particularly GOOGLE, were at the top of the list. This followed a discussion on the use of the web in information-seeking. We figured Ellis would get different results on his study if he conducted it now instead of 1993.