INLS 500 – Human Information Interaction

Megan Winget, Fall 2018

Basic Information

Date & Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 – 10:45 a.m.
Location: Manning 304

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Megan Winget
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Office: Manning 06 (on “the garden level,” right around the corner from Manning 01)
Office hours: Tuesdays from 11 a.m. – noon.

Anyone can come to office hours to discuss anything, without making an appointment in advance. It’s a great time to ask questions about assignments, to ask for help, or just to say hello.

Introduction

From the SILS Catalog “This course surveys human information interactions through broad examination of information science literature. Students examine cognitive, affective, social, and organizational/institutional approaches to understanding interactions between people and information. Emphasis is placed on the role of information professionals and information systems as mediators. Students are encouraged to analyze current events and situations, and to apply concepts, models and theories to their own information practice.”

What that Means to Me

We interact with information all day, every day. We wake up, open our eyes, and the quality of light in the room tells us what kinds clothes we might need to wear that day. We go to the refrigerator and see that we are out of milk, so it’s just coffee for breakfast (again). Most of us go to work and interact with systems that other people have developed to help us manage our information throughout the day. We check our email. We look at Facebook. We “Google” for information – all the time! We set up and keep track of meetings with friends and colleagues on some sort of calendar. We look up recipes. We chat with friends. We learn how to do things. We remember how to do things. These are all examples of systems that manage our interaction with information. Some of these systems were created for our use (Facebook, Google, email, calendaring, the library catalog, etc.), some we create ourselves (how we “chat to friends,”), and some are a function of our lived biological experience (“open our eyes and judge the quality of light”).

Library and Information Science is fundamentally interested in how humans interact with information, specifically information within those formally created systems. People have information needs. They look for information. They use information. They organize information. They collect. Analyze. Judge. Our field functions to serve those needs, guide those interactions, and ensure a system’s utility, and usefulness.
Most of the courses at SILS will explore, in one way or another, the ways in which people interact with information and/or the systems we’ve created to manage their interactions. *This course* will provide a foundation for all of these other courses, introducing students to the core concepts in our field. Familiarity with the topics covered in this class will have implications on the student’s future success at the school, and, arguably, within the field as a whole.

Because INLS500 covers foundational knowledge about the field, we recommend students enroll in this course within their first or second semester at the school.

**Course Goals**

By the end of this course, students will:

- Be familiar with the empirical and theoretical literature related to information seeking, including the recognition of information needs, actions taken to resolve those needs, the roles of intermediaries (both human and machine), and the retrieval and use of information;
- Understand key concepts related to the ways in which information is created, structured, disseminated and used;
- Develop skills in reading, writing, and discussing information science concepts, models, frameworks, and theories;
- Critically apply theories and empirical findings to the definition and solution of problems related to human information interactions.

**Learning Objectives**

In this course, students will:

- Identify the major theories that inform our field as they relate to information behavior, and the main proponents of those theories.
- Describe the relationships among, and differences between, competing theories and methods for interpreting and examining information behavior.
- Evaluate the impact that those theories have had on our field and the world at large.
- Learn how to read critically and engage professionally with the literature and colleagues.
- Develop confidence in their ability to communicate (online and IRL, in writing and verbally) with colleagues and peers efficiently, effectively, and consistently.

**My Dearest Wish**

My hope in teaching this class is to excite and engage my students so they feel personally connected to the field. I want students to finish this class with a deep knowledge of the theoretical models and frameworks that underpin our profession, to have opinions on their favorite research methodologies, and thinkers, and theories; and be curious about what the future holds. I want students to feel empowered to take control of their careers, and understand that librarians and information scientists hold the future in their hands.

**Assessments**

**Description and Analysis of an Information-Seeking Event (15% = 60 points)**

For this assignment, you will pair with a classmate to conduct a think aloud observation of an exploratory search activity (approximately 45 minutes of searching) related to the System/Service Assignment. You will take notes on your partner’s actions, and descriptions, and analyze their
behaviors in light of those descriptions and in light of the course readings and class discussions. You should demonstrate a clear understanding of concepts, models and theories covered in class and in the readings.

**Intermediate Deliverables**

- Choose partner, date and time for observation: To ensure that you're on the right track with this assignment, both members should submit the name of their partner, and a mutually agreed-upon time and date for the think aloud observation.

**Final Deliverables:**

- Description of search behavior (March 6) - *Describe* your partner’s information seeking event, including behaviors, strategies, verbalized thoughts, and motivations. Your description should capture as much detail as possible, but does not have to be formal or very structured (it must be comprehensible at some level). The goal of this description is to provide chronology and context for the analysis. *(Descriptive Writing)*
- Analysis of Information Seeking Event (March 6) – *Evaluate* the information seeking experience. *Assess* which (if any) of the information seeking and use models we have discussed in class apply to your partner’s situation - as motivation, as information-seeking process, or as use. Write a brief report (3-4 single-spaced pages) that interprets the experience. Concentrate on analysis and application of the models and theories learned in class, rather than retelling what you have already presented in the description. The goal here is to demonstrate that you can use the terminology, and apply the concepts, models, and theories learned in class to your own information seeking behavior. *(Expository/Analytical Writing)*

A few questions you should consider:

- What search strategies did your partner engage? Did those strategies work? What did they do when they did? When they didn’t?
- What information behaviors did s/he display?
- Where did your partner search/what sources did your partner consult? Why?
- What barriers or surprises did s/he experience?
- Why do you think the experience was a successful (or unsuccessful) one?
- Be sure to relate your observations to readings and discussions from class. Cite them as appropriate.

**Audience Analysis & Preliminary Needs Assessment (25% = 100 points)**

In this assignment, you will choose a particular client population and conduct an in-depth analysis in-depth review of the literature on the information needs and behaviors of your client group. You will then identify shortcomings in offerings to this population, and suggest further work to develop tools or programs that will serve these people. For example you might choose to conduct a literature review on the information behaviors of retirees, lawyers, performing arts faculty, genealogists; and you might identify opportunities like outreach programs, the development of training tools, some sort of new UI structure… these examples are intended to be suggestive, not comprehensive or restrictive).

The purpose of this assessment is to have you get in-depth experience with user research, learn about a particular user group, and try to extend that knowledge into problem-solving for that group. The particular ideas you come up with are not the focus of the assignment.
Intermediate Deliverables:

- Setting/Target Audience Description: This brief description will outline your intended setting, the organization to which you will be writing your memo/proposal, and the target population or client group. You will submit three paragraphs:
  - One paragraph describing the setting you’ve selected, including the name (real or fictional) of the organization to which you will be proposing your system/service (Descriptive/Expository Writing).
  - One paragraph defining/describing the client group (based on your current knowledge) (Descriptive/Expository Writing).
  - One paragraph about why you selected this setting and client group (Persuasive Writing).

- Preliminary Searching Plan: This portion of the project is intended to encourage you to think systematically about your search process. Provide a bulleted list of the following:
  - Databases/Other sources you intend to search with brief explanations as to why
  - Search Terms (including inclusion/exclusion criteria such as dates)
  - What elements/factors you intend to use to judge the relevance/quality of information you find (1-3 sentences each - no more than 1 page)

- Preliminary Population Data: Provide a detailed outline, a concept map/matrix, or a similar sketch of what you’ve learned about the population. Include the preliminary list of references to the articles you’re using as evidence.

- Proposed system or service: 1-2 paragraph description of your proposed system or service. Briefly describe your solution and how it meets the needs of your population.

Final Deliverables:

The final proposal package will consist of two parts:

- Poster (for in-class poster session week of November 13):
  - A graphical representation of your research to share with your colleagues in class the week of November 15). This poster will present your research and needs analysis, and will provide information on moving forward to help this user group.

- Paper (Due November 16)
  - Client Population Analysis: A brief description (4-6 pages, single-spaced) of the client population and an analysis of its information needs, based on your knowledge of its behaviors. This analysis should be evidence-based, i.e., it should rely on prior studies and/or descriptions of the client population and their information behaviors as reported in the literature. To support your analysis, you will be expected to cite and assess the relevant literature. This appendix will serve as your support documentation (the strength of this document, and the depth of your analysis will determine the bulk of your grade).
  - Search Strategies: A listing of the databases/resources you used to learning about the client population, and the specific search strategies/terms used in each. You should also describe your inclusion/exclusion criteria (e.g., range of years or other limits you placed on your searches) and the criteria you used to make judgments about the relevance or usefulness of the items you selected. This appendix should be a bulleted list or outline format, rather than narrative. There’s no limit on its length, but it is likely to be 1-3 pages, single-spaced.
Group Project: Research and Theory In- and Outside the Field: Conducting an Analysis of Scholarly Communication (35% = 140 points)

In this assignment, you will work with a team to conduct a small-scale bibliographic analysis of research one theory, model, framework, or clearly defined concept in information science. Your team will choose a topic from the list provided, create a bibliography of scholarly works on the topic, analyze the scholarly context of four selected articles (1 per team member), and describe the corpus of written work (in and outside of LIS) about the selected topic, based on bibliographic records. This assignment is to be completed in teams of 4 people.

Intermediate Deliverables

One group member should submit all deliverables via Sakai. Be sure to include the names of all group members in the submission box and on all documents.

- Team selection: 4 People per group (please read through the entire assignment before you choose your group).
- Topic Selection: Your team should choose one of the following topics and authors as a starting point for analysis:
  - Information poverty (Chatman)
  - Information Search Process (Kuhlthau)
  - Anomalous states of knowledge (Belkin)
  - Relevance (Saracevic)
  - Information Intents (Todd)
  - Sensemaking (Dervin)
  - Serendipity (Erdelez)
  - Task-based Information Retrieval (Vakkari)
  - Browsing and Berry picking (Bates)
  - Distributed Cognition (Hollan)
- Search parameters/Preliminary Bibliography: Provide a guide outlining your search strategies (see Bates), and criteria for inclusion and exclusion of articles. As you conduct your analysis, you will encounter other authors (these are given as a starting point), but you should be careful about establishing boundaries for your topic area. Be very intentional about how you determine that a topic does or does not fit within the parameters of your search, and describe this in detail. Search parameters: (min 1 page); Preliminary bibliography (1 article per group member).

Final Deliverables

One group member should submit final deliverables via Sakai. Be sure to include the names of all group members in the submission box and on the final document. Each group member should also submit peer evaluations individually via Sakai.

1. **Final Bibliography of research on your given topic.** This bibliography should be as expansive as you can make it (suggested minimum of 30 items), and should, ideally, contain research from inside and outside of the field of Information & Library science. Bibliography should use APA (6th edition) format.
2. **Bibliographic analysis of the literature** (4 pages/2000 words total). This section should examine your entire bibliography for trends (geographic, chronological, bibliographic, and conceptual). Suggested approaches/questions: What does the corpus of literature on this topic “look like?” What fields/subfields does it cover? Where is research on this topic
published (what journals/institutions)? What conference proceedings include the topic? What are the most popular journals? Where (geographically) are the journals and authors located? Who is citing this work? What do these citations tell you about the importance (or lack of importance) of this topic? What do the titles suggest about the conceptual/theoretical development of the topic? What related topics exist in the literature? Note: If your final bibliography is too expansive, you may need to examine a subset of the literature. Please see me to discuss strategies for doing this if this is the case.

3. **Analysis of one article and its scholarly context** (1 analysis per group member; 1000-1250 words each. 5000 word max total, excluding references). The group must include the work of more than one author. Select one article from the final bibliography and provide the following analysis:

   a. 1 page (500 words): Very brief analysis of your article. The analysis should reflect your impressions of the paper with respect to the article’s structure and content. The review should describe what you found useful in the article, what you liked about it, what the article’s deficiencies or limitations are, and how the article has influenced your thinking about the field or about practice. You should relate your discussion to other readings or topics from the class. Note: It may be more fun to be critical, but one of the goals of this assignment is to recognize that the author is trying to make a point, to convey information that he/she/they believe is important, so it is important to appreciate that and place your comments in context. Consider the target audience when assessing the appropriateness of form and content. When the authors have failed in their effort, be precise (but concise) about how they failed and offer suggestions for improvement.

   b. 1.5 pages (500-750 words): Analysis of scholarly context of your article. Begin by examining the reference list in your selected paper. Suggested approaches/questions: How old are the citations? Who wrote the work that the author(s) cited? In what journals or other media were the references published? What clues do the references give you about the purpose of the paper or the intended audience? How much overlap is there between the reference lists of the several articles in your selected set? Who has cited the paper you selected? You may check the following online citation indexes: ISI Web of Science (available online through the UNC Library e-research tools), Scopus (available online through the UNC Library e-research tools), Google Scholar, CiteSeer X (from Penn State University), the ACM Digital Library (for some technical papers), and/or other online databases that might include your paper and that include citation data. At a minimum, conduct citation searches in (1) the ISI Web of Science database or Scopus and (2) at least one of the other citation databases. Be sure to keep track of which citations were discovered in which database. How many times has each of the selected articles been cited? Who has cited each? Are there examples of bibliographic coupling (i.e., where two or more of your selected articles are citing the same article/document)? In what fields/disciplines are your selected articles cited?

4. **Final list of search terms & expanded/revised search parameters**. Provide a guide outlining your search strategies (see Bates), and criteria for inclusion and exclusion of articles. As you conduct your analysis, you will encounter other authors (these are given as a starting point), but you should be careful about establishing boundaries for your topic area. Be very intentional about how you determine that a topic does or does not fit within
the parameters of your search, and describe this in detail. Search parameters: (min 1 page); Preliminary bibliography (min 30 references).

5. **Peer Evaluation**: Assign each team member a grade (0-5 points) and provide a 3-4 sentence qualitative evaluation of each of your team members based on their participation in this project. I will grade you based on the thoughtfulness and quality of your assessment. Submit this assessment separately via Sakai.

Examples of Bibliographic Analyses


**Participation (25% = 100 points)**

Participation is a chance for students to discuss the unit’s readings with their peers (in the case of the mostly weekly discussion sessions); and to digest their readings by finding relevant materials and projects on the web (in the case of blogging).

Showing engagement with material via various discussion mechanisms is very important. Therefore, participation is an important part of the course, and represents a quarter of the final course grade. Your success in this course depends on your engagement with the material, with each other, and with me through the guided discussion sessions and the class blog.

Even though the participation assessment is, essentially, credit / no credit – it’s really the best way for me to know that students are actively working through this subject material. Not only is this good for you – you get a chance to think about things your own way – but participating fully is good for everyone in the class – engagement is a “good thing.” Be the change you want to see! Lead by proactive example!

Participation includes asking clarifying questions, answering questions raised by other students, commenting on other students’ messages, responding to specific passages in the readings, sharing your expertise and resources, or posing issues pertinent to the subject.

Participation consists of:

- **[Mostly] Weekly Discussion Sessions**: 60 points (12 weeks / discussions x 5 points per week). We will have devoted class time for discussion.
  - Assessment of discussion sessions will be, essentially, credit / no credit. If students are present for the discussion, and they have not disrupted the discussion (i.e., absolutely not participating, insulted or threatened colleagues), they will receive full credit.
  - At the beginning of every discussion class, I will hand out cards for students to fill out with open-ended questions (impossible to get “wrong”). These cards will act as as an attendance record for these classes.
- **Posting to the Class Blog**: 40 Points (4 blog posts / 5 points each; 4 comments on other students’ blog posts / 5 points each). This website also acts as the class blog. (Look under the “blog” tab in the navigation bar above). Throughout the course, students will post (at least) 4 blog stories, and comment on their colleagues’ stories (at least) 4 times. Blog posts are a chance for students to identify class topics in the real world. Students will find articles
online that are related to class content, link to that article, write a brief synopsis (between 250 – 500 words) of the article and describe why they think the article is interesting in terms of topics covered in the course.

- Assessment: Like the discussion sessions, this assessment is credit / no credit. If a student writes 4 blog posts and comments on 4 other blog posts, they will receive full credit. However, students may get credit for only one blog post per week (that is, students should not wait until the last week to do all of the blog posts), but may comment on others’ posts whenever it’s relevant.
- Students will be responsible for tracking their progress on blog postings.
- By the final day of classes, students will fill out a “BloggingProof” (Word Doc) and turn in via Sakai.

Remember: Students may only get credit for one blog post per week.

Grading

UNC-CH graduate students are graded on the H/P/L/F scale. The following definitions of these grades will be used for this course. I want to stress that in this particular school, all classes are essentially – credit / no credit. Grades, for all intents and purposes, do not exist. Rest assured that if you engage with the material and complete the course assignments, you should expect to get a P in the class.

**Graduate Students**

H 380 – 400 points (95%+)

P 320 – 379.9 points

L 280 – 319.9 points

F Below 280 points

IN work is incomplete

**Undergraduate Students**

A 380 to 400 (95%+)

A- 360 to 379 (90% - 94%)

B+ 348 to 359 (87% - 89%)

B 336 to 347 (84% - 86%)

B- 320 to 335 (80% - 83%)

C+ 308 to 319 (77% - 79%)

C 296 to 307 (74% - 76%)

C- 280 to 295 (70% - 73%)

D+ 268 to 279 (67% - 69%)

D 240 to 267 (60% - 66%)

F <240 (<60%)
Semester Calendar

All readings are available through the WordPress site.

For each day of the course, read the listed materials before class.

At the end of each class session, I will provide a brief introduction to the reading for the next session, with a few questions to consider for each reading. You should be prepared to discuss these questions in class.

Unit 1: Introductions & Basic Concepts:

Week 1: Course Introduction and – Why is this Important?

- Read Course Syllabus

Week 2: What is Information (August 28)

Tuesday:

- Case, Donald. (2002). Looking for Information: A survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behavior. Chapter 1 [PDF]; Chapter 2 (choose one example, read that section) [PDF]; Chapter 3 [PDF].

Thursday

- Choose One
  - Dervin, B. (1992). From the mind’s eye of the user: The sense-making qualitative-quantitative methodology. In J. Glazier & R. Powell (Eds.), Qualitative research in information management (pp. 61–84). Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited. [LINK]


Unit 2: Information Behavior
Week 3: Models, Theories, Perspectives in Information Behavior (September 4)
DUE: Description & Analysis of an Information Seeking Event – Choose Partners / Setting / Context (deliver in class)

Tuesday
- Case (2002). Chapter 6 – Models of Information Behavior [PDF]; Chapter 7 – Perspectives, Paradigms and Theories [PDF]; Chapter 8 – The Research Process [PDF]; Chapter 9 – Methods: Examples by Types [PDF]
- Fidel (2012). Chapter 3 – Theoretical Constructs and Models in Information Seeking Behavior, Chapter 9 – Models and Their Contribution to Design

Thursday

Week 4: Models, theories, perspectives in action – Information Behavior (September 11)
DUE: Audience Research – Choose Audience (deliver in class)

Tuesday

Thursday
- Haythornthwaite, C. (1996). Social network analysis: An approach and technique for the study of information exchange. *Library & Information Science Research*, 18, 323-342. [PDF] (Be sure you understand all the basic concepts described on pages 323-331; then you can skim lightly to page 338, then focus on the last section (pages 338-340.).)
Unit 3: Information Needs

Week 5: Introduction (September 18) (Co-instructor: Rebecca Vargha)

DUE: Final Group Project – Group Selection (deliver in-class)
IN-CLASS: Database searching How-To

Tuesday
- Case (2002), Chapter 4: Information Needs and Information Seeking
- Fidel (2012), Chapter 4: Information Needs and the Decision Ladder

Thursday
- Bring the draft of your audience research proposal preliminary plan for literature searching

Week 6: Info Needs Models and Theories (September 25)

DUE: Final Group Project – Topic Selection (deliver in-class)

Tuesday
- Belkin, N. (1980). Anomalous states of knowledge as a basis for information retrieval. Canadian Journal of Information Science, 5,133-143. (Pay special attention to his explanation of the specificability of an information need, p.136-139, with Figure 3.) [PDF]

Thursday

Week 7: Information Needs In Practice (October 2)

DUE: Audience Research – Literature Search Plan AND User Identification Plan (Friday of this week at 9 p.m. via Sakai)

Tuesday
- Taylor, R.S. (1968). Question negotiation and information seeking in libraries. College & Research Libraries, 29(3),178-194. (Read about the four levels of "questions," on pages 182-183) [PDF]
Thursday

**Unit 4: Information Seeking**

**Week 8: Introduction to Information Seeking (October 9)**

DUE: Final Group Project – Literature Search Plan (Friday of this week at 9 p.m. via Sakai)

Tuesday


Thursday

- Bates, M.J. (1989). The design of browsing and berrypicking techniques for the online search interface. *Online Review, 13*(5), 407-424. (Skim quickly; pay special attention to the techniques listed on page 412; you’re expected to incorporate them in your Information Seeking Event assignment) [PDF]

**Week 9: Prevalent Models and Theories (October 16)**

Tuesday


Thursday

Fall Break! No class on Thursday

**Week 10: Information Seeking in Practice (October 23)**

DUE: Description & Analysis of an Information Seeking Event – Final Deliverable (Friday of this week at 9 p.m. via Sakai)

Tuesday

• Rieh, S.Y. (2004). On the Web at home: Information seeking and web searching in the home environment. Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 55(8), 743-753. (Focus special attention on the literature review, and the results for research questions 1 & 2) [PDF]

Thursday
(Open)

Unit 5: Information Use

Week 11: Introduction to Information Use (October 30)

DUE: Audience Analysis – Population Info (Friday of this week at 9 p.m. via Sakai)

Tuesday
• Fidel (2012). Chapter 10 – Human Information Behavior and Information Retrieval
• Case (2002). Chapter 5.3, 5.4, 5.5: Related Concepts – Relevance, Pertinence and Salience; and Avoiding Information; Information versus Entertainment

Thursday

Week 12: Prevalent Models and Theories – Information Use (November 6)

Tuesday

Thursday
• (Open)

Week 13: In-Class Presentations – Audience Research Project (November 13)

Due: Audience Analysis – Final Deliverables (paper due Friday of this week at 9 p.m. via Sakai, poster session in class)
Unit 6: Bringing It All Together

Week 14: (November 20)
Tuesday
- Open
Thursday
- Thanksgiving! No Class

Week 15 (November 27)
- Work on Group Project?

Week 16 (December 4)
Tuesday – Last Day of Class