

Celebrating Rural Information Seeking and Use

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What is Information Seeking and Use?

Definition
How people seek, obtain, and use information in their context of social life

Information Seeking and Use (ISU)

ISU is a social and cultural activity
- Individuals seek information to solve their problems
- People need to process and use information that is relevant to their lives
- Individuals seek information to solve their problems
- Information seeking is a social activity
- Information seeking is a social activity

Hanusz, B. (2014)

Information Poverty

Defined as a condition where individuals have limited access to information, digital, or social services in comparison to some broader society or relative to their own needs
- Included in relation to access to information technology resources, literacy skills, computer, and especially among marginalized populations

Hanusz and Brasher (2017)

Remote and Rural in Canada

- 18% of Canadians live rurally
- 400,000 live rurally
- experienced little to no influence from larger centres, metropolitan (urban) areas
- poor access to supply chain, healthcare, education
- library service, if present, is maximum 12 hrs/wk

Research Methods and Design

- methods: methods, 18 months in the field, interviews with 24 participants aged 20-89
- visual methods: environmental scanning
- personal letters, school reports, 600+ images, survey records, and published forms, monographs
- qualitative thematic coding, grounded theory

Characteristics of IP

Digital Divide
Geographic or economic barriers to ICTs, reliance on one-way (push) communication like television or radio, infrastructure instability, reduced quantity or quality of local formal information resources, and limited or no access to library services

Social Divide
Physical or institutional barriers to accessibility, and reduced access to government and not-for-profit services can be indicators of information poverty.

Characteristics of IP

Literacy/Processing Skills
Insufficient knowledge of how to use ICTs, lower rates of secondary and post-secondary education, insufficient communication skills, inability to find or evaluate information sources, and connectivity

Awareness of Information Sources
Overwhelmed ability to identify relevant needs, cognitive barriers (education, literacy, etc.), limited social world or access to networks, and a general feeling of being lost within the community which especially those who do not have the community and perceive reduced in quantity or quality of services available

Characteristics of IP

Affective Component
Lack of confidence, uncertainty, mistrust, and/or fear of risk, heightened awareness of negative consequences, reputation of failure, and fearfully toward outside sources

Protective, Negative Behaviours
Information overload, information avoidance and filtering, and self-protective behaviours such as anxiety and isolation

Information Resilience

Balancing the "order of things"
- rural, rural, they know

Value in the Default
- less means fewer people, fewer rules, less demand for participation, less competition, less means more simplicity, clarity, stability and inclusion from business, satisfaction
- resilience through flexibility, creativity, cooperation, civic participation, and positive attitudes

Conclusions

- theories of info poverty aren't obsolete successful ISU
- psychosocial variables continue to be important factors in information resilience

- systems privilege western ideas and urban contexts
- local-specific ICTs, types of info

- need to recognize & value the many roles, experiences, and information-seeking
- need to move beyond research in remote rural and information-seeking
- need to involve or transform civic library services to these populations

What is Information Seeking and Use?

Definition

"How people need, seek, manage, give, and use information in different contexts" (Fischer et al)

Information Seeking and Use (ISU)

- ISU is situational/contextual
- Decisions to seek information (or not) are complex
- People tend to choose easily accessible info sources first
- people prefer interpersonal sources, especially people like themselves
- Information seekers expect affective support
- information seeking follows habitual patterns

Harris & Dewdney, 1994

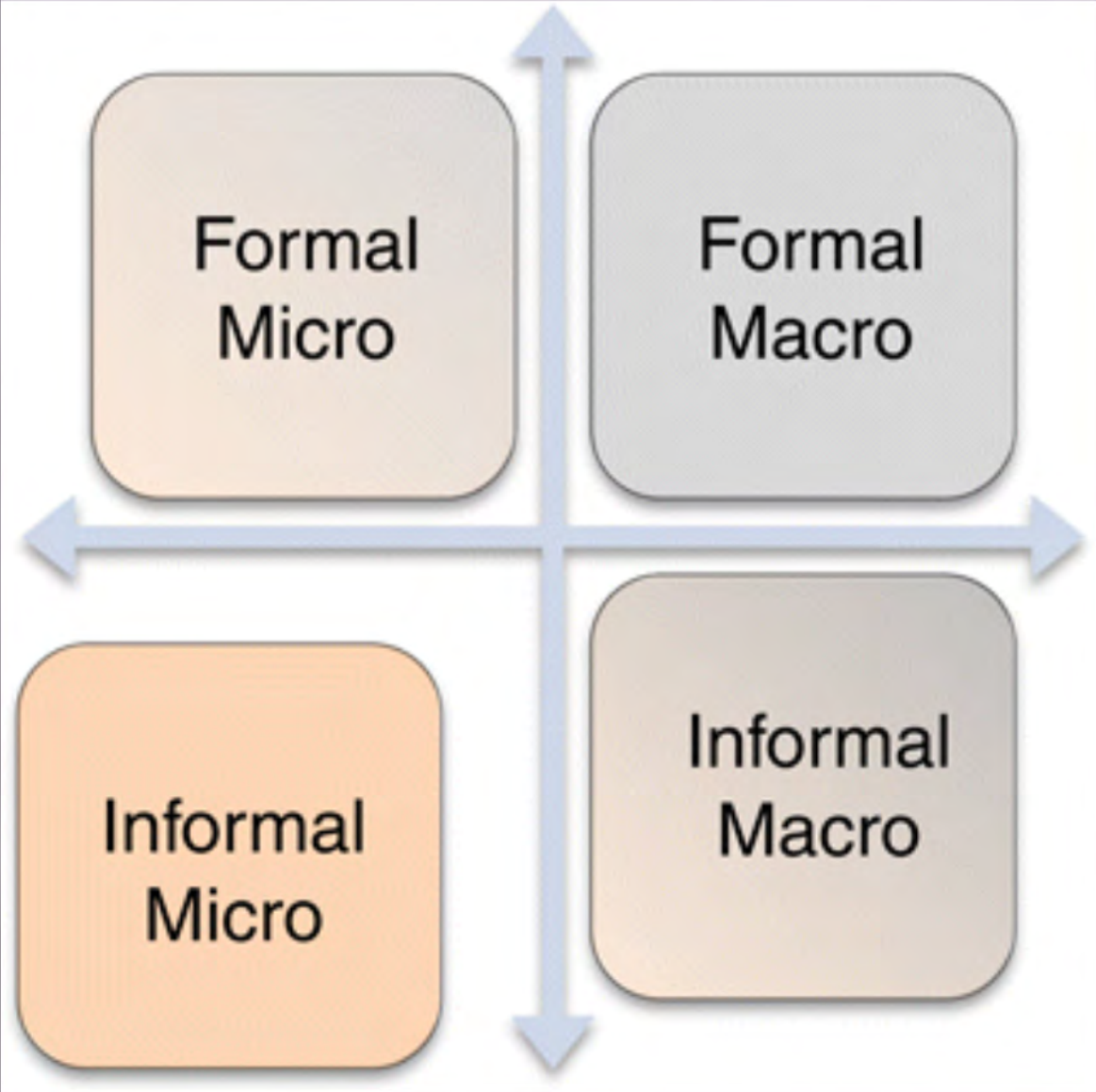
Information Poverty

Defined as "insufficient access to economic, infrastructure, cultural, or social resources... in comparison to some variable, socially acceptable minimum standard"

"Studied in relation to access to information technology, resources, literacy, skills, education, and especially among marginalized populations"



Haider and Bawden (2007)



Remote and Rural in Canada

- 18% of Canadians live rurally
- 400 000 live remotely
- "experience little to no influence from larger census metropolitan (urban) areas"
- poor access to supply chain, healthcare, education
- library service, if present, is maximum 12 hrs/wk

Research Methods and Design

- naturalistic methods, 18 months in the field
- interviews with 24 participants aged 20-89
- visual methods, environmental scanning
- personal letters, school records, 600+
images, military records, self-published
items, monographs
- qualitative thematic coding, grounded theory

Characteristics of IP

Digital Divide

Geographic or economic barriers to ICTs, reliance on one-way (push) communication like television or radio; infrastructure instability, reduced quantity or quality of local formal information resources, and limited or no access to library services

Social Divide

Physical or institutional barriers to accessibility, and reduced access to government and not-for-profit services can be indicators of information poverty.

Characteristics of IP

Literacy/Processing Skills

Insufficient knowledge of how to use ICTs, lower rates of secondary and post-secondary education, insufficient personal communication skills, inability to find or evaluate information sources, and satisficing.

Awareness of Information Sources

Compromised ability to identify information needs, cognitive barriers (education, disability, etc.), limited social world or narrow world view, past and present thinking, strong ties within the community with comparably fewer ties outside the community, and perceived reduction in quantity or quality of information resources.

Characteristics of IP

Affective Component

Lack of confidence, uncertainty, mistrust, aversion to risk, heightened awareness of negative consequences, expectation of failure, and hostility toward outside sources

Protective, Negative Behaviours

Information overload, information avoidance and blunting, and self-protective behaviors such as secrecy and deception

Information Resilience

Balancing the "order of things"?

- many don't... they leave

Value in the Deficit

- less means fewer people, fewer rules, less demand for participation, less consumption
- less means more simplicity, privacy, tranquility, and insulation from busyness, satisfaction
- resilience through flexibility, creativity, cooperation, civic participation, and positive attitudes

Conclusions

- theories of info poverty don't describe successful ISU
- psycho-social attitudes continue to be important factors in information resilience
- systems privilege western ideals and urban contexts
- need to recognize & value the intangible, experiential, and location-specific types of info
- need for more basic research in remote, rural and indigenous settings
- need to improve or transform public library services to these populations

Thank you!

Questions?

Pollak, Angela. (2016). **"Information seeking and use in the context of minimalist lifestyles"**, Journal of Documentation, Vol. 72 Iss: 6, pp.1228 - 1250.