Information Behavior in Developing Countries: Research, Issues, and Emerging Trends

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The field of library and information science (LIS) has historically been a leading discipline in studying human information behavior (Spink & Cole, 2006). Information seeking in industrialized nations is grounded in theories and moving towards new directions and evolutionary approaches that often challenge the established paradigms of information behavior studies (see Case, 2007; Spink & Cole, 2006; Fisher, Erdelez, & Mckechnie, 2005; Chelton & Cool, 2004. Information behavior has been conceptualized in a holistic context that draws upon theories from various disciplines such as cognitive science, communication, psychology, and computer science (Nahl & Bilal, 2007; Spink & Cole,
2006). Compared to industrialized nations, most developing countries relegate towards the bottom heap of research on information behavior (Coleman, 2005; Britz, 2005).

A panel of researchers, educators, and consultants will address research in information behavior in various contexts in developing countries, particularly in India, South Africa, and the Arab world. Based on their research findings and experiences, the speakers will trace themes, map the intellectual terrain, identify emerging trends and approaches, and frame issues related to information behavior research in these countries. Moreover, they will identify significant knowledge domains, concepts, and topics of application in information behavior research where there can be mutual exchange between developing countries and the industrialized nations (including the United States) to nurture and further growth in this area of study.

Human Information Behavior Concepts from a Perspective of IT Professionals in India
*Bharat Mehra and Kevin Rioux*

Since the closing decade of the 20th century, India has emerged as a significant leader in information computer technology (ICT) and software engineering design professions, competing with China in the global supply chain services and manufacturing (Friedman, 2005). What role does information behavior research play in the ICT industry in India? How are concepts in information behavior perceived and articulated in India among information professionals? Is the success of Indian computer engineering and software technology development concepts in relation to human information behavior research? What can ICT researchers in India learn and gain from understanding human information behavior research as practiced in industrialized nations? Bharat Mehra and Rioux will answer these questions based on data collected using two qualitative methods:

1. Content analysis of e-mail data gathered from representatives of all IT companies listed on Bangalore IT official website of the Department of IT and Biotechnology, Government of Karnataka, India; and
2. Participant observations and in-progress anecdotal feedback gathered during the Information and Communication Technologies and Development Conference that was held in Goa, India (January 4-6, 2007), where government representatives, information and communication scholars, community activists, and university instructors met to discuss how ICT influences developments in India at both local and national levels.

**Critical Questions about South Africa’s Status the Global Information Society**

*Johannes Britz*

The global information/knowledge society is based on modern information and communication technology. The trajectory of South Africa towards an information society needs to take into account the requirements and the majority for information and information literacy” (Nassimbeni, 1996). What is the current status of
information provision in South Africa? How can South Africa thrive in the global information society? Br address these questions and discuss four critical prerequisites for South Africa’s success in the global information society:

1. Development of human resources, especially information professionals who are capable of iden and addressing citizens’ information needs and use;
2. Improvement in access to information;
3. Advancements in information infrastructure, including connectivity, costs, reliability, and policies;
4. Development of physical infrastructure, including networks, telecommunications, and hardware.

Information Seeking Research in the Arab World

_Dania Bilal and Lokman Meho_

The Arab world, home to over 300 million people and some of the earliest and greatest universal libraries in the Middle Ages and the modern world astonishingly produces little research in the a information seeking behavior. Literature searches in major library and information science dataal (e.g., LISA), relevant published literature (e.g., Coleman, 2005; Meho & Nsouli, 1999); and recen research (Bilal & Bachir, 2007) attest to the scarcity of literature in various areas of information behavior. Bilal and Meho will share the findings of a study that is designed to assess the percepl LIS educators in the Arab world pertaining to the meaning, value, awareness, and status of rese and education in information behavior. They will share the participants’ responses to such quest

1. What does information seeking behavior mean to you as an LIS educator?
2. What concepts, approaches, and methods are used in the study of information seeking b in your country?
3. What theories and/or models of information seeking behavior are you aware of?
4. What research have you done in this area?

References


References


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