
This research project was motivated by the question of how a Slow perspective may relate to and impact upon theories of information behaviour and upon everyday information practices. Two related qualitative studies were undertaken to explore the relevance of Slow principles to the notion of the information society. The task-based, fixed end-points of existing theories of information behaviour and information literacy are shown to inadequately reflect the complexity of life in a social landscape characterised by the acceleration, and subsequent proliferation, of information channels.

The project progressed through three distinct but related phases which are reported here. First, the conceptual foundations of a Slow perspective were hypothesised during reviews of the literature and existing conceptions of the information society. A Delphi study was then executed to facilitate discussion of the issues between experts in information behaviour. Thirdly, a focus group session was held to engage Slow experts in similar discussion of the issues from a practice perspective. Each phase was guided by a social constructivist methodology which encouraged participants and moderator to engage in conscious consideration of their perspective by connecting and discussing with others, echoing the Slow principles that the project sought to explore.

A Slow perspective is shown to challenge received notions of information behaviour in three ways. The first two relate to fixed causal processes wherein the temporal progression of information behaviour and, relatedly, information literacy, is disrupted by a focus on tempo. The third challenge disrupts what ‘information’ is when society itself is perceived as information-based, shifting from an instrumental to an experiential view.

Elements of a Slow approach were reported in practice as a means of attaining ‘informational balance’, which in turn can be seen to encourage everyday information literacy. Specifically Slow attitudes were reported in some withdrawal and avoidance behaviours, and were also rejected when the pressure of informational speed and scale proved too beneficial, or indeed, too addictive.

The project concludes with an illustration of the implications of a Slow perspective of information behaviour, and recommendations for further research with this illustration in mind.

Publication Type:  Thesis (Doctoral)
Departments:  Doctoral Theses
School of Mathematics, Computer Science & Engineering > Library & Information Science
URI:  http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/19825
However, the field of human information behavior (HIB) has not heretofore pursued an evolutionary understanding of information behavior. The goal of this exploratory study is to provide insight about the information behavior of various individuals from the past to begin the development of an evolutionary perspective for our understanding of HIB. Design/methodology/approach - This paper presents findings from a qualitative analysis of the autobiographies and personal writings of several historical figures, including Napoleon Bonaparte, Charles Darwin, Giacomo Casanova and others. Practical implications - This paper has implications for expanding the nature of our evolutionary understanding of information behavior and provides a broader context for the HIB research field. This paper proposes that Wilson's models of information behavior constitute a general theory and that this is recognized by other researchers, although the term 'theory' has not been used by Wilson. Wilson's models are reviewed in the context of their use by other researchers, who use the terms 'theory' or 'theoretical' in describing the models. The relationship between model and theory is discussed and the characteristics of theories are explored, with a view to identifying the kind of theory embodied in the models. Furthermore, cognitive theories deal with crucial areas in the development of information needs and subsequent behavior such as decision making (Simon, 1947), problem solving (Berry and Broadbent, 1995) and motivation (Vroom, 1964; Locke and Latham, 1990). Wilson's model of information seeking behavior was born out of a need to focus the field of information and library science on human use of information, rather than the use of information systems and sources. Previous studies undertaken in the field were primarily concerned with systems, specifically, how an individual uses a system. Very little had been written that examined an individual's information needs, or how information seeking behavior related to other task-oriented behaviors. Thomas D