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643 Week 5:
Libraries as Information Use
Environments:

Robert Taylor's
Concept of the
Information Use Environment

Feb 5, 2009

Robert S Taylor

- Robert S. Taylor,
- 1918-2008
- WWII intelligence agent
- Sports editor
- Newspaper reporter
- Librarian
- Researcher, Educator
- Founding Dean
Syracuse University
School of Information Studies
(1972-1981)
- Visionary “information” scholar
- [http://ischool.syr.edu/
taylor_temp/taylor_bio.html](http://ischool.syr.edu/taylor_temp/taylor_bio.html)

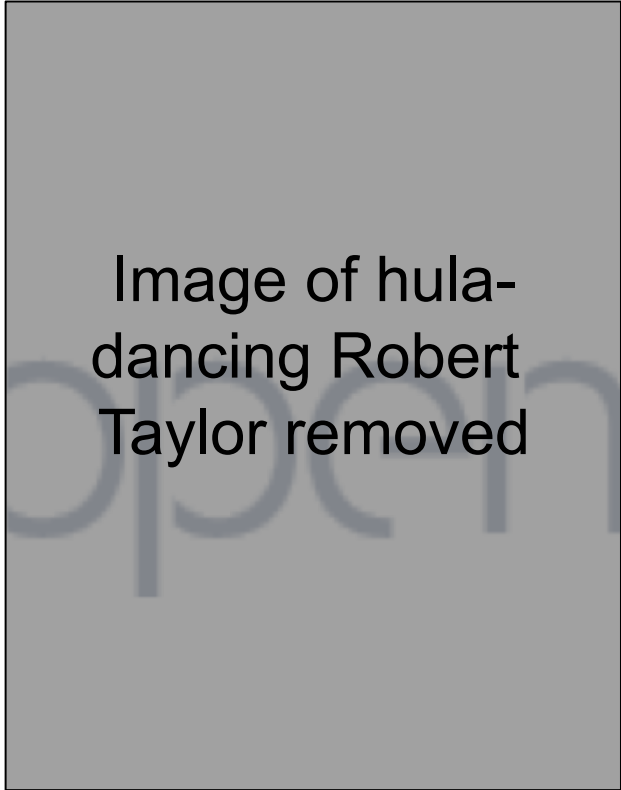
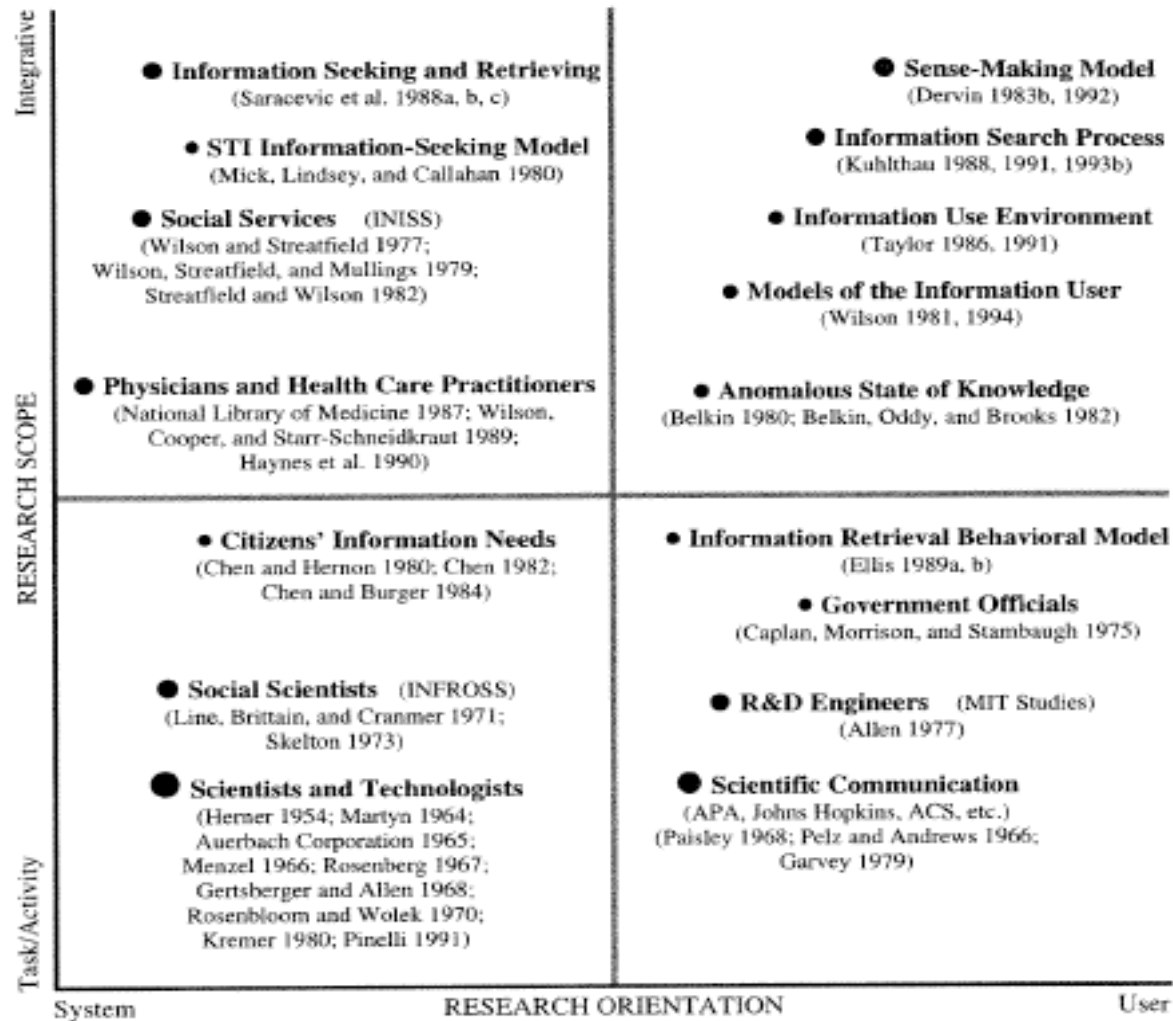


Image of hula-
dancing Robert
Taylor removed

An Information Use Environment

- A framework developed by Robert Taylor in the late 1980s & published in 1991.
- An IUE “consists of **sets of people who share assumptions** about the nature of their work and the role of information in it”;

50+ Years of Information Needs & Use Studies (Chun Wei Choo)



Choo's Graphic of Taylor's IUE

TABLE 2-2. Information-use environments (Taylor 1991).

<i>Sets of people</i>	<i>Typical problems</i>	<i>Work settings</i>	<i>Problem resolution</i>
1. The professions 2. The entrepreneurs 3. Special interest groups 4. Special socioeconomic groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems are dynamic • Discrete classes of problems are created by requirements of profession, occupation, social condition, etc. • Problem dimensions determine the criteria for judging the value of information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization structure and style • Domain of interest • Access to information • History, experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumptions about what constitutes the resolution of a problem • Classes of information use • Traits of information anticipated to resolve problem

The IUE Framework

- The IUE is contextual (people, problems, settings, problem resolution)
- Taylor (1991): The IUE is “a bridge between
 - a) users and their environments and
 - b) . . . librarians.”
- Choo (2006): “people’s **perceptions** . . . control the *breadth and depth* of their information search-- including the time and effort to spend on searching, where to search, how information encountered is to be filtered, and how much and what kinds of information are required.”

Taylor's Problem Dimensions

<i>Design</i>	<i>Discovery</i>
<i>Well-structured</i>	<i>Ill-structured</i>
<i>Simple</i>	<i>Complex</i>
<i>"Goals are specific"</i>	<i>"Goals are amorphous"</i>
<i>"Initial state understood"</i>	<i>"Initial state not understood"</i>
<i>"Assumptions agreed upon"</i>	<i>"Assumptions not agreed upon"</i>
<i>"Assumptions explicit"</i>	<i>"Assumptions not explicit"</i>
<i>"Familiar pattern"</i>	<i>"New pattern"</i>
<i>"Magnitude of risk not great"</i>	<i>"Magnitude of risk great"</i>
<i>"Susceptible to empirical analysis"</i>	<i>"Not susceptible to empirical analysis"</i>
<i>"Internal imposition"</i>	<i>"External imposition"</i>

OK. What is Information Use (IU)?

- IU happens when a person selects & processes info that **leads to a change** in the person's capacity to **make sense of something** or to **take action**
- Taylor's 8 categories of information use

Enlightenment Problem understanding	Projective Motivational
Instrumental; factual Confirmational	Personal Political

Taylor, R. S. (1991). Information Use Environments. In: Brenda Dervin & Melvin J. Voigt (eds). Progress in Communication Sciences. Norwood, NJ: Ablex. Vol. 10: 217-255

The IUE: An Early Framework to Help Librarians Think Contextually by:

- 1) focusing on **sets of people**—often those who share work or **organizational settings**;
- 2) realizing that **the problems** these sets of people focus on profoundly **effect** the kinds of information they think will be useful;
- 3) recognizing that the **constraints and opportunities** provided by the **setting** influence information use; and
- 4) understanding that **attitudes and approaches** to **problem resolution** influence information seeking and use.

The IUE in the 21st Century

- Did your job analysis reveal that the information professionals in that area need to know any of the info environment concepts?
- Have you seen pieces of the IUE in use (even if it isn't called an IUE)? How?
- What are the implications of the Information Use Environment Concept for Practice?