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Librarians & their Clientele: Anticipating Info Needs

SI 643

February 12, 2009

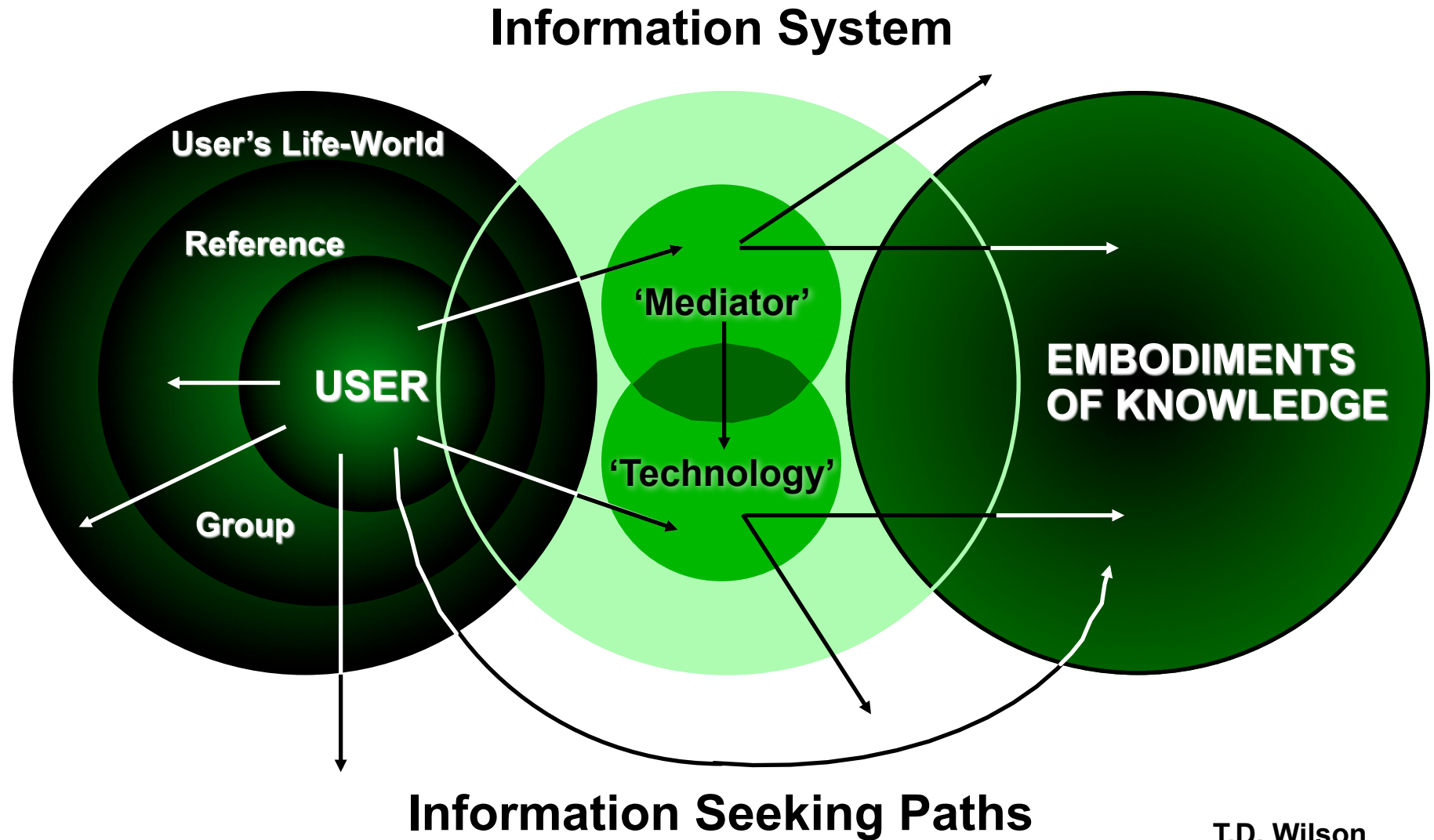
Wilson, T.D. (2005). Evolution in information behavior modeling: Wilson's model, In: *Theories of information behavior*

- T.D. Wilson, theorist
- Holistic approaches since the early 1980s
- Coined the term “information behavior”
- Develops models to show components.



Source: <http://informationr.net/tdw/>

Universe of Knowledge



T.D. Wilson
1981

Harris, R. M., & Dewdney, P. (1994)

- *Barriers to information: How formal help systems fail battered women.* Westport, CN: Greenwood Press. (Ch 2: Theory and research in information seeking)

Information Seeking Insights

- Information needs arise from the help-seeker's situation
- The decision to seek help (information) is complex.
- Needs arise when a person recognizes a gap in the ability to make sense of something
- People seek information that is most accessible - (zipf's law - principle of least effort)
- People tend to seek help or information first from their own experience
- In general people prefer
 - interpersonal sources
 - from people like themselves and those they TRUST

Information Seeking Insights

- Info needs, seeking & use are influenced by a number of cognitive, affective, & situational dimensions.
- Uncertainty may drive the need to seek information.
- People follow habitual patterns (strategies, systems, etc. that worked in the past)
- People seek help from sources thought to be helpful, trustworthy, reliable.
- Formal sources of help (systems) may be used less frequently than people.
- Information seeking models are, of necessity, complex.
- More *information needs, seeking, use* knowledge: SI 551

JASIST ARTICLE

- Fisher, K. E., Durrance, J. C., & Hinton, M. B. (2004). Information grounds and use of need-based services by immigrants in Queens, NY: A context-based, outcome evaluation approach. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology*, 55.8, 754-766.

IMLS STUDY & METHODS

- Multi-year, multi site study to identify outcomes funded by IMLS
- Study Team site visit to Queens (2002)
- We conducted interviews with 15 selected QBPL, focusing on the New Americans Program & the Adult Learner Program
- We observed clients and staff at NAP/ALP
- QBPL Staff conducted short interviews (in clients' language) with 30 NAP and ALP users
 - Reason using QBPL service
 - What hope to gain
 - What else would help
 - How learned about the service used
 - Families' use of QBPL

QUEENS BOROUGH IMMIGRANT POPULATION

- NYC's highest ethnic population-1M born (41% of Queens residents) born outside US
- More than half speak a language other than English; 14% say they do not speak English well.
- More than 100 languages spoken.
- Some from oral tradition cultures;
- Other immigrants speak and read several languages;
- Some hold advanced degrees.
- People have a variety of reasons/motivations for gaining English skills
- Immigrant needs vary considerably.

Queens Public Library Immigrant Programs

- <http://www.queenslibrary.org/>
- Google Queens Library New Americans Program
- Google Queens Library Adult Learner Program
- **Our Research Questions**
 - How do immigrants use and benefit from NAP/ALP?
 - How does “context” shape these outcomes?
 - Do NAP and ALP fit as info grounds?

INFORMATION GROUNDS

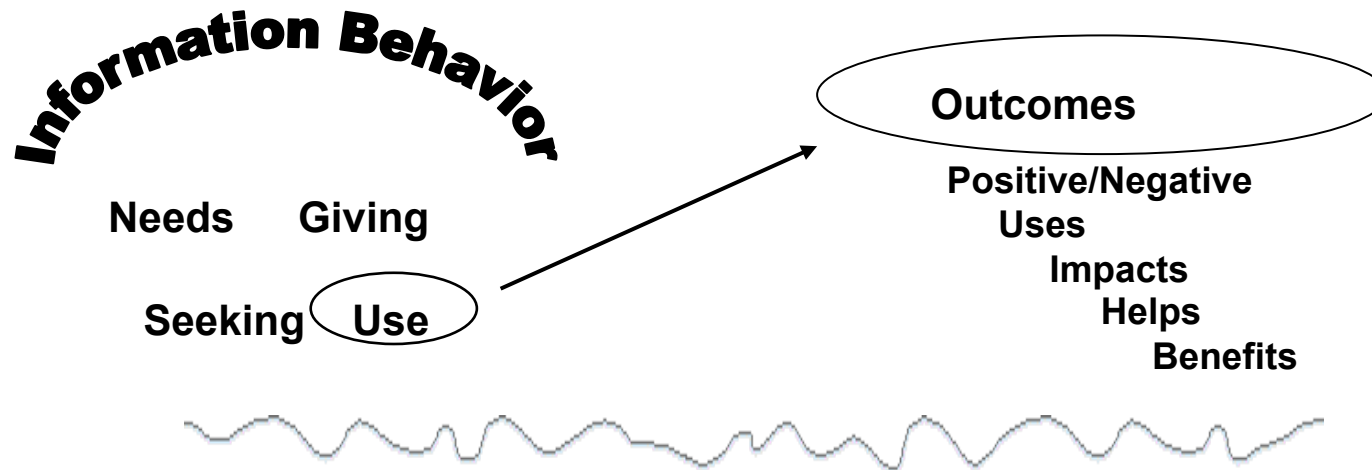
- Synergistic environment temporarily created by behavior of people who come together to perform a given task, but from which emerges a social atmosphere that fosters the spontaneous and serendipitous sharing of info (Pettigrew, 1999)
- Info flow is a byproduct of social interaction
- Foot clinics, playgrounds, barber shops, beauty salons, quilting bees, places of worship ...
- Info Grounds result from a confluence of contextual factors

QBPL NAP/ALP Contextual Factors

- Contextual factor #1: The immigrants of Queens, NY (diverse by nature; needs diverse; face barriers)
- Contextual factor # 2: QBPL & Its Immigrant-Focused Activities
- Contextual factor #3: Professional contributions of QBPL staff

QUEENS PUBLIC LIBRARY NAP, ALP SUMMARY

- **QBPL Service Delivery**
 - 63 branches + 6 adult learner centers
 - Immigrants served through various programs:
 - New Americans Program (NAP; coping skills, cultural awareness)
 - Adult Learner Program (ALP, English lang/literacy)
- **Activities** of these two services include:
 - thousands of **public programs**/year on multiple topics (cultural programs, etc.);
 - **ESOL classes** at various levels;
 - **tutoring**;
 - **conversation groups**;
 - **workshops** on coping skills of various sorts),
 - **collaboration** with community organizations.
 - Extensive **marketing** using ethnic media.
- **Users interact selectively**, may use more than one component.



Information Ground

- Context rich, Temporal setting
- Instrumental purpose
- Social types, Social interaction
- Informal & formal info flow
- Alternative forms of info use
- Sub-contexts create grand context (outcomes model)

WHAT WE FOUND:

- Ranges of outcomes: building blocks + personal gains
- Immigrants and their families tended to become long-term QBPL users—
- Through social networks some are aware of QBPL before reaching US
- NAP/ALP assist users in meeting info, psych, social, and practical needs
- QPL's programs appeared to function as an Info Ground
- Challenge for libraries: to design spaces that may foster social interaction

Image of immigrant
gains from library
use removed

Figure 1 can be found in the
“Queens Borough Public Library
New
Americans (NAP) and Programs
Case Study Report” at
[http://www.si.umich.edu/
~durrance/casestudies/
casestudyreports/
QueensReport.html](http://www.si.umich.edu/~durrance/casestudies/casestudyreports/QueensReport.html)