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Author(s): Joan Durrance, 2009

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Studies of People & Their Needs: A (Very) Brief Introduction to Information Behavior Research; Brief Intro to Civic Engagement

645

Sept 28, 2009

Information Behavior In Communities Is Understudied. A 645 Focus

Librarians lack an understanding of how people need, seek, use information in communities. This course focuses on reducing this problem.

Understanding Barriers Is One Key to Increasing Access to Info And Its Use

- Today: Brief intro to info behavior theory
- Today: Barriers associated with a sensitive individual problem—spouse abuse
- Today: Examination of Barriers associated with Digital Divide Issues

Harris & Dewdney's Premises:

- Premise: LIS, even in 90s, System Centered
- Premise: even researchers prone to look at wrong variables (demographics, occupation, etc) and use the wrong methods
- Premise: every day life problems/situations & "ordinary people" understudied
- Work of theorists such as Dervin essential to learning to anticipate community info needs

H&D's Six Principles of Information-Seeking Distilled from Then Recent Research

1. Information needs arise from help-seeker's situation.

2. The decision to seek help or not to seek help is affected by many factors.

3. People tend to seek information that is most accessible.

H&D's Six Principles (Con't)

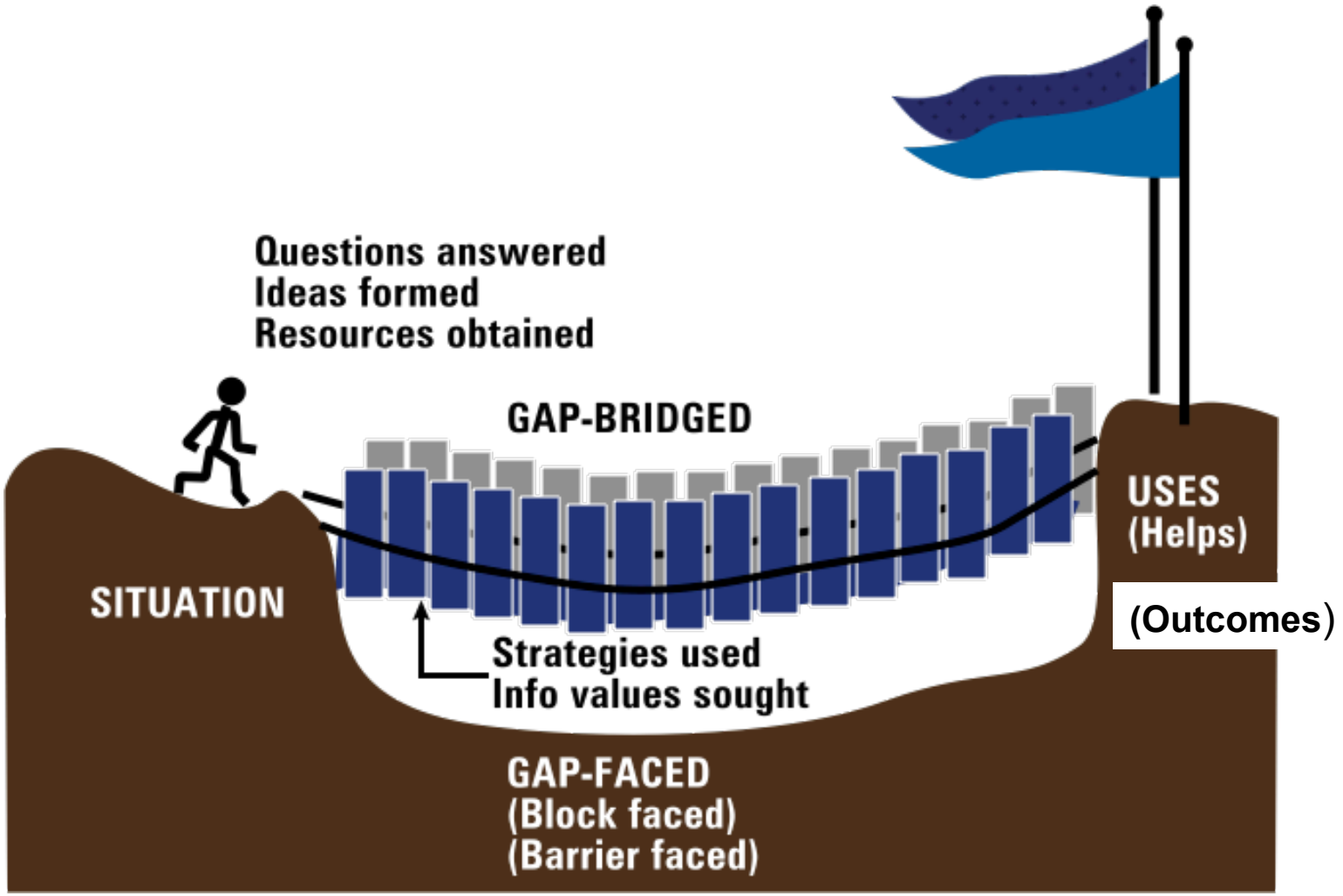
4. People tend first to seek help or information from interpersonal sources, especially from people like themselves

5. Information-seekers expect emotional support.

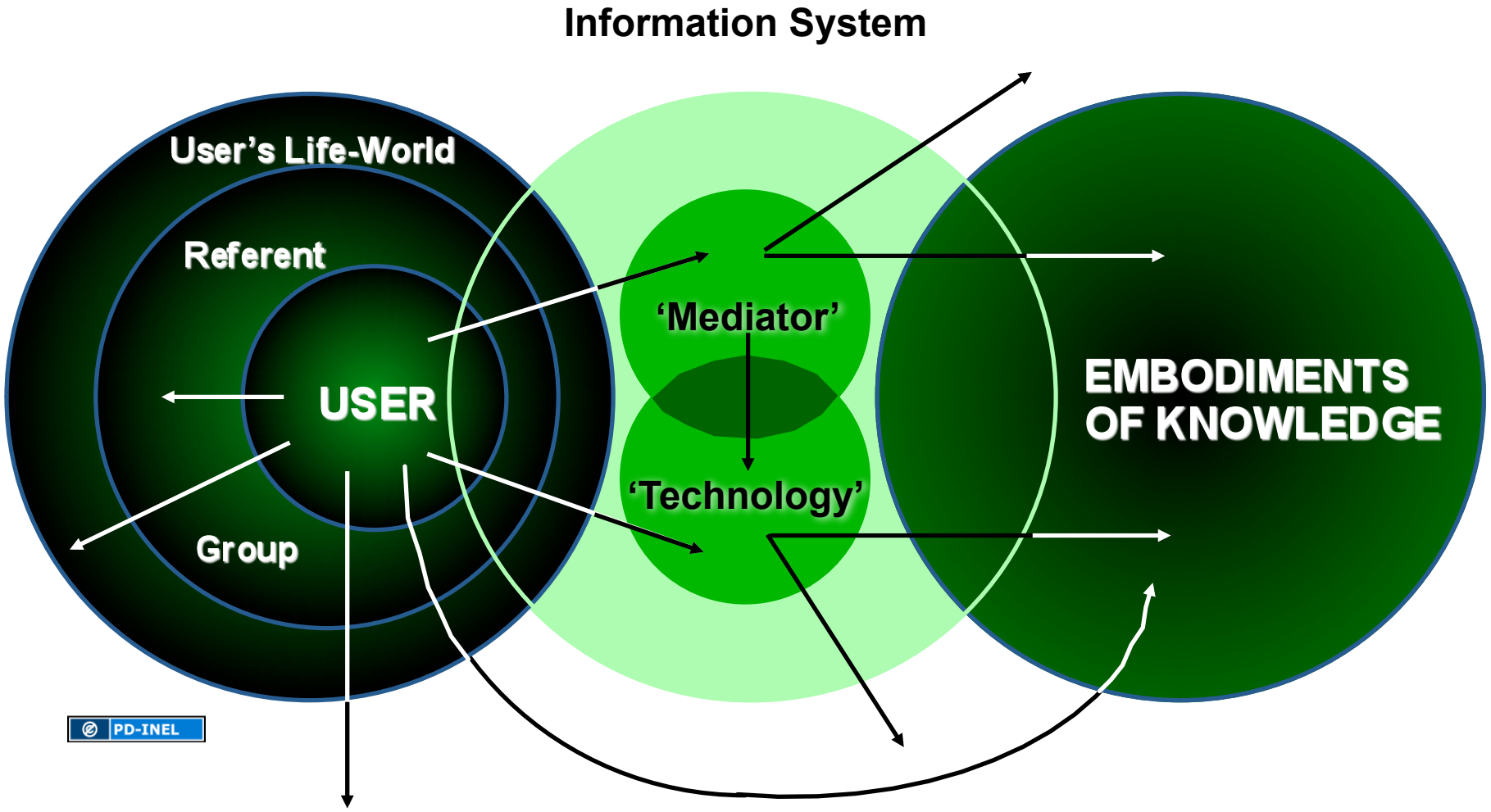
6. People follow habitual patterns in seeking information

Brenda Dervin' Sense-Making Metaphor 1970s-present

PD-INEL



Universe of Knowledge



T.D. Wilson

1981

Chun Wei Choo's Map Of Information Need And Use Studies (2006)

Integrative

Research Scope

	System-centered, integrative studies (primarily 1980s)	User-centered, integrative (e.g., contextual) studies (1980s-90s---->)
Task/activity	System-centered, task-directed studies (primarily '60s-'80s)	User-centered, task-directed studies (primarily 70s)

System ←Research Orientation→ User

Civic Engagement & 645

- Active civic engagement is the commitment to participate and contribute to the improvement of one's community, neighborhood and nation. PACE
- At the community level: a variety of activities initiated by individuals, groups, or agencies
- Civic engagement fostered by groups one focus of this class (postpone Durrance 1984 & 2006 Durrance civic engagement studies)
- Governmental organizations are seeking to "reinvent" their approaches to engagement

Case Studies: Toward Model Development

- There are indicators that institutions are moving away from system-centeredness
- How do can/do/should community institutions engage with their communities?
- What are the components and best practices that foster civic engagement?
- Throughout this term we will seek to identify and bring together model components
- Analyzing the case studies should contribute to the model

Resources

- IMLS National Medal Awards for engagement
- LJ “library of the year” article (most recent 2009)
- Urban Libraries Council reports aimed at providing models of engagement for libraries (examples of activities, etc.). See the Ctools Bib/Resource folder for three ULC studies: Engaged Library; Welcome Stranger; Making Cities Stronger.

Selection of Case Studies

Order of Discussion of Readings

- Information Behavior:
  - Harris & Dewdney ch 4-5
  - Harris & Dewdney ch 6-7

- Digital divide: Robinson et al
- Civic engagement: PACE