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STUDIES IN INFORMATION

LOOKING FOR INFORMATION: EXAMINING RESEARCH ON HOW PEOPLE ENGAGE WITH INFORMATION

FIFTH EDITION

BY

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Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

Fifth edition 2023

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80382-424-6 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-80382-423-9 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-80382-425-3 (Epub)

ISSN: 2055-5377 (Series)

ISOQAR certified Management System, awarded to Emerald for adherence to Environmental standard ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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PREFACE

We are thrilled to introduce the fifth edition of *Looking for Information* – and with a revised subtitle: *Examining Research on How People Engage with Information*. This change in title reflects the overall broadening of focus across information behavior studies; just as the field has moved on from a primary focus on information *seeking* and *needs* to embrace concepts such as *use, creation,* and *embodiment*, so have we.

The book's first edition was published in 2002 and it was awarded the *Best Information Science Book* at that time by the Association for Information Science and Technology. New editions followed in 2007, 2012 and 2016, including translation of the fourth edition into Chinese and Greek. We are very proud of the large and loyal following we have gained, around the world, over these 20 years. For those of you reading this book for the first time – welcome! We are sure you will find some interesting insights within these pages and that you will be intrigued to learn more about the evolution of research on people's engagement with information. For returning readers – thank you! We have enjoyed discussing this book with you over the years and hope you enjoy the new approach we have taken with this new edition.

With this edition, we very purposely welcome readers from outside of information science who will benefit from reviewing key outcomes and trends in information behavior research. There is an increasing focus on interdisciplinarity as researchers (and society) grapple with the world's complex issues, including climate change, geopolitics, and adoption of new technologies. The COVID-19 pandemic provides a powerful case example in the need for health researchers to partner with experts in human information behavior, as misinformation and disinformation continue to shape global uptake of vaccinations and other public health interventions. There has never been a better, or more pressing, time for us to work together to address such complex questions in contemporary society.

THE BOOK'S SCOPE

Looking for Information provides an in-depth look at international research on people's engagement with information. It reviews a century of scholarship, providing examples of research approaches, models, and theories used in information behavior studies. The book is intended for researchers at all levels, from senior academics looking for an overview of key issues or theories, to graduate and undergraduate students who need an introduction to topics and approaches. The book is primarily focused on research conducted in the disciplinary *home* of information behavior

research – information science. As information science is inherently interdisciplinary, the book also includes relevant citations from related fields, such as media and communication, sociology, psychology, digital humanities, education, business, management, medicine, nursing, and public health, among others. The studies cited in the book include a mix of quantitative, qualitative, and textual approaches used to investigate a wide variety of research problems.

Information behavior researchers have expanded their epistemological, methodological, and technological repertoires over the past 25 years. Since the previous (fourth) edition, the adoption of arts-based and mixed methods studies has continued, and with interdisciplinary projects expanding, globally. In this book, we present a detailed overview of the current state of information behavior research, including the new trends we see on the horizon. We cover the core topics explored in the discipline, including the populations, settings, contexts, and activities that researchers explore. We discuss key historic works alongside new innovations, providing readers with a solid overview of both landmark studies and cutting-edge trends. As with previous editions, we retain the book's core purpose – i.e., to outline the common and essential aspects of people's information behaviors by presenting robust examples of publications that demonstrate the contribution of this research area to information science and other disciplines.

A NEW LOOK AND FEEL

Readers familiar with the fourth edition of this book will note that the number of chapters is now reduced (to six) and the content is streamlined. The literature continues to grow at a fast pace, which makes the task of reviewing *all* new works published between editions that much more challenging! With this fifth edition, we include more than 1,200 publications, with the newest additions published in the last seven years (November 2015–2022). We removed at least 100 older references, replacing them with newer, contemporary examples. We also expanded our scope to include commentary on emergent areas (e.g., information creation) and those that received less attention, previously (e.g., information use).

Given the vast amount of literature published to date, we knew the book would either need to expand into two volumes or be refreshed as a single volume. We chose the latter, resulting in a significant remastering of the book's design. With this edition, we introduce new design features (such as sidebars and tables) that enable us to retain content within a smaller textual footprint. We carefully reviewed our use of appendices, tables, figures, and bulleted lists, to balance quick access to summaries and highlights, alongside long-form narratives. The result is a reformulated and streamlined approach to the layout of the book, while retaining the content and focus that our readers expect.

We constructed each chapter to serve as a stand-alone piece of writing, to make it easier to include select chapters on course syllabi, and to facilitate downloading of chapters on e-readers. Each chapter now has its own, complete reference list, as well as *Our Top 3 Must Read Recommendations*. We retained the full reference list to collate references from the entire book, and we have also

retained detailed author and subject indices. We have also added DOIs to citations, where these were available. As a result of the streamlined chapter structure, we no longer group the chapters; however, we do retain a detailed table of contents for the chapters. All these features support findability of key concepts and cited authors, and we hope these will enhance your reading experience.

OUR APPROACH TO CITING EXAMPLES AND RELEVANT LITERATURE

As with previous editions, we portray both the depth and breadth of the information behavior literature by presenting selected studies that illustrate key topics. Choosing which studies to highlight for this volume has been challenging, and we have employed a few different approaches to make our selections. First, we retained the previous framework, which gathered studies by *roles* and *occupations* as part of our detailed overview of historic approaches to information behavior research. We then extended this framework to examine more *holistic* approaches to research, which account for *situations* and *contexts* that shape people's experiences. We have exercised judgment in choosing studies that we see as unique, well done or illustrative of a particular population or approach. We have also highlighted studies using innovative methodological or theoretical approaches, or those that reflect the ongoing shift towards interdisciplinarity.

Second, we omitted investigations focused exclusively on information retrieval and people's searching practices from channels, sources, or systems. Most of these excluded studies concern the use of the internet, social media, online databases, and library catalogs, and together these constitute a huge literature. The focus of these excluded works is on the *system or source*, rather than the *person* who is searching; for this reason, they fall outside the boundaries of our review.

Third, we focus primarily on recent publications, especially those from 2000 to 2022. In some cases, older items are portrayed to highlight the shifts in assumptions, methods, and findings that have taken place over several decades. We also cite earlier, landmark discussions and definitions of core concepts, to ensure proper credit and to provide a historical perspective. By focusing on works from recent decades, we aim to provide an efficient means for reviewing developments in the field, while keeping the book to a manageable size.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

Chapter 1 Information Behavior: An Introduction provides an overview of foundational concepts and key terms and definitions, including *information behavior, information practice, information experience, seeking, sharing, needs, use, creation,* and *encountering,* among others. The nature of *information* is also explored, including such topics as *truth* and *intentionality* in the information people seek, as well as common myths related to information use. The chapter examines the

scope of information behavior research, including its focus on people's holistic and complex relationships with information.

Chapter 2 The Evolution of Information Behavior Research presents a brief, historical overview of information behavior research. The chapter discusses the traditional research focus on people's *roles* (e.g., academics; managers) and *activities* (e.g., seeking), as well as issues related to *motivation* and *gatekeeping* practices. This chapter introduces the history of information behavior research, expanding on the concepts introduced in Chapter 1, and setting the stage to explore contemporary, holistic studies in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 The Complex Nature of Information Behavior examines contemporary approaches to information behavior research, focusing primarily on people's holistic experiences of information. This includes the shift towards approaches that embrace socio-cultural contexts, affect, and embodiment, among other topics. Misinformation and disinformation are explored in depth, and the chapter also provides a detailed snapshot of research on COVID-19.

Chapter 4 Metatheories, Theories, and Models examines the paradigmatic and theoretical influences that have shaped information behavior research, alongside detailed discussions of methodologies and methods. This chapter mentions the approaches used in empirical studies, but also explores conceptual and philosophical publications that address the critical concepts shaping information behavior, overall.

Chapter 5 Research Design, Methodologies, and Methods discusses how information behavior researchers have designed their studies, collected and analyzed data, and written about their findings, over time. This chapter maps the evolution from primarily descriptive, quantitative studies, through the adoption of qualitative and mixed methods approaches, to the use of arts-based and creative designs. The chapter also highlights the increasing shift towards the societal impact of research, globally.

Chapter 6 Reviewing, Critiquing, Concluding, and Futuring highlights critical reviews of information behavior research and explores emerging trends. The chapter examines global *megatrends* (e.g., climate change, sustainable development) and what the future may hold for information behavior scholars.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the last 20 years, countless individuals have provided advice, ideas and reflections on what to include in *Looking for Information*. We are grateful for the many people who have engaged with this book over the years, including those who have added it on course reading lists. We thank you for your ongoing support! This fifth edition has benefited greatly from the help of Dr Linus Tan, who assisted with graphics and referencing. Thanks also to the editors at Emerald, for their continued guidance and support.

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