

IRLS 587: Information Seeking Behaviors

Syllabus - Fall 2002

Instructor: Anita S. Coleman

Office: #21, SIRLS

Class Meets: Thurs., 3:30 – 6:00 pm

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Classroom: Shantz 242 W

Office Hours: W: 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Required Text: Case, Donald O. *Looking for Information: A Survey of Research on Information Seeking Needs and Behavior*. San Diego: Academic Press, 2002.

Catalog Description

IRLS 587: Information Seeking Behaviors (3 units)

Description: Information-seeking theories, methods, and user behaviors will be covered in order to gain an understanding of how different groups of people seek, gather and retrieve information in a variety of information environments. Information-seeking behavior draws on literature from library and information science, psychology, and communications.

Course Description

This course examines the individual and social aspects of human information needs, seeking, and use behaviors that are based on theoretical and empirical research. Elements of information behaviors studied are:

- Nature of information and knowledge
- Types and characteristics of information use and users
- Models and theories of information seeking
- Contexts of information seeking
- Methods to study information seeking behaviors
- The representations of inquiry and the role of language
- The searching strategies and techniques, including emotion, cognition and learning theory.

Goals and Objectives

- The main goal of the course is to become familiar with the principles and research related to information seeking. More specifically, by the end of the course, the student will be able to:
- Identify the main concepts related to information needs, uses, users, and seeking;

- Identify and synthesize the main findings, including the important research programs, questions, theories, and researchers associated with human information seeking behaviors;
- Describe and identify the weaknesses and strengths of each of the subfields of research on information seeking;
- Apply the concepts and frameworks from the research literature to specific examples and cases;
- Observe and analyze information seeking behaviors in a context/environment; and
- Design studies for investigating information seeking behaviors in electronic information environments.

Course Requirements

I. Readings

With the exception of Week 1, students are required to come to class having read materials assigned for that day. The course will be taught in seminar form, emphasizing student questions and answers; students may also be called upon in class to summarize or interpret readings and complete quizzes and exercises. In addition:

- A bibliography of information seeking is available online for download (URL: <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~asc/isbbib.html>).
- A list of additional research and theory readings *may* be assigned on an as needed basis.

II. Discussions

Students are expected to participate in constructive, collaborative, logical discussion of the readings and topics.

III. Annotated Bibliography

Students working in a group will compile an annotated bibliography, a list of *references* for *pre-selected* Social Contexts of Information Seeking.

IV. User Study

Students are expected to write their major project paper based on a real-world experience or evaluation of information seeking behaviors in the social context and/or with systems assigned. The paper will be in the form of a pilot study, small research proposal or research project. Field experience or experience designing and conducting a small user study is highly recommended and hence you will actually **do** the study as a feasibility or test. More information on research methods to use will be given later.

Methods of Assessment

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation and two deliverables: *Annotated Bibliography* (List of references for Social Context), and the *User Study* (research proposal and study).

More specific information about the *Annotated Bibliography* and the *User Study* will be given on a separate handout.

Grading Formula

Grading for the course will be as follows:

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|---------------------------|
| Annotated bibliography | 30% | List of References |
| User Study | 70% | Design and implementation |

Course Grades

Course grades will be assigned as follows:

A= 90-100

B=80–89

C=70-79

F=Below 69

Incomplete/Extension grades are not viable options for this class.

Observe the UA Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.

I reserve the right to modify the course during the semester as deemed fit and reasonable.

*****NOTE: WORK TURNED IN LATE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!*****

Week 1: Aug. 29

Course Overview, Introduction

In-class reading. Anonymous. If Architects Had to Work Like Programmers.

Week 2: Sept. 5

What is Information Behavior? Chapters 1, 2

Week 3: Sept. 12

What is information? Chapter 3

Week 4: Sept. 19

What is information seeking? Chapters 4, 5

Week 5: Sept. 26

Four models of information behavior Chapter 6

Week 6: Oct. 3

Is there a theory of Information Behavior? Chapter 7

Week 7: Oct. 10

What is Research? Chapter 8

Week 8: Oct. 17

What are research methods we can use and what does the research show? Chapter 9 & 10

Week 9: Oct. 24

Student presentations: First draft of proposal (share draft at least on the Monday before class)

Week 10: Nov. 7

Student presentations: First draft of proposal (share draft at least on the Monday before class)

Week 11: Nov. 14

What does the research tell us about occupational groups? Chapter 11

Submit 1st deliverable: *Annotated Bibliography*

Week 12: Nov. 21

What do the demographics tell us? What conclusions can we reach? Chapter 12 & 13

Week 13, Nov. 28

Have a Happy Thanksgiving Break!

Week 14, Dec. 5

Student Presentations – Poster Session

Week 15: Dec. 12

Submit 2nd deliverable: *User Study* (Final project)

Final Papers Due by 4:00 pm

Week 16 - Finals Week: Dec 19