Toward a Radical Information Literacy

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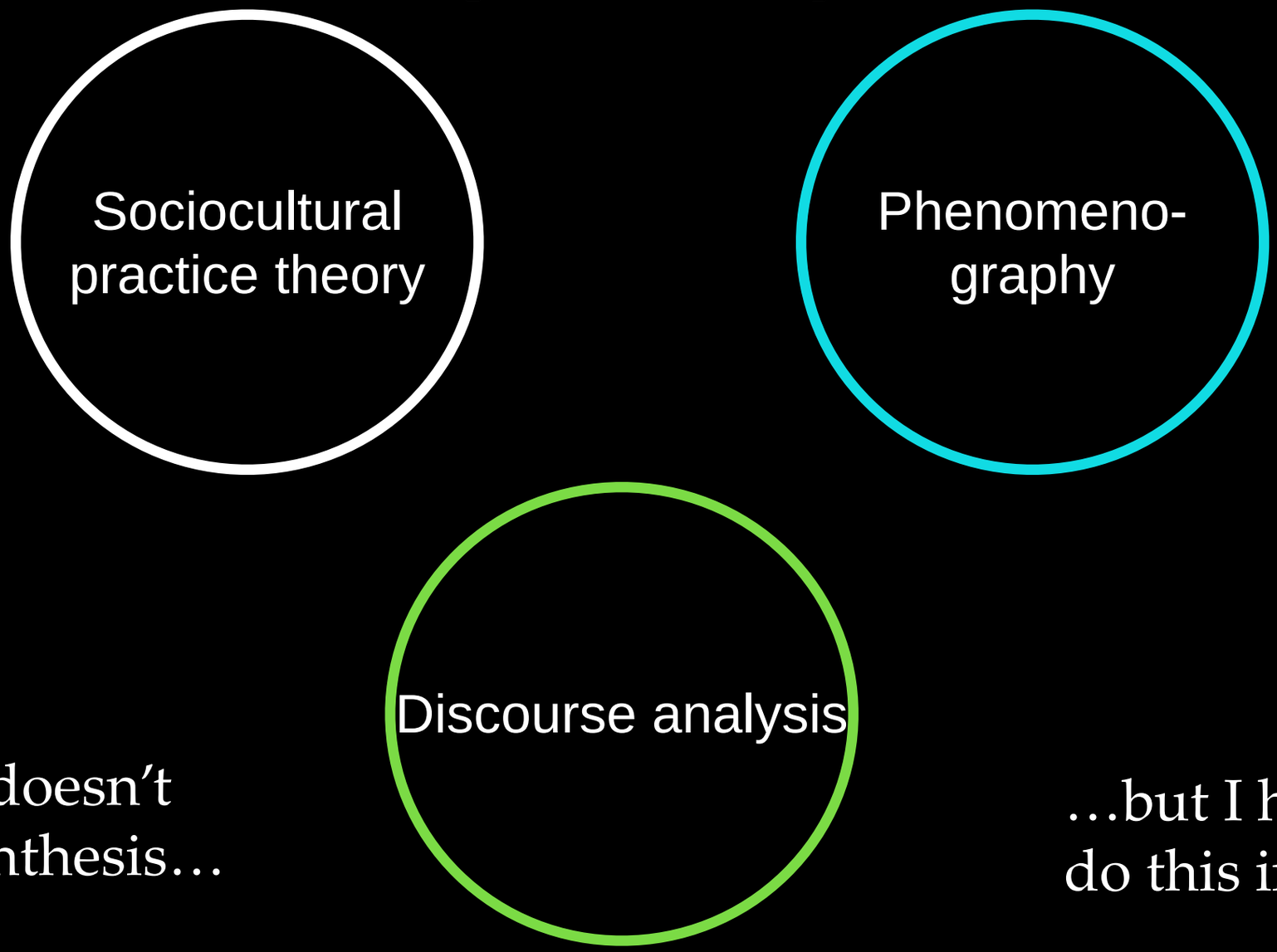
Previous keynotes

- Christine Bruce, last year's ECIL…
- Annemaree Lloyd, i3 (2013)
- It is theory that the field of IL is now lacking, not practice

40 years have passed since Zurkowski's paper…

New practices are just going to get marginalised too unless we think about why the theory-practice gap exists!

Limberg, Sundin and Talja (2012)



Their paper doesn't attempt a synthesis…

…but I have tried to do this in the book

Sociocultural practice theory

Phenomeno-graphy

Discourse analysis

Phenomenography and IL

Bruce's 1997 study (her PhD) — *'seven faces'* of information literacy

2006, with Edwards and Lupton — *'six frames'* of IL education

2008: *Informed Learning*

Phenomenography is a *research methodology…*

…what these studies have done is also illustrate its applicability as a *pedagogy*

outcome space

Phenomenography aims to elicit the *experience of variation* of a phenomenon within a population.

The *categories of description* which emerge are presented in the *outcome space*. This might be diagrammatic, textual or digital.

outcome space

Eliciting the experience of variation is also a *learning experience*…

Edwards (2006, p. 49): “At the core of variation theory, and its influence on learning then, we must understand all the aspects or elements that are possible to be discerned in an experience, and understand the varying ways of experiencing the object of learning. Having done this we can then restructure the learning environment to encourage students to experience all the possible variations… having identified the varying aspects in the group awareness, we can use them to identify ways to encourage people to discern another aspect of the experience, an aspect they have previously not discerned.”

Sociocultural practice theory

Phenomeno-graphy

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IL and practice

- Annemaree Lloyd's work (from 2004 on) is not the only reference, but she has probably done the most to help set up a theory of IL-as-practice

- She sees information literacy not as a set of (library-related) skills, but as *the source of practice*
- Practices are constructed collaboratively and in context
- Communities of practice draw on, and continuously reshape, resources in their "information landscape" (Lloyd 2010)
- These resources are distributed across minds, bodies, texts, artefacts, social relations…
- IL must therefore be manifested in everyday, prosaic communication

- Different contexts have different *practice architectures* however.

- Some architectures, or aspects of them, are more open to *transformation* than others

This from page 14 of *Radical Information Literacy*:

The landscape is… something one experiences and explores, an engagement which "allows [one]... to map the landscape, constructing an understanding of how it is shaped" (Lloyd 2010, 2). Exploring, and mapping, an information landscape "requires the act of becoming informed"; that is, to form an idea about the relevant resources within the landscape and "to understand and make judgments about these activities in the context of what is considered acceptable practice by others who share the same contextual space" (ibid).

Enquiries that draw on the experience of variation do not have to be explicit and conscious.

Writers like Carr & Kemmis show that they go on all the time — *the basis of practice*

- Conceptually, such enquiries *map the information landscape*
- The outcome space, like any map, is a tool for exploration of that landscape: *scrutiny* of practices and resources
- It embodies certain *perspectives* about what has been mapped

outcome space

Does the outcome space reflect a fuller experience of variation…

…or the more limited perspective of a dominant group?

After its production, who can use the map as a *resource*, in the transformation of practice?

Sociocultural practice theory

Phenomeno-graphy

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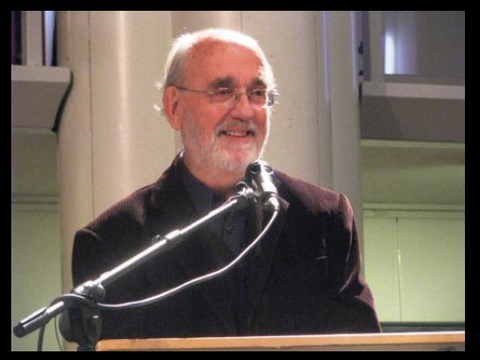
The reality of organisational life is that not all contexts are equal, not all experiences of variation can be expressed.

Practice architectures, and the ways of thinking they represent, are ‘pushed’ by dominant interests

Here see the work of Ricardo Blaug (2007, 2010)

& Cees Hamelink’s early statement on IL (1976)



Mikhail Bakhtin's work on *prosaic* communication is invaluable for an understanding of these contrasting tendencies in discourse

Towards dialogue, polyphony, and the experience of variation

(*centrifugal* tendencies)

Towards monologue, a concentration of authority

(*centripetal* tendencies)

Where does information literacy sit in this model?

Or does it teach us to scrutinise and, if necessary, transform these practices, develop new maps of the information landscape?

Does it teach us to *conform* to the cognitive authority embedded in existing information practices?

Towards dialogue, polyphony, and the experience of variation

(*centrifugal* tendencies)

Towards monologue, a concentration of authority

(*centripetal* tendencies)

Bakhtin's 'polyphony' is not a formless cacophony, akin to Keen's "cult of the amateur"

Radical information literacy does not reject the need for authority over information practice…

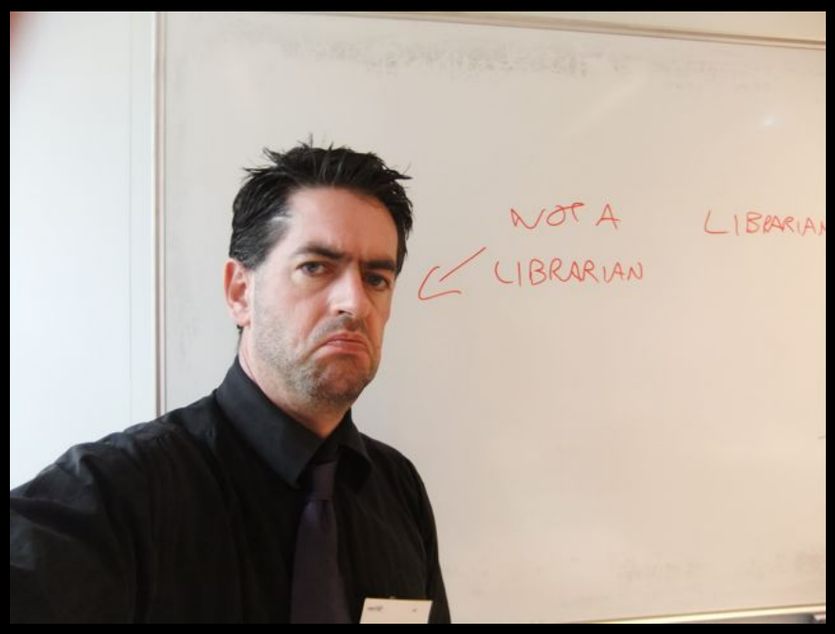
…but it *redistributes* this authority, giving a wider spectrum of members of communities of practice the skills and awareness they need to *steward* their information landscapes (see Wenger et al 2009)

"Anyone can cook"

IL is for all, and all can teach it… though there remain normative standards of good practice (which are to do with ensuring plurality and scrutiny of practices)

That’s the theory…

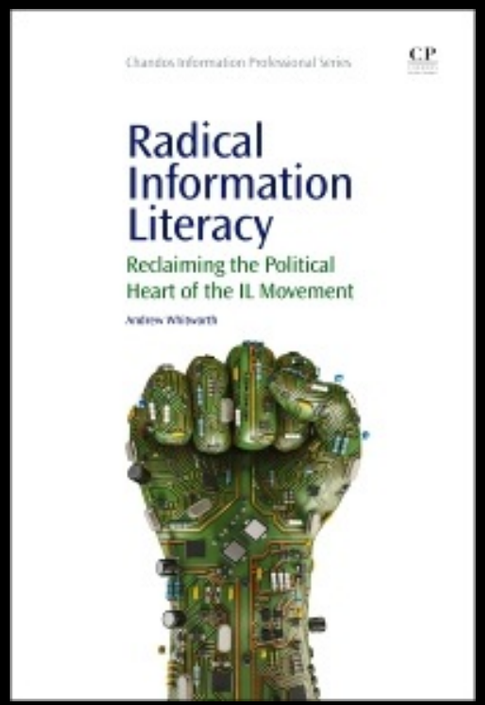
…but in practice?



LEARN TO SEE…

Look not only for those people using the term ‘IL’ (which is library-centric)… it’s like ‘democracy’

Look for: critical pedagogy — professional developers — those teaching human geography and sociology — political theory — trades unions — student unions…



& read the book :-) …

And go and do the practice — and the research — to prove me wrong (or right…)

A.Whitworth (2014): *Radical Information Literacy,* Chandos, Oxford

THANK YOU.