# Information Literacy as an object of research –
# in tension between various fields

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Louise Limberg

# Aim and research interests

- Analyse and identify different positions for IL research
- Discuss the implications of different perspectives for research and practice communties, including recognition and possible impact
- Propose ideas for positioning future IL research

# Method

- Using texts with explicit statements about positioning IL research

- Limited number of texts from the last decade

- With a view to identifying differences and implications of these for research and practice

# My own background

- Information seeking and use/information practices
- Interest in student learning via information activities
- Reluctant to the label of Information Literacy research
- Why?

# IL as an independent research field

- Emerged from professional practice with a focus on teaching IL or evaluating users' abilities
- Grounded in standards and norms
- Remains an interest within librarianship
- Rethoric linked to political issues of democracy and citizenship

# IL as learning – information experience

- IL = experience of using information to learn
- IL in various contexts characterized by widely different experiences of content of learning
- Main question: learning WHAT?
- Implications – a range of various descriptions of IL
- Implications – for practice? for research?
- Weak relationship between IL and ISU?

# Information seeking and learning — aspects of IL

1. IL as Seeking information for learning purposes, i.e. IS "for a purpose beyond itself" (Sundin & Johannisson 2005)

2. IL as Learning information seeking and use, i.e. IL as the object of learning

3. IL as Teaching information seeking, i.e. IL as the object of teaching

4. IL as Learning from information, i.e. closely related to ways of using information, meaning-making from information, transforming information into meaning

# IL related to Information seeking and use (ISU)

- Information literacies as an area of ISU research
  - Information seeking and use as tools for learning
  - How and what do people learn to become information literate?
  - IL related to information mediated via various tools (books, the internet), genres (newpapers, hobby literature, academic or political sources) and modalities (writing, photo, moving pictures)
  - Evaluation and production of information/documents
  - Relationship between IL and other literacies (digital, media…)
- Basically about more or less purposeful ways to engage with information

| Information literacy | Digital literacy | Media literacy |
|---|---|---|
| Content oriented | Tool oriented | Media oriented |
| Variety of formats and modalities | Technology oriented | Genres, format, multimodality |
| Selection, critical evaluation and organisation | Multimedia – not text/script | Production and presentation |
| Use of information | Communicative interaction via digital tools | Communication Audiences Risks, warnings, advice |
| Life-long learning | Publishing on the internet | Political focus: democracy, liberties and civic rights |
| Information seeking and use | Information searching | Production, seeking, storing, evaluation … |

Information literacy research according to various interests

- Information practices
- Information behaviour/ISU
- Critical evaluation of information
- Learning
- Teaching
- Literacies
- Reading
- Information organisation

# Naming: Information, digital, media, multimodal, meta… literacies?

- Information: core concept of LIS
- Focussing on content and substance, not only on tools and technologies
- Directed at understanding and using information — that is substance and content, meaning making
- Meaning in information is created through the meeting between people, practices and tools
- Associated to classical interest in the critical use of sources

# Names, purposes and contexts

- Institutional – information literacy

- Empirical – directed at object of research, more concrete, concerned with various  questions…

- Strategic – adopting the name/concept that will generate  funding, valuable research alliances or potential political impact (cf. Sundin 2011)

# Back to Case's inclusion or exclusion

- It is not the topic, it is the approach to or the perspective of issues related to information activities and learning that decide whether IL studies should be included or not in information behaviour research.

- This makes IL a boundary object of ISU and learning.

# Conclusions with information literacy as a boundary object

- Potential for collaboration with 'relevant others'
- Promising research field opening up with strong relevance both academically, professionally and societally
- The name of the phenomenon of interest (IL) may be adapted inwards and outwards in the interest of potential funding agencies or other academic, professional or political interests

**Thus**: We have enough proposals of new names and hierarchies – the challenge is to develop new knowledge and expertise!

*Thank you
and Questions!*

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