

Defining the discipline?

**- A discourse analysis of the Information Seeking In
Context conference 1996-2010**

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Examensarbete (20 poäng) för magisterexamen i Biblioteks- och informationsvetenskap
vid Lunds universitet.

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BIVILs skriftserie 2006:15

ISSN 1401:2375

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Abstract

The aim of this master's thesis is to examine what form the information seeking discourse has had, as displayed through the call for papers of the Information Seeking in Context (ISIC) conference.

The ISIC conference is a biannual conference which gathers many key researchers and is widely regarded as the preeminent conference in the information seeking field, a field of research that has comparatively few actors. The original conference was started because of a perceived lack in forums to discuss information seeking in a user context perspective. These factors combine to make it both an attainable and interesting possibility to examine the view of the fields' discourse and how it has changed over time. The method used is Mouffe's and Laclau's discourse theory *and the materials studied are the conference invitations for researchers to submit their papers, the CFPs.*

The findings are partly in concordance with the coalescing of an interdisciplinary field of research. After the initial 'anything-goes' phase focus has shifted to the discussion of what belongs in information seeking and what does not. The difference being that the organisers, rather than delineating fields of interest and approved theories and methods, beseech contributors to examine their own epistemology and theories as well as plan for the dissemination of findings among practitioners. Along with this disciplining the discipline runs a strong current of empowerment shown among other things by the encouragement of local researchers to submit their research papers.

Information seeking and information science as a whole would benefit from an awareness of the discourse development in the field. Such scrutiny could be an instrument of definition and empowerment and lead to a better understanding of what and why research is done in the field of information seeking.

Keywords: Information seeking, discourse analysis, ISIC, Information Seeking In Context.

Foreword

My thanks go out to Janne Turunen for offering to translate the Finnish abstract and to Prof. Pertti Vakkari and Dr. Crystal Fulton for their help in locating material for this study.

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Introduction

Library and Information Science

Library and Information Science, LIS, is a broad and many faceted subject, encompassing a wide array of topics. These topics are scrutinized through a great number of methods using many differing theories as basis for the studies. This inherent form of interdisciplinarianism is often seen as the supreme evidence of the fact that LIS is a dynamic and vibrant subject with a wide area of study (Nolin and Åström 2009). However this breadth leads to the fact that there are as many definitions of the subject Library and Information Science as there are researchers.

Through the years a large amount of research has been directed towards the question of defining what LIS is and what research in the field should encompass and be dedicated to examining. This research spans from Jim Zwadlo's *We don't need a philosophy of library and information science – we're confused enough already* (1997) to George Adam Holland's *Information science: an interdisciplinary effort?* (2006) and *Turning weakness into strength: strategies for future LIS* by Jan Nolin and Fredrik Åström (2009), and includes countless others.

In the light of this it would seem difficult to create a wholly exhaustive picture of LIS but in 2004 the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (Högskoleverket) presented their report on the quality evaluation of the LIS subject at the Swedish universities. Attached to the report is an etymological report defining the origins of the term Library and Information Science in Sweden which is collaborated by people in the field. It inventories both the names this field of study has had through the years and the names of the parts that make up LIS. It concludes that:

Today Library and Information Science is the most used designation for the field. The term combines the connotations that belong to the older designations of "Library Science" and "Information science", but stresses the latter part [author's translation] (Högskoleverket 2004 p.122).

Information Seeking

The fact that Information Science carries the most weight in LIS in Sweden is interesting since it is a field of study for at least three different research disciplines: Media and Communication Studies, Informatics and LIS. What parts of Information

Science that belong to which discipline does not appear to be settled but rather seems to be a question of pragmatism, just as adequately expressed by Becher and Trower:

It often happens that adjoining disciplinary groups lay claim to the same pieces of intellectual territory. This does not necessarily entail a conflict between them. In some cases [...] it may involve a straightforward division of interest; in others it may mark a growing unification of ideas and approaches (Becher and Trower 2001 p.60).

Of the fields of study encompassed by Information Science, Information Seeking is perceived as one of the primary subjects seen from the LIS perspective. In *Introduktion till informationsvetenskapen* Vakkari claims that 'The research concerning Information Seeking is de facto a central part of Information Science' [author's translation] and that 'The most central fields of study of Information Science are Information Seeking, Information Retrieval and Information Administration' [author's translation] (Mäkinen and Sandqvist 2004 p.15). In *Informations-videnskablige grundbegreber* by Birger Hjørland it is also concurred that 'the kernel of Information Science is [...] Information Seeking, Information Retrieval [...]' [author's translation] (1995 p.200).

As with the wider field of Information Science and LIS in general there exists no simple definition of Information Seeking that all the actors in the field share. Just as with LIS boundaries to neighbouring disciplines are vague and there has never existed any consensus regarding theoretical underpinnings or accepted methods of research.

This has not deterred researchers through the years to make attempts at defining Information Seeking and what should and should not be included in its remit. One effort that can be viewed as such an endeavour is the Information Seeking in Context (ISIC) conference. It is a biannual conference that has gathered researchers in the field since 1996.

Background

Information Seeking In Context

The ISIC conference, Information Seeking In Context, started in 1996 at the Tampere University through the administrations of, among others, Professor Pertti Vakkari at the Faculty of Information Science. The conference was presented as an answer to the request by many researchers for a forum discussing Information Seeking from the user perspective, hence 'Seeking In Context'. Its goal was to allow 'INS (information needs and seeking) researchers from all over the world [to] convene' as the subject of Information Seeking was seen as 'significant although [...] the number of international conferences [...] has remained low' (Dervin, Savolainen and Vakkari, 1997 p.7). The conference turned out to be a success with a high turnout, i.e. 137 participants from 17 countries (Appendix 1.2).

The question of a sequel to this success was settled when the Department of Information Studies at the University of Sheffield headed by Professor Tom Wilson announced that they would host the second ISIC conference in 1998. Since then the conference has been held every second year in a different location each time, the host chosen among volunteers.

During this period Information Seeking as a subject has almost completed the transition of focus that started in the middle of the eighties, from the earlier focus on the system to the now prevalent user centred view advocated by the organisers of the first and subsequent ISIC conferences (Dervin, Savolainen & Vakkari, 1997). As Tom Wilson describes it in his paper *Human Information Behaviour*:

Since the 1980s there has been a shift towards a "person-centred" approach, rather than a "system-centred" approach. This has been accompanied by a switch from quantitative methods to qualitative methods. (Wilson, 2000 p.51)

The ISIC conference issues a call for papers and contributions are subjected to standard peer review screening processes. The accepted contributions are then presented at the conference by one or more of the authors followed by short seminars. Keynote presentations are given by invited authors. In addition to this there are usually PhD workshops and poster sessions and a concluding open seminar to summarise the conference.

To maintain constancy the conference has from the second iteration, Sheffield 1998, been headed by a standing committee containing the members from the original conference committee, as well as later additions. They, together with the onsite conference organisers, compose the call for papers that invite contributions.

The conference has been successful in maintaining its role as the central forum for exchanging ideas and socializing with other researchers in the Information Seeking field as Dirndorfer Anderson and Orsatti (2008) show in their paper *Rhythms of "being" at ISIC - understanding the place of the ISIC conferences in information seeking research*.

Purpose, material selection and problem description

The purpose

Information seeking is perceived by actors in the field as a wide encompassing and disparate field, often referred to as multi-disciplinary (Appendix 1.8). The borders of the discipline are blurred and research in the field is often on topics also examined by other disciplines.

As portrayed in the introduction, ISIC has a central role in the information exchange between researchers in the information seeking field. As Dirndorfer Anderson and Orsatti (2008) show in their paper it is a place to gather new insights and build networks, not just with other researchers dealing with the same subjects, but with all other researchers at the conference. The umbrella under which they all gather is the broad term of *information seeking* which lately has transformed into *human information behaviour*.

The organisers started the conference to fill a perceived lack of conferences dealing with the user rather than the system view prevalent in the information seeking field. This means that they had an idea of what they wanted to discuss, and what they thought fit into this remit (Vakkari 1997).

It is therefore conducive to see the concepts making up ‘Information seeking’, as inferred from the ‘Call For Papers’, or CFPs for short, as a view of how the field is perceived by the organisers of the conference. It is a common human habit to try to order chaos so the question is if this is an effort to discipline the discipline by delineating what belongs and what does not.

With reference to the mentioning in the introduction of the two different research approaches to information seeking, the user view as opposed to the system view, it should be made clear that this study adheres to the declaration made by, among others, Vakkari in 1997. In his introduction to the papers from the first ISIC conference (Dervin, Savolainen and Vakkari, 1997 p.8); he claims that the user view is taking over as the focus for Information Seeking. This view is still prevalent more than a decade later.

The material

The materials that will be examined are the 'Call for Papers'. These are the official invitations sent out to scholars of the field to participate in the conferences with papers on whatever they are researching at the time. The CFP:s of ISIC go from one end of the spectra, being quite indistinct in 1996, to the other, being an enumerated list of areas of interest in 2010, see Appendix 1. These can be seen as the official declaration of purpose for the conferences, since they demonstrate what the conference organisers view as part of the field of interest. The actual material labelled as the CFPs varies to a small amount as can be seen in Appendix 1. The CFPs from 1996 to 2000 include the conference descriptions simply because the 'pure' CFPs from those years are what later was to become the submission guidelines. The three last CFPs include enough information for the purpose and are presented without appendices.

The Problem

This study is interested in the Information seeking discourse, as put forward by the ISIC organisers through the CFPs. Thus the problem is formulated as such:

How is the information seeking discourse formulated by the ISIC organisers in the CFPs?

Can this be construed as an effort to discipline the field of research?

Theory

Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis was originally a tool with its roots in linguistics and semiotics, and was a tool for text analysis. Since then there has been a veritable explosion in applications and it is now seen as a valid tool for examination of social and human practices in many branches of human and social sciences (Howarth, 2000).

In the field of LIS Bradley and Sutton wrote that:

Research in library and information science has generally been characterized by a loose confederacy of approaches, including quantitative sociological methods, literary criticism, historical analysis, and experimental methods, but a serious cultivation of the potential of qualitative research has yet to emerge. (Bradley & Sutton 1993, see Frohmann 1994 p.119)

Bernd Frohmann responded to this in his paper *Discourse Analysis as a Research Method in Library and Information Science* (1994), where he strove to show the merits of discourse analysis in LIS. In the paper he also did a short historic overview, using a variant of discourse analysis, of the dominant views that had helped shape research and the researchers' view of the field.

Since then a slew of researchers have used discourse analysis to investigate differing aspects and approaches of LIS research. Among many others the list contains such names as Bernd Frohmann, Åse Hedemark, Olof Sundin, Sanna Talja, Kimmo Tuominen. All of which have employed discourse analysis in one way or another on their respective facets of study.

What most researchers using discourse analysis have in common is refuting the traditional positivist view that the ultimate goal of science is to dig ever deeper and find the profound truth behind reality. Instead they subscribe to the notion put forth by Jacques Derrida and others: That everything is discourse – that all social interaction and all actions which entail meaning are discourse (Howarth, 2000).

However, exactly what 'discourse' means depends on the context, and view of the world, the researchers have. What it entails differs if you subscribe to Marxism, empiricism, realism or any other '-ism' that has made discourse analysis a part of their toolbox.

This thesis uses Laclau's and Mouffe's view of discourse analysis, based on the descriptions in Winther Jørgensen and Phillips' *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* from 2002 and in Bergström and Boréus' *Textens mening och makt – Metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys* from 2005, together with a deepened understanding garnered from Howarth's book *Discourse* and to a certain extent from Thorning's *New Theories of Discourse – Laclau, Mouffe and Žižek* from 1999.

The use of discourse analysis as described by Laclau and Mouffe is soundly planted in social constructionism, meaning that the world around us is explained through our language and that in the absence of language we cannot make meaning out of what we see (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). How we perceive and react to this world is in turn dictated by what sets of values and cultures we subscribe to while at the same time these can be changed by our interaction with our surroundings. What it means is when analysing patterns of language that make up discourse you can never 'get behind' the discourse because there is no 'real' reality to find. Many critics mean that this leads to pointless relativism whereby discourse analysis disqualifies itself as a meaningful scientific method of analysis.

This is a result of wrongly placed focus as outlined above. As a method squarely placed in the post modern fields of the social scientific landscape and not that interested in the positivist goal of finding the 'truth', discourse analysis is interested in 'understanding and interpreting socially produced meanings' (Howarth, 2000 p.128) and therefore finds no reason for avoiding the subjective.

In addition to social constructionism, discourse analysis as viewed by Laclau and Mouffe draws upon deconstruction of both Foucault's and Gramsci's theories as its foundation. Foucault is consulted for some of the post-modern content of the theory and Gramsci for his revised view of Marxist base-superstructure dichotomy and his concept of hegemony. They also make use of Lacan for the concept of the subject (Thorning, 1999).

According to Laclau and Mouffe discourse is a question of conflicting attempts to fix the definitions of society and identity. The definitions take the forms of signs, called elements, that are assigned content which turns them into moments. When this has happened it is called closure. But integral to Laclau's and Mouffe's theory is that meanings can never be finally fixed and that closures never exist more than an instant. This means that every meaning of a sign is possible but not necessary. The noun 'discourse' is defined as 'the fixation of meaning within a particular domain' in Winther Jørgensen and Phillips (2002 p.26), but due to the fact that closures never are true and final they are always challenged. The method to arrive at fixation is to exclude all other possible meanings of the signs contained in the discourse. The meanings left outside of it form the 'Field of Discursivity'.

This is where Winther Jørgensen's and Phillips' biggest modification to Laclau's and Mouffe's theory comes into play, since they argue that the notion of 'Order of Discourse' should be inserted into the picture of discourse and Field of Discursivity. This denoting the fact that several discourses can be in conflict regarding the meanings in a domain. Thus it is not a question of one discourse excluding everything else, ending

up with a gigantic field of discourse where most signs would not have any bearing on the subject of the discourse at all. It is rather the fact that some discourses are rather close and overlap in their struggle. In Winther Jørgensen and Phillips this is exemplified with the difference in the medical discourse between 'western science' and 'alternative treatment' and their relation to the discourse of 'football' (2002 p.27).

Laclau and Mouffe deconstruct Gramsci's theories as they see the worth of his interdependency of the base and the superstructure, but take it a step further. Instead of saying that the base and the superstructure depend on each other Laclau and Mouffe fuses them into one discursive field. This follows suit with their practice of not dividing social practices into discursive and non-discursive categories but rather applying a holistic view. As cited in Bergström and Boréus:

'Let us assume that I am building a wall together with another bricklayer. In a given moment I ask my workmate to hand me a brick and then I join it to the wall. The first action – to ask for the brick – is linguistic; the other – to join the brick to the wall – is non-linguistic. [...] Obviously this whole, the work of building the wall, if it includes both linguistic and non-linguistic elements, cannot itself be either linguistic or non-linguistic; it has to precede this distinction. This whole [...] is what we call discourse' [Author's translation] (2005 p.315).

But the biggest concept offered by Gramsci and incorporated by Laclau and Mouffe is the concept of hegemony.

Gramsci subscribes to the Marxist view that society is made up of classes in struggle with each other. But this antagonism is not always evident; one class can have the advantage over another without being openly confronted, thus hegemony has been established. Laclau and Mouffe leave Gramsci's essentialism behind, as they see discourses as ever being in conflict as to ascribing meanings to elements, and that therefore there are no objective 'classes' that struggle against each other, only discourses. These conflicts can also be 'hidden' by the way of established discourses being in hegemony, whereby one discourse has the advantage over another. Not on the grounds of having 'won' or being stronger, but because the other discourse or discourses take a subordinate position (Bergström & Boréus 2005 p.319). Sometimes these hegemonic structures have been in place for such a long time that the discourse has sedimented and is perceived as 'objective' knowledge (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002 p.36).

Since everything thus viewed as objective truths are really just sedimented discourses, nothing stops a discourse from being questioned and brought back into activity again, and an 'objective truth' being dethroned by another discourse. This is part of our reality as humans. It is a constant struggle to fix meanings and bring a semblance of stability to the fluidity of discourses and meaning making.

Why Laclau and Mouffe?

Both Bergström and Boréus and Winther Jørgensen and Phillips present three different theories of discourse analysis. They are not the only ones but are presented as the three main approaches available when using discourse analysis. These three theories are

Laclau's and Mouffe's discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology. Broadly they can be said to represent a linguistic approach, a critical social approach and an individual approach (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002 p.7).

The focus of this study is the conference as a whole, hence how the individuals use the flexibility of discourses to their own ends is not that interesting and discursive psychology can be regarded as unsuitable for the task. This leaves it a question of choosing between discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis.

Since the point of interest lies in the discourse of information seeking, and not the intra-personal discourses, discourse analysis, without the critical social approach, will be employed. And in that Laclau and Mouffe, with Winther Jørgensen's and Phillips' additions, fit this thesis perfectly.

Method

The Method

The method that will be used in this thesis is, as described in the Theory chapter, discourse analysis according to Laclau and Mouffe, modified and described by Winther Jørgensen and Phillips in *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (2000).

When considering the actual method to use Laclau and Mouffe leave you in the dark according to both Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, and Bergström and Boréus: ‘Laclau and Mouffe do not do much detailed analysis of empirical material [to use as example, author’s comment]’ (2002 p.49) and ‘There simply does not exist any readymade templates to use in a study [author’s translation]’ (2005 p.329). But Winther Jørgensen and Phillips continue by saying that ‘It just takes a little imagination’ (2002 p.49) and that as long as the transparency is maintained and you argue your decisions you are allowed to do what you see fit.

As this author subscribes to the idea that the way we perceive reality is formed by the words we label it with, it is important that as much ambiguity is laid to rest as possible and clarity allowed to penetrate the concepts and definitions that will be employed. Hence this short run down of which terms will be used and how and in what ways they are connected and interdependent.

Winther Jørgensen and Phillips give an explanation of the terms *discourse*, *node*, *sign* and *floating signifier* in *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (2002 p.27), but as they will not be used in the exact same fashion the following will delineate what they mean in this thesis.

The main concept used will be ‘Discourse’. As seen in the theory chapter this is no simple concept, throughout the text it takes on different meanings, and it is therefore difficult to pinpoint. In the following study ‘Discourse’ will be interpreted as large areas or domains of ideas in which different attempts at assigning meaning are in conflict.

The ideas seen as central to each discourse will be called ‘Nodes’. It is the fixation of nodes that are the main point of conflict in a discourse.

In the discourse of abortion, an illustrative example of a node is ‘Right to Life’. The point of conflict here is the interpretation of the notion of ‘Right to Life’. Some want to affix the node with the meaning that it is the mother’s right to the life she has chosen.

Others interpret that meaning to be the unborn child's right to life. Whichever meaning is subscribed to the node of 'Right to life' is central to the 'Abortion' discourse.

Other ideas, that are not central to the formation of a discourse but none the less have their meanings assigned by them, will be called 'signs'. The signs will be important when describing the various discourses and nodes and how they interrelate by providing context and links not otherwise apparent.

As stated earlier the fixating of a final meaning of a node, the closure, is never possible. In reality competing meanings can always challenge the meaning affixed to an idea. Nonetheless, thanks to Laclau's and Mouffe's take on Gramsci's theory of Hegemony, we are able to explain the fact that most people regard the world through sets of fairly static ideas, where the nodes seem to be fixed in their meanings.

This is where the concept of sedimented discourses must be introduced. These are discourses where the meanings affixed to nodes have been in place for such a long time that the discourse has sedimented and is perceived as 'objective', or natural, knowledge.

In real life discourses are dynamic and everchanging, evolving around nodes that can never have closure. Yet, to be able, in a mode, to compare them and chart their relative changes and developments, this thesis will have to treat most discourses as sedimented, bearing the inherent problems with this visualisation in mind. As an effect the term 'node' will be used to signify sedimented discourses and instead introduce the term 'floating signifier' to describe the nodes where no meaning has yet been sedimented. What separates 'floating signifiers' from 'signs' is their importance for a discourse in a hierarchical sense. This means there is a scale along which these labels will be used, where discourse is the whole field, node is a central idea or concept, floating signifier is a node that has not sedimented and a sign is an idea or concept not really central but still a part of the discourse.

The boundaries between signs and floating signifiers can be arbitrary, but deliberations will be explained.

The Researcher

The method of discourse, as used here, is a social constructionist method. That is, it does not purport to uncover any 'truths' regarding reality, as peoples' view of reality is dependent on historical and cultural factors and thus changes over time (Burr 2003). As our view of the world is created through social interaction, and we learn in the same way, the focus of interest is how this view looks for different groups (Berger and Luckmann 1966). It also means that there is no objective scientific stance to inherit for researchers. Thus, for the sake of scientific transparency, the author of this thesis and his context as a researcher must be presented:

The author of this thesis could be seen as part of the wider 'Information Science' research field by the fact of having been socialised into the LIS domain through his master studies. He has become more and more attuned to what is accepted as right and

according procedures of his academic discipline and what is considered to belong to it or not (Becher and Trowler 2001). Still, the 'Information Seeking' field is a specific area which he has only come across briefly in course assignments.

The author is interested in the subject of Information Seeking which presupposes certain knowledge of the subject. This study has deepened his knowledge and at the same time closed the gap between studier and subject of study.

Validity

According to Winther Jørgensen and Phillips there are no definitive ways of reaching scientific validity when doing discourse analysis, but there are a few rules of thumb: The analysis should be *solid*, meaning it should contain several textual features; it should be *comprehensive* in the way that questions posed should be fully answered and divergent features accounted for; it should be *transparent* allowing for the readers to see how decisions have been made and to see the material (2002).

The aim is to fulfil these requirements and maintain as high validity as possible. Whether or not it is solid will be apparent in the Analysis part of the thesis. The same goes for being comprehensive and transparent, at least regarding the decisions. The text material is available in the Appendices, pp. 50-57.

Literature and earlier research

Discourse analysis in the field of LIS

As mentioned in the theory chapter, researchers in the field of LIS were late in adapting discourse analysis for their own uses. Frohmann quotes Bradley and Sutton regarding the late awakening of LIS to the avenues of research offered by qualitative research methods (1994), and then writes that the 'shift [...] from information system to information user is especially suited to questions of LIS theories in the discursive construction of specific identities for information, its users, and its uses' (Frohmann, 1994 p.133).

Since then discourse analysis has been used in a wide variety of applications. Most of these discourse analysis have been made of information users behaviours in different contexts, such as Lisa Given's *Discursive constructions in the university context: social positioning theory & mature undergraduates' information behaviours* (2002), Jenny Johannisson and Olof Sundins *Putting discourse to work: Information practices and the professional project of nurses* (2007) and Kimmo Tuomminens *User-centered discourse: An analysis of the subject positions of the user and the librarian* (1997).

Another kind of application is done by Bernd Frohmann who uses discourse analysis to examine an empirical relativistic model of thought in order to study its suitability for use in the field of LIS (1994b).

However during the years efforts have been directed towards analysis of the LIS field itself. Most have not employed discourse analysis for this task, but rather science study theories discussing eventual metatheoretical, epistemological, underpinnings for LIS research. For example Birger Hjørland in his 1998 paper *Theory and metatheory*, claims that LIS research would be most fruitful if it has historic oriented epistemologies as its basis. Jim Zwadlo, in his paper *We don't need a philosophy of library and information science- we're confused enough already* (1997), argues that LIS should be multitheoretical, allowing for both positivist and relativist theories.

In 2005 *Journal of Documentation* put together a special issue dealing with metatheoretical views and epistemologies and their applications in the information science field. It is concluded with finishing comments from Hjørland where he gives a short run down of the ideas displayed and fills in where he believes the authors miss important issues or assign faulty theoretical connections and backgrounds. He finishes by commenting on eclecticism, the use of several, often conflicting theories in the same

work. It can be a way to avoid certain theoretical and methodological problems but if the own epistemological point of departure is not examined can lead to other unforeseen problems (2005a).

With discourse analysis soundly grounded in social relativist theories the epistemology is clear. However the use of discourse analysis to analyze the field itself is not common.

ISIC

When work began on this thesis the ISIC conference was a researcher's dream; virtually nothing was written about it. Doubtlessly, the conference has spawned plenty of research, ideas and programs, but the research about the actual conference and not just certain papers and ideas presented amounted to one single master's thesis on the subject. Presented by Silva Rintanen 2006 at the Department of Information Science at Tampere University in Finland, it is a quantitative content analysis of the papers published in connection with the ISIC conferences 1996 to 2004. The purpose is to show what the conference papers have dealt with. Rintanen reaches the conclusions that Reijo Savolainen has been the most productive participator, that the writers almost exclusively come from universities and also lists which research areas have been neglected:

Target groups outside workers and students, the use of mass media, the choice of professional and educational fields and the acquisition of civic information were studied little. [Translation from Finnish by Janne Turunen] (Rintanen, 2006 p.1)

Unfortunately the analysis is written in Finnish and a lack of resources does not allow having it translated. Yet, reading the abstract, it does not seem to have any direct bearing on this thesis' questions.

However, in 2008, at the 7th ISIC conference in Vilnius, three new papers centred on the ISIC conferences were presented. Pertti Vakkari unveiled a Keynote Paper titled *Trends and Approaches in Information Behaviour Research* (2008), a content analysis of the accepted papers of the 1996 and the 2008 conferences.

The second ISIC-oriented paper is written by Lynne McKechnie and her colleagues on the failure of ISIC authors to communicate their work to practitioners in the field, something to which Pertti Vakkari also draws attention (McKechnie, Julien and Oliphant, 2008). The third paper, by Theresa Dirndorfer Anderson and Jo Orsatti, is on the place of the conference in information seeking research, which shows that ISIC plays a significant role for the research community (Dirndorfer Anderson and Orsatti 2008).

This result is arrived at in a two-fold way; primarily they have conducted surveys of participators before and during the 2006 conference in Sydney to ascertain the reasons for going and how the conference is perceived. Secondly they have mapped key words from titles and supplied key words from all accepted papers from 1996 to 2006 to find out the context for the conference, i.e. what the conferences have been discussing.

Vakkari has broken down the papers accepted by the conferences into different theoretical and methodological groupings and has analysed the changes found in what theories and methods are in vogue and which have lost in favour with the information seeking scientist community, as represented by the ISIC contributors. He draws the conclusion that the research approaches in the field of information seeking has narrowed, and that research is becoming more and more descriptive rather than explanatory. At the same time a loosening of the frame of research can be observed.

On the basis of this development Vakkari makes certain predictions for the future of information behaviour research, although he concedes the point that the future is never entirely easy to predict.

It is an interesting paper, and Vakkari's conclusions will be returned to in the discussion, but the foundation of this thesis will not be based in his findings to any greater extent. This can in main be put down to the fact that this thesis is, in Vakkari's own words, descriptive in nature. That is, it looks at what is and has been, but does not afford any praxis for the future, while Vakkari tries to lead by example in making a projective and explanatory paper. Nevertheless the findings are valid and will be commented on.

Other literature

When regarding the literature about conferences it is striking that the main part of research done is concerned with 'political' conferences, that is, conferences of governing political and economic entities and networks such as WTO and the party meetings of the Swedish Social Democratic Party. These are subjects traditionally subordinated to Political Science, and as such have been researched predominantly with traditional methods. That is, they have mostly been scrutinised from an objective-centred perspective, i.e. what the conferences resulted in, and how these objectives were reached. This is often done by analysing preparatory texts and comparing them with the final ratified documents, sometimes sprinkled with interviews of participators.

As the point of interest of this thesis is radically different from this, these works have not been found particularly relevant.

Research in the field of LIS and information seeking is prolific. For this thesis Frohmann's use of discourse theory (1994a and 1994b), Hjørland's metatheoretical studies (1998, 2005a, 2005b), Tom Wilson's information behavior studies (1999, 2000) and the multi-disciplinarian nature of information seeking and behavior evinced in Holland's (1997), Nolin and Åström's (2009) and Zwadlo's (1997) papers will be used, among others.

Widening the search has netted a thesis by Anneli Höynä, which uses discourse analysis to examine how the European Union's institutions deal with the issue of illegal and harmful content on the Internet. Here the method, in roughly the same form as intended to be employed here, is used to good effect (Höynä 2005).

Analysis

The Call For Papers

The Call for papers from eight ISIC conferences will be analysed, from 1996 to 2010. As described under the heading 'Material' they differ from each other in their actual forms but they follow the same general reasoning; to present the themes in which papers are accepted. To start with they will be analysed individually. Nodes will be designated with plain quotation marks and capital letter, signs only with quotation marks. The term floating signifier will be used for unsedimented nodes. Terms will be in italics when applicable.

A term that shows up in the later CFPs, from 2002 and onwards, is themes. These are simply what are called topics of interest in the earlier CFPs. Further on they evolve into the enumerated lists of the latest conferences' CFPs.

1996 Tampere

This is the first Call for Papers for an ISIC conference. It starts with a small historical background of Information studies at Tampere University and details how for the department 'the last decade has in particular signified a shift from studies of library and information service institutions to the research of the whole spectrum of phenomena connected with information needs, seeking and use, as well as the supply of and access to information'.

The themes of the conference are presented as 'information needs, seeking and use in different contexts' and the aim as to discuss 'information needs, seeking and use in the light of [...] contextual factors' (Appendix 1.1). It is also stated that our information environment is changing rapidly and that this 'not only has remarkable effects on the practical aspects of information seeking and use but also raises questions about the democratisation of information. Thus the relationship between information and democracy is one of the conference's topics'.

Regarding focus areas it says 'Along with the aforementioned issues, papers dealing with the future trends in information seeking and use, as well as those dealing with theoretical and methodological aspects of the conference theme are called for'.

Judging from the department description and the presentation of themes it can be seen that the nodes which are central to the discourse of 'Information Seeking' as put forward in the CFP are 'Information', 'Use', 'Seeking' and 'Context'. 'Information' is the central node as everything revolves around it, but it is tightly woven with the node 'Use'. In this analysis the node 'Use' subsumes the sign of 'need' because the terms *use* and *need* are used exclusively in tandem, often together with *seeking*. The node 'Seeking' is also tightly woven with the others. As stated earlier, the outlook described by Wilson (2000) is taken for granted; that the user centred view has replaced the system centred view. By default user centred lends strength to the node 'Use' rather than the node of 'Seeking'.

'Context' is a floating signifier in as much as it is not a sedimented node; it is not already given what it entails and the CFP assigns it the power to 'shape the information behaviour of individuals both in professional activity and in everyday life'. *Context* is also included in the name of the conference, thus indicating its importance.

A sign that emerges is 'behaviour', as an interesting study object. However it is subsumed by 'Context' in the light of the following sentences:

[...] it is characteristic of information needs, seeking and use that they are situational. These three factors shape the information behaviour of individuals both in professional activity and in everyday life. The aim of the conference is to discuss information needs, seeking and use in the light of these contextual factors. (Appendix 1.1)

In the words chosen to describe the conference another, subordinate, node is represented by 'Democracy and Information'. It is not as central to the discourse of 'Information Seeking' as the others but none the less the CFP makes it out as one of the central topics of the conference, by the simple virtue of not pointing out any other issues in the same specified mode.

Three other signs are also assigned importance by the organisers; 'future', 'theories' and 'methods'. They represent facets of the central nodes rather than being nodes in themselves and represent the organisers' letter of intent to try to impose some kind of order to the interdisciplinary field of information seeking research.

Nodes: 'Information', 'Use', 'Seeking', 'Democracy and information'

Floating signifiers: 'Context'

Signs: 'need' (subsumed by Use), 'behaviour' (subsumed by 'Context'), 'future', 'theories', 'methods'

1998 Sheffield

The CFP of 1998 starts out by explaining what Information Seeking In Context is. According to the CFP it is ‘an International Conference on Information needs, Seeking and Use in Different Contexts’ (Appendix 1.2). This immediately enforces the earlier view of what the central signs and nodes of ‘Information Seeking’ are, i.e. ‘Information’, ‘Use’, ‘Seeking’ and ‘Context’.

The 1998 CFP displays the division into conference description and call for paper which was displayed in its infancy in the first CFP. Overall the Sheffield CFP signifies that it is a continuation of the last conference in its all business approach. Instead of any describing background the reader is given the number of researchers who attended 1996 and the intent of the conference organisers; that the conference will ‘build on and develop the themes debated at the first meeting’. They also hope that it will offer ‘an opportunity to debate methodological issues, and [...] identify areas for further research’.

The areas of interest are declared to be ‘Information Behaviour and Electronic Environments, Information Requirements and Information Systems Design, Theoretical and methodological issues, Information Seeking in Educational, Business and Health Sectors and Longitudinal Studies’. But they will not limit themselves to this and thus ‘Contributions from cognate disciplines such as Marketing, Consumer Studies, Media Studies, Communication Studies, Information Systems and Computer Science are welcome’.

Under the heading ‘Call for Proposals and papers’ the note is the interesting part: ‘Preference will be given to papers that report research or debate underlying methodological and philosophical issues, rather than those that report on plans yet to be implemented’.

As noted above, the discourse as displayed in the CFP of this conference seems to be similar regarding the central nodes, which are ‘Information’, ‘Use’, ‘Seeking’ and ‘Context’. To these can now be added the floating signifiers ‘Methodology’ and ‘Theory’, which the organisers put much emphasis in. For example *longitudinal studies* is one of the six areas of interest, while another is titled *Theoretical and methodological issues*. It is exactly because of this increased emphasis that both ‘Methodology’ and ‘Theory’ are accorded status of floating signifiers, to highlight the importance accorded in the CFP.

‘Information’ is still the central node around which everything revolves, with the nodes of ‘Use’ ‘Seeking’ and ‘Context’ tightly woven to it. Also, the ‘Use’ node as it appears in this CFP shows no divergence compared to the former one.

The ‘Seeking’ node is displayed in the choice of topics of interest, where ‘Information Seeking in Educational, Business and Health Sectors’ is one of the five shown.

The node of 'Context' is given the following content: Electronic environments, Information systems, Educational-, Business- and Health Sectors. It is also inferred that the areas of Consumer-, Media- and Communication studies, as well as Computer science can also be considered part of the 'Context' node within the 'Information Science' discourse, as they are pointed out as 'cognate disciplines'. Seeing that Information Science as a scientific subject is still not defined (see introduction) a 'cognate discipline' can be viewed as a possible extension of the field rather than a sovereign area resisting any inroads. As an opposite, think of the quite rigid dichotomy of the medical and psychological fields of science regarding the human body; one has reign over the somatic and one over the psychological aspects.

This testing of ground regarding what the node 'Context' entails is one of the organisers' reasons for staging the conference, as evinced by their hope that it will 'build on and develop the themes debated at the first meeting'.

With all this the transition of 'Context' from floating signifier to node can be established. Although its content is not pinpointed it is made obvious that it is wide enough to encompass many fields of human endeavour.

As with the CFP of the first conference 'future' is a sign present, but this time it is mentioned as a part of the 'Context' node as it is shown in the hopes of the organisers that the conference will 'identify areas for further research'. Therefore 'future' can be seen as subsumed into the node 'Context'. Note that 'future' is also present in a negative sense in the note that 'Preference will be given to papers that report research or debate underlying methodological and philosophical issues, rather than those that report on plans yet to be implemented'. Therefore it can be seen in reverse as a part of the floating signifier of 'Methodology'.

'Behaviour' is a sign which is noted and can be seen as subsumed by 'Use', as it shows in 'information behaviour and electronic environments', i.e. how context affects use.

Nodes: 'Information', 'Use', 'Seeking', 'Context'

Floating signifiers: 'Methodology', 'Theory'

Signs: 'future' (subsumed by 'Context'), 'behaviour' (subsumed by 'Use')

2000 Göteborg/Borås

The CFP for the Göteborg/Borås conference is quite similar to the preceding CFP (Appendix 1.3). It does away with the short introduction and expands the cut-and-pasted conference description with the aims for this conference.

The description says that the conference 'will offer an opportunity to hear results of the latest research in the field of information seeking, to debate methodological issues and to identify areas for further research'. The aim is to 'discuss information needs, seeking

and use in the light of contextual factors'. But new issues have arisen since 'today this may include information technology, multimedia environments and networked information'.

The list of areas of interest displays: 'Information Behaviour - individual, organisational and societal aspects, Information Seeking and Learning, Task-Embedded Information Searching, Information Requirements and Information Systems Design, Gender and Cultural aspects of Information Seeking and use, Theoretical and methodological issues'. Yet again it opens up for other fields also: 'Contributions from cognate disciplines such as Communication Studies, Information Systems, Computer Science, Marketing, Consumer Studies and Media Studies, are welcome and may lead to separate sessions'.

The submission guide inherent in the call for papers is the only CFP to date that thoroughly presents the peer review process. But the most interesting part is the end-note: 'To be accepted papers should report original research or debate underlying methodological and philosophical issues, rather than report on plans yet to be implemented'. This shows a reinforcement of the previous conference's 'preference will be given' by using 'to be accepted'.

The text opens with a retrospective description of the earlier ISIC conferences, followed by the aims of this specific conference. This points towards the fact that the ISIC conference is viewed as an established entity, no longer in need of an introductory description.

In the CFP the central node of 'Information Seeking' is still 'Information' with the nodes of 'Use', 'Seeking' and 'Context' closely tied to it. But now 'Methodology' is also a central node of 'Information Seeking'. It is specifically mentioned among the areas of interest in a general capacity, thereby widening its scope compared to its earlier showing. At the same time the floating signifier 'Theory' can also be seen as sedimented as an important node of the Information seeking context, even though the term *theory* is exchanged for *philosophy* in one instance.

This year however, a couple of new signs make their debut: 'gender', 'information technology', 'multimedia environments' and 'networked information'. As they all are contextual factors they serve to strengthen the 'Context' node and add content to it, rather than becoming floating signifiers in their own right. 'Behaviour' is present as the first topic of interest, but could still be viewed as a facet of 'Use'. However, its placement as the first topic of interest speaks of its importance. Hence it will here be awarded the status of floating signifier.

The reason for the explanation of how the peer review process works could be a sign of an effort to attract contributors not so used to the scientific context of a research conference.

Nodes: 'Information', 'Use', 'Seeking', 'Context', 'Methodology'

Floating signifiers: 'Behaviour'

Signs: ‘gender’, ‘information technology’, ‘multimedia environments’, ‘networked information’ (all subsumed by ‘Context’)

2002 Lisboa

This is the first CFP where all the information is actually gathered under the heading Call for papers (appendix 1.4), which shows ISIC to be well enough established in the field of Information Seeking research not to necessitate any introduction. Neither is the acronym ISIC deemed to need explaining. Instead the CFP starts with the same expectation as earlier conferences stating that it ‘will be an opportunity to hear results of the latest research in the field of information seeking, to debate methodological issues and to discuss emerging and further areas of research’. Then it introduces a new take on the hope of participation from cognate fields: ‘we hope that many other researchers from information related fields will also be attracted [to the conference]’.

The fields of interest cover:

Theories and models of information seeking, Research approaches and methodologies, Information seeking in specific contexts[...], Organizational structures and processes and information seeking: the impact of structures and processes on ISB of organizational members, and the relationship of ISB to work tasks and their complexity [ISB= information seeking behaviour, author’s comment], Information behaviour in everyday life[...](including the role of the Web in supporting such behaviour and the development of virtual communities), Integrating studies on information seeking and retrieval [...]including the role of Web-based searching in the overall information seeking process, Information use (Appendix 1.4).

By the exclusion of the information presented in previous CFPs this analysis is faced with a dilemma. Should the exclusion be taken as proof that the discourse of ‘Information Seeking’, and of the conference as an established entity in the research community, are just the same as that of the previous CFPs? Or should the analysis just be about what is actually written?

An effort will here be made to take the middle road by comparing the view of the previous CFP, from the year 2000, with what is actually written in the Lisboa text of 2002. Regarding the discourse of ‘Information Seeking’ it is obviously around this that the conference is centred. Although the acronyms are not explained, the CFP states that the conference will be an ‘opportunity to hear results of the latest research in the field of *information seeking*, to debate methodological issues and to discuss emerging and further areas of research’ [author’s emphasis]. ‘Information’ and ‘Information Seeking’ are also present in five of the seven themes of the conference.

These themes are the only place in the CFP where what is important, and hence central to the discourse, can be found. The first theme presents ‘Theory’ as an important node. It is presented in as wide capacity as possible, encompassing the entire discourse, meaning that it is seen as a central node of ‘Information Seeking’.

The second theme re-establishes 'Methodology' as a central node. The third, fourth and fifth theme firmly institutes 'Context' as a third node of 'Information Seeking'. Theme six enforces 'Information Seeking' and 'Seeking' while the sign of 'retrieval' is yet again subsumed by 'Information Seeking'. In theme seven 'Use' is present, and also in theme five.

'Behaviour' emerges in two of the themes and in one of them only in the form of unexplained acronyms. The fact that the term is deemed sufficiently well-known to not warrant an explanation speaks of its importance to the field. However it is still very close knit with 'Context' so retains the status of floating signifier.

Thus the central nodes of 'Information Seeking' continue to be 'Information', 'Context', 'Use', 'Seeking', 'Methodology' and 'Theory' is added as a new central node. The exclusion of a description apparently does not pose any problem for analysing the CFP.

Nodes: 'Information', 'Use', 'Seeking', 'Context', 'Methodology', 'Theory'

Floating signifiers: 'Behaviour'

Signs: 'gender', 'information technology', 'multimedia environments', 'networked information' (all subsumed by 'Context')

2004 Dublin

The CFP of the Dublin ISIC conference is in large measures identical to the previous one from Lisbon (Appendix 1.5). Again there is no introduction explaining the acronym of ISIC as the text is copied, with Lisbon dropped in favour of Dublin. This time any reference to earlier conferences is also dropped in the short introduction.

The result of the discourse analysis of the Dublin ISIC conference is much the same as the results of the four previous analyses. The central nodes of the 'Information Seeking' discourse continue to be 'Information', 'Context', 'Use', 'Seeking', 'Methodology' and 'Theory'. What is interesting are the changes and additions made to the CFP text of previous year.

There are three notable differences: Changes in themes two and seven, the addition of an eighth theme and the absence of specifications of papers solicited. This is yet another token of the fact that the ISIC conference is considered well enough established to do without these pointers.

In theme two a specific methodology is pointed out, namely *ethnomethodology*. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary ethnomethodology is '*a branch of sociology dealing with nonspecialists' commonsense understanding of the structure and organisation of society*'. No explanation is given in the CFP, but the dictionary explanation shows that it, aside from being the only method specifically pointed out,

gives strength to the node of 'Context', as it pertains to nonspecialists' understanding of society, i.e. user context.

Theme seven introduces a new sign; 'nature of information'. This undoubtedly lends strength to 'Information' as a central node of the discourse.

Meanwhile a new sign is also put forward in theme eight, namely that of 'information communities', which according to the text includes virtual communities. As explained earlier, with the user-centred view of this analysis, this sign can be seen as supporting both nodes of 'Use' and 'Context' as it concerns social networks, i.e. users and contexts.

The floating signifier 'Behaviour' has a strong showing in theme four and five. In both themes it is closely knit with networking and communities and with that in mind could be seen as a facet of 'Context'. Yet, in theme four it is juxtaposed to 'Context' by the virtue of the wording: 'The impact of structures and processes on the information seeking and behaviour of organizational members, and the relationship of information seeking behaviour to work tasks and their complexity' (Appendix 1.5). This points to it being more of a facet of the node 'Use'. This ambiguity and the strong showing in the CFP awards it a separate status as floating signifier.

Nodes: 'Information', 'Use', 'Seeking', 'Context', 'Methodology', 'Theory'

Floating signifiers: 'Behaviour'

Signs: 'nature of information' (subsumed by 'Information'), 'information communities'

2006 Sydney

The 2006 CFP opens with a completely different introduction than that of the previous conferences (Appendix 1.6). It begins with an invitation to submit 'papers in the field of human information behaviour research from participants in previous ISIC Conferences and other researchers from information-related fields'. Further on the organisers 'especially welcome submissions from researchers and doctoral students based in the Southern Hemisphere'.

The introduction makes it clear that in the eyes of the organisers human information behaviour research is the major field of interest, regardless of what the conference is called. Nevertheless, as the themes and the rest of the CFP show, there is no greater difference in content to earlier conferences so this is an example of re-labelling, from *information seeking* to *information behaviour*. This is an interesting step that will be further explored later. Suffice to say, following this the discourse will hence be labelled Information behaviour, and 'Behaviour' displayed as one of the central nodes of the discourse.

The enumerated list of themes of interest for the conference is basically the same as the one from the previous CFP with one important difference. Where the earlier CFPs have

presented a theme by first making an open statement and then giving specifying examples, the Sydney conference CFP just presents the open statements.

Theme four can serve as an example of this simplification; in the Dublin CFP it is presented as ‘Organizational structures and processes and information seeking and use - The impact of structures and processes on the information seeking behaviour of organisational members, and the relationship of information seeking behaviour to work tasks and their complexity.’ In the Sydney CFP it is simply stated as: ‘Organizational structures and processes and information seeking and use’.

This openness makes it easier for the organisers to accept papers, as they have excluded very few things, and goes hand in hand with the invitation aimed at ‘other researchers from information-related fields’. From the analysis point of view many of the signs that in the Lisbon CFP showed up for the first time disappear due to this move. Nevertheless, the central nodes remain consistent, i.e. ‘Information’, ‘Context’, ‘Use’, ‘Seeking’, ‘Methodology’ and ‘Theory’ while ‘Behaviour’ takes place among them, by virtue of the first sentence of the CFP and the showing in some of the themes.

Looking at the individual themes the first one is identical to the first one in the Dublin CFP. Theme two on the other hand shows a dramatic widening of scope as the CFP states an interest in ‘both interpretive and positivist’ research methodologies rather than just stating ethnomethodology as an example, thereby introducing the signs ‘positivism’ and ‘interpretive’ as parts of the ‘Methodology’ node. This also offers a widened generalization of the ‘Theory’ node.

Theme three is yet again identical, but the rest show the text condensation outlined above. Interestingly, in theme five there is mentioning of ‘the role of indigenous knowledge’ as well as a widening of scope to include both real and virtual communities, strengthening ‘Context’ as a central node. Meanwhile the eighth theme concerning information communities present in the former CFP is removed in the Sydney CFP. This is consistent with the analysis that a deliberate effort has been made to broaden the spectrum of the CFP, and thus information communities are not exemplified anymore as they belong to the ‘Context’ node.

The CFP is the first one to openly encourage a specific group of researchers to submit papers, soliciting ‘submissions from researchers and doctoral students based in the Southern Hemisphere’.

Nodes: ‘Information’, ‘Use’, ‘Seeking’, ‘Context’, ‘Methodology’, ‘Theory’, ‘Behaviour’

Floating signifiers:

Signs: ‘positivism’, ‘interpretive’ (belonging both to ‘Methodology’ and ‘Theory’)

2008 Vilnius

The Vilnius CFP starts out identical to the previous CFP from Sydney by inviting ‘papers in the field of human information behaviour research from participants in previous ISIC Conferences and other researchers from information-related fields’ (Appendix 1.7). After that it diverges by stating a clear definition of what kind of papers the organisers are soliciting:

Papers should draw upon the theoretical and empirical literature of information behaviour: those that seek to link that literature with related topics such as information literacy, information retrieval, and information system design should have information seeking or searching at the core of their presentation (Appendix 1.7)

Further on they ‘especially welcome submissions from researchers and doctoral students based in the Eastern Europe’.

This introduction further reinforces the re-labelling of the discourse, from *Information Behaviour* to *Information Seeking*, with ‘Behaviour’ as a central node of the discourse. As ‘Information seeking’ shows up in many of the themes and ‘Behaviour’ only once this stance can be questioned but it seems the Vilnius conference organisers take the same view as the Sydney organisers; that ‘Information Seeking’ is just a part of the wider ‘Information Behaviour’.

The themes of the conference take the totally opposite route of the previous CFP by adding details to each as to what kind of papers could be fitting to submit. An in-depth look shows the following:

The first theme is theories and models of information seeking where the following is added: ‘particular theoretical frameworks that are currently of interest include (but are not restricted to) social network theory, actor network theory, cultural-historical activity theory, genre theory, etc’ thereby filling the node ‘Theory’ with content.

The second theme is expanded by the addition of ‘qualitative or quantitative methods’ and the third theme by adding more examples to the list of specific contexts. Theme four is identical except for the fact that the word searching is added. As *information seeking* is already present this would seem to be a redundant addition.

Theme five is different from its counterpart in the earlier CFP, because it is a new theme that pushes the theme of everyday information behaviour into category six. This new theme concerns ‘searching in the context of the World Wide Web, including the relationship of information seeking to participation in virtual social networks’, which strongly enforces ‘Context’ as a central node of the ‘Information Seeking’ context.

Duly, theme six matches the previous CFPs theme five except for a small divergence. Where the former stated interest in ‘Information behaviour [...] including the role of indigenous knowledge’, the Vilnius CFP reads ‘Information behaviour [...] including its role in indigenous communities’. What is the role of *indigenous knowledge* in relation to

information behaviour? Obviously the role of information seeking in indigenous communities is something totally different, even though both variants concern themselves with different facets of the 'Context' node. But more importantly what is *indigenous knowledge*?

The text offers no clarification on the issue, but it might be assumed that it refers to groupings of people and their common sense knowledge of their usual areas of action (compare with ethnomethodology above). This could include Aborigine knowledge of surviving in the Outback as well as Facebook users' experiences with plug-ins, and fits in equally well in both of the above versions.

Theme seven is also a near-copy of a theme from the Sydney CFP. The word interactive has been added to what kind of retrieval studies the organisers are interested in receiving papers for.

The eighth theme is a direct copy-and-paste but the final theme is a new addition. 'Information seeking and information requirements - integrating information science and information systems' means that the CFP introduces a new and interesting node: 'Information systems'. The most interesting part is that the statement seems to show this to be an area outside of the Information Behaviour discourse. At least 'Information behaviour' and 'Information systems' are considered to be separate entities as papers are solicited that aim to integrate them. *Information requirements* also mean that the sign 'information needs' makes a comeback.

Following the short historical exposé in the introduction of this thesis it can be inferred that this might not really be the case, but that 'Information behaviour' and 'Information systems' (called *Information Administration* [author's translation], Mäkinen and Sandqvist 2004 p.15) are different discourses bound together by the wider discourse of 'Information Science'. Nonetheless they are separated and can thus demand integration.

The joint themes enforce the legacy from the previous CFP concerning what nodes are central to the 'Information behaviour' discourse: 'Information', 'Context', 'Use', 'Seeking', 'Methodology', 'Theory' and 'Behaviour'.

A final comment by the organisers:

For the 2008 Conference we shall be particularly interested in papers in any of these areas that address the connection between information research and information practice.

Information practice is the practical application of information research. Considering that information research is a user centred subject it is not surprising that this is stated in the CFP. This is in line with Vakkari's keynote speech (2008) which touches upon the subject as well as McKechnie, Julien and Oliphant's paper which is solely concerned with the inability of researchers in the field to communicate their finds to practitioners (2008) In the light of this the sentence can be seen as meaning that prescriptive papers will be given preference over descriptive papers.

Nodes: ‘Information’, ‘Use’, ‘Seeking’, ‘Context’, ‘Methodology’, ‘Theory’, ‘Behaviour’

Floating signifiers: ‘Information Systems’

Signs: ‘indigenous knowledge’, ‘information needs’

2010 Murcia

The CFP for the Murcia conference looks totally different from the previous one since it starts out with an overview of the multi-disciplinary field of *human information behaviour* followed by a declaration of intent:

ISIC: the Information Behaviour Conference intends to reflect this interdisciplinary character through attracting papers from researchers in all of these areas. The unifying characteristic, which we see as essential in developing a programme is the relationship between the needs or requirements of the information user, the means for the satisfaction of those needs and the uses to which those means are put in practice organizations or disciplines [sic]. Thus, papers that deal solely with technological aspects of system design, for example, will not be appropriate for the conference (Appendix 1.8).

Just as in the Vilnius CFP it is maintained that Information behaviour is the focus for the ISIC conference, yet again making ‘Behaviour’ one of the central nodes of the Information behaviour discourse.

Following this the themes of the conference are displayed. At a cursory glance they remind of the ones from previous conference and are indeed identical until the fourth theme. The fifth theme shows the first departure: “Information seeking and searching in virtual social networks, including gaming and virtual worlds as arenas for information exchange”. This gives the node ‘Context’ content in the shape of the signs ‘virtual social networks’, ‘gaming worlds’ and ‘virtual worlds’.

Themes six, seven and eight are again identical to the corresponding ones in the previous CFP. The ninth theme shows yet a departure: ‘The mediation of information behaviour: how human or software agents can respond to information needs’. This strengthens ‘Behaviour’ as one of the central nodes as well as displays the signs ‘human agents’, and ‘software agents’ who in turn are subsumed by the ‘Use’ node. The floating signifier ‘Information needs’ is also present.

The tenth theme is also new: ‘The design of information delivery systems to meet information needs generally, or in organizational or disciplinary contexts, including Web 2.0 developments such as blogs, wikis, e-learning platforms and open access information resources’. This theme supports both ‘Context’ as a node and ‘Information seeking’ as a floating signifier.

The eleventh theme is identical to the ninth in the previous CFP while the twelfth is a completely new one: ‘The communication of information to users: relationship between communication theory and information behaviour, including, for example, the relationship of information architectures to information seeking behaviour and the

design of information products on sound communication principles; including audio and visual communication media'. This new theme adds strength to the nodes of 'Behaviour' and 'Use', displays the signs 'design' and 'communication media' who are subsumed by 'Context' and foremost introduces the floating signifier 'Communication'. This by its prevalence and obvious importance in the last theme.

The themes are followed by an admonition for what papers are especially sought for:

Papers that deal with the information behaviour of practitioner groups, such as scientists, engineers, local government works, politicians, and other less-studied (in this context) groups, will be particularly welcome. Also, analytical, rather than descriptive investigations, will be sought, with strong connections to previous work and to theoretical or conceptual frameworks (Appendix 1.8).

This is an addition compared to the Vilnius CFP. The Murcia CFP gives special consideration to research into contexts not previously covered in the ISIC context. Also the importance of papers building on theoretical and conceptual frameworks previously used is held forth. This lends strength to both the 'Context' and the 'Theory' node.

This is followed by the same words as in the previous CFP 'For the 2010 Conference we shall be particularly interested in papers in any of these areas *that address the connection between information research and information practice*' with the notable italics. This can be seen as a response to the issues raised by Vakkari (2008) and McKechnie, Julien and Oliphant (2008) as referenced above.

The CFP yet again targets a special group of researchers: 'We especially welcome submissions from researchers and doctoral students based in Spain, Portugal and Latin America'.

Nodes: 'Information', 'Use', 'Seeking', 'Context', 'Methodology', 'Theory', 'Behaviour'

Floating signifiers: 'Communication', 'Information seeking', 'Information Needs'

Signs: 'virtual social networks', 'gaming worlds', 'virtual worlds', 'design' and 'communication media' all belonging to 'Context', 'human- and software agents' subsumed by 'Use'

The CFPs over time

When comparing the CFPs over time certain subjects become apparent. These are interesting because they seem to show ways in which how the 'Information Seeking' discourse, as projected in the CFPs, has evolved.

When looking at the first CFP it is apparent that the Tampere organisers had an idea of what should be discussed and expanded on at their conference. The analysis shows that in their view 'Information', 'Use', 'Seeking' and 'Context' made up the most important parts of 'Information Seeking' and that they expected the conference contributors to share this view.

It is also evident that the organisers were aware that the conference was in its ill defined infancy as they left many options open in their invitation. This stemmed most probably from the reality of having a conference focused on an interdisciplinary field of study, while at the same time wanting to create a new forum for research not fitting in with the venues available at that time.

The focus on democracy displayed could be the result of general belief that the advent of the internet reaching into more and more homes across the world would lead to a surge in democratic participation and democratic movements globally. This belief would mean that information technology, and by association information seeking, would be seen as intertwined with democracy. As late as 2001 the then president of the U.S.A., Bill Clinton, said that ‘When over 100 million people in China can get on the Net, [...] it will be impossible to maintain a closed political and economic society’ (Luh, 2001). In the light of this it would be obvious for a conference in information seeking to include democracy in the agenda.

When the CFP for the second ISIC conference in Sheffield was conceived the organisers obviously deemed the path chosen to be the right one as they evince through their hopes that the conference would ‘build on and develop the themes debated at the first meeting’ (Appendix 1.2). The nodes presented as central through the CFP are the same as in the previous one with the addition of the floating signifiers ‘Methodology’ and ‘Theory’.

For this thesis this is interpreted as confidence on part of the organisers in having established their view of ‘Information Seeking’ and having taken the first steps toward defining the field of research, or at least the methods and theories used when studying fields perceived as being part of ‘Information Seeking’. As Becher and Trower (2001) point out, a science is also a social field for the researchers engaged in it. Therefore a convergence in theory and method used is expected when an interdisciplinary field of research coalesces into a science, just as has been done with information science, and information seeking. This is also in part confirmed by Vakkari (2008).

The signs that make up the central nodes, i.e. the ‘topics of interest’ are here expanded in the way that they are not compounded in a text but listed separately. They show what would be the starting point for future CFPs, where most of the signs belong to the ‘Context’ node but also the floating signifiers ‘Methodology’ and ‘Theory’ feature strongly.

The third conference in Göteborg/Borås in 2000 continues the path laid out by the predecessors by exhibiting ‘Methodology’ and ‘Theory’ as central nodes of ‘Information Seeking’, while still retaining the ones displayed earlier; i.e. ‘Information’, ‘Use’, ‘Seeking’ and ‘Context’. The signs that make up the nodes, i.e. the topics of interest, enforce the nodes, especially ‘Context’ which includes both the topic of ‘Information behaviour – individual, organisational and societal aspects’ and ‘Gender and Cultural aspects of Information Seeking and use’.

This is interesting because it is the only CFP to state the word *gender* as part of the ‘Context’ node. Swedes tend to perceive themselves as more advanced than other

peoples regarding gender-based equal rights. As seen on the Swedish Government's own website for the Ministry of Integration and Equality from 2009:

The progress we have made has given us a strong position in the international work for equality and the interest in, and demand for, our knowledge and experience is in much demand. Sweden has an international trust in these areas to both manage and expand [author's translation].

The CFP for the Göteborg/Borås conference is also the premier for 'Behaviour' as a floating signifier, i.e. 'behaviour' is no longer just a part of other nodes or signs.

The fourth CFP shows no doubts as to what the nature of the conference is and what the 'Information seeking' discourse contains. To the earlier nodes the node of 'Theory' is added. The sign has been present since the first conference, but now it is presented as central to the discourse. The signs that are present support the central nodes as before. This time many of the signs making up the 'Context' node involve organisations and communities and the internet/the World Wide Web is also apparent. One sign combines them in the term *virtual communities*.

Since this CFP does not have any introduction, and the acronym of ISIC is not even spelled out, it is interesting to see the signs of 'Context' to have changed so much compared to its predecessor. As a whole it would seem that the organisers believe ISIC, as an information seeking research conference, to be well established and the contents fairly given, yet the simple expedient of comparing with the former CFP shows it is not so.

'Behaviour' is now presented partly by unexplained acronyms thereby showing the importance invested in it. It has to be well known if it does not even demand spelling out of the acronym. Regardless, it does not take a central place in the discourse as it only features fleetingly in the CFP.

Having by now found that both the conference and the discourse are considered well established it would not have been surprising to find the next CFP, from Dublin, a duplicate, which it almost is except for the inclusion of two new signs; 'ethnomethodology' and 'the nature of information'. 'Ethnomethodology' marks a true step for the 'Methodology' node as it points out one specific method where before the signs have been generalised. The use of the term 'nature of information' could point towards an acceptance of research grounded in a positivist epistemology. However it can also be construed as a catch-all for a kaleidoscopic designation defying all definition, i.e. used without regard for the positivist connotations.

'The nature of information' also points towards a deepened interest in theories that help explain the whole field of study. With the CFP introduction refined and the themes reasonably well defined through examples it looks like this will be the mould for the future CFPs.

Then comes the 2006 Sydney ISIC conference. In the CFP all the themes are refined by removing the examples and thereby widening the scope considerably. The area of interest is also re-labelled as 'the field of human information behaviour research' instead

of just 'information seeking'. This makes a re-labelling of the entire discourse necessary.

Since the name of a discourse is for the ease of the analysis rather than a name used by the study objects, it does not really matter what it is called. At the same time how we name the world tells how we view it. It could be argued that keeping the name 'Information seeking' would make it easier to follow the analysis. Yet the re-labelling signifies a change has taken place and helps to highlight this fact. What this change entails is further expounded on later on.

The professed change of area-of-interest turns 'Behaviour' into one of the central nodes of 'Information Seeking', as from being a floating signifier with an undefined content it now obviously contains what 'Information Seeking' contains. On the other hand, this re-labelling can be seen as an effort to differentiate the conference from those areas of information seeking working with internet bots, i.e. independent information seeking and archiving by computer programs.

The CFP of the 2008 conference can in this light be construed as a backlash to the 2006 openness. Where the Sydney CFP is open by giving very few examples to its themes the Vilnius CFP takes the opposite route, and in that way gets back on the track of earlier CFPs. With explanatory examples of what is included in the themes it stakes out boundaries for the conference that might be tighter than the prior conference. However, the invitation is wide enough, going out to previous participants and researchers from information-related fields to submit papers concerning the same area as the Sydney CFP.

Following this the amount of signs present explodes. For the 'Context' node there are 'health care', 'education', 'business', 'industry', 'the public services and government', 'the emergency services', 'organisational structures', 'the world wide web', 'virtual social networks', 'everyday life' etc. 'Theories' has 'social network theory', 'cultural-historical activity theory', 'genre theory' etc. In essence numerous signs, but most fairly general in their definitions. Two common denominators seem to be *networks* and *communities*.

The CFP continues the same path regarding 'Behaviour' as the prior CFP, treating it as a relabeling of 'Information Seeking', in as much as 'Information Behaviour' is a wider discourse which includes 'Information Seeking' within its boundaries. This is inferred from the fact that the invitation goes out to 'papers in the field of human information behaviour research' (Appendix 1.7) and 'Information seeking' in turn is featured among the themes.

With the central nodes of the discourse basically the same since 2002 the Vilnius CFP introduces something totally new: *Information systems* - an area designated as being outside of the discourse, yet desirable to integrate with. This has a couple of possible deductions inherent; It could be viewed as a symptom of actors within the 'Information seeking' discourse seeing the discourse as sedimented and closed, i.e. that it is defined and stable as a field of research with well defined theories, methodologies and accepted

materials. Once a discourse is seen as set in this way it could open up for integration with foreign fields as it is no longer seen as threatened by such collaboration.

It could also be seen as harking back to 'Information seeking's interdisciplinary roots and as something that has been there all along, just not put to the forefront in this way before.

A third possibility is that it stems from intradiscourse hegemonic rivalry. The first ISIC conference was started out of a perceived lack of forums for the ventilation of user-centred research in information seeking (Dervin, Savolainen and Vakkari, 1997). This lack was seen by some as being the result of the 'Information system' discourse's hegemony within the wider discourse of 'Information science'. This hegemony had for decades meant that the central node of 'Information science' had been 'Information systems' and that the greater part of scientific endeavour had been employed in perfecting said systems.

But from the late seventies and onward concerns had been voiced that questioned the meaning of a perfect system without the user view. If the systems did not take their users into account, what good would they be?

The final CFP starts out with a general outline of the multi-disciplinary powers at work in the human information behaviour research field. Then it goes on to describe what contributions the organisers are looking for, and yet again it is user studies and not system studies that are solicited.

The CFP follows the general outlay of the Vilnius one in the themes but displays some new things. Firstly, six years after World of Warcraft was released with an estimated 12 million current users, the 'Context' node is expanded with gaming- and virtual worlds. Considering that Ultima Online already in 1997 popularized massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) creating virtual worlds this would seem to be about time.

Further on the mediation of information and how agents can respond to information needs are highlighted. This is something that has been seen as a part of the discourse from the start but has not been put in these words before. Implicit in studying information needs is the idea that the study will help map how to remedy said need. The interesting bit is that software agents are included as part of this theme.

The next theme expounds on information seeking and information behaviour by including Web 2.0 contexts while the last of the new themes tries to bring communication theories and information architecture into the picture. Hence the will to include researchers from other disciplines is actually displayed in the themes.

The CFP finishes with the admonition that papers dealing in the information behaviour of certain user groups will be especially welcome and lists 'scientists, engineers, local government works, politicians, and other less-studied (in this context) groups' (Appendix 1.8). Further on the CFP underlines that what is sought for are analytical papers which connect to previous work and theoretical frameworks.

And if this is not clear enough there is an additional admonition that the papers should pertain to the connection between research and practice. Just as in the previous CFP this links to the issues raised by Vakkari (2008).

Empowerment

A theme apparent from the Göteborg/Borås CFP and forward is that of empowerment. By this is meant the will to include groups of people discriminated by the norm, both in social and professional fields.

At the Göteborg/Borås conference the first sign of this can be seen in that the peer review procedure is detailed. The workings of peer review should be known by all researchers existing in an academical context. This could then be construed as an opening for researchers existing outside of this context to submit.

The last three conferences have displayed another kind of empowerment. In Sydney the invitation read that 'We especially welcome submissions from researchers and doctoral students based in the Southern Hemisphere', in Vilnius they 'especially welcome submissions from researchers and doctoral students based in the Eastern Europe' and in Murcia: 'We especially welcome submissions from researchers and doctoral students based in Spain, Portugal and Latin America'.

This can be seen as response to the western science hegemony most openly displayed and criticised in the Open Access debate, regarding scientific publishing. In short it is the view that science and scientists focus on prestige since this is intertwined with funding. The more prestigious the researcher is the more likely he or she is to receive funding. Status is acquired by getting published in the most renowned journals in the field, and all these are 'western'. This has led to a western-centred scientific world where researchers from other areas have difficulties asserting their place in the scientific community (Ruhe and Åström 2006).

This is not confined to the publishing area of science but is present in all scientific exchange around the world. And apparently the organisers of the ISIC conferences have been of the same opinion as their invitations especially try to encourage researchers from 'non-western', or non Anglo-Saxon as it would be, areas to submit papers and by extension participate in the conferences.

User and Use

Throughout the analysis *user* and *use* are used interchangeably. Even though one is descriptive and the other performative this utilisation has no immediate impact as *use* always implicates a *user*. Thus the 'Use' node could be more correctly be given the name 'Use/User' but that would clutter the analysis needlessly.

Discussion

This study is based on two research questions whose answers intertwine:

How is the information seeking discourse formulated by the ISIC organisers in the CFPs?

and

Can this be construed as an effort to discipline the field of research?

The answer to the first question is that the progression of the discourse, as presented in the CFPs, is in accordance with an interdisciplinary field of study coalescing into a defined field of study as portrayed in Becher and Trower's *Academic tribes and territories* (2001).

Hence the progressive inclusions of nodes. From first CFPs nodes being 'Information', 'Use', 'Seeking' and 'Context', which can be seen as the lowest common denominators for anybody doing information research from a user-centred perspective, to the Murcia CFP in 2010 containing the nodes 'Information', 'Use', 'Seeking', 'Context', 'Methodology', 'Theory', 'Behaviour'.

Nevertheless, the fact is that the ISIC conference and the field of information seeking are not isolated features but belong within the much wider field of information behaviour and information science. As such the basis for the first ISIC conference was not taken out of thin air and suddenly materialised, but was rather the result of a long process.

At the time of the first conference, several researchers argued that the epistemological basis of LIS was positivism, and that 'had been kept too long, and is overdue for replacement by a new philosophy' (Zwadlo 1997, p.105). Positivism was linked with the system-view by virtue of system studies having for years aimed to perfect the system using traditional positivist research methods. Hence positivism was seen as part of the unwanted hegemony of system-centred discourse.

As the invitation for the first conference stated:

Over 50 years, the training of librarians has grown into rich and advanced education and research activity that covers comprehensively the field of information studies. The last decade has in particular signified a shift from studies of library and information service institutions to the research of the whole spectrum of phenomena connected with information needs, seeking and use, as well as the supply of and access to information (Appendix 1.1).

The changing signs from year to year, with ‘democracy’ and ‘gender’ as notable examples, are a sign of trying to profile the conference in certain ways. One trend is to highlight areas that are deemed to need more research or to comply with notions of what areas have higher status at the moment. At the same time, as shown above, empowerment seems to be a strong conference theme, which goes counter to the notion of the organisers aiming for the conference to simply include ‘hot’ topics.

The cornerstones of ‘Information seeking’ have remained the same through the existence of the conference: ‘Information’, ‘Use’, ‘Seeking’ and ‘Context’. What has been added is both a discussion of the tools of the trade and how the world is perceived, i.e. ‘Method’ and ‘Theory’.

The statement that preference will be given to papers using theoretical frameworks has been displayed in one form or another ever since the first conference showing that this is something deemed important. However this entreaty seems to have had mixed success.

A study of how researchers link their findings to professionals in the field was carried out by McKechnie, Julien and Oliphant in 2008 in the article *Communicating findings to library and information science practitioners: a study of ISIC papers from 1996 to 2000*, which despite its title covers the years 1996 to 2006. They selected accepted ISIC papers and after weeding out the papers that are not empirical studies they were left with 117 papers out of 181. Of these only 80 papers show a use of theory or theoretical frameworks. Three theories stand out:

The three most frequently cited theories were Savolainen’s Everyday Life Information Seeking (four times), Dervin’s Sense Making (six times) and Kuhlthau’s Information Search Process (nine times) (McKechnie, Julien & Oliphant 2008).

Unfortunately McKechnie, Julien and Oliphant do not tell how these theory users are spread out over the years, but the diversity of theories used point to a wide spreading of frameworks used to understand the subject matter. But since a full third of the papers do not display the use of any theory, it would be interesting to see how those authors formulate themselves in relation to the Information Science field of research.

As stated earlier, in 2005 *Journal of Documentation* hosted a special issue on LIS and the philosophy of science where Birger Hjørland writes both the introduction and the finishing comments on the contributing papers. In the introduction he states that:

‘The special aim of the present issue is the attempt to relate issues in LIS more systematically to major philosophical movements from outside LIS. It may well be the most systematic attempt made so far to present and discuss basic epistemological issues in LIS’ (Hjørland 2005b, p.8).

Further on he states that ‘In the LIS community the interest in the philosophy of science has so far been limited’ and ‘Those of us who think that the philosophy of science have potentials [sic] to contribute to the further development of LIS as a field of inquiry as well as a professional field have to argue and demonstrate that this is indeed the case’

(Hjørland 2005b, p.5) .The use Hjørland makes of *philosophy* is that of the basic theoretical underpinnings for the work carried out, i.e. the theoretical frameworks mentioned in the CFPs. He highlights the need for such awareness of the epistemological grounds on which researchers base their inquiries to avoid them becoming too narrow as he exemplifies by Ranganathan's consideration only of the strong sides of his own theories and refusal to see the weak ones.

In the introduction Hjørland gives no preference for any theory, and in the finishing summary he states that:

'It is important to emphasize that knowledge about different positions in the philosophy of science is not an aim in itself. If a position has no potential to contribute to the further development of LIS it is principally of no interest to us [...] If a position makes no visible difference in research output, then the position cannot said to be important' (Hjørland 2005a, p.156)

This view can be seen as the one projected through all the CFPs in their soliciting papers expanding theoretical and methodological issues. The organisers view is not that the Information seeking, and later on, the Human information behaviour discourse has one dominant theoretical underpinning but that the field is genuinely pluralistic. A view that is compounded, both by Zwadlo's *We don't need a philosophy of library and information science – we're confused enough already* (1997) and Holland's *Information science: an interdisciplinary effort?* (2006) as well as *Turning weakness into strength: strategies for future LIS* by Nolin and Åström (2009).

The organisers are not trying to define what theories and frameworks should be used to study human information behaviour as seen in the CFPs. They simply try over and over again to make contributing researchers aware of why they are doing what they are doing.

The same can be said of the methods. Through the CFPs the organisers have been quite liberal in delineating what methods should be discussed at the ISIC conferences. Often by soliciting papers discussing 'theories and methods' in a general capacity.

Information Seeking and Information Behaviour

Information behaviour is as stated by Tom Wilson in 'Human Information Behaviour':

[...] the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking, and information use. Thus, it includes face-to-face communication with others, as well as the passive reception of information as in, for example, watching TV advertisements, without any intention to act on the information given. (2000)

The journal *The New Review of Information Behaviour Research* was started to publish the papers from the ISIC conferences and states in its foreword:

Research into human information behaviour has assumed major significance as a result of the pervasive influence of information technology, multimedia environments and networked information. The design of more effective information systems proceeds from an understanding of human information seeking and use. [...] The New Review is designed to address the

perceived shortcomings of many previous information needs studies - which were often systems-centred rather than person-centred, which conceptualised information as an objective entity with constant meaning, which concentrated on external behaviour to the neglect of internal cognition, which tended to ignore the larger contexts of the lives of information users, and which produced over-rigid models to predict information behaviour. [...] (Höglund, L & Wilson, T. 2000 p.IV).

Dirndorfer Anderson and Orsatti in their paper *Rhythms of "being" at ISIC - understanding the place of the ISIC conferences in information seeking research* (2008) found that *information seeking behaviour* were among the top four frequent keywords for submitted papers.

In Vakkari's paper *Trends and Approaches in Information Behaviour Research* he notes that 'Another restriction of the studies is the relatively weak interest in information behavior as a process. Studies on one phase of this process, especially information seeking, have gained more footing' (2008 p.10)

In the light of the above it could be understood that the change in the invitation of the 2006 CFP from the previous one is an attempt to place it into its hegemonic relation with the 'Information behaviour' discourse. That is, to show that 'Information Seeking' is one of the nodes of the 'Information behaviour' discourse, a statement most actors in the field of research take for granted.

The re-labelling of the conference could be an attempt at hegemonic subversion of the wider Human information behaviour discourse. By taking the name of the larger discourse it is enforced that information seeking is the most important part of the field.

It can be seen as the use of 'Behaviour' as a node in the analysis is performed wrongly. This since 'Behaviour' includes both 'Use' and 'Context' in it since its remit is agents' reactions to milieus and inputs, i.e. contexts. However the way the analysis has been constructed serves to highlight that the discourse has undergone an expansion of its content rather than any extreme re-alignment or focus shifts.

Thus, the relabeling acknowledges that Human information behaviour is a wider discourse of which Information seeking is a part and that the organisers have set their views higher in order to not exclude anything pertinent by design.

Employing research finds

A facet of the ISIC conference that is tightly linked to the 'Context' node is the question of how the research is communicated to the practitioners in the field. In his keynote speech at the 7th ISIC conference, *Trends and Approaches in Information Behaviour Research*, Vakkari concludes that in the twelve years between the first and that conference there has been an

[...] increasing conceptualization of information behaviour as a part of a larger activity that generates it. Information behaviour is not seen as a separate phenomenon on its own, but as an activity serving various tasks and interests (Vakkari 2008 p.10).

He follows up by stating that:

On the darker side are some features, which seem to reflect the homogenization of our field of research. Researchers focus increasingly and almost solely on empirical studies. Their interest in descriptive designs instead of explanatory designs has grown. There is a growing trend towards qualitative studies. However, the use of several research techniques within general research designs has become more popular, which potentially increases the validity of the findings. [...] Another restriction of the studies is the relatively weak interest in information behaviour as a process. Studies on one phase of this process, especially information seeking, have gained more footing. Also the interest in information use has decreased somewhat (Vakkari 2008 p.10).

Descriptive studies are not meaningless in that they can help researchers understand what is going on. But if no-one plans and executes experiments where these findings are tested and used to refine and enhance information behaviour processes among users, then what is the point of the research?

McKechnie, Julien and Oliphant in their paper *Communicating research findings to library and information science practitioners: a study of ISIC papers from 1996 to 2000*, despite the title, examine accepted papers from the 1996 to the 2006 conferences. Of these they chose the empirical studies and compared if they included any implications for further practice (McKechnie, Julien & Oliphant 2008). They found that 59% of the papers examined did that, but of these only 43% did that in an explicit way usable by practitioners in the field.

This is important since it is fine if research is a part of the grand undertaking of expanding the total amount of human knowledge. However the bottom line is always money. If the research carried through can be linked to enhanced practices they are making their money's worth.

This is something that the conference organisers have not focused on until the 2008 conference in Vilnius. This is probably connected to the fact that both Vakkari's keynote speech and McKechnie, Julien and Oliphant's paper originate that year, but in the latest CFP it is even italicised: 'For the 2010 Conference we shall be particularly interested in papers in any of these areas *that address the connection between information research and information practice*'.

Context

The node that is most important in the discourse as displayed in the CFPs is 'Context'. As shown above the theories and the methods used are afforded pluralism and are not delineated by the organisers. Neither are the contexts that are examined. During the years there are numerous different contexts offered by the organisers spanning all possible areas of information seeking and behaviour with the common denominator being how these contexts affect the information use in question.

This means that the biggest bifurcation for the organisers whether a paper should be accepted or not is if the author subscribes to the notion that the context does indeed affect the information use and behaviour examined.

Sanna Talja, Heidi Keso and Tarja Pietiläinen's paper *The production of 'context' in information seeking research: a metatheoretical view* (1999) shows that context in itself is a difficult concept that researchers often take for granted. But how do they use it? As background for the user-studies conducted, as frames of reference and patterns of behaviour or as phenomena mediated by social and cultural meanings?

Yet again the conference organisers prove to be quite open minded in that it does not matter in what way *context* is explained, just that it has an impact on the information behaviour studied.

Conclusion

This thesis has the analysis of the Information seeking discourse, morphed into the Human information behaviour discourse, as its prime object. When looking at what the conference organisers of the ISIC have displayed as central it starts out quite simple; ‘Information’, ‘Use’, ‘Seeking’ and ‘Context’. This expands during the years to include ‘Methodology’, ‘Theory’ and ‘Behaviour’ i.e. to the foundation is added the how, the why and the what. This is in accordance with a scientific field being established. At first the general area is defined so that there can be scientific consensus on what is being studied. Only then do the questions of how and why arise.

In the case of information seeking, stemming from information science saturated with the information system outlook but striving to add a user-centred view, the general area decided on is context. But not in the sense that the context of the field of research is important, as the label of *human information behaviour* shows. Such a wide enveloping label entails that all human information behaviour, wherever it may occur, is the remit of the field of research. It is rather in the fact that no human information behaviour happens without a context to relate to.

The organisers do not try to limit the ways in which the field should be examined nor what theories should be used as basis for enquiries. Throughout the CFPs they make an effort to lift the question of researchers’ awareness of their own theoretical basis as impertinent to further scientific endeavour in the field, because this has an impact on how context is viewed.

And context is the most important part of the Human information behaviour discourse, at least as can be inferred from the CFPs. This stems from the idea of no context equals no behaviour.

The question of the re-labelling from Information seeking to Human information behaviour is an acceptance of Information seeking being a node in the wider human behaviour research discourse and also an attempt to show that Information seeking is the most important part of the discourse.

The first question of this thesis is: *How is the information seeking discourse formulated by the ISIC organisers in the CFPs?* This is answered above.

The second one is: *Can this be construed as an effort to discipline the field of research?* This depends on what is meant by disciplining the field. The organisers have not, at least not in the CFPs as the analysis shows, tried to limit in what ways the field of

research may be studied, or how this may be done. Both of which can be construed as classical delineating factors in defining a field of research.

They have however through the CFPs ceaselessly implored the contributing researchers to consider their epistemology and grounds for their theories used. They have also continually displayed context as required for information seeking- and human information behaviour studies. But the most important facet of what can be seen as a disciplining has only been displayed in the latest two CFPs: That contributors should be communicating findings to practitioners.

Further research and finishing words

This thesis is by its nature limited in its scope by the form of the master's thesis as well as the resources and experience of its author. The results hopefully serve to further research in the field by adding to the self awareness of researchers conducting enquiries in information seeking or human information behaviour.

The process of writing this thesis has uncovered many different avenues of research that would most probably prove fruitful for a researcher interested in further examining the field and to gain a wider understanding of its players.

Questions of what kind of theories and methods would be fitting to use to examine information seeking are not easy ones to answer. Pertti Vakkari discusses this subject in his *Trends and Approaches in Information Behaviour Research* (2008), where he finds that the pluralistic research approach has narrowed a bit from the earlier years. It would be interesting to see an account of what part the ISIC conference has played in this development, but that goes a long way outside the scope of this thesis.

It would also be intriguing to interview key persons among the organisers to gain an inside view of the ISIC editorship and of the development of the research field. Have there been overt attempts to discipline the discipline or has it all been an open dialogue centred on common ideas?

Another project would be to do a textual discourse analysis comparing texts from different years and how they describe the field of information seeking. This could be done by using randomised papers or by focusing on keynote papers, as they are presented by researchers invited by the organisers, and therefore probably have been invested with hegemonic power in the discourse.

Yet another angle would be to do a survey of how many papers through the years have stated that they present interdisciplinary findings, i.e. represent collaboration and/or merging with other fields of research. This would be interesting as they would then have straddled the boundaries of the discourse, and it is in instances like these that the players' views of a discourse can be most visible. Much could be gained by using sociological theories and methods to examine the field.

By focusing this thesis solely on describing the advance of the field of information science rather than helping to develop its practical application, it becomes part of the research in the field of information seeking that Vakkari warns of. Yet, Information Science would benefit from an awareness of the discourse development in the field. Such scrutiny is an instrument of definition and empowerment and lead to a better

understanding of what and why research is done both in Information Science and Human information behaviour. This can be seen in Nolin's and Åström's paper, where they outline the field and argue how the fractured characteristic of LIS is instead a strength (2009).

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Appendix 1, Call for Papers

The Call for Papers from the ISIC conferences. Note that from year 2000 and onwards the CFPs are divided into Conference Description and Call for Papers. For year 2002 and 2004 the CFPs are divided into Conference Description, Call for Papers and Submission Guidelines. Only the CFPs are presented, since they contain the pertinent information.

1.1 Call for Papers Tampere 1996

Call for Papers

ISIC 96

Information Seeking in Context

Tampere, Finland

August 14-16, 1996

Information Seeking In Context:

A Conference on Research in Information Needs, Seeking and Use in Different Contexts, Organized by the University of Tampere Department of Information Studies.

The education of library and information professionals in Finland began in 1946 at the University of Tampere. Over 50 years, the training of librarians has grown into rich and advanced education and research activity that covers comprehensively the field of information studies. The last decade has in particular signified a shift from studies of library and information service institutions to the research of the whole spectrum of phenomena connected with information needs, seeking and use, as well as the supply of and access to information. To celebrate the 50th anniversary, the Department of Information Studies at the University of Tampere will organize an international conference titled information Seeking in context [sic].

Conference Theme

The theme of the conference is information needs, seeking and use in different contexts. First, different communities and organizations, with their different structures and cultures, constitute frames of reference for the information needs, seeking and use of individuals. Second, information seeking and use are connected with and affected by the organization of information resources both in specific communities and in society in general. Access to information significantly also directs its use. Third, it is characteristic of information needs, seeking and use that they are situational. These three factors shape

the information behaviour of individuals both in professional activity and in everyday life. The aim of the conference is to discuss information needs, seeking and use in the light of these contextual factors.

Our information environment is changing vastly in the future: a growing share of information will be in digital form. This development not only has remarkable effects on the practical aspects of information seeking and use but also raises questions about the democratization of information. Thus, the relationship between information and democracy is one of the conference's topics. Along with the aforementioned issues, papers dealing with the future trends in information seeking and use, as well as those dealing with theoretical and methodological aspects of the conference theme are called for.

Instructions for Contributors

Authors are requested to submit a copy of an extended abstract of about 600 words (2-3 A4 or letter size papers) to the conference secretary. The author's name, organization and the complete mailing address with phone, fax and e-mail numbers should be typed on a separate sheet.

The papers will be selected on the basis of the extended abstracts. The collection of abstracts will be available for participants on the spot. A separate conference proceedings of selected papers will also be published.

1.2 Call for Papers Sheffield 1998

Call for Papers

Information Seeking in Context: an International Conference on Information Needs, Seeking and Use in Different Contexts, Sheffield, United Kingdom, August 13-15 1998
Hosted by: The Department of Information Studies at Sheffield University.

Conference Description

The first ISIC conference was held in Tampere, Finland in August 1996 and was a considerable success with 136 participants from 17 countries.

The Second Information Seeking in Context conference is intended to build on and develop the themes debated at the first meeting. The Conference will offer an opportunity to hear results of the latest research in the field of information seeking, to debate methodological issues, and to identify areas for further research.

All participants at the first ISIC meeting will be welcome in 1998 and we hope that many researchers for whom this will be their first Conference will be attracted.

Topics of interest include but are not limited to: Information Behaviour and Electronic Environments * Information Requirements and Information Systems Design *

Theoretical and methodological issues * Information Seeking in Educational, Business and Health Sectors * Longitudinal Studies.

Contributions from cognate disciplines such as Marketing, Consumer Studies, Media Studies, Communication Studies, Information Systems and Computer Science are welcome and may lead to separate sessions.

Call for proposals and papers

Contributors are requested to submit a copy of an extended abstract of about 600 words to the conference secretary. The authors' name, organization and the complete mailing address with phone and fax numbers and e-mail address should be typed on a separate sheet. The papers will be selected on the basis of the extended abstracts.

Electronic submissions will be accepted. For detailed instructions on electronic submission of papers are available from the conference www pages.

All documents should be sent by October the 31st, 1997 to Professor Tom Wilson, Conference Committee Chair, at the address below.

Note: Preference will be given to papers that report research or debate underlying methodological and philosophical issues, rather than those that report on plans yet to be implemented.

1.3 Call for papers Göteborg/Borås 2000

Conference Description

The first ISIC conference was held in Tampere, Finland in August 1996 and was a considerable success with 136 participants from 17 countries.

The Second Information Seeking in Context conference, which was held in Sheffield, Great Britain, 1998, developed the themes debated at the first meeting and also attracted new participants.

The Third Conference in Göteborg will offer an opportunity to hear results of the latest research in the field of information seeking, to debate methodological issues and to identify areas for further research.

All participants at the first two ISIC meetings will be welcome in 2000 and we hope that many researchers for whom this will be their first Conference will be attracted.

The aim of the conference is to discuss information needs, seeking and use in the light of contextual factors. Of course today this may include information technology, multimedia environments and networked information.

Topics of interest include but are not limited to:

- Information Behaviour - individual, organisational and societal aspects
- Information Seeking and Learning
- Task-embedded Information Searching
- Information Requirements and Information Systems Design

- Gender and Cultural aspects of Information Seeking and use
- Theoretical and methodological issues

Contributions from cognate disciplines such as Communication Studies, Information Systems, Computer Science, Marketing, Consumer Studies and Media Studies, are welcome and may lead to separate sessions.

Call for proposals and papers

Contributors are requested to submit a copy of an extended abstract of approximately 1000 words to the conference secretary by **October 1st, 1999**. The authors name, organization and complete mailing address with phone and fax numbers and e-mail address should be typed on a **separate** sheet to ensure anonymity in the review process. Contributors will be notified by 15th December, 1999, if their abstract has been selected or not.

Full papers on selected abstracts are requested by **1st March, 2000**. A further selection procedure will take place at this point and contributors will be notified by 15th May. Accepted papers will be published in the *Conference Proceedings*. If the number of papers exceeds the space limits in the *Conference Proceedings* some papers may be published in *Information Research: an electronic journal* or in *Swedish Library Research*.

Electronic submissions are allowed as long as a paper copy is either faxed/mailed to be compared to the electronic version to make sure submission was received correctly in its original format. Authors of accepted manuscripts and proposals will be asked to provide the final copy of the submission in *Microsoft Word* or *RTF* (Rich text format) on a 3.5" diskette or via an e-mail attachment. If using a diskette please indicate the programme used, (See Deadlines and submission guidelines for more details on style). Authors of accepted papers (at least one person) must register and attend the conference.

All abstracts should be sent by **October 1st, 1999** to Frances Hultgren, ISIC 2000, at the address below:

The Swedish School of Library and Information studies, University College of Borås,
501 90 Borås, Sweden.

Telephone: + 46 33 16 40 00

E-mail: ISIC 2000 (isic2000@hb.se)

Fax: 033-16 40 05, International number: + 46 33 16 40 05

Note: To be accepted papers should report original research or debate underlying methodological and philosophical issues, rather than report on plans yet to be implemented.

1.4 Call for papers Lisboa 2002

Call for Papers

The fourth ISIC Conference in Lisbon will be an opportunity to hear results of the latest research in the field of information seeking, to debate methodological issues and to discuss emerging and further areas of research.

All participants of the previous ISIC Conferences are welcome in 2002 in Lisbon and we hope that many other researchers from information related fields will also be attracted.

The themes of the conference will be:

1. Theories and models of information seeking;
2. Research approaches and methodologies;
3. Information seeking in specific contexts, e.g. health care, education etc.;
4. Organizational structures and processes and information seeking: the impact of structures and processes on ISB of organizational members, and the relationship of ISB to work tasks and their complexity;
5. Information behaviour in every day life, i.e., information seeking to support citizenship, parenting, career development, etc. Including its role in community activities and processes (including the role of the Web in supporting such behaviour and the development of virtual communities);
6. Integrating studies on information seeking and retrieval, i.e, research into the relationship between information searching and retrieval and the broader field of information seeking, including the role of Web-based searching in the overall information seeking process;
7. Information use - how information is used to help solve the original problem or satisfy the initial need.

We are soliciting original research papers not exceeding 5000 words. Longer papers will be rejected immediately. Most of the papers should be intended to be presented orally, but a poster session will also be available.

Electronic submissions are strongly encouraged. The acceptable format is MS Word in .rtf format. If electronic submission is not possible five paper copies should be sent the address below. Submissions must include in a separate sheet the name, affiliation, complete address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address of the author(s) and a list of at least four keywords.

The papers will be published by Taylor Graham in the New Review of Information Behaviour Research.

Papers in electronic form should be sent by email to: Prof.^a Doutora Maria Joaquina Barrulas Paper copies of the texts should be sent to: Prof.^a Doutora Maria Joaquina Barrulas Information Seeking in Context 2002 Universidade Lusíada Rua da Junqueira, 188-198 P-1349-001 Lisboa, Portugal.

1.5 Call for papers Dublin 2004

Call for Papers

ISIC 2004 in Dublin, Ireland offers researchers and practitioners the opportunity to hear results of the latest research in the field of information seeking, to debate methodological issues, and to discuss emerging and further areas of research.

Themes of the conference include the following:

1. Theories and models of information seeking.
2. Research approaches and methodologies, including ethnomethodology.
3. Information seeking and use in specific contexts e.g., health care, education, etc.
4. Organizational structures and processes and information seeking and use - The impact of structures and processes on the information seeking behaviour of organizational members, and the relationship of information seeking behaviour to work tasks and their complexity.
5. Information behaviour in everyday life, including its role in community activities and processes, as well as the role of the Web in supporting such behaviour and the development of virtual communities. e.g., information seeking to support citizenship, parenting, career development, etc.
6. Integrating studies on information seeking and retrieval. e.g., research into the relationship between information searching and retrieval and the broader field of information seeking, including the role of Web-based searching in the overall information seeking process; task-based information searching etc.
7. Information use - the nature of information and how information is used to help solve an original problem or satisfy an initial need.
8. Information communities, including virtual communities.

1.6 Call for papers Sydney 2006

Call for Papers

We invite the submission of papers in the field of human information behaviour research from participants in previous ISIC Conferences and other researchers from information-related fields for presentation at the Information Seeking in Context Conference to be held in Sydney on 19-21 July, 2006. We also invite doctoral students to submit an application for participation in the Doctoral Workshop held in conjunction with the Conference on 18 July. We especially welcome submissions from researchers and doctoral students based in the Southern Hemisphere.

Themes of the conference include the following:

1. Theories and models of information seeking
2. Research approaches and methodologies, both interpretive and positivist
3. Information seeking and use in specific contexts e.g., health care, education, business, etc.

4. Organizational structures and processes and information seeking and use
5. Information behaviour in everyday life; in communities both real and virtual, including the role of indigenous knowledge.
6. Integrating studies on information seeking and retrieval
7. Information use, the nature of information and how information is used to help solve an original problem or satisfy an initial need

Paper Preparation and Submission (deadline January 31, 2006)

1.7 Call for papers Vilnius 2008

Call for Papers

We invite the submission of papers in the field of human information behaviour research from participants in previous ISIC Conferences and other researchers from information-related fields for presentation at the Information Seeking in Context Conference to be held in Vilnius on September 17-20, 2008. Papers should draw upon the theoretical and empirical literature of information behaviour: those that seek to link that literature with related topics such as information literacy, information retrieval, and information system design should have information seeking or searching at the core of their presentation.

We also invite doctoral students to submit an application for participation in the Doctoral Workshop held in conjunction with the Conference on 18 September. We especially welcome submissions from researchers and doctoral students based in the Eastern Europe.

Themes of the conference include the following:

1. Theories and models of information seeking and searching: particular theoretical frameworks that are currently of interest include (but are not restricted to) social network theory, actor network theory, cultural-historical activity theory, genre theory, etc.
2. Research approaches and methodologies, both interpretative and positivist, employing either qualitative or quantitative methods.
3. Information seeking, searching and use in specific contexts, e.g., health care, education, business, industry, the public services and government, the emergency services, etc.
4. Organizational structures and processes and information seeking, searching and use.
5. Information seeking and searching in the context of the World Wide Web, including the relationship of information seeking to participation in virtual social networks.
6. Information behaviour in everyday life; in communities both real and virtual, including its role in indigenous communities.
7. Integrating studies on information seeking and interactive retrieval.
8. Information use: the nature of information and how information is used to help solve problems, aid decision making or satisfy an initial need

9. Information seeking and information requirements - integrating information science and information systems.

For the 2008 Conference we shall be particularly interested in papers in any of these areas that address the connection between information research and information practice.

Paper preparation and submission deadline February 1, 2008 Please, submit a prepared paper in Microsoft Word format (.doc or .rtf files) to: isic2008@kf.vu.lt

1.8 Call for papers Murcia 2010

Call for Papers

The field of *human information behaviour* is multi-disciplinary in scope: researchers from information science, information management, psychology, social psychology, sociology, information systems, computer science, and other disciplines all contribute to this field of investigation.

ISIC: the Information Behaviour Conference intends to reflect this interdisciplinary character through attracting papers from researchers in all of these areas. The unifying characteristic, which we see as essential in developing a programme is the relationship between the needs or requirements of the information user, the means for the satisfaction of those needs and the uses to which those means are put in practice organizations or disciplines. Thus, papers that deal solely with technological aspects of system design, for example, will not be appropriate for the conference.

Themes of the conference include the following:

1. Theories and models of information seeking and searching: particular theoretical frameworks that are currently of interest include (but are not restricted to) social network theory, actor network theory, cultural-historical activity theory, genre theory, etc.
2. Research approaches and methodologies, both interpretative and positivist, employing either qualitative or quantitative methods.
3. Information seeking, searching and use in specific contexts, e.g., health care, education, business, industry, the public services and government, the emergency services, etc.
4. Organizational structures and processes and information seeking, searching and use.
5. Information seeking and searching in virtual social networks, including gaming and virtual worlds as arenas for information exchange.
6. Information behaviour in everyday life; in communities both real and virtual, including its role in indigenous communities.
7. Integrating studies on information seeking and interactive retrieval.
8. Information use: the nature of information and how information is used to help solve problems, aid decision making or satisfy an initial need.
9. The mediation of information behaviour: how human or software agents can respond to information needs.

10. The design of information delivery systems to meet information needs generally, or in organizational or disciplinary contexts, including Web 2.0 developments such as blogs, wikis, e-learning platforms and open access information resources.
11. Information seeking and information requirements - integrating information science and information systems.
12. The communication of information to users: relationship between communication theory and information behaviour, including, for example, the relationship of information architectures to information seeking behaviour and the design of information products on sound communication principles; including audio and visual communication media.

Papers that deal with the information behaviour of practitioner groups, such as scientists, engineers, local government works, politicians, and other less-studied (in this context) groups, will be particularly welcome. Also, analytical, rather than descriptive investigations, will be sought, with strong connections to previous work and to theoretical or conceptual frameworks.

For the 2010 Conference we shall be particularly interested in papers in any of these areas *that address the connection between information research and information practice*.

Paper preparation and submission deadline February 1, 2010 Authors must register a prepared paper in Microsoft Word format (.doc or .rtf files) into the ISIC 2010 Open Conference System sited in the URL: <http://fcd1.inf.um.es/ocs/index.php/isic/>

We also invite doctoral students to submit an application for participation in the Doctoral Workshop held in conjunction with the Conference on 28th September. We especially welcome submissions from researchers and doctoral students based in Spain, Portugal and Latin America.

Appendix 2, Paper jury guidelines, an example

Role of Reviewers:

- To select papers
- To identify possible research notes presentations

Duties of Reviewers:

- Please submit reviews on time, so that we can maintain our review/feedback schedule. If you feel you have a conflict of interest in reviewing a particular paper, please contact us immediately.
- We ask reviewers to rank papers on a 5 point scale, according to the reviewing standards noted below.
- Provide comments to indicate why a paper merits a particular score. Objective comments are essential. Remember to write and read your comments from the author's perspective.

Reviewing Standards:

- Does the paper fall within the scope of the conference?
- Is the subject of the paper a sufficiently significant issue or problem to warrant publication?
- Is the paper original? Does the paper have value for future work?
- Is the argument soundly presented, supported by appropriately analyzed data and effectively organized?
- Are the conclusions supported by the research findings?
- If statistical analysis is employed, are the methods appropriate to the nature of the data? If any other mathematical methods are used, are they used correctly and presented effectively?

- Are the citations given up-to-date? Do they give a reasonably complete background to the research reported? Are there any significant omissions?

- Are the title and abstract sufficiently informative and appropriate for the paper?

- Overall, is the paper interesting, effectively presented and potentially useful?

- Reviewers are asked to bear in mind that they are being asked to assess the paper for publication in a refereed journal, *Information Research*, as well as for presentation at ISIC2006. If you feel that the paper is acceptable for the conference, but that further revision is needed before publication, then please indicate this in the Internal Comments section.

Please note:

In my role as editor of *Information Research* I'm concerned that very few of the authors have followed the instructions on the preparation of the text according to the standards laid down in the journal. There are recurrent problems which need to be fixed if I am going to cope with publishing the material and I'd be grateful if you could draw authors' attention to the following points, if they have not been properly addressed:

1. Abstracts should be structured and fully informative - 150-200 words
2. Citation should be 'author/date' and references should follow APA 5th ed

Recommendations:

You will be asked to provide input online as follows:

Is this paper within the scope of the conference:

- 0 totally
- 0 somewhat
- 0 not at all

	Very Poor 1	Poor 2	Fair 3	Good 4	Very Good 5
Significance of the research issue					
Originality of approach & presentation					
Methodology					
Organisation, structure, clarity of expression					
Validity of conclusions					
Recognition of existing literature; quality of citations					
Overall ranking					

Your Recommendation:

- Accept paper without revision
- Accept paper with minor changes
- Major revision needed before acceptance
- Accept as research notes presentation
- Reject paper

Comments for Internal Use:

Comments to be given to the Author(s):

Tom Wilson
ISIC PC Chair