LBSC 601

USERS AND INFORMATION CONTEXT

Fall, 2012

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This course is offered online asynchronously via Blackboard. Should you have questions about the course, course assignments, etc. please contact me via Blackboard email or at “Ask Dr. P.” on the course discussion board. All course deadlines for written assignments that are not to be posted directly to the discussion board are at 11:55 p.m. on the date due.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Nature and roles of information and information institutions; information behavior; studying information behavior; information policy; the information professions.

Upon satisfactory completion of this course, students will:

• Understand fundamental concepts, models, and theories in the study of information and its use
• Be acquainted with methods of inquiry for the study of information and information use
• Understand users of information in terms of their goals, work flows, social and content needs, behaviors and preferences, and be able to connect those factors to the design, provision and use of information services
• Appreciate the role of institutions in generating and disseminating information to users
• Be aware of key information policy issues that affect the profession and users’ lives
• Be aware of the core values, ethics, and social responsibilities of information professionals and the roles of professional associations and organizations.

Academic Integrity. It is the obligation of all members of the University of Maryland, College Park community to promote the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has a student-administered honor code, posted on the web at http://www.shc.umd.edu/code.html. The code prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same
paper for credit in two classes without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent
documents, and forging signatures.

TEXTBOOK

Case. Donald O. Looking for Information: A Survey of Research on Information Seeking,
and is sufficiently close to the third edition that I have no objection to your using it. Because it
may have been too late to order the textbook through the UMD Bookstore for the Fall semester,
you may need to order the text directly from Amazon.com.

COURSE FORMAT

Before you begin, if you are not familiar with Blackboard, the following orientation
opportunities are available;

ELMS Login screen; http://elms.umd.edu
Blackboard site; http://www.blackboard.com/

If you have a problem with Blackboard, call 301-405-1400 Monday - Friday from 8:00
a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or email elms.help@umd.edu. If you continue to have difficulties, email me
and let me know so that I can assist you in solving them.

Karen Patterson who is the University Library Bibliographer for LIS materials has
prepared a guide for LIS students who are taking courses on line and she recommends that each
student access that guide as it provides important information on accessing resources. It can be
found at http://libguides.umd.edu/informationstudiesonlinestudents. Because your readings are
available through the research port, you will need the information provided in the guide
immediately.

Course Structure. This course is not a static entity. The syllabus and readings provide a
structure upon which inputs including those from discussions, your experiences, readings you
have identified, plus the instructors lectures and comments, will inform and enrich that structure.
The course is divided into fifteen units, each of which focuses on a particular topic. Each course
unit includes required readings, lecture notes (available in the Course Content section), and assignments. It is expected that you will complete the readings and the lecture prior to discussions or other unit assignments.

**On Line Fora.** There are four types of fora for the course, each of which serves a different purpose. The first one will require your continuing attention. The second forum, the class bio forum, consists of mini-bios each student will submit as a way of self introduction to the class, the third forum, the water cooler, is where you can inform others in the class of a particularly interesting article, a meeting, etc. that would be of interest to the class, and the fourth forum, Ask Dr. P. provides a place where you can post questions about the course or about assignments.

1). Discussion topic forum. For several units of the course, there will be a discussion topic. Discussion questions will be posted to start the discussion. Each discussion session will be open from 9:00 a.m. on Monday through 9:00 p.m on Thursday. Students may post comments at any time during that period. Sessions are available for review throughout the course should you wish to check on an earlier discussion or follow up on a link. Class members are expected to contribute to the discussion by asking additional relevant questions, by responding to questions, and by indicating sources of information relevant to the topic. Your three short papers will also be posted on the appropriate discussion boards. Each class member is expected to contribute substantially to the discussion at least three times. If you wish to contribute additional comments, please feel free to do so but keep in mind class size and the patience of your fellow class mates. Participation is required and is a component of the course grade.

2). Class bio forum. Please provide a brief mini-biography with information about yourself you are willing to share with the class; your name, where you are in the program, career goals, subject area(s) of particular interest, hobbies, your favorite read, etc. Please submit this by **Wednesday, August 29.**

3). Water Cooler is available to students who wish to inform others of an article of particular interest, a meeting, an event.

4). Ask Dr. P is available to students who have a question about the course they wish to ask and the answer to which they anticipate will be useful to others in the class. This can be on
any topic related to the course. For private responses, please use the Blackboard email.

**Other Forms of Communication.** Announcements is a separate section in Blackboard. I use it to provide additional information to the class such as information concerning the course schedule, syllabus, or assignments. I will also use it to share an interesting new reading, announce an external lecture, or comment on discussions on the discussion board. Please check the Announcements section regularly. Students who wish to share information of interest to the class can use the Email option. You can send messages to one individual, several, or the entire class and the instructor.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

There are two types of written assignments for the course in addition to required readings, article reviews, and required participation in discussions.

1). Written reviews of two research articles and a commentary on Dervin’s “8 Lessons of Information Behavior Research” are to be submitted to discussion sessions in order to inform the conversation. Information on each of these assignments is provided under the relevant unit heading. These reviews are not to exceed 300 words in length and are to be placed on the appropriate discussion board by **9:00 a.m. the first day of the relevant discussion**.

2). There are two longer papers, one of which is an analysis of your personal information behavior and the other in which you will report on your research of a specific population’s information behavior. Each paper is to be approximately 3000 words (10 pages) in length.

**Paper #1 Analyzing your own Information Behavior**

**Due by 11:55 p.m. Saturday, October 20.**

- Select and describe an information behavior from your life.
- Discuss what this behavior demonstrates about your information needs, how and where you look for and use information, and the information problems you face in your life. Your discussion should make clear that you have thought about and understand the concepts of information, information needs, information seeking, and information behavior as outlined in the readings and discussed in class.
- Select two of the models, paradigms, or theories we have read about and/or
discussed in class and analyze your information behavior using each of these two models, paradigms, or theories to interpret your behavior in two different ways.

- Compare and contrast the results of your two analyses. How did these models, paradigms, or theories affect your interpretation of your information behavior? How useful were these models, paradigms, or theories for explaining your information behavior?

**Paper #2. Researching a Population’s Information Behavior.**

**Due by 11:55 p.m. December 13.**

- Select and describe a user population for which you would like to know more about their information needs, uses, and behaviors. You may, if you wish, choose a population discussed in the text.
- Seek research studies and articles that are related to the information behavior of this user population.
- Review and summarize what the articles and studies tell us about the information behavior of the population of interest.
- Use those studies and articles to analyze and discuss the major research questions that have driven past studies of this population’s information behavior.
- Identify the specific question(s) that you believe need further study or have not yet been studied and explain why you think these question(s) need further study.
- Describe and discuss how you would research (or encourage others to research) these questions in the future
- What questions would you ask? How would you analyze the data gathered? How might the results of your analysis improve the results our understanding of this population’s information behavior?

**For each of the above papers.**

- Identify each document with your name, date, and title in a header.
- Put page numbers in the bottom margin
- For citing sources, use a standard guide (one guide per paper please) such as APA style [*Concise Rules of APA Style* (2010), 6th ed., Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association]
Basic guidelines are also at

- [http://flash1r.apa.org/apastyle/basics/index.htm](http://flash1r.apa.org/apastyle/basics/index.htm) or
- [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)

NOTE CAREFULLY not only the bibliographic style for the References but also the way in which in-text citations are presented.

The quality of writing will be assessed along with the content. Edit and check for grammar, readability, and spelling. Remember that spell check tells you if the word is spelled correctly but not if you have the correct word. Quality of writing will also be taken into consideration for the three brief assignments.

All assignments are due on the established due date. Exceptions will be made only for extraordinary circumstances. Late papers will be assigned a lower grade.

**GRADING**

All class work and assignments will be evaluated and a grade assigned. Grades will be assigned as follows.

- Participation in class discussion 20%
- Reviewed articles for class discussion 15%
- Analyzing your Personal Information Behavior 30%
- Researching a Population’s Information Behavior 35%

Late or incomplete papers will not be accepted at full value.

**Unit Topics, Readings, and Review Materials.**

Readings are to be completed prior to the online discussion sessions. Required readings are on the Research Port or otherwise available electronically. Please access the guide provided by Karen Patterson (see p. 2 of the Syllabus) for further information.

**WEEK 1  Defining the Information Professions.  August 29-31.**

Lecture 1  See Course Content
Readings: In the lecture, you will find the following link.

http://informationr.net/ir/12-4/colis/colis29.html

At the end of this syllabus, you will find a representative listing of web sites of professional societies. They provide information about professional societies, their plans, programs, ethics, etc. Peruse them to get an understanding of their similarities, differences, and which ones match your professional interests. Unit 15 will focus on professional societies and at that time we will conclude our discussion of the information professions and professional societies. This week’s perusal is in the way of introduction.

WEEK 2     Defining Information     September 4-6.

Case, Chapter 1.  Information Behavior: An Introduction
Case, Chapter 3.  The Concept of Information
Lecture 2   See Course Content

Readings:


Lecture 3   See Course Content

Readings:
Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources 2010: Content and Community.
http://www.oclc.org/reports/2010perceptions.htm  (We have had difficulty accessing this on line and think that it is because there are so many charts and graphs that a laptop can’t deal with them. If you have difficulties, there is a hard copy at the Reserve Desk at McKeldin)

Assignment: Go to the course site on Blackboard. Go to University Libraries and locate data bases
that are relevant to the field of Library/Information Science (LIS). Wander around in a data base to see what is there, how it is accessed, and identify areas of interest to you and those relevant to information use and users. If possible, go to McKeldin Library or the Shady Grove Library to see the kinds and formats of information that are available and how they are accessed. Karen Patterson at McKeldin is the LIS Bibliographer and would welcome questions from you. Be sure you access the library guide Karen Patterson has provided (p. 2 of the Syllabus). Madhu Singh will be able to assist you at Shady Grove. If possible, go to a public library, perhaps the one you use regularly, tell a librarian you are a studying users and use needs and ask for comments. Ask the same question of an academic librarian or a librarian/information professional in a special library or archive. If this is not your first LIS course and you are already familiar with the literature of the field and how to access it, spend more of your time observing how people are using libraries. In our discussion session, report on your experiences and observations in locating information on line and/or in person.

Discussion Questions:

1). How many data basis did you find/search? How easy was it to navigate the systems so that you could find what you needed? Were there problems?

2). As an information user, how satisfied were you with your ability to access information? Did the information you found meet your needs?

3). If you visited a library in person, were your needs met?

4). In your information seeking field trip, what was positive? For those less than positive observations, how would you have handled the situation differently?

WEEK 4 What Do We Know About Information Users and Behavior? Sept.17-20.

Case, Ch. 2 Common Examples of Information Behavior
Case, Ch. 4 Information Needs and Information Seeking
Case, Ch. 5 Related Concepts
Lecture 4 See Course Content

Readings:


**Assignment:** Identify a particular user group that is of interest to you. You may use one of the groups listed in the text (Chapter 11) or any group that is of interest to you. Locate and read three research reports in the literature that describe this group and in c.300 words indicate how this information is useful to those providing LIS services to the group. Your report will be due on the discussion board for Unit 4 by **9:00 a.m. Monday, September 17.** The information you develop for this assignment can also be part of your second longer paper that is due at the end of the semester.

**Discussion:** We will discuss your reports to gain an understanding of the kind of information that describes different user groups and its usefulness in connecting users with the information they need and/or want.

**WEEK 5 Models of Information Behavior September 24-27**

Case, Chapter 6 Models of Information Behavior

Case, Chapter 7 Meta theories, Paradigms, and Theories

Lecture 5 See Course Content

**Readings:**


**Discussion:** Which of the models of information behavior is most similar to that you find yourself
using and why? You can use some of the content of this discussion as part of your first major paper.

**WEEK 6**  
**Studying Information Needs and Behaviors**  
October 1-4

Case, Chapter 8 The Research Process  
Case, Chapter 9 Examples by Type  
Lecture 6  See Course Content  

**Readings:**  
Wilson, C. (2003) Methods and guidelines to avoid common questionnaire bloopers.  
http://www.stcig.org/usability/newsletter/0301-surveybloopers.html

**WEEK 7**  
**Continuation of Research Methodology**  
October 8-11

**the Survey Method**  
Case. Go to the Index and check Survey Methods. Review entries for different types of surveys so that you will be able to comment on the surveys submitted for discussion.  
Lecture 7  See Course Content  

**Assignment:** Locate a research article that uses the survey method. Review and evaluate it in terms of the criteria discussed in the text (p. 235-240 in the 2nd edition) and in the lecture. Submit your review (c. 300 words) to the class discussion by **9:00 a.m. Monday, October 8**. You may use this article as part of your second major paper if you wish.

**Discussion:** We will discuss your contributions as well as critique the SlapHappy Public Library questionnaire that is in the lecture.

**WEEK 8**  
**Reviewing the Research: Its History, Size and Topics**  
October 15-18

Case, Chapter 10. Reviewing the Research.  
Lecture 8  See Course Content.  

**Readings:**  
Julien, H. And Duggan, L. (2000) A longitudinal analysis of the information needs and


Your Paper #1 is due by **11:55 p.m. Saturday, October 20.**

**WEEK 9** Research by Occupation October 22-25

Case, Chapter 11 Research by Occupation.

Lecture 9 See Course Content.

Readings:


Discussion: This question is posed by Case. “A great many investigations have been conducted of a relatively small number of occupations - especially scientists, engineers, medical doctors and managers. Is this degree of research attention deserved, compared to other possible occupations? Why or why not? Which occupations do you believe have not received sufficient attention and why?”

**WEEK 10** Research by Social Role and Demographic Group Oct. 29-Nov. 1

Case, Chapter 12 Research by Social Role and Demographic

Lecture 10 See Course Content.

Readings:


Discussion: From your research for your Paper #2, what have you learned about the research describing the information seeking activities of the user group you have chosen to study?

**WEEK 11**  
Scholarly Communication  
November 5-8

Lecture: See Course Content

Readings:


Discussion: Questions to be provided.

**WEEK 12.**  
Usability/Dervin’s 8 Lessons  
November 12-15

Lecture 12 See Course Content.

Readings


Assignment: Indicate how/if you were influenced by Dervin’s “8 Lessons of Information Behavior Research.” (p. 326-328 in the 2nd ed. And p. 375-377 in the 3rd edition of Case). Which of her lessons do you consider most important. This is the third of your three short papers and is due on
the discussion board by **9:00 a.m. Monday, November 12.**

**WEEK 13**

Information Policy

November 19-21

Lecture   See Course Content.

Readings: Go to Wikipedia and read the article on Information Policy.

More readings to be added here.

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

November 22-25

**WEEK 14.**

Professional Societies

November 26-29

Lecture 14   See Course Content.


AALL Ethical Principles (1999)

http://www.aallinet.org/about policy ethics.asp


http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/index.cfm
http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/federallegislation/index.cfm

ASIST Professional Guidelines

http://www.asis.org/AboutASIS/professional-guidelines.html

MLA Code of Ethics for Health Science Librarianship

http://www.mlanet.org

SLA Vision, Mission, and Core Value Statement

http://www.sla.org/content/SLA/

If you are interested in other professional societies such as those representing archivists or computer scientists interested in information, or regional, state, international societies, Google is a helpful source.

**Discussion:** What role does the professional association/society play in advocacy, in policy development?  What value does professional association membership add to an individual’s
professional career?

**WEEK 15**

**Discussion of Paper #2**

**December 3-6**

**Assignment:** Post an executive summary of your paper on the discussion board by **9 a.m. on Monday, December 3.**

**Last Day of Classes**

**December 11**

**Paper #2 due by 11:55 p.m.**

**December 13.**