

Deepening our understanding of information behaviour in health librarianship: information literacy skills in praxis

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Scope of paper



- Introduction and background
- Clarification of concepts
- Need for discovery - people affected / people to consider
- Information literacy standards & models
- Information behaviour models
- How to deepen understanding
- Conclusion



Introduction and background



- Discovering new seas of knowledge
 - Portuguese mariners – Cape of Storms
- Importance of discovery & dealing with uncertainty
 - Healthcare professionals ↔ patients
- Literature on information behaviour in healthcare contexts – but still many concerns
- Literature on information literacy - various context and means of delivery
- What happens if we apply information literacy skills to understand information behaviour?

Clarification of concepts



- Information literacy - workplace & life-long learning
 - “The ability to define, locate, access, evaluate and use information to help resolve personal, job-related or broader social issues and problems, as part of a life-long learning strategy” (The Council of Australian University Librarians)
 - Definitions tailored for developing countries (e.g. Donner & Gorman 2006)

Clarification of concepts

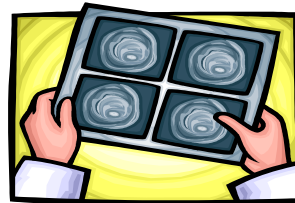


- Information behaviour: “the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information-seeking and **information use**” (Wilson 1999). Includes
 - **not recognising** an information need
 - deciding **not to act** on an information need
- Information practice (Savolainen 2005)

People affected / people to consider

- Healthcare professionals: current & future
 - Variation in contexts, levels of interaction with patients, tasks and explicit importance of information, etc.
 - Their perceptions of information needs and information behaviour of

- Own
- Patients



Prosthesis



People affected / people to consider

- Healthcare professionals are key role players in patient information behaviour: diagnosis & sharing information
- Patients' stories – not fairy tales

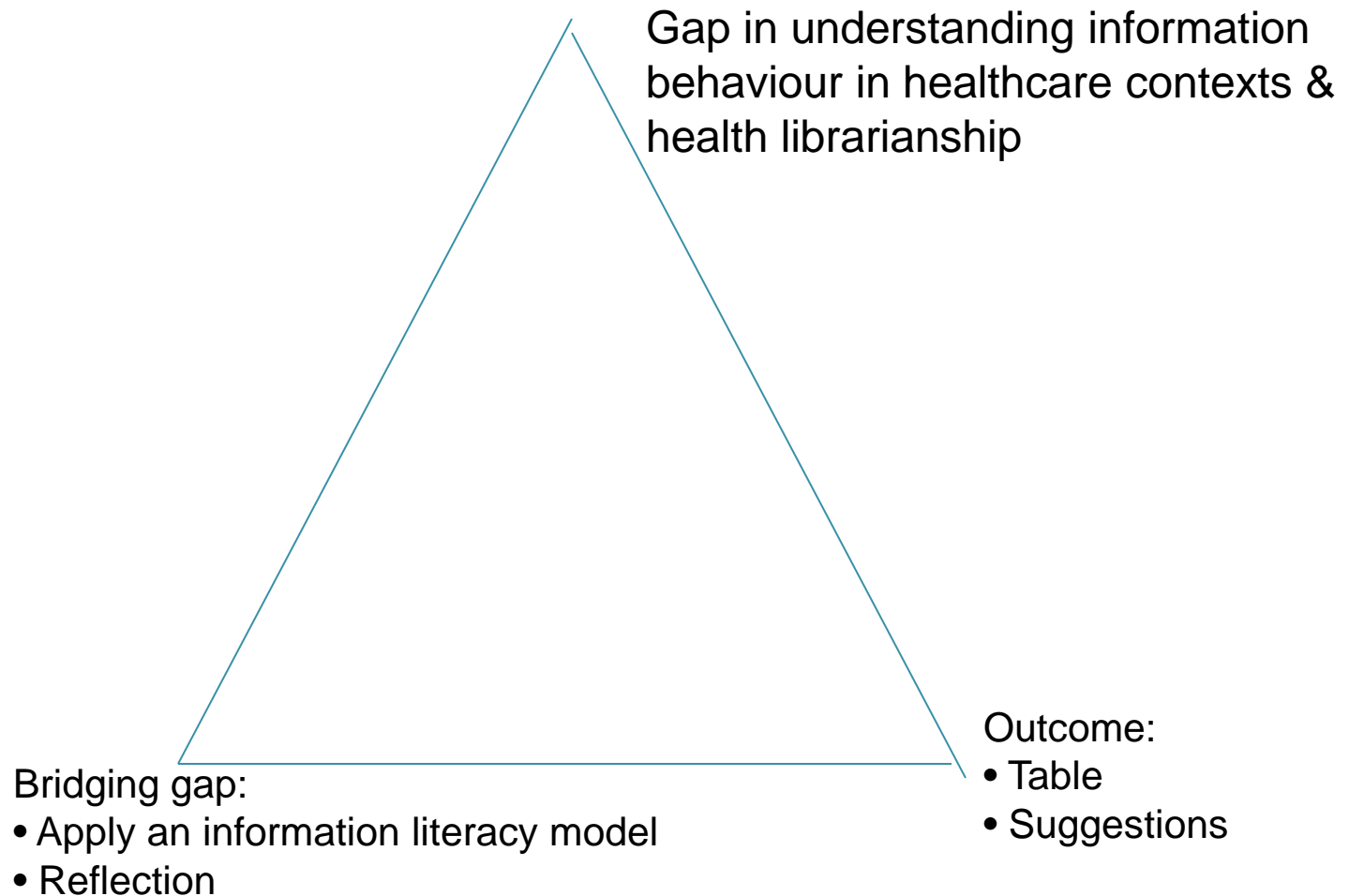


Research report on the experiences of women with cervical cancer: “Remember, I heard this all through tears”.

I am sitting on my hands not to go onto the Internet (a nurse)...

From an ethnographic study on hospice care: “Staff burnt aromatherapy oils around her bed, but generally, these did little to mask the odour [she had no control over bodily functions] (Lawton 2000:126).

Gap in understanding information behaviour in health librarianship



Information literacy: standards, models e.g. Big6

Task definition

- Define the information problem
- Identify information needed

Information seeking strategies

- Determine all possible sources
- Select the best sources

Location and access

- Locate sources (intellectually & physically)
- Find information within sources (cont.)

Information literacy: standards, models e.g. Big6 (cont.)

Use of Information

- Engage (e.g. read, hear, view, touch)
- Extract relevant information

Synthesis

- Organize from multiple sources
- Present the information

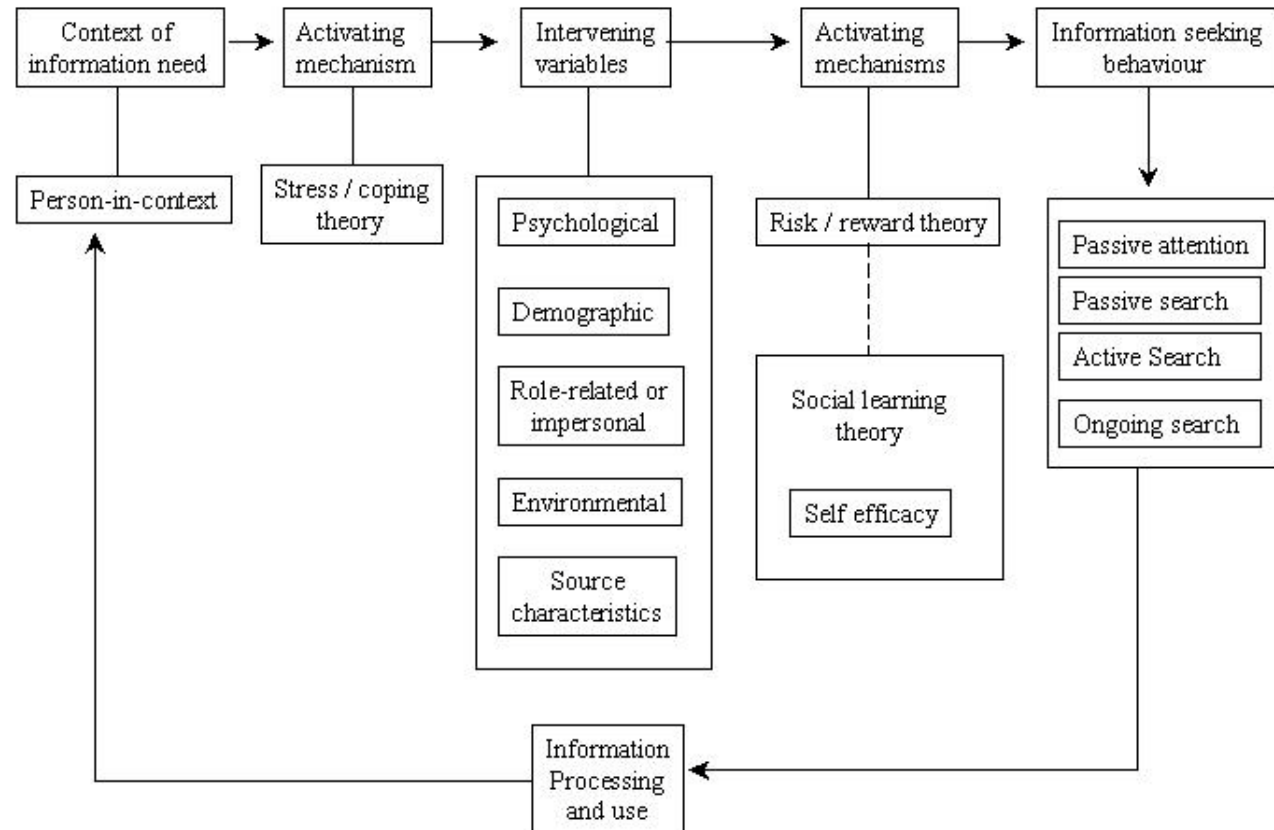
Evaluation

- Judge the product (effectiveness)
- Judge the process (efficiency)

Information behaviour models

- Dervin: bridging the gap & sense making
- Wilson: various models covering contexts, uncertainty, environment, information as secondary need
- Kuhlthau: phases, feelings, thoughts
- Ellis: phases/stages
- Fisher: information grounds
- Johnson: comprehensive model of information seeking
- Erdelez: information encountering, etc.

Information behaviour models – Wilson 1996 model



Information behaviour models

- Kuhlthau

| | | | | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Tasks | Initiation | Selection | Explore | Formulate | Collect | Present |
| Feelings | Uncertain | Optimistic | Confuse Frustrate | Clarity | Sense of direction Confident | Satisfied Disap- pointed |
| Thought | | Vague | | Focused Increase interest | | |
| Actions | Seeking relevant info | | | Seeking pertinent info | | |

Applying information skills in praxis – understanding information behaviour

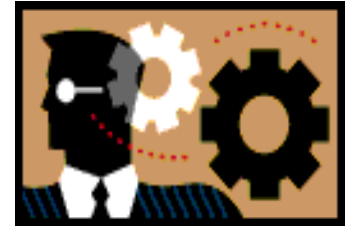
Example

How to study information
behaviour in palliative care
contexts

Applying information skills in praxis – understanding information behaviour

Task definition

- Define the information problem
- Identify information needed



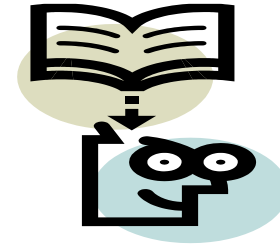
From studies on information behaviour:

- May not realise the problem; may need ways to be alerted to problems
- Difficult to find the right words; even the right words may not give the answer – more than synonyms
- Not only factual information & information to solve task problems that matters
- Confusion, uncertainty, despair, gut feeling(s)

Applying information skills in praxis – understanding information behaviour

Information seeking strategies

- Determine all possible sources
- Select the best sources



From studies on information behaviour:

- Preferences – colleagues, doctors, Internet; different stages
- Ease of use and convenience is important
 - Need to be prompted to look wider
 - Librarians want to **change** the information seeking behaviour of healthcare professionals who want to change the health behaviour of patients...
- Search strategies; information encountering; information grounds
- **Information monitoring**

Applying information skills in praxis – understanding information behaviour

Location and access

- Locate sources (intellectually & physically)
- Find information within sources

From studies on information behaviour:

- Uncertainty, frustration, **personality**, learning style
- How to deal with information difficult to understand... avoidance?
- **Bias** in selection; **different information** at different times



Applying information skills in praxis – understanding information behaviour

Use of Information: engage & extract relevant information

From studies on information behaviour:

- Uncertainty, excitement, frustration, increased confusion, satisfaction

Synthesis: organize from multiple sources, present the information

From studies on information behaviour:

- Insufficient knowledge; also on information overload



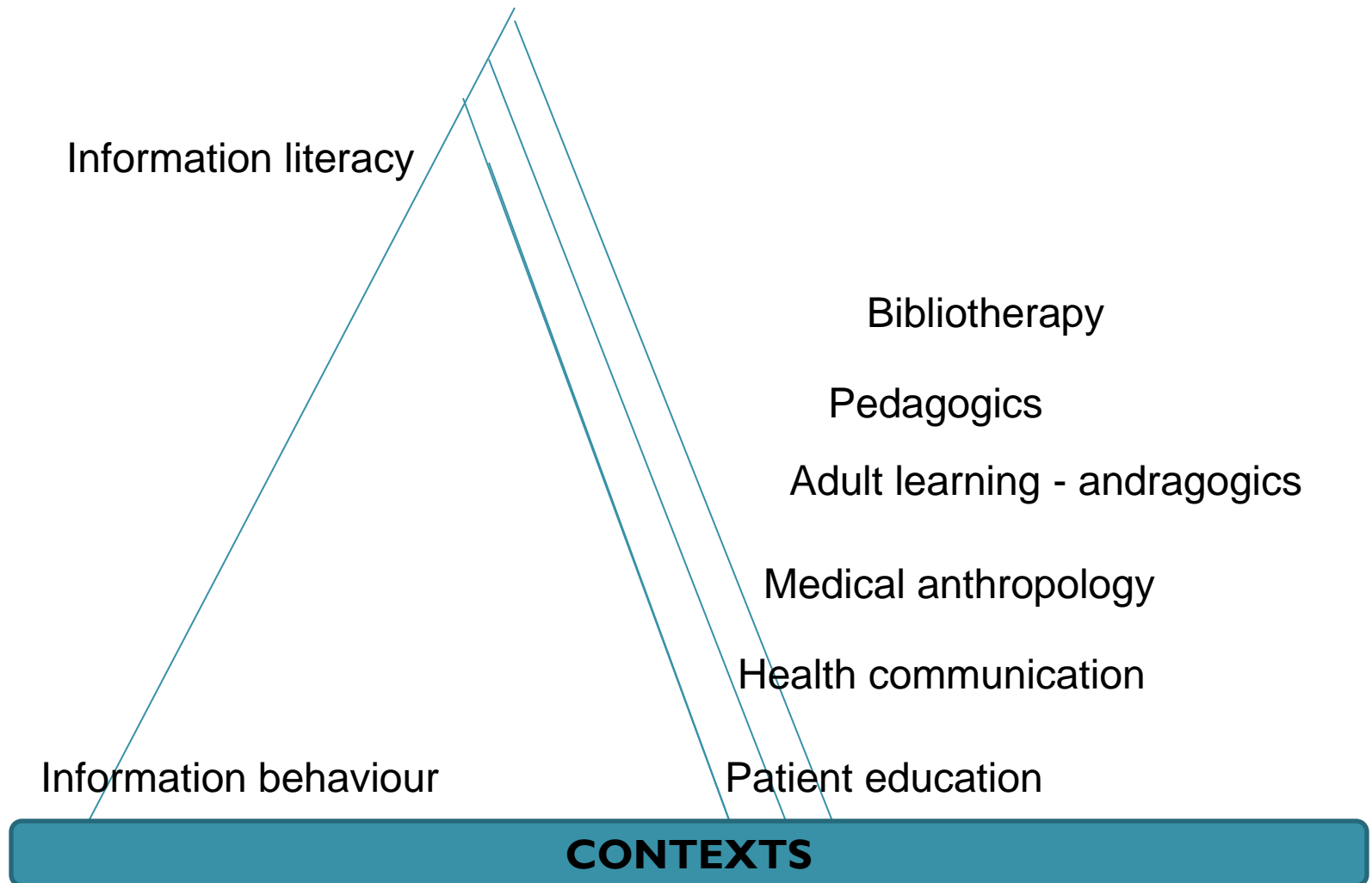
Applying information skills in praxis – understanding information behaviour

Evaluation: judge the product (effectiveness) & judge the process (efficiency)

From studies on information behaviour:

- Too little known on information use and ability to evaluate the product and process
- What do health librarians know about their own abilities and how they do this?

Gap between information literacy training & information behaviour models



Some suggestions

| Fields / disciplines | Theories | Methods |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Medical anthropology | Coping / stress handling | Systematic, in-depth reviews of what is known |
| Adult learning | Behavioural change | Standardised questionnaires from healthcare |
| Contexts <i>per se</i> e.g. palliative care, hospice care | Learning theories e.g. constructivism | Narratives / stories |
| Library & Information Science | | Observation of contexts |
| Information retrieval | | Focus groups |
| | | Reflective practice / collaborative reflective practice |

Conclusion

- Reflective practice on how health librarians can deepen their understanding of information behaviour can help to inform training in information literacy
- Training in information literacy should reflect on the meaning of concepts and build more on theories and findings of information behaviour
- Training in information literacy should be used to influence information behaviour and deepen awareness of patients' information behaviour (cont.)

Conclusion (cont.)

- Realising and acknowledging the importance of understanding information behaviour, health librarians can
 - Support studies from the health sciences to probe deeper than is currently the case
 - Deepen their own efforts to probe deeper, identifying means and methods and supporting disciplines
 - Collaborate and set new challenges
 - Refine reflective practices



Thank you

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