Chapter 2
We Don’t Do Politics:
An Analysis and Discussion of
Information Seeking Behaviour Research
in Relation to the Net Generation

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ABSTRACT

Information Seeking Behaviour (ISB) is becoming an interesting topic, especially with the advancement of the World Wide Web and technologically enhanced data collection techniques. Differences between generations, such as the Net Generation and Baby Boomers are becoming more and more evident. The Net Generation have shown they are enjoying more public policy participation than ever before through the use of the Internet. Finding an overall methodology that takes into account this generation is therefore a challenge. This chapter applies a heuristic framework to a number of research papers on the Net Generation and ISBs in order to critically analyse and evaluate the information within it in order to gain an insight into the most effective approach to ISB research. Through interpreting these research papers, this chapter attempts to gauge the scope and develop an understanding of ISB research in relation to the Net Generation and discover the most effective methodological approach for the emerging discipline.

INTRODUCTION

The world is under the influence of three major trends: the revolutionary development of information and communication technologies; the transition to a knowledge society; and the new learning mode of the Net Generation (Lee, 2013). Online communities have the potential to radically transform social interaction and community formation (Lutters & Ackerman, 2003). Research into online communities draws on methods, theories and practices from many disciplines, making this an exciting and challenging field (Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, 2005). One group that has taken full advantage of Internet systems is the Net Generation. Online technologies such as network gaming are highly effective at influencing not just the perspective of N-Geners but their view of being citizens (Oblinger, 2004). As voters the Net Generation have shown they are enjoying
more public policy participation than ever before through the use of the Internet (Tak, 2006). It is therefore important to have an understanding of how literature on the Net Generation inter-relates with other literature.

Net Generation’s experiences in engaging and interacting in electronic communications, particularly in games, means low level interactivity in a learning management system is of little interest to them (Oliver & Goerke, 2007). Investigations into the use of online communities have used a range of these methods from the theoretical, based on literature reviews (Bishop, 2007c) to empirical studies using quantitative research methods such as questionnaires (Leung, 2003). There are those based on qualitative methods using interviewing to develop detailed narratives about Internet use (Choi & Ross, 2006). And there are those which combine interviewing with questionnaires (Choo, Detlor, & Turnbull, 2000). The latter three of these three studies will be investigated in detail and critically evaluated.

BACKGROUND

Much research into information seeking behaviour (ISB) has focused on a small number of factors identified before the empirical investigation has begun (Berryman, 2006). Traditional locations for information seeking, like libraries, no longer have a monopoly on information sources, but such sources can apply classic marketing principles to attract and better serve new generations of users, such as the Net Generation (Barnes, Marateo, & Ferris, 2007). Indeed, students from the Net Generation are generally interested in having online multimedia resources at their fingertips and one of the driving factors in the creation of Web-based educational resources is on-going student demand (Krzic et al., 2013).

Research has found that both the Net Generation and Baby boomers identify Google and human sources as the first sources they use for quick searches (Connaway, Radford, Dickey, De Angelis Williams, & Confer, 2008). This showed that young N-Geners mentioned consulting parents most frequently, while the older N-Geners consult friends and professors. Connaway et al. (2008) found that Baby Boomers indicate that they consult their personal libraries and colleagues.

There have been a number of models that have attempted to understand online communities. de Souza and Preece (2004) developed the Online Community Framework and later Bishop (2007c) proposed the Ecological Cognition Framework (ECF). The later of these two models provides a useful basis for analysing what motivates actors to participate in online communities and the specific elements of their mind and body and the world that could affect their political behaviour. Bishop’s framework (2007a) was developed through drawing from the literature on online communities the factors that influence behaviour in these systems. The ECF, which is illustrated on the left in the diagram in Figure 2, is made up of four layers containing quantifiable elements connected by process arrows with specific qualities. As explored in more detail by Bishop (2007a) the Environment is the base of the model, which contains actors who can be measured by factors such as age, height, and others, artefacts, which can be measured by size, texture and others, structures and other external representations. The Environment is connected upwards by the Stimuli process to Level 3, which contains the sensory preceptors. Level 3 is connected to Level 2 by the ‘impetus’, which converts the stimulus from the environment into something understandable by the mind. Level 2 contains the cognitions that are evoked by the particular impetus, such as a resonance from a social stimulus from someone speaking may provoke a remembered belief or remind someone of a plan. These ‘cognitions’ can also be measured using various quantifiable measures. The next process is the ‘intent’, which is based on the cognition evoked and leads to one of the five binary opposition forces being provoked
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