

Seeking Information Between and Beyond Binaries: How Queer Theory Can Inform LIS Theories

SIG Convener(s):

Gender Issues (Travis L. Wagner, University of South Carolina, United States of America)

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ABSTRACT

Queer theory offers a rich set of ideas, epistemologies, and methodological interventions whose incorporation into theories of information allows for growth, expansion, and potential alteration of library and information science scholarship, pedagogy, and research praxis. This presentation provides a primer for queer theory and applies tenets from its vast canon of thought to three ongoing LIS-based research projects. Each project and application engages with existing information science theories and illuminates how queer theory challenges, unsettles, and even reconstitutes the epistemological assumptions latent within them. The first project deploys queer phenomenology to understand how one's embodied queerness, or lack thereof, informs their perception of difference and identity within information seeking and creation. The second project examines how authenticity shapes insider/outsider dynamics within queer communities as it relates to information flow. This work presents realness, as developed by queer and trans people of color, as an alternative approach to envisioning these dynamics that leaves space to privilege individual subjectivities regarding information interactions. The third project uses notions of queer imaginaries and futurities to critique utopic conceptions of information systems in sociotechnical work. The presentation culminates in a discussion of what queering information science could and should do, and suggests ways in which queer theoretical perspectives may be applied to the field of library and information science more broadly.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

information seeking; information use; critical librarianship; social justice; sociology of information; political economy of the information society; social media; research methods

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

queer theory; queer phenomenology; queer authenticity; queer imaginaries; information worlds; embodied information; queer communities; social informatics