

Exploring Information Worlds: A Codebook and Theory Development Session for Interaction and Engagement

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Abstract

Officially published in 2010, the theory of information worlds is an exciting and relatively new addition to the theoretical and analytical backbone of the information disciplines. This two-part session is designed to introduce the theory of information worlds and discuss current and potential applications of the theory as well as host a hands-on event where participants are invited to bring their own data and try out the theory. While this session would be ideal for doctoral students and early career scholars, anyone with an interest in social information behavior theories, codebook development, theory testing, or research methods should consider attending.

Keywords: information worlds; theory development; research methods; codebook development

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1 Key Participants

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2 Description

A two-part session consisting of a panel discussion to introduce the theory of information worlds and its applications and an experiential learning activity session where participants apply the theory to their own data.

2.1 Purpose and Intended Audience

The primary purposes of this session for interaction and engagement (SIE) are to introduce and build awareness of the theory of information worlds and to provide those unfamiliar with it some experience using it in a meaningful way. As such, doctoral students and emerging scholars considering social information behavior theories are our primary intended audience. However, anyone wanting to learn more about the theory and how they might use it within their own research contexts and methodologies or those that want to learn more about codebook and theory development are encouraged to participate.

2.2 Proposed Activities

Part 1 (Panel): This hour long session will consist of a panel in which Dr. Burnett will briefly introduce and explain the theory of information worlds and describe our process for developing the codebooks. Additionally, current applications of the theory will also be discussed during the panel by the key participants and other invited speakers who are using or planning to use information worlds in a series of brief, 5-minute lightning talks which describe their research projects. Following the presentations, the floor will be open to general questions. Before dismissing, groups will be organized by topic, theoretical concept, or data type for Part 2 of the SIE. Attendees will be asked to bring a page or two of their own cleaned data (if possible) for Part 2. However, cleaned data will be provided by the organizers as well.

Part 2 (Theory Development & Codebook Session): The attendees will be broken up into 4 to 5 groups based on either similar research topics, data types, or theoretical concept(s) of interest. This is to allow for more flexibility for the different interests and levels of experience of the audience. For example, attendees using or planning to use qualitative interview data might want to discuss how information worlds could be used to inform questions and code data. Similarly, attendees with their own data could be grouped by their research areas or topics.

Copies of the general information worlds codebook will be distributed to each group. One of the key participants or invited speakers will lead each group through the analysis of a few of the samples of data provided by the organizers or brought by the participants. Once a sample is coded, each group will

discuss their coding and work toward building a consensus or an acceptable level of interrater reliability. After the coding and group discussions are completed (roughly 1-1.5 hours), the remainder of the session will be reserved for group reports and a closing discussion. The groups will report what they found and identify any usefulness or limitations of the theory. After the reports, the panel will be reconvene to discuss overlapping themes from the group reports and answer any additional questions before dismissing.

2.3 Relevance to the Conference/Significance to the Field

The theory of information worlds provides an analytical framework for understanding the social context(s) of information behavior (Jaeger and Burnett, 2010). The concepts of social types, social norms, information value, normative information behavior, and boundaries create a scalable solution for understanding how and why information may or may not move between worlds or contexts, the types of information used as well as how and why this information is used or unused. In order to forge a partnership with society, knowledge of what matters, who is involved, how they are going to find out about it, and what they might do with information are critical factors. For example, an understanding of how the information worlds of federal, state, and local governments overlap and interact with the information worlds of nonprofits, communities, and academic intuitions could provide clear points of mutual interest and reveal potential areas for improving collaboration or streamlining information exchange.

Additionally, this SIE is inspired by an ongoing collaboration of the authors, 3 J's and a G, which initially started as a codebook development group consisting of one of the theory's creators and three doctoral candidates using the theory in their own very different research projects. By regularly discussing the concepts in relation to different types of research contexts, data, and methodologies, we are building a stronger, more comprehensive general codebook that could be applied to a similarly wide variety of studies than we would have through working independently. The dissertation process is typically an isolating, solo experience (Goodman, 2006). As such, integrating a collaborative element into this process by co-developing a codebook has strengthened our individual theoretical contributions as well as created a fruitful collaboration and support group. Therefore, we think that introducing the theory, describing the process we have used in developing it, and providing hands-on experience with the theory will be beneficial to the attendees as well as to the use and creation of theories of information.

2.4 Length of the Event

Part 1 (Panel Discussion): 1 hour

Part 2 (Theory Development & Codebook Session): 2 hours

3 References

- Goodman, S. (2006). Autonomy and guidance in doctoral advisement relationships: A dialectical study. *Humanistic Psychologist, 34*(3), 201-222.
- Jaeger, P.T. & Burnett, G. (2010). *Information Worlds: Social Context, Technology, and Information Behavior in the Age of the Internet*. New York, NY: Routledge.