
Introduction: Pleasurable Pursuits: Leisure and LIS Research

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INTRODUCTION

Leisure continues to grow in importance in today's society, as a construct of non-work time and the activities that attend our leisure. While researchers have explored the work context and everyday life contexts, the area of leisure in our information worlds has only recently attracted interest in library and information science (LIS). The impact of leisure on our everyday lives, including our information behavior, negotiation of technology in pursuit of leisure activities, and social outcomes of our interactions through leisure, bears greater attention. This special issue uniquely brings together LIS researchers and research about leisure in a single venue to explore the different aspects of leisure, emerging frameworks and theoretical foundations, and implications for individuals, groups, and, importantly, the role of libraries and LIS generally in the evolving landscape of leisure in our lives.

PERSPECTIVES ON LEISURE

Leisure is increasingly attracting attention in library and information science, with researchers around the world focusing on a variety of aspects of this topic. Leisure has been the subject of research interest in other fields for some time now, and Leisure Studies has prospered as a field in its own right.

Researchers generally turn to the definitions and categories of leisure developed by sociologist Stebbins (2005, 2006b). Beginning his work in the 1970s, he began by classifying leisure as "serious" and "casual." According to Stebbins (1992, 1993), serious leisure may be defined as:

The systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a

career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience.

In contrast, Stebbins (2006b) defines casual leisure as follows:

Casual leisure is immediately intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it. It is fundamentally hedonic, engaged in for the significant level of pure enjoyment, or pleasure, found there.

Recently, Stebbins (2005, 2006b) added project-based leisure to his concepts of leisure:

Project-based leisure is a short-term, moderately complicated, either one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time (Stebbins, 2005). Such leisure involves considerable planning, effort, and sometimes skill or knowledge, but for all that is not of the serious variety nor intended to develop into such. Nor is it casual leisure. The adjective "occasional" describes widely spaced undertakings for such regular occasions as arts festivals, sports events, religious holidays, individual birthdays, or national holidays while "creative" stresses that the undertaking results in something new or different, showing imagination, skill, or knowledge.

In his *Serious Leisure Perspective*, Stebbins (2006b) combines all his concepts of leisure in a theoretical framework, designed to show the relationship of each concept with the others.

Studying leisure continues to hold interdisciplinary and international appeal, with a number of organizations, associations, and groups dedicated to the topic. For example, *World Leisure* (www.worldleisure.org) was founded in 1952 to explore leisure opportunities around the world. A variety of international journals that target leisure studies, including the *Journal of Leisure Research*, *Leisure Studies*, *Leisure Sciences*, etc., have also risen in other fields. It should be noted, however, that no LIS journal focuses on leisure. Dedicating an issue of a journal to this topic offers an innovative approach to exploring LIS research, including both theoretical and empirical work, and connections with the field of leisure internationally.

LEISURE AND LIS

Leisure is far from a new concept in LIS. However, the means of addressing leisure, for example, the provision of popular fiction for readers in public libraries, has been a contentious issue. A variety of factors, including the rise of free time among baby boomers now retired or retiring, increased opportunities for budget travel with cheap fare airlines, and rediscovery of leisure through the lens of other subject fields, have encouraged LIS researchers to explore this aspect of everyday information and social behaviors.

Early research about leisure in LIS dates back to the 1980s, often focusing on particular aspects of leisure as time or activities offering rich

information contexts. Chatman's (e.g., 1983, 1985) studies of ordinary people's interaction with media in leisure not only offered an early research endeavor involving leisure in our field, but also probed the exchange and relationship of information to the ordinary person in this context. In addition, Ross's investigations of readers and reading (e.g., 1997, 1999), explored information behavior in the context of a leisure activity and the connections between reading for pleasure and encountering information that leads to problem solving. Ross's work is ongoing; recently, for example, McKechnie, Ross and Rothbauer (2007) examined recreational or pleasure reading and found that the affective responses to pleasure reading that influence children's information behavior also affect that of adults involved in the reading process.

Leisure has recently gained in popularity as an area for exploration in library and information science research. Several researchers have and continue to explore information behavior topics as connected with leisure, including a wide range of leisure contexts, the impact of participation in leisure on one's information world, and the development of leisure as a structural concept in our discipline.

Several themes run through current LIS research efforts in the area of leisure. As well as associating information with leisure, researchers are examining leisure involvement from the perspective of pleasure. In the past LIS research has tended to focus on work and other serious concerns, such as health and family (e.g., Fulton, 2006; Kari and Hartel, 2007). Additionally, leisure crosses socioeconomic boundaries, such as age and culture. Leisure is for everyone, from the holidaymaker to the hobbyist. Further, involvement in a leisured world has the potential to open prospects for lifelong learning and increased social inclusion. The resulting possibilities for library and information professionals and educators are exciting. This journal issue highlights not only some of the research in this emerging area in our field, but also the implications and opportunities resulting from leisure participation.

Most recently, researchers have focused efforts on a variety of leisure-related topics and their relationship to current and influence on development of LIS theories, for example, small worlds, information literacy, e-environments, and hobbies. For example, Chang (e.g., most recently Chang, 2007; Chang & Su, 2007) has studied the world of tourist information with her exploration of backpackers' information seeking behavior. Fulton (e.g., 2005, 2006, 2007, in press) has explored information behavior and community building among hobbyists, including amateur genealogists and lacemakers. Burnett (2006) has examined communication and information exchange in online environments, including music blogs. Hartel (2006) considered the hobby of gourmet cooking as an episode with discrete cooking tasks, information activities, and resources associated with this practice. Urban (2007) and Urban, Marty, and Twidale

(2007) have investigated serious leisure in online gaming. In 2006, a panel at the American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T), called "Taking Leisure Seriously," brought together a group of LIS researchers to explore the promise of leisure as a research area in our field.

IN THIS SPECIAL ISSUE OF LIBRARY TRENDS

The articles in this issue of *Library Trends* mark several *firsts*. This is the first time *Library Trends* has published an issue focused on leisure in library and information science. It is also the first time a journal issue in our field has been thematically devoted to the topic of leisure and its place in our field.

This special issue of *Library Trends* brings together several peer reviewed examples of ongoing research about leisure in a single venue to explore the different aspects of leisure, emerging frameworks and theoretical foundations, and implications for individuals, groups, and, importantly, the role of libraries and LIS generally in the evolving landscape of leisure in our lives. This issue is devoted to what people do during and get from leisure, how they interact with information, and what leisure means to them.

Who better to write a lead piece for this issue than Robert Stebbins? In "Leisure and Its Relationship to Library and Information Science: Bridging the Gap," Stebbins presents an in-depth conceptual framework of leisure that "bridges a critical gap that has separated the fields of LIS and leisure studies." One of his goals is to bring understanding about some of the information-related tasks and behaviors associated with leisure, and, in particular, with serious leisure, to those engaged with the retrieval and dissemination of information for leisure activities.

Catherine Ross, in her lively fashion, urges public librarians to re-examine the models of reading that they subscribe to, especially regarding popular fiction. In "Reader on Top: Public Libraries, Pleasure Reading, and Models of Reading," Ross reviews reading models from several disciplines, including public librarianship, and presents two test cases of pleasure readers that she says have been "historically denigrated: the series book reader and the romance reader."

Pamela McKenzie and Roz Stooke take an institutional ethnography approach as participant-observers in their extensive study of programs for young children accompanied by their caretakers in two Canadian provinces. In "Leisure and Work in Library and Community Programs for Very Young Children," they examine the complex interplay of work and leisure in *formal* and *informal* activities. Their findings lead them to conclude that flexible and improvisational approaches may better support educational and social support outcomes.

In "What Games Have to Offer: Information Behavior and Meaning-Making in Virtual Play Spaces," Suellen S. Adams argues that librarians, some educators, and academics do not recognize the potential educa-

tional aspects of gaming. Adams uses a model of everyday life information seeking and a unique dramaturgical perspective to her analysis of *City of Heroes*, a virtual play space. In her conclusion, she offers recommendations for further exploration of gaming as a means of presenting information and encouraging learning in an engaging way.

Testing the theory of normative behavior, Gary Burnett's "Colliding Norms, Community, and the Place of Online Information: The Case of archive.org" analyzes posts to the Live Music Archive concerning a controversial action that limited access to the Grateful Dead's live concert recordings. From this analysis three distinct groups or *small worlds* emerged, each of which values the Grateful Dead collection differently. Burnett recommends that librarians need to consider the value of collections from the worldviews of others, as well as their own.

Shan-Ju L. Chang's article, "Information Research in Leisure: Implications from an Empirical Study of Backpackers," explores backpackers' information seeking behaviors from the perspective of everyday life information seeking. Characteristics of backpackers also emerged from the study, which align backpacking with serious leisure activities. She suggests that understanding the information seeking and sharing behaviors of backpackers and others engaged in leisure pursuits could impact how librarians organize information for access for this group.

Donald O. Case, in "Serial Collecting as Leisure, and Coin Collecting in Particular," defines not only how coin collectors seek information, but what characterizes collecting and why it should be considered serious leisure. Along with a participant observation study in both virtual and physical meeting places, he adds his own perceptions as a collector. Case finds that coin collectors fit Fromanek's categorizations of motives and meaning.

In "Quid Pro Quo: Silver Surfers and Information Sharing in Amateur Genealogy," Crystal Fulton explores information sharing in the hobby of amateur genealogy as a means of building community bonds. Characteristic of serious leisure, amateur genealogists excelled at learning and using information tools and technologies, in particular, the Internet, in pursuit of their hobby. Sharing information played a critical role in advancing genealogical inquiries, and the expectation of reciprocity of information giving reinforced openness and helping behavior as core values in this community.

We hope you enjoy the issue.

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