

SIG-USE 2011 Workshop: Information Used Across Domains

Information Behavior ↔ Leisure Studies

My academic career is organized around the question: *What is the nature of information in the pleasures of life?* I am investigating this matter through the concatenated study of information behavior in *serious leisure*¹ (Stebbins, 1982) activities, which are crossroads of information and enjoyment. My empirical research explores the use and structure of leisure information on personal and social levels (Hartel, 2006a, 2007, 2010b, 2010c, 2011) and my theoretical work conceptualizes the relationship between leisure and information (Hartel, 2003, 2005, 2010a; Kari & Hartel, 2007). Out of necessity, this project is interdisciplinary and borrows substantially from the field of leisure studies, sometimes referred to as *the happy science*.

Specifically, from leisure studies I apply a framework known as The Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP). The SLP is a grounded theory of leisure introduced in 1973 by sociologist Robert A. Stebbins that is now the center of an international, multidisciplinary research program. It provides macrosocial, microsocial, and psychological insights into the leisure experience and establishes a platform for information research. The framework classifies leisure activities into different forms, establishes their general orientation to information, provides sensitizing concepts (such as the “leisure career”), and illuminates social organization. I cannot imagine conducting research into information phenomena within leisure without this organizing rubric! For almost a decade I have been advocating the adoption of the SLP within information studies to make information behavior research into leisure phenomena more rigorous, systematic, comparable, and generalizable (Hartel, 2003).

In practice, working “across domains” means: spending 25% of my time reading the leisure studies literature; building relationships with leisure scholars (such as my long-running partnership with the architect of the SLP, Robert A. Stebbins); managing a website devoted to the SLP; writing papers and hosting panels (Hartel, 2006b, Hartel, Kari, Stebbins, Bates, 2009, 2010a) that bring together the two fields; responding to emails from interested students and scholars in both areas; including units on leisure in all my courses at the Faculty of Information; and designing one course dedicated exclusively to leisure information phenomena (in progress).

Theoretically, interdisciplinary scholarship requires challenging *translation work* (Palmer & Neumann, 2002). That is, major information behavior concepts must be reconciled with existing leisure tenets, and vice-versa (↔). Effective translation work is time-consuming but ultimately invisible to readers. Interdisciplinary approaches are much lauded by the university but in actuality are not always productive nor supported. I spend too much time explaining and defending leisure concepts to my information studies peers; the necessary workload accommodations and funding are not provided to participate fully in the social worlds of both disciplines; and less time and energy are available to focus on information phenomena.

¹ *Serious leisure* is free-time activity “that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centered on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (Stebbins, 1992, p. 3).

References

- Hartel, J. (2003). The serious leisure frontier in library and information science: Hobby domains. *Knowledge Organization*, 30(3/4), 228-238.
- Hartel, J. (2005). Serious leisure. In K. Fisher, S. Erdelez, & L. McKechnie (Eds.), *Theories of information behaviour: A Researcher's guide* (pp. 313-317). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Hartel, J. (2006a). Information activities and resources in an episode of gourmet cooking. Paper presented at the 6th Information Seeking in Context Conference, Sydney, Australia. *Information Research*, 12(1), paper 281. Retrieved from <http://InformationR.net/ir/12-1/paper282.html>.
- Hartel, J. (2006b). *Taking leisure seriously: Information realities in leisure time*. In ASIS&T 2006: *Proceedings of the 69th ASIS&T Annual Meeting: Information realities: Shaping the digital future for all*. Austin, TX: American Society for Information Science and Technology. Retrieved from <http://www.asis.org/Conferences/AM06/index.html>.
- Hartel, J. (2007). *Information activities, resources, and spaces in the hobby of gourmet cooking* (Ph.D. dissertation). University of California, Los Angeles. Chair: Gregory Leazer; Committee: Leah Lievrouw, Mary Niles Maack & Megan Franke.
- Hartel, J. (2010a). Hobby and leisure information and its users. In M. J. Bates, & M. N. Maack (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of library and information science* (3rd ed., Vol. 4, pp. 3263-3274). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Hartel, J. (2010b). Managing documents at home for serious leisure: A case study of the hobby of gourmet cooking. *Journal of Documentation*, 66(6), pp. 847-874.
- Hartel, J. (2010c). Time as a framework for information science: Insights from the hobby of gourmet cooking. Paper presented at the 7th International Conference on Conceptions of Library and Information Science. *Information Research*, 15(4), colis715. Retrieved from <http://InformationR.net/ir/15-4/colis715.html>.
- Hartel, J. (2011). Information in the hobby of gourmet cooking: Four contexts. In W. Aspray, & B. Hayes (Eds.), *Information in everyday life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hartel, J., Kari, J., Stebbins, R., & Bates, M. (2009). Towards positive information science? In A. Grove (Ed.), *ASIS&T 2009: Proceedings of the 72nd ASIS&T Annual Meeting*. Silver Spring, MD: American Society for Information Science and Technology.
- Kari, J., & Hartel, J. (2007). Information and higher things in life: Addressing the pleasurable and the profound in information science. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 58(8), 1131-1147.
- Palmer, C. L. and Neumann, L. (2002). The information work of interdisciplinary humanities scholars: Exploration and translation. *Library Quarterly*, 72, 85-117.
- Stebbins, R. A. (1982). Serious leisure: a conceptual statement. *Pacific Sociological Review*, 25, 251-272.