Information behaviour of scientists and the influence of social network patterns

Proposer.

Tamara Heck
Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf
Dept. of Information Science
Universitätsstraße 1, D-40225 Germany

Statement of Topic.
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Significance and Relevance of the Topic.
Social information about researchers influences information behaviour and sharing in communities. As new social information is collected, it has to be analysed in which way this data influences human information dynamics in communities and in which way the structure of academic networks influences those processes.

Keywords.
academic social networks, communities of practice, information sharing, information behaviour

Content
ResearchGate and LinkedIn are popular social networks among researchers, where they exchange about new ideas and projects, discuss relevant topics and advice each other concerning scientific issues. For many researchers, it is also important to list and promote new publications. Here, ResearchGate offers an appropriate platform. Both networks offer data about researchers' skills and expertise. The focus lies on the data that is endorsed by oneself or other community members. Furthermore, concepts of communities of practice in relation to human information behaviour shall be discussed.

Abstract
Social networks offer more and more social information about researchers. In those networks, scientists exchange about new research ideas and projects, discuss relevant topics and advice each other concerning scientific issues. They also list and promote their publications and present their recent scientific work. Similar to common users, which build have online networks, researchers use those services to network with peers.

The benefit of academic social network sites seems controversial. On the one hand, network site allow boundless, time- and location-independent information exchange and discussion between researchers. Benefits may be more collaboration, stronger community building and increased social capital. Additionally, the scientific community gets more open and fosters the Open Science and Science 2.0 movement (Friesike, Widenmayer, Gassmann, & Schildhauer, 2015; Waldrop, 2008). On the other hand, authors claim that most researchers use these sites to promote themselves and not for

social interaction. The role of various social information on information behaviour in academic communities has to be discussed within this task.

ResearchGate (Utz & Muscanell, 2016) and LinkedIn are two social professional networks that are quite popular researchers. Those networks not only include information about researchers' publications and citations, but also information about their skills and expertise, their peers and followers. It seems that academics are more connected and share more information in those online networks (Van Noorden, 2014). But as more information about researchers and their activities are online, in which way does it influence information behaviour of researchers?

Human information behaviour (HIB) has different facets and research on HIB analyses diverse approaches like information seeking, information organizing and information use (Spink & Currier, 2006; Wilson, 2000). Here, the facet of information behaviour is examined, which includes the use and seeking of information in sources and channels. A further component is information generation or information expansion. For example, in ResearchGate scientists can actively provide new information about peers, they can endorse skills and competencies. The environment itself influences this process as it suggests giving endorsements to recommended peers. This information is then a part of the system and can influence researchers' information seeking and use . Thus, these aspects are interwoven (compare Tabak's and Willson's (2012) conceptual model). The information offered by a service and the users' interaction opportunities influence information behaviour. The theory of the study is based on the socio-cognitive approach of Hjørland (2002): The researcher's perspectives and his environment – the social academic networks – both influence the researcher's use of information. The analysis of the two networks is a first step to detect this interdependence. Further questions to be discussed are: Does social researcher information strengthen scientific communities and their shared enterprise? Are there any obstacles or problems concerning this information and its use related to information behaviour of future scientists?

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