

## **Thesis summary**

### **The impact of networking supported by social media on the job search process: an information science perspective**

#### **1. Research problem and questions**

The PhD project investigates how networking, as supported by social media tools, influences the employment opportunities of young Scottish jobseekers. In particular, individual behaviours in relation to the use of informal sources of information (i.e. social networks) will be a key focus. Additionally, the use of social media tools by careers practitioners will also be investigated, with a view to incorporating the knowledge gained from the study of networking behaviours into careers information and guidance (CIAG) service provision. To achieve this, the research seeks to answer the following three questions regarding networking, and the impact of social networks on the information behaviours of young jobseekers:

- 1) What are the key off-line networking behaviours employed by the Scottish youth labour force during the job search process?
- 2) How do social media tools support the networking behaviours of the Scottish youth labour force during the job search process?
- 3) How can the knowledge from (1) & (2) be incorporated into CIAG services in order to improve individual employability levels of young jobseekers in Scotland?

To answer the above questions, a mixed methods approach is being adopted. This includes the gathering of both qualitative and quantitative data. It is an iterative design, in that the initial stages of the research has focused on gathering qualitative data which, which will be analysed and used to inform the quantitative element of the field work. These stages should fully answer the first two research questions. A final qualitative round of data collection will then take place with jobseekers and CIAG professionals, to fully address the third research question outlined above.

#### **2. Work to date**

Thus far, a literature review has been completed which identified and the following broad research themes as being relevant to the PhD topic:

- 1) Social network theory and the use of informal channels of information during job search
- 2) The role of networking behaviours during job search
- 3) The adoption and use of social media tools.

Wilson's (1997) general model of information behaviour has also been analysed and discussed, with reference to its suitability as a framework from which new knowledge on the subject can be accrued. This model has been used to guide the initial stages of the field work, which has included a series of scoping interviews and focus groups with young Scottish jobseekers. The purpose of this qualitative element has been to gain a better understanding of the role of networking as an information seeking behaviour during job search from the point of view of young Scottish jobseekers, and how social media tools are used during this process. The interviews have taken place in various regions in Scotland, with the age of participants ranging

16-24 years. The sample has been equally divided between genders, and also includes jobseekers with varying levels of educational attainment.

### **3. Work plan**

**Mar 2016:** Complete interviews/focus with jobseekers and careers practitioners, and begin analysis of qualitative data (9 interviews and 2 focus groups).

**Apr-May 2016:** Complete the analysis of qualitative data gathered in interviews and focus groups. Start work on the development of a survey questionnaire to be aimed at a cross-section of young Scottish jobseekers (aged 16-24). In the meantime, source a sample for the survey questionnaire with the assistance of collaborative partners (i.e. Skills Development Scotland), and other organisations previously contacted for qualitative field work (e.g. Fife College, and Barnardo's Charity). Pilot the survey questionnaire.

**Apr-May 2016:** Distribute the survey questionnaire.

**Jun-Aug 2016:** Collect and begin analysis of survey data.

**Sept-Oct 2016:** Begin post-survey interviews with jobseekers, with sample having been stratified from questionnaire responses. Hold focus groups with Skills Development Scotland careers advisers to discuss research findings and how these could be useful for CIAG service provision. All empirical data should have been collected by this date. Continue analysis of quantitative data derived from survey questionnaire.

**Nov 2016-Mar 2017:** Complete analysis of empirical work, and begin write-up of PhD thesis.

**Apr-Sep 2017:** Writing up of PhD thesis.

### **4. Problems encountered**

Understanding networking behaviours in online environments has involved defining what constitutes online "networking", and which social media tools can be used for this purpose. The initial qualitative element of the field work has been exploratory in this regard, as little previous research has provided any understanding as to how young people network online (or offline), to gain job information.

The biggest anticipated challenge is translating this qualitative data into themes which can guide the larger scale survey questionnaire. Also, creating a manageable questionnaire which young jobseekers of all skill levels can understand could require a substantial effort and several pilot surveys. However, the data gathered from this must answer the research questions. Therefore, whilst the survey must be intuitive to complete, it must also be designed to elicit insightful data about networking behaviours.

**John Mowbray**  
**Edinburgh Napier University**  
**Curriculum Vitae**

**Education**

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<b>2013-14</b>	<b>University of Strathclyde</b> MSc Information and Library Studies (with distinction)
<b>2011-12</b>	<b>Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT)</b> Level 3 Diploma in Accountancy
<b>2004-08</b>	<b>Glasgow Caledonian University</b> BA (Hons) 2i Tourism and Business Management
<b>1998-04</b>	<b>Larkhall Academy</b> Higher: Drama B, English B, History B, and Maths C

**Work**

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<b>Oct 2014-</b>	<b>Edinburgh Napier University</b> PhD Researcher/Research Assistant/Associate Lecturer
<b>Jan 2014-Oct 14</b>	<b>UWS Hamilton</b> Library Assistant
<b>Mar 2013-Feb 14</b>	<b>Scottish Television</b> Accounts Administration Assistant
<b>Apr 2012-Mar 13</b>	<b>Martin Aitken &amp; Company</b> Trainee Accountant
<b>Jan 2011-Apr 12</b>	<b>Ritsons Chartered Accountants</b> Trainee Accountant
<b>Mar 2004-Dec 10</b>	<b>Cooperative Foods</b> Customer Service Assistant/Backshift Supervisor
<b>Mar 2003-Mar 04</b>	<b>ASDA</b> Customer Service Assistant
<b>Jan 2001-Mar 03</b>	<b>Parks Honda</b> Yard Worker

## Publications

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Mowbray, J., Raeside, R., Hall, H., Robertson, P. (2016). Social networking sites and employment status: an investigation based on Understanding Society data. In: *Proceedings of the 2nd International Data Information and Information Management Conference (IDIMC)*. (pp. 75-85). Loughborough: LISU.

Mowbray, J., Hall, H., Raeside, R. (2015, June). Could social networking online help NEET young people gain employment?. Paper presented at *Information: interactions and impact (i3) 2015*, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland.

Mowbray, J., Hall, H. (2015, June). The impact of community grassroots campaigns on public library closures in the UK. Paper presented at *Information: interactions and impact (i3) 2015*, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland.

## Other responsibilities

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**Aug 2015-**                      **Social Network Analysis in Scotland (SNAS) Group**  
Committee Member/Group Administrator

**Summary of role:** *The SNAS Group provides a forum to discuss projects, issues and ideas which relate to the use of social network analysis as a research approach. Having previously attended various seminars and training events organised by the SNAS Group, I was asked to join their committee in June 2015 to take over communication and administrative duties. This work includes organising monthly seminars/workshops, liaising with invited speakers, and maintaining the mailing list.*

**Jun 2015**                      **iDocQ 2015: Fifth Information Science Doctoral Colloquium**  
Committee Member/Chair

**Summary of role:** *I played a key organising role as a member of the committee. This involved tasks such as marketing the event by preparing and distributing flyers to information science departments at institutions throughout the UK, designing an ice-breaking activity for delegates to participate in, and chairing the all-day Colloquium.*

## Contact details

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