ISIC 2016 Doctoral Workshop Application
Thesis Summary
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Problem statement

Young people devote a large percentage of their time engaging in interest-driven and free-choice activities in their everyday life, such as having conversations at family dinner table and participating in out-of-school programs (e.g., museums, science centers and libraries) (Barron, 2006). Experience and exploration in these informal settings may lead to development in interests, motivation, social competence and learning in subject knowledge (Bell et al, 2009). Provision of quality information services to young people in these informal settings is important. Hence, there is a need to develop a holistic understanding of how young people interact with information and go about to be informed in informal learning environments.

A review of the body of literature pertaining to young people in the field of library and information science (LIS) reveals that much focus has been on the information phenomena in digital environment and formal educational environment where students engage in assigned tasks. Despite there is an increasing body of literature on young people's everyday life information behavior and practice, the focus has been on daily life information needs (Agosto & Hughes-Hassell, 2006), everyday hassles (Lu, 2011), career decision making (Julien, 1999), and marginalized youth (Markwei & Rasmussen, 2015). It remains unknown how young people interact with information to make sense of their experiences and explorations in informal learning environments in everyday life.

These informal learning activities and environments constitute a social world in which young people have the opportunities to work together with peers and experts. However, successful collaborative learning among young people is challenging (Barron, 2003). Thus, in addition to understanding individual information practices, it is critical to compare and understand their collaborative information practices, so that information professionals and services can facilitate and afford young people's engagement with information effectively in both individual and collaborative situations. Therefore, this proposed study sets out to understand young people's (children and adolescents, aged approximated nine to fifteen) individual and collaborative information practices when they engage in informal learning activities.

Proposed work plan

This proposed study takes a qualitative approach. With the underlying philosophical and epistemological assumptions of social constructivism, this study will particularly employ Dervin's Sense-Making theory and methodology (1992; 1999; 2015) to guide the research design and subsequent investigation. Findings of the pilot studies have shown that the two chosen makerspaces at a public library and a school library were information-rich informal learning environments, which will continue to be the study sites for this proposed study. More detailed work plan at each library makerspace is listed as follows:

Location	Timeline	Data Collection
Both public and school library makerspaces	• Every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from the beginning of April to the end of May • April and May (depending on the available of informants)	• Observer-as-participant observation incorporating with brief informal Sense-Making time-line interviews • In-depth individual Sense-Making time-line interviews

School library makerspace	• Beginning of April	• Sense-Making focus group informant recruitment
	• Beginning of April to Mid-April (approximately 2 weeks)	• Recruited informants taking photos of their makerspace experiences
	• Mid-April	• Sense-Making focus group including Sense-Making pre-questionnaire, Storytelling with photos, Sense-Making self-journaling
Public library makerspace	• Beginning of May	• Sense-Making focus group informant recruitment
	• Beginning of April to Mid-April (approximately 2 weeks)	• Recruited informants taking photos of their makerspace experiences
	• Mid-May	• Sense-Making focus group including Sense-Making pre-questionnaire, Storytelling with photos, Sense-Making self-journaling

Current progress

As mentioned above, I have done pilot studies at both makerspaces in the fall of 2015. I am currently at the final stage of the dissertation proposal, expecting to defend my proposal at the end of March 2016. I plan to defend my dissertation at the end of 2016 and graduate in 2017.

Encountered problems for discussion

The first problem in my pilot study for this proposed study is the difficulty of choosing appropriate methods to elicit rich information from the youth in an informal learning environment. Given that this is an informal learning site, young people usually arrive right before the programs and leave quickly afterwards for other events, not leaving adequate time for me to interview more than one person. Additionally, even when they were asked what questions and difficulties they had during the participation immediately after the programs, they had a hard time recalling what the questions were. Therefore, I would like to learn about data collection methods that deal with young people. Another problem that I had and would like to learn from the discussion is how to analyze all the data collected, in order to develop an understanding and comparison between individual and collaborative information practices among young people in informal learning environment.

Selected references

Dervin, B. (1992). From the mind's eye of the user: The sense-making qualitative quantitative methodology. In *Qualitative research in information management* (pp. 61–84).

Dervin, B. (1999). On studying information seeking methodologically: the implications of connecting metatheory to method. *Information Processing & Management*, *35*(6), 727–750. doi:10.1016/S0306-4573(99)00023-0

Dervin, B. (2015). Information seeking behavior and technology adoption: Theories and trends. *Information Seeking Behavior and Technology Adoption: Theories and Trends*, *i*, 59–80. doi:10.4018/978-1-4666-8156-9

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EDUCATION:

PhD of Library and Information Science

Sep. 2012 to May 2017 (expected)   Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, USA

PhD. Candidacy acquired on Mar. 10th, 2015

MSc. of Information and Knowledge Management

Sep. 2006 – Dec. 2007   Loughborough University, England

BSc. of Information Management and Information Systems

Sep. 2002 – Jun. 2006   University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, China

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES:

Jan. 2016 to Now: Rutgers University, School of Communication and Information, Instructor Assistant

- Working as an Instructor Assistant in an undergraduate course on Retrieving and Evaluating Electronic Information, including keeping track of students' participation, grading, answering students' questions, and teaching one session on the topic of human information behavior.

Sept. 2015 to Now: Rutgers University, School of Communication and Information, Grader

- Working as a grader for two undergraduate courses: Retrieving and Evaluating Electronic Information (hybrid course), and Information Technology and Informatics (large lecture hall course)

Jan. 2015 to Jul. 2015: Rutgers University, School of Communication and Information, Instructors

- Taught two fully online courses on Human Information Behavior for master students in 2015 Spring and Summer semesters

Sept. 2014 to Dec. 2014: Rutgers University, School of Communication and Information, Teaching Assistant

- Worked closely with the professor for a large lecture hall undergraduate class, including grading, answering questions after classes, holding weekly office hours

Sept. 2012 to Aug. 2014: Rutgers University, School of Communication and Information, Graduate Fellow

- Engaged in an IMLS-funded project, involving data collection, analysis and writing reports
- Attended and presented findings at academic conferences domestically and internationally
- Worked closely with the Principle Investigator, collaborated with other team members and managed a student team

Jun. 2011 to Sept. 2011: Rutgers University, Summer Research Assistant

- Evaluated and coded about 400 Flash games programmed
- Led several undergraduate students in game evaluations and reported updates directly to the PI

Sept. 2010 to Jul. 2012: Language Stars LLC, Chicago, USA, Mandarin Chinese Teacher

- Taught children Mandarin Chinese in various centers and schools in the Chicago area

Dec. 2007 to Jun. 2010: Shanghai High School International Division, Shanghai, China, Teacher

- Taught Pre-algebra for standard level and advanced level
- Homeroom teacher for 7th grade international students

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Sept. 2013 to Aug. 2014: School of Communication and Information Doctoral Students Association, President

- Organized socials events for doctoral students on a weekly basis and academic events throughout the school year
- Assisted the department in events such as the orientation, graduate school expo, and recruitment day

Apr. 2014: School of Communication and Information, Outstanding Program Faculty Member Award Committee, Chair

- Organized a committee of six doctoral students, deliberated and selected a winner from the nominees

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

Kitzie, V., & **Li, X**. (2016). "It's incompatible with the views of the community about themselves and their defining characteristics": Norms and knowledge production within Transgender Wikipedia page. *Poster to be presented at the iConference 2016, Philadelphia, PA*.

Li, X., & Todd, R.J. (2015). Graduate students' sense-making processes in collaborative learning tasks: Social justice considerations. ALISE, Chicago, USA. January 27-30, 2015.

Li, X., & Todd, R.J. (2015). Graduate students' sense-making processes in collaborative learning tasks. iConference, Newport beach, USA. March 24-27, 2015.

Li, X. (2014). An Exploratory Study to Understand Interest Development and Learning at Makerspace. FabLearn. Stanford, USA. Octorber 25-26, 2014.

Reynolds, R., Baik, E., & **Li, X.** (2013). Collaborative information seeking in the wild: Middle-schoolers' self-initiated teamwork strategies to support game design. In *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, Montreal, Canada. November 1st-5th, 2013.

Li, X., & Reynolds, R. (2013). An exploratory study of middle school students' sensemaking events, gaps and uses in a collaborative game design learning project. In *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, Montreal, Canada. November 1st-5th, 2013.

Reynolds, R., **Li, X.**, & Baik, E. (2014). Inquiry and resource use strategies that emerge among middle schoolers in a guided discovery-based program of game design learning. In *Proceedings of the Association for Library and Information Science Education*, Philadelphia, USA. January 21st-24th, 2014.

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