Looking at Information Behaviour from a Transitional Perspective

Abstract

We are living in an era of rapid change in which people are constantly dealing with transitions in their everyday life. The workshop will provide a platform for the exploration of information behaviour from a transitional perspective and will lay the groundwork for the creation of a research network on the topic. The workshop will aim to establish an emerging conceptualisation of what transition means in the field of information behaviour, examining different transition theoretical models, using participatory tools. During the workshop, participants will explore and discuss their own transitional experiences working towards creating a shared matrix of transition.

Description

Transitions are a natural state in everyday life. In a broader sense, individuals could be said to be in a constant state of transition, or "transitioning" with every passage in life. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, transition is defined both as a noun and adverb, it is both: "A passing or passage from one condition, action, or (rarely) place, to another; change" and, "To make or undergo a transition (from one state, system, etc. to or into another); to change over or switch."

Information has been found to be a strong trigger in the transition process that results in information seeking as a coping mechanism to reduce uncertainty (Savolainen, 2017), a major characteristic of any transition. The workshop will provide a platform for the exploration of information behaviour from a transitional perspective and will lay the groundwork for the creation of a research network on the topic. We will establish an emerging conceptualisation of what transition means in the field of information behaviour, examining different transition theoretical models and using participatory, tools.

For example, the Theory of Life Transition, developed in nursing, defines transition as a "passage from one life phase, condition, or status to another" (Chick and Meleis,1986, p. 239), that occurs when a person's current reality is disrupted, and causes a forced or a chosen change (Selder, 1989). This theory describes how people restructure their reality and resolve uncertainty when facing life changes (Meleis, 2015). According to Chick and Meleis (1986) transitions have four elements: (1) Process: a transition is a process and has a sense of movement, (2) Disconnectedness: transitions disrupt known linkages, loss of familiar reference points, and discrepancy between needs and availability; (3) Perception: the way that a transition is perceived by the person going through it influences its outcome; (4) Patterns of response. Transitions can be personal (changes due to changes in life cycle), situational (changes in circumstances in personal or professional life), or environmental (changes in the organisational environment impacting individuals) (Schumacher & Meleis, 1994).

Transition theory concerns the process through which people in transition move beyond a disrupted reality to construct a new reality. From an informational perspective, transitions fracture the individual's information landscapes and require them to learn new "ways of knowing" (Lloyd, 2017) to create new meaning, which may require both seeking and avoiding information. This notion of a "gappy" reality (Dervin, 1999, p. 370) resonates with sense-

making's premise of discontinuity (Dervin, 2003) as a fundamental aspect of reality that mandates humans to "take steps to construct sense in constantly changing life situations." (Savolainen, 1993, p. 16). Sense-making can also become a social process, a shared co-construction of meaning between people and within communities (Weick, 1995).

Although transitions are permeated with information practices of many kinds, information behaviour research has engaged only peripherally with ideas of transition and the concept remains underexplored (e.g. Bronstein, 2018; Karim, Widén & Heinström, 2019; Hertzum & Hyldegård, 2019; Hicks, 2019; Lloyd, 2017; McKenzie, 2001; Ruthven, 2021; Willson, 2019). Consequently, the aim of this workshop is to explore transition from an information behaviour perspective, in doing so, we ask:

1. What is a life transition?
2. How should transition be conceptualised and studied within the field of information behaviour?
3. What is the role of information and information activities, including information avoidance, in a transition?
4. What role does time, affect and place play in shaping transitional information practices?
5. What types of life transitions exist and how can they be conceptualised in information behaviour?

Key issues addressed by the Workshop

The purpose of this workshop is to bring together researchers who are interested in the concept of transition to explore how information behaviour can be explored and conceptualised from a transitional perspective, and to lay the groundwork for the creation of a research network on the topic. To this end, participants in the workshop will:

- Explore emerging conceptualisations of what transition means from an information behaviour perspective, examining how different theoretical models have been used or could be adapted to further research in information behaviour.
- Explore and discuss their own transitional experiences using participatory tools.
- Analyse and organise the data collectively aiming to develop a time-space matrix that incorporates descriptive and temporal factors associated with the transition.

The audience for the workshop will be all information behaviour and LIS researchers that are interested in learning a new approach to IB.

Relevance to ISIC 2022

Transition as a focus for information research relates to many of the ISIC themes and areas of interest. In particular the workshop's focus on conceptualising transitions relates to the ISIC themes of theoretical conceptualisations and cross-disciplinary contributions, the focus on information avoidance and related concepts speaks to the ISIC theme of investigations of information activities and the ISIC theme of information use and value is highly related to information behaviours within periods of transitions. Several regular ISIC attendees have worked on transitions from various theoretical and practical perspectives and this workshop can be used to provide a uniquely ISIC perspective on the informational aspects of transitions and to stimulate future ISIC papers on this topic.

Number of attendees that can be accommodated

Expected: 15-20 participants

Preferred: 15-20 participants

Requirements for participation

No requirements needed.

Workshop structure

1. [10 mins]: Organiser Introduction - welcome, brief introduction to the workshop, the concept of transition and why this is important in IB

2. [30 mins]: Three short invited presentations (10 mins each) that introduce participants to examples of transition problems/issues, including methodologies, theoretical frameworks or empirical research.

3. The main activity of the workshop will be held using the World Café methodology (see https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods/world-cafe) in the following manner:
   - **Introduction to the World Café process**: setting the context
   - **Small-Group Rounds**: participants will be divided into small groups for 3 twenty-minute rounds of conversation to discuss a set of questions outlined. Group members contribute to a collaborative document. At the end of the twenty minutes, each member of the group moves to a different new table. They may or may not choose to leave one person as the "table host" for the next round, who welcomes the next group and briefly fills them in on what happened in the previous round. Each new group builds on the prior collaborative document. [60 mins].
   - **Discussion points**: an issue or question related to participants transitional experiences will be raised at the beginning of each round.
   - **Harvest**: After the small groups participants will be invited to share insights or other results from their conversations with the rest of the large group.
   - **Wrap-Up** and introduction of the proposed research network [30 mins].

Special needs

This workshop should be adaptable for either face-to-face or online delivery. If face-to-face, the Small-group rounds will require small tables for groups to gather, and chart paper and markers for the collaborative document. The Harvest stage will ideally have access to a display mechanism (adhesive chart paper or a display frame), though this is not an absolute requirement. and chart paper. If online, needed, this workshop could be run digitally, e.g., by creating Zoom breakout rooms and using software such as Padlet or Google Jamboard for the Small-group rounds, and screen sharing for the Harvest.

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