Is there a need for re-claiming search in information literacy practices research?

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Type of event
Panel

Title of even/session
Is there a need for re-claiming search in information literacy practices research?

Organizers
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Short abstract
Traditionally, searching constitutes a core area in information studies, but it seems that during the last decade of practice-oriented information literacy research searching has lost some of its attraction as a field of research. At the same time, searching is discussed intensively in other areas of information literacy, in information behaviour research as well as outside the realm of information studies (e.g. Hillis, Petit & Jarret, 2013; Rieh et al., 2016).

Knowledge important for searching is to an increasing extent built into the information infrastructure surrounding us and to which we always have constant access to the internet (Sundin, 2015). When searching for information became an activity anyone could carry out, as well as access to search facilities became mobile, the activity of search has been given a less significant position and less attention in information literacy research, especially from a practice-oriented perspective. Boolean logic, truncation and other search techniques are less important in a time when any search on Google generates the answers people search for. The theoretical development of the field in a practice-theoretical direction might even have amplified this lack of interest in searching as a phenomenon and activity.

Accordingly, research focus has in many cases moved from searching information to assessing its trustworthiness. In fact, the dominant discourse on information literacy in schools, both public and academic, circulates around difficulties people face when assessing whether information found can be trusted or not. The wider concept of seeking is often more prominent than searching. Another discourse on information literacy in the same area has had the focus on the written assignment practice and the changing character of the activities performing this practice (Schreiber, 2014). In both discourses the information activities has been examined. All this is very important, but the actual searching and the tools for finding this information have not been investigated and problematized in the same respect. Many aspects in relation to information searching might therefore contribute to information literacy research.

The aim of this panel is to turn to the question of the role of search in information literacy investigated from various practice-oriented perspectives. Focus will be on discussions around

questions like e.g. has search fallen into oblivion? Has searching been left aside for a good reason? Is there a role for search in a field where seeking has been a dominant concept? Is search as well as research on search in fact more important than ever? If so, do we need to approach search in a different way than we used to? Do research employing a practice-oriented approach to information literacy need to rethink research methods for studying information searching?

The panel will gather early career and senior researchers with experiences from information literacy research and/or practice-oriented research of information seeking and use. The panellists will discuss the central theme of the panel by taking examples from their own research. The audience will be engaged through a moderator-led discussion.

Length: 90 minutes.

Participants: Information literacy has been a strong theme on CoLIS conferences. The topic of the panel is expected to attract approximately 30 participants.

Proposed format
Beside the organizers of the panel five panellists have been invited representing different universities and research approaches:

Andrew M. Cox, Senior Lecturer, University of Sheffield, a.m.cox@sheffield.ac.uk
Helena Francke, Associate Professor, University of Borås, helena.francke@hb.se
Ola Pilerot, Senior Lecturer, University of Borås, ola.pilerot@hb.se
Cecilia Andersson, PhD student, Lund University, Cecilia.andersson@kultur.lu.se
Camilla Moring, Associate Professor, University of Copenhagen, camilla.moring@hum.ku.dk

The panel is organised as scheduled in Table 1 below. Firstly the panel theme is introduced and put in relation to relevant literature. Thereafter each panellist presents arguments which in short account for his/her standpoint regarding the theme of the panel. Each argument is concluded by 1-2 questions, but the discussion of these questions is saved for the final discussion of all arguments. The discussion will be moderated in an attempt to encourage discussion not only among the panellists but including all participants at the panel session.

Table 1:

Content	Responsible	Time
Introduction	Trine Schreiber	6-8 minutes
Argument 1	Olof Sundin	8-10 minutes
Argument 2	Helena Francke	8-10 minutes
Argument 3	Cecilia Andersson	8-10 minutes
Argument 4	Andrew M. Cox	8-10 minutes

Argument 5	Camilla Moring	8-10 minutes
Argument 6	Ola Pilerot	8-10 minute
Discussion	Moderator: Trine Schreiber	15-20 minutes

Purpose, goals and expected outcomes

The purpose of the panel is to discuss the growing obscurity of one traditionally central interest of information literacy research – searching. The goal is to discuss whether there is a need to reclaim searching for information literacy research, if so, to discuss the implications this might have for future research in information literacy practices.

References

Hillis, K., Petit, M. & Jarret K. (2013). *Google and the Culture of Search*. New York, Routledge.

Rieh, S. Y., Collins-Thompson, K., Hansen, P. & Lee, H. J. (2016). Towards searching as a learning process: a review of current perspectives and future directions. *Journal of Information Science*. 42(2):19-34.

Sundin, O. (2015). Invisible Search: Information Literacy in the Swedish Curriculum for Compulsory Schools. *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*, 10(4):193–209.

Schreiber, T. (2014). Conceptualizing students´ written assignments in the context of information literacy and Schatzki´s practice theory. *Journal of Documentation*, 70(3): 346-363.