

# Between individual and group: exploring social information behaviour in context

Jette Hyldegaard

Department of Information Studies  
Royal School of Library and Information Science  
Birketinget 6, DK-2300 Copenhagen, Denmark  
[jh@db.dk](mailto:jh@db.dk). Phone: (+45) 32 58 60 66. Fax: (+45) 32 84 02 01

---

Though much information behaviour takes place in collaborative settings, information behaviour processes are often perceived and modelled by information scientists as individual processes. The research note presents and discusses the findings from a qualitative preliminary case study exploring Kuhlthau's (1991; 1993) Information Search Process (ISP) model in a group-based educational setting. The aim of the study was to explore if group members behave differently from the individual modelled in the ISP-model and further, if intra-group members demonstrate different behaviour or they will assimilate and turn the group into *an individual*. During a project assignment, which lasted seven weeks, two groups of information science students filled out a questionnaire and kept diaries of their activities and information-related behaviour. Further, the students were each interviewed three times during the study.

It was found that contextual and social factors seem dynamically to affect group members' physical activities and their cognitive and emotional experiences during a project assignment. Group members did to some extent demonstrate similar cognitive experiences as the individual in the ISP-model, but not only due to information seeking activities. Emotional experiences among group members differed from the ISP-model, partly due to a mismatch in group members' motivations, ambitions and project focus. Regarding the intra-group behaviour, group members did not demonstrate similar behaviour, indicating that groups cannot be perceived or modelled as *an individual*. Based on the result of the study, it may be hypothesized that the work task and its effect on students performance is even more complicated when the task is solved in a group based setting. Building upon the results from the case study ( [Hyldegård, in press](#) ), a larger study will be carried out in 2004-2005, exploring the information behaviour of information science students in group based settings.

## References

- Hyldegård, J. (In press). Collaborative information behaviour—exploring Kuhlthau's Information Search Process model in a group-based educational setting. *Information Processing and Management*.
- Kuhlthau, C.C. (1991). Inside the search process: seeking meaning from the user's perspective. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, **42**(5), 361-371.
- Kuhlthau, C. (1993). *Seeking meaning*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- 

## How to cite this summary:

Hyldegaard, J. (2004) "Between individual and group: exploring social information behaviour in context"  
[Summary of a research note delivered at the ISIC 2004 conference, Dublin, 1-3 September, 2004] *Information Research*, **10**(1) summary 1 (Available at <http://InformationR.net/ir/10-1/abs1>)

---

© the author, 2004.  
Last updated: 9th August, 2004

