Course Reflection and Self-Assessment

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17:610:510:91 Human Information Behavior
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COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate understanding of the theoretical foundations of human information behavior

   After readings like Wilson (1999) and Pettigrew et al. (2001), I'm not convinced that anyone understands the theoretical foundations of human information behavior, but I feel like I have a decent grasp at least on the foundations of HIB as a scholarly discipline, and I can recognize the names and say generally accurate and useful things about the work of some of the major figures in the field like Kuhlthau (e.g. the analysis of the search process in Kuhlthau, 1991) and Dervin (although Dervin worked on sense-making for so long, and said so many things about it in so many different places—none of them, as far as I noticed, licensed by the Rutgers library—it's hard to point to one canonical interpretation). And of course now when my GLAM colleagues talk about "the berry-picking paper" on social media, I'll know they're talking about Bates (1989/2016). I think my discussion posts show that, and my interpretation of sources in my term paper, some of which rely on these works, but you can judge better than I can.

2. Analyze, synthesize and evaluate research findings about human information behavior in a variety of different contexts

   This I feel pretty comfortable with—I would have said I could do it, to a point, even before taking the course (absent the disciplinary foundations above), but I appreciated the formal techniques we covered of writing an evidence summary and constructing a concept matrix, and I've been applying the latter both to my other coursework and to non-school projects, as well as to my term paper here. (It was also helpful to have done the evidence summary project when one of the term paper sources I turned up was an evidence summary for *EBLIP* of one of the sources I'd already read, so I knew what I was looking at!) It was also interesting to see the range of very

different types of papers that turned up when I was writing the term paper—interesting, and not necessarily in a good way, to see what counts as research in some journals, a spectrum running from "here's a narrative report on a thing we did" to "here is an impenetrable collection of means, standard deviations, p-values and t-test scores with no prose interpretation, let alone critical analysis".

3. Be able to think critically and reflectively about human information behavior, engage in scholarly discussion, and reflect on the learning process

Here I would point to the previous paragraph, as well as to my discussion posts and term paper. It's been helpful to be able to apply some of this work in other courses as well, such as Ross (2017) on information literacy pedagogy in the context of discussing archival literacy instruction in K-12 and undergraduate education for 533 Manuscripts and Archives. (Seriously, they should make all MI students take 510 their first term—it'd be more valuable than 550.)

4. Demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively through scholarly discussions to build knowledge of information behavior in a variety of different contexts

Discussions aside, we didn't do a lot of collaborative work in this course, so it's hard to judge. The discussions were helpful for me, though, esp. as we got to the end of the course and the specific discussion questions were oriented toward having us see how what other people were working on could apply to our projects and vice versa (Darya Tahvildar-Zadeh's work on undergraduates was close enough to what I was doing that I found her posts particularly thought-provoking). I hope other students found my posts helpful as well!

5. Be able to apply concepts and research findings from human information behavior to a variety of library and information service settings, as well as to other aspects of life

So I came to this course with a mixed academic / software / GLAM background, which meant that, (1), I was pretty familiar with the domain of a lot of the analyses we read (esp. e.g. Kuhlthau on the research process, or

Bates on search systems, or even the social media / online-community aspects of Costello & Murillo, 2014, on health information seeking), and (2) I found a lot of the systems-oriented or Internet-behavior-oriented literature from the 1990s and early 2000s pretty depressing, as a lot of it was desiderata for a better future we didn't get. But the analyses were still informative and I thought the more psychology- or anthropology-oriented findings of HIB research were pretty compelling, and I'm looking forward to going back to them when I'm back in the workplace, even if (as I noted above in question 1) I'm still dissatisfied with the overall state of HIB theory.

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