Sharing and non-sharing of work-related information amongst scholars within the field of design research

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Where is my project located?

Keywords:
- Information practices (e.g. Lloyd)
- Information Needs Seeking and Use (INSU)
- Practice theory (Schatzki; Kemmis, 2011)
- Discursive approach (e.g. Talja & MacKenzie, 2007)
- Scholarly work practices (e.g. Palmer & Cragin, 2008)
- Sociology of science (e.g. Collins; Shapin; Merton)
THE AREA OF DESIGN RESEARCH

Complex  Heterogeneous
Fragmented  Interdisciplinary

"The primary dimensions of design"
Art, Science, and Technology

Central and peripheral participants

Dispersed  Placeless
“Each person entering the discursive complexes of a research field must learn to cope with diverse communicative means and processes that mediate participation with others. /–/ Though each participant in a discursive field need not think alike, the discursive activities of disciplines largely rely on people not thinking precisely alike — each must draw on a common body of resources, cope with the same body of material and symbolic artifacts, master the same tools, and gain legitimacy for any new resources they want to bring into the field by addressing the same mechanisms of evaluation by which new concepts, tools, and phenomena gain standing in the discourse” (Bazerman, 1997, p. 305).

Problem, Aim, Question

• The research problem in brief:
  – The area of information sharing is not very much explored, and the contributions that are to be found are to a great extent focused on technological solutions for sharing. Also, the network under study expresses an explicit wish to enhance and improve their routines for information sharing.

• The overall aim of the thesis is to gain increased knowledge about the information practices — with a particular focus on information sharing activities — of design research scholars.

• The overarching question, which certainly is multi-facetted, is:
  – How, where, when, and why do design researchers share (or not share) work-related information?
• The researchers’ activities are perceived of as organised by understandings, material conditions, rules, and teleoaffective structures, e.g.:
  – How to write an article?
  – With what and where?
  – In accordance with “instructions for authors”?
  – For the sake of happiness?
• Bundle – ”an amalgam of activity and materiality” (Schatzki, 2011, p. 4)

Dimensions of practice

• Cultural-discursive
  – Talk, sayings
  – Norms and conventions
  – Ways of doing
• Social
  – Interactions
  – Relations
  – Belongingness
  – Identity
• Material-economic
  – Stuff, e.g. ICTs
  – Economy, restrictions and possibilities

The richness and complexity of practice: it is “stretching out from the here-and-now of particular episodes of behaviour and action in time and physical, material, cultural, semantic and social space” (Kemmis, 2010, p 27).
Research design – a blended strategy

- “[u]nderstanding people’s words for activities and practices /.../ provides access to the activities and practices that make up their practice-arrangement bundles” (Schatzki, 2011, p. 11).
- “hanging out with, joining in with, talking to and watching, and getting together the people concerned” (ibid).
- The study of relevant documents, such as the network website, personal websites, and documentation from seminars and meetings.

LIS research on information sharing activities – people, places, or information

Design/methodology/approach – In order to explore how library and information science researchers define the concept of information sharing, and how the concept is connected with theory, empirical material and other supporting concepts, a literature review and a conceptual meta-analysis was carried out on 35 papers and one monograph. The analysis was based on Waismann’s concept of open texture, Wittgenstein’s notion of language games and the concept of meaning holism.

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Three possibly interrelated main foci

- **On that which is shared**: most often, implicitly understood as, and occasionally explicitly described as, “information”, and the flow and transfer of information.

- **On those who are sharing**, and their social relations, i.e. the people involved and their commonalities, such as common interests, mutual beliefs, and shared norms (including motivational forces and incentives), which are often seen as a ground for the development of information sharing practices.

- **On the location or site where the sharing activities take place**, on co-existence and the material conditions that characterise this site.
Information sharing as a means to reach collective understanding

- Information sharing is intertwined with other information-related activities, such as writing, reading and the seeking and use of information; embedded in routine work.
- Common (research) interests, rather than being colleagues at the same department, seem to be the most prominent aspects regarding decisions about whom to share information with.
- Traditional organizational settings, e.g. academic departments, can be substituted or at least complemented by rather flexible groups of people. In this process, the activities of information sharing fill a crucial function.
- The propensity to share information increases when a shared responsibility for the information needed, created and shared is perceived.
- Objectives for information sharing do not necessarily reside within the actual information practice; they can also be traced to the comprehensive practices of design research.
- Information sharing contributes to nurture and take care of the common project of design research.
- Material context impose rules and constraints, as well as affordances for information sharing.


Information sharing and trust

- Tentatively, a shared frame of mind, or an inter-subjective space (Crossley, 1996), is crucial for information sharing.
- The way we communicate, the information sources we refer to, and our sense of a common epistemic culture (Knorr Cetina, 1999), constitute a multifaceted complex that we turn to in order to assess trust in peers.
- “[W]e are not ‘owners’ of our common language, but ‘shareholders’ in it” (Rommetveit, 2003, p. 214) – in Nordcode, the language shares are somewhat unevenly distributed among the members.
- Even though the creation of inter-subjectivity is a joint enterprise, there seem to be a renegotiation going on regarding whose story it is that shall be the main theme for the community.
- Different epistemological stances might be of importance regarding further explorations of these tensions and of what is of importance in the establishment of inter-subjectivity and grounds for trust in relation to information sharing.
- Social media (e.g. YouTube videos and TED talks) contributes to re-shape activities of information sharing.
Upcoming study

- Get closer to the actual activities of information sharing
- Conferences are described by the participants as good opportunities for information sharing
- I will participate in, and present at, an upcoming conference (cf. “Rhythms of “being” at ISIC”, Anderson & Orsatti, 2008)
- Opportunities both for observing information sharing activities and getting feedback from the scholars whose information sharing activities I am exploring
- Questionnaire among the conference participants

References