



Looking for information: examining research on how people engage with information

It seems rather redundant to be reviewing the fifth edition of such a highly regarded book as *Looking for information*. Everyone working in the field of information behaviour will know the book and is sure to have used one or more of the previous four editions. Evidence for this is the number of citations it has received: it is a little difficult to be accurate on this because of the four editions, but the citations must amount, in total, to more than 4,000, according to Google Scholar. This edition has just been published and already (14th July) Google Scholar records three citations. Really, all that is required is an announcement notice and the book's success is assured.

However, this is not simply a continuation of what has gone before. As the authors note in the Preface they had a choice of producing a two-volume edition, or rethinking the structure and coverage of the entire work. Wisely, I think, they chose the latter option. The result is that the book is reduced from 542 pages to 349: the reduction could have been greater if the reference lists at the end of chapters had been removed, since these add 71 pages to the total. I understand from the Preface that this must have been a feature requested by users of the book. This would be reasonable in a work of 542 pages, but the slight advantage for the user does not seem to be worthwhile when the actual text is reduced to 184 pages in the smaller edition. The loss of 71 pages might also have helped to reduce the price of the book.

It is not only the size of the book that has changed: the content has also changed with the introduction of sidebars for information on key concepts or issues, and the use of tables to compare, for example, the information behaviour models dealt with in previous editions of *Looking for information* (Table 4.2) and methods of data collection (Table 5.1). At the end of each chapter there is also a box listing 'Our top-3 must read recommendations, which I think students in particular will find invaluable in getting a grip on what is, by now, a very extensive body of research. The authors have also removed about 100 older references, and the reference list now includes more than 1,200 items, with a focus on the period 2015 to 2022.

With almost half of the pages of the previous edition having been "lost", and with eleven chapters reduced to six, it will be obvious that the changes in this edition are more than cosmetic. The presentation of the subject has been streamlined and topics that previously occupied a chapter are now reduced to sections of chapters. For example, in the previous edition, twelve models of information behaviour were presented in Chapter 7, these have been reduced to five in Chapter 4 of this edition, although some, for example, Ellis's model, are mentioned elsewhere in the text. I suspect that those retained have either emerged in the intervening period, or continue to be more heavily cited than those that have disappeared. Chapter 5, Information needs, motivation, and use, and Chapter 6, Related concepts, of the previous edition have disappeared completely, although some of the concepts, for example, motivation, information needs, decision-making, and learning, appear where relevant throughout the text. Chapters 7 and 8 are revised, restructured, and combined in Chapter 4 of the new edition. The glossary and the "Questions for discussion and application" have also been removed

The final chapter, presents, as did the 4th edition, ten lessons learnt: these are quite stimulating in terms of leading the imagination to possible research topics. The same can be said of the list of

"global megatrends"; here the authors can be forgiven for not including the current surge of interest in machine learning and artificial intelligence, since these have come to fruition in ways that are likely to influence information behaviour only this year. I imagine a growth in research attending to this issue, which will surely form a new section in the next edition.

Given these changes one might ask, Is this still a book worth having? My answer would be an unequivocal "Yes". The decision to slim down was a sensible one, given the rapid growth of the research in the field over time, and the result is more manageable and, I think, better structured with a stronger focus on the topic. It also has the advantage of keeping the earlier edition relevant and useful to the researcher, for its coverage of additional material and concepts. This volume does not supersede its predecessor, but supplements and updates it in a way that students, teachers and researchers will find eminently useful. I would not be surprised to see it nominated for ASIST's Best Information Science Book Award, even though the first edition received the Award in 2003.

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