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Position paper: Web tutorials and Information Literacy research

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The paper is structured in smaller sections using the questions posed by Olof Sundin as headings:

Important strategic issue 1: The name of the research field

As many before us have noted new tools create new challenges for people in their learning how to use these tools in their daily activities. Research in visual literacy, digital literacy, media literacy and information literacy have the same interest concerning the development of new tools of discursive as well as material kind. It is therefore difficult to isolate information literacy research from these other research fields. As a consequence it may be more in our interest to use another term as e.g. 'Multimodal Literacy Research' for opening up the field and to include all the other fields within one and the same discipline?

Important strategic issues 2: The multiplicity of social practices as the topic of the research field

In recent years the subject 'information literacy' has been substituted by concepts like 'information practice' and 'information literacy practice'. The concept of 'social practice' defined by e.g. T. Schatzki or E. Wenger gives rise to not a specific understanding of information literacy but rather to the understanding of many different information practices as well as information literacy practices. Lloyd writes that this practice approach "enables us to understand an information-literate person as an expert user of information who, through their information practice, develops a deep connection with their information landscape, a fluency with the modalities of information valued within it, and an ability to search for salient information from other landscapes that will enrich their practice" (Lloyd 2010: 30). A very exciting field of research lies in this description. After a long period dominated by a conceptualization of information literacy as an individual competence we now define information literacy from sociocultural, participative or communicative perspectives. Today information literacy research is characterized by studies of a multiplicity of social practices. We believe that it is a very positive development. In our opinion the information literacy research do not need a particular object of study. However for that particular reason we are concerned that one of the two concepts mentioned above, namely 'information literacy practice', have such kind of implication. In contrast, the concept 'information practice' seem as a more "elastic" concept concerning the type of practice studied and without any preference of the object of study. What does it mean when we add the word 'literacy' to the concept 'information practice'? What are the implications? - is it for instance that 'information literacy practice' focus especially on pedagogical practices?

Empirical areas that need to be investigated: Information literacy in everyday life and across practices

Information literacy (practices) has been well researched in educational settings, and to some extent we also begin to know more about information literacy in workplace contexts, but it seems that information literacy related to everyday life activities or practices has been a bit overlooked. There might exist interesting perspectives in doing IL-research within that area and it may broaden our understanding of what information literacy are. We also need to look more into ideas about how individuals become information literate, not only in relation to one particular practice, but across

different practices (e.g. Herring 2011, Moring 2011). If we believe that people develops knowledge about how to deal with information in different ways in different contexts, then how do we understand and reflect on the possibilities and constraints related to transferring or connecting this situated knowledge across contexts?

Important research questions: How to analyze the changes in a social practice?

On the one hand information literacy is seen as an information practice embedded in social interactions. Lloyd talks about site ontology saying that an information practice are not isolated from the context, but it is the context. This means that an information practice 'takes place'. As a researcher you will analyze a certain practice and try to characterize how it takes place. On the other hand this practice will all the time be changing. Therefore it is necessary at the same time to understand both how a practice currently takes place and how it seems to change, and to try to capture in which direction it is changing. But what theoretical tools does the practice approach give us for the conceptualization of these changing processes? According to Schatzki a social practice is part of a network of many practices. Thus, a central aspect of the theory is how information practice may be maintained or transformed through its linkage with other practices. Individuals perform activities in many different ways drawing on understandings, rules and teleoaffective structures mediated through these activities. Reckwitz (2002:256) sees the individual (or the "agent") as a "unique crossing point" of many practices. In this way he provides a preliminary explanation of how changes in a practice takes place, namely by saying that the individual is the carrier of many different practices and therefore may use elements from one practice in the performance of another. For another researcher from the practice approach, Etienne Wenger, the negotiation of meaning involves a sort of focus at some changing processes. A theoretical debate of the different understandings and their possibilities concerning empirical studies may strengthen our knowledge about how to identify and analyze changes in a social practice. Such a debate has not yet been taken.

Methodological challenge: The analysis of how the bodily aspect of acts and activities has meaning in social practices.

Etienne Wenger theory implies a focus on community of practices, and the negotiation of meaning in the learning process between participants in a community. The negotiation of meaning seems to be useful concept when investigating a social practice (Lloyd 2010, Moring 2011). Wenger explains the negotiation of meaning as the interplay between two processes; participation and reification (Wenger 1998). Following Wenger's theory both discursive as well as bodily acts are parts of the reification respectively the participation process. In spite of the importance of therefore investigating both aspects it seems like we first of all have focused on the discursive element in our research. It is in many ways quite convenient to interpret these acts in communicative terms and hereby giving the discursive aspects of negotiation priority in the analysis. How can bodily acts be given a more central role in the analysis, and do we have a methodological challenge concerning the analysis of how the bodily aspects of activity becomes meaningful in a social practices?

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