Archivists' information practices and archivists' personal and professional identity:

A theoretical framework

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I pay my respects to the Lenape peoples on whose ancestral lands I live and work.

Introduction

This research presents a theoretical framework for archivists to view perspectives on information practices in a whole-life context of personal and professional identity and core values.

It builds on the theoretical framework in my dissertation, a qualitative case study exploring 11 archivists' information work and information practices at 6 history of medicine collections in Philadelphia before and after COVID-19 onset.

Format

1. Problem statement
2. Research method
3. Results
4. Findings
5. Future research

First, **the problem statement focuses** on archivists' stewardship activities as an understudied topic and a complex social phenomenon. The research questions explore archivist's work.

Second, **qualitative methods and case study approach in the interpretivist paradigm** featured a theoretical framework and four work contexts for coding data. Sensitizing concepts from LIS information behavior research guided data analysis.

Third, **results** demonstrate how participants constructed, circulated, and shared archival knowledge before and after COVID-19 onset.

Fourth, **findings** highlight participants' information practices and archival agency in the work contexts.

Fifth, **future research** on archivists' information practices, archival agency, and core values parallel broader themes on personal and professional identity in IS literature.

Problem statement

History of medicine collections in the US, including the National Library of Medicine, hold special collections of health-related primary sources dating from the nation's colonial era (Megaridis, 2018; Stadel-Bevans & Bell-Russel, 2017).

Access to primary sources in history of medicine special collections serves the public interest and supports research on healthcare reform, humanity and society, and planetary sustainability (Hannaway, 1999; Hoffman, 2003; Lussky & Drott, 2019; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018).

However, archivists' stewardship activities are not well understood (Novak Gustainis, 2012). Information behavior research in LIS focuses on users, but not on information professionals' use of information to steward primary sources and provide access points.

The case study's research questions explore archivists' work.

Problem statement

RQ1. How do archivists produce and put information to use through information work and information practices?

RQ2. How can a theoretical framework based on sensitizing concepts in information practice (IP), information work (IW), and communities of practice (COP) literature refine analysis of archivists' production and use of information through information work at history of medicine collections in Philadelphia?

Methods
Theoretical
framework:
4 work contexts

The theoretical framework structures case study data into four work contexts:

1- the physical site,

2- biography and work roles,

3- workplace documents, and

4- work task performance.

Methods: Sensitizing concepts in LIS

Sensitizing concepts from LIS literature guide data analysis:

Sensitizing concepts

IP — Information practice (IP): shared, cohesive human activities
- ❖ Embodiment, affect, materiality, togetherness, sharing, learning

IW — Information work (IW): the perspective of persons managing information (doing work, problem-solving)
- ❖ Layers, trajectories, complementary skills, timing, phases, blunting, avoiding

COP — Communities of practice (COP): fluidity of human groups based on shared interests
- ❖ Belonging, dispersing, regrouping, vanishing

Results: Theoretical Framework: Sensitizing concepts, work contexts, and case study data

Sensitizing concepts	Four work contexts	Case study data
IP	1st: PHYSICAL SITE Work context as physical site, architectural features of visitor services, legacy embedded information practices	Participants' physical settings Researcher analytic memos of participants' physical work settings Researcher summaries of available documentation on repository type and holdings
IP, IW, COP	2nd: BIOGRAPHY & WORK ROLES Work context as credentials, professional position and interests, work roles	Holistic information work Education, training, career stage, memberships; multiple work roles; whole life perspective
IP, IW, COP	3rd: WORKPLACE DOCUMENTS Work context as participants' views of workplace documents	Participants' sense of institutional connection Mission statement and workplace culture, strategic plans, policies, written guidelines
IP, IW, COP	4th: WORK TASK PERFORMANCE Work context as information work tasks and information practices	Participants' information activities Collections, reference, outreach; trajectory information work during COVID-19 hiatus

Results:
Participants' Trajectory Information Work During Pandemic Hiatus

Work context	Case Study Data
1st Work context Physical site, architectural features, and embedded information practices	1st Physical site under quarantine Information work at the physical site paused
2nd Work context Participants' holistic information work (BW)	2nd Participants' work task performance from home Participants perform remote work via institutional servers ==Participants use archival agency in hybrid remote and onsite work==
3rd Work context Participants' perception of workplace documents (==active information practices==)	3rd Participants create remote policies and guidelines Participants replace workplace culture with videoconferences ==Participants use archival agency to reshape workplace documents==
4th Work context Participants' work task performance	4th Participants' archival knowledge of collections and their use Archival agency in use of digital libraries during the pandemic Work task performance branches in new directions Participants' archival agency shapes ==**embedded information practices**==

4　Findings

In the case study, participants produced, shared, and disseminated archival knowledge through trajectories of information work at and beyond the physical site.

Participants linked workplace documents to a sense of archival agency and autonomy.

Work contexts distributed analysis of institutional and personal-professional factors that enabled or detracted from participants' agency.

During the pandemic hiatus, participants' holistic personal-professional archival knowledge and work with users highlighted the transformative effects of archival work.

5　Future research

The theoretical framework may be useful for archivists to frame viewpoints on information practices, archival knowledge and agency, and core values of personal and professional identity.

Future research on a archivists' information practices can contribute to broader themes in IS literature on personal and professional identity based on core values.

Future research: Theoretical Framework for Archivist's information practices in a whole life context

Sensitizing concepts	Four work contexts	Suggested analytical framing for archivist's viewpoints
IP	**1st: PHYSICAL SITE** Work context as physical site, architectural features of visitor services, legacy embedded information practices	**Archivist's physical settings** Work site location, architectural features of tasks performed. Existing documentation on repository type and holdings.
IP, IW, COP	**2nd: BIOGRAPHY & WORK ROLES** Work context as credentials, professional position and interests, work roles	**Holistic information work** Education, training, career stage, memberships; multiple work roles; whole life perspective and core values.
IP, IW, COP	**3rd: WORKPLACE DOCUMENTS** Work context as participants' views of workplace documents	**Archivist's sense of institutional connection** Strength of links between mission statement and workplace culture; participation in strategic plans, policies, written guidelines.
IP, IW, COP	**4th: WORK TASK PERFORMANCE** Work context as information work tasks and information practices	**Archivist's information activities** Sense of institutional and information architectures that enable or detract from archival agency and visibility

Conclusion, future research, limitations

Problem Statement. Archivists' stewardship practices for special collections are not well understood. This investigation explores the viewpoints of persons doing archival work.

Methods. Information behavior research in LIS studies users, but not information professionals who steward collections and provide access points. I bring LIS tools to the archival context.

Results. A theoretical framework I developed constructs four work contexts for analyzing participants' views of work. Data analysis guided by sensitizing concepts in LIS literature on IP, IW, and COPs highlights participants' sense of agency.

Findings. Participants produce, share, and disseminate archival knowledge through trajectories of information work and information practices at and beyond the physical site. Work contexts enable analysis of factors that enable or detract from participants' agency.

Future research. Archivists' viewpoints on information practices bring archival agency to visibility and advance IS literature on personal and professional identity.

Limitations. Qualitative research preserves complexity in a bounded context. I mitigated bias through member checking and peer review. Readers gauge trustworthiness and transferability of my findings to other settings.

Thank you!

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