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The implied information 'actor' – revisiting models of information behaviour through a Meta-Ethnographic approach

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Abstract

Introduction. Information use and non-use have often been treated as two unequal concepts favoring information discovery, though information may not always be 'good' and wanted. Through a new methodological approach, this paper investigates explicit and implicit notions of the human information actor in five models of information behaviour (IB).

Methods. The meta-ethnographic methodology by Noblit and Hare was employed in a new way to strengthen the systematic and inductive analysis of 'meanings' inherent in the five IB-models.

Analysis. Each model was systematically examined according to the seven meta-ethnographic phases and in an ongoing 'dialogue' between the model, prior writings about the model and a conceptual framework of information engagement, including information avoidance exemplifying non-use of information.

Findings. The implied actor emerging from the models (still) appeared to be driven by a need to discover, seek, find and use information to solve a problematic situation, hence, positioned as an active or passive information seeker. The outcome and the methodological potentials, barriers and limitations are discussed guiding further research.

Conclusion. The study suggests a new analytical approach to IB research fostering deeper insight into tacit and underlying notions of information behaviour affecting how we understand, study and support humans' engagement with information.

Introduction

Already in 2011, Ronald E. Day proclaimed the death of the 'user' in Library and Information Science (LIS) and the need for a new understanding of the human actors engaging with information. Since the 'user turn' in LIS promoting information access, the need *for* information has changed (Julien et al., 2018). To many, non-seeking or non-use of information, here in terms of information avoidance (IA), has become a common strategy to cope with daily life (Hicks et al., 2025). That said, information use and non-use have often been treated as two unequal concepts of information behaviour (IB) favoring information discovery despite information may not always be 'good' and wanted. This imbalance in IB research was already demonstrated by Houston (2011, p. 364) finding that less than 1% of the preceding 60 years of information science publications addressed information non-use. The same observation was made by Julien et al. (2018) in their review of user constructions identified in proceedings from the Information Seeking in Context Conference (ISIC) between 1996 and 2016. With few exceptions, the information behavior literature only contains little discussion of the non-users. Even in prior visions of future IB-research the focus is (still) expected to be on how people search *for* and *use* information (Wilson, 2008, p. 463). This vision has recently been confirmed in a review of trends in IB research between 2016-2022 (Huvila & Gorichanaz, 2025). According to the authors, '*…today's information behaviour literature still has features that harken back to the field's historical roots, such as a plurality of articles that focus on information seeking…*' (2025, p. 227). The dominant focus on information seeking and use of information is also reflected in views of the human information 'actor'. Besides being an information seeker, the information user has often been taken for granted in IB research, e.g., implying an individual without a social context (Byström, 1999), or by sparse participant descriptions (Julien et al., 2018). In his critical analysis of the 'information user', Olsson (2016) identified a tacit system-oriented focus in many IB models deriving from a narrow conceptualization of information seeking behavior. He then called for a more holistic approach to understanding the complex relationship between people, information and context. The way IB scholars describe, conceptualize and construct their participants and human information actors, e.g. in models of information behaviour, has important implications for how we design information studies and perceive and understand peoples' information related behavior in research and practice (Julien et al., 2018). An example of the latter is found in Miksa (2009, p. 345) which discussed the effects of the vague conceptualization of the 'mysterious' information user among information professionals.

As this short introduction highlights, conceptualizations of information actors in IB research are often difficult to discern, yet impactful for research and practice. There is a need for a broader view of human information engagement involving also behaviour of non-use and disengagement. For example, what implicit/explicit notions of the human information actor can be identified in existing models of information behaviour when looking through an information avoidance lens. This research question has guided the theoretical analysis presented in this paper. Five general IB models were analyzed based on the meta-ethnographic methodology (Noblit & Hare, 1988) originally aimed at theory development. By using this methodology in a new way for analyzing IB models, the aim was to examine notions of the human information actor while ensuring a systematic, transparent and consistent approach to 'look' (also) for information avoidance in conceptual models of IB. The analysis was further guided by two research questions:

RQ1. How is the human information actor conceptualized in models of information behaviour?

RQ2. How can a Meta-Ethnographic methodology approach contribute insights into notions of the human information actor in IB models, if at all?

In this way, the aim of the study was to contribute insights, reflections and suggestions for further research mitigating the imbalance in IB research favoring information discovery.

The paper is structured in six parts starting with a theoretical background introducing the key concepts informing the analysis. The methodology of the meta-ethnography approach is presented including how it has been adapted to the analysis of the five selected IB models. The 'meanings' elicited from the analysis are presented and discussed, followed by a section on the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research. The conclusion presents the outcome and reflections of the study and the potential of the Meta-Ethnographic approach for future studies.

Background

This section presents the theoretical background framing the analysis of the IB-models.

The implied actor

As already indicated, the term *user* represents a limited view of human information engagement. People not only *use* information, systems, libraries etc. but may also need to disengage from information at particular moments in time and space. Users are also more than traditional and/or invented categories (Dervin, 1989). According to Day (2011) the user or the preferable 'subject' does not exist per se. Rather, the human subject is constructed and *only* exists in his/her/their relation to some objects, co- determined by social, cultural and physical affordances. Other researchers have suggested using broader and more powerful terms like *actors* (Day, 2011; Dervin, 1989; Tabak, 2014), *doers* (Byström, 1999) and *agents* (Day, 2011), all stressing individuals' agency. A similar variation in terminology and viewpoints is reflected in the naming of participants and their accompanying role in studies as users, participants, subjects or partners (Julien et al., 2018; Nesset et al., 2024). In this paper we use the human information actor and introduce the concept of the 'implied information actor'. It is a theoretical construct inspired by Lars Ulriksen's (2009) idea of the 'implied student' that tacitly exists in study structures and practices, forming the student's academic identity. His thinking originates from Wolfgang Iser's (1974) idea of the 'implied reader' being inherent in the text just waiting for an agent (reader) to do something with the text before meaning can emerge. Likewise, we argue that an *implied information actor* is inherent in the structures and design of IB-models just waiting for a reader (e.g., a researcher, teacher, student) to interact with the model to emerge. As such, the models do not determine a specific information behaviour; rather they provide a set of frames for what is possible and a legitimate and comprehensible way of engaging with information. The idea of the 'implied information actor' adds to recent employment of Ulriksen's theoretical construct (Hyldegård & Jensen, 2023; Nicolaisen & Achiam, 2020).

Models of information behaviour

Many models exist in information science offering an overview and a framework for thinking about information behaviour. They differ in type, purpose and complexity, but all 'mirror' the author's conceptualization expressing either '*…actual or theoretical relationships, or ideal processes of interaction with information.*' (Wilson, 2017, p. 2087). Despite their heuristic advantages, they may also oversimplify processes, leading people to over generalize without realizing the limitations of their tacit assumptions (Johnson, 2009, p. 595). Three types of models seem to dominate in information behaviour research: 1) purely descriptive models 2) process-oriented and flowchart-inspired models with arrows/feedback, and 3) explaining models, including theory and intervening variables (Wilson, 2017). With a broad perspective on information behaviour (IB) including any dynamics between use and non-use of information, the focus in this paper will be on the process-oriented and explaining type of models. Inspired by Greifeneder and Schlebbe's (2022) general and newcomer-oriented IB-model, we distinguish between information discovery (use) and information avoidance (non-use) when exploring the selected models of IB. The *use* of information refers here to 1) the information discovery process regarding both the active intentional and the accidental discovery of information (Wilson, 2022) and to 2) the specific use of the information discovered. The *non-use* of information refers here to the activities and processes related to

actively or passively avoiding and disengaging with information. The *implied information actor* is the one emerging from the analysis of *meanings* and views represented in the IB-models.

Information Avoidance

Already in 2001, Pettigrew et al. (2001, p. 68) pointed to the '*...rich insights [to] be obtained regarding such novel concepts as...the non-use of information or information blunting*'. That said, the interest in non-engaging information behaviour has only been sparse in the information science literature, and only rarely discussed (Case et al., 2005, p. 356). In a recent critical review of information avoidance in LIS literature (Hicks et al., 2025) three recurring characteristics were identified: 1) information is narrowly defined, 2) information avoidance is absent from models in LIS in contrast to other disciplines and 3) avoidance of information is depicted as 'failure' or even pathologic. Turning to other disciplines like communication, Donohew and Tipton (1973, p. 265) defined that '*...avoidance is something other than the failure to seek*'. In the field of psychology, Sweeny et al. (2010, p. 340) talked about information avoidance '*...as any behavior designed to prevent or delay the acquisition of available but potentially unwanted information*'. From a sociological perspective, Chatman (1996) asserted that people will avoid seeking information if it is not socially acceptable, or preventing one from becoming burdensome, indebted, or responsible for reciprocating any help that might be provided. Information avoidance (hereafter IA) is a rich and complex concept. IA can be hedonically or strategically driven (Golman et al., 2017), motivated by personal, physical, social, situational, emotional, cognitive and temporal factors (e.g., information overload, cognitive dissonance, uncertainty, groupthink, mis-/dis-information, privacy, and critical life transitions and crisis) (Case et al., 2005; Choo, 2017; Golman et al., 2017; Klaus, 2021; Lakshminarayanan et al., 2011; Sweeny et al. 2010; Hicks et al., 2025). Further, it can be manifested in many forms, both passively and actively (e.g., by ignoring, rejecting and delaying information or by self-guarding and selective exposure). It can also be practiced by different actors like individuals, groups and proxies (Houston, 2011; Lakshminarayanan et al., 2011; Sweeny et al, 2010). Most recently, Haider and Rödl (2023) have raised our critical awareness to IA when compelled by powerful technological and political structures and agents. To qualify and strengthen the IA lens during the conceptual analysis of the IB models, a framework of IA terms and concepts was established and employed as part of the meta-ethnographic methodology presented below.

Methodology

The qualitative analysis of IB models was guided by the meta-ethnographic methodology (France et al., 2019; Noblit & Hare, 1988; 1999). A meta-ethnography (hereafter M-E) is a methodology for deriving understanding from multiple qualitative studies based on interpretation rather than aggregation. Ethnographic refers to an underlying interest in finding an explanation for social and cultural events based upon the perspectives and experiences of the people being studied (Noblit & Hare, 1999, p. 95). One of M-E's key strengths is theory development from primary studies, and it has been widely used across social science, education, social care and nursing (France et al., 2019). Recently, it has also been used in information science to develop an information behaviour theory of transitions from an information perspective (Ruthven, 2021). In this study, we employ the approach in a new way to strengthen the systematic and inductive analysis of *meanings* in IB models, hence, for contributing implied notions and views of the human information 'actor'. As Ruthven (2021, p. 591) has suggested, the M-E approach may also be useful for other areas of information science to progress the many models we have in information science toward theory.

The M-E methodology was developed in 1988 by Noblit and Hare and consists of seven iterative and overlapping phases (1-3 preparation; 4-6 analysis and 7 presentation):

1. The focus and intellectual interest informed by qualitative research
2. What to study and synthesize

3. Reading studies (here each model and associated research), and repeat the reading of the study accounts
4. Determine how the studies (here models) are related by listing, comparing and grouping terms/concepts
5. Translating studies (here the models) into one another (meaning translation) by reciprocal translation (looking for major themes), and by refutational translation (looking for contradictions and exceptions)
6. Synthesize translations to develop new interpretations
7. Express the synthesis (reporting)

A key consideration in M-E is which studies, here models, to include (step 2). The selected IB models were five general *process-oriented* and *explaining* information behavior models (Wilson, 2017):
Wilson (1996) in Wilson (1999), *Wilson* (2022), *Savolainen* (1995), *Johnson et al.* (1995) and *Krikelas* (1983). The models were selected for their historical and current dominance in the field, e.g. demonstrated by their continuing employment and appearance in reviews, articles and encyclopedias of information science (Case & Given, 2016; Case et al., 2023; Kundu, 2017; Rather & Ganaie, 2018; Wilson, 2017). Modifications of dominating models were included as well.

To support and guide the 'reading' of the five process-oriented and explaining IB models through an information avoidance lens (step 3), terms and concepts deriving from an initial conceptual analysis of the information avoidance literature (see Hicks et al. (2025) for more information on procedure) were categorized into Sweeny et al.'s (2010) five Ws of IA (what, why, who, when and where). A sixth category (how) was added (Table 1). The same categories and aspects were employed when looking for concepts and terms related to information discovery (use).

What (Attributes)	**Why** (Motivations)	**Who** (Actors)	**When** (Time)	**Where** (Context)	**How** (By which means)
Active/passive Conscious/ unconscious Information-related Person-related Person-information related Positive/ negative Situated Temporal	Cognitive dissonance/ resonance Confirmation Coping Costs/satis-ficing Distraction Disruption Ease of use/feasibility Ignorance Information overload Least conflict (fit) Least effort Risk manage-ment Self-efficacy Self-protection Uncertainty reduction	Gatekeepers for self/others Human/digital Individual/ group Personal/social Proxy Roles (labels) of non-users	Deferring Delaying Information holidays Liminal Recent Slow/fast	Domain specific Incidential Setting Situation	Blunting By proxy Compelling Concealing Delaying Delegation Filtering Forgetting Ignoring Rejection Resignation Satisficing Selective exposure Self-regulation

Table 1. Terms and concepts associated with information avoidance (not exhaustive) categorized alphabetically according to 6 key aspects.

After the initial preparation (step 1-2), each model was read and examined in an ongoing 'dialogue' between Table 1, the model, the author's presentation of the model in original and later work, related writings, and reviews of the model by other researchers (step 3) (Case et al., 2005; Case & Given, 2016; Case et al., 2023; Fisher et al., 2005; Kundu, 2017; Rather & Ganaie, 2018; Wilson, 1999; 2017; 2022). When preparing for both the individual and the reciprocal analysis between models, identified terms and concepts of *use* and *non-use* behaviour were recorded and grouped separately during reading in a working-table for each model; and notes were added. During the next phase of comparing models (step 4) in a continuously 'dialogue' between working-tables, text and models, four new groupings of concepts and elements occurred iterating the reciprocal analysis of models: 1) *theories* informing models, 2) *role of information*, 3) *type of need* and 4) *type of context*. Then meaning was elicited by translating the conceptual meanings of the models into one another (not literal) (step 5). Since no step-by-step guide for this part of the process was provided by Noblit and Hare (France et al., 2019, p. 8), step 5 was done by reciprocally translating the concepts and elements for one model into the others, back and forth. Working between groupings of concepts (e.g. use and non-use), text and models as abstractions of the text served to clarify what the models were representing in terms of information behaviour. This stepwise and reciprocal conceptual translation further guided the synthesizing of *meanings* across the models (step 6). The outcome of the analysis (step 7) leading to explicit and implicit notions of the human information actor is presented in the next section.

Findings of 'meaning'

First, some general characteristics of the models are presented followed by the *meaning* elicited from each model.

Like many other models in LIS, the five general IB models were not derived from a meta-theoretical analysis but reflected the authors' theoretical conceptualization of actual or ideal processes of interaction with information in specific contexts (Wilson, 2017). None of the examined models explicitly mentioned or addressed 'information avoidance', but all authors acknowledged to various extent instances of *not* wanting to seek, receive or use information. By discussing mechanisms whereby people may avoid information, authors' different points of views of information non-use also appeared. In some cases, avoidance and non-use of information was considered a potential and accepted part of human information behaviour (e.g. Krikelas, 1983; Savolainen, 2005), while in other cases information avoidance such as ignoring was seen as a likely, but 'wrong' behaviour (Johnson, 2009). Table 1 and the six aspects served looking for IA terms and concepts explicitly in the models, but also implicitly during background reading and analysis. Likewise, the six aspects all served to identify and record terms and concepts related to information discovery in a systematic way.

Wilson's 1996-model (figure 1) (Wilson, 1999; 2005; 2017; 2022) recognizes that avoidance behaviour can be invoked immediately after a need arises. He stresses the importance of looking at the person in context (not specified), that is, the underlying situation and the *basic* needs of any information behaviour, including the physical, affective and cognitive factors influencing information seeking. The 1996-model introduces initial activating motivators and theories for seeking information (or not) such as stress/coping, risk/reward and self-efficacy. Though not depicted in the model, Wilson (2022, p. 32) explains that a person may decide at this point not to seek information, to avoid information, to postpone or to delegate it. These motivators for seeking (or not) are influenced by intervening variables expanded from five in 1996 to eight in 2022 (psychological, demographic, role-related/interpersonal, environmental, source characteristics (potential future actions) *and* socio-economic (external to person) values and beliefs). Each variable can be enlarged to identify or point out related factors. Likewise, experiences of risks or low self-efficacy to execute and produce a desired outcome can invoke a passive and limited information seeking behaviour (Wilson, 1999). In his recent expanded 2022-model (figure 2) *Wilson* (2022, p. 44) replaces

information seeking with the broader label *information discovery* to cover both the active purposive *and* the passive non-intentional information activities. That said, the model still reflects information behaviour as primarily an intentional activity towards information *discovery* for the common good. This interest is further demonstrated by a call for research into why people *do not* move on to search for information '*...when the need for information is evident to them*' (Wilson, 2022, p. 41-42).

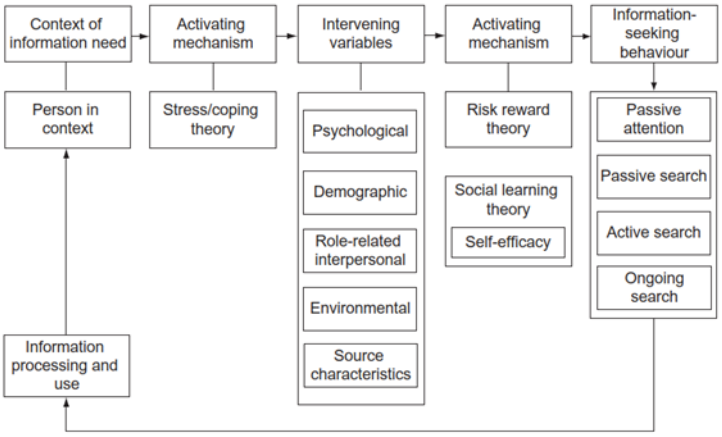

Figure 1. Wilson's 1996-model of information behaviour (adapted from Wilson, 1999, p 257).

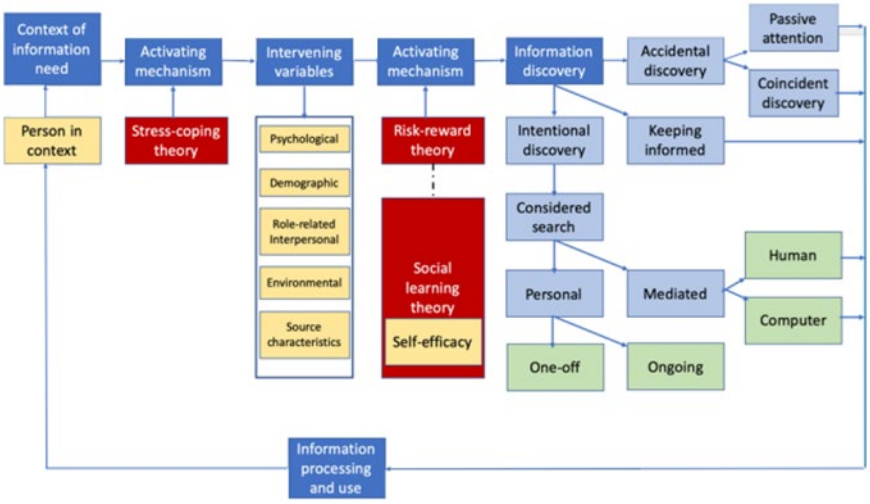

Figure 2. Wilson's expanded 2022-model of general information behaviour (Wilson, 2022, p. 44).

Savolainen's 1995-model of everyday-life information seeking (ELIS) (figure 3) draws on Bourdieu's (1984) idea of habitus and the cultural and social factors influencing people's way of preferring and using information sources. Information seeking is rooted in people's way of life and integrated with their mastery of life, e.g., the way they solve a problematic situation, make sense of and keep order of things. Savolainen's 1995-model introduces four information strategies to master life-situations involving also the right *not* to seek. Many cognitive and/or affective factors may interfere with people's need for (seeking) information, meaning that an increase in the importance of a problem does not automatically imply that a person will be more motivated to seek information. There *are* times when a problem may just be seen as an 'unwanted guest.' (Savolainen, 1995, p. 281) Information avoidance can here be the preferred strategy (consciously/unconsciously) to master one's life. Except for the first type involving systematic information seeking and use of specific

sources and channels, information avoidance is introduced as a legitimate coping strategy given type and need of mastery.

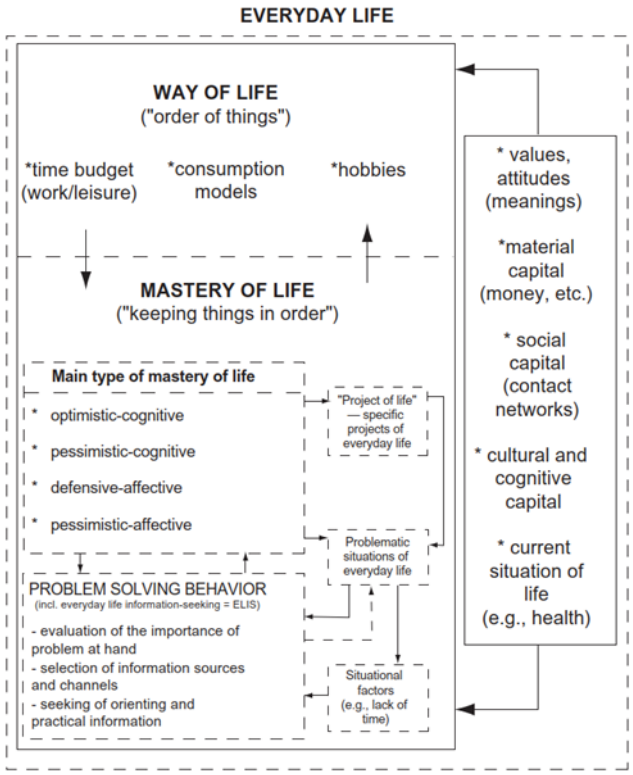

Figure 3. Savolainen's 1995-model of everyday-life information seeking (ELIS) (Savolainen, 1995, p. 268).

The underlying premise of *Johnson*'s (1995) comprehensive model of information seeking (CMIS) (figure 4) is that information is important and has crucial impact on decision making and problem solving, e.g., in settings like organizations, communication and health that primarily has informed his model. He draws on theories from Uses and gratification, the Health Believe Model (HBM) and a Model of Exposure and Appraisal (MEA). Information avoidance, on the other hand, is associated with ignorance and considered a failure implying numerous negative consequences, e.g., workers' feelings of stress and burnout. Later, still echoing the accepted view of IA as negative, Johnson (2009) notes that ignorance is viewed as something that needs to be overcome. He unpacks ignorance into 6 different concepts: 1) known unknowns, 2) unknown unknowns, 3) error, 4) false truths, 5) denial and 6) taboo.

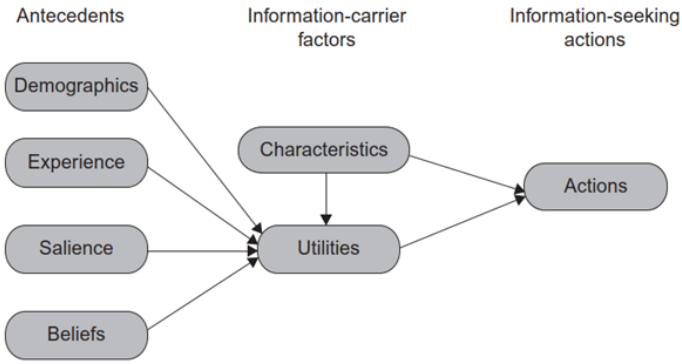

Figure 4. Johnson's (1995) comprehensive model of information seeking (CMIS) (Johnson, 1995, p. 276)

Krikelas's (1983) model of information gathering, seeking and giving (figure 5) differentiates between different types of needs and information all with the aim of satisfying a perceived need and reduce uncertainty. The model seeks to unify concepts examined in user studies without specifying a context. He focuses on information *use*, but acknowledges that some needs can be immediate, others deferred or delayed when gathering information for potential later use (means of IA). In contrast to many models, Krikelas (1983) includes both personal/internal and external knowledge and experiences, hereby challenging a perspective of information beyond literature – but also the dominant view of information use to imply the seeking of external sources.

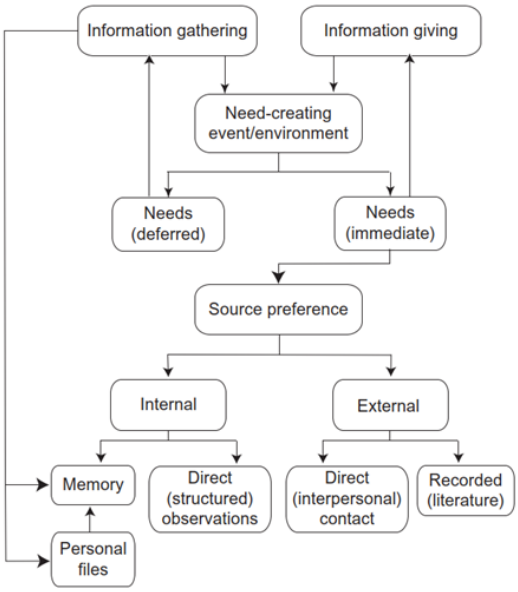

Figure 5. Krikelas's (1983) model of information gathering, seeking and giving (Krikelas, 1983, p. 17).

Though instances of information avoidance to varying degrees are acknowledged by the five IB models and authors, the dominating view in these models favors human information behaviour as an *intentional* activity towards information discovery in response to a need *for* information. This imbalance was explicitly and implicitly reflected by the models' actions in support of information discovery, while behaviour of information avoidance (or non-use) was either absent, explained or mis-conceptualized as 'failure'. When synthesizing the *meanings* of the human information actor inherent in the models, the implied information actor that emerged from the analysis reflected an individual who may occasionally avoid information to escape negative feelings and cope with life, but *ideally* one who behave like an information *seeker*. As the analysis indicates, the structured, yet dynamic, M-E-approach supported the 'unlocking' of new perspectives of the IB-models and the 'reader's' meaning-making, which will be discussed further in the next section.

Discussion

This paper has examined inherent perspectives and views of use (discover) and non-use (information avoidance) in five general IB-models to identify notions of the human information actor (RQ1). To strengthen the analysis and 'meaning making' of the models including notions of the human information actor, a meta-ethnographic methodology approach was employed (RQ2).

As the outcome of the analysis has indicated, the implied information actor emerging from the analysis reflected a reductionistic view of human information engagement, preserving the human actor in an archaic position as *user* and information *seeker* of information, and information as 'good' and wanted. One may argue that most of the examined models were rooted in another time (e.g. guided by a 'library logic' aimed at professional users and developed before the Internet); but

nonetheless these models are still referred to as some of the general and mainstream models of IB in information science and still inspiring new attempts of modeling and unifying information seeking behaviour (Agarwal, 2022). This way, there is a risk of stereotyping the human actor engaging with information.

Only recently, LIS researchers have started to propose alternatives to intentional information use and seeking (Greifeneder & Schlebbe, 2022), as information behaviour is a much more complex and dynamic process between use and non-use of information (Ruthven, 2024). At times '*…it seems that we strive to know both more and less at the same time*' (Case & Given, 2016, p. 118). This dilemma may sometimes harm discovering meaningful information (Matsubayashi, 2023) but may as well lead to new information. Just as you may incidentally discover information while searching for something else (Wilson, 2022, p. 42), you may also incidentally discover relevant information while *avoiding* something else. Discovering and avoiding information involves many of the same behaviour approaches (e.g., passive/active, conscious/unconscious) and actions (e.g., evaluating and sense-making) and they are influenced by the same factors (e.g. individual and situational). Though *differently* motivated, Link et al. (2023) found that information seeking and avoiding are two distinct, not causally, but co-related behaviours regulated by norms of information seeking *and* avoidance behaviour. As Manheim (2014) emphasizes, exploring information non-seeking more holistically may lead to cases of beneficial uses and deeper understanding of non-seeking in general. Today, the human information actor not only needs to be good at seeking, finding and using information, but he/she should also know when and how to critically avoid or ignore information to cope meaningfully with different life situations (Kozyreva et al., 2022).

Regarding the second research question, the M-E-approach was chosen for its strength of producing a new interpretation of data, for instance, a new conceptual understanding and 'storyline', or overarching explanation of a phenomenon (France et al., 2019, p. 11). Disregarding the limitations mentioned below, the proposed analytical approach contributed new insights - and may serve as a steppingstone towards deeper insight into tacit and underlying notions of information behavior impacting how we understand and study human information actors. For example, future research design of IB might address how to collect qualitative and quantitative data on non-use behaviour and information avoidance. This may imply decisions on what to observe and how, what questions to ask in interviews and how to elicit behaviour of information non-use and IA from different data probes (diaries, questionnaires, interviews, visual material). Further, one may ask what a 'critical incident' of information non-use and IA looks like; how can information non-use and IA be explored over time (longitudinal study) and how is IA perceived, experienced or practiced in specific settings and among specific groups of people. Moreover, a new conceptualization of the human information actor is needed in models and frameworks reflecting the dynamic between use and non-use behaviour, which also calls for more research into the strategies, skills and mindset driving or supporting non-use of information compared to information discovery. From a design perspective, a nuanced understanding of the information actor's interactions with information could lead to better IT solutions and suggestions for non-information literacy.

Limitation

Some methodological limitations of this study should be mentioned, also serving future research. The meta-ethnographic methodology was originally developed with the aim of theory building by offering a detailed and systematic approach to synthesize meaning across rich text material. In this study the M-E approach was used in a new way to guide the analysis of IB models, ensure a systematic, transparent and consistent approach, hence, also to establish a distance between researcher and text minimizing the risk of an 'impressionistic' analysis. However, since the analysis was not 'tested' or validated by other researchers, the analysis may reflect a one-sided lens of IB driven by an interest in legitimizing *non-use* of information in favor of a new IB-logic. Further,

Noblit and Hare (1988; 1999) recommended being exhaustive when selecting material, but it is likely that comparing and synthesizing *meaning* within and across only five different models may be too few to really demonstrate the value of M-E for examining IB-models. More models also imply more groupings of material, e.g. using a chronological and/or contextual grouping of IB-models to elicit conceptual trends or changes of IB during time, which could lay the ground for theory development as suggested by Frances et al. (2019) and Ruthven (2022). The order in which the models have been compared and translated into one another may also have impacted the overall interpretation (France et al., 2019, p. 15).

That said, the purpose of the M-E-analysis was not to formulate or suggest an 'ideal' information behavior model or to develop a theory from existing IB-models and frameworks. Rather, the aim was to highlight notions of information behaviour in existing IB-models from a holistic perspective, where non-use like information avoidance and use like information discovery co-exist as common instances of human behaviour to 'master life' (Savolainen, 1995). Likewise, using the theoretical construct of the 'implied actor' inspired by Ulriksen (1999) was not to suggest an 'ideal' information actor, but to make the hidden and implied notions of the human actor visible to the reader for further reflection.

Conclusion

This paper has presented a conceptual analysis of the implicit/explicit notions of the human information actor present in five general information behavior models. Though instances of information avoidance at different acceptance levels were acknowledged, *the implied information actor* emerging from the analysis (still) appeared to be an information *seeker*. This imbalance was explicitly and implicitly reflected by the models' actions in support of information discovery, while behaviour of information avoidance (or non-use) was either absent, explained or mis-conceptualized as 'failure'. Drawing from this, the models reflected a reductionistic view of human information interaction preserving the actor in a limited role ignoring the *varying* needs for information engagement. To strengthen the conceptual analysis and foster deeper insights into underlying notions of information behavior and practices in frameworks and models, a new methodological approach was proposed. Despite the limitations, the meta-ethnographic methodology approach contributed a richer perspective and understanding of the implied information actor. Further research is needed for validation, but it seems that the proposed M-E-approach emphasizing procedural transparency holds potential for generating insights that may affect how we understand, study and support humans' engagement with information.

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