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The Tripartite Matrix of Information Literacy, Critical Thinking and Every Day Life Information Seeking

By

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Abstract

- ▶ *The paper is a conceptual analysis of Reijo Savolainen's literary work on ELIS focusing on the role of critical thinking and information literacy (IL). It aims to explore the interconnectedness of the tripartite matrix of IL, critical thinking and the ELIS model as tools of empowering people with the capacity to make informed decisions for daily living. The methodology used is a conceptual analysis by which the inter-relationship of the three concepts in information seeking were examined. Findings indicate the potential of the three concepts to be used as a theoretical framework for investigating the holistic information experiences of users in diverse contexts. The analyses of the issues raised provide important considerations for the continued exploration of the tripartite concepts in IL research. The study is significant for providing insight into users' information seeking behaviour in diverse everyday life contexts and how they can be supported and empowered to develop IL and critical thinking skills for effective decision making.*
- ▶

Introduction

- ▶ **Concept of Information Literacy (IL)** - Paul Zurkwoski's (1974). The ACRL (2000) definition - set its main concern with the individual's knowledge, skills, and attitudes relating to information use through a series of learning processes.
- ▶ **Current research in IL** – ACRL Framework for IL for Higher Education (2015).
- ▶ **Today IL** - central to the field of librarianship - is viewed as a discipline that shapes the information behaviour of users.
- ▶ IL is instilling the ability to influence decisive thinking and generate critical thinking skills (Bryan, 2014).

IL – Current context of research

- ▶ The research landscape - IL and HEIs: However, changing notions of the concept - A move to other contexts beyond educational settings.
- New areas of analyses are expanding opportunities for investigation into aspects of IL that are vital for:
 - ▶ a) Citizenship and the ability to engage critically in the use of information sources for participatory democracy (Sturges & Gastinger, 2010; IFLA, 2015; Secker, 2018).
 - ▶ b) Economic growth that motivate the development of new and existing enterprises through the intensive use of information sources in ways that create job opportunities (Jerkov, Sofaravijevic & Stanisic, 2015).

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- ▶ c) Personal growth and development of abilities and skills that are effective for every day life challenges (Martzoukou & Abdi, 2017).
- ▶ d) Socially enacted practices of people by which daily activities are undertaken (Lloyd, 2012).
- ▶ e) Health information literacy (Ericksson-Backa, Enwald, Hirvonen & Huvila, 2018).
- ▶ f) Sports and other related physical activities (Sapp & Vaughan, 2017).

Statement of the problem

- ▶ **Contemporary perspectives on IL** - a more critical approach towards examining:
 - Social constructions and political dimensions of LIS services to users in ways that empower them to
 - Question dominant values and beliefs in society (Elmborg, 2012; Tewell, 2015; Secker, 2018).
- ▶ **A theoretical analysis of Reijo Savolainen's literary work on Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS)** over two decades - focusing on the role of IL and critical thinking as important concepts in this regard. It aims to:
- ▶ Explore the **interconnectedness of the tripartite matrix of IL, critical thinking and ELIS contexts** with specific reference to the ways that:
- ▶ Empower people with the capacity to make informed decisions for daily living challenges as ordinary citizens - not related to their formal employment or education.

Research Questions

- ▶ 1. What are the current dimensions of IL to critical thinking and user empowerment?
- ▶ 2. What is the inter-relationship between critical thinking, IL and Savolainen's (1995) ELIS model?
- ▶ 3. In what ways does the tripartite matrix of critical thinking, information literacy and the Savolainen's (1995) ELIS model empower people with the capacity to make informed decisions for daily living?

Methodology

- ▶ A conceptual analysis of the literary work of Reijo Savolainen in ELIS in relation to the concepts of information literacy and critical thinking. Key concepts:
- ▶ **Information literacy:** As defined by the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL, 2000).
- ▶ **Critical thinking:** Clayton-Molina (2016) also defines critical thinking as a skill that requires the ability to distinguish between assumption and facts, suspending personal opinions and bias in favour of objectivity and considering issues from multiple perspectives.
- ▶ **Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS)** in the context of way of life (Savolainen, 1995): “The acquisition of various informational (both cognitive and expressive) elements which people employ to orient themselves in daily life or to solve problems not directly associated with the performance of occupational tasks” (p. 266–267).

IL and information seeking behaviour

- ▶ **Information need** - Research on all aspects of information need stem from concerns surrounding how people use information in their work environments (Saracevic, 2009; Omiunu, 2014).
- ▶ Research in information seeking behaviour – identify, causes/consequences and inter-relationship of activity.
- ▶ The literature of IL and information-seeking behaviour – is aligned to the development of models and theories.
- ▶ This paper examined the relationship between IL and information seeking behaviour as important concepts to the development of ELIS models.



Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS)

- ▶ Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS) - models of information seeking behaviour that seek to understand the processes that surround information seeking and the ways in which people access and use various information sources to meet information needs in everyday life in such areas as:
- ▶ Health, consumption, transportation, recreation, crime and safety, financial matters and other aspects of life not related to formal employment or work practices. Among the major ELIS models include:
- ▶ Sense-Making approach (Dervin, 1998)
- ▶ The Small World Theory (Chatman, 1999)
- ▶ The Ecological Model of ELIS (Williamson, 1998)
- ▶ ELIS in the context of way of life (Savolainen, 1995)
- ▶ The Model of Information Practices (McKenzie, 2003)

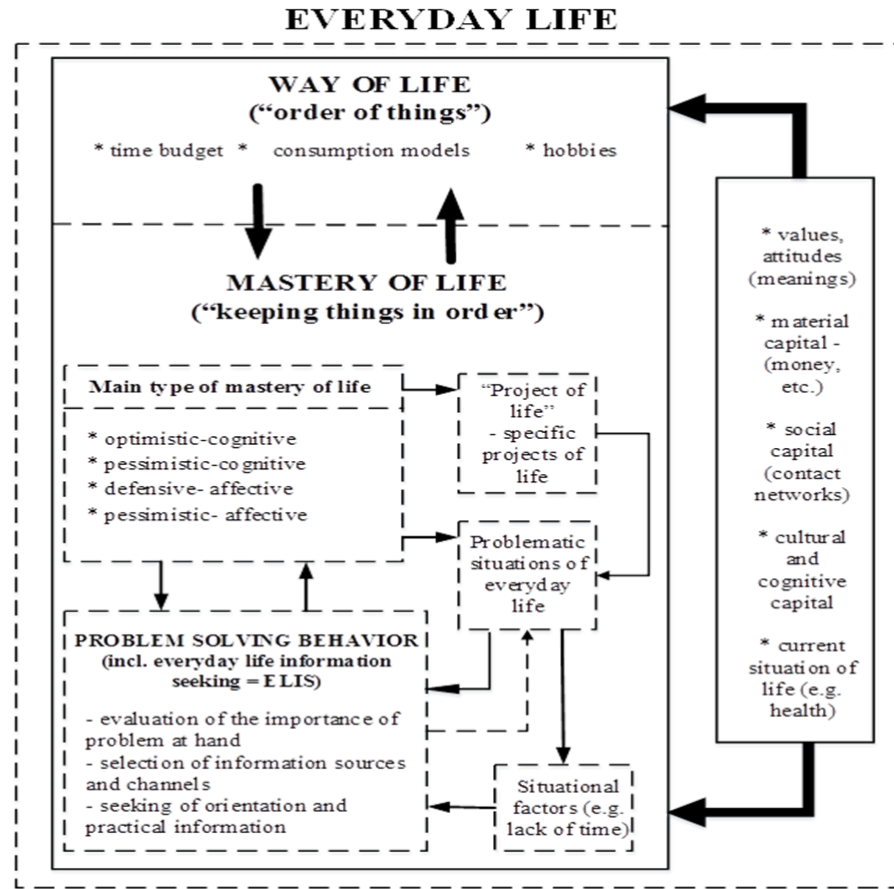
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- ▶ Tom Wilson (1997) – various ways in which people frequently discover information in their everyday life - not involve active or purposeful information seeking but as serendipitous (McKenzie, 2003).
- ▶ The concept of ELIS can be approached from various perspectives; studies in ELIS have explored diverse groups of people such as:
 - ▶ Teenagers (Agosto, & Hughes-Hassell, 2006).
 - ▶ Pre-teens (Meyers, Fisher, & Marcoux, 2009).
 - ▶ Clergymen (Dankasa, 2016).
 - ▶ Public library users (Beyazit & Serap Kurbanoglu, 2017) and also in the context of
 - ▶ Leisure such as hobbies and sports (Jorda, 2009; Case, 2010; Joseph, 2016).
- ▶ **IL and ELIS models:** An evolving area of research within the domain of information seeking behaviour and are useful for developing and enhancing user information seeking skills in everyday life situations (Steinerová, 2016).

Reijo Savolainen's literary work: ELIS in the context of way of life

- ▶ The concept of ELIS - developed by Reijo Savolainen (1995) based on the hypothesis that:
- ▶ An individual's ability to select and use information resources, source preferences and use patterns for everyday life problem solving **are all socially conditioned**.
- ▶ The model is a social scientific concept which provides a broad context by which the social and psychological factors affecting an individuals' every day information seeking can be investigated (Savolainen, 1995).
- ▶ The theoretical nexus for Savolainen's concept of ELIS is based on the sociological idea of "Habitus" developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1984).

ELIS Model



Savolainen's ELIS studies

- ▶ **Practical application:** Savolainen's ELIS model was employed in an empirical study of:
 - ▶ Teachers and industrial workers in Finland (Savolainen, 1995).
 - ▶ Consumers (Savolainen, 2001), the unemployed (Savolainen, 2008b).
 - ▶ The significance of the Internet in seeking for problem-specific and orienting information (Savolainen (1999; Savolainen & Kari, 2004).
 - ▶ ELIS studies on environmental activists (Savolainen, 2007)
 - ▶ Study on the role of social media in everyday information practices (Savolainen; 2008b).
 - ▶ Homebuyers (Savolainen, 2008a)

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- ▶ **Findings** from these studies are:
- ▶ Indicative of how information need is addressed to solve everyday problems by these groups of people.
- ▶ Highlight the use of information source horizons and preferred information seeking behaviour of individuals
- ▶ Show patterns as to the extent people go to in searching for information and the preferences in their search strategies (Savolainen, 2008a).
- ▶ **Methods in Savolainen's studies** - the adoption of the social constructionist approach to information seeking behaviour which considers the social context not only as a factor influencing the individual information user's cognitive processes, but as the primary focus of theoretical attention.

Savolainen: The 2016 ASIS&T Research in Information Science Award

- ▶ These studies informed his preferred term of **ELIS in the context of “way of life”** information seeking which is more associated with an individual’s daily information seeking and specific role in the society.
- ▶ **Savolainen’s studies contribution** - the conceptual and methodological development of ELIS research and also informed a number of other theories and models including :
 - ▶ Elfreda Chatman’s (1999) - ELIS in the Context of Small World,
 - ▶ Kirsty Williamson (1998) - Ecological Model of ELIS,
 - ▶ Pamela McKenzie (2003) - Information Practices, and
 - ▶ Karen Fisher and Charles Naumer, (2006) - Information Grounds
- ▶ All of which have been applied in empirical studies focusing on ELIS of diverse groups.

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- ▶ **Today**, ELIS is his research niche area that is **globally recognized** as:
- ▶ An established area of research within the domain of information seeking behaviour as indicated by:
- ▶ A high number of citations of his work and wider societal impact for over two decades. As at 04 August 2019, **Schematic Scholar** showed **356 citations** of the original Savolainen (1995) article with an average of **18 citations per year from 2017 to 2019**.
- ▶ **ELIS** – old but still influential and applicable – *See*: Rolf's (2017) - the contemporary context of networked mobile technologies in the everyday life of international students.

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- ▶ **Landmark achievements in information behaviour research:** Reijo Savolainen is regarded as among the first scholars to:
- ▶ Introduce a strong focus on the everyday life context.
- ▶ ELIS - as a theoretical/conceptual framework for everyday information seeking and use
- ▶ Strong emphasis of the context of **social and cultural factors** in ways that influence how individuals select and use information sources and channels in everyday life (Jorda, 2009; Aydin, 2017).
- ▶ **The ASIS&T Research in Information Science Award for lifetime research achievement** – A recognition of Savolainen's major contribution to the increasing research focus on ELIS in the sphere of ordinary life (Savolainen, 2017).

Literature review: Analysis of Savolainen's ELIS Model

- ▶ Studies in ELIS model - Examine varied situations of information seeking help to identify gaps in the literature of everyday information seeking behaviour. Such as:
- ▶ Student populations – (Brinkman, Gibson, & Presnell, 2013).
- ▶ Senior citizens in a community – (Gray, Snarr, Vallance & Zero, 2005).
- ▶ In ordinary or pleasurable contexts such as leisure and hobbies – (Yadamsuren & Erdelez, 2011; Joseph, 2016).
- ▶ Shows the value of the ELIS model in the information seeking practices of users and Savolainen's ability to investigate diverse social contexts in the light of daily life occurrences.

Application of the ELIS model in IL

- ▶ **ELIS and IL:** That take place within an everyday life context is connected to searching for, critically evaluating and using information effectively to solve everyday problems (Martzoukou & Abdi, 2017).
- ▶ ELIS and IL studies - a developing area. Examples:
- ▶ **Students populations** – (Head & Eisenberg, 2009).
- ▶ **Leisure and hobbies** - studies conducted with implications for developing IL skills for example, gourmet cooks (Hartel, 2006), food bloggers (Cox & Blake, 2011), online museum visitors (Skov, 2013).
- ▶ Stebbins (2009) - Research in ELIS **and impact of IL** in people's everyday lives - differentiates between serious and casual leisure information seeking.

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- ▶ **With specific reference to IL:**
- ▶ Demasson, Partridge and Bruce (2016) investigated the ways in which people engaged in serious leisure activity.
- ▶ **ELIS and IL in citizenship** - an important condition for civic participation and engagement, health and well-being and informed citizenship (Martzoukou & Abdi, 2017). Such studies are premised on the need to establish a strong link between IL and empowering citizens for participatory democracy (Johanna, 2017).
- ▶ **The Alexandria Declaration** (IFLA, 2015) - Encourage governments and inter-governmental agencies to pursue policies and programmes in this respect.
- ▶ In this regard also, it is noted that within the **African context** where democratic processes are gradually taking roots, developing IL skills in ELIS is a key resource by which people can be empowered to contribute to policies that directly affect their daily lives (Ayee, 2007).

Value of ELIS to IL

- ▶ ELIS and IL - Existing empirical research - limited and lacks a holistic view. (Martzoukou & Abdi, 2017).
- ▶ ELIS and IL - **The value of Savolainen's (1995) model:**
- ▶ It is among the few research-based models of information seeking behaviour that is linked to the context of the research by:
- ▶ Its ability to focus on non-active information seeking in ways that reflect the social concept of information practices in diverse contexts thus
- ▶ Provides a more general understanding of the broader socio-cultural conditions within which individuals operate in information seeking (Hartel, 2003; Tuominen, Savolainen, & Talja, 2005; Aydin, 2017).

The tripartite matrix: IL, critical thinking and ELIS – analyses and findings

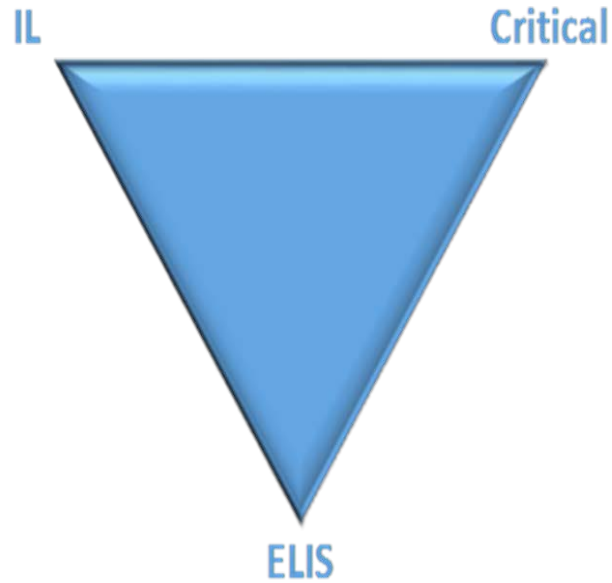
- ▶ Examine the interconnectedness of the 3 concepts in the **context of the research questions** of the paper:

RQ1. What are the current dimensions of IL to critical thinking and user empowerment?

- ▶ Definitions of the concept of critical thinking implies the ability to have problem solving skills for effective decision-making in ELIS.
- ▶ Current dimensions of information use indicated by advances in technological applications emphasize the value of critical thinking and IL skills for users as important tools of empowerment in everyday life.
- ▶ The acquisition of functional literacies that are transferable to new contexts and changing digital innovations are vital for enhancing lifelong learning skills in ELIS (Bryan, 2014).

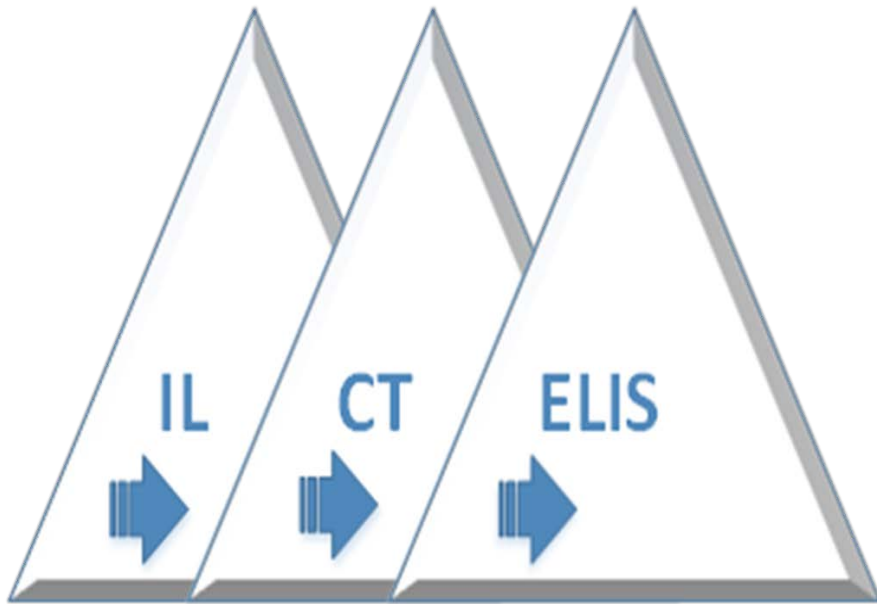
RQ 2: What is the inter-relationship between IL, Critical thinking and ELIS?

The Tripartite Matrix: Figure 2



- ▶ As depicted Figure 1, IL and critical thinking skills above the triangle are indicated as the determining factors for the effective utilisation of information sources which stress the importance of a critical approach to information use in diverse contexts of ELIS.
- ▶ Within these converging contexts therefore, ELIS for problem solving is increasingly dependent on the critical selection and use of relevant information sources by the user.
- ▶ This conceptualization – IL Mindset or ELIL (Martzoukou and Abdi, 2017).

RQ 3: In what ways do the tripartite matrix of IL, critical thinking and ELIS empower people with the capacity to make informed decision making for daily living?



- ▶ Critical life situations - alter expected, stable and routine daily activities are compelling people to seek relevant information. In such situations;
- ▶ The value of IL and critical thinking is seen as an empowering tool for informed decision-making (Martzoukou & Abdi, 2017; Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2019).
- ▶ Savolainen's (1995) description of the two major components of ELIS, that is:
- ▶ “Order of things” and mastery of life, and “keeping things in order” are seen to be prioritized subjectively and objectively by the individual in decision making in such situations.

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- ▶ Thus as shown in Figure 3, IL and critical thinking skills in ELIS enable users to:
- ▶ Carefully analyse and reflect on how information is applied to everyday challenges
- ▶ Question the dominant values and beliefs in their own socio-cultural contexts in ways that empower them with the capacity to make informed decisions for daily living (Elmborg, 2012).

Summary

- ▶ From the review of the literature and analyses of the research questions of the paper - the research contexts of IL, critical thinking and ELIS has:
- ▶ Allowed for **a shift in focus** from the individual as a unit of analysis to the broader socio-cultural context (Tuominen, Savolainen, & Talja, 2005).
- ▶ Also, the shift in IL research from the educational and workplace contexts to aspects relating to leisure, health and the political dimensions of IL for active participation in democratic processes which are strong indication of **the growing all-encompassing nature of IL as being linked to ELIS** (IFLA, 2015; Johanna, 2017; Secker, 2018).
- ▶ The **social constructionist approach** in Savolainen's (1995) ELIS model - provides a **potential theoretical framework** for studying the holistic information experiences of the individual in a way that aligns with and contributes to the wider discourse of IL, critical thinking and ELIS in diverse contexts.

Recommendations and Conclusion

- ▶ The use and application of ELIS in the context of way of life model and IL is gaining more influence and **expanding the research inquiry base** into areas outside of academic and professional contexts. As research in IL and ELIS continue to evolve:
- ▶ **Practical implications** could provide further insight on how people in diverse everyday life contexts can be supported and empowered to develop effective IL and critical thinking skills for problem solving particularly the information-poor or disadvantaged (Gray, Snarr, Vallance & Zero, 2005).
- ▶ **The combined matrix of IL, critical thinking and ELIS** can be considered as a set of survival skills by which users are empowered and capable of adapting themselves to changing everyday life information environments for informed decision making in diverse situations.
- ▶ **Studies in IL, critical thinking and ELIS** are affording the opportunity for a more holistic research in information seeking behaviour including aspects in leisure and hobbies providing a more general understanding of the broader socio-cultural conditions in information use (Hartel, 2010; Hicks & Lloyd, 2016; Demasson, Partridge and Bruce, 2016).

THANK YOU

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