Conference Reports

Design through a clear "experiential lens": Information experience design tutorial held at 2019 ASIS&T annual meeting

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"Understanding people and their experiences of information and technology" (Abdi & Davis, 2019) is at the heart of information experience design (IXD). Where researchers may put behavioral, technological, or educational elements in the analytical crosshairs, a holistic view of information is foregrounded in IXD, recognizing that information are intrinsic to our greater experiences with the world around us.

This human-centric message kicked off *Information Experience Design: Activating Information Research in Practice*, the full-day post-conference tutorial led by Dr. Kate Davis, University of Southern Queensland, and Dr. Elham Sayyad Abdi, University of the Pacific. *Activating* is an excellent descriptor, because the day flew by with non-stop discussion and hands-on design practice.

Built upon the emerging domain of research and practice known as information experience, the tutorial demonstrated how incorporating design principles can bring the outcomes of information experience research into problem-solving enterprises. Information experience (IX) is defined as an emerging body of theory and research that aims to broadly illuminate subjective, contextualized human interactions and engagement with information (Bruce et al., 2014). Abdi and Davis explained how IX can be both the object of research and an overarching domain of research and practice. Although they briefly explained distinctions between IX and established spheres, such as information behavior and information practice, the tutorial emphasized methods to bring research findings into practical outcomes that improve people's lives.

Capturing a holistic view of something as broad and subjective as experience may seem to put us outside the realm of data that can be directly applied to practice – however, the tutorial presented techniques that effectively derive specific solutions to findings of information experience research. Using their own published research (Baretta, Abdi & Bruce, 2018; Davis, 2015) as case studies, Abdi and Davis demonstrated how to apply IX research findings to solve problems from IX research comes opportunities for "interventions" to improve information experiences of specific or general populations.

In small groups, attendees put these techniques to the test using a hypothetical research and design scenario. Our organizers provided a mock interview recording and the groups were introduced to "Belinda," a single, working mother returning to university to complete her degree. Our task was first to analyze the interview and listen for problems, pain points, or needs where an academic library might be prepared to offer services. Using this single interview as a test case, we discussed how analysis would work across multiple interviews and how we might look for similarities and/or variations in findings.

From our interpretative analysis, the groups identified Belinda's specific challenges or pain points, and brainstormed ways the library might offer support or services to meet these needs. This ideation process led to a narrowing of options until each group had one concept they were prepared to prototype. In real-world design scenarios, this step is often achieved in phases of increasingly detailed plans and prototypes; for the purposes of our tutorial, we collaborated on drafting a storyboard for our idea, to demonstrate the touchpoints between Belinda and the library. We concluded this exercise with a discussion of the testing and development methods that could ensure our awareness of Belinda and her needs remain top of mind throughout design iterations.

Tutorial attendees were invited to see information experience as a domain of research that "gives us an experiential lens through which to view people's engagement with information" (Abdi & Davis, 2019) – which means we might apply that IX lens to a range of research questions and within a number of existing bodies of theory. In so doing, we aim to suspend our own worldviews and adopt an empathetic ear when listening to our patrons and customers. The objective of IX research and design is to not impose external assumptions about information needs, goals and expectations – but instead to develop an operational understanding of the contextual dependencies and situated information experiences of those we serve.

As presented by Drs. Abdi and Davis, IXD brings proven design principles into a fresh approach to human-centric information sciences. The goal of IXD is not always product or system design, although that may be a result in many cases. Instead, IXD allows us to put aside our personal perspectives and assumptions, and instead foreground our R&D activities with a holistic view of information experiences, which contrasts with some classic service design principles with more transactional goals. Like other human-centric design methods, IXD champions a design mindset which involves embracing ambiguity and the fluidity of human experience, with an optimistic and empathetic ethos. IXD brings an experiential lens to unify the design sciences with information sciences.

References

Workshop materials and slides can be found at http://katedavis.info/2019/11/information-experience-design-activating-information-research-in-practice/.

Abdi, E. S., & Davis, K. (2019). Information experience design: Activating information research in practice. Workshop at the 82nd Annual Meeting of the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T), October 19–23, Melbourne, VIC, Australia. Materials available at http://katedavis.info/2019/11/information-experience-design-activating-information-research-in-practice/.

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