Information Behavior on the Move: 2013 ASIS&T SIG/USE Research Symposium
by Denise E. Agosto, Lorri Mon and Rong Tang

EDITOR’S SUMMARY
The 13th Annual SIG/USE Research Symposium focused on ways mobile technologies have influenced information needs, seeking and use. In her keynote address, Caroline Haythornthwaite framed movement as changing contributorship, interactions and participation in multiple knowledge communities. A series of Ignite talks on the common theme of mobility followed, with topics ranging from mobile phones as the preferred Internet access device, credibility of mobile applications and online resources and public libraries’ use of social media and mobile applications to mobile apps promoting health information literacy and supporting teleworking. Small groups brainstormed on opportunities, challenges and research ideas inspired by the theme. Annual SIG/USE awards recognized scholars for innovative work on topics including refugees’ information seeking, factors influencing scholars’ data sharing and drawings as visual representations of information. The symposium closed with encouragement to consider how information on the move influences perspectives and research into information behavior.

KEYWORDS
information use  social web
search behavior  mobile applications
information needs  mobile communications
user generated content  honors

SIS&T SIG/USE held its 13th Annual Research Symposium at the ASIS&T Annual Meeting in Montreal on November 2, 2013. Information Behavior on the Move: Information Needs, Seeking and Use in the Era of Mobile Technologies drew more than 50 information behavior researchers, professionals, students and others interested in examining the implications of increasingly mobile information environments on the study of information behavior. The symposium featured a keynote address by the University of British Columbia’s Caroline Haythornthwaite, a series of 10 Ignite talks, a research award presentation by Joy Joung Hwa Koo of Mongolia International University and the presentation of the 2013 SIG/USE awards.

The 2013 SIG/USE Symposium Planning Committee was co-chaired by Mega Subramaniam, University of Maryland, and Beth St. Jean, University of Maryland. Committee members included Isto Huvila, Åbo Akademi University; Eric Meyers, University of British Columbia; Pei Lei, Nanjing University; Michael Olsson, University of Technology Sydney; Maria Souden, University College Dublin; and Xiaojun (Jenny) Yuan, University at Albany, State University of New York. Amanda Waugh and Adam Worrell were the official Tweeters and Storifyers for the event. The Symposium Planning Committee worked with SIG/USE chair Denise Agosto, chair-elect Rong Tang and immediate past chair Lorri Mon in planning the event.

Keynote Address
Caroline Haythornthwaite, director and professor in the School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia, delivered the keynote address. In “Expertise on the Move,” Haythornthwaite addressed the meanings and implications of mobile in the modern information world. She considered what expertise means in light of
the increase of the role of crowds and communities in the production and evaluation of information and asked the audience to think about what motivates people to contribute to bodies of co-constructed knowledge.

In considering why we can say that not just information, but expertise, is “on the move,” Haythornthwaite stressed the importance of understanding individual and shared motivations for contributing to knowledge communities, highlighting the role of what Wellman has called “networked individualism”[1], in which contributors have many partial memberships in many different networks. Haythornthwaite suggested that levels of participation vary from networked community to community, in a continuum between lightweight and heavyweight participation. In either crowd-based or community-based environments, motivations to participate can be personal or shared, based on either internal or external need. In general, lightweight/crowd-sourced information sources have a low bar to entry, and they use “bragging rights” to motivate and reward contribution. These changes have important implications for learning and education, since via the Internet information and expertise have broken the bonds of print and formal institutions, enabling the current shift from learning being self-directed toward a more participatory learning culture in both formal and informal learning environments.

In light of these changes, Haythornthwaite suggests a social network perspective for studying information behavior on the move, emphasizing interactions and actors tied by relations that form networks; she also suggests that new mobile information environments represent a change in the authority and control of information and knowledge. According to Haythornthwaite, information “wants to be free” – free of location and time constraints. She concluded by proposing six dimensions to consider in information systems design: contributions, contributors and their networks, learning and commitment, authority and control, recognition-reputation-reward, and motivations and coordination.

Following the keynote address, Haythornthwaite led the audience in a small-group activity focusing on the information technology design implications of these six dimensions in various information contexts.

**Ignite Talks**

The next portion of the symposium featured 10 refereed Ignite talks, selected by jury from a total of 25 submissions. In the first talk, Rafa Absar and Heather O’Brien presented “Information Behavior as Shared Experience in Mobile Interactions,” a diary and interview study of 19 participants. They found 28% of participants’ searching activities to be social in nature, with shared experiences and shared meanings created through shared social searching and other online interactions.

Renee Bennett-Kapusniak, Hye Jung Han and Wooseob Jeong then discussed their “Digital Inclusion Survey.” Based on 638 telephone interviews, they found 69% of respondents had mobile phones, yet 83% still used computers on a regular basis. Mobile devices were the most important way to access the Internet for 88% of people who owned mobile phones, with 70% of students using phones more frequently than computers to access the Internet. The top three reasons for using the Internet were for communication and social network participation, for obtaining news and other information and for entertainment purposes, with 55% of respondents wanting smartphone and/or tablet training at public libraries.

For the third Ignite talk, Wonchan Choi presented his work with Robert Capra about “Credibility Assessment of Online Resources and Perceived Quality of Mobile Applications.” The researchers used semi-structured interviews with older adults to study the concept of credibility in relation to health information websites, showing credibility to lie at the intersection of trustworthiness and expertise.

Next, Lorri Mon presented “Libraries on the Move: The Public Library in Social Space,” an examination of U.S. public libraries’ use of social media and mobile apps for the delivery of library services. She traced the skyrocketing development of mobile apps for libraries and mapped the engagement of libraries in social space. Her work examines the lifecycle of engagement with particular technologies and investigates how libraries present themselves to different audiences in different digital environments.

Adam Worrall then presented “A Boundary-Centric Approach to Studying Mobile Information Sharing.” Worrall considered how individual
and group information sharing spans group, community and other boundaries, suggesting that information sharing can be physical or social and sometimes both.

Moving into the arena of youth and game design, Ingrid Erikson presented “Playing the Neighborhood: Learning, Game Design and Mediated Storytelling While on the Move,” in which the project leaders are teaching children to use iPhones to create gaming apps. Their project represents a switch from thinking of children as information and technology consumers to thinking of them as creators of digital content.

In the seventh Ignite talk of the day, Safirotu Khoir, Jia Tina Du and Andy Koronios discussed “Information Behavior Captured by Study Participants' Mobile Phones.” They used questionnaires, Photovoice [2] and interviews to study the everyday life information behaviors of immigrants to Australia. They recommended combining the two data-gathering techniques to enable the creation of rich portrayals of participants’ information behaviors, but cautioned that combining the methods has challenges, such as difficulty in understanding the context and meaning of participants’ photos.

Next, Rachel Magee discussed “Methods for Movement: Capturing Compelling Mobile Data with Voicemail Diaries,” focusing on the voicemail data collection method she has developed for her dissertation study of teens’ use of technologies in their everyday lives. The method is a low-tech technique for capturing participants’ audio diaries, enabling self-reflection on the fly and use in a private personal settings.

In “HackHealth: Engaging Youth in Health-Related Information Seeking, Sharing and Use,” Beth St. Jean, Mega Subramaniam, Natalie Greene Taylor, Rebecca Follman, Gary Goldberg and Dana Casciotti described an NLM-funded project that is seeking to promote interest in health sciences among middle school students from disadvantaged backgrounds while teaching them to improve their ability to look for and evaluate health-related information. The project works with middle school librarians and employs a range of digital technologies, including mobile apps.

Lastly, in “Information Behavior beyond the Office Doorway and Back,” Leslie Thomson analyzed mobile information behavior in non-permanent work locales. She studied work-related information behavior in home offices, coffee shops and other non-traditional office environments, gathering data at multiple points per day to understand how non-permanent work environments influence users’ information needs and uses.

Breakout Session: Small Group Discussions

Building on the Ignite presentations, symposium chairs Subramaniam and St. Jean led the audience in a small-group activity focused on bringing together topics and ideas from the individual presentations. Each small group brainstormed challenges and constraints of studying information on the move, opportunities and benefits of studying information on the move, research ideas inspired by the Ignite presentations and other thoughts related to the study of information on the move. The combined summary of responses, illustrated in Table 1, is also available online via Padlet at http://padlet.com/wall/siguse2013.

Results of the breakout groups following the Ignite presentations at the 2013 ASIS&T SIG/USE Symposium
TABLE 1. Information Behavior on the Move: Research Opportunities and Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects &amp; Themes</th>
<th>Opportunities &amp; Benefits</th>
<th>Challenges &amp; Constraints</th>
<th>Research Ideas Inspired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Context</td>
<td>Context is complex and key</td>
<td>Defining mobile; capturing context</td>
<td>The importance of comparing mobile information behavior or demographic groups and in varying context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Capturing</td>
<td>The mobility of data capturing technologies to enable the capturing of richer contexts</td>
<td>Trying to capture mobile behavior across devices &amp; time; capturing context; capturing mobile data</td>
<td>New method for data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Types</td>
<td>Mobile information behaviors and interaction naturally generate a broad range of data types</td>
<td>Capturing mobile data</td>
<td>New types of data to collect and to analyze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Constraints</td>
<td>Managing constraints of the research context: privacy issues, institutional review board restrictions, the fleeting nature of mobile communication events and information behaviors, etc.</td>
<td></td>
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The small-group exercise results suggest some interesting possibilities for the theme of next year’s symposium, such as capturing context in information behavior research. The 2014 SIG/USE Research Symposium planning committee is currently thinking about how to build on this work in next year’s symposium.

Elfreda A. Chatman Research Award Presentations

For this year’s research awards presentation, 2012 SIG/USE Elfreda A. Chatman Research Award winner Joy Joung Hwa Koo discussed the results of her research project, conducted with Yong Wan Cho and Melissa Gross of Florida State University. In “Is Ignorance Really Bliss? Understanding the Role of Information-Seeking in Coping with Severe Traumatic Stress Among Refugees,” Koo and her colleagues studied North Korean refugees living in South Korea, with a focus on the relationship between levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and refugee information needs and information-seeking behaviors.

The researchers used a survey to measure participants’ levels of PTSD, their engagement in active information seeking and the types of information sources they used, with follow-up interviews to probe these topics more deeply. As a group, the refugees had left North Korea hoping to escape starvation, poverty and the lack of hope for a better future. After arriving in South Korea, they tended to experience culture shock, neglect or discrimination, communication difficulties and financial difficulties. Most of them needed information to help them adjust to their new environment and to find work. Major sources of information included the local refugee center, churches, mass media and other North Korean refugees.

Koo, Cho and Gross found no relationship between levels of PTSD and information source types used. However, PTSD was found to be a factor in active versus passive information seeking. Participants with higher levels of PTSD tended to seek information more passively than those with lower levels of PTSD. Those with higher levels of PTSD engaged in increased levels of information avoidance and were often afraid to ask questions and to seek help from others, making their adjustment to their new country slower and more difficult than for those with lower levels of PTSD.

Koo suggested that in order to meet refugees’ information needs more effectively service providers should move from a first-come, first-serve service model to one that includes more actively seeking out refugees who might be

Elfreda A. Chatman Research Award winner Joy Joung Hwa Koo discusses the results of her research project, conducted with Yong Wan Cho and Melissa Gross of Florida State University, at the 2013 ASIS&T SIG/USE Symposium.
hesitant to pursue available services. She stressed the importance of user-friendly interface design and mediators who can help refugees use unfamiliar information systems and sources.

Looking beyond their specific population, Koo, Cho and Gross’s work can help us to understand how stressful life experiences influence information behaviors and how to design information sources and systems that take into account both affective and cultural factors.

2013 SIG/USE Research and Travel Awards

This year SIG/USE received a large number of submissions for the annual SIG/USE research and travel awards. Awards committee chair Gary Burnett presented this year’s winning submissions at the symposium and reminded the audience to consider applying for the 2014 awards competition. More information about the SIG/USE awards is located at http://siguse.wordpress.com/awards/.

The 2013 Best Information Behavior Conference Paper Award went to “Institutional and Individual Influences on Scientists’ Data Sharing Behaviors: A Multilevel Analysis” by Youngseek Kim, University of Kentucky, and Jeffrey M. Stanton, Syracuse University. Their paper investigates institutional and individual factors that influence scientists’ data-sharing behaviors across disciplines, drawing on institutional theory and the theory of planned behavior. The findings suggest that because practices, requirements and expectations may differ across and even within disciplines, future research should focus on those differences, as well as on data reuse issues and data sharing.

Vanessa Kitzie, Eric Choi and Chirag Shah, all of Rutgers University, received the 2013 Best Information Behavior Conference Poster Award for “From Bad to Good: An Investigation of Question Quality and Transformation.” The poster considers the problem of question quality in social question-answering services such as Yahoo! Answers. Kitzie, Choi and Shah’s work reveals the elements that make a difference in question quality in these services. Their findings have implications for developing systems that can automatically flag questions of poor quality.

The 2013 Elfreda A. Chatman Research Proposal Award went to “Information Needs: A Conceptualization, Operationalization and Empirical Validation” by Waseem Afzal, Charles Sturt University. The proposal draws on psychology and LIS literatures with the goal of conceptualizing, operationalizing and empirically validating a construct of information needs. The study has strong potential to contribute to our understanding of information behavior by providing concrete linkages between theory and empirical research. Afzal will present the results of the work at the 2014 SIG/USE Research Symposium.

Jenna Hartel, Karen Pollock and Rebecca Noon, all of University of Toronto, received the first-ever SIG/USE Innovation Award for their panel presentation, “The Concept Formerly Known as Information.” The panel examined visual data in the form of drawings from participants as a novel way to investigate how people define information in their everyday lives. The awards committee deemed the theoretical focus, data collection method and panel format all innovative and compelling and the integration of visual, non-verbal research methods into the study of information and information behavior as showing strong potential to open up and expand how we think of information.

Doctoral candidate Devon Greyson, University of British Columbia, received the 2013 SIG/USE Student Travel Award for her proposal entitled “Rethinking Information Boundaries Across Disciplinary Boundaries.” Greyson’s research focuses on public health interventions targeting high-risk populations, using an information practice [3] perspective. Her investigation of the ways in which health information interventions do and do not interact with personal information practices has important implications for how those interventions can have positive influence on health behaviors.

Lastly, long-time ASIS&T member Nick Belkin, Rutgers, received the 2013 SIG/USE Outstanding Contribution to Information Behavior Research award. This award promotes scholars who have, over a period of time, contributed in an outstanding way to the development of the information behavior research field. In giving him this award, the SIG/USE Cabinet recognized Belkin as a pioneering researcher who introduced the concept of information-seeking behavior to the field of information retrieval and who showed researchers in a broad range of fields how information behavior research can have important implications for designing and developing...
information retrieval systems. In receiving the 2013 Outstanding Contributions to Information Behavior Award, Belkin joins the SIG/USE Academy of Fellows. The full list of Fellows can be found online at http://siguse.wordpress.com/academy-of-fellows/.

Symposium Conclusion and Wrap-Up

Incoming SIG/USE chair Rong Tang offered closing remarks for the 2013 SIG/USE Research Symposium. She prompted the audience to continue to think about information behavior on the move in their future work and studies, asking the following thought-provoking questions:

- Has information behavior ever not been on the move?
- Does on-the-move technology take us to a new horizon of information behavior?
- Or is it a broader on-the-move context that takes us there?
- What is new, magnificently interesting and fascinatingly exciting about “information behavior on the move” and its research front?

For more information about the symposium, visit the Storify page created by Adam Worrall and Amanda Waugh at http://storify.com/adamworrall4/siguse2013.

Resources Mentioned in the Article