

# Bringing out the everyday in everyday information behavior

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to argue that scholars in the information behavior (IB) field should embrace the theoretical framework of the everyday to explore a more holistic view of IB.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper describes the theory of the everyday and delineates four opportunities offered by scholars of the everyday. The paper concludes with three examples that highlight what a more everyday-focused everyday information behavior might look like.

**Findings** – The theory of the everyday provides a useful theoretical framework to ground research addressing the everyday world as well as useful concepts for analysis and research methodology.

**Originality/value** – The theoretical framework of the everyday contributes to IB research by providing a theoretical justification for work addressing everyday life as well as useful concepts for analysis. The paper also outlines the benefits of integrating methods influenced by institutional ethnography, a methodology previously used to address the nuances of the everyday world.

**Keywords** Research methods, Cultural theory, Information behaviour, Critical theory, Everyday life, Everyday information behaviour

**Paper type** Conceptual paper

## Introduction

As library and information scientists, we do not have a tradition of focusing on normative problems in which we can approach a line of inquiry with some measure of certainty. We cannot be sure that our areas are well defined and that our problems are important. We have no central theory or body of interrelated theories we can view as “middle range” (Chatman, 1996, p. 193).

In the 20 years since Chatman published the above quotation, considerable work has been done to develop and build models and theories throughout the library and information science literature, especially among information behavior (IB) scholars (Case, 2012; Fisher *et al.*, 2009). Although great strides into theory development in IB research have been made, many aspects still lack theoretical grounding and justification. This paper focuses on one of those aspects: research addressing everyday information behavior (EIB)[1]. Most of the theoretical work in IB and EIB use concepts and models from other disciplines to help explain behavior, but not to situate the research theoretically. Scholars under the umbrella of IB study a variety of individuals in different roles, occupations, and demographics without a theoretical framework that explains their relationships or evaluates their importance to the wider goal of understanding information behavior (Case, 2012).

Recently, IB scholars have begun to expand their domain of interest to include everyday contexts. Although this expansion seems logical, the connection of everyday IB literature to the more traditional IB literature has not been fully delineated. Major theoretical works in EIB such as everyday life information seeking (Savolainen, 1995, 2009), life in the round (Chatman, 1999), and information grounds (Pettigrew, 1999), largely address the context immediately surrounding an individual's information behaviors. They do not articulate the rationale for exploring the everyday or how it relates to information behaviors in other contexts. IB and EIB scholars have built theories and models to explain behavior, but they have not yet used theory to ground their approach to the everyday domain or the rationale for studying it (Fisher *et al.*, 2009).



The theory of the everyday and its fundamental belief that “the world of the everyday life is consequently man’s fundamental and paramount reality” (Schütz and Luckmann, 1973, p. 3) provides a theoretical framework for approaching and studying the everyday as well as a justification of its importance to IB researchers. EIB is still a relatively new research domain and as such it is an amalgam of old and new concepts and methods. This paper adds to the EIB literature by situating and defining the everyday and by suggesting a theoretical framework that can help define the field. To demonstrate the usefulness of the theory of the everyday to EIB, this paper presents four opportunities from everyday scholarship that can extend IB research and move toward a more holistic understanding of how individuals interact with information. This paper begins by defining the theory of the everyday, then briefly describes the history of EIB. The paper then presents four opportunities from critical and cultural theory scholars that employ the theory of the everyday to highlight how these concepts can be integrated into EIB. The paper concludes with three examples to show what grounding EIB in the theory of the everyday looks like.

### **The theory of the everyday**

The theory of the everyday articulates the everyday world as primary to all other aspects of life. The everyday is more than simply non-work contexts (Savolainen, 1995, 2009); it is the totality of lived experience, so all aspects of life are represented in the everyday (Lefebvre, 2008). According to IB scholars, the theory of the everyday enables scholars to address IBs in spaces that have previously been overlooked as well as to remove artificial borders between work and non-work contexts. It is in the everyday where our understanding of reality is created (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), and that understanding impacts our information behaviors and the very concept of what information means.

The theoretical concept of the everyday was primarily established by Henri Lefebvre (2008) and Alfred Schütz (Schütz and Luckmann, 1973). Schütz was a Phenomenologist and Social Scientist who believed in the primacy of the everyday and that it should be the focus of scientific inquiry. A scholar fascinated by social scientific methods, Schütz argued that:

The sciences that would interpret and explain human action and thought must begin with a description of the foundational structures of what is prescientific, the reality which seems self-evident to men remaining within the natural attitude. This reality is the everyday life-world (p. 3).

For Schütz, the everyday was important because it influences an individual’s every thought and action. Much of the everyday is quotidian and unnoticed, which is precisely why it is the centerpiece to examine individuals and the larger social structures around them.

The other major scholar to define and encourage scholarship in the everyday, Lefebvre (2008), saw the banality of the everyday as an opportunity for revolution. Like Schütz, Lefebvre believed that “the science of mankind must become a study of everyday life,” because the everyday is where “genuine reality” can be found and “genuine change” can take place (p. 137). Lefebvre described the everyday as the nexus of work, leisure, and family life. “It is their unity and their totality” (p. 31). The totality of the everyday means that research should focus on the banal and quotidian parts of life along with the more traditional IB domains, such as work and serious leisure (Hartel, 2003). Since little research has focused on the quotidian aspects of life, the quotidian is the first place that EIB scholars should look to research information behaviors embodied in the totality of lived experience.

Although neither Lefebvre (2008) and Schütz (Schütz and Luckmann, 1973) were primarily interested in information’s role in the everyday, their call to begin work in the everyday applies to studies of IB. The term “everyday” has never been fully examined by IB scholars, and the theory of the everyday as proposed by Lefebvre and Schütz highlights the importance, uniqueness, and supremacy of the everyday. Their perspective can be used to situate EIB as a field of study by placing EIB at the center of IB research, embracing the

connectedness of the everyday world and rejecting artificial distinctions between work and other contexts.

EIB has previously addressed the everyday only as what is left over from other types of IB research, which limits the scope and focus of the field. Research into a more everyday-focused EIB will challenge assumptions within the field, while expanding it toward new areas of research. The quotidian interactions of everyday life have not been the focus of IB, but without understanding them we will not be able to truly have a holistic understanding of how information behaviors impact the lives of individuals or improve their access to important information. The knowledge gained from this new research focus will likely have implications for improving information access and reception in traditional information institutions, such as a library, as well as in more banal information spaces, such as a shoe store. By studying how individuals use information in the quotidian parts of life, an everyday-focused EIB can gain deeper insights into how all people interact with information in the grocery store, as much as in the doctor's office or the library, because of the similarities in the ways in which individuals typically approach these three domains.

### **The origins of EIB**

The scholarship and concepts of EIB and IB trace their roots back to a research study in 1902 that examined information use in a library collection (Case, 2012). Studies addressing users as well as their information sources or systems became increasingly prevalent in the 1920s. Slowly, the field expanded to include multiple channels of information as well as information needs and dissemination. Most of the post-war research focused on the information needs and uses of scientists and engineers, professions that were becoming increasingly important to US defense and economic growth. The information interactions in these studies typically involved domain experts carrying out work tasks and using formal information systems.

Recent research in IB continues to use the concepts of task-oriented studies of the past, and many of the field's most well-known studies focus on traditional domain experts and sources of information in information-rich workplaces (Ellis, 1993; Byström and Järvelin, 1995)[2].

In a highly structured and controlled environment, such as a workplace, tasks and sources of information can readily be identified and observed, and the concepts that comprise the information-seeking model can therefore be confirmed with assurance. When researchers branch out from structured information environments, however, they find it more challenging to analyze or even identify instances of IB concepts. Therefore, in order for IB to successfully expand into new domains, such as the quotidian aspects of the everyday, scholars must grapple with the assumptions that underlie the concepts, theories, and models in the literature and the research environments that produced them.

### *EIB in transition*

As the field of IB has grown and evolved, scholars have left the workplace and library to examine other clearly information-rich areas of everyday life. One domain that has become a major focus of EIB is healthcare (e.g. Ankem, 2007; Johnson and Meischke, 1993; McKenzie, 2003; Pettigrew, 1999; Veinot, 2009). While this scholarship includes topics as varied as the information networks of HIV/AIDS patients and the information behavior of elderly individuals at a community foot care clinic, the majority of these studies focus on topics far removed from most people's typical everyday experiences.

One example in this area is McKenzie's (2003) work creating a model of varied information practices of women who are pregnant with twins. Pregnancy is a traditionally information-rich life event, which McKenzie argued creates a unique information context in which "pregnant women can ask, and are often expected to ask, questions about pregnancy, childbirth, and infancy" (p. 31). Although pregnancy is a fairly common life event (albeit a temporary one

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for most women), few women have their pregnancies complicated by a multiple birth. McKenzie's article added to the EIB literature with the development of a model identifying a wide variety of information practices that were identified in everyday spaces. Even with the progress of this work in using new conceptualizations of information, however, the author notes that the IB concepts and models added difficulty to her work, stating:

While such models are useful for describing the kinds of systematic information searches that go on in academic or workplace environments, they tend to reflect analysis of one single focussed [sic] current need and therefore do not attempt a holistic consideration of the variety of information behaviours individuals describe in their everyday lives [...] (p. 20).

In response to the recognition of these limitations, McKenzie developed a new model of information practice to incorporate an emerging EIB perspective into the body of IB literature. Yet despite this acknowledgment of the problems present in the IB literature, her 2003 study contains several traditional assumptions intrinsic to the IB literature. For example, the focus of the study is on an "information-rich life event" and the sources of information identified by the author are those that are commonly found in the IB literature, e.g. in the work of Byström and Järvelin (1995). McKenzie's (2003) article is therefore emblematic of how influential scholars are challenging several of the ideas and concepts of the IB literature and are developing EIB into a distinct research area, while still identifying with – and often working around – the literature of their chosen academic field.

### **Opportunities for EIB**

EIB scholars are breaking new ground both by exploring the everyday world that historically has been viewed as too frivolous for research, and by wrestling with fitting the everyday into the concepts and theories of well-established IB scholarship. In order to enrich EIB scholarship, this paper advocates augmenting the scholarly focus in EIB research of the traditional IB scholarship with literature focused on the theory of the everyday.

Critical and cultural theory is the birthplace of research into the everyday, with scholars arguing for the importance of everyday life in scholarship since the 1930s (Lefebvre, 2008). Due to its focus on deconstructing and critically analyzing existing social structures, critical and cultural theory has been integral to the movement in the social sciences away from the study of traditional spaces of power to explore the lived experience of the subaltern. Lefebvre and several later scholars of critical and cultural theory provide many answers to aid contemporary EIB scholarship[3].

### **Opportunity: the everyday experts**

In its earliest days, research in IB was focused on understanding the behaviors of expert scholars in the fields of science and engineering who were using information systems known for containing sources with informational expertise. This legacy has led to a long tradition in both IB and EIB of privileging expertise in documents and people (Case, 2012). When leaving the controlled environments of the laboratory or the workplace and entering the everyday world, definitions and boundaries for information sources and for expertise become considerably more open. The library does not always contain the best answer to an everyday life question, and a non-professional user may not be able to readily access a library or a similar information system. Nevertheless, much of the EIB literature continues to align itself with these kinds of traditional informational institutions and traditional expert information (Ankem, 2007; Hartel, 2003; Savolainen, 1995).

The everyday world is filled with information behaviors that may not depend on what have traditionally been regarded as expert sources, but this does not mean they are not worth researching. Due to the complicated and varied nature of information behaviors in everyday life, many situations require expediency, social connection, cultural norms, or other

characteristics to fill an information need. Going forward, EIB could be enhanced by using critical theory from other scholarly fields to reject traditional conceptualizations of information hierarchy and replace them with a new conceptualization of expertise[4].

Coming out of a critical feminist tradition, Smith (1987) provided one such explication of the everyday expert that could work with and shape the hierarchical expertise present in the EIB literature. She explained that an essential component of the women's movement and the political action of consciousness-raising is "the repudiation of the professional, the expert, the already authoritative tones of the discipline; the science, the formal tradition, and the return to the seriously engaged and very difficult enterprise of discovering how to begin from ourselves" (p. 58). As outsiders, Smith argued, women were viewed as less capable than men due to their perceived lack of power and ability to fit within the norms of the public sphere. Men were regarded as the experts of the public sphere in all of the places that mattered, while women's expertise was largely restricted to the private sphere of the home.

Freed from the assumed hierarchies of expertise by rejecting the basic premise of those hierarchies, Smith explained that the meaning of expertise changes from identifying the few experts to recognizing expertise in every person: "Within our everyday worlds, we are expert practitioners [...] Our everyday worlds are in part our own accomplishments, and our special and expert knowledge is continually demonstrated in their ordinary familiarity and unsurprising ongoing presence" (Smith, 1987, p. 110). Thus, individuals of all social and cultural backgrounds – even individuals who may fail at traditional forms of information seeking – are experts of their own everyday lives; consequently, everyday expertise needs to be taken into consideration in future research in EIB. Information behaviors are not limited to contexts with traditional expert sources, especially in exploring everyday life. Furthermore, scholars cannot simply swap out one group of expert sources for another when researching a new domain. Instead, the field should use Smith's concept of the everyday expert to focus on the multiple forms of expertise present in the everyday.

### **Opportunity: non-traditional forms of information**

The information identified and studied by most EIB scholars looks remarkably similar. Not only are the scholars well versed in the IB literature with its origins in the study of libraries and research labs, but they have also been socialized into their positions through the regular use of academic tools, such as libraries, databases, and scholarly communication. Even when scholars challenge convention and take on topics of study that historically have been regarded as frivolous, they continue to identify with the libraries and books, which demonstrate to them that information is present. They have difficulty identifying alternate forms of information in part because they do not look like the academic forms of information to which IB and EIB scholars are accustomed.

Certainly, academic forms of information can be readily identified in the everyday world by IB and EIB scholars, but there are also many other types and forms of information not only native to the everyday, but characteristic of its unique aspects. Examples include a memory of baking cookies with your grandmother or the smell of a hospital that makes it an unpleasant place to be. Non-traditional information sources cannot be identified from a list of information objects, such as the list of common household information items presented to participants by Kalms (2008) in his study of household information practices, or by taking photographs of a person's living spaces, such as how Hartel (2010) photographed information spaces in the homes of the gourmet cooking hobbyists she studied. Information sources are far more complex and specific to an individual's lived experience and personal reference schemas (Schütz and Luckmann, 1973)[5].

Information that cannot be seen or experienced by the researcher has not been well researched in the EIB or IB literature; nevertheless, several scholars in critical and cultural theory (Geertz, 1973; Haraway, 2004; Hartman, 2007, 2008; Steedman, 1987; Williams, 1975)

have offered alternative ways of identifying alternative sources of information through explorations of epistemology and the unique relationship between an individual and the information he or she encounters.

In particular, two scholars of cultural theory, Steedman (1987) and Hartman (2008), have both identified information in new ways. Both scholars share several important characteristics: both were trained as historians and felt a pull to explore research areas that reflected their own biographies. Steedman devoted much of her career to class analysis, cultural criticism, and critical feminism through an examination of the English working class, while Hartman spent her career researching memory and identity formation through the history of slavery and contemporary black experience. Each was frustrated by the desire to tell accurate histories in the face of inaccurate and incomplete sources. When the traditional sources that they were taught to use failed them, both of these scholars explored the meaning of evidence and alternative ways of telling history.

Steedman's (1987) most notable work, *Landscape for a Good Woman*, begins with her research problem, stating, "the structures of class analysis and schools of cultural criticism [...] cannot deal with everything there is to say about my mother's life" (p. 6). Her mother is a central figure in this work precisely because her everyday experience as a working-class woman in post-war England did not match the accounts of working-class women that Steedman found in the scholarly literature. Steedman was interested not primarily in what happened, but instead and in her eyes more importantly in, "how people use the past to tell the stories of their life" (p. 8) and through those stories how they make sense of their life. Throughout the work, Steedman used her memories of past events as evidence to explore the social pressures and norms placed on her and her family as working-class people. She argued that it is through narrative that social meaning can be identified, and she provided several examples including how children use fairytales as cognitive tools to understand their world and their place within that world.

Whereas personal narrative and memory are not types of evidence traditionally found in historical scholarship, Steedman (1987) reminds the reader that traditional sources are not always the accurate accounts they claim to be. In explaining that while she and her sister are illegitimate, "we have proper birth certificates, because my mother must have told a simple lie to the registrar, a discovery about the verisimilitude of documents that worries me a lot as a historian" (p. 40). Such inaccuracies in traditional sources of evidence are just one of the many reasons why one should not assume a hierarchy of information sources or why one should not privilege official documents over lived experience.

Hartman's (2008) work not only provides another argument against over-reliance on "authoritative" sources, but also considers alternative ways of knowing and recounting history. In her research on the Atlantic Slave Trade, she encountered historical documents filled with brief snippets of lives discarded, often written by the men who discarded them. In an archive, Hartman encountered a passing reference to a young girl named Venus who, along with another young girl, was killed on board the slave ship "Recovery." The captain of the ship was acquitted of these crimes and the only evidence introduced in the trial was testimony by the ship's crew. The absence of Venus's voice troubled Hartman. She knew that to create a story for Venus "would have trespassed the boundaries of the archive," (p. 9) but not to write about Venus and the other girl would have "consigned them to oblivion" (p. 10). The archives that Hartman worked with are filled with traditional forms of evidence and information, but they also include "the fictions of history – the rumors, scandals, lies, invented evidence, fabricated confessions, volatile facts, impossible metaphors, chance events, and fantasies that constitute the archive and determine what can be said about the past" (p. 10).

The tools of her field required Hartman (2007) to enter the archive, and there she explained, "my graduate training hadn't prepared me to tell the stories of those who had left no record of their lives and whose biography consisted of the terrible things said about them

or done to them” (p. 16). Instead of relying solely on inaccurate and incomplete sources, she decided to write about the Atlantic Slave Trade by going to Ghana, a country that “possessed more dungeons, prisons, and slave pens than any other in West Africa” (p. 7). In Ghana, she sought out the archives and historical monuments of the Atlantic Slave Trade and found additional inaccurate and incomplete sources. She decided, instead of regarding her time in Ghana as a fruitless research trip, to write about her experience as a young African-American in Ghana struggling to find a specific history that was not there and discovering a new story and new ways to tell history.

Information scholars – particularly EIB researchers – can take Steedman’s (1987) and Hartman’s (2007, 2008) assurance that scholars can move beyond the accepted disciplinary tools and still find full and adequate answers to their research questions. Instead of overly relying on traditional information sources and ways of knowing, they can look to narrative, lived experience, and other non-traditional forms of information as valuable resources and means for understanding everyday life.

### **Opportunity: the variety of “everyday” information behavior**

As EIB literature has expanded and addressed new areas of everyday life, it has held on to the familiar concept of “information-rich behavior” that comes from the IB literature. Several of the clearest examples of research in EIB that focus exclusively on information-rich behaviors come from studies on health information (Ankem, 2007; Johnson and Meischke, 1993; McKenzie, 2003; Veinot, 2009). All of these studies consider the information behavior of individuals in the midst of major medical life events, such as cancer diagnoses, multiple birth pregnancies, and HIV/AIDS treatment. During these difficult times, patients may suddenly find themselves making decisions about their treatments and dealing with the personal hardships that go along with their diagnoses. Many patients struggle to find and assess pertinent information coming from their doctors, friends, and their own information searches.

Even research that is focused not on a doctor’s office but instead on the home, one of the more typical venues of the everyday, tends to seek out exclusively information-rich pursuits: the hobbies of genealogy (Cortada, 2011), gourmet cooking (Hartel, 2010), rubber duck collecting (Lee and Trace, 2009), and fantasy sports (Otto *et al.*, 2011). This focus on information-rich pursuits is not surprising considering the way in which Hartel (2003) exhorted EIB scholars to enter the leisure domain: “The most fruitful starting point [for leisure research] is serious, not casual leisure, because it is information-rich” (p. 236). Specifically, Hartel argued that individuals who participate in serious leisure are ideal to study because, “participants in serious leisure must make significant personal effort based on specially acquired knowledge, training, or skill. Hence, information and the proactive seeking and use of it are central to serious leisure” (p. 230). Hartel (2003) also noted that serious leisure hobbyists are also frequenters of the public library – highlighting their similarities to other subjects of many IB studies.

All of the above examples underscore my argument that EIB research looks for the information that it readily recognizes – and the more information, the better. These studies also demonstrate that even with an emphasis placed on identifying a variety of information sources in information-rich environments, there is little variation in the sources presented. The information-rich behaviors and information-rich environments typically found in the EIB literature strongly resemble the information wealth of the traditional information institutions and workplaces that have defined the IB literature. The traditional IB understanding of information, and especially information-richness, makes much of everyday life appear to be information poor and thus not a worthy focus of research.

In order to explore the great variety of information behaviors native to the everyday world, EIB scholars could gain by broadening their conceptualization of information-richness to include behaviors that appear at first glance to use few, if any, formal sources of information

(Case, 2012), but which in fact are, in their own way, information-rich. For instance, future work should move beyond the serious leisure to explore what has been defined as casual leisure, i.e., “play, relaxation, and entertainment” (Stebbins, 1997, p. 19). One study that has begun the process of studying casual leisure found that many of the behaviors associated with casual leisure, “do not fit with existing models of information behavior in the literature” (Elsweiler *et al.*, 2011, p. 237). By understanding and using the transformative power of the everyday (Lefebvre, 2008; Schütz and Luckmann, 1973), EIB scholars can expand their research to new domains and new forms of information. These new conceptualizations of information are not just information-rich and within the reach of study, they are also notable for the emphasis they place on the relationship between the various types of information and the individual interacting with that information.

Like Schütz and Lefebvre, IB scholars must look to and not past the banal, quotidian descriptions of the everyday in order to understand how individuals really interact with information on a fundamental level. To conduct this research, the scholar must go beyond simply identifying sources of information and look to the relationship individuals have with information. For example, De Certeau’s (1984) influential chapter “Walking in the City” takes the everyday behavior of walking through a city and examines it through a critical lens in order to discover the complexities of a common activity.

De Certeau (1984) explained that walking through a city is viewed by most scholars as a passive experience in which an individual follows paths constructed by various social and governmental institutions. Although the city is created with space where an individual can and cannot walk – the various paths someone might take across the city – this infrastructure allows for pedestrians to shape their own experience of the city. Walking in a city is not completely limiting, but it is also not totally free for personal freedom and movement. In fact, the various paths available to a pedestrian contain great amounts of information – everything from the signs, billboards, and people populating the city to the reasons an individual might choose one path over another. Regarding walking in a city as De Certeau argued it should provide just one example of how an individual’s interaction with the everyday can be information-rich while using few, if any, formal information sources. Often, the information-richness of a behavior can best be understood when taking into account the relationship between the individual and the information.

In both IB and EIB, sources are often viewed as things read, heard, or seen by an individual and are taken at face value: if an individual reads an article about a specific medical procedure, then he or she is regarded as having received that information. In contrast, scholars of the everyday look at how individuals interact with information on a personalized level. For instance, Schütz explained that:

Meaning is not a quality of certain lived experience emerging distinctively in the stream of consciousness – that is to say, of the objectivities constituted within it. It is rather the result of my explication of past lived experiences which are grasped reflectively from an actual now and from an actually valid reference schema (Schütz and Luckmann, 1973, pp. 15-16).

Whereas meaning making may be only one type of interaction between an individual and information, this quotation highlights the relationship between the new information that an individual interacts with and all of the information and experiences that comprise the individual’s reference schema.

In thinking more about the relationship between individuals and information, De Certeau (1984) provided an illustrative example in his chapter entitled “Reading as Poaching.” Reading is described as a typical everyday activity, which at first glance appears to be a passive form of consumption in which an individual receives the information present within a book. De Certeau (1984), however, argued that reading is a form of production in which the book provides information to the reader, who in turn places his or her own interpretation on

that information to create new information. Readers are like poachers in that, as De Certeau explained, “readers are travelers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write” (p. 174). This view of reading not only explicates an information behavior in which information is both received and created, but also identifies the agency of the reader that is typically not recognized in much of IB and EIB scholarship. At the end of “Reading as Poaching,” De Certeau made an important point about how we consider the individuals we study and their information behaviors: “it is always good to remind ourselves that we mustn’t take people for fools” (p. 176).

### **Opportunity: institutional ethnography**

One of the most exciting opportunities in EIB research can also be one of its biggest pitfalls. Researching a new area allows scholars considerable freedom to ask big questions and to try to find big answers. Unfortunately, this freedom also means that although several of the research goals are ambitious, the initial studies may lack the ability to identify and utilize methods that are up to the challenge of exploring new domains.

As new ideas and research areas enter into a research field, the customary methods need to be revised, and new methods need to be created that are more appropriate to facilitate the new area of research. Several recent works in EIB and IB are expanding the pool of methods to include new visual ways of exploring information behavior, including photovoice (Julien *et al.*, 2013) and information horizons (Sonnenwald, 2009) that have shown success in exploring the holistic information experiences of the research participants.

EIB scholars can continue to evolve their methods and look to Smith (1987) and her reinvention of methodologies in sociology as inspiration to create new methods. Like Smith, scholars in EIB need methods that allow for a thorough and precise recording of the lived experience of participants in order to accurately portray the nuances of everyday life. Smith’s institutional ethnography could become a guiding force for the incorporation of new methods into EIB. Below, this paper presents how Smith’s (1987, 2006) institutional ethnography method is used by sociologists and how it can be adapted in the EIB field will be presented.

The aim of institutional ethnography is “to explicate the actual social processes and practices organizing people’s everyday experience from a standpoint in the everyday world” (Smith, 1987, p. 151). This means that institutional ethnography “does not transform people into objects, but preserves their presence as subjects” (p. 151). Institutional ethnography is a methodology for the people that “begins where people are and proceeds from there to discoveries that are for them” (Smith, 2006, p. 3). This method is grounded in the real, lived experience of the participants and “does not transpose knowing into the objective forms in which the situated subject and her actual experience and location are discarded” (Smith, 1987, p. 153). The specific methods used within institutional ethnography can be diverse, as long as there is “a commitment to an investigation and explication of how ‘it’ actually is, of how ‘it’ actually works, of actual practices and relations” (p. 160). Even though most of the work is descriptive and all work is based on local settings, institutional ethnography is nevertheless generalizable.

Smith (1987) presented a new framework for positioning the method by explaining, “investigating the everyday world as problematic involves an inquiry into relations that are themselves generalized through exploration of the character of those relations from the standpoint of everyday experience” (p. 159). An individual case is the “point of entry, the locus of an experiencing subject or subjects, into a larger social and economic process” (p. 157). The individual cases are used to draw out broader general statements about society or about the particular population that is being studied; these cases are the ideal units of analysis precisely because of their specificity and awareness of their lived experience. The context surrounding the cases is created by the social relationships that impact all members of the population within that context.

For EIB, institutional ethnography provides a framework for thinking about the best methods for exploring both the everyday and understanding the actual lived information behavior of individuals. By grounding work in the everyday life of individuals, EIB scholars can learn how information actually impacts and interacts with people's lives. This focus can also ensure that participants in research are valued and encouraged to share their own thoughts and opinions, not merely to repeat back the views of the researcher. This research framework amplifies the solutions mentioned above to the problems currently affecting EIB by ensuring that participants are valued for their everyday expertise and that their behaviors are carefully examined to find the many forms of information in their everyday life.

EIB methods that aim to explore the unique and multifaceted nature of the everyday should follow institutional ethnography in that:

[...] though this inquiry calls for specialized skills, it must be considered as a work of cooperation between sociologists and those who want to understand the social matrices of their experience. For each of us is an expert practitioner of our everyday world, knowledgeable in the most intimate ways of how it is put together and of its routine daily accomplishment. It is the individual's working knowledge of her everyday world that provides the beginning of the inquiry (Smith, 1987, p. 154).

Methods designed to follow institutional ethnography are the most appropriate for EIB research because they will be developed with a specific focus on the everyday world in addition to supporting the other solutions to EIB problems as presented above.

### **Toward a more "everyday" EIB**

This paper concludes by presenting three examples in order to elucidate how the new EIB advocated in this paper will work. These examples all deal with lived experience in the everyday world, and they all demonstrate the great amount of information that is present in the everyday but is traditionally hidden from IB scholars. The first example comes from a folklorist describing an interpretive conflict surrounding her interpretation of her grandmother's story (Borland, 1998). Steedman (1987) provided the second example of how the creation of government assistance programs dramatically shaped her understanding of her own worth. The third example (Ocepek, in press) addresses sensory-based information sources in the quotidian task of grocery shopping. All three examples suggest how critical and cultural theory can be integrated into EIB and can open up new avenues of research.

Borland (1998), a Folklorist interested in feminism and stories of women's experience in the early twentieth century, embarked on interpreting a story from her grandmother for an academic audience. She recorded her grandmother, Beatrice, recounting the story about a day Beatrice spent with her father at the racetrack in the 1930s. The story centers around Beatrice correctly picking and betting on a winning horse and her father's disagreement with Beatrice's selection. Borland interpreted Beatrice's story "as a presentation of self as a competent judge of horses," and also functioning "to assert a sense of female autonomy and equality within a sphere dominated by men" (p. 325). Borland sent this interpretation to Beatrice who responded with a fourteen-page letter explaining that she is not a feminist and does not agree with her granddaughter's interpretation.

The conflict of interpretations between Borland (1998) and her grandmother allowed her to reflect on how her methods and analysis alienated her grandmother. Borland explained:

The performance of a personal narrative is a fundamental means by which people comprehend their own lives and present a "self" to their audience. Our scholarly representations of those performances, if not sensitively presented, may constitute an attack on our collaborators' carefully constructed sense of self (p. 328).

Beatrice found Borland's interpretation not to align with her own lived experience. Specifically, Borland abstracts from Beatrice's story and described Beatrice's father as

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“a symbol of repressive male authority” (p. 329), while the actual man was many things to Beatrice, including supportive and loving. Through the interpretation of her story, Beatrice’s lived experience and her father were attacked in order to draw broader meaning. The interpretations differ because of the contextual information that is tied to the story for Beatrice and removed in Borland’s interpretation.

This example highlights the hidden information present in lived experience as well as the problems with abstracting out from participants’ localized actualities. Although Borland’s (1998) interpretation of her grandmother’s story may be useful for scholarship, it misses out on the nuanced relationship between Beatrice and her father and her everyday world. The next example also highlights the importance of seemingly small everyday changes to someone’s life.

Steedman’s (1987) research addressed gender and class dynamics in England, as well as the differences she saw in the lived experience of herself and her mother. Both grew up as working-class women, but they did not share the same worldview. One reason for the change in worldviews between generations is the impact that state intervention had on Steedman and her sister in post-war England. Steedman argued that, as some of the first beneficiaries of welfare programs designed to ensure that children had access to nutritious food, she developed a novel viewpoint within her own family. The extra food provided to her and her family gave her the message, “I do have a right to the earth” (p. 122). This message did not need to exist in advertising campaigns or through lectures at Steedman’s school; instead, the message came from her experience of receiving assistance that was not available to previous working-class generations, including her mother’s. Steedman further explained that even in her later life, when her family no longer needed government assistance, she could not disconnect from her personal experience to analytically examine the government assistance programs.

Using customary methods and concepts of information would make understanding Steedman’s story difficult. Looking at the facts of the government assistance programs of post-war England provides an understanding of the impact of the program in an abstract way, but only the stories of the individuals who actually lived and benefitted from the program can uncover the program’s broader significance. A large part of Steedman’s understanding of self is derived from the everyday experience of picking up food from government assistance programs. Embracing this type of everyday experience in IB research will require new research aims as well as methods to execute those aims.

Recently work has addressed sensory-based information sources and their prevalence throughout the act of grocery shopping. Grocery shopping was selected as a fruitful space to explore the everyday because it is a task filled with traditional IB concepts such as browsing, seeking, and encountering, but most shoppers do not rely on the library or other formal sources to make decisions in the grocery store (Case, 2012). The study consisted of two empirical studies using qualitative methods (interview and observation) focused on the lived experience of primary grocery shoppers to explore what kinds of information sources they use throughout their grocery shopping process (Ocepek, in press). The study found a prevalence of participants using their sight, taste, touch, and smell to gain information about the products they were considering purchasing in the grocery store in addition to textual and other word-based sources. Sensory-based information sources, a new type of information source, functioned similarly to previous described information sources, and were observed in relation to information seeking, encountering, sharing, and browsing.

This new work puts into practice the opportunities described in this paper. First, the study focuses on the lived experience of grocery shoppers and explores how they evaluate grocery items and make purchase decisions in stores (Ocepek, in press). This approach highlights their everyday expertise as shoppers and providers of food for themselves and

their families. Second, the focus on embodied sources of information related to the sensory experience of grocery shopping identifies a new type of information source that is not based in text or spoken words. This new form of information source was found to be prevalent throughout the shopping trip and functions similarly to other information sources. Third, the concept of sensory-based information sources is based on the distinct experience of individuals in the act of grocery shopping. Their relationship with the sensory experience of evaluating grocery items and remembering previous shopping trips come together to create information sources rich with content that is difficult to perceive from outside observation. Fourth, the new study combined concepts of IB and EIB with methods focused on the lived experience of grocery shoppers to explore a largely hidden information source (Smith, 1987). Identifying sensory-based information sources occurred through valuing the descriptions of grocery shoppers and encouraging participants to share their lived experience, both in real time and through memory. This study and the two previous examples highlight how the everyday can be incorporated into social sciences and lead to novel discoveries.

## Conclusion

The integration of the theory of the everyday into the still-developing field of EIB research creates many opportunities to examine new information behaviors, as well as providing EIB scholars with a more nuanced understanding of information behavior than can be achieved by solely relying on traditional IB perspectives. This paper argues that IB and EIB scholars should embrace a more holistic approach to the study of information behavior and research the quotidian aspects of the everyday world, a fruitful and underdeveloped domain. Instead of highlighting the divisions between work, leisure, and other aspects of life, an everyday-focused EIB will address the totality of the everyday world, leading to a more complete understanding of how individuals actually use information in all aspects of their lives. By bringing out the everyday in EIB, research can gain greater insight into IB that goes largely unnoticed and then use that insight to improve the analysis of IB, processes, and systems across different information spaces, from libraries to grocery stores and the information world in between.

## Notes

1. Everyday information behavior is a concept meant to address information behavior in the everyday world as described by scholars of the everyday (Lefebvre, 2008; Schütz and Luckmann, 1973). It is not the same everyday that is described in the Everyday Life Information-Seeking concept (Case, 2012; Savolainen, 1995, 2009).
2. The use of the term “information-rich” is meant to highlight spaces where information comes from formal information sources such as books, journals, databases, government documents, and scholarly communication (Case, 2012). The author views the entire world as information-rich, and intends to highlight the distinction between traditional information institutions and the everyday world.
3. The current application of the work of critical and cultural theory scholars is limited to specific pieces of their work that are the most readily used in EIB scholarship. Identifying them as scholars of critical and cultural theory is designed to create a conceptual coherence based on the subset of work described in this paper.
4. The term “expert” may not be the most appropriate word to use here, inasmuch as everyday expertise refers primarily to a competence or experience, but the term’s common usage in the EIB scholarship makes it the appropriate term for me to extend its meaning for my purposes.
5. A personal reference schema is a cognitive framework for understanding the world based on personal experience and other known information.

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