The Meta-Context of Information Behavior:
The Importance of Multiple Lenses and Mixed Methods Tension

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Meta-Context

Quant + Qual

Cognitive + Social + Affective + Systems + Critical

TENSION

Occupation
Need
Source
Information Ground
Information World
ELIS
Network
Ecology
Insight

2014 ASIS&T SIG USE Symposium
Recent Study

• Users of LibraryThing and Goodreads
• Roles played within and across communities

Social

• Content analysis of messages \( (n = 519) \)
  - Conventions, practices
  - Information sharing
  - Structure
  - Linking
  - Encouraging activities

Recent Study

- **Survey of users** \((n = 142)\)
  - Individualized cognitions of behavior
  - Strong, significant role in users’ information behavior

- **Semi-structured interviews** \((n = 11)\)
  - Behaviors, needs
  - Use of site, groups
  - Shared (or unshared) social context

Worrall, A. (2014). *The roles of digital libraries as boundary objects within and across social and information worlds* (Doctoral dissertation). Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL.
http://www.adamworrall.org/portfolio/dissertation/
Resolving Tension

- Synthesis of nuances, facets
- Deeper, richer conclusions
- Information behavior plays a clear role, but not always manifest
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Meta-Context

• May be necessary for research purposes
• Very complex under the surface
• “Ethnographic observation & study of artifacts”
• “Questioning of human actors”  
  (Courtright, 2008, p. 293)
• Should continue in individual research studies and in working together as a field

Questions or comments?

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