

Pre iSchool Workshop: Developing Activity Theory in Information Studies (DATIS)

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Abstract

Over the last two decades the use of Activity Theory has grown within the field of information studies. However, while there is a budding community, the use and development of Activity Theory in information studies remains underdeveloped and fragmented. This community building workshop provides an opportunity to: (1) introduce information scholars to the basic conceptual premises of Activity Theory focusing on the use, development and contribution of Activity Theory; (2) provide a forum to extend the development of Activity Theory; and (3) It will also provide a networking opportunity for scholars already utilizing Activity Theory and an opportunity to discuss the contributions iSchool scholars can make to the wider Activity Theory community.

Keywords: Activity Theory; Human Information Behaviour; Information Systems; Information Studies

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1 Workshop purpose

Over the last two decades the use of Activity Theory has developed within the field of information studies (Allen et al., 2011; Spasser, 1999; Wilson, 2008), as well as related fields such as Human Computer Interaction (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006; Kuutti, 1996), information systems (Allen et al., 2013; Karanasios & Allen, 2013) and communications (Spinuzzi, 2012). However, while there is a growing community, the use and development of Activity Theory in information studies remains underdeveloped and fragmented.

The purpose of the workshop is to strengthen and develop the community of information scholars using Activity Theory as an analytic and explanatory framework to understand the relationship between information, people and technology. While there is significant interest in this topic many of the researchers deploying Activity Theory are working as lone scholars within iSchools and related departments. The workshop will provide a unique opportunity to bring together early career researchers and more established researchers to discuss issues of interest and share research work. Therefore, this community building workshop provides an opportunity to: (1) introduce information scholars to the basic conceptual premises of Activity Theory focusing on the use, development and contribution of Activity Theory; (2) provide a forum to extend the development of Activity Theory; and (3) It will also provide a networking opportunity for scholars already utilizing Activity Theory and an opportunity to discuss the contributions iSchool scholars can make to the wider Activity Theory community.

We hope that the outcome of the workshop will be threefold:

- Strengthen and build the community of scholars within iSchools and related departments using Activity Theory to understand the relationship between information, people and technology.
- Provide an opportunity for scholars to reflect and gain feedback on work in progress or gain fresh perspectives.
- Provide support for researchers that are starting to explore Activity Theory.

Contributions to the workshop include: short position papers for the morning panel sessions, papers in progress or position papers for discussion in the break-out sessions.

2 Workshop format

The workshop will take place over a full day. The first half of the day will focus on providing participants with a basic overview of the conceptual premises of Activity Theory and on exploring the ways in which it has been used by information scholars. The second half of the day will focus on making connections between information scholars deploying Activity Theory, stimulate discourse and advance the use of the theory.

Morning session:

09:00: Welcome, participant introductions, and overview of the workshop.

09:15: Key note presentation. Professor Bonnie Nardi

10:00: Working Panel: Experiences from the field: Three scholars present short papers on a current research project that they are working on identifying key challenges in the use of Activity Theory.

10:30: Working Panel: Methodological challenges: Three scholars present short papers (five minute overviews) of key theoretical 'challenges' related to the use of Activity Theory and explore how they have resolved them within their research.

11:00 Break.

11:30: Short paper presentations.

12:30: Concluding discussion: Insights on opportunities, open issues, and next steps. Some of these can be considered in the afternoon.

12:45: Lunch break.

Afternoon Session:

13:45: Welcome and introduction to afternoon sessions.

14:00: Short paper presentations.

15:30: Breakout group work (organized by shared interests and themes): Tackling the challenges and opportunities of Activity Theory.

16:15 Break.

16:45: Breakout group reports and discussion.

17:15: Planning follow-on opportunities/outcomes and closing remarks.

17:30: Workshop end.

Evening: Optional Dinner/social event to follow

Submission details and dates

- Submission of short paper (500 words): March 4th 2016
- Short papers should be e-mailed to research.lubs@leeds.ac.uk for the attention of Hannah Preston with the words 'iSchool Workshop' in the title.
- Short papers will be circulated prior to the workshop.

Short paper submission is not required for attendance at the workshop.

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