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January 2023

Professionalism in LIS: A Blend of Theory and Practical Application

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Professionalism in LIS: A Blend of Theory and Practical Application

About Author

Amber has studied human development and applied linguistics, earning a B.S. from Brigham Young University and an M.A. in Applied Linguistics from the University of Utah, respectively. In her personal and professional life, she has developed skills in teaching, editing, and playing with young children. Passey anticipates graduating from SJSU's MLIS program in 2023, after which she plans to focus her work on Children's Librarianship.

A profession requires “specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). This specialized knowledge and educational training separate professionals from paraprofessionals and provide opportunities for academic discourse. As professionals strive to apply their knowledge or theory to their day-to-day operations, terms such as “best practices” have arisen. Too often, however, these “best practices” are assembled only from anecdotal experiences of professionals and have not been put through the research process to determine value, success, and generalizability. At the *Student Research Journal* we seek to use research to support the suggested actions in the scholarship we publish, thus ensuring a blend of theory and practical application of LIS scholarship. In this issue we bring together three different approaches to the relationship between theory and practice.

Samuel Kauffman, SJSU MLIS candidate, has written a critical analysis of Byström, Heinström, and Ruthven’s *Information at Work: Information Management in the Workplace*. Kauffman identifies the strengths of the book in inviting critical examination of how information affects workplace processes. While Kauffman notes that the book may not deliver solutions, there are pragmatic examples which provide deeper understanding of how professionals can move from concept to action.

Recent SJSU MLIS graduate, Natasha Finnegan, provides insight on the information needs and behaviors of Haitian immigrants. Using established scholarship, Finnegan provides actionable suggestions on how LIS professionals can best serve this population. This piece shows that as professionals, we cannot stop at understanding theory but must use theory to inform practice in order to serve the needs of underrepresented groups.

Dr. Jennifer Hopwood, lecturer at the iSchool at San José State University, brings her extensive academic knowledge in creativity and innovation in educational leadership and management to her invited contribution to this issue. This piece blends theory and practice skillfully to show how workplace creativity can empower employees to grow professionally in positive work environments.

I am honored to have worked with these authors, who have been committed to professionalism in their analyses and writings. This issue is the culmination of the Editorial Team’s efforts to understand the theories of research generally as well as Library and Information Sciences specifically and then help authors draw out practical applications of these theories in their articles.

Acknowledgments

The Managing Editor, Ben Brown, has been instrumental in coordinating editors with submissions, creating reports, and providing insights on the work of the *SRJ*. A special thank you as well to the Editorial Team who were committed to providing an excellent and timely peer review experience for authors.

Our faculty advisor, Dr. Anthony Bernier, has mentored me as I stepped into the role of Editor-In-Chief and has spent many hours strengthening our understanding of and skills in LIS scholarship, academic discourse, and the peer review process. I am deeply grateful for his guidance.

We also express appreciation for the Faculty Advisory Board led by iSchool Director, Dr. Anthony Chow, and Associate Director, Dr. Linda Main for

their continued and enthusiastic support of the *Student Research Journal*. Additionally, we acknowledge the role of the Alumni Advisory Group in helping the *SRJ* Editorial Team identify trends in the field, needs of professionals, and ways the *Journal* can support graduate students as they join the LIS profession. With the completion of several special projects by Editorial Team members and support from the Faculty Advisory Board, we look forward to the growth of the *SRJ* as an accessible channel for graduate students to join the scholarly conversation.

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Understanding the Importance of Creativity Towards Psychological Safety in the Library Workplace

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Understanding the Importance of Creativity Towards Psychological Safety in the Library Workplace

Abstract

Employee Engagement is one of the leading factors toward organizational success. Happier employees are engaged employees. However, employees cannot reach engagement unless there are feelings of psychological safety. One tool that libraries can utilize to increase the engagement of their staff is to invest in opportunities for workplace creativity.

Keywords

Employee Engagement, Psychological Safety, Happiness, Creativity

About Author

Dr. Jennifer L. Hopwood is the Training and Development Specialist for the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association as well as a lecturer for the San Jose State University iSchool. Hopwood holds a Master of Science degree in library and information studies from Florida State University and a Doctor of Education degree in educational leadership and management with a concentration on creativity and innovation from Drexel University.

The most important resource of any organization is the people within the organization. Unfortunately, over half of workers are reporting they are more stressed than ever (Gallup, 2022). Workers attribute this stress to be connected back to their workplaces because of issues such as lack of support for ideas, unreasonable time pressures, unclear communication, and unreasonable workloads. However, the biggest factors workers cite are the environment and culture of the workplace, which are directly impacted by management. Library workers are no different. In fact, many library workers are reporting symptoms of low morale and burnout (Corrado, 2022). In addition to the stressors listed above, library staff also listed shifting priorities and a lack of recognition as contributing factors to their negative experiences in the workplace. Many library staff are experiencing job creep and feelings of vocational awe where libraries are everything for everyone (Dixon, 2022). Unfortunately, this can result in disengagement, burned-out staff, and resignations.

According to a Gallup (2022) poll, 69% of America's workforce is not engaged in the work they are doing. Post-pandemic reporting has brought to light the term "quiet quitting," people who do the minimum amount of work required (Harter, 2022). Many of these people qualify as what Gallup terms "not engaged." This lack of engagement can lead to high turnover, negativity, and decreased productivity. This, in turn, can have caustic effects on the organizations' competitiveness and longevity. However, research shows that happier employees are engaged employees (Gallup, 2017). Workers need to feel that they belong and are making contributions to the organization. To achieve this state, workplace creativity can be utilized to foster positive work environments that can lead to an increase in employee engagement.

Defining Workplace Creativity

When most people think of creativity in the workplace, they may think of roles related to creative outputs like advertisements and promotional materials. Creativity has become a bit of a buzzword in our society and can be seen almost exclusively related to those fields involved in the creative economy: media, entertainment, and arts-related activities that generate income from intellectual property (Bilton, 2007). However, creativity also exists in organizations beyond just creative outputs. Creativity is defined as the combination of novelty and usefulness (Bilton, 2007), though this can be a subjective categorization when it comes to looking at creativity through the lens of culture. Also, what is new to the individual may not necessarily be new to the organization. Additionally, according to Maslow's definition of creativity, it is part of a process that can be used in problem solving (Bilton, 2007). When it comes to defining creativity in an organization, it depends on the culture of the organization and the goals that motivate the people in that organization.

Often creativity will involve a lengthy process and hard work to reach the skills needed to produce acknowledged creative outputs (Bilton, 2007). However, creativity in the workplace is not always planned nor does it always involve an obvious output. According to Robinson & Stern (1998), "[i]t is impossible to predict *what* [creative acts] will be, *who* will be involved in them, and *when* and *how* they will happen" (pg. 1). Creativity often is the result of the unexpected,

serendipitous moments that may solve a problem within the organization or create new opportunities for growth. Successful and sustainable organizations are the ones that recognize the potential of creativity and not only seek it out, but also invest in it.

Investing in Creativity

As stated, many successful organizations recognize that there is a need to invest in creativity. Maslow (1971) asked, “[w]hat will happen to the automobile manufacturers if someone comes out with a cheap, personal-travel technique of some kind, one which could sell at half the price of an automobile?” (p. 93). This was the reason that automobile manufacturers invested heavily into research and development as a way to find new and innovative products as well as improvements to existing one. In this way, the automobile manufacturers could remain relevant. Sometimes an unexpected result when trying to solve a problem can also lead to new opportunities. Successful brands such as Teflon, GoreTex, Kevlar, and Nylon all resulted out of serendipitous moments (Robinson & Stern, 1998; Tanner & Reisman, 2014). However, these research and development projects are only one part of the creativity in organizations. It is just as important to invest in individual creativity within organizations as it is to invest in creative projects.

The Individual’s Role in Workplace Creativity

Robinson & Stern (1998) define this workplace or corporate creativity as “when employees do something new and potentially useful without being directly shown or taught” (pg. 11). In other words, this is when employees are given autonomy to veer away from protocol or the standardized way of doing things. It is important in an organizational culture that employees have opportunities and freedom to be creative because this is part of what keeps organizations competitive (Williams & Yang, 1999).

Additionally, Bilton (2007) states that current theories are moving away from the idea of the individual creative genius and more towards a systems perspective. A team made up of different thinking styles can be important when it comes to generating creative ideas. They should be encouraged to build upon the ideas of others as well. Sometimes negativity can also play a role here because the team can think of concerns before they become an issue. However, too much negativity might hinder employees from feeling like they can share openly (“Ground rules”, n.d.).

Innovation Champions at Work

According to Tanner and Reisman (2014), it is important to give freedom and space for innovation champions in organizations. The role of an innovation champion is to identify high priority needs within the organization. Tanner and Reisman (2014) give a list of eight characteristics that creative innovation champions exhibit. The first is discontent with the status quo or questioning the way things have always been done. The second is to have an open mind. As stated above, this would not mean jumping on the first idea, but instead investigating alternative solutions to solve problems. The third is a prepared mind that is always

searching out the trends, new research, and facts. The fourth is positive thinking; it is important to keep a positive mindset and keep looking forward. Failure does not mean the end; it means an opportunity to make changes and find something better. The fifth is being willing to take risks. The sixth is being action oriented. When someone is action-oriented, they do what they say they are going to do. The seventh is persistence. The eighth is that a creative innovation champion must be hard working. Tanner and Reisman (2014) mention that this is the one characteristic that is common to all creative innovation champions, to which I agree, as without being willing to engage in hard work, none of the other characteristics will carry an idea very far.

The idea of innovation champions is similar to IDEO's Tom Kelley's (2005) idea that organizations need people with diverse backgrounds who can serve as cross-pollinators. These people are able to look at problems from many different angles. Kelley (2005) suggests that organizations can foster innovation and combat the naysayers by developing roles in the organization that promote innovation through strategies that drive creativity. To promote a culture where creativity and innovation are embraced, it is recommended that leaders introduce concepts to their stakeholders that help to overcome the roadblocks to their involvement. Some examples of this would be utilizing design thinking exercises, piloting ideas, and experimenting.

Defining Psychological Safety in Terms of Creativity

Harvard professor, Amy Edmondson (1999), defines psychological safety as an environment where staff do not fear being themselves. There is a culture of respect and trust between the administration and the staff. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a person's unmet needs serve as a motivator for their behavior (Evans & Ward, 2007). However, even if the person has met their need for food or shelter, they still may feel a risk to their feelings of safety (Huber & Potter, 2015). Safety includes physical protection from danger as well as workplace morale, a stable environment, predictability, and understanding an employee's place in an organization (Evans & Ward, 2007). A lack of feeling safe in an organization can result in feelings of not belonging. Additionally, when the culture of the organization does not support the employees' feelings of belonging, it can erode the trust between the employee and the administration. This can be related back to employee's feelings of contributions not being appreciated or welcome in the organization (Corrado, 2022).

Creative Climate

The climate of the workplace environment has a direct impact on the employee's feelings of belonging (Isaken & Ackkermans, 2015). While the culture of the organization is defined by foundational beliefs based on the history, traditions, and values of the organization; climate is defined as the experience of those in the organization who observe the culture. Ekvall has identified ten dimensions that make up this climate (Puccio, Mance, & Murdock; 2011):

Table 1

Ekvall's Climate Dimensions (Puccio, Mance, & Murdock; 2011)

Dimension	Definition	High	Low
Challenge	Emotional involvement in the tasks or goals	People feel meaningfulness and joy in the task and are willing to invest energy	People feel alienation and indifferent to the task. They are disinterested
Freedom	Independence in behavior or thought	Problems are discussed freely, and people feel they have the power to take initiative	People are passive or feel they cannot “break the rules”.
Idea Support	The way in which new ideas are treated	Superiors or peers pay attention to what is suggested. People listen to each other. They create ways to test and trial new ideas	There is an attitude where everything is faced with an automatic “no.” Suggestions are countered as being wrong or will never work.
Trust & Openness	Emotional safety in the relationships around the individual	Everyone offers ideas and opinions without fear of reprisal or ridicule. Communication is open and direct.	People are suspicious of each other and having ideas stolen. Mistakes come at a cost.
Dynamism & Liveliness	The amount in which the environment is eventful	New things are constantly happening. The pace is quick and idea flow is constant.	There are no new projects. Things do not change.
Playfulness & Humor	Spontaneity and ease are displayed	The atmosphere is relaxed. There are lots of jokes and laughter.	People have a grave demeanor. The atmosphere is stiff and gloomy. Jokes and laughter are considered inappropriate.
Debate	Differences of opinion or clashes of ideas	People are interested in discussing new ideas and viewpoints	People do not question the status quo. No ideas or viewpoints are discussed.
Risk Taking	The level of tolerance for uncertainty	People do not hesitate to participate in new opportunities. Action is more important than investigation and analysis	People are cautious and hesitant to act on new ideas. They create committees to come to a consensus before deciding on ideas.
Idea Time	The amount of time people invest and do when it comes to new ideas	Tasks outside of daily assignments occur. Impulses are tested in the moment as people explore possibilities.	Every minute is accounted for leaving no room for deviation from assigned or scheduled tasks.

Conflict	The presence of personal or emotional tension	People dislike or hate each other. Hostility is present. Gossip and slander exist.	People control their impulses and are mature in their manner and interactions.
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As shown in Table 1, the first nine dimensions on the chart are positive dimensions; therefore, a high ranking is preferred. The Conflict dimension is seen as a negative and the organization likely wants to score on the low end in that area. While the climate dimensions are best utilized in an organizational environment, people do not live in a bubble. Our personal values have an impact on our professional selves. There is a thin line between our professional and personal selves as most of our development takes place in the workplace, since that is where people spend most of their time (Kotter, 1996). Therefore, our experiences in the workplace are just as much a part of us as our experiences outside of it. If there is misalignment between the employee and the organization's values, then this can impact the climate of the organization. Mental models can hinder the process of innovation because people sometimes get stuck in their perceptions and cannot move forward (Dweck, 2006; Senge et al., 2012). This can relate back to the perception of the culture of the organization when it comes to risk-taking and the freedom to pursue innovative ideas.

According to Sahlin (2013), a creative environment embodies generosity, community, qualifications, diversity, trust and tolerance, equality, curiosity, freedom of spirit, and small-scale size. Sahlin describes the creative environment as being warm and welcoming whereas the uncreative atmosphere has the smell of death. Sahlin's theories align with the idea that environments play a part in our perceptions of creativity. Creative environments not only have a physical feeling of warmth, but also a mental one that extends to the people who make up the environment. People in a creative environment tend to be open and generous. They give off a sense of belonging to the group (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2006). Sahlin (2013) also states that in a creative environment, the people in the group are likeminded and respectful of the opinions and ideas of others. An environment that promotes creativity would score high on the positive dimensions of the CCQ. This depiction of the creative environment echoes the characteristics of Edmondson's psychological safety.

Creativity's Relation to Workplace Happiness

When it comes to establishing happiness at work, it is more about motivation and mindset than it is material things (Achor, 2010). While money may make some people happy, that happiness is temporary because the bar is always being reset, e.g., "If I can only reach x then I will be happy, but when x is achieved, it then becomes, now I only need to reach y and I will be happy." Not only is this goal of happiness always being moved, but the negativity that can exist because of this failure can be contagious throughout the workplace. Negativity in turn can lead to a decrease in engagement. However, organizations can utilize creativity as a tool to combat the negativity. According to Lyubomsky (2007), our states of happiness hinge on both environmental (10%) and genetic factors (50%) as well as our

intentional activity (40%). Since only 40% of our happiness is in our control, it makes sense to strive towards the things that make us happy.

Defining Happiness at Work

To understand how to achieve happiness at work, we must first understand how it is defined. The definition of positive psychology from Dr. Martin Seligman is the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that allow communities to thrive (Tanner & Reisman, 2014). The World Health Organization (2012) categorizes our levels of happiness in three ways: positive affect, negative affect, and overall life satisfaction. So just as creativity can be subjective, so too can happiness. It is also important to note that this is not “toxic positivity”. Happiness cannot be forced. It requires a shift in the culture of the organization where there are healthy boundaries and balance.

Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement

According to the World Happiness Report (De Neve & Ward, 2017), employee engagement goes hand in hand with the employee’s levels of satisfaction with the job. In order to be engaged at work, the individual must be positively absorbed by the work that they are doing. As mentioned in the research by Achor (2010), more money does not always equate to higher job satisfaction. According to the World Happiness Report (De Neve & Ward, 2017), while high-paying jobs do rate higher on the satisfaction scale than low-paying jobs; increases in pay of an extra \$100 mean more to the lower-paid than the higher-paid. Work-life balance plays a more significant role than pay. Jobs that leave the employee too tired to enjoy family time or where work is constantly brought home have a lower satisfaction rate than ones that allow for more time spent with family and friends. Also, jobs that hold more challenges and variety are high in satisfaction. Employees who have control over planning their day-to-day workday experience have higher levels of happiness and job satisfaction than those that are micromanaged.

Management’s Role

A big part of management’s role in fostering a positive workplace culture is to listen. Inside an organization, really listening to this feedback is just as important as soliciting it:

When we are in a room, there are no titles, grades, seniority. All voices have equal weight and all have equal time. Everyone knows they are listened to, and their contribution is always given time. Everyone is in a relationship that is based on trust and honesty, and not always the easy kind of honesty. (Seppala, 2016 September)

To achieve engagement, employees need to know that their opinions matter and that their ideas contribute to the organization (Gallup, 2017). This will not only give the employee a sense that their thoughts have importance to the organization, but also show that the organization cares about the employee enough to have these communication channels (Gallup, 2017). Seppala and Cameron (2015) recommend that management follow these six principles towards establishing a positive culture in their workplace:

1. Caring for, being interested in, and maintaining responsibility for colleagues as friends.
 2. Providing support for one another, including offering kindness and compassion when others are struggling.
 3. Avoiding blame, and forgive mistakes.
 4. Inspiring one another at work.
 5. Emphasizing the meaningfulness of the work.
 6. Treating one another with respect, gratitude, trust, and integrity.
- (para. 11)

According to the World Happiness Report (De Neve & Ward, 2017), societal connections and our place within society are part of what determines our overall well-being. Employees want to know that what they say and what they do matters; not just to the organization, but also to the world. Employees want not just to feel supported in what they are doing right, but also to know that it is okay to make mistakes. Seppala (2016) also recommends that managers and their staff take time to do nothing. Allowing for time to let the mind wander not only serves as a break from intense workloads, but also for generating creative new ideas. This could be as simple as taking a walk or a “field trip” to a business unlike the one of which currently employed.

How They Are All Connected

Flow states are mental states that happen when a person is totally absorbed by the task at hand. According to Csikszentmihalyi, when people are in a flow state, they are completely engaged in what they are working on (Collins & Amabile, 1999). Many organizations follow traditional hierarchies and bureaucratic methods of management where everything is regimented and specialized (Williams & Yang, 1999). However, as Csikszentmihalyi (1990) states, happiness and engagement are very much part of individual creation and cannot be found simply by following checklists and recipes for success. Variety, challenge to skills, creativity, and opportunities to set own goals is part of what can lead to an employee’s flow state. However, according to the Gallup’s (2017) Employee Engagement Survey, only 40% of employees feel that they are given the opportunity to use their talents and do what they do best. Employers are more concerned over achieving productivity than they are with whether the work is enjoyable for the employee (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

“Because work is so universal, yet so varied, it makes a tremendous difference to one’s overall contentment whether what one does for a living is enjoyable or not” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, pg. 144). In order to provide opportunities for flow states to flourish, organizations must create environments that are conducive to these states. This can be accomplished by allowing employees the opportunity to set their own goals and the flexibility in how they will achieve those goals. Additionally, employees should be given the opportunity to utilize their skills in creative ways that not only realistically challenge their abilities, but also help contribute to the purpose or mission of the organization.

Reasons for Creativity Resistance in Libraries

While many organizations have adopted creativity as a way to establish and build sustainability for their brand's success (Bilton, 2007), they are losing sight of the opportunity creativity can serve towards their internal brand and their greatest resource: their employees. Library administrators are responsible for enabling personnel at all levels of the organization to take risks and infuse innovation into the infrastructure of the institution (Huber & Potter, 2015). In a time where there is still plenty of uncertainty, administration needs to support cultures of psychological safety where staff feel that their ideas and individual contributions are supported. However, in many scenarios, library administration has taken a step back from encouraging individual forms of creativity from their staff as a form of expression in the workplace. Australian Librarian, Jane Cowell (2017) identifies this as administration micromanaging their teams and putting restrictions on how they use their time to be creative.

There can be many reasons why administration is hesitant to allow for creative expression from staff. Many libraries face financial constraints, budget cuts, and rely on funds provided by external stakeholders through sources like donations and taxes (Huber & Potter, 2015). Therefore, staff time to devote to these activities may face restrictions due to various factors such as the need for ideas to go through an approval process (Bizzle and Flora, 2015) where creative ideas are seen as a waste of resources (Rogers, 2003). These resources can be in the form of supplies or staff time. In some scenarios, the resistance from administration can be due to psychological factors having more to do with the administrator themselves (Huber & Potter, 2015; Van Gorp, 2011). These risks can be due to a fear of change, fear of failure, or a fear of losing credibility (Prentice, 2011; Evans & Ward, 2007; Huber & Potter, 2015; Parker, 2015; Bridges, 2003; Swid, 2015; Van Gorp, 2011; Maslow, 1971; Sutton, 2001). However, by restricting these activities, the administrators also risk incurring a lack of psychological safety for their staff.

Study on Workplace Creativity

A 2020 study on creativity resistance in the Maryland public libraries found that the factors influencing stakeholder resistance are connected to 1) how change is communicated in the organization and 2) the stakeholders' perception of the organizational culture (Hopwood, 2020). The successful adoption of an innovative idea within an organization is contingent upon the supportiveness of the organizational culture. When the perceived culture of the organization is not supportive of creativity and innovation, then the likelihood of the innovation to be adopted decreases. As the findings from the administration of the Situational Outlook Questionnaire (SOQ) illustrates, when it comes to innovation, successful organizations are the ones with high correlations to perceptions of a culture that are supportive of risk-taking, trust, involving stakeholders, exploring ideas, open discussion, and having fun. Once again, all of these culture traits connect back to psychological safety.

Traditional organizations tend to follow a bureaucratic formula for their rules, authorities, and relationships as there are strict guidelines on the roles of the employees and the actions they can take within the system. This can also put communication in jeopardy because the pattern becomes top-down instead of

two-way (Rogers, 2003). If roles at the organization have been specialized, supervisors may not be familiar enough with the roles to understand the potential of ideas to innovate. Therefore, such ideas may be turned down. Another problem that results because of this bureaucratic formula is many employees refrain from stepping out of line because they believe it can place their survival at the organization in danger, which could impact their security in their personal life (Williams & Yang, 1999; Maslow, 1971). When an employee comes to their supervisor or organizational leader with an idea and is immediately told, "That will never work," employees become afraid to voice ideas (Eikenberry, 2007). Comments like these are known as "creativity squelchers," which make it difficult for innovation to flourish in an environment because of a fear of failure (Fullan, 2011). Employees want to know what they say and what they do matters, not just to the organization, but also to the world (Senge et al., 2012). Employees want to feel supported when they succeed as well as when mistakes are made. (Bizzle & Flora, 2015; Prentice, 2011). Changing the culture of the organization is not easy, but if leadership embraces this adjustment, success is possible.

Ideally, to change from a traditional organization to a creative one, the facility must adopt a systems-thinking approach toward pursuing goals (Williams & Yang, 1999). Leaders must create a fear-free environment where employees are able to make suggestions on innovative or creative ideas without repercussions (Prentice, 2011). They should create a shared vision, be open, and be flexible regarding their mindsets (Senge et al., 2012). While knowledge and training can influence change, it must be put into practice by innovation champions within the organization (Tanner & Reisman, 2014). Staff need to see successful innovative ideas in action, but the area in need of improvement or attention needs to be communicated to stakeholders in a manner that shows leadership's acceptance of piloting risky ideas, even if the result may be failure.

Additionally, it is important for library leaders to be aware of the perception their stakeholders hold in relation to innovation within the organization. Their outlook and support can hinder or support the behaviors needed to embrace innovative change. Even if innovative ideas are accepted, the actions of the organization's leaders must support that perception. Otherwise, these ideas may remain unvoiced by those in the organization. Employees should be given the opportunity to utilize their skills in creative ways that realistically challenge their abilities and help contribute to the purpose or mission of the organization. Most importantly, employees need to know they are supported by their organizations without a fear of reprisal for failure or their idea being squelched. In a world where the only constant is change, library employees and stakeholders must strive for a culture of innovation to move into the future and obtain sustainability.

What You Can Do in Your Workplace

Creativity as a Means to Stress Reduction

According to a study conducted in 2014 by the American Psychological Association (APA), 77% of the people surveyed reported regularly feeling stressed. An almost equal percentage of 73% reported experiencing psychological

symptoms caused by stress. Half of those responding reported experiencing a negative impact on their personal and professional lives (American Institute of Stress, 2016). Eighty percent of workers feel stress on the job, with 42% reporting that they need help managing it. The cost to employers for stress-related health care or missed work is over \$300 billion (American Institute of Stress, 2016). When surveyed regarding the previous day's work post-pandemic, 50% of American workers reported that they had experienced a stress event on the job and 41% experienced a worry event (Gallup, 2022). This stress can cause ripple effects where it can not only impact customer transactions but also interactions with friends and family (Gallup, 2022). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) cautions that when we are constantly threatened by things that instead of aligning to our goals, distract us from our goals, then this can cause our energy to weaken and cause us to lose investment. According to Runco (2014), "[c]reativity can help the individual maintain both psychological and physical health" (pg. 110).

A study published in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* found that people who do small creative projects report feeling happier and more relaxed (Lewis, 2016). According to the study, "[i]ntervention designs are still relatively rare in creative research [...], but research suggests that art-making interventions can reduce stress and anxiety" (Conner, DeYoung, & Silvia, 2016, pg. 2). In fact, the study found that the effects of small creative endeavors, small "c" tasks, could induce states of "flourishing", as described by Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theory of flow states. These states were recorded as lasting longer, up to a day longer, than the time the participant invested into the activity. If emotions can have an effect on levels of creativity (Runco, 2014), then it makes sense that the inverse is also true, where engaging in creative endeavors can have a similar effect on emotions resulting in a more positive mood and therefore reducing stress levels. Therefore, if employees are given the autonomy to engage in small "c" type creative tasks, it is predicted that their interest and engagement in their work will also increase.

Failure as an Opportunity

According to Fullan (2011), people with a fixed mindset see their mistakes as negative, and therefore, mistakes are something to be avoided. He echoes Dweck (2006) and her theory that a growth mindset is necessary and that individuals and organizations can learn from their mistakes. Skills and talent are developed over time and don't just happen overnight. Learning from our mistakes is necessary for the growth of the organization just as much as it is to the growth of the individual. Fullan (2011) states that mistakes are not always a bad thing. Sometimes mistakes should be celebrated just as much as the successes. This is especially important in a learning organization because much can be learned from mistakes. If organizations are too scared to make mistakes, then they will never take risks and strive towards innovation because they are afraid of failure. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) describe this as "permission to fail." They say to broaden your definition of success so as to adopt an experimental mindset, change your vocabulary to be one of an open mindset where failure is an acceptable possibility, and try for small experiments first as they can be easier to bounce back from.

Bizzle and Flora (2015), also address the need of making sure that leaders promote a culture where failure is accepted. They state that leaders should provide an environment where the members of the organization are free to make decisions without the fear of being beaten over the head for making a mistake. They should instead be encouraged to pick themselves back up and to go out there to try again. Prentice (2011) suggests that having this type of culture creates an environment where employees will be comfortable not only being involved in innovative endeavors, but also in suggesting ideas of their own. According to Weinert (2013), trust as the ability to accept the vulnerability of what others may think of us is a big part of our ability to accept change. According to Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009), leaders who fear the pressure to produce certain results can use experimentation as part of a process to test ideas in a safe environment. By seeing innovation initiatives as an experiment, employees are free to see any change as part of an educated guess. By doing so, they are opening themselves to the possibility of innovation and creativity.

Gratitude Journals & Boards

Journaling and creative writing are methods for relieving stress and contributing to positive mood building. Building on the work of Maslow's self-actualization, researchers have found that if an individual participated in positive-writing, this was followed by an increase in mood and well-being. The study also found that writing created an outlet for solving problems and working through difficult experiences. In addition to affecting mood, there was also a documented increase in immune function as well (Lowe, 2006). Achor (2010) refers to the neurological effect that a daily gratitude habit creates as the positive Tetris effect. When we spend twenty-one days of consistently looking for the positive things in our lives, we will begin to see positivity everywhere and more often than we see the negative things. Tanner and Reisman (2014) recommend not only writing down three gratitudes a day, but also sharing them with staff and coworkers as a way to create unison in gratitude beliefs.

Making Time to Be Silly

Seppala (2016) recommends "inviting fun back into your life" (pg. 113). Silliness, fun, play—whatever you call it, all has a positive impact on us because it stimulates positive emotions. When we feel good, we also pay more attention to what is around us. While it may sound silly, an adult playing childhood games can not only refresh the individual, but also make us more productive. Many companies, like Google and Facebook, are now providing opportunities for fun in the workplace. Some simple things that can be done in the workplace are to host board game events, competitive office challenges (like cubicle decorating), or casual Fridays. Take time to mix things up a little and try things in different ways (Tanner & Reisman, 2014). A way to apply this in libraries is to allow employees to decorate bulletin boards, book drops, book carts, or find other ways to express their creativity. Mental health breaks are just as important as bathroom breaks. Allow staff time to take a breather away from the desk.

Traveling

Seppala (2016 September) suggests traveling or changing the perspective as a way to stimulate happiness. This is very similar to theories presented by creativity researchers. Runco (2014) also suggests as creative tools the idea of shifting the perspective of a problem so you can see it from another angle or turning it upside down. The benefits of looking at something from a new angle is that it can inspire renewed interest in the problem, which can generate new ideas and also can change the perspective enough that new ideas will be generated because things will no longer be looked at as obstacles. A major way of changing your perspective may be leaving the problem entirely, taking a break, and trying something new or even traveling. Runco (2014) states that traveling produces excitement as it can be stimulating. This change in mood can facilitate creativity as well as help people to be more grounded. They may even produce those aha moments because the individual is no longer so focused on the thing that was stressing them that they are finally able to think clearly. Many professional development conferences now feature behind-the-scenes tours as part of a pre-conference experience. These tours echo the idea proposed by Seppala (2016 September) that a change in scenery might be needed to stimulate ideas. The next time you attend a library conference, take a tour of a museum or local library for idea inspiration.

Conclusion

According to Tanner and Reisman (2014), employees respond to optimism in different ways. Some employees crave social connection, some want managers to acknowledge their work, some need help setting goals and realizing expectations, and others need a change of scenery. When employees are happy, it can create a rippling effect that flows through the organization. When people are happy, they work harder and are inspired to try new things. Happiness, just like creativity, is subjective to the individual. However, when it comes to the workplace, it is important to find that right mix of creativity and optimism that will lead to engagement and overall well-being not only for the individual but also for the organization.

As Maslow (1971) stated, people feel anxious when their needs are not met. These needs could relate to safety, belonging, or accomplishment. Often, it is experience which defines the lens through which these needs are viewed. If an employee has a negative workplace experience, that is going to shape their workplace behaviors. They have their own mental models of what is taking place. Taking time to allow employees to be creative can help foster their psychological safety. When it comes to employee engagement, creating workplace cultures where employees thrive and flourish begins at the top but is defined by those at the bottom.

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Haitian Immigrants' Information Needs and Behaviors: Libraries, Information Professionals and Haitians in the United States

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Haitian Immigrants' Information Needs and Behaviors: Libraries, Information Professionals and Haitians in the United States

Abstract

Haitian immigrants are a socially excluded growing demographic in the United States that deals with racism, anti-immigrant sentiment, anti-Haiti rhetoric, and language barriers. Information professionals need to understand Haitian information behavior, their cultural preferences, and barriers in order to successfully fulfill their information needs. This article examines other disciplines' relevant and scholarly research literature on Haitian immigrants in the United States to discover their trends of information behavior and barriers so that the Library and Information Science field can create effective information pathways to support their community. Haitian immigrants turn to their families and trusted individuals for their information needs, due to their high-context oral culture. They utilize the radio and ICT networks to connect transnationally. The challenges to their information needs include information overload, language barriers, a bias for face-to-face communication, racism, and culture clash issues. Information professionals can mitigate these barriers by providing outreach, access, excellent programming, bilingual resources and reference, and culturally competent staff.

Keywords: Haitian immigrants, libraries, Haiti, information needs, information behaviors, social inclusion, United States

Keywords

Haitian immigrants, libraries, Haiti, United States, information needs, information behaviors, social inclusion, acculturation

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**Haitian Immigrants' Information Needs and Behaviors:
Libraries, Information Professionals and Haitians in the United States**

Saw pa konnen pi gran pase 'w. What you don't know is greater than you. - Haitian proverb

The library and information science (LIS) community works to provide resources to information seekers by incorporating findings from information literacy studies. Researchers of the LIS community have investigated various immigrant cultures' information behavior to better support those information seekers, as their information needs are enormous and can impact successful acculturation. There is a gap in the research/literature on the information behavior trends of the Haitian immigrant community, which is a growing demographic group that faces unique barriers in the United States. This gap demands an examination of existing literature through the LIS lens in order to better serve this population. This article examines other disciplines' research literature on Haitian immigrants in the United States and broader information literature to discover trends of information behavior, cultural context, and barriers so that information professionals can apply this research for their Haitian immigrant community members.

Haitian immigrants and their descendants are a significant ethnic group in the United States, especially on the East and southern coasts. Haiti is a historically poor nation, and migration is spurred by poverty, political instability, and natural disasters (Desir, 2007; Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020). The United States is a top destination for Haitian migrants; as of 2018 there are 687,000 Haitian immigrants living in the United States comprising 2 percent of the United States' population (Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020). They are the fourth-largest Caribbean immigrant group in the United States and the second largest Afro-Caribbean group (Nicolas et al., 2011; Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020). The greatest concentration of Haitian immigrants are in Florida (48%) and New York (19%)(Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020).

Haitian immigrants have a disadvantage in emigrating to the United States due to triple minority status – they are foreigners, speak a unique language, and are black in a country with unresolved racism issues. Haiti has been disparaged by the media and government officials in the United States, leaving Haitian immigrants with weaker social capital than other immigrant groups (Blake, 2018; Nicolas et al., 2011; Stepick et al., 2003; Vanderkooy, 2011). Information professionals need to support this unique group in navigating information seeking to strengthen their social capital.

This paper seeks to discover how Haitian immigrants in the United States find information, what issues affect their information needs and information-seeking behavior, how can the LIS community support them, and what are the implications of this research for the LIS community? Information professionals can utilize knowledge of Haitian immigrant culture and their typical barriers by providing outreach, access, excellent programming, bilingual resources and reference, and culturally competent staff.

Literature Review

The intersection of Haitian immigrants and library and information science has not been studied vigorously. There is little research concerning the topic of their information needs, behaviors, and barriers in order to further their acculturation in the United States. One reason for this is that immigration by people of African descent did not occur in large numbers until after the 1960s and African-descent immigrants are a smaller demographic than Hispanic or Asian immigrant ethnicities (Desir, 2007). This lack of information required searching for information in other fields, researching information on Haitians when incorporated into larger information worlds like African and Afro-Black immigrants, investigating information behavior and needs in the Caribbean, and how other immigrant groups navigate roadblocks in information fulfillment. Acculturation is defined as cultural modification by adapting to another, usually dominant, culture and is critical to demonstrating that an immigrant has successfully adjusted to the culture of their new country (Caidi & Allard, 2005).

Nicolas et al. (2011), Stepick et al. (2003), and Vanderkooy (2011), address the nature of Haitian culture in the United States. They explore the culture and their methods of overcoming difficult issues, including racism, anti-Haitian discrimination, and familial obligations. Haitians began emigrating to the United States in the early 1800s to Louisiana and fought in the Civil War for the Union (Lachance, 2008). After the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and changes to immigration law in the United States, Haitian immigration ramped up due to the systemic violence from the Duvalier and military coup regimes (Desir, 2007). By the 1990s they were the third-largest ethnic immigrant group in the United States due to pressure from a military coup, and they were often derivatively referred to as “boat people” by the Floridian population (Vanderkooy, 2011).

Sources Studying School-Age Haitian Immigrants

Information behavior research on school-age Haitian immigrants is well researched by the education pedagogy, likely due to the difficulties of school assimilation when the intersections of trauma and triple minority status occur. Stepick et al. (2003) found that depending on their socioeconomic scale, Haitians have a dichotomy of reactions to their ethnic heritage, with those on the lower end of the economic scale hiding their ethnicity, while those on the higher end embrace it and proudly declare themselves Haitian-Americans. Acculturation is a two-way street, requiring acceptance by the native population and the willingness to adapt to the predominant culture of the host country. Stepick et al. (2003) and Vanderkooy (2011) discuss this duality for successful integration into the United States society by exploring Haitian adolescents' acculturation in schools. Vanderkooy follows children of Haitian immigrants over life courses. Vanderkooy (2011) and Stepick et al. (2003) are joined in researching young Haitians' success and in schools and attitudes towards education by Gelin (2002), Pichard (2006), and Pierre (2018). According to these sources, Haitian society strongly encourages education and reveres teachers, and those who emigrate to the United States consider education to be the key to success.

Gelin (2002), Pichard (2006), and Stepick et al. (2003) focus on high school age adolescents, while Pierre (2018) studied post-high school young adults. Desir (2007) explored the reasons for sending young Haitians to the United States. They determined that systemic violence and political upheaval in Haiti, with deadly consequences for children and young adults in schools, caused a middle-class exodus and significant trauma. The education field primarily focuses on school-age individuals, not on their older relations who may have more significant barriers to information.

Sociology Sources

Studies by Belizaire & Fuertes (2011), Nicolas et al. (2011), Stepick (1998), allow for information behavior research gleanings through the lens of sociology and counseling. Nicolas et al. (2011) and Stepick (1998) discuss the Haitian immigrant culture as it relates to acculturation in the United States. They determine that family, including extended relations and friends, is a vital support system and information network. Stepick's book is dated, but is one of the few sources of information that fully researches Haitian immigrants in South Florida. Belizaire and Fuertes (2011) focus on coping and acculturation via counseling services. These fields relate to LIS, but do not mention information centers and how they could positively impact Haitian immigrants' acculturation.

LIS Sources on African and Caribbean Immigrants' Information Behavior

AlJaberi (2018), Artinger and Rothbauer (2013), and Ndumu (2018; 2019) explore African and Caribbean immigrants' information behavior. AlJaberi's (2018) study on how pregnant women seek information is insightful for the Afro-Caribbean experience on health information-seeking in the United States but is exclusive to the childbearing population. Ndumu's research (2018; 2019) concentrates on information overload for black immigrants, utilizing a significant amount of Haitian immigrants as research subjects. Ndumu's works are valuable sources for this research subject in LIS but are based only in South Florida where 40% of the Haitian diaspora lives. More research for other regions is needed. Artinger and Rothbauer (2013) examine immigrant youth and their information behavior concerning libraries in Canada. Their study takes place in Canada and has a smaller ratio of Haitian immigrants. These three sources make the argument that their subjects are well-connected to information and communication technologies (ICT) and use it as the main method of socializing with families across the world (AlJaberi, 2018; Artinger & Rothbauer, 2018; Ndumu, 2018; 2019). Haitian immigrants frequently turn to familial information sources that are transnational in nature and have the technological means to do so. These sources give insight into how Haitian immigrants participate in information seeking, but do not necessarily reflect all Haitian immigrants in the United States, due to their perspectives from south Florida and Canada.

From an academic LIS standpoint, Bragdon (2018) and Iton (2009) explore the nuances of digital reference with Caribbean natives. In English-speaking Caribbean islands, complexities involving oral cultures and various Creole

languages make an already difficult task more so (Bragdon, 2018; Iton, 2009). Oral, high context cultures rely on face-to-face communication, trusting information from that mode more than from digital or phone transmission (Bragdon, 2018; Iton, 2009; Ndumu, 2018). These studies are focused in academia of the Caribbean and do not address Haitians specifically, nor diaspora and immigration information needs.

General LIS research is explored by Jaeger and Burnett (2010) and Konrad (2007). Jaeger and Burnett's (2010) theory on information worlds allows extrapolation from research on other immigrants' information needs, behaviors, and barriers allowing for application of those findings to Haitian immigrants. Konrad in their 2007 dissertation focused on what Library and Information Science really studies and focuses the purpose of the LIS goals.

LIS Sources on Immigrants' Information Behaviors

Immigrants and library use has been well-studied, with finding that use is dependent upon native countries' library infrastructure, trust in the government, and literacy levels (Burke, 2008; Caidi & Allard, 2005; Shepherd et al., 2018). Burke in 2008 explored the likelihood of library use by ethnic groups from large regions. However, Haitians are a unique ethnic group even in the Caribbean, which undermines generalizations for best LIS practices from Burke's study. Caidi and Allard in 2005 investigated how information professionals can provide Canadian immigrants with information provision and access strategies while looking from a holistic approach through the lens of social inclusion and capital theories. They give a broad overview of immigrant information needs and barriers. Shepherd, Petrillo, and Wilson in 2018 study Canadian urban public libraries and how immigrants use those information centers. These overarching studies on immigrant information behaviors and needs set the stage for deeper inquiry of unique ethnic immigrant groups.

Immigrants have intense information needs during their early periods of settling in, and they encounter overwhelming and complex information landscapes; having information interpreted and condensed through trustworthy sources is a key component of immigrant social inclusion (Caidi & Allard, 2005; Kosciejew, 2019; Lloyd et al., 2012; Shepherd et al., 2018). Kosciejew (2019) and Lloyd et al. (2012) focus on refugee's need for information access and how LIS professionals can better support this enormous, transient, and multicultural group. Haiti's turbulent history means that Haitian immigrants can be considered refugees, but Kosciejew and Lloyd et al.'s 2019 work has broad implications, since they discuss a group numbering about 68.5 million people. The LIS field works to provide access to resources, skills, and literacy to everyone, and these studies supply broad conclusions that are pertinent to Haitian immigrants.

LIS Sources Regarding Services for Racially, Ethnically, & Economically Diverse Groups

For the library to be regarded as a trustworthy and accessible source of information, recommendations have been implemented over the years concerning programming, collections, staff training, library and website design, outreach, and access for

vulnerable groups. Cichanowicz & Chen (2004) studied the language impact on immigrants and their preferences for access to information, and how building a multilingual chat reference service can be an effective method for a public library to reach immigrant populations. Collins, Howard, and Miraflor (2009) explored how to best serve homeless populations in a joint effort between a university and public library. This article is a treasure trove of findings on how to better serve homeless populations; many can be applied to Haitian immigrants. Gomez (2000) proposes hiring staff to specifically serve non-dominant language groups in the community, including hiring from the group itself. Jensen (2002) focused on Hispanic males who don't come into the library and how to provide materials and programming to local meeting spaces like local hiring sites. English language learning in libraries was investigated by Witteveen in 2016. They determine that if the need is there, libraries need to expand programming and build coalitions to support that need. Finally, Garmer in a 2014 paper for Aspen Institute, wrote three things for all public libraries to focus on in order to serve their community in the 21st century: an all-encompassing library application, high-speed internet, and a community forum space where positive political dialogue can grow. This is a future oriented document that recommends bold actions.

None of this research refers specifically to Haitian immigrants and/or how the LIS community can better serve their information needs, but cumulatively the research imparts important lessons. Using these sources, the author hopes to piece together a picture of what information professionals can do to support the information seeking of Haitian immigrants in the United States.

Methods

The research for this article began with a broad search on the topic. The initial search strategies used were keywords Haitian, immigration, Caribbean, "United States", "information services", "Caribbean immigrants", "information-seeking behaviors", and variations therein utilizing WorldCat Discovery, OneSearch, Google Scholar, Library & Information Science Source, and Library and Information Science Collection. Twenty-nine sources were deemed relevant enough to explore, eventually ending up with eight with adequate relevance, authority, and accessibility on the focused topic of Haitian immigrants and their information-seeking behaviors.

Reading through these sources, the most relevant and authoritative of the initial research period were AlJaberi (2018), Bragdon (2018), Iton (2009), Ndumu (2018; 2019), Nicolas, et al. (2011), and Stepick's 1998 work. Only four of them dealt specifically with information-seeking. Stepick's 1998 book "Pride Against Prejudice" was the most frequently cited source with its in-depth exploration of the Haitian immigrant community in South Florida. Nicolas, et al.'s 2011 book was right on target with the subject group and had better currency than Stepick's 1998. The limited results, especially within the framework of LIS, required another search.

During the second-tier search, Google brought back dissertations and theses, such as Gelin (2002), Pichard (2006), Pierre (2018), and Vanderkooy (2011); these

greatly helped for exploring Haitian immigrant culture and transitions in the United States. The use of citations and author searches from all relevant previous finds also brought back good results pertaining to the Haitian immigrant community in the United States.

The realization that this topic was not thoroughly researched in the LIS community required broadening the search to include other diverse groups and the intersections of immigration, information-seeking behavior, and information science. Sources on LIS support of racially, ethnically, and economically diverse groups in libraries came from coursework from the San José State University's School of Information Master's program. A large majority of LIS sources, including Burke (2008), Caidi and Allard (2005), Cichanowicz & Chen (2004), Collins, et al. (2009), Garmer (2014), Gomez (2000), Jensen (2002), Kosciejew (2019), Lloyd, et al. (2012), Shepherd, et al. (2018), and Witteveen (2016) were from classes. In determining whether to include or exclude a source, the priorities were given to relevance and scholarly sources. Topics selected for inclusion were Haitian immigrants and the intersections of information behavior, barriers to access, culture, and information science support for that group.

The Information Needs and Behaviors

Transitioning Haitian immigrants have a great variety of pressing information needs. For successful acculturation, preliminary work is crucial. The social network of the Haitian diaspora is the first and most important aspect of the support system. The basic unit of the social network is family, which "remains the central organizing institution of recent Haitian immigrants" (Stepick, 1998, p. 15). The social network sets up the recently arrived, also known as the *just comes*, for success by giving them food, a safe place to stay, and people to rely on during their transition. These transnational social networks provide social capital for the newly arrived. The social network is transnational; these relationships further the goal of a better life for the group as a whole and encourage further immigration to more desirable locations. Exploring outreach methods to contact critical people in these chains of immigration assistance could further information professionals' goals in assisting Haitian immigrants in their information seeking.

Once the overwhelming physiological needs are taken care of, the *just comes* go from transitioning to the second stage of settling in (Shepherd et al., 2018). Compliance information, like traffic laws or green card maintenance, is necessary to function lawfully in society (Shepherd et al., 2018). Compliance law enforcement concerning immigration is in flux in the United States and that creates anxiety, especially with high-stakes threats of deportation and ICE visitations (Zulkey, 2020). Understanding and accessing compliance information and everyday information, such as cultural norms, can determine the success of the settling-in period. Challenging information needs that routinely come up are governmental issues (i.e. changing immigration laws, citizenship processes), job searches, health and wellbeing, social support (childcare, ICT access for family communication, etc.), and transportation.

English-speaking is deemed critical for successful acculturation and a difficult

acquisition. Researchers state that English proficiency is the best indicator of acculturation and for academic purposes requires five to seven years, with older age impacting acquisition negatively (Belizaire & Fuertes, 2010; Pichard, 2006). In addition, Haitian immigrants also have to navigate the often-overwhelming information landscape that the United States prides itself on. One important skill is learning information literacy in an environment that frequently causes information overload (Ndumu, 2018). Identifying, evaluating, and accessing information are key literacy skills in any society, but due to the vast amounts of mis/information available in the US compared to Haiti, these skills are crucial to mitigating immigrant anxiety. The information needs listed above are a small snapshot of what Haitian immigrants must get answered.

Information Behavior

Caribbean culture is generally described as an oral, high-context, and collectivist society (Bragdon, 2018; Iton, 2009). To find the information trustworthy, members of this culture need to have a personal relationship with the information provider. Speaking the language heightens the trust in the information. The oral tradition in the Caribbean is in the form of storytelling, for communication of social values and used in teaching (Iton, 2009). Information is verbal communication rather than print based (Iton, 2009; Ndumu, 2019) and Iton writes in 2009 that the “flexibility afforded by face-to-face interaction with a librarian is often preferred” (p. 362). This implies that the first source of information for a Haitian immigrant is someone who speaks their language. Family, Kreyol-speaking aural sources, and ICTs that allow for face-to face communication are thus key information sources.

Family reigns supreme in Haitian society and is the first source of information in a traditionally oral culture (AlJaberi, 2018; Ndumu, 2019; Nicolas et al., 2011). Family includes not only nuclear families, but extended families and even those not related at all, like neighbors or god-parents, who create a social network of support in foreign nations (AlJaberi, 2018; Nicolas et al., 2011; Stepick, 1998). Haitian immigrants make decisions as a family group. In 2011, Nicolas et al. wrote that “the most influential members of the family, such as grandparents, ... are in charge of making decisions for the family” (p. 48). Another example of family decision-making is demonstrated during AlJaberi’s 2018 study of the pregnancy experience, where a subject described it as “the family connection. With mother, sisters, cousin friends, and friends. We talk about it, we plan it together, we make decisions together, you need each other” (p. 6). The English-speaking family members are frequently the younger children who are in school and thus exposed to more English language, leading to better acquisition. They assist in gathering and translating information while the elders make decisions that impact the family.

The family and larger Haitian community is the first group Haitian immigrants turn to when information-seeking. The family is the organizer of Haitian diaspora, and those who emigrate are expected to send money home and do well, a source of both anxiety and support for the *just comes* (AlJaberi, 2018; Ndumu, 2019; Nicolas et al., 2011; Stepick et al., 2003). In 2019, one of Ndumu’s subjects commented on a family member’s information seeking behavior:

For my grandmother, being illiterate and not knowing how to get access to the necessary information is hard. She relies on Haitians who have been here before her and their guidance. Sometimes they don't know much either but they help. (p. 8)

Information professionals could embrace this family connection by approaching possible ambassadors, thus making libraries a part of Haitian immigrant information search patterns. Once a person or institution is deemed trustworthy, they become a source of information. Having Kreyol speakers in information centers, with face-to-face contact, can best support the oral cultural tradition of Haitian immigrants. Having programming that welcomes every member of the family would also better support this group in libraries.

ICT use enables family reference communication for Haitian immigrants transnationally. Haitian immigrants favor ICT use since it allows audiovisual communication. In addition, the use of check-ins, geo-tagging, status updates, and following trusted sources on social media supports the tradition of trusted information sources. These ICT connections provide authentic and highly local resources for information seeking (Kim & Lingel, 2016). Information professionals utilize social media to provide authentic information on their community and resources. Translating posts into Kreyol can promote outreach and provide an alternate source of information for Haitian immigrants.

When discussing transnational communication of subjects in their research in 2018, AlJaberi wrote: "Participants used social media, video, and group-texting technologies to maintain ties in their home country during pregnancy ... 'we use Whatsapp and Skype whenever we can'" (p. 6). Historically, the consensus was that there was limited access to information via ICT for immigrants. However, current research seems to indicate that that is not the case now (AlJaberi, 2018; Ndumu, 2018). Haitian immigrants are able to access ICT, which means the ability to check on family transnationally and use social media for fulfilling information needs. Since there is still a strong connection to Haiti, information professionals already can lower costs for those communications, by promoting free wifi to the Haitian immigrant population or providing other ICT tools.

A vital ICT tool is the radio. The radio was described in 2013 by Munro as the most important communication technology for Haitians following the 2010 earthquake. In Salisbury, MD, where there is a community of 2,000 Haitian emigres, there are two Haitian radio stations as of 2022, with others available on the internet via streaming. Radio programs in small towns like Salisbury, Maryland demonstrate the importance of the radio, and thus of oral culture, for Haitian immigrants in information-seeking. Promoting a library on a Haitian radio station could further the goal of making it an alternative source for reliable information.

Other sources of information are clergy, the local community, and the government. Concerning the clergy, Haitian immigrants seek help for emotional support and family issues, but not for material concerns (Nicolas et al., 2011). The local community source is dependent on previous accessibility and support. In Haiti, neighborhood support is expected, but in the United States, it is highly dependent on

the local community, as Nicolas et al. in 2011 explores in this statement:

Haitians in the United States seem to perceive lower levels of available support and to receive less support from neighbors. Requests that are more personal in nature, such as those involving health issues, childcare, or financial support do not seem to be directed toward or met by the community ... [but] the neighborhood *can be* a significant source of support. (pp. 89-90)

Libraries can be this significant source of support in the Haitian immigrant community. The LIS field promotes libraries and information centers as sources of healthy communities. Continuing this work of community support by providing information and resources with no judgment labels helps all vulnerable populations, not just Haitian immigrants. By providing resources in Kreyol and performing outreach, the LIS field can better support their Haitian community members.

Barriers to Information Seeking

Before taking a step into the United States, Haitian immigrants are at a disadvantage. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with sixty-one percent literacy rate (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2020), eighty percent in poverty (Belizaire & Fuertes, 2010), and difficult political history (Desir, 2007). Haiti has been demonized historically by the United States media, with examples like Haiti's political systems represented as kleptocracies and the religious practice of Voodoo described as demonic (Blake, 2018; Desir, 2007; Nicolas et al., 2011). The United States' Center for Disease Control [CDC] listed being ethnically Haitian as a risk factor for AIDS in 1982 (Stepick et al., 2003) and derogatory terms like "boat people" further stigmatize this population in the eyes of Americans (Vanderkooy, 2011).

Historically, the United Nations, the United States, and other countries have placed embargoes on Haiti, impacting it economically. Most recently, a former United States president labeled Haiti as a "shithole country" (Blake, 2018). General anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States has become more vocal in the last ten years, adding to Haitian immigrants' difficulties. These comments and actions by the United States government led to anti-Haitian discrimination in schools and the workforce, impacting acculturation (Stepick, 2003) and leaving Haitian immigrants with weaker social capital (Vanderkooy, 2011). When immigrant groups, already at a disadvantaged status, arrive with all this baggage, their information needs compound and access to resources shrinks.

Haitian immigrants have the triple minority complex, where their foreigner status, uncommon language, and skin color create barriers to fulfilling their information needs. Haitians are black and experience the United States' systemic and individual racism. Racism is a form of social exclusion, resulting in compounding disadvantages (Caidi & Allard, 2005). Haiti is a black nation which overthrew white colonialist masters (Desir, 2007). This emancipation hurt Haiti's standing with historically slave-owning and, currently, systemically racist countries like the United States. The United States' government and media disparaged Haitian culture in an effort to undermine black self-determination (Desir, 2007).

Even in the Caribbean, miscommunication occurs due to different Creole dialects (Iton, 2009). Haitian Kreyol is a unique language, used only in Haiti. In the United States, few speak Kreyol; the burden of learning a new language is another barrier. In addition to language barriers, the oral bias of Haitian culture means they are less likely to seek out reliable sources in print and online. Thankfully, many information centers provide language acquisition resources and classes. They should promote those services as well as information literacy classes in Haitian Kreyol.

Well-being, fitness, and mental health information access is vital for true social inclusion yet is rife with misinformation. AlJaberi's 2018 study explores folk wisdom and superstition in health information seeking. They determined that these beliefs may create problems in information behavior for health information (AlJaberi, 2018). Folk wisdom, which is not necessarily a bad thing, can create barriers to information, whether in information-seeking deterrence (fear of inviting people's envy leading to curses) or in poor selection and literacy.

Understanding the context of superstition and folk wisdom in Haitian culture may be useful for teaching information literacy skills. Haitian worldview includes turning to the head of the family, usually a group of elders called the *conseil de famille*, when information seeking. Elders may be more likely to believe in folk wisdom than second generation or younger Haitian immigrants and thus have a larger impact on information behavior. Information seeking on health topics that are rife with misinformation and superstitions should allow for Haitian immigrants' worldview in order for successful access and incorporation.

Health information literacy is critical because Haitian immigrants are at risk of poor health due to living in the United States. The 'immigrant health paradox' is described by Ndumu (2019) and AlJaberi (2018) as the idea that immigrants arrive in the United States as healthy, but decline in health after years of living in the United States, with illnesses like heart disease and asthma. AlJaberi in 2018 describes health information barriers as including not knowing how to access medical resources in the United States, miscommunication due to culture and language issues, and stigmas dealing with mental health. With health information, one can see that the overarching information barriers can have physical consequences. These issues could be mitigated with information literacy skills.

Family support close by could also be helpful – especially for mental health - but after arrival in the United States, family gatherings decline (Nicolas et al., 2011). To make up for lack of close-by relatives, the life-partner must take up the slack, but as AlJaberi in 2018 notes: "Separation from family support imposed lifestyle changes that require the expecting father to adapt and contribute. When that does not happen, participants are left feeling abandoned and neglected" (p. 3-4). Lastly, the opposite stress of too-much family - back home and in the United States – can have a negative effect on information seeking. The stresses of life in the United States can impact the emotional and physical well-being of Haitian immigrants, which impacts their ability to seek out and process important information. Fostering connections that potentially replace these missing family connections without the burden of family judgment can lead to better information behaviors.

Information overload is a severe barrier for Haitian immigrants. In Haiti, information is kept mainly in the knowledge city of Port-Au-Prince and online information can be censored or inaccessible. The United States has free access to almost all information, leading to misinformation and information overload. In 2019, Ndumu explores how Afro-Caribbean and African immigrants feel about information access in their home country and their new home:

Though some lauded the accessibility of information, others felt that information seeking can be inefficient at best, or labyrinthine, at worst, on account of the prevalence of resources. By comparison, resources in countries of origin were perceived by some as less complicated. (p. 6)

This description of the dichotomy of too little information versus too much information in the United States underlines the importance of information literacy.

The constant need of updating information in the United States - for keeping up with immigration or tax law, for instance - can be frustrating. Libraries, a potential resource for fulfilling information needs, are used in Haiti primarily for educational study (Ndumu, 2019). In Artinger and Rothbauer's 2013 study, the immigrant youth experience towards libraries in the United States was as a social place, not for information. In addition, the government is viewed by Haitians as untrustworthy and public libraries are a part of the government.

In terms of the government sourcing of information, there is a roadblock. While the government provides important compliance information (taxes, immigration, legal issues) and thus is a necessity, Haitians approach it with great distrust because the Haitian government historically could not be trusted (Ndumu, 2019). Libraries, being government institutions, are thus not part of typical information-seeking strategies (Caidi & Allard, 2005). Recent politics and the rise of anti-immigrant attitudes have impacted trust in the American government. Thus, while the government is a huge source of impactful information, it is not a source that Haitian immigrants easily approach. Information professionals should consider becoming an intermediary between Haitian immigrants and government services by providing a safe space and creating Haitian immigrant ambassadors to reach out to the population.

LIS Support

Information professionals can support Haitian immigrants in settling successfully into their new home, using LIS research findings and tools like collections, programming, design, reference, and outreach. In the last decade, libraries have stepped up with lending technology, expanding wifi reach, providing digital access via bookmobiles and in laundromats, e-resources, temporary library cards for online access, in addition to typical reference and programming. Garmer (2014) states that the next step is to create an application that can notify patrons of relevant classes, linking them to useful resources (i.e. immigration law change alerts), ordering materials, and checking on their account, all from their cell phones. The potential for an all-encompassing library application is enormous, especially since it can link patrons to e-learning, other agencies, knowledge networks, and collections (Garmer,

2014) connected via the library rather than through for-profit or small non-profit organizations.

Traditional forms of outreach are still crucial. Information professionals with the goal in mind of assisting the Haitian immigrant and descendant populations could perform outreach that promotes library services in immigration offices and other locations where *just comes* frequent, so that information-seeking behavior is introduced early on in the acculturation process when change is easiest. Connecting and partnering with other social support agencies, community partners, and local Haitian communities transfers trust from Haitian community organizations to libraries. Ambassadors to the Haitian community can link up libraries to the community as well. Ambassadors are key individuals in the Haitian community who introduce transitioning Haitian immigrants to the services that information centers have to offer. Linking up with these groups to organize childcare or transportation can make a huge difference in program attendance, as evidenced by Collins, Howard,

and Miraflor's (2009) work on programming for the homeless at San Jose's King Library. Advertising by leaving bilingual programming flyers in OB-GYN offices, mHealth applications, and other medical areas (AlJaberi, 2018) or via radio advertisements on Haitian radio stations is another way to connect with a population that may not use libraries.

Providing relevant immigrant programming is another great incentive for participation by Haitian immigrants. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes help mitigate the triple minority status. Witteveen (2016) recommends offering a variety of educational opportunities for language learning: courses for direct purposes like driver's education and business, informal discussion groups with structured activities, reciprocal peer-to-peer language learning, and bilingual homework help that welcomes parent participation. Civic programming like citizenship classes, immigrant counseling, free legal aid, job assistance, and providing mentorship opportunities to recent immigrants for assistance with settling in are all immigrant support programming ideas that have been used extensively by libraries.

Programming on health information and resources by licensed professionals is a way of circumventing the misinformation that is endemic to the field. Elderly care and parenting classes can encourage new patrons to come into the library for the first time, connecting them to the United States culture in meaningful ways (Nicolas et al., 2011). Support groups and programming of this nature are useful situations where information literacy lessons can gain traction. When providing programming, inviting the entire Haitian family rather than just partners is a more inclusive move (Nicolas et al., 2011). Designing to be flexible for a specific group like Haitian immigrants allows for equitable access.

One of the greater barriers to social integration is the unique language of Haitian immigrants. Including Kreyol as one of the website languages and providing Kreyol literature (including subscriptions to Haitian newspapers) in the collection allows for information access despite the language barrier. Providing the Kreyol collection outside the library (Jensen, 2002), and utilizing job centers for placement

of training materials for migrant Haitian workers is another possibility of LIS support. Multilingual online chat, as promoted by Cichanowicz and Chen (2004), can mitigate the oral cultural and language impasse.

Having staff that speaks Kreyol would have a great impact on providing a welcoming space to Haitian immigrants. However, since that is less likely due to the small percentage of speakers nationally, hiring paraprofessionals who “are committed to serving the ethnic-minority community” (Gomez, 2000, p. 39) and willing to learn the language goes a long way. Having a point person on staff makes it easier for Haitian immigrants to request information, since it can create a relationship that helps with the high-context society (Bragdon, 2018). The possibilities are endless, but information professionals need to take the first step to make the library welcoming to Haitian immigrants. By bringing Haitian immigrants information access, skills, and literacy, information professionals allow for easier acculturation and greater social capital for this unique ethnic group.

LIS Implications

Library and information science is a broad field. It boils down to humans constructing meaning via intermediation of information professionals and their tools of information dissemination (Konrad, 2007). Information professionals work for their local communities. The small worldview of a unique ethnic group can illuminate broader trends in LIS. Studying distinctive populations adds to the LIS research by providing information professionals tools for disseminating the information services they have, whether it's through reference, catalog management, or programming.

Immigration is an intense moment in a person's life. During moments of great change, such as pregnancy or the transition period of immigration, intervention is effective to change information behavior patterns. The consequences of illiteracy and poor access to information undermines acculturation. When essential information needs are not met “at all stages of immigration, the social exclusion of newcomers is to be expected” (Caidi & Allard, 2005, p. 318). Information professionals should support information literacy and access for transitioning and other Haitian immigrants in order to help them lead better lives in their new communities.

Poverty, racism, non-dominant language, misinformation, information overload, distrust of government entities are all barriers for any immigrant and compound each other. Haitian immigrants come from a high-trust, oral communication style of information seeking, consider education as empowerment, and they maintain strong transnational relations. Working towards supporting these information behaviors and barriers allows LIS professionals to support their community in an equitable manner. Social exclusion is not acceptable.

The LIS community strives to teach information literacy and provide access to information resources for their community. Burke wrote in 2008 that “Predicting the information needs of the community base can help the library make good program and materials decisions” (p. 172). If Haitian immigrants are part of the community, information professionals should provide services that support their

information behavior, whether it is by providing Kreyol-speaking staff, English-language acquisition programming, technological access and support, outreach, or information literacy education.

Currently, there is not a lot of research on Haitian immigrants in LIS research. Burke in 2008 asked “Do immigrants from other regions display these same needs?” (p. 173) in reference to their findings on how large immigrant groups use the library. Parsing out the differences in information behavior of a unique ethnic group from the broader groups is critical for the LIS profession. This article is an attempt to gather research from a wide variety of disciplines and allows information professionals to begin narrowing research questions on how to better provide information services to a vulnerable group in their communities. By understanding the information behaviors of Haitian immigrants in the United States, information professionals can assist in goals of the LIS field: promoting self-advocacy through literacy and access to information for better social inclusion.

Conclusion

Haiti has a vibrant culture, but culture clash is inevitable when Haitians arrive in the United States. Haitians are likely to need more assistance upon arrival due to their triple minority status. In order to better assist this small but growing population in their goal of full participation in United States society, information professionals need to understand where Haitian immigrants are coming from, what challenges they need to overcome, and their cultural preferences. Haitian immigrants turn first and foremost to their families and friends for their pressing information needs, preferring oral communication tools like the radio or ICT audiovisual access.

The barriers to their information needs include information overload, speaking only Haitian Kreyol, a preference for face-to-face communication, racism, culture clash issues, historical animosity against Haiti, and mistrust of government entities. This is all on top of the typical immigration information needs, which are continuous and dynamic. By utilizing the information of barriers and cultural trends provided in this article, information professionals can mitigate barriers by providing innovative outreach, excellent programming, bilingual resources, and culturally competent staff in order to encourage information-seeking behavior in libraries and other information centers. The research on Haitian immigrants’ information needs and behaviors requires further study in the field of library and information science.

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Book Review: Information at Work: Information Management in the Workplace, Katriina Byström, Jannica Heinström, Ian Ruthven

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Book Review: Information at Work: Information Management in the Workplace, Katriina Byström, Jannica Heinström, Ian Ruthven

Keywords

workplace information, information management, information science, information technology, knowledge management

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Byström, K., Heinström, J., & Ruthven, I. (2019). *Information at work: Information management in the workplace*. Facet Publishing.

Information at Work: Information Management in the Workplace offers an expansive yet succinct series of essays exploring information and its entangled, complex interactions within the workplace. Edited by researchers Katriina Byström, Jannica Heinström, and Ian Ruthven, and co-authored by an additional seven information researchers, the work highlights the pivotal role information plays in the socio-cultural context of human labor, portraying its significance even beyond the domain of the knowledge worker. Katriina Byström is a Professor in Library and Information Science at the Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway, focusing on information flows within the work environment and how information tasks are executed. Jannica Heinström is an Associate Professor in the Library and Information Science at the Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway. Heinström explores the psychological dimensions of information interaction such as how workers with different personalities use information. Ian Ruthven is a Professor of Information Seeking and Retrieval at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland, researching information seeking behaviors across diverse populations. Although the collection of essays could be more coherent, the reader will find prescient, relevant questions posed spanning a variety of topics, including workplace automation, the shaping of information cultures, information artifacts, and evolving workplace environments. Ultimately, the book argues that only by trying to understand the dynamic, sometimes elusive qualities and impacts of information can it be effectively managed for the benefit of the worker.

Deliberately multidisciplinary, *Information at Work* excels at presenting more abstract, philosophical considerations of information management while framed within specific industries and real-life scenarios. Fictitious characters who are employed as a cardiologist, a lawyer, and a journalist are used throughout the book to demonstrate how information is metabolized within the day-to-day activities of specific jobs. Information for a cardiologist, for example, materializes as health science journals, colleagues, the medical record, and, importantly, the patient. The authors reveal how workers' responsibilities are now commonly fragmented as they "spend less time at each task and switch tasks frequently" (Byström et al., p. 5) due to the evolving retrieval and dissemination of relevant information. They explore how information overload, artificial intelligence, personal information management, and the shifting hybridity of labor are contributing to new realities for modern workers. And despite their macro analysis of emerging trends in managing workplace information, they don't pretend to have the answers; instead, they offer specific examples of larger themes and ultimately concede that "there is no single framework or epistemological perspective that singlehandedly explains the entire phenomena of workplace information" (Byström et al., p. 24).

Two essays, "Information Activities and Tasks" and "Information Artefacts," are particularly eye-opening and successfully merge the conceptual and realistic. In "Information Activities and Tasks," the authors propose an analogy of a flowing stream to model the movement of information inside an organization. Vividly, Byström et al. write:

A stream meanders across the landscape until disturbed (or controlled) by stones and tree branches that divert the flow in different directions along distributaries. So too with respect to information flows within

organizations. Stones and tree branches are now the people and systems that become gatekeepers (Allen, 1996), controlling for security, compliance and confidentiality (Blumenthal et al., 2006), and/or hoarders who block access knowingly and unknowingly (Lin and Huang, 2010). (p. 49)

By providing the strong visual image of information percolating and redistributing like water, the reader is invited to more easily grasp the complex life of workplace information. Within this stream, they argue, workers themselves are now emerging as the central focus—rather than the information. Emphasizing the user as the focus (i.e. the worker) is now key to cultivating a productive, engaged work environment (Byström et al.). In chapter 5, “Information Artefacts,” Byström and Pharo effectively describe the elusive, complicated characteristics of information artifacts. These information proxies, which can manifest as countless forms such as objects, persons, and technologies, reshape our perspective of information in the workplace. A human body, for example, becomes an information artifact once it becomes a patient of medical care (Byström et al., p. 108). Through the lens of individual industries and workers within them, information artifacts show how perceiving everything and everyone on a spectrum of informationality empowers us to improve workplace processes through deeper understanding.

As a collection of essays, the work does at times fail to present as cohesive. Written for information professionals as well as students of information science, *Information at Work* may confuse other audiences as it bounces among perspectives from philosophy, history, sociology, psychology, business, and information science. Its readability is challenging at times and requires a minimum level of knowledge in its myriad subjects. And although each chapter offers pertinent inquiries of the contemporary workplace, it struggles to convey a consistent, actionable message. Business-minded individuals may not find the book exceptionally useful for delivering solutions. Only near the end of the book did I understand why the authors were asking their questions of the evolving nature of workplace information, the answer being for the ultimate benefit of the worker. Despite these shortcomings, the book is worthwhile due to its ability to prompt more profound awareness of information’s multitudinous, labyrinthine behavior at work.

Readers will find *Information at Work* topically similar to other recently published library and information science (LIS) works. In *Practical Knowledge and Information Management*, information professionals learn how to establish knowledge management practices and systems within their various workplaces (Schopflin & Walsh, 2019). *Information at Work*, in contrast and unsurprisingly, is less concerned with the applied methods of managing information and more so fostering the philosophical and sociological understanding of information’s weaving through the workplace. And in *The Internet of People, Things and Services* a techno-centered perspective guides readers through the hyper-relevant transformations taking place in communication and information devices (Simmers & Anandarajan, 2018).

Although not perfectly executed, *Information at Work* illuminates the ways information relates to and fundamentally structures workplace activities. Enriched by a variety of well-researched authorial viewpoints, the work compels readers to critically examine how information flows within the organization so we may be able to better design how we work. These conceptual takeaways are enmeshed with more pragmatic examples for enhanced comprehension. And while some

readers may be frustrated by the multidisciplinary, noncommittal approach to workplace information issues, the book's strength is not to provide reductionist commentary but instead to encourage critical examination.

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