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Description

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??? You and the ISP Are Well-Liked ???
(And What’s the Point of These Videos Anyways?)

Jenna Hartel

A well-liked (?) video on Carol Kuhlthau’s Information Search Process just passed 1,000 views in 8 months, making it a rising star on my YouTube channel, INFIDEOS. Congratulations, Dr. Kuhlthau!

The 15-minute video presents her celebrated contribution to Information Science, the Information Search Process (ISP), a model of student information seeking that has wider applications. As the 4th episode in the video series What Makes This Paper Great?, viewers are taken on a deep dive into Kuhlthau’s 1988 article, “Developing a Model of the Library Search Process: Cognitive and Effective Factors.” The video also pans back to present additional context about Kuhlthau and her idea within the Information Science literature. It could be used to fortify learning about the foundations of our field, reference services, school librarianship, information literacy, or information behavior, among other topics.

—Do landmark papers of Information Science that are already shining in their own light really need a multimedia makeover?—

Kuhlthau’s work is award-winning, highly-cited, and more often included in LIS courses than any other
information behavior model (VanScoy, Julien, & Harding, in press). Given its success, why make or watch a video about it? Do landmark papers of Information Science that are already shining in their own light really need a multimedia makeover? Put differently: What’s the point of these Information Science videos anyways? My post this week answers the latter question with examples from the video at hand, and argues that well-crafted educational videos provide otherwise missed avenues of learning and present concepts in more rounded and complete ways. For example:

- **Biography that Brings Scholars to Life.** The video opens with a biographical profile of Dr. Kuhlthau that is more current and richer than the short biography within any paper or book. Many students obtain information degrees to pursue a second career and may appreciate that she worked for years as a school librarian, coming to doctoral studies only later. The video includes a snippet of Dr. Kuhlthau speaking about the ISP that is uplifting evidence of her authority, integrity, passion, and vision.
A Long View of Trends in the Literature and Field. Any retrospective of a landmark publication (multimedia or otherwise) has the opportunity for historical perspective. To that end, my video locates the ISP in theoretical developments within the literature and field over the last 50 years. Having focused on documents and information systems for most of its formative years, in the 1980s Information Science took a “cognitive turn,” (Hartel, 2019), and research was re-centered on the information seeker. Kuhlthau’s humanistic study was a cornerstone of this sea change. Nowadays, research from the once-dominant cognitive paradigm is often dismissed as overly mentalistic and insensitive to context. However, the dynamic and unfolding nature of video allows us to see concepts like the ISP as bridges to the more socially and culturally sensitive frameworks we embrace today.
A Paper’s Organization. The What Makes This Paper Great? video series bring attention to the featured work’s organization and rhetorical strategy. A segment of the video at hand entitled “Structure of the Paper,” analyzes Kuhlthau’s 1989 article at the thumbnail and paragraph level, giving viewers a high-level, narrated tour. This way, learners can understand the conceptual work performed in each section of the document, enhancing comprehension. (I also believe that these lessons in document organization help readers to become better writers. Doctoral students who aspire to write conceptual papers can especially benefit from these explications.) Several educators who have used What Makes This Paper Great? series in their courses have applauded its unique emphasis on the structure of documents.
Complex Theoretical Influences Can Be Illustrated. Among her contributions to Information Science, Kuhlthau applied George Kelly’s theory of personality to the information seeking context. The video at hand illustrates her interdisciplinary translation of that idea and shows how personal constructs influence behavior. The dynamic nature of personal constructs lends itself well to the video format. This is a case in which a (motion) picture is worth a thousand words.
Static Models Can Be Animated and Humanized. Kuhlthau’s ISP model was crystallized and presented as a table that appears centrally in the original paper. An arrow along its X-axis represents a student information-seeker’s path of experience. Though this now-famous graphic design captures the ISP’s key elements, it unfortunately has a static quality and renders the information seeker somewhat abstract and invisible. The video animates and humanizes the Information Search Process, with particular attention to its most innovative affective dimension.
• **Videos Enable a Public Conversation.** Videos posted on YouTube contain a public space for comments. This feature allows for additional inputs and reveals the social construction of ideas. Recently, Dr. Leslie Maniotes, Kuhlthau’s collaborator (and an accomplished researcher and educational consultant in her own right) watched the video and submitted a lengthy comment. Dr. Maniote’s expressed her appreciation and pointed to additional learning resources, such as the book *Seeking Meaning: A Process Approach to Library and Information Services* (Kuhlthau, 2004). She also noted that Nilo Sarraf (a “Neuro Information Scientist”) has recently used EEG imaging to document the ISP in new ways. Thank you, Dr. Maniotes, for enriching the conversation.

To recap, I believe that well-crafted educational videos provide otherwise missed avenues of learning and present concepts in the more rounded and complete ways, delineated above.

I’ll end this post with a round-up of YouTube resources on Kuhlthau and the Information Search Process. Two exemplar presentations ([here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1234567890) and [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0987654321)) are made by college librarians and speak to applications of the ISP in a school context. Dr. Nilo Sarraf, mentioned above, hosts an interview with Dr. Kuhlthau about the ISP’s development. On INFIDEOS you can also find a Tiny Video on the ISP, and Kuhlthau’s work is included within *The Crossroads of INFORMATION & LOVE, How Do I Write a Conceptual Paper, Information Behavior*, and *Turn, Turn, Turn*. My personal favorite overview of the ISP is a video-recording of a guest lecture by Kuhlthau herself, which captures her genius. The latter should inspire all Information Scientists—going forward—to document their ideas in video.
A Student’s Perspective: What Makes Carol Kuhlthau’s Library (Information) Search Process a Great Paper?

Marissa Caico

Visually exploring Kuhlthau’s ISP model from her paper Developing a model of the library search process: Cognitive and affective aspects, allows us to see how this paper acts as a connection point between an array of notable ideas, as well as Information Science and other fields like Education and Cognitive Science. I found the section of the video, where the publication context of the paper and Information Science literature is placed along a timeline to be particularly enriching; understanding where this paper stands and the developments taking place before and after it stress its importance and influence. Kuhlthau’s Information Search Process Model lays out the different search stages, feelings, thoughts, and actions students go through when doing research. Having the model broken down and accompanied by animations that emphasize and humanize these stages brought the information seekers to life. Most students new to writing research papers in high school and college experience at least some of these stages and often feel like they are isolated in this experience. It makes sense that Kuhlthau would find it valuable for information mediators to be aware of these stages as well. Seeing the model animated gave me a better sense of information seeking in the research process and I think Information Science students who intend on acting as information mediators would benefit from this visual argument for Kuhlthau’s paper. I thought Dr. Hartel’s illustrations of Kelly’s constructs of thought and emotion are helpful in moving us through the model and the theory surrounding it, clarifying some complicated concepts. The video keeps moving, taking us along for the ride to experience this well-known work from multiple perspectives,
and solidifying its position as a great paper in Information Science.