The information-related behaviour of emerging artists and designers: Inspiration and guidance for new practitioners

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Abstract

Purpose
This paper aims to report an empirical study of the information-related behaviour of emerging artists and designers. It also aims to add to understanding of the information behaviour of the group both as practising artists (a little understood category of information users), and also as “new practitioners”.

Design/methodology/approach
A literature analysis is used to guide creation of an online questionnaire, eliciting both qualitative and quantitative data. A total of 78 practising artists participated, all having graduated in the seven years prior to the survey.

Findings
The group have generally the same information practices as more established artists. They place reliance on internet and social networks, while also using traditional printed tools and libraries. Browsing is important, but not a predominant means of accessing information. Inspiration is found from a very diverse and idiosyncratic set of sources, often by serendipitous means. Their status as emergent practitioners means that their information behaviour is governed by cost factors, and by needs for career advice and interaction with peers.

Research limitations/implications
The study group are a convenience sample, all having access to the internet. No observation or interviews were carried out.

Practical implications
The results will provide guidance to academic and public librarians serving artist users, and to those providing career advice to them. It will also be valuable to those providing services to “new practitioners” in any field.

Originality/value
This is one of a very few papers reporting empirical studies of the information behaviour of artists, and has the largest sample size of any such study. It is one of a very few papers considering the information needs and behaviour of new practitioners.

Keywords
Arts, Visual media, Information retrieval, Individual behaviour, Internet, Social networks

Citation

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