

Proceedings of RAILS - Research Applications, Information and
Library Studies, 2018:

Faculty of Information Technology, Monash University,
Australia, 28-30 November 2018.

Telling stories: extending informed learning with narrative theory

Yen B. Wong, Christine Susan Bruce and Clarence Maybee

Introduction. *Learning design in the information profession may open new opportunities by addressing learners as whole persons with a historical past, a current situation, and future aspiration, with their own beliefs and values. These are, according to Paul Ricoeur, stories.*

Method. *This conceptual paper explores the ideas of Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology of narrative (a theoretical description), and Bruce's phenomenography of informed learning (a model of information literacy experience) as perspectives of meaning making. It suggests the use of narrative awareness as an enabler of informed learning.*

Analysis. *This paper provides insights into the information learning experience by considering Bruce's seven faces of informed learning as aspects of the creative process of narrative that Ricoeur refers to as a mimesis. The paper highlights the holistic and creative process of narrative structure in enabling learners to orient themselves as information users.*

Conclusions. *Understanding informed learning as a narrative construct offers an account of learners' experiences as a process of meaning making and narrative making in the formation of an unfolding identity through time. With this understanding, information professionals may be encouraged to incorporate narrative as a strategy for supporting learners navigate information spaces.*

Introduction

Current practices in the information profession must strive to better address individuals as whole persons. It is necessary *'to acknowledge the uniqueness of our users as complex, dynamic, evolving beings at a certain stage and development in life, living in a certain situated context... with a past, a present, and future'* (Wong, 2019, p. 27). The uniformity of learning programmes often deployed when working with our users has limited the great capacity that we have to stimulate learners' innate creativity and enable their lives to flourish. While the information literacy agenda has explored the value of socio-cultural, critical, and relational approaches (to name a few), the potential of narrative as a way to enrich our understanding of people's lived learning experiences has received little attention.

This paper aims to provide an alternative way of understanding the information-learning process by aligning Bruce's (2008) *'seven faces of informed learning'* with the creative process of narrative construction that Paul Ricoeur (1984-1988) identifies as essential to human life. The core of the paper is devoted to the creative process of self-creation through narrative, both as the structure of human experience through time, and the structure by which we use stories to organise our thoughts in order to comprehend or understand our internal and external worlds. We then turn to learning and show that learning as human action may be interpreted as a narrative construct. The seven faces of informed learning highlight the variation of learning experiences, and we will demonstrate how this approach reflects aspects of the learning process (through Ricoeur's narrative theory of mimesis).

We hope to convey the importance of understanding the ubiquitous nature of

narrative in learning experience and the crucial role narratives play in people's lives. Given the holistic thinking behind informed learning, and its interest in narrative for understanding users' experiences, there is value to be gained by incorporating narrative in its conceptualisation and approach to learning design. The paper takes the reader through a thought journey in two parts: first, configuring the information experience (that is, making sense of the information literacy landscape with Ricoeur's narrative theory as an emerging thought in the arena), and second, informed learning as the experience of narrative process (which explores how informed learning is a narrative construct).

Configuring the information experience

From information literacy to informed learning: ways of understanding the information experience

In 1974 Zurkowski created the term information literacy based on the mandate of skilling up people to meet the challenges of our information complex modern world (Zurkowski, 1974). The American Library Association provided the following definition in its 1989 report:

To be information literate, a person must be able to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information. (American Library Association.... 1989)

The concept of information literacy continues to evolve. In recognising the broader spectrum of people's information worlds, research and practice has expanded to include socio-cultural, socio-political, behavioural, critical and cognitive influences (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016; Dervin, 1992; Lloyd, 2006; Whitworth, 2006). It is understood that people's information worlds are multidimensional, in a constant flux of making and remaking information. Reflecting this thinking, the Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association (ALA), has updated their view of information literacy, and now defines it as:

the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016).

Despite there being interest in incorporating a more holistic representation of people's information worlds, current information literacy practices lack a comprehensive view of learners as complex, dynamic, and evolving through time. Early use of the definition provided by the American Library Association (1989) led to instructional library competencies that focused on tool-based search and evaluation skills. These processes of instruction have often been concerned with the acquisition of information as an atomistic process, an approach which may be seen as limiting: '*Information literacy is an appreciation of the complex ways of interacting with information. It is a way of thinking and reasoning about aspects of subject matter*'. (Bruce, 1997, p. 2).

Grounded in research that explored people's experiences of information literacy, Bruce (2008) devised the concept of informed learning. This approach re-interprets '*information literacy as a complex of different ways of using information to learn*'. The idea of informed learning '*brings learner-centred, experimental, and reflective approaches to the information literacy agenda*' (Bruce, 2008, p. 5). Additionally, '*Informed learning is an interpretation of information literacy that focuses on people's information experience rather than their skills or attributes*' (Bruce, Somerville, Stoodley, and Partridge, 2014, p. 169).

Understanding informed learning experiences

Bruce used phenomenography as a research approach to study the relationship between people and their objects of interest (phenomenon) as a means to understand

people's varying experience of information use (Bruce, 1997). Informed learning recognises the inseparable connection between people and the world. It is a holistic approach to understanding the world view of individuals as they go about solving life's problems through differing ways of experiencing information.

Informed learning is concerned with both the experience of using information, and learners' awareness of their use of information. It is understood as the simultaneous act of using information and learning (Bruce and Hughes, 2010). Learning happens with and through engagement with information.

Informed learning offers a holistic understanding of how people use information to learn by describing the experience as a complex of seven inter-related faces (Bruce, 1997, 2008). 'The faces reveal ways of experiencing informed learning, based on whole experiences, a real life practice' (Bruce, 2008, p. 40). These faces outline the varying character of the learner's experiences of information:

1. Information awareness: recognising a need for new information.
2. Sourcing information for learning: finding information in various sources.
3. Using information processes to learn: executing a task.
4. Connecting information with learning needs: organising and managing information.
5. Knowledge construction: building up a personal knowledge base in a new area of interest.
6. Knowledge extension: working with knowledge and one's own personal perspectives in generating new insights.
7. Wise use of information: using information wisely for the benefit of others. (Bruce, 1997, 2008)

Given the dynamic nature of people's information experiences, and its transformative character, it is limiting to segregate what is better seen as a linear graduation between data, information, and knowledge. The holistic thinking behind informed learning encourages deep, rather than atomistic approaches to learning and information use:

When we consider information as it is experienced and recognise the transforming character of information, traditional separations between data, information, and knowledge become fused; there is no need to conceptually differentiate them or represent them as part of a hierarchy (Bruce, 2008, p. 53).

We now turn to considering the role of narrative in human experience.

Narrative as ubiquitous to human experience

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, narrative is:

an account of a series of events, facts, etc. given in order and with the establishing of connections between them; a narration, a story, an account. (Narrative, 2003)

Narrative is represented in the matrix of all human affairs. Human identity is constructed through stories and our culture is built from the building blocks of narrative through history by individuals and communities (Gare, 2007). People are born into a world that is already scripted with stories handed down from our culture and traditions. Barthes notes the ubiquity of narrative to be everywhere, in all things:

The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances – as though any material were fit to receive man's stories... narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting...stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation... narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself (Barthes, 1977, p. 79).

Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), amongst others, objected to a mechanistic world view and argued that all things, including science and mathematics, are human creations. Vico's *New Science* argued for the important value of knowledge gained through

culture. Vico contended that humans have the ability to organise reality in multiple ways, and that our comprehension of things comes from the inside (an organic experience); we understand something because it is human, created:

in the night of thick darkness enveloping the earliest antiquity, so remote from ourselves, there shines the eternal and never-failing light of a truth beyond all question: that the world of civil society has certainly been made by men,...which, since men made it, men could hope to know (Vico, 1948, par 331, p. 85).

And because we have imagination,

it is possible for us to know works of art, political schemes, legal systems, and history, to understand motives, purposes, ambitions, hopes, jealousies, outlooks and visions of reality for the same reason. We can grasp the thoughts, the attitudes, the beliefs, the worlds of thought and feeling of societies dead and gone through language, myths, and rites. (Gare, 2007, p. 99)

Immersed in a world of narratives, people must therefore orient themselves through stories as they participate in the world.

Narrative is important to our understanding of information literacy as an account of the uniqueness of learners as organic, complex, dynamic, evolving beings living in and amongst other processes in the world. Narrative is holistic, meaning that the study of learners is not reduced to components or aspects of their experiences, but rather draws upon the learner's life experiences as part of an integrative whole. Incorporating narrative in our conceptualisation of learning means that we are able to capture a truer representation of human reality and perception.

Narrative is ubiquitous in people's lives, and information acts as the heterogeneous elements of their world. Therefore, there is value to be gained by integrating narrative with information literacy, first as a construct of how people understand things, and second as the process of self-creation which forms an unfolding identity through time. Existing literature on information literacy has not considered the significance that narrative plays in people's lives. Although the multidimensional aspect of learners' information worlds has been acknowledged (Bruce *et al.*, 2014), there is little literature on information literacy that explicitly recognises the organic nature of how humans interpret information, and make meaning. This paper actively incorporates this way of making meaning. It aims to reinforce the holistic thinking behind Bruce's informed learning by reframing it as an aspect of the creative process of narrative construction.

Narrative as the agency of human self-creation in the work of Paul Ricoeur

For philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1981), stories are lived, and narrative is the structure of human experience through time. He refers to this process as a mimesis which consists of three phases: prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration (Ricoeur, 1984-1988).

Prefiguration (M1) describes the inchoate stories being lived. This is made possible because life is already organised through narratives, and people have their own evolving narratives as a reference to help them decide on future actions. In this sense, we already have a pre-understanding of what human action is (the semantics, the symbols, and the temporal aspects).

Configuration (M2) is the phase of emplotment, a term that refers to how we interpret our understanding by constructing a story from a diversity of events and actions that are integrated into the unity of a narrative with a beginning, middle, and end. Ricoeur emphasised the creativity of humans, and the important role imagination has on perception, knowledge, action, and art.

Refiguration (M3) is the reauthoring of one's own narrative, by way of redefining the narratives one is living out.

The three phases of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration operate as a spiralling process whereby the motion is continuous but reaches a new position with each cycle. This reflects the transformative process, in that whilst the process is repeated, people arrive at new positions with new understandings, a new awareness. The mimesis affects the emergence of new stories, with prefiguration affecting the composition of the story told in configuration; configuration affecting and influencing the prescription or solution in the refiguration phase; and refiguration affecting prefiguration. The process is iterative, and is constantly changing, and evolving.

The mimesis is a process of human self-creation through time, and is the structure by which we make sense of the world. Telling stories highlights the holistic nature of narrative structures, which involves an integration where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Identity as an expression of narrative continuity

Ricoeur's work in *Time and narrative* (1984-1988) argues the importance of narrative in helping individuals find meaning, identity, and creativity through their imagination. His focus is on human action and human identity through lived time. The hermeneutic phenomenological study of the mimesis is the structure by which people define who they are. It is a reflective task of recounting and restoring the meaning of one's own existence. Through the narrative making process, individuals may come to understand their actual and possible worlds, and as a result, be better informed to understand themselves, and what they can become and achieve. A narrative identity becomes apparent when we ask:

Who did this? Who is the agent? ... [To] answer the question 'Who did this?'... is to tell the story of life. The story told tells about the action of the 'who'. And the identity of this 'who' therefore itself must be a narrative identity (Ricoeur, 1984-1988, Vol. 3, p. 246).

According to Ricoeur, narrative identity is constituted by an *idem* identity (identity as sameness: stable and continuous through time), and an *ipse* identity (selfhood: as evolving and dynamic through time). Both coexist through the meditation of the narrative process through time.

Informed learning as the experience of narrative process

Through the lens of narrative theory, learning is conceptualised as an active and creative process of being affected by the past, present, and future. It is an operation of narrative construction (mimesis) in the formation of a narrative identity, and is the structure by which individuals understand the world and themselves. If we accept that narrative is the structure of human experience through time, we can therefore say that learning is a process of narrative activity. The learner is a narrator narrating the story of their life. Ricoeur's (1984-1988) narrative theory thus offers an alternative way of understanding Bruce's (2008) seven faces of informed learning in relation to the creative process of narrative construction.

Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenological study through the mimesis represents the interpretative structure of experience and consciousness as the essence of the phenomenon; Bruce's seven faces of informed learning is a model of variations of the learning experience. The faces represent the experiences that contribute to our study of learning as a narrative construct. Both Ricoeur and Bruce's concepts concern the practice of making meaning in terms of having an awareness of an object, in other words, a phenomenon. To learn requires having an awareness of the informational elements that surround us. Through the lens of informed learning, phenomenographical learning is a change in or an expansion of awareness or experience (Bruce, 1997, 2008).

An element central to phenomenology (and phenomenography) is intentionality, which is the relationship between one's awareness and what is external in the world, that is, being aware of something. A belief, a value, a desire, or a motivation is always

directed towards something. Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology suggests that how one interprets a phenomenon is a personal undertaking. It is imbued with one's own historical past, one's current situation, one's future aspirations, and one's own beliefs and values, together with the stories one has encountered through myths, traditions, and as handed down to us from culture, all contributing to a complex dimension of the individual. For example, one person's interpretation of a book or movie will be different to the next person, since it is a unique encounter and response. It is through stories that relationships between such diverse meanings are created, interpreted, and reinterpreted.

Unlike the view of learning as an atomistic process of obtaining information, Ricoeur and Bruce both contend that all human information experiences are constitutive of a life lived and are non-linear, that is human action and experiences cannot be predetermined.

If we understand informed learning as a narrative experience and as an integral part of our lives, we can say that how people understand and interpret information involves an interconnectedness between people's internal and external worlds. Ricoeur (1991, p. 431) contends that our experiences of phenomenon and how we interpret them are mediated between:

- a. *Man and the world (reference)*: a person learns from the historical narrative of civilisation and culture;
- b. *Man and man (communication)*: through the interpretation of the self, people express themselves with symbols through language and the situated and cultural meanings of actions: for example, the wave of the hand could indicate a greeting, or hailing a taxi, or casting a vote;
- c. *Man and itself (self-understanding)*: because knowledge of the self is an interpretation.

Thus, the narrative identity undergoes an interweaving between the individual's internal and external worlds of narratives, through the dimensions of reference, communication, and self-understanding. It is this dualism of maintaining one's character, whilst evolving through the change of selfhood in our participation in the world that constitutes who the person is.

The learner is evolving internally as a character, but also by responding to the external world entities. The person is engaged in a process of co-creation. Table 1 shows the consistency of both thinkers' views.

| States of inquiry | Ricoeur | Bruce |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Objectivity | The world is always prefigured, that is, information is pre-defined meanings semantically presented. In this sense, knowledge is an integrated whole, is embodied, i.e., there is no objective thought. | Information is objective and decontextualised (information is externally experienced as objective) Information is objective and contextualised (information is experienced as objective but relies on previous knowledge to give it context or meaning) |
| Subjectivity | People are constantly re-interpreting their narrative identity, never stands still, and is in constant motion of change (<i>ipse</i> identity) whilst remaining stable (<i>idem</i> identity). | Information is internally experienced. |
| | Semantics of action through which individuals rediscover | Information is experienced as |

| | | |
|------------------|---|-------------------|
| Transformational | new components of their story. Refiguration opens up 'a horizon of possible experiences, a world in which it would be possible to dwell' (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 43) | transformational. |
|------------------|---|-------------------|

Table 1: States of inquiry: Ricoeur (1984-1988) and Bruce (2008, pp. 53-54)

The holistic nature of informed learning posits learners uniquely interpreting information for their own personal practicality, growth, and development. *Emplotment* of the configuration phase highlights the holistic nature of narrative structures. This involves an integration in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts (Arran Gare, personal communication, October 17, 2018). This is the creative process of narrative making.

Creative process of becoming: informed learning as narrative construction

Reflecting Ricoeur's mimesis of narrative activity, informed learning as a narrative experience involves: 1) drawing upon prior knowledge to describe the situation or context or problem, i.e. understanding how things hang together; 2) synthesising information by creatively organising experiences into meaningful wholes; and 3) reception of the story (or understanding) by the learner to reinvent new solutions. Table 2 outlines how the three phases of mimesis and the different faces of informed learning align with these three iterative learning stages.

| Ricoeur's Mimesis phases of narrative making | Bruce's Seven faces of informed learning | Learning phases |
|---|---|--|
| Prefiguration (M1): Describing inchoate stories | Face 1: Information awareness Face 2: Sources information Face 3: Uses information processes to learn Face 4: Connecting information with learning needs | Awareness of prior knowledge |
| Configuration (M2): Constructing a story from a diversity of actions and events | Face 5: Knowledge construction Face 6: Knowledge extension | Engaging with and synthesising new information |
| Refiguration (M3): reauthoring one's own narrative | Face 7: Wise use of information | Developing alternative understandings or solutions |

Table 2: Mimesis phases of narrative making: comparative parallels

To demonstrate how informed learning exemplifies aspects of the creative process of narrative construction, we will now describe an individual's information experience as narrative. The following example is based on actual events at an Australian library. Face 6 (of the configuration phase) and Face 7 (of the refiguration phase) are the authors' interpretation of the thought processes that could have been going through the woman's mind.

All library users are undergoing narrative making in all moments of their lives. The following example serves to offer information professionals a lens to how their services support user's narrative constructions.

Awareness of prior knowledge

Prefiguration: this describes the situation one is living out, relying on one's prior knowledge (semantics, symbolic, and temporal). This pre-understanding describes understanding of what, why, when, and how.



The woman is in her sixties or seventies and is the main carer for her elderly mother (in her late eighties). Her mother is suffering from dementia and in the past has shared stories about her experience of the Second World War with her daughter, including her memories of the V Day celebrations and how a photograph of her celebrating had been published in the newspaper.

Face 1: Information awareness: a picture exists.

As a full time carer the woman did not have much opportunity to leave the house for long but on one of her rare visits to the city, she had been passing the library and had been curious as to what was inside. She discovered that the library had a historical newspaper collection, and decided it might be nice to show her mother a copy of the photograph of the V Day celebration that her mother had told her about.
As part of the inquiry she learned how to navigate her way through the library to the Newspaper Reading room, learned how to look up historical newspapers, how to locate the article, how to use a microfilm reader, and how to make copies of microfilm.

Face 2: Sourcing information for learning: visiting the library and speaking with the librarian.

Face 3: Using information processes to learn: navigating the system in a way that suited her own learning style and needs.

Face 4: Connecting information with learning needs: connecting the newspaper collection with her mother's interests and the possibility of locating the article.

Engaging with and synthesising new information

Configuration: plotting a story from a diversity of events and actions into an integrated intelligent whole; of using one's imagination in synthesising and piecing together heterogeneous elements to compose a story with a beginning, middle, and end.

Having located the article, she saw her mother as a carefree young woman, dancing, mobile and extremely happy. She found the whole experience exciting and rewarding, and moving, in that she had discovered an aspect of her mother: joy. She was looking forward to taking the images back to her mother so she could share their different experiences together... the daughter learning more about V Day, the mother about the daughter's adventure at the library.

Face 5: Knowledge construction: learning about V Day.

Face 6: Knowledge extension: the humanness of human life.

Developing alternative understandings

Refiguration: distancing oneself from the existing story, and considering alternative or new solutions to a problem; a redefining of the narratives one is living out.

The experience has also affected the daughter. It has provided her with another perspective of her mother as young, happy, and carefree, and not the old, frail, and disabled person. The picture of her mother has reminded her of her own youth, enabling her to see with greater clarity the 'humanness' of human life; that she too will undergo the path similar to that of her mother. The experience has engendered empathy for her mother.

Face 7: Wise use of information: develops empathy for elderly mother.

In matching the seven faces with the story, it becomes apparent that the faces are intermingled, overlapping one another and not linear. The present situation is constituted by previous stories (memories of lived experiences), an awareness of the present, and an expectation of future ambitions, goals, or desires. These constituents build on, and influence future actions, and hence, the creative making of future stories. The above story also encapsulates the stability and evolving identity of the two characters: the mother, once a vibrant carefree young woman is now old and frail, and

the daughter, now a grown woman, is able to comprehend the constancy of change through her mother, as a reflection of her own evolving life:

It consists in the permanent contrast between the instability of the human now which embraces past, present, and future in unity of creative vision and action (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 436).

An iterative process, like that of the spiralling effect of the mimesis phases, gives learners the opportunity to reorganise, and re-establish their understanding through engagement with information. Through the mimesis of narrative activity, learners use their new found knowledge and their newly transformed states to engage with the world differently and perform new tasks differently with the view of being more skilful and knowledgeable with each experience. Using information to learn in a situational context potentially allows for better experiences because the learner is adopting new ways of seeing the world.

Indeed, learning is an experience of participation in the world. Learning under the right conditions paves the way for the development of wisdom in using information for the benefit of others. Learning is about coming to experience the world differently through questionings, clarifying one's understanding, interpreting and making judgements, and seeing differently one's place in the world. These are creative processes of interpretation and awareness, made possible by the information environment.

Refiguring the learning experience: towards informed learning as narrative experience

This paper has sought to provide value by integrating two descriptions of the human learning experience: Ricoeur's narrative theory concerns the process of self-creation and Bruce's informed learning is about the varying experience of using information to learn. For Ricoeur, narrative is the basis of all human action, and learning is the experience of narrative and narrative construction. From Bruce's phenomenographic lens, learning is about coming to experience the world differently. Both perspectives are underpinned by phenomenological interpretations of experience.

Ricoeur argued that narratives are important to enrich our lives, and that we transform ourselves and the way we live through stories. According to him, life has an ethical aim and this has to do with the development of character. It concerns the capacity of being able to fulfil the requirements of different roles within one's own life stories. For instance, being a responsible and loving parent, or to act courageously as a soldier when fighting a war (Arran Gare, personal communication, October 17, 2018).

The notion that humans are complex, dynamic, evolving beings suggests that individuals have the capacity to live more meaningfully. That is, our actions are ethically bounded with the intent of '*aiming at the good life with and for others, in just institutions*' (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 172; emphasis in the original). Both the narrative mimesis and the seven faces of informed learning are concerned with the development and growth of the learner, with a focus on conscientiously being aware. This assertion conveys that an examination is key to how we recount our lives, and use knowledge to guide us on our actions:

A life examined is a life narrated. (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 435)

According to Bruce, experiencing wisdom comes from being informed. This involves informed use of information to make decisions in relation to one's information experience and use, for the benefit of others. Ricoeur's notion of a person finding their place in the world, of self-understanding, and as an ethical agent living and experiencing through time implies that individuals have the ability to make intelligent action based on a well-considered assessment of one's situated context, the effects of one's actions on other processes and agents, and the impact this will have on oneself.

Wisdom is a personal quality brought to the use of information for the benefit of

others. It occurs in a range of contexts including exercising judgement, making decisions, and doing research. Through the process of placing information in a larger context, and seeing it in the light of broader experience, for example, e.g., historically, temporarily, socio-culturally. Information is seen within a larger context and one's own life experiences (adapted from Bruce, 1997).

Participation in the world means that people are continuously preoccupied with acquiring and accumulating knowledge and wisdom (Zins, 2007). With greater knowledge and wisdom, one's actions become sounder, more apt, and more ethical. The development of wisdom allows for a broader perspective of the human condition than just competencies and efficiencies. Life is seen as the expression of creative potentialities and the opportunity for growth and well-being.

Conclusion

Awareness of narrative as the structure by which people make meaning and thereby learn, opens up a new perspective in our understanding of informed learning as a narrative construct. Thinking of people as being constituted with and shaped through stories, and as identities in an unfolding story, enables us to appreciate that people are complex and dynamic agents evolving through time. This understanding offers us a more comprehensive account of a person and their place in the world, experiencing and interpreting phenomenon as an identity (both stable and evolving), living in and amongst other processes, a conglomerate of interconnected processes interacting and affecting each other in one great interdependent system. Individuals' lives are purposeful, practical, and meaningful, and our actions are an expression of these factors. By augmenting informed learning as a narrative construct we enrich our perspective of learners as dynamic evolving agents in a world of plurality and change.

Knowing that individuals interpret information differently reminds us that individuals are themselves unique, possessing different backgrounds, culturally, historically (past experiences and encounters), and have differing values, beliefs, and goals. This uniqueness is what individuals bring to their acts of learning, and in the creation of their own novel potentialities. Recognition of this will enable us to be more sensitive in how we design learning programmes for individuals' differing needs, through their varying life stages. Learning is an active and creative process of becoming. By narrating one's understanding, one exercises one's imagination, and in the process make new discoveries, develop new skills and knowledge, and become independent, capable, self-actualised flourishing beings. Providing appropriate support is the key to fostering and enabling the emergence of an individual's own unique potentialities. Given that people are constituted by the ubiquity of narratives embedded in our culture, relationships, social contexts and the world, attention to the use of stories as a source for inspiration is an idea worth pursuing.

Both the narrative structure and seven faces of informed learning are concerned with the development and growth of people, with a focus on expanding their awareness. Being informed, through processes of reflection and broadening awareness, cultivates what this paper describes as wisdom. Having an awareness of what one knows, what one needs to know, and knowing where and how to learn about it are important aspects of our lifelong learning journeys. The practice of deep understanding improves the quality and efficacy of our decisions. Both concepts involve processes which may reveal how knowledge and capabilities enable not only the performance of specific tasks but also the achievement of responsible ethical human action. Such understanding may inform the application of appropriate learning design for information professionals.

The refiguration phase has an important message to impart, which is that we all have the capacity to re-author, re-invent, and re-establish our circumstances. We learn from our mistakes, and have many opportunities to improve ourselves. The acquisition of knowledge and wisdom over time means that individuals are better informed with their use of knowledge to perform specific tasks more wisely. By helping people narrate and refigure their stories, information professionals may assist them in examining their lives so that they can learn to refigure their lives more

creatively and with greater purpose and meaning. Above all else, information professionals need to 'appreciate their uniqueness, and at the same time, inspire them to realise their own unique potentials' (Gare, 2007, p.101).

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Associate Professor Arran Gare for his kind assistance with clarifying some philosophy questions.

About the authors

Yen Wong is Learning Programs Officer, Audience Engagement at the State Library Victoria. Her research interests include: information literacy, narrative, problem-based learning, and learning pedagogy. Her scholarly interests stems from her work in a variety of public, TAFE, and special libraries. She can be contacted at ywong@slv.vic.gov.au

Christine Bruce is Dean, Graduate Research at James Cook University. Christine is an Australian Learning and Teaching Fellow, Principal Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy and Adjunct Professor, at University of Southern Queensland. Christine is most widely known for her contributions to information literacy and information literacy education. She works extensively with colleagues around the world on the application of informed learning theory to research and practice.

Clarence Maybee is an Associate Professor at Purdue University's Libraries and School of Information Studies. He researches information literacy in theoretical and applied contexts. In 2018, Dr. Maybee authored the book, *IMPACT Learning: Librarians at the Forefront of Change in Higher Education*, published by Chandos Publishing. He can be contacted at cmaybee@purdue.edu

References

- American Library Association. *Presidential Committee on Information Literacy*. (1989). *Final report*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/whitepapers/presidential> (Archived by the Internet Archive at <https://web.archive.org/web/20190608091458/http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/whitepapers/presidential>)
- Association of College and Research Libraries. (2016). *Information literacy competency standards for higher education*. Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency> (Archived by the Internet Archive at <https://web.archive.org/web/20190119151406/https://alair.ala.org/handle/11213/7668>)
- Barthes, R. (1977). *Image, music, text*. London: Fontana Press.
- Bruce, C. S. (1997). *The seven faces of information literacy*. Adelaide, Australia: Auslib Press.
- Bruce, C. (2008). *Informed learning*. Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries.
- Bruce, C. S. & Hughes, H. E. (2010). Informed learning: a pedagogical construct attending simultaneously to information use and learning. *Library and Information Science Research*, 32, A2–A8. Retrieved from <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/38705/> (Archived by the Internet Archive at <https://web.archive.org/web/20180307092642/https://eprints.qut.edu.au/38705/>)
- Bruce, C., Somerville, M. M., Stoodley, I. & Partridge, H. (2014). Diversifying information literacy research: an informed learning perspective. In C. Bruce, K. Davis, H. Hughes, H. Partridge, and I. Stoodley (Eds.), *Information experience: approaches to theory and practice*, (pp. 169–186). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited. (Library and Information Science, Vol. 9)
- Dervin, B. (1992). From the mind's eye of the user: the sense-making qualitative-quantitative methodology. In J. Glazier & R. Powell. *Qualitative research in information management*. (pp. 61-84). Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Gare, A. (2007). *The primordial role of stories in human self-creation*. *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 3(1), 93–114. Retrieved from <http://www.cosmosandhistory.org/index.php/journal/article/view/56> (Archived by the Internet Archive at <https://bit.ly/30AdBC5>)

- Lloyd, A. (2006). Information literacy landscapes: an emerging picture. *Journal of Documentation*, 62(5), 570–583.
- Narrative, n. (2003). In *Oxford English dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (1984-1988). *Time and narrative* (Vols.1-3). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (1991). Life: a story in search of a narrator. In M.J. Valdés, (Ed.). *A Ricoeur reader: reflection and imagination*. Edited by . (pp. 425-438). Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (1992). *Oneself as another*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Ricoeur, P., & Thompson, J. B. (1981). *Hermeneutics and the human sciences: essays on language, action and interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vico, G. (1948). *The new science of Giambattista Vico*. Translated from the third edition (1744) by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Whitworth, A. (2006). Communicative competence in the information age: towards a critical theory of information literacy education. *Innovation in Teaching and Learning in Information and Computer Sciences*, 5(1), 1–13.
- Wong, Y. (2019). Libraries help users narrate their life stories. *INCITE*, 40(1/2), 27.
- Zins, C. (2007). Conceptual approaches for defining data, information, and knowledge. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 58(4), 479–493.
- Zurkowski, P.G. (1974). [The information service environment relationships and priorities](#). Washington, DC: National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, National Program for Library and Information Services. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED100391.pdf> (Archived by the Internet Archive at <https://web.archive.org/web/20190804214230/https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED100391.pdf>)

How to cite this paper

Wong, Y.B., Bruce, C.S. & Maybee, C. (2019). Telling stories: extending informed learning with narrative theory. In *Proceedings of RAILS - Research Applications Information and Library Studies, 2018, Faculty of Information Technology, Monash University, 28-30 November 2018. Information Research*, 24(3), paper rails1811. Retrieved from <http://InformationR.net/ir/24-3/rails/rails1811.html> (Archived by the Internet Archive at <https://web.archive.org/web/20190818104746/http://informationr.net/ir/24-3/rails/rails1811.html>)

Find other papers on this subject

Check for citations, [using Google Scholar](#)

Facebook

Twitter

LinkedIn

More

© the authors, 2019.

288 Last updated: 14 August, 2019

[Contents](#) | [Author index](#) | [Subject index](#) | [Search](#) | [Home](#)
