

Four typologies for understanding local information

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to propose the four different typologies for understanding local information.

Design/methodology/approach – This study applied a conceptual approach to analyze and clarify how the concept local information can be understood in wildly different ways. Furthermore, this study employed conceptual analysis of 36 studies. For the conceptual analysis, coding was applied to formulate and abstract four typologies for understanding local information with specific focus on the Thai cultural heritage setting.

Findings – The four different typologies include local information as an array of different interpretations as diverse meanings of local, local information as cultural heritage, local information as subject of information management and situated local information.

Research limitations/implications – This study mainly focuses relevant typologies for understanding local information in the Thai context.

Originality/value – This study contributes and extends the literature in the local information field and the cultural heritage context. In addition, an eclectic strategy of using several alternative typologies for dealing with essentially contested concepts is suggested. This can be useful not only for supporting librarians working with local information but also in other practices dealing with broadly defined concepts.

Keywords Typologies of information, Concept of local information, Cultural heritage, Tangible cultural heritage, Intangible cultural heritage, Information management, Situated local information, Thailand

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Most librarians work with clearly defined tasks within established institutions, whether they be public libraries, school libraries or academic libraries. However, sometimes librarians are tasked with challenges that are less defined. This can, for instance, be in the context of attending to policy directives. In such cases, librarians may need to find interpretations of lofty policy ideals. Additionally, stakeholders separate from librarians may be involved in following up policy directives and there may be implicit or explicit struggles concerning how to understand a broadly articulated concept. The current article is concerned with the difficult handling of one such concept: local information.

Local information is a concept that is used both for policy and by various professionals in distinct practices. It is, for instance, used in cultural policy discussions on cultural heritage, which is the particular focus of this article. Local information is a complicated concept as



both “local” and “information” are essentially contested concepts (Gallie, 1956; Garver, 1978). Pertinent examples of essentially contested concepts are knowledge, democracy and art. Such concepts are broadly used and acclaimed as involving positive values. However, practical discussions among professionals commonly reveal that such concepts can be interpreted with a variety of different meanings. This can lead to conflicts between actors working within separate language domains that will have different interpretations, stakes and standpoints. Within each individual domain, specific language games will be developed around the concept, articulating subtle but distinctly different nuances (Wittgenstein, 1953).

Professionals working apart from each other may easily assume that there is no conflict regarding interpretations. Indeed, each stakeholder, embedded in a particular domain, will be likely to see their interpretation as the only valid one. When professionals from different domains come in contact with each other, there is frequently a struggle regarding definition. In such lengthy conflicts between different professionals, attempts at definition can fall apart.

Some stakeholders may embrace skepticism, i.e. that all interpretations are equally true or false. Other stakeholders may deal with the problem through eclecticism, i.e. that each interpretation supplies merely a partial view and there is a need for embracing many viewpoints. However, arguably the most common strategy in dealing with essentially contested concepts is to avoid definition and stay away from clashes regarding what the fundamental concept really means.

All of the above listed strategies are problematic, as a variety of professionals work under the banner of concepts such as “culture” and “information” without being supplied tools for understanding what the concept really means. In such situations, dogmatism flourishes, i.e. different actors adhere to a strict definition, rejecting the relevance of other interpretations. One eclectic strategy of supplying tools for professionals is to define the essentially contested concept with the help of a typology. This would allow different stakeholders to find their own tool for a specific task among a palette of meanings.

In the current text, we will expand upon the eclectic strategy of typology to supply appropriate tools for those working with the complex concept of local information in the context of cultural heritage. The strategy is to supply not one but four different typologies. This allows a range of stakeholders to see the broader context of other choices, other meanings, in different situations. With an implementation of a choice of different typologies, it can be hoped that dogmatism can be tempered. Of particular interest is professional librarians tasked with imperatives of providing local information on cultural heritage. Arguably, librarians will have use of all of the four different typologies here suggested but at different stages of their work.

This article builds upon a larger study on librarians working with local information in Thailand. Reference will sometimes be made to national, regional and local settings within that country. This article consists of the methodology section followed by results, discussion and a conclusion.

Method

The initial idea for this article came out of a study of various, surprisingly different, understandings of local information from a variety of actors. In particular, it was obvious that the vagueness of the concept created difficulties for those working with policy directives in practical projects. This led to an interest in typologies. Initially, an attempt was made to understand different actors as dealing with different types of understanding of “local”, “information” and “local information.” However, as work progressed, it became more

reasonable to understand different typologies as being relevant for separate actors or even that the same profession might find all of these typologies useful at different stages of work.

To further support this idea, a substantial review of research-based literature was performed. The aim was to identify various typologies relevant for work with local information. We are grateful for several suggestions from reviewers of the previous version of this article.

Texts was searched from Web of science, Scopus, Google scholar and Thai Digital Collection [1] website. Several keywords were used including, “information,” “concept of information,” “philosophy of information,” “local information,” “local culture,” “local cultural heritage,” “cultural heritage,” “local history,” “genealogy,” “local studies,” “local wisdom,” “community information,” “roles of librarians,” “roles and competencies of information professionals,” “local studies librarian,” “local history librarian” and other related keywords. These studies were classified in the four scopes of literature, which was applied to frame the introduction, results, discussion and conclusion.

Altogether, 36 studies were classified according to four different categories (Table 1):

- (1) concepts and philosophy of information;
- (2) understanding of local;
- (3) cultural heritage; and
- (4) information management.

Through the investigation of multiple meanings suggested by different researchers relating to concepts of “local,” “information” and “local information,” it became clear that sporadic usage of typologies had previously been launched by various researchers.

Thus, the four main conceptual typologies were clarified including local information as an array of different interpretations as diverse meanings of local, local information as cultural heritage, local information as subject of information management and situated local information. The results, below, reviews various understandings of local information, leading to a presentation of different typologies.

Results

Problems in understanding the local

Local information is a complex and multifaceted concept that has different connotations in different cultures and societies. This can become a substantial difficulty when English language concepts are translated to various cultures and languages with the optimistic expectation that the meaning remains the same. In English speaking countries, such as the USA, the UK and Australia, local information often refers to general information relating to cities and similar places but also to the history of the locality. For example, the local information, which is provided at the local information center in Crewkerne, Somerset, England, is information about a tourism, transportation, accommodation and services in the town (Crewkerne Town Council, 2019).

It is not only a matter of diverse meanings being invested into the same concept at different places. Equally important is the emphasis and priority given to a policy concept. One persistent cultural policy problem is that various cultural heritage resources are situated at distinctly different local sites. Nonetheless, local, regional, national and international policies are developed to create the vestiges of symmetrical procedures.

In Thailand, local information is awarded high priority in the national government policy. Despite that, there is no official definition of the concept. Furthermore, the organizations that work with local information, primarily the provincial university libraries

Concepts and philosophy of information (20)	Understanding of local (5)	Cultural heritage (10)	Information management (1)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bates (2005) 2. Bates (2006) 3. Bawden and Robinson (2012) 4. Bawden and Robinson (2018) 5. Buckland (1991) 6. Buckland (1997) 7. Buckland (2012) 8. Buckland (2017) 9. Capurro (2009) 10. Capurro and Hjørland (2003) 11. Floridi (2005) 12. Floridi (2010a) 13. Floridi (2010b) 14. Floridi (2020) 15. Fumer (2004) 16. Hjørland (2014) 17. Koscijew (2017) 18. Ma (2012) 19. Ma (2013) 20. Ørom (2007) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Abhakar (1993) 2. Grewkerne Town Council (2019) 3. Saraya (1996) 4. Strisaard (2009) 5. Wynne (1989) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Boonyakanchana (2014) 2. Chang-ju (2009) 3. Ministry of Culture, Intangible Cultural Heritage (2021) 4. Mo (2008) 5. Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (2011) 6. Ruthven and Chowdhury (2015) 7. UNESCO (2017) 8. UNESCO (2018) 9. UNESCO, Intangible Cultural Heritage (2020) 10. Zhengliang (2010) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dewe (2002)

Table 1. Scopes of the literature that were included in the literature reviews

and scholars in the field, seem to emphasize different dimensions of local information in practices and research. As a result of such variations in areas of expertise, interests and geographical location, the objects of local information comprise for example art, culture, history and medicine but with considerable variation concerning the contents of and balance between, these, in different regions of the country.

Various Thai scholars provide diverse definitions of how to understand “local” in “local information”. “Local” can be described as belonging to a village, a city, a community, a cultural group or an ethnic group (Abhakara, 1993, p. 12; Saraya, 1996, pp. 41–42). “Local” has also been defined as the locality, which is related to the political power area and culture area (Saraya, 1996, pp. 41–42). Although this is a more distinct way of talking about “local,” it also creates a choice. Should the definition build upon the political power and culture of today or of previous generations and civilizations? Thai scholar Abhakara (1993) suggests that “local” may be easier to understand as a cultural region, i.e. Northern Thailand, Central Thailand, Eastern Thailand, Western Thailand, Northeastern Thailand and Southern Thailand, or a province, which is governed by local authorities dependent on policies from the central government. There are problems with this as well. “Local” here refers to regions, which are rather large cultural and political entities.

The difficulties with the concept of “local” remains when attempting to define local information. Srisa-ard (2009) argues that local information mirrors the culture and the traditions of the region. Again, there are problems. Allowing local to refer to a whole region might disempower specific local sites where cultural heritage is situated. Furthermore, arguing that the contemporary regions mirror the historical divisions of geography might be misleading. Frequently, regional boundaries have changed multiple times over the course of history. This makes each instance of local information unique.

Nonetheless, despite the ambiguity of the concept, local information has become an important concept in today’s Thai society because it is seen as linking the past, present and future. It is seen as a vital resource that is valuable for both researchers and citizens. As the concept has become more important in policy some researchers has started to connect it to “wisdom” (Boonyakanchana, 2014).

Understanding information through typologies

As noted initially, information can be described as an essentially contested concept. Consequently, the term “information” has been given different definitions by various scholars in library and information science and related fields for different purposes, traditions and contexts. Attempting to transcend these fundamental difficulties, many scholars in these fields have been interested in studying “information” from a philosophical viewpoint. In connection to their investigations, numerous notable attempts at finding common ground in understanding “information” has been pursued since the 1990s (Bates, 2005, 2006; Bawden and Robinson, 2012, 2018; Buckland, 1991, 1997, 2012, 2017; Capurro, 2009; Capurro and Hjørland, 2003; Floridi, 2005, 2010a, 2010b, 2020; Furner, 2004; Hjørland, 2014; Koscijew, 2017; Ma, 2012, 2013; Ørom, 2007).

There is an implicit tradition within information science to clarify the concept of information through typologies. Even though the discussion on information and typologies is of interest in itself, the current study does not focus on delving deeper into this aspect (the concept of information and philosophy of information) because the main focus of the study is the special concept of local information. The specific discussions on clarifying information for the typology is therefore something that need to be pursued further in another article.

Altogether 15 cases of clarifying the concept of information through typology were identified (Bates, 2005, 2006; Bawden and Robinson, 2012; Buckland, 1991, 1997, 2012, 2017;

Capurro, 2009; Capurro and Hjørland, 2003; Floridi, 2010a, 2020; Koscieljew, 2017; Hjørland, 2014; Ma, 2012, 2013). These 15 studies provide an important context to the current study.

From a philosophical viewpoint, the concept can appear overly abstract, defying attempts at definitions that information scientists would find useful. Implicitly and not clearly discussed within the field, a tradition of using a typology has evolved. If attempts at a universal definition is abandoned, progress can be made by stating that information can be two of three different entities, conceptualized separately. A case in point is Bates (2005, 2006, p. 1044), arguing that the meaning of information is defined as two core aspects. The first is “the pattern of organization of matter and energy.” The second is “some pattern of organization of matter and energy given meaning by a living being (or a component thereof)”. For both types, the notion of pattern is central. Implicitly, this creates a difference between raw data and information. The emphasis lies on humans as sense makers.

Capurro and Hjørland (2003) and Capurro (2009) review the history, present and future of the concept of information in information science. They argue that the concept can be captured with two separate understandings, “the act of molding the mind and the act of communicating knowledge.” These two definitions are seen as intimately related (Capurro and Hjørland, 2003, p. 351; Capurro, 2009). Consequently, the difficulty of setting out two separate types of information is tempered by arguing connection of types. With this typology information is closely associated with knowledge. The emphasis is also on activities. Information is understood as a capacity for action.

Most researchers designing typologies and up positioning information in relationship to core concepts. Most notable of this is a simple but influential typology with vague origins: the Data, Information, Knowledge and Wisdom (DIKW) model (Ackoff, 1989; Ma, 2012; Machlup, 1983). It can be understood in two different ways. First, limiting information so as not allow information scientists to go into issues of data and knowledge, certainly not wisdom. Second, information could be seen as central and present within a typology, where we can talk about information as data, information as knowledge and information as wisdom.

Such a broad appreciation of the concept holds many advantages. However, such a typology can also obliterate the meaning of the concept. It becomes difficult for information scientists to take ownership of the concept. Floridi (2010a, 2020) points out that information is a central concept in both the sciences and the humanities, as well as in everyday life. Information is not a research-based concept that information science scholars have sole ownership over. Rather, different disciplines may use it in a commonsense fashion not bothering with the semantic difficulties involved.

The DIKW model can be useful as a way to position various attempts at typologies. As noted above, some researchers angle there typologies toward knowledge. Others are more interested in a typology of information that is closely tied to data. An example of the latter is Ma (2013), sweeping knowledge and wisdom to the side and launching a data centrist typology: “information as data,” “information as processed data” and “information as justifiable data.”

Nonetheless, the most influential typology within information science is, arguably, supplied by Buckland (1991), who proposes a framework consisting of three different dimensions as “information-as-process,” “information-as-knowledge” and “information-as-thing.” This framework has been discussed and used in several works (Buckland, 1997, 2012, 2017; Koscieljew, 2017). The current article also extends this interest in clarifying information through typologies, particularly with inspiration from Buckland (1991). The specific angle, which has not previously been pursued, is to understand local information through a typology.

First typology: local information as different understandings of local

As already has been established, it is difficult to articulate a generic understanding for local in the context of situating cultural heritage in local context. Local can have a diversity of meanings. We suggest the following typology, local being either:

- a village;
- a city;
- a community;
- a region;
- a cultural group;
- an historical group; or
- an ethnic group.

This typology illustrates how difficult it is to associate a particular cultural heritage with a specific notion of local. It is therefore profoundly challenging to articulate some universal notion that would apply to all cultural heritage. These are all situated locally but the context surrounding each cultural heritage is highly diverse.

The typology of different understandings of local is useful for professionals working with cultural heritage, case-by-case. In each instance, what is local must be understood through the specific context. Some cultural heritage may distinctly be tied to a village. Others may be important for the whole region. In yet other cases, it may be a cultural heritage of national importance and so on.

Deciding which type of locality a specific cultural heritage best belong to may generate conflicts. Arguably, it is good to settle such differences at an early stage. In some cases, compromises can be made. Local information can be made available according to different types of local at the same time. It may for instance be possible to resolve tensions between a cultural value and an economic value. For certain local actors at certain cultural heritage may best be used through tourism, i.e. economical exploitation. At the same time, such exposure may create wear and tear on the cultural value. Other similar conflicts are possible.

Problems in understanding local and cultural heritage

Work involving local information should be seen in the international policy context of the long-standing work that UNESCO has done to counter the threat against numerous local cultural traditions in the world. Of specific concern are issues relating to cultural heritage. [UNESCO \(2017\)](#) defines and classifies cultural heritage into two main categories as tangible cultural heritage (TCH) and intangible cultural heritage (ICH).

Understanding local information as being aimed at either tangible or intangible cultural value is useful for understanding and working with certain policy directives. Here, the national policy of Thailand supplies a pertinent example. This is a country with an exceptionally rich cultural heritage. Part of this involves tangible artifacts such as buildings and works of art. However, another part is intangible in the form of cultural traditions that have difficulty in surviving, when competing with international, particular US-based, cultural productions and values. Preservation of cultural heritage through local information is included in the government policy:

- to ensure equality in development among all regions of Thailand by recognizing and strengthening of their local identities; and

- to support learning and development of each individual in Thai society to promote adaptation to a changing environment ([Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2011](#)).

Local information is thus in the case of Thailand important with regard to national policy. However, accurate and reliable local information about cultural heritage must be understood as something specific within each local community.

[Boonyakanchana \(2014\)](#) has suggested that local information comes from “local wisdom and lifestyle.” Seen in this way, local information is an influential local strength, which is essential for economic, educational and societal growth. [Boonyakanchana \(2014\)](#) allows for a broad understanding of local information including all aspects associated with the lifestyles of local people transferred from generation to generation. Local information is thus recognized as vital for social sustainable growth and development.

In Thailand, all kind of libraries in a community have a vital role in providing local information and services to the people in their community. Provincial university libraries are recognized as community learning centers and follow the same national policies as other libraries. The conservation of local wisdom is part of their main mission because this, in turn, carries out the universities’ mission. Provincial university libraries are responsible for acquiring, collecting, organizing and disseminating local information in the form of printed and non-printed materials to library users such as scholars, researchers, lecturers, students and public users. Also, the libraries established local information departments to fulfill the university library’s responsibility for the locals to learn about their locality.

Given the interlinkages between the discussion of cultural heritage and local information, it appears necessary to pursue a typology from such a viewpoint.

Second typology: local information as cultural heritage

From the cultural heritage perspective, local information is connected to some cultural value that is to be identified, protected and preserved. However, it is problematic for national or international policy actors to make normative judgments and directives regarding cultural value, as it, frequently, is for those residing at specific local sites that are best equipped to make such distinctions. Therefore, the simple typology of tangible and intangible local information can be seen to be useful as a general guideline. Nonetheless, it must be complemented with other typologies which speak more to those professionals and inhabitants that are residing at the relevant local sites.

As already mentioned, the typology of tangible and intangible is used by [UNESCO \(2017\)](#). Several library researchers have found this distinction useful. [Mo \(2008\)](#) suggested that libraries should be the primary agent for exportation and arrangement of ICH. Similarly, [Chang-ju \(2009\)](#) and [Zhengliang \(2010\)](#) argued that a local university library should be the vital institution to collect and organize and protect the ICH. In this respect, these researchers viewed local university libraries as the most relevant cultural heritage institutions that should have the power to select, collect and protect intangible local information. [Mo \(2008\)](#) also suggested that libraries should play a role in the protection of TCH. We therefore find many instances in which the typology of tangible and intangible can be broadly useful to identify tasks for libraries at various local sites, setting some broad guidelines for handling local information relating to cultural heritage.

Naturally, the collection of ICH constitutes a complex challenge in its own right. There is a substantial contrast to that of TCH, which can refer to a building or something similar. That which is tangible can be collected, packaged, processed and protected, perhaps to eventually be placed in a museum. TCH can also be sets of documents that need to be

archived in a library. If the TCH is a building or in other ways fixated, it needs to be documented through other means and perhaps also protected.

ICH is by its very nature not an artifact. It is some kind of implicit or explicit knowledge. To collect such intangible local information, the librarian needs to become an ethnographic investigator, posing questions to people who uphold knowledge about old traditions and implicit knowledge. Arguably, such intangible local information needs to be coded so that it becomes explicit or perhaps even tangible. Managing such local information requires distinctly different processes compared to the management of local information connected to tangible artifacts.

Local information, when seen as fundamentally connected to local wisdom, allows for an understanding of the unique and situated knowledge linked to a particular community residing in a certain locality. It includes many relevant subject areas, such as studies of history, culture, lifestyle, clothing, belief, housing, etc. However, emphasizing local information as local wisdom implicitly creates a distinction between localized knowledge production and the generalizable claims of science. Research-based knowledge can be seen as consisting of non-indigenous claims that are given priority above that which has been culturally developed over centuries in local areas. Nonetheless, as with research-based knowledge, it is assumed that local information can be stored as printed material, audio material, digital media, analog media and artefacts, which are transferred from generation to generation. However, there are also challenges as some knowledge can be characterized as tacit, not possible to codify. Still, librarians can be tasked with coding and transferring knowledge, thinking, beliefs, competence of the local people, continually conserving and disseminating it for the benefit of local development. Local information is vital for each community, as there are always problems that require access to entrenched localized knowledge.

In a famous study sociologist of science, [Wynne \(1989\)](#) showed how North Cumbrian sheep farmers building on their localized knowledge of soil, geography, wind movements and the traditions of sheep farming provided a superior way of dealing with the radiation fallout from the Chernobyl disaster compared to that of research-based knowledge. The study demonstrates the conflict between knowing by science and knowing by local tradition. It is easy to assume that research-based knowledge always is superior, but in cases such as conservation of cultural heritage, it would seem that there is much value in knowledge steeped in local traditions.

Libraries can work with TCH and ICH in different ways, and the typology is useful in the early stages of local information work. However, it becomes less useful once some documentation has been produced. For this, a third typology might be useful.

Third typology: local information as subject of information management

When there exist some original documents or documentations about either TCH or ICH and determination what kind of notion of local is optimal, the local information needs to be managed. Therefore, there's a need for a third type of typology relating to information management. When local information is something to be managed, it becomes necessary to construct a typology regarding the different activities or steps involved. One such typology would be to say that local information about TCH or ICH would need to be:

- selected (influenced by local actors);
- acquired (and allowed to be collected by local actors);
- described (in such a way that it respects local traditions);

- organized (to be coherent and congruent with information on other cultural heritage); and
- preserved (to minimize or maximize access for various actors).

Such a typology would be useful for librarians working with documents relating to TCH or ICH. In this setting, where librarians need to do hands on work, the typology of tangible/intangible might still be of use in some cases. However, local information is primarily something that need to be managed in the context of professional library work.

Naturally, the above described typology is not the only one that is possible. Literature on information management contains a wealth of different typologies. For instance, [Dewe \(2002\)](#) pointed out the key issues of the study of the local studies collection management in the 21st century that included the process of the acquisition, organization of materials (classification, cataloging and indexing), information access, information retrieval, preservation, dissemination and marketing of local studies collection to the users.

So far, we have presented three different types of typologies that are useful for working with local information associated with cultural heritage. Nonetheless, all of this work that is enabled by these typologies are for naught if the local information is not used by the intended users. In the case of the national policy of Thailand, these are primarily the local inhabitants. To have a typology useful for use of local information, we turn to a fourth typology, suggested by [Buckland \(1991\)](#).

Fourth typology: situated local information

[Buckland \(1991\)](#) is concerned with defining information through a simple typology. Buckland takes as his starting point that almost everything can be seen as information. This includes the problem that untrue information could be included. He suggests that the notion “informative” could be useful. Things that are not informative should not be information. Nonetheless, he concludes that most about everything could be informative given the appropriate settings. It is the specific situation of the user that sets the stage for experience of information, such as local information, being informative.

Buckland combines the concept of informative with the concept of situational relevance suggested by [Wilson \(1973\)](#). In specific situations, there can be information as process that leads to tangible information, i.e. information as thing. Information as thing can then only be meaningful in specific situation and times when an object or event may be informative. For instance, collection development concerns collection of information. Information systems can only deal directly with information as thing. From this vantage point, anything might be considered information as thing if the situation is appropriate. The third category Buckland introduces is information as knowledge, representations that Buckland sees as a subset of the larger category information as thing. Information as knowledge is where informed decisions about information as process and information as thing can be made

Buckland’s argumentation for the typology is philosophical and rooted in numerous discussions within information science. Although many have reused the typology as three separate forms of information, Buckland is careful to connect them. The key concept is situational. In specific situations, there are information as process, which leads to information as thing. There is therefore a causal relationship between these two notions. Furthermore, information as thing is the central of the three concepts, and information as knowledge is a subset of information as thing.

According to this typology, then, local information can be understood as:

- information as process;

- information as thing; or
- information as knowledge.

This typology is useful for professionals when making implicit or explicit decisions regarding information management with the aim of the final product being informative. Will this documentation be informative to users? Or, more cautiously formulated; can I make a judgment on this document that it is likely or unlikely to be informative for any user? It is a difficult query, as the librarian will not be able to predict all the various situations in which users are likely to encounter the document.

What, then, should be done with documents (information as thing) that are unlikely to be informative? Should they be discarded, or should they be targeted for information management (information as process)?

Furthermore, librarians can ask what kind of information as thing should be the output of information as process in the case of the various documents associated with local information? Once again, the main issue is to focus on a type of information as thing that should be informative for the prospective user within the relevant locality.

Although Dewe (2002) in his typology of information management includes dissemination and marketing of the local collection, Buckland introduces issues that are easily forgotten with conventional information management. It is convenient to think that the task is to build a collection, open it up for the public and do the necessary marketing. But Buckland's typology is useful for making decisions before dissemination and marketing. Will the local information collection be informative? As different people perceive certain information to be informative in some situations but not in others, should we present the local information in diverse ways and at different sites? Should it be packaged in alternate ways for various user groups?

It cannot be emphasized too much that the purpose of the whole process of producing local information is to empower the users, particularly those who are situated at the local side of the cultural heritage. They will have unique connections to the cultural heritage and are likely to be able to, in a constructive way, contribute to the information management process. By introducing issues of what kind of local information may be informative to various end users at an early stage, the trajectory of the collection development can be improved as regards to usability.

Discussion

This article has demonstrated a new eclectic way of handling essentially contested concepts, such as art, knowledge and democracy. Local information, the concept focused, actually consists of two such concepts with broad meanings: local and information. By allowing different actors at different situations to work with separate forms of typologies it becomes possible to deal with distinctly different interpretations and select those that are most relevant for the tasks at hand.

Arguably, the interpretive flexibility of broad concepts intended to be used universally by a variety of factors is deeply problematic. There is lack of discussions regarding how to improve the situation. Basically, there are two opposite ways of proceeding. The first is to create standards that are intended to apply in all circumstances, regardless of context. The second is to create a structure that allows local actors considerable leeway in creating practices and standards that are optimized for the local situation (whatever local would mean in that context). The suggestions regarding typologies put forward in this article supports the latter approach.

Local information is potentially a central concept within library and information science. According to the highly influential text by Buckland (1991), all information is situated and as a consequence local in character. However, in library and information science, the local character of information has been discussed with the help of other concepts. That said, the four different typologies that have been discussed in this article may not only be useful in the context of practical work connected to cultural heritage policy. Arguably, these typologies are useful in discussing some of the core conceptual issues of library and information science.

Of course, the fourth typology introduced in this text is the Buckland typology. However, the three other typologies are useful for gaining a broader view of the situatedness of information, expanding on Buckland's understanding.

The first typology, stipulating different views of local, helps in understanding the situatedness of information as process, knowledge or thing. Contexts of a region or village or community supplies a variety of different situations. Even though a thing appears to be available only in a micro context of a space such as a room, there is likely to be a context of similar things in other rooms in various local settings. Knowledge is never situated only through two people interacting but is only made possible by assemblages of people together over time creating certain ways of knowing.

The second typology deals with TCH or ICH. Expanding on Buckland's ideas, challenging the notion that information science can only deal with the tangible, i.e. information as thing. However, ICH, the elusive tacit knowledge, serve as the basis of documentation and such can be described as information as thing.

The third typology supplies an information management perspective and expands on Buckland's notion of information as process.

Conclusion

A conceptual analysis was applied in this study to identify, detail and expand on four typologies for understanding local information. A synthesis of the results was described in the results section. The four different typologies for understanding local information were local information as an array of different interpretations as diverse meanings of local, local information as cultural heritage, local information as subject of information management and situated information.

Each typology proposes a new way of understanding local information. First of all, local information is vulnerable to numerous different interpretations promoted by separate stakeholders.

Local information as cultural heritage, provided connection of local information to both TCH and ICH. It is proposed in this article that it would be fruitful to introduce this typology to library and information science.

The third typology involves local information as subject of information management, focused on how to manage local information within different library practices. It is notable that there are many different typologies on information management, which can be applied within the management of the local information.

Situated local information concerns how information is used by the end user, and it was identified through the three types of information use described by Buckland (1991). Buckland, argued that information can be used in three different ways, including, information as process, information as thing and information as knowledge. Aligned with Buckland's definition of information, local information can also be viewed or perceived along the lines of these three uses as well.

Actors working with the concept of local information could find it useful to alternate between different typologies for different purposes. Some actors will only find one of these typologies of use. Specific emphasis can be placed on situated local information, as this whole process should benefit local actors in specific situations, empowering them.

Understanding local information would seem to be required for the professional librarians working in the cultural heritage settings. Significantly, this study proposes a novel perspective of the typologies for understanding local information that are useful for librarians working with local information in the cultural heritage setting but at different stages of their work.

This article has implications for future research as well as for librarians working with the concept of local information. It is a conceptual article that attempts to break new ground, which, hopefully, others will find interesting to follow. It is beyond the scope of the article to investigate social implications. Additionally, this article does not relate to the development of information scientists understanding of the concept of information. As important as this is, the main focus of the article is “local information.”

Note

1. TDC is a project of the Thai Library Integrated System.

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