2012

Review of Information Need: A Theory Connecting Information Search to Knowledge Formation

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INFORMATION NEED: A THEORY CONNECTING INFORMATION SEARCH TO KNOWLEDGE FORMATION. Cole, Charles. *Medford, NJ: Information Today, 2012, xiii+224 pp., $59.50, ISBN 978-1-57387-429-8.*

In this book, Cole attempts to establish a framework for the information searching process. Cole analyzes information need from the perspectives of both information science and computer science. Where information science considers the need as sensory (perceptual-cognitive), computer science views information need as mechanical (input-output). The book, one in the ASIST Monograph Series, is a conceptual work that presents a systematic overview of users' information retrieval practices.

Charles Cole is a Research Associate, Visiting Scholar, and Instructor at the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, McGill University. He also provides services as a consultant. Cole has published heavily in the field of information behavior and information retrieval in such journals as *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* and *Information Processing and Management*. He has contributed chapters to books and served as co-editor of two books on these subjects.

Information Need is organized into four parts. The first lays the foundation, providing a history of and context for this work. It culminates in Cole's theory of information need, which is comprised of six propositions encompassing the structure, process, and perspective of information retrieval behavior. Part two examines information need especially in the pre-focus (brainstorming) and focusing (narrowing) stages of information retrieval, during which information need develops. Post-focus, the third stage of information retrieval, is that in which the user establishes a comfort with the research topic and becomes a more efficient searcher. Cole argues that information need is no longer changing in this last stage of performance.

Part three, toward the final pages of the book, takes a brief look at application of the subject matter. Visual learners may do well to read this part immediately after reading the preliminary chapters and then again after reading parts one and two, as the case study presented here is set to a series of diagrammatic panels, charting the course of Cole's theory of information need. Part four offers concluding remarks, reviewing the levels of information need.

Information Need is a work that explores the theory of information retrieval. As such, it is fitting for scholars of user behavior. Figures helped break up the rather abstract textual concepts, but did little to clarify what was being said in the text. The author consistently refers to his work in the plural "we," making the reader wonder with whom the author is collaborating or what constituency he represents as he presents the material in this book. Some of the author's previous works, including co-authored publications, are cited and included in the reference list at the back of the book.

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