

• *Articles* •

Hobby Quilting Websites and Voluntary Provision of Information

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Abstract: *The purpose of this essay is to explore how the “information behaviors” of quilting website hobbyists point to principles that could be applied to professional work environments in fostering employee contributions to institutional information repositories. Using a Library and Information Studies (LIS) perspective, this qualitative and interdisciplinary study investigates the information behaviors of twenty-five hobby quilters who own websites and blogs. Items for investigation and analysis within the data set include statements of motivation, teaching tools, and expressions of personal creativity.*

The research findings show that the websites demonstrate themes of creativity, teaching, and community, all of which seem to be inextricably tied not only to the larger quilting community and traditions, but to the quilt object itself. In extrapolating principles for professional work life contexts, the findings demonstrate that the accepting, nurturing, mentoring, and creative environment that the quilting community embodies allows the spontaneous and voluntary development of information resources for community and non-community members alike.

An Interdisciplinary Project

The field of Library and Information Studies (LIS) is interested in how information is assessed, organized, and stored. A component part of this scholarly and professional field is information behavior. The term “information behavior” is used to describe the methods by which people find information, and how they use information once discovered. Although the research presented in this essay has been framed by my work in LIS and the social science field of Leisure Studies, my findings nevertheless have applicability for folkloristics. As with all

interdisciplinary work, my hope is to not only highlight gaps in knowledge, but to synthesize existing knowledge and bring about new insights.

In the private and public sector, a great deal of money is invested in developing databases and other electronic knowledge tools for storage and dissemination of organizational knowledge. However, in work environments employees are not always willing to use these tools, or to share knowledge they have with their coworkers. That reality, contrasted with the eagerness of most quilters to share information with others (as witnessed by the freely available online resources created by quilters), inspired me to examine the information structures of quilting websites and blogs, and to identify expressed motivations of quilters for sharing information.

This essay explores how personal creativity in quilting websites manifest as information behavior and analyzes the reasons given by the hobbyists (who created the sites' content) for sharing these personally-developed information structures. In elucidating the dynamics of discourse, I ultimately analyze the reasons site owners gave for creating the sites, and examine how they connect their motivations to the quilts and quilting communities they create.

Online Quilting Resources as Folkloric Items

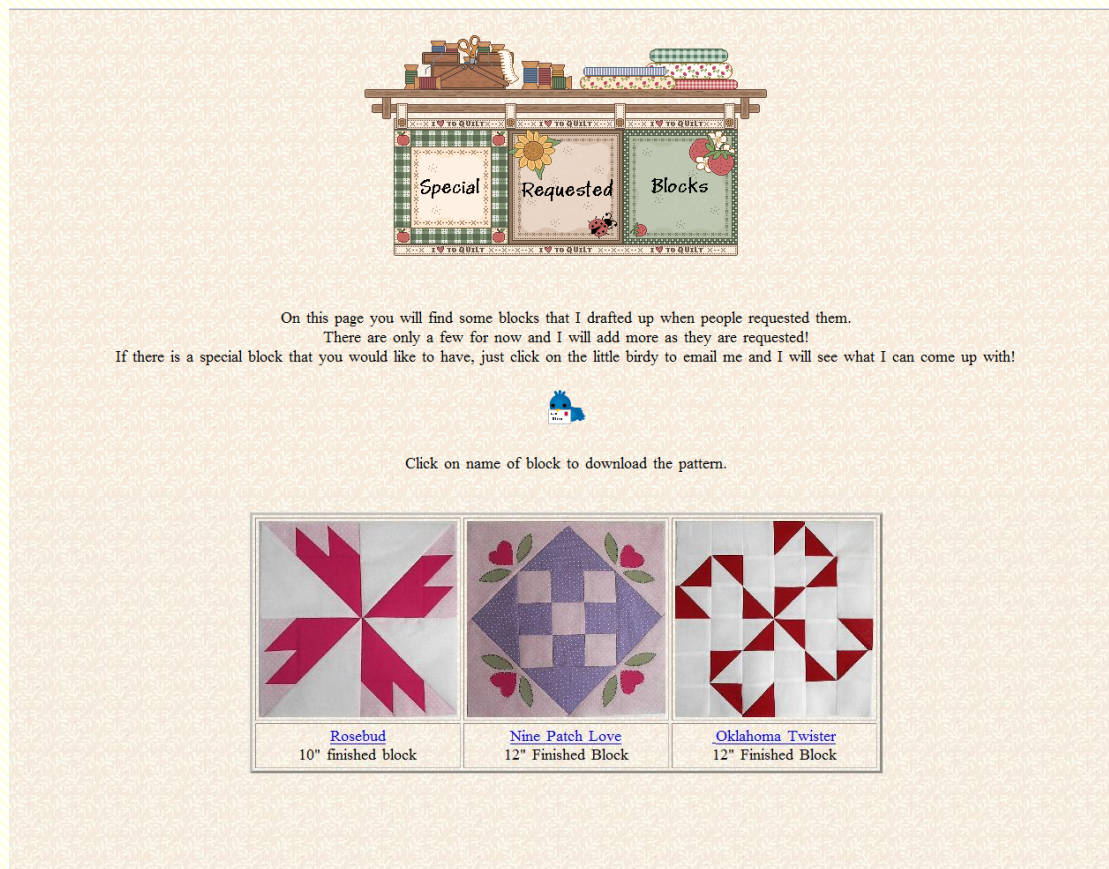
There are many aspects to quilting as a sociocultural activity, including the gendered role it frequently plays, its historic aspects, the link women feel to their history and ancestors, and the way it serves as a conduit to strengthen family ties

(Stalp 2001). An essential part of quilting's sociocultural and information practices is "generativity," or the attempt to link generations not only through the creation of objects but also through the teaching of skills and family history in relationship to quilts. This generativity goes beyond family members to a larger community of quilters and potential quilters, making quilters as a group eager to teach and share knowledge with others, and making them a particularly rich and communicative leisure group to study (Piercy and Cheek 2004).¹

The Internet is populated with content from various groups exhibiting folkloric behaviors and artifacts (Blank 2009), many among whom are quilters. The personal stories of this group, relating the how and the why of individual quilts, quilting interests, and online sites, are of interest to folklorists, recognizing that "the folklore discipline is about the stories we tell to illustrate and understand our lives" (Kelso 2010, 40). All of the quilting sites I visited tell stories of some kind; all of which are interrelated by themes of family, sharing, teaching, and artistic endeavor. These themes are what Sandra Dolby Stahl terms the "essential 'givens'," or traditional beliefs or attitudes of the group, defining a dialogue as part of a larger folkloric tradition (1977, 12-13).

As seen in **Figure 1**, traditional themes of sharing and teaching have been translated into the virtual domain by quilters. With this in mind, quilters are an ideal hobby group to study for further insights into social networks and their individual and unique traditions of information sharing. Quilting as an activity is nearly indivisible from its twin values of sharing personal creativity and initiating

new practitioners of the craft. But more than that, moving from real-time physical proximity to a digital arena has not significantly shaken or changed those values.



[[Click to enlarge](#)]

Figure 1. One example of the helpfulness site owners display in teaching the public. Special Requested Quilt Blocks, *The Golden Thimble* (Feb 29, 2008). Permission to use these images granted by Rebecca Kuck of The Golden Thimble.

The Value of Studying Quilters Online

The value of studying an online community through its online artifacts (websites and blogs) is that the mechanisms of expression they employ—the texts and tools—can provide empirical insights into how they are formed and maintained.

Insight can also be obtained into the role information sharing plays within the community dynamic, whether it is from the viewpoint of information owners, gatherers, or distributors.

Folklorist John Dorst reminds us that in order to establish “critically effective readings” of stories presented, researchers must take into account “the mode of production and exchange of the lore” as we examine our data (1990, 184-85). How traditional dynamics of the group are affected—or not affected—by Internet technology and anonymity can provide insight into interface design possibilities for information repositories, in order to encourage work life information sharing within professional communities that may lack cooperative, information-rich traditions of sharing and dialogue. The effects of empathy and emotional support on information sharing and seeking in online communities are noteworthy in relation to the quilting community, with its cultural emphasis on family and social bonding.²

Quilter-hobbyists also structure and visualize online information, while at the same time choosing to seek out and share learning experiences. This is valuable because it gives insight into the voluntary and amateur aspects of an online community within the contexts of serious leisure and everyday life information seeking (ELIS). One component of ELIS is the pursuit of knowledge in service of hobbies or self-learning. When people search for information to satisfy curiosity or to acquire a new skill, these are examples of ELIS (Savolainen 2005).

“Serious leisure,” another conceptual frame for this research, is an area within sociology’s leisure studies. It is defined as the serious pursuit by choice of

activities that give pleasure or satisfaction. These activities are regularly practiced over an extended length of time, with the intent to acquire skill (Stebbins 2007). While many scholars in various fields have studied leisure activities through a variety of scholarly perspectives (Piercy and Cheek 2004; Rojek 2002; Turkle 2004), very few scholars in LIS have investigated serious leisure information behaviors (see Hartel 2003; 2006; Prigoda and McKenzie 2007). There is very little research in LIS that has studied the information behaviors of serious leisure groups online.³ Therefore, the absence of research in this area, and the specialized information structures characteristic to individual hobby groups makes this a valuable area for discovery.⁴ Moreover, although it is understudied, it is highly pertinent to millions of people who engage in serious leisure, and for that alone it merits examination.

The value of such research for folklore is that the online texts which make up the dataset offer tangible clues to how hobbyist groups do three things: make sense of their craft as practical and cultural knowledge (Borgman 1999); use the craft as an entry to social worlds (Unruh 1980); and finally engage with it as civil labor, aiding and teaching quilting novices to preserve knowledge (Rojek 2002). Further, the archived messages and texts of these sites provide easily accessible, rich data to be mined, particularly within the concept of communal re-creation (see Ben-Amos 1971, 7-8).

Methodology

In recognition of the changing and sometimes loose definition of the term “quilting,” I would like to offer very specific criterion for this essay. A “quilt” may be reduced to its old-fashioned essence: a physical object, created for home decoration or for comfort. “Quilters” are those who create these physical objects. In identifying quilting communities (websites and blogs) to visit and analyze, I relied upon these definitions to inform my analysis. Furthermore, I chose to limit my profiling of “hobby sites” to those with the express purpose of facilitating a user’s desire for self-expression and/or those promoting quilting as a leisure pursuit. Hobby sites are typically created as information resources by quilters for essentially non-commercial purposes, recognizing that money is not a primary motivator in creating folk art (Jones 1995, fn2), although some may contain limited commercial elements, such as advertising space, to help pay for the expenses of the site.

From October of 2007 to March of 2008, I visited and analyzed twenty-five quilting websites and blogs. All materials I collected resided in the public domain, and only that content made publicly available (i.e., where no memberships or passwords were required to view content) was examined.⁵ My research questions to informants asked about three main elements: motivation, creativity, and community, and sampling elements ensured each of these issues were identified in the data set. A list of the sites and blogs examined can be found in **Appendix A** at the end of this essay.

Findings

Typology of websites

Upon analyzing the data I accumulated from the twenty-five “hobby sites,” a typology quickly emerged. I found that there were five different types of sites possible in my data set (and it was rare that a site did not have a combination of these elements). The typology of sites is as follows:

1. Gallery of work: images of quilts made either by the site owner or by others are displayed. The images usually have commentary on why the fabrics, designs, etc. were chosen, and notes and tips on how the quilt was made.
2. Teaching: this type of site offers tutorials, free patterns, and instructions on how to make quilts. These are almost always done by the site owner him or herself.
3. Assembly of resources: another term for this category could be “information portal.” The site owner in this instance has provided links to or list of online and print resources.
4. Journaling: the site owner treats the site as a personal space and therefore writes about family experiences, relationships, and emotions.
5. Commercial: the site is used not only to celebrate a hobby, but also notifies visitors to the site about other projects that generate income, such as an etsy site, or perhaps has some advertising on the pages.

Most of these sites were a hybrid where two or more of the elements named above were combined. **Figure 2** shows four elements of the typology combined together in a site: commercial, gallery, teaching, and assembly of resources.



[[Click to enlarge](#)]

Figure 2. An example of a “hybrid” quilting hobby site and how it combines elements of the typology. *Ena's Crazy Quilt Page*, home page. Permission to use this image granted by Ena Flynn of Ena's Crazy Quilts.

Within the sites I observed, information was likely to be polluted with information noise in the forms of ad space, informational subthemes, and neglect. The ads can be said to detract from the key messages of the site, providing only the

slight and questionable value of information regarding the existence of products available on the market. In contrast the informational subthemes, which typically revolve around domestic concerns, seem to an expected part of communication between quilters, and are accordingly valued by the community as a reflection of their values (Kari and Savolainen 2007; Kim 2000). The sampling process showed that there is a high incidence of neglect and abandonment of sites, where initial efforts to convey accurate, useful, and rich information is not sustained.

A notable element of these information structures is the socializing aspects of the quilting sites. McKenzie's (2002) belief, that everyday life information seeking (the steps people take in resolving day to day information needs) is more about the social aspects of information practices than psychological models of information behavior, is supported by many of the information behaviors amongst quilters.

Information and Creativity

Serious discussion about what creativity is and how site owners cultivate it was available in several forms. Some site owners wrote essays on creativity, while others simply made personal statements about how quilting made them feel. Some quilters discussed their creativity in terms of sources of inspiration and contributory factors to a quilt they had made. Altogether there were five ways in which quilters discussed their quilting creativity:

1. Quilting as a creative act: creativity was framed as having a strongly positive component. This tie between expressing creativity and experiencing deep

happiness is one recognized within the field of psychology by such academics as Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1997).

2. Quilting as emotional succor: some sites contained discussion of how quilting brought soothing emotional states in times of upheaval. One quilter made a "misery quilt" that helped her to heal from her father's death (Goff); another quilter talked about how quilting helped him overcome mental illness and regain health and strength (Handley, 2006). The tie between emotional state and cognition is recognized by information science (Nahl, 2007), and the therapeutic value of artistic creation is recognized in folklore (Jones 1995, p. 268): according to these quilters, to be able to quilt gives quilters a way to reflect on and process life's challenges.
3. Quilting as passion: Quilters also wrote about quilting being a passion, an addiction, and a lifelong interest. These kinds of comments on the sites made it clear that quilting for many is more avocation than pastime, supporting Stebbins' (2004) definition of the serious leisure enthusiast as one finding gratification and fulfillment, rather than mere fun, in their chosen activity.
4. Quilting as object: The site owner of Shirley's Quilts wrote about how she wanted to make a quilt for a seriously ill brother in law. She described the process of making the quilt in terms of the quilt requirements: she wanted it to feel comforting like a hug, so she chose to make a rag quilt; her brother in law is color blind, so she used a lot of red; her own favorite fabric pattern is plaid, so she used plaid materials (Ellen, *Raggedy Hug Quilt*). The relationship between leisure, creativity, inspiration, outside restrictions, and the tools at hand, in order to deliver an object to a recipient, is similar to that described by Hartel (2006) as the gourmet cooking process for food enthusiasts.
5. Other examples of creativity: Site owners used the sites to display images of other handicrafts such as needlework or fabric dyeing, post recipes, and share poetry they have written. The expectation that information about quilting will include items about domesticity and other areas of creative endeavor appears to be a part of the cultural context of quilting communities affecting information behavior (Kim 2000).

Any model of information behaviors in relation to hobbies seemingly needs to accommodate the degree of passion with which one pursues one's interest. From creating mental models as to how the object will be created, to perceiving the hobby to be relief from emotional turmoil, quilting is more than a way to pass the time or

make an object. The process of making quilts, and the quilts themselves, are being invested with value and emotion.

Quilting as a coping mechanism speaks to way of life and mastery of life both, unifying the two major components of Savolainen's ELIS model (2005). If a hobby impacts how people perceive themselves and affects their ability to maneuver through life's problems, then hobby activities cannot be only dictated to by way of life and mastery of life; there is a reverse process taking place, and we understand that for some, the expression of creativity can flow back into and affect one's control and management of daily tasks and life events.

Reasons for Creating Websites

Thirteen of the twenty-five site owners in my dataset explained the motivation for creating the website or blog. The most popular reason given (nine of twelve sites) for creating sites was to help others learn to quilt. This was frequently couched in highly positive terms, using terms like "joy" and references to the giving and helpful nature of quilters in general (Noblin 2008). Summing up the core motivations and values that most owners seemed to express, as the site owner of

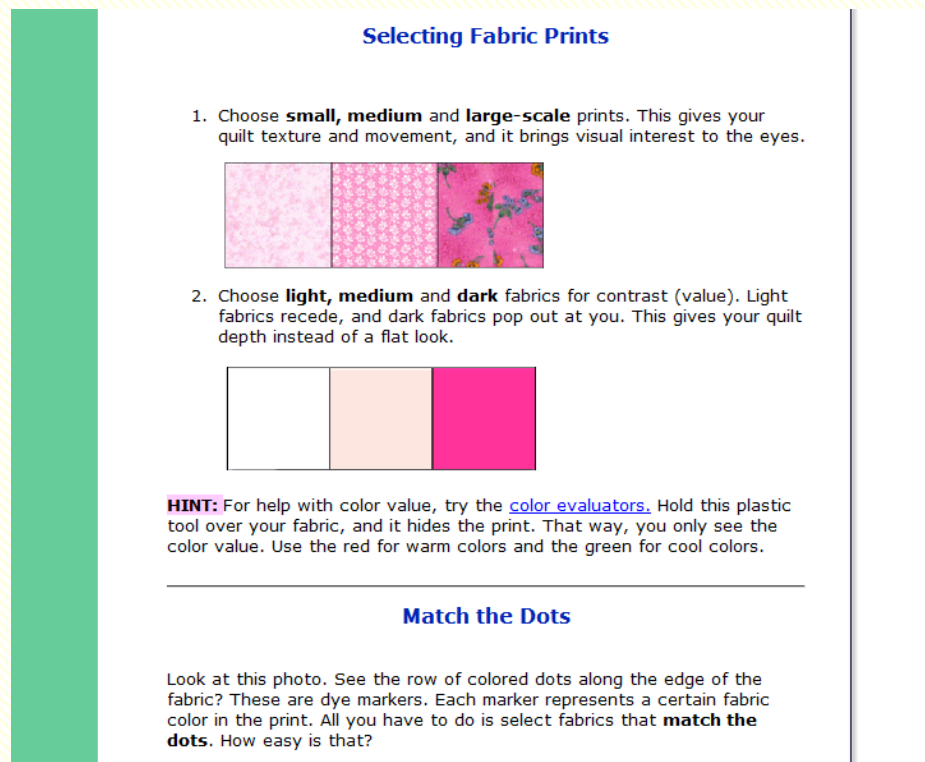
The Golden Thimble revealed:

I decided I wanted a website that would help others find what they needed, to help them in the quest to learn to quilt... I only hope that you can take something away with you from this site, something that helps you, or makes your quilting experience more fun and a little easier! :) If I help even one person...this site is worth all the work! Thanks and please enjoy! (Kuck 2007)

Other reasons for creating sites and information resources also fall within the value system of quilting. The *Piecepatcher* (Laukkonen 2008) and *Shirley's Quilts* (Ellen 2007) sites were created to share a love of quilting with others. An interest in family history triggered the creation of *The Nana Lord Quilt Project*, a blog that chronicles a woman's efforts to trace quilts her grandmother made, and to investigate ways of preserving her own family heirloom quilt for her children (Paluzzi 2008). Organizing charitable work for communities motivated *The Heart Strings Project*, which grew out of a Yahoo! Group (an online chat group) that organized itself to create string quilts (quilts made from narrow strips of fabric that create patterns) for community-level charities, such as local shelters. The site is intended to recruit non-members by inviting them to join and explaining how even non-members of their group can contribute or form their own charitable quilting groups (Heart Strings 2008).

Teaching Elements

Over the course of the data sampling process it became apparent that during more recent years even quilting hobbyists with a desire to create teaching tools or assemble resources were more likely to build a blog than a website.



[[Click to enlarge](#)]

Figure 3. An online quilting tutorial about color and fabric choice.

“Choosing Fabric Colors and Prints,” *Sew A Quilt* (Dec 12, 2008). Permission to use this image granted by Gloria Massard of Sew A Quilt.

Although some of these sites, which we may call information repositories, have readily identifiable and more traditional teaching elements such as tutorials on technique (as seen in **Figure 3**), other quilters just want to share their quilts with the public through image and commentary, which can be considered another way of teaching. By showing images of what they are making, and then explaining why they are doing it in just that way, why it is significant to use a particular fabric or block pattern, and providing links to other sources for more information, these

quilters are providing teaching resources. The traditional teaching and the sharing sites both contain an invitation to others to try quilting.

No site owner explicitly stated why it was important to them to teach others to quilt. However, by reading for what was implicit, it became apparent that the primary reason was that quilting is a pleasurable activity, and the site owners would like others to enjoy the act of quilting. Additional, secondary reasons for creating these information repositories included organizing one's thoughts and projects (McGuire 2008), to fulfill an information need (Magee 2008), and to possibly create commercial elements that would provide income (Kuck 2007).

There were four ways that site owners encouraged site viewers to participate in quilting. "Gallery" sites display examples of their own or others' creativity through galleries of images, accompanied by text expounding on the creative process. This text is frequently very personal and reflective, and holds an implicit invitation to join a circle of supportive friends and a promise that creative satisfaction will come from engaging the activity. A second way is the sincere, supportive language, a constant feature of these sites, which include not only reassuring statements about how easy quilting can be but occasional offers of personal assistance, such as this quote: "You can also email me with any questions. I'll do my best to set you on the right path. After all, your success is my success. Right?" (Massard 2008). Thirdly, teaching elements abound, from laboriously crafted tutorials written on the techniques and history of quilting to the free designs offered, and compiled lists of additional resources. The fourth strategy is

community, affirmed and available to quilters through not just the structural and technical elements in the sites, such as emailing a site owner, but through notifications about guild and listserv memberships, and personal discussion of family activities connected to quilting. In all these expressions and manifestations of community, there exists openness to recruiting new members, who are assured that they are welcome to join this group and participate in this activity.

The Application to Professional Contexts

Quilting sites reflect core values of the quilting community, namely generativity and creative personal life. Discussion is heavily slanted by these issues within the context of how they influence the creation of quilts. The quilting process described in the sites was intertwined with the teaching features and tutorial information, directly related to the quilters' quests for improvement and development of skills, a part of their quilting culture that affects their hobby-related information sharing (Kari and Savolainen 2007).⁶

The revealing, personal, and at-times emotionally intimate approach amongst quilting hobbyists might point to why in the workplace much more success can be seen in geographically-based online communities (Baker and Ward 2002; Fisher and Bennion 2005). Employees, understandably, recoil from recording personal information online in work contexts. Exchange of personal information usually requires at least some face to face interaction before it is trusted to an electronic

domain—and even then, professional considerations would limit these to instant messaging or email.

This then sets up a conflict. The quilters and their sites shows that there is a need for off-topic conversation that allows members of the community to bond in shared purpose. However, the work environment shows us that the human need for privacy and protection requires at least some preliminary face to face exchanges. This need for either face-to-face interaction or off-topic electronic interaction as a preliminary step to building relationships of trust has to be resolved for geographically dispersed professional communities to interact optimally in electronic environments.

My findings also point to the need for professional environments to allow for and encourage the creativity of employees. The emotionally descriptive language of the quilting sites indicate how important it is for these hobbyists to feel free to explore, represent, and discuss their creativity as part of a community that places high value on the creative process. The findings also point to a relationship between the freedom to express and experience creativity, and the willingness to source and provide information and develop teaching resources.

Several of the sites analyzed in the course of this project were the response of an individual seeing a need and then stepping forward to fill it. One example is Gwen Magee (2008), who created the *Quilt Ethnic* site. Recognizing that there was a lack of resources on the Web that discussed quilting in the Native American and African American traditions, among others, she made the effort to provide that

missing resource. We can then extrapolate a principle and possibly apply it to a professional setting: if features are provided that encourage members of the community to discuss information needs and then cooperatively take steps to fill those needs, initiative and creativity can take place. Successful, enjoyable workplace experiences that result from opportunities to creatively respond to information needs should provide a source of positive reinforcement for employees to continue in those efforts (Csikszentmihalyi 1997).

The primary motivator in the creation of these information repository-sites is a desire to teach the craft of quilting. Quilters online, although they have left real time physical interactions, continue to show the high premium they place on community and community building (King 2001; Stalp 2006). Online quilters work hard to recruit new quilters to their community. The efforts of the sites in the data set to provide teaching elements for use by others, quilters and potential quilters alike, underscores the community and generativity of this group, and the inescapable conclusion that quilters believe part of quilting is to teach.⁷ That desire to teach others is stated by the near-unanimous majority of site owners to be the main motivator in creating their sites and making them information repositories.

However, it is worth noting that the desire to teach is enabled and empowered by the accepting and non-judgmental environment of the quilting community. That environment fosters a sense of confidence in those who want to make contributions. The willingness of these site owners to teach speaks to their

confidence in their ability (Hsiu-Fen 2007), their belief that the community will value what they have to share, and their belief that the activity of quilting includes doing something to help others learn to quilt and acquire skills of their own (Ardichvili, Page, and Wentling 2003).

Conclusion

In each site type, although adaptations were found marking the movement to a digital forum, evidence was found of the traditional values of quilting communities, as evidenced by the words of *Block Central's* site owner, Kim Noblin:

...I am still humbled by the enormity of this thing we call the World Wide Web and more so by the incredible, giving nature of quilters all around the world. To share seems to be second nature to quilters and this is expressed in the enormous amount of quilting information that is shared and enjoyed by so many on a daily basis (Noblin 2008).

This research was originally formulated in the belief that the serious leisure groups have information behaviors that, when studied, could highlight ways to improve the solicitation of information from employees in professional contexts. The findings have indicated that flexible roles, accommodation of off-topic discussion, and opportunities to creatively seek to fill perceived needs, if placed within a positive work-community environment, should indeed help stimulate employee contributions to organizational knowledge.

The quilting community's supportive network strategies are for community growth. These strategies are driven not by money, but rather altruism, enjoyment, and creative impulse. This project investigated how those aspects of a leisure

community foster the exchange of information and found the online quilting community is characterized not only altruism and enjoyable creativity, but also positive interactions, supportive language, a strong imperative to mentor and teach, and personal sharing. In some way the quilt object is connected to this value system.

For quilters, an important part of learning the craft and art of quilting seems to be a simultaneous expression and internalization of these contextual values, in the way Aldred described as “instanced identity,” where identity is a “communicative act of power” (2010, 16). Furthermore, the structures of the sites and the discourse strategies all seem to reinforce the building of community through teaching and fellowship. The community values seem to influence a site owner’s willingness (and the willingness of site visitors) to share information (Ardichvili, Page, and Wentling 2003, 70).

The activities of the quilting hobby site owners in the study confirms ELIS’ claim that knowledge exchange is a social practice. All of the quilting sites in the data set sit within a framework of values that seem to flow from the quilt object to the community and back again, in perpetual reinforcement. Whether those values are articulated face to face or via digital technology, the construction of these information resources manifests the community values of teaching and sharing. Context and motivation are here so closely aligned that they appear to point to territory not yet mapped by ELIS (Kari and Savolainen 2007; Kim 2000).

The success of any efforts to build an information sharing community, whether in professional or hobby contexts, is of course reliant on the members of the community believing that their contributions are valued by the community at large (Chewar, McCrickard, and Carroll 2005; Erickson and Kellogg, 2000). The sincere and positive language within the quilting sites studied indicates that this community places a particular priority on helping its membership feel accepted and valued, a part of the “giving nature of quilters” (Noblin 2008).

Analyzing these hobby sites not only provided insights into online quilting community discourse, but they also raised follow-up questions. In relation to ELIS, a question is whether site owners more likely to optimistic-cognitive in their mastery of life, possibly linking creativity to productive and satisfying information behaviors? Also, are quilters representative of other serious leisure groups in the information behaviors described above, such as willingness to teach? Is the value placed on communication and content type constant across various leisure pursuits?

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Notes

¹ For example, quilting bees, a feature of “New World” pioneer life that continues today, epitomize the traditional socializing and mentoring around the creation of quilts (Kiracofe 1993; Piercy and Cheek 2004).

² In 2000, Gary Burnett called for LIS research that connected information with social-emotional activities online. Though some scholars are investigating the impacts of emotion on information behavior, notably Diane Nahl (2007), scholarly research remains scarce, as is investigation within LIS into personal development activities and their related information behaviors (Kari and Savolainen 2007).

³ The leisure activities examined by this study place it within LIS' examination of informational issues within serious leisure.

⁴ As philosopher Jenna Hartel (2006) indicates, the value of LIS research into leisure studies is that it examines rich and distinct ELIS behaviors that are often understudied by LIS scholars. This scholarly neglect is evidenced by the dearth of scholarly literature of serious leisure practices or serious leisure practices online.

⁵ Sites and blogs were added to the data set once discourse elements were identified, so that data samples would be secured that spoke to the research questions. Three approaches of domain analysis were used in the study: bibliometric, epistemological, and discourse. These three approaches informed the development of seventeen sampling criteria, which included elements to address quilter (site owner) demographics such as gender, discourse elements, and site features such as tutorials or the use of images. Purposive sampling was accomplished with the use of snowball sampling once starter sites were identified with simple "quilts" and "quilting information" Google keyword searches. The data set was examined in relation to the research questions described above, including mining texts with a grounded theory approach, to discover representations of personal creativity, motivation, teaching, and community building strategies. Domain analysis was chosen as the analysis method because it encompasses the variable nature of information sharing, acknowledging that it changes from one subject area to another. As a result, it has a wide variety of approaches (Hjørland 2002). Domain analysis as an analytical method is a "social paradigm" which tries to comprehend external effects along with internal processes of information and communication. It has been formulated with the belief that the best way to know information behavior is to watch what takes place within specific communities of discourse (Hjørland and Albrechtson 1995, 400). As Jenna Hartel (2003) acknowledges, the holistic approach of domain analysis is uniquely suited to the needs of those LIS researchers who study hobbyists and their communities of interest. Using the method of domain analysis in studying each website and blog as a text gave insight into online community issues specific to this group. At the same time, the use of a grounded theory approach left the data itself free to point out directions and highlight themes as it was collected.

⁶ Neutral chat also plays a role in community discourse. The role of neutral chat within online communities, and its usefulness as a social lubricant, has been noted by researchers such as Sean Googins, James Laffey, and I-Chun Tsai (2007).

⁷ See Prigoda and McKenzie (2007) for a similar conclusion on the part of a group of knitters.

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Appendix A:

Complete Data Sample of Websites and Blogs

Website Name	Website Address
Block Central	http://blockcentral.com/index.shtml
Candy Goff	http://www.handquilter.com/
Caroline Ingalls	http://la-petite-maison-en-virginie.over-blog.com/
Crazy Quilt Central	http://www.oocities.com/SoHo/Lofts/6531/
Ena's Crazy Quilt Page	http://www.oocities.com/Heartland/Farm/9138/
The Golden Thimble	http://www.thegoldenthimble.com/
Heart Strings Quilt Project	http://heartstringsquiltproject.com/
Hester's Quilting Page	http://www.portup.com/~hjbe/quilt/
The Joy of Quilting	http://thejoyofquilting.homestead.com/enter.html
Laurence Martin - Patchworks, Quilts	http://www.laurencemartin.ca/
Nana Lord Quilt Project	http://nanalordquilt.blogspot.com/
One Quilter's Opinions	http://www.angelfire.com/home/quiltersreview/
Piecepatcher Quilts	http://www.piecepatcher.com/about.htm
Priscilla's Quilts and Country	http://www.oocities.com/Heartland/4583/index.html
Quilt Ethnic	http://www.quiltethnic.com/
Quilt The Atlantic	http://www.quilttheatlantic.ca/
Quilting 101	http://www.quilting101.com/
Quilting Gallery	http://quiltinggallery.com/
QuiltNet	http://www.quilt.net/
Rick McGuire	http://www.rickmcguire.net/blogs/quiltblog.html
Sew A Quilt	http://www.sewaquilt.com/index.html
Shirley's Quilts	http://members.tripod.com/inspiring-thoughts/quilts/index.html
State of the Craft	http://stateofthecraft.blogspot.com/
Womenfolk: The Art of Quilting	http://www.womenfolk.com
World Wide Quilting Page	http://www.quilt.com/index.html