

Information Behaviors of Mobility-Disabled on the Internet/

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Abstract

The purpose of this work was to familiarize with the information behavior of the mobility-disabled in the internet, with the internet of contributing to the information group which deals with the research of information behavior particularly within this population, and within special populations in general.

Information behavior is a field which examines subjects as information requirements, information usage restrictions, information search, user's interaction with information systems, etc. Testing of main themes and information behaviors of the mobility-disabled will assist information providers to be attentive to the specific necessities of this population, and so to provide the essential information and allow wiser utilization of existing information resources over the internet, in order to ease the daily coping with the disabilities.

The research questions discussed the central issues that occupy the mobility-disabled. Issues such as coping with the difficulties of the day to day life, the information needs the disabled require in different areas, and the manner in which they use the available information over the internet in order to supply their needs.

The data gathering was done through face to face interviews in two steps. The first part of the interview was an open interview, meaning the listening on my behalf was the major part, while the interviewees told their life stories and difficulties without any leading questions. The second part was a semi-structured interview, in order to direct to and focus on the relevant subjects of the research. The questions dealt with the frequency of use of the internet, specific incidents of difficulties that were encountered daily, websites in which they browse customarily, social life, etc.

Turning to these examinees was done by forums over the internet, which deals with disabilities, illnesses causing handicap in mobility such as multiple sclerosis,

and accident injuries. Furthermore, the "snowball" method was used where the interviewees helped me to contact other handicappers from their peers.

In order to analyze the findings, I was mainly assisted by Alderfer's ERG theory, which consists of people's needs: existence needs, relatedness needs, and growth needs. From analyzing the interview findings, it was discovered that the internet constitutes a response to a complex of needs in the life of the mobility-disabled. Existence needs: assistance with accessibility, education, health, etc. Relatedness needs: with peers, family, etc. Growth needs: coping with the handicapped identity, support, etc. In addition, congruence was found between models of information behavior, that their themes are uncertainty and constraint which force an individual to seek for information (Wilson, 1999 Allen, 1996).

Through researching information behavior over the internet of mobility-disabled, it is possible to build a comprehensive program adjusted to this type of handicap, in an effort to assist their orientation inside the vast cybernetic maze. This research indicates the importance of the internet as a central supplier of information, through which it is possible to answer the needs of varied and diverse populations. This out of hope that these populations will increase their usage of the internet by means of satisfying teleprocessing skills and technological aids, in order to narrow the digital gap evident today among the special populations.

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