

Call for Papers: JASIST Special Issue on “The Theory and Practice of Informational Transitions”

Deadline to submit: June 13, 2024

Paper development workshop: September 13, 2023

Overview

Life transitions forms a rich area of scholarship for Information Science research. The last five years have seen a steady growth in the publication of empirical studies related to transition, including PhD work and longitudinal studies, in a variety of areas including health, social, academic and employment contexts. At the same time, emerging conceptual work has also started to re-examine transition through a historical lens, including how change and adjustment has been treated in historical Information Science scholarship. This adds significant scope for complex conceptual work. The breadth of interest further means that transition has the potential to unify various related fields of study, including information behaviour, practice, and literacy research as well as various disciplinary fields.

This Special Issue will provide a platform for the exploration of life transitions from an information behaviour, information practice, or information literacy perspective. The aim is to develop the emerging conceptualisation of what transition means in these fields of study through examining different theoretical models, methodological approaches, and empirical findings. This Special Issue will act as focal point for growing theoretical and empirical interest in the relationship between life transitions and information.

Special Issue Theme

Transitions are a natural state in everyday life. In a broader sense, individuals could be said to be in a constant state of transition, or “transitioning” with every passage in life. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, transition is defined both as a noun and adverb, it is both: “A passing or passage from one condition, action, or (rarely) place, to another; “change” and, “To make or undergo a transition (from one state, system, etc. to or into another); to change over or switch.”

From a research perspective, transition is a complex topic that has been variously conceptualised and defined. Transitions can be personal (changes due to changes in life cycle), situational (changes in circumstances in personal or professional life), or environmental (changes in the organisational environment impacting individuals) (Schumacher & Meleis, 1994). These emphases mean that transition has been most comprehensively explored to date within the field of Education and Nursing. Conceptual work in these areas has focused on the process through which people in transition move beyond a disrupted reality to construct a new reality.

Information has been found to be a strong trigger in the transition process. Transitions fracture the individual’s information landscapes and require them to learn new “ways of knowing” (Lloyd, 2017), a process that often requires both seeking and avoiding information as a coping mechanism to reduce uncertainty (Savolainen, 2017). This notion of a “gappy” reality (Dervin, 1999, p. 370) resonates with sense-making’s premise of discontinuity (Dervin, 2003) as a fundamental aspect of reality that mandates humans to “take steps to construct sense in constantly changing life situations.” (Savolainen, 1993, p. 16).

Although transitions are permeated with information practices of many kinds, information behaviour / practices/ literacy research has engaged only peripherally with ideas of transition and the concept remains underexplored (e.g. Bronstein, 2018; Karim, Widén & Heinström, 2019; Hertzum & Hyldegård, 2019; Hicks, 2019; Huttunen & Kortalainen, 2021; Lloyd, 2017; McKenzie, 2001; Ruthven, 2021; Willson, 2019). Consequently, the aim of this special issue is to extend these initial explorations of transition through an information lens.

We invite empirical, conceptual or methodological submissions for this special issue that address one or more of these questions:

- How should transition be conceptualised, studied, evaluated within the field of information behaviour, information practice or information literacy?
- What is the role of information and information activities, including information avoidance, in a transition?
 - E.g., What role do uncertainty, liminality, agency, reflexivity, time, affect and place play in shaping transitional information practices?
- What models, theories and concepts from Information Science and beyond are useful for studying transitions?
- What research methods/methodologies can we use to study transition? e.g., interdisciplinary, arts-based, narrative and longitudinal?
- What types of life transitions exist and how can they be conceptualised in information behaviour, information practice or information literacy? e.g.,
 - Physiological, organisational and social transitions
 - Health, migration/refugee, education, workplace, intercultural, parenthood, ageing, religious/spiritual, personal development and gender transitions
 - Unexpected or unwanted transitions
- What informational strategies might support transitions? e.g.,
 - Community/information intermediaries and gatekeepers
 - Information resources
 - Educational interventions
 - Digital technologies including social media and user-generated content

Paper Development Workshop

Potential authors will have the opportunity to attend an online paper development workshop held on 13th September 2023. The workshop will provide an opportunity for those interested in submitting to the special issue to present their in-progress papers and receive feedback and guidance from the guest editors on how to develop their research into papers suitable for the special issue. Those interested in participating in the workshop should submit an extended abstract of up to 1,000 words to Ian Ruthven <ian.ruthven@strath.ac.uk> by August 18th 2023. Participation in the workshop is not required for submissions to the special issue, but we encourage those interested in submitting to the special issue to take advantage of this opportunity and receive feedback prior to submitting papers for consideration in the special issue.

Guest Editors

Jenny Bronstein, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Alison Hicks, University College London (UCL), UK

Jette Hyldegård, University of Copenhagen, DK

Pam McKenzie, The University of Western Ontario, Canada

Ian Ruthven, University of Strathclyde, UK

Gunilla Widén, Åbo Akademi, Finland

Submission Guidelines

Submit your manuscript through your JASIST author account at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jasist>. Submissions should comply with JASIST criteria for a 'Research Article' and be at most 7000 words in length.
<https://asistdl.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/hub/journal/23301643/homepage/forauthors>

Special Issue Timeline (planned)

Paper development workshop: 13 September 2023

Submissions due: 13 June 2024

Decisions after first round of reviews: 11 September 2024

Special Issue to be published in November 2025

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