

Title:	“A Clean, Well-lighted Place”: Differences reported in information ground characteristics between online information ground participants and members of face-to-face information grounds.
Type of study:	This project will survey the users of an online information ground (Flickr.com) to determine how Fisher, Landry and Naumer’s people-place-information trichotomy applies to the online experience, comparing differences in behavior in the online information ground to the reported experience of a physical information ground.
Problem statement:	Do the user experiences reported as most valued in a physical information ground retain value in an online information ground? How do the identified characteristics of a physical information ground differ when participants communicate exclusively in a virtual environment, rather than meeting face-to-face?
Purpose:	<p>The purpose of this study is to compare differences reported in information ground characteristics between Flickr.com participants and the participants of Fisher et al’s 2006 face-to-face information ground study.</p> <p>Using survey questions based on Fisher, Landry and Naumer’s people-place-information trichotomy (activities reported in physical face-to-face IGs), this project will survey members of Flickr.com.</p> <p>The goal is to determine whether the user experiences reported as most valuable in a physical information ground retain value in an online information ground.</p>
Significance:	<p>Online communities face situations where swift and efficient information transfer may be limited by unrecognized “place” factors, similar to those factors interrupting physical information grounds.</p> <p>Identifying elements of the online environment that boost or hinder information transfer among members should increase the efficiency and usefulness of online communities.</p> <p>Including “place” factors when examining information behavior could introduce elements not previously noted when considering tools or users alone.</p> <p>Analyzing the reported differences in information ground characteristics between virtual and face-to-face information ground participants could reveal new patterns both in the production of online art and in the sharing of creative virtual information online.</p>
Research question:	What differences in the five place-related information ground characteristics of Fisher, Landry and Naumer’s people-place-information trichotomy are reported between full and part-time enrolled information science students (both Masters and Doctoral) at the University of North Texas who self-report using Flickr as an information ground in 2011 and the participants in Fisher et al’s original 2006 study of these same face-to-face information grounds characteristics?

<p>Literature review:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oldenburg (1998) eight requirements of a “great good place” • Fisher (1999) definition of information grounds • Durrance (2003) public libraries and information grounds • Fisher et al (2003) information grounds of migrant workers • Burrell and Nambi (2005) coffee shops as info grounds. • Fisher et al’s people-place-information trichotomy (2006) • Saxton (2007) specific library (Seattle Public) information grounds • McKechnie (2007) storytime hours at public libraries as IG • McKenzie (2007) midwifery and IG • Lilley (2009) Maori tribes and rules of an information ground • Scott (2008) patterns of the information ground in progress
<p>Data collection method:</p>	<p>Participants will voluntarily complete an online survey based on the primarily open-ended questions focused on five place-related factors used in the Fisher, Landry and Naumer 2006 project. The results will be compiled and compared to the original results obtained by Fisher et al.</p> <p>The place-related questions used in Fisher, Landry and Naumer’s people-place-information trichotomy (2005) survey will be reproduced in this study. [FISHER HAS BEEN CONTACTED FOR THE SPECIFIC INSTRUMENT DETAILS. THE INSTRUMENT WAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PUBLISHED RESULTS NOR IN THE SUBSEQUENT ANALYSIS BY OTHER RESEARCHERS.]</p> <p>The survey will be delivered online and results will be collected online. This study consists of an online questionnaire which should take about 15 minutes to complete.</p> <p>(The draft survey is available here.)</p> <p>The questionnaire will be available online until XXXXX XX, 2011.</p> <p>The study will accept up to 500 participants and will distribute results in 2012 to those who request to be added to the project mailing list.</p> <p>UNT students 18 years of age or older are eligible.</p> <p>All information submitted in questionnaire will be treated in confidence.</p> <p>Where the original Fisher instrument provides quantitative measures, the statistical significance of the responses to the Flickr survey will be provided by a single sample t-test with a ratio less than .05 considered significant.</p> <p>The target population for this study consists of full and part-time enrolled information science students (both Masters and Doctoral) at the University of North Texas who self-report using Flickr as an information ground in 2009. The reason for targeting this group is to simulate the student population surveyed in the Fisher, Landry and Naumer’s 2006 project.</p>

	<p>Flickr was selected to exemplify online collaborative visual communities in this project based on longevity, diversity, number of participants and widening influence.</p> <p>The students will be solicited to participate via an email distributed through the Department of Library and Information Sciences. The sample selection will occur via voluntary participation.</p> <p>Sample size in this project will be a minimum of 176 students.</p>
<p>Data analysis method:</p>	<p>In this project, the relationship being measured is the similarity between the student responses to Fisher’s original study of face to face IG behaviors and the student responses to this survey of online IG behaviors.</p> <p>This project is based in a qualitative ethnology approach, considering an entire group in a natural environment and identifying the everyday information behaviors within the group.</p> <p>Content analysis of a normative descriptive survey constructed from a self-reported online questionnaire will be used to collect details of information ground characteristics from Flickr.com members. The survey data, consisting of responses to open-ended questions, will be compiled using content analysis, charting any similarities with the Fisher, Landry and Naumer findings.</p> <p>Where the original Fisher instrument provides quantitative measures, the statistical significance of the responses to the Flickr survey will be provided by a single sample t-test with a ratio less than .05 considered significant.</p> <p>However, the practical significance of this study will be assessed qualitatively, by compiling textual responses from the online survey and comparing them using content analysis to responses in the original study. The resulting research report will include the specific characteristics tabulated, a thesaurus of terminology used during content analysis, the rating procedure used to determine similarity of characteristics, reported frequencies for each characteristic and a description of found data patterns.</p> <p>Sample-based effect size estimates the strength of an apparent relationship.</p> <p><i>Cohen’s d is one way to define effect size i.e. whether an observed difference is important in a particular study. A small effect size is generally noted as $d = 0.2$, a medium effect size is noted as $d = 0.5$ and a large effect size is written as $d = 0.8$</i></p> <p><i>Effect sizes can also show the amount of nonoverlap between the scores of two groups. An effect size d of 0.0 indicates that the distribution of scores for one group overlaps completely with the distribution of scores for the control group. An effect size d of 0.8 indicates a nonoverlap of 47.4% in the two distributions. An effect size d of 1.7 indicates a nonoverlap of 75.4% in the two distributions.</i></p>

	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>In this project, power analysis suggests that the intended sample size of 176 participants is sufficient for a single-sample t-test yielding an effect size of 0.5 (medium as per Cohen's d) with a power of 0.95</i></p>
<p>Methodological issues:</p>	<p>Fisher, Landry and Naumer's people-place-information trichotomy (2006) involved surveying 729 college students at the University of Washington in 2004.</p> <p>This project will involve an online survey of graduate students who use flickr.com at the University of North Texas in 2011.</p>
<p>Scope and limitations:</p>	<p>Response rates are dependent on locating and contacting UNT students who are Flickr users.</p> <p>An online survey instrument will be used to collect data, making response error and bias difficult to control.</p> <p>Random selection and assignment have not been used, which may affect external validity.</p> <p>Respondents may not accurately recall and report their experiences.</p> <p>The research design of this study does not completely control for the effects of other variables. This may limit conclusions regarding causation.</p>
<p>Terms and definitions:</p>	<p>Information ground [IG] "environment temporarily created when people come together for a singular purpose but from whose behavior emerges a social atmosphere that fosters the spontaneous and serendipitous sharing of information." (Pettigrew, 1999).</p> <p>Legal definitions of "place" relate to online environments and describe legislative cases in which "place" was the determining factor on whether certain types of speech were legal or illegal. (Zick 2006)</p> <p>Virtual communities are made up of the everyday reality of people sharing a similar cultural space, characterized by common or routine events, including normative behaviors: "that which is viewed by the inhabitants of a social world as most appropriate within a particular public context or situation." (Chatman 1996)</p> <p>User-generated content (UGC) describes information produced by the members of a community, provided as a central product of that community, publicly and prominently available, replacing highly edited, professionally packaged, "one-way" information traditionally delivered from authoritative sources. (Wunsch-Vincent, 2007.)</p> <p>Space as a purely formal essence is an aspect of an experience which can be described mathematically, mapped out on the basis of absolute space. (Casey 1996)</p>

	<p>Lived space, encompassing the tangible, ever-present, and constant world of real machines, phone lines, and assorted hardware connecting the Internet as a physical mechanism . (Weinberger 2003).</p> <p>Measured space, the invented, timed, and artificially mapped vocabulary system created to discuss “places” on the World Wide Web (Weinberger 2003).</p>
Expected results:	<p>Based on observation, the expected results should show that the characteristics of a physical information ground which appear to transfer directly into the online environment will include a preference for simultaneous events as a focal point of activities.</p> <p>If all visual culture is socially constructed and depends on an organized human system for transfer, then various types of social environments may alter the ways people discover and share such information. Surrounding environments (whether physical or virtual) can affect a social setting in complex and subtle ways. How creative work is accomplished and how information is exchanged among creative community members may be influenced by context, sense making and group processes as studied in other areas of traditional information seeking and sharing.</p> <p>The defining qualities of an information ground environment would seem to influence the formal and informal information sharing which occurs in many directions, in alternative ways, and within many subcontexts.</p>
Completion schedule:	<p>Obtain instrument from Fisher – Fall 2011</p> <p>Create survey – Fall 2011</p> <p>Collect data – Spring 2012</p> <p>Analyze data – Spring 2012</p> <p>Write report – Fall 2012</p>