

01. Introduction

Purpose:

To examine and describe the information-seeking behavior of creative writers during their creative research, with particular emphasis on writers' engagement with visual studies materials.

Context:

Visual literary genres, image-centered writing practices, and intertwined art-literary movements demonstrate that creative writers repeatedly engage with visual studies information and integrate this information into their writing processes and products. Further, visual artist information-seeking behavior overlaps greatly with the experiential, sensorial, and targeted inspiration seeking needs of writers as recounted in creative writing craft texts (Cobbledick, 1996; Hemmig, 2008). However, creative writer information needs and behavior are often folded into those of humanities scholars despite existing psychology research indicating limited overlap in the fields' research practices (Webb & Brien, 2010). There are currently fewer than 20 studies on creative writer information behavior, and thus little information science research to offer alternative models.

Study Importance for Art Librarians:

- Contextualizes information-seeking behavior of visual artists, in comparison to those of creative writers; expands understanding of creative information seeking
- Examines visual studies material audiences, access, and discoverability; role of the art librarian; and opportunities for art library outreach.

02. Methods



- Phenomenological, semi-structured interviews with 6 purposefully sampled creative writers about their creative research processes.
- Follows methods for studying creative information-seeking behavior as established by Cobbledick (1996) with visual artists.



- Participants were asked about both their creative research generally and targeted questions about engagement with visual studies materials.



- Interview transcripts were analyzed by hand using qualitative, open coding through ATLAS.ti.

03. Results

Summary of Findings:

The writers pursued information-seeking behaviors on a spectrum of factual-experiential inquiry (Figure A), adjusting their approaches to information-seeking based on the type of information they were aiming to gather from their resources (Figures A, B). Engagement with visual studies materials occurred most frequently during inspiration seeking and in their activities and life information-seeking. 5/6 of the writers reported difficulty accessing visual studies materials. Barriers included feeling untrained in visual studies, not knowing how to search for visual resources, not being able to find relevant materials, and feeling shut out from "high art." The writers viewed creative research as a highly socially connected activity and were more likely to engage with materials, both literary and visual studies, if they had a social connection to the creator.

Figure A: Information-Seeking Behaviors by Creative Writers during Research

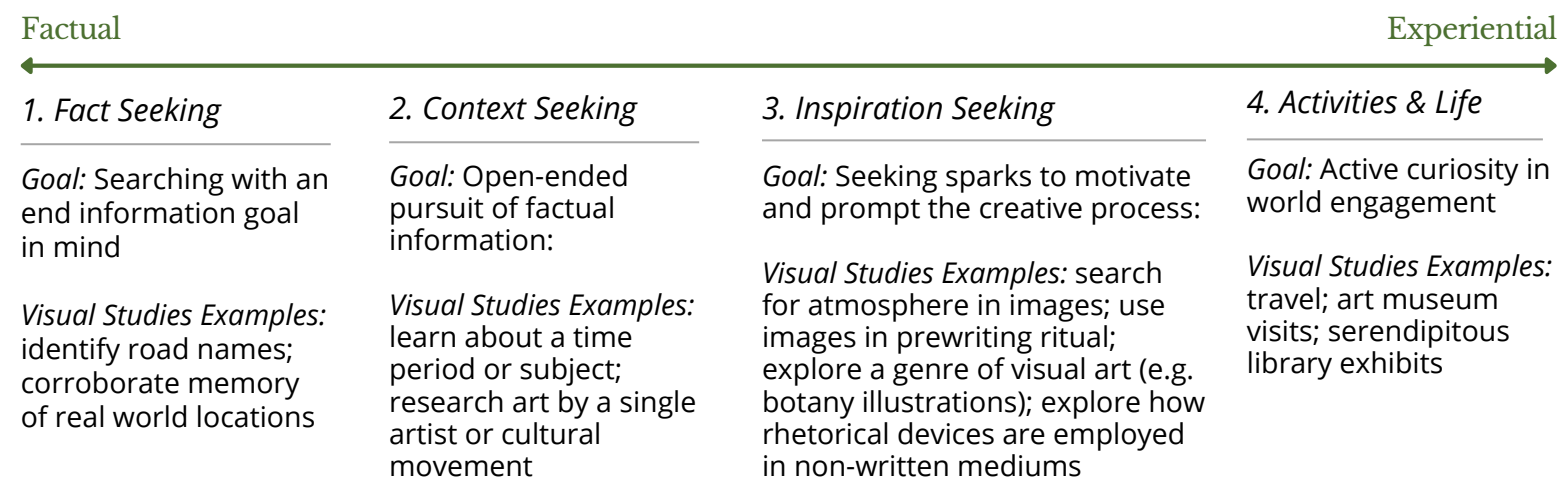
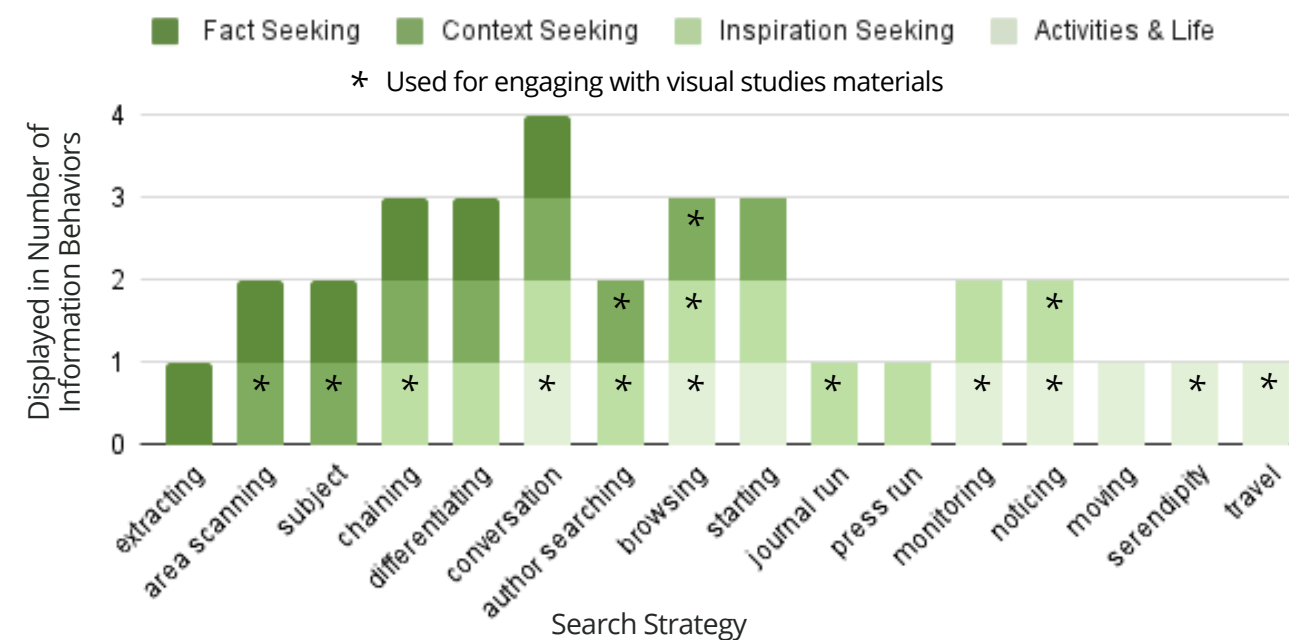


Figure B: Search Strategies by Creative Writers during Creative Research



04. Conclusions

Key Overlaps between Visual Artists' and Creative Writers' Information-Seeking Behaviors:

- Intentional, sophisticated information seekers
- Information-seeking as a creative process in and of itself
- Experiential forms of inquiry
- Heavy use of print monographs
- Regular use of memories as information source
- Important role of social relationships and social information gathering for creative research
- Frequently explore informational materials without a specific plan for how findings will translate into the final product

Art Librarian Implications:

Further research is needed on how a factual-experiential inquiry model translates across creative mediums. Still, the spectrum offers important footholds for understanding creative information seekers across mediums. Librarians can support inspiration seeking through instruction sessions, sharing unique and intellectually stimulating texts and visual materials. Librarians can support experiential inquiry and serendipitous discovery through collection displays and exhibits. Additionally, across the present interviews, the writers expressed feelings of incompetency surrounding visual studies materials and visual resources. If this concern and sense of exclusion is common within the writing community, then writers could be greatly supported by visual literacy instruction sessions. As writers are particularly drawn to materials linked to the literary community, libraries might consider sharing a curation of visual studies materials with literary connections.

Works Cited

- Cobbledick, S. (1996). The Information-Seeking Behavior of Artists: Exploratory Interviews. *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, 66, 343-372.
- Hemmig, W. S. (2008). The information-seeking behavior of visual artists: a literature review. *Journal of Documentation*, 64(3), 343-362. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00220410810867579>
- Webb, J., & Brien, D. L. (2010). Addressing the "Ancient Quarrel": Creative Writing as Research. In *The Routledge companion to research in the arts* (1st ed, pp. 141-151). Routledge.