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The information-related behaviour of emerging artists and designers: inspiration and guidance for new practitioners

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Abstract

Purpose

Reports an empirical study of the information-related behaviour of emerging artists and designers. It adds to understanding of the information behaviour of the group both as practicing artists (an ill-understood category of information users), and also as 'new practitioners'.

Design / methodology / approach

A literature analysis is used to guide creation on an online questionnaire, eliciting both qualitative and quantitative data. 78 practicing artists participated.

Findings

The group have generally the same information practices as more established artists. They place reliance on internet and social networks, while also using traditional printed tools and libraries. Browsing is important, but not a predominant means of accessing information. Inspiration is found from a very diverse and idiosyncratic set of sources, often by serendipitous means. Their status as emergent practitioners means that their information behaviour is governed by cost factors, and by a need for career advice.

Research limitations

The study group are a convenience sample, with access to Internet.

Practical implications

The results will provide guidance to academic and public librarians serving artist users, and to those providing career advice to them. It will also be valuable to those providing services to 'new practitioners' in any field.

Originality / value

This is one of very few papers reporting empirical studies of the information behaviour of artists, and has the largest sample size of any such study. It is one of a very few papers considering the information needs and behaviour of new practitioners.

Type of paper

Research paper

Keywords

information behaviour; artists; designers; browsing; serendipity; information encountering; internet; library use; social networking; communities of practice; new practitioners

Introduction

This paper reports a study of the information-related behaviour of 'emerging artists'. This group of 'new practitioners' comprises those who have recently completed formal education in art or design, are no longer in formal education or a formal career structure, and are engaged in building up their own practice of the arts. The paper derives from an MA thesis (Mason 2009), which provides fuller details.

This is an interesting group to investigate on two counts; because they are artists, and because they are new practitioners.

Studies of the information practices of artists show them to an unusual and not well understood group, with a peculiarly wide and personal range of information needs, a requirement for a very diverse set of resources, and a unique need for information for 'inspiration', as well as for more conventional technical, practical and marketing information.

The information-related behaviour of 'emerging practitioners' or 'new professionals' has been rarely examined explicitly. It may be inferred from age factors in a professional group, for example, the observations of different reading behaviours of young academic faculty members (Tenopir, King, Spencer and Wu 2009). Or it may be seen in an examination of the behaviour of those with 'trainee' status in a particular professional or occupation, for example junior doctors (Urquhart, Massiter, Thomas, Sharp, and Smith 1999). These groups, however, are different are very different from emerging artists, who typically have no structure of supervision, mentoring or development, and no access to specialised library / information services. They are the epitome of the emerging independent practitioner.

This study therefore has two aims. The first is to add to understanding of the information-related behaviour of artists, where the literature presents an incomplete, and to an extent contradictory, picture. The second is to examine emerging artists, in particular, to assess how their behaviour compares to that of artists in general, and to consider them as archetypical 'new practitioners', in information terms.

The information-related behaviour of artists

Despite Cobbledick's (1996) much quoted point that there are more professional artists than there are lawyers in the USA, the information-related behaviour of artists has been little studied. Such studies as have been done are typically anecdotal in nature, rather then systematic surveys, and limited to small numbers of subjects. This has been variously attributed to the facts that artists are not a clear professional group, that they are difficult to identify and contact for purposes of research, and that they are not thought of as being significant 'consumers' of information, and information products (Andersen 1994, Stam 1995A, 1995B, Cowan 2004). Most of the studies which have been done have focused on students or teachers of art or art history, rather than on practising artists, and are therefore likely to show rather different purposes and behaviours. Studies which have focused wholly or partly on practitioners are those of Cowan (2004), van Zijl and Gericke (2002), Visick, Hendrickson and Bowman (2006), and Hemmig (2009); none have looked specifically at the emerging practitioner.

Furthermore, most examinations of artists' information behaviour, following the example of the early studies by Toyne (1975, 1977), have focused specifically on information access through library services, necessarily pointing up specific forms of resource and access. Cowan (2004) criticises several early studies on the grounds that they assume that all meaningful information seeking should happen in a library, and that artists typically do not use libraries properly.

There has also been an assumption, not entirely justified, that artists behave as 'typical humanities scholars', or evan as "the humanist's humanist" (Hemmig 2008)in their information behaviour, following the patterns identified by authors such as Budd (1989), Watson-Boone (1994) and Barrett (2005). While this may be so, at an extent at least, for art students and professors, it is unlikely to hold for practicing artists.

Nonetheless, despite these limitations, some insight has been gained into the issues involved in artists' information behaviour.

The only recent review of these studies is that due to Hemmig (2008). His analysis of the literature suggests that four purposes ('coherent but inconclusive') may be identified, for which artists seek information: inspiration; identification of 'specific visual elements'; information of materials and techniques; and marketing and career guidance.

'Inspiration' as a motivation for seeking information is arguably most strongly seen in the arts. Although access to information as an aid to creativity stimulation in diverse environments has been discussed (Bawden 1986, Ford 1999), it is in the case of artists that it is most naturally assumed to occur. This has been verified by several of the studies in this area (Toyne, 1977, Pacey, 1982, Layne, 1994, Stam, 1995A, Stam1995B, Cobbledick, 1996, Littrell 2001, Visick, Hendrickson and Bowman 2006, and Hemmig 2009). Sources of inspiration are very varied, and highly individual, in nature: Hemmig (2009), for example, found them to cover a wide range, going beyond what might be anticipated – works of art, images, natural forms, personal experience – to such things as 'dreams', 'food', and 'light and sunshine'.

The identification of 'specific visual elements' is a form of information seeking largely unique to the visual arts, and closely associated areas such as design, and perhaps advertising. It has, again, been identified in several studies (Pacey, 1982, Day & McDowell 1985, Phillips 1986, Layne 1994, Stam 1995A, Stam 1995B, Cobbledick 1996, Frank, 1999, Visick, Hendrickson and Bowman 2006, and Hemmig 2009). It primarily involves reproduced images in all formats, but extends to physical objects seen directly, and overlaps with the 'inspiration' category.

The same is true of information of materials and techniques – these being, as may be imagined, very varied in nature, and dependant on the kind of art or design being practiced. Personal experience and the advice of other people is commonly stated as the source for this kind of information, in addition to more formal published materials, suppliers' guides, etc. This purpose is identified in the studies of Toyne (1977), Dane (1987), Layne (1994), Stam (1995A, 1995B), Cobbledick (1996), Oddos (1998), Frank (1999), Visick, Hendrickson and Bowman (2006) and Hemmig (2009).

Marketing and career guidance information is likely to be particularly important for the emerging artists of particular interest here, although it may be required at any stage of a career. It is identified as an

explicit purpose for information seeking by Pacey (1982), Dane (1987), Stam (1995A, 1995B), Hemmig (2009) and Cobbledick (1996). Careers guidance from universities and colleges is often not very effective in guiding emerging artists (Aston 1999, Corner 2002). Hemmig (2009) found distinct differences with the younger age ranges, roughly corresponding to emerging artists, who, for example, rely particularly on contacts with buyers, rather than galleries, in delaing with this kind of information.

A fifth purpose - Information on current trends in the art world, a rather diverse category of need -, is identified by Pacey (1982), Day & McDowell (1985), Nilsen (1986), Cobbledick (1996), Challener (1999), Frank (1999). Hemmig (2008) argues that this is an unclear category, subsumed by the other four.

In terms of information behaviour, and practices, Hemmig identifies four general issues from the literature: a idiosyncratic pattern of needs; a need for 'non-art' information; a preference for browsing; and a preference for social networks as a source of information.

It has been a truism that the information needs of artists are extremely wideranging and unpredictable. This idiosyncracy and diversity of needs have been identified by the studies of Toyne (1977), Pacey (1982), Ferguson (1986), Stam (1995A), Stam (1995B), Cobbledick (1996), Hemmig (2009) and Oddos (1998). As Layne (1994) noted "Art information is both visual and textual, that is, it may be conveyed through images and through words, it may take the form of pictures, both still and moving, or of books, journals, and manuscripts. Art information includes representations of works of art and text about those works; it also encompasses, more broadly, any information that may be used in the creation of art works or in understanding or giving context to those works. Indeed, almost any information might at some time or another be considered "art information": for example, an artist may find inspiration in music or in scientific phenomena, while an art historian, trying to understand the context of a work of art, may draw on sources in history or literature." More simply, an artist responding to Hemmig's (2009) survey, commented "I hesitate to discount anything as an influence or source", while. In more expansive vein, Visick, Hendrickson and Bowman (2006) noted the comment that " Inspiration comes from Life: a glance at a figure standing by the road as I drive by, from a long relationship, from a passing comment in conversation, from social/political issues … working figures, aided by live models, my knowledge of anatomy, my experience of posture and gesture, colleagues' critiques…". Any library/information service seeking to match such a diversity of 'inspirational information' faces tough challenges.

This leads directly to the next issue, the extent to which artists require a great deal of information across a range of subject matter that has, in Hemmig's (2008) phrase, no epistemic relationship to art *per se*. This has been confirmed by Toyne (1975), Pacey (1982), Day & McDowell (1985), Trepanier (1986), Dane, 1987; Visick, Hendrickson and Bowman (2006), Hemmig (2009), Cobbledick (1996) and Oddos (1998). A typical finding is that of Dane (1987), who found artists to be interested in reading "poetry, philosophy, cultural history, fiction, religion social sciences and psychology" for inspiration.

The belief that artists, and students of art, prefer browsing – more specifically, undirected, serendipitous browsing – as a main way of finding information has been expressed by numerous authors, including Toyne (1977), Pacey (1982), Day & McDowell (1985), Ferguson (1986), Phillips (1986), Trepanier (1986), Stam (1995A, 1995B), Frank (1999), Hemming (2009) and Littrell (2001). In some cases, this belief is based on a survey of artists or students, in some on the observations of librarians, in some on a consideration of the very diverse and unpredictable information needs. However other studies have qualified this view: both Visick, Hendrickson and Bowman (2006) and Cobbledick (1996) found that most artists had a specific need in mind at the time they looked for information, and that browsing was carried out only within clearly defined areas.

A social and inter-personal information gathering has also been shown to be important, particularly for knowledge of materials and techniques, and for marketing and career guidance (Hemmig 2009, Toyne 1975, Nilsen 1986, Dane 1987, Cobbledick 1996; Oddos 1998, Visick, Hendrickson and Bowman 2006)). This has been expressed by various authors as involving 'gatekeepers', 'invisible colleges' and, most recently, 'communities of practice' (Hemmig 2008).

A fifth issue may also be identified: the kind of resources needed and used, and in particular the balance between printed and electronic sources, and the use, or non-use, of libraries. Most studies have identified a need by artists, and art students, for a range of formats and materials, including text, images and other multi-media forms, and a limitation in the value of traditional library services (Visick,

Hendrickson and Bowman 2006, Reed and Tanner 2001, Dane 1987, Frank 1999, Gregory 2007, Hemmig 2009, Bennett 2006, Oddos 1998, Ferguson 1986, Stam 1995B, Challener 1999, Strautz 1991, Van Zijl and Gericke 1998, Littrell 2001, Cobbledick 1996, Pacey 1982). Beyond this, there is little consensus as to the relative importance of different types of resource, or to the best way of providing them. Older assumptions that artists did not read books (at least in support of their art), and were interested only in images to the exclusion of text, have proved too simplistic. A recurring suggestion has been that artists would benefit from the breadth of content of public library, rather than the more limited offering of a traditional 'art library', while also having the support of a specialist art librarian (Oddos 1998, Ferguson 1986). Hemmig (2009) suggests that younger artists may make use of a wider range of types resources than their senior peers.

Relatively few studies of artists' information seeking behaviour have focused on use of electronic sources, and the Internet in particular. This is largely because, prior to the World Wide Web, little information of relevance to artists was available in digital form, and most of the studies pre-date wide use of the Web. However, several of the more recent studies show online / Internet resources to be "essential" (Van Zijl and Gericke 1998, Visick, Hendrickson and Bowman 2006). Hemmig (2009) found electronic sources to be more popular with younger artists.

The literature, as we see, shows a coherent, though far from conclusive, pattern of needs and behaviour for practising artists. There have been no studies of emerging artists as such; the indications, taking age as a surrogate identifier, is that they may use a wider range of type of resource, rely more on electronic sources, and have less access to marketing contacts. It may also be expected that they have more pressing needs for career guidance and information on developing both the technical and professional aspects of practice.

Survey of emerging artists

The general aim of the survey was to investigate the information-related behaviour of emerging artists and designers, and to assess how similar it is to the patterns found for artists generally.

Within this general aim, five specific points, derived from the literature analysis above, were investigated:

- Use of print resources

To what extent were these resources used, and how were they accessed?

- Use of internet

Extent and purpose of use, and means of access

- Boundaries of 'art information'

Scope of subjects and media of use, especially for 'inspiration'

- Information behaviour

Patterns of behaviour, as compared with artists in general; specifically, the role of browsing, role of social and personal contacts, and influence of availability of resources.

- Career development

Sources consulted, and value of guidance obtained from their academic institution

In order to define a coherent and feasible survey group for this study, emerging artists were defined as anyone who had graduated with a degree in art and design since 2000, from any form of higher education institution, were no longer undertaking formal education, and were continuing to create their own art works, though not necessarily making a living from their art. Although no restriction was placed on nationality residence, the practicalities of the survey meant that respondents mostly lived in the United Kingdom. This loosely defined population implied that no random or systematic sampling could be carried out, and the survey was based on a convenience sample of those who responded.

The survey method used was an online questionnaire, generating both quantitative and qualitative data. While this lacks the in-depth understanding to be gained from observation or interviewing, it had the advantage of reaching a much wider population; potentially overcoming the drawback of the very small numbers surveyed in previous studies of this nature.

The survey was created using the *SurveyGizmo* tool [http://www.surveygozmo.com], and was available online for six weeks in summer of 2009. It was publicised by a variety of means, including:
- mention in the *Russell Herron* arts newsletter
- listing in *ArtsHub* UK arts professionals site
- listing in the news pages of London University's Creative Careers alumni site
- setting up a Facebook group for the survey
- direct mailing of details to a personal network of artists, with a request that they be passed on

The limitation of this approach, apart from its purely convenience sample nature, was that it would attract only those who used the Internet, or were closely connected to some who did; the latter is not a serious drawback given the nature of the target survey group.

A total of 109 people completed the survey. 31 were eliminated as not falling within the scope of the survey, as they were still in formal education, not a practising artist, or no longer 'emerging'. The results stem from the analysis of the remaining 78 responses. This is the largest sample of artists whose information behaviour has been studied.

The questionnaire contained 27 questions, in six sections:
- respondent profile (8 questions)
- information resources (8 questions)
- use of internet (5 questions)
- sources of inspiration (1 question)

- other information behaviour (4 questions)
- career development (1 question)

Full details of the survey, and results, are given by Mason (2009).

Results and analysis

Respondent profile

90% of the sample had either undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications in art or design, the remainder having Diploma or similar qualifications. In general, there was little difference in responses according to education level.

Their graduation years were mainly (59/78) between 2004 and 2008; they fall clearly into the 'Net Generation', usually presumed to prefer electronic media. They are also a group who may be expected to have had formal 'information skills' training.They had studied at 40 different institutions. Only one had studied in Continental Europe, the remainder in the United Kingdom, nearly half in London. 53 of the 78 respondents were living in the London area, 16 elsewhere in England, 6 in Scotland, and 3 in Continental Europe. A majority earned les than 10% of their total income from art; of the 12 who earned more than 75% of their income in this way, 10 identified themselves as designers. The stereotype of the impecunious artist is, to this extent, upheld.

Most of the respondents regarded themselves as artist rather than designers; as an illustration of their breadth of interests, a full list of their media of practice is shown in Table 1.

Fine Art (mixed media)	12
Painting/Drawing	12
Sculpture	8
Video/Film	4
Performance	7
Fashion/Textiles	9
Printmaking	2
Photography	1
Animation	3
Digital Media	2
Installation	3
Illustration	6
Graphic Design	2
Industrial Design	1
Theatre Design	3
Other	2

Table 1
Current medium practiced

Over a quarter of the respondents (21/78) were working in a different medium from that which they had studied. The main reason for change was a general progression of ideas, and a desire to develop as an artist. This, in itself, suggests one very clear for information and advice, distinct from what they had gained in their training.

Use of print resources

65 of the respondents had used a library since graduation; those with postgraduate qualifications were more likely to use libraries, particularly university libraries, than others. Public libraries were being the most popular destination (45/78). University libraries were the second most popular, with a total of 36 respondents using them in the capacity of either staff/student or alumni. 16 respondents had used the British Library and 9 had used the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Among the 'other' responses were the Barbican library - a public library with a specialised art library within it - and various archives, galleries, creative organisations and mediatheques. 3 respondents also included bookshops in this category, suggesting they used them for browsing in the way that they might have used the library when they were studying.

When asked how they searched for items in a library, by far the most popular method was to search the library catalogue (43/78). 15 favoured the broadest approach to browsing – to browse the whole library itself, before settling on a specific section and browsing its shelves. A further 9 respondents preferred to identify the area they wanted using a library map or guide, and then browse the shelves within that area. 10 respondents chose to ask library staff for assistance. This finding gives support to those studies which refute the idea that artists rely on browsing, though it is clearly a significant way of accessing library materials.

All of the respondents said that they read books to find information related to their artistic practice. 75 read for inspiration, 67 to find specific images or visual references, 60 read books on the lives or work of other artists, and 50 consulted books on creative techniques and materials. It was less popular among the respondents to use books for information on funding and grants, with only 25 using them for this reason.

When asked about how they would go about finding a book that someone had recommended to them, 19/78 said they would try and find it in the library. This was followed closely by buying a copy, 18/78, and reading the book in a bookshop without buying it, 17/78. 13 respondents would try to borrow a copy from a friend and 11 said they would try and find similar material online for free. Impecunious artistic behaviour indeed. Although the survey did not ask specifically about personal book collections, it was clear from the responses that virtually all respondents had them, in support of the earlier findings of Stam (1995B) and Visick, Hendrickson and Bowman (2006).

All but one read art journals or magazines. The most popular reason was to keep up with news of the art world (67/77), while 62 read magazines to find inspiration, and 60 to read about the lives or work of other artists; in line with the findings of earlier studies, particularly Challener (1999) and Frank (1999). 44 consulted magazines to find out about jobs or internship opportunities, and 39 for exhibition tenders and details of prizes. When asked where they read journals or magazines, roughly similar numbers – about half the respondents in each case, bought a copy, read it online, read a friend's copy, or read it in a bookshop without purchase. Smaller numbers took out subscriptions, or read journals in a library; only 35% of respondents had magazine subscriptions, compared, for example, with 80& in Challener's (1999) study of arts faculty; cost is certainly the issue here. There was no clear change since the respondents left formal education: some read journals and magazines more, some less. Access and cost were the main reasons for less use. A main reason for increased use was to substitute for the access to resources and advice available at university or college.

These results clearly show the continuing importance of these 'traditional' kinds of resources for this group. They also underline the importance of cost and access in determining behaviour, and the way in which some resources are used to substitute for others no longer readily available.

Use of Internet

The Internet was used by all of the respondents for all purposes; typically the first resort or in conjunction with other sources, as can be seen from Table 2.

	Only place I look	First place I look	Use it along with other sources	Might use it occasionally	Might consult it as a last resort	Never consult it
Inspiration/ ideas		25	42	7	2	1
Information about techniques / materials	3	33	30	10	1	1
Specific images	1	51	22	3	1	
Careers / funding / grants etc	10	51	7	4	1	5
Events / exhibitions etc	6	37	32	2		1

Table 2
Use of Internet

The only purpose for which it was never the only resource used was for inspiration, and it was used a the first resort less than any other purpose. Conversely, it was the main resource for more specific information on careers (with 55 websites being named as sources here), and on events, as well as a source of specific images.

80% of the participants (63/78) used the internet for social networking purposes, including use of sites such as Facebook, blogs and forums.

57 participants used the Internet more than when they were in formal education, and only one used it less. The main reason was that they now had more convenient access, but some stated that there was more relevant content. Typical comments here were:

> "Internet has become much more dominant toll for networking and disseminating information about shows, etc. 5 years ago it was important but now it is integral – mail outs for private views etc.. Facebook is good for this"

> "The world has changed in the past six years. I also need a lot of current technical information for my work, so the internet is a great source for me"

It seems clear that for this group of emerging practitioners, the internet is gaining in importance as their careers develop. This is certainly partly due to an increase in the amount of useful web content, and hence similar results might be found with current students. However, some of the responses suggest that the value has increased as a result of the particular 'emerging practitioner' context.

Inspiration and boundaries of 'art information'

This part of the survey sought to identify the sources of inspiration for this group of artists, and to investigate the limits of information relevant to artists. Nearly 300 sources of inspiration, general and specific, were named, and are listed in Table 3, categorised as 'books and writers', 'films / TV', 'magazines', 'places', 'people', 'objects', 'music', 'artists', 'natural world', 'social world / movements', and 'abstract'.

Books and Writers
Artists monographs
Poetry
Phaidon art books
John Berger
Franz Kafka
John Steinbeck
Anatomy books
True crime
Art exhibition catalogues
Fiction/international fiction
Books on nature
History books
Philosophy
Psychology/psychoanalysis
Art history
Science
Books on specialist materials/techniques/manufacturing
Feminist writers
Biographies
"What Painting Is"
Jorge Luis Borges
Andrew Crumey
Social myths/storytelling
Italo Calvino
Economics
Semiotics
Sociology
Children's books
Nursery rhymes
Fairy tales
Belvedere (copyright-free) books
1970s craft books
Daniel Defoe
Iain Sinclair
Proust
Ovid
Tolstoy
George Eliot
Genet
Marguerite Duras
Rabih Alameddine
Xiaolu Guo
Surrealist poetry
Beat writing/poetry

Hannah Arendt
Mathieu Ricard
Sadie Plant
Julia Kristeva

Films/TV
Film noir
World cinema
Sci-fi/fantasy
Clips/online tutorials on youtube
Silent witness
Thrillers
Alfred Hitchcock
B-movies
1980s horror movies
Early romance and black comedies
Adventure films
Sitcoms
Manga/ Studio Ghibli
Werner Herzog
Film titles
David Lynch
Lars Von Trier
Jean Luc Goddard
Documentaries
Tim Burton
Pan's Labyrinth
Sylvain Chomet
Errol Morris
British folk films from the 1960s/1970s
Animation
Contemporary European cinema
French cinema
Silent/b&w films
New wave
Sergei Paradjanov
Ozu
Krzysztof Kieslowski
Satyajit Ray
Catherine Breillat
Curb your Enthusiasm
Seinfeld

Magazines
Vintage Vogue illustrations
Fashion magazines
Newspapers – stories / images / obituaries
Frieze – articles
Art World – emerging artists section
Science journals
1970s/1980s magazines
Believer magazine
Paper thin walls
Plan B

Environmental science articles
Popular (non-art) magazines
Eye
Comics
Blogs
Vogue
Elle
National Geographic
Design magazines

Places
Libraries
Bookshops
Exhibitions
Galleries
Serpentine gallery
Whitechapel gallery
Design Museum
Local history archives/websites
Museums
Natural history museum
Horniman museum
Body worlds exhibition
Tate gallery
Hayward gallery
Welcome Trust image library
V & A
John Soames museum
Portobello rd
Theatre
My studio
UCL library
Hardware stores
Shop windows
Selfridges
British Library
City of London

People
Talking to friends
Evening courses
Poetry readings
How to relate to others, the effort to connect
Conversation
Talking to other artists
Interaction with other people – discussing, debating, advancing ideas
Watching performances
People on the street/ street style
Human behaviour
Crime/serial killers/police
Real-life stories read online
Lectures/talks
Friends' personal style
Women

Meeting people who don't share my interests
Events/being part of a community
Activism
Working with young people
Other peoples opinions
Sudden/unexpected deaths of friends
Watching strangers
Political/social events

Objects

Old photographs
Folk costume
Antique quilts
Own photos that inspire paintings
Posters
Packaging
Architectural drawings
Nature photography
Book jackets
Jewellery
Ancient artefacts
Handcrafted furniture
Commonplace found items
Vintage clothing
Discarded things
Product labels
Street signs in foreign languages
Customized, personalized cars
Antiques
Bits of rubbish/junk
1970s handcrafts
Fabric patterns
Mobile phone photographs

Music

Improvisational music
Bjork
Music in general
Alternative/Indie
Contemporary classical
Post-rock
Alt-country
Alt music forums
Album covers
Electronica
New, emerging bands
Gigs, live music
Gwen Stefani/Amy Winehouse/Lily Allen/Katy Perry – style
Punk/electronic metal
Music videos
The silent beats in music
Lyrics
Nina Simone
Benjamin Britten

Damon Albarn
Bizet
Love
Pop
Reggae
Latin
Jazz
Percussion
Hip hop
Artists
Christian Marclay
Banksy
Franz West
Mike Kelley
Fischli and Weiss
Robert Brownjohn
Saul Bass
Frank Auerbach
Marlene Dumas
Diane Arbus
Feminist artists
Paul Noble
Liza Lou
Mike Nelson
The Situationists
Arte Povera
Pina Bausch
Koichi Tamono
Etienne Decroux
Robert Wilson
Coco Fusco
Laurie Anderson
Louise Bourgeois
Paula Rego
Matisse
Vuillard
Van Gogh
Natural World
the sea
natural forms/textures
colours and shapes in nature
natural history
human anatomy
open spaces
colour of the sky
walks in forests
Social world / movements
Architecture/urban environment
Art Deco
Pop art
Graphic design
Current trends

Fashion/catwalk shows
Interiors
The Internet
Sculpture
Contemporary avant-garde fashion design
Mark-making/drawing
Advertising/commercial media
Gothic/Victorianesque
The layout/curation of exhibitions
Furniture design
Illustration
Religious architecture (but not religion)
Technology
Portraiture
Abstract
Things I see around me
Daily life/events
Responding to sites, being on a residency, the natural world and the mystery of others
Boredom
Human interaction with nature and animals
General zeitgeist
Thinking
Walking around
Personal experiences
Walking in wild places
Things that frustrate/upset me
Use of beautiful typefaces
Everything!
The experience of being in a space
International travel
Notions of identity
Sense of place
Sleep
Bike rides
The work that has come before!
Dreams
The idea of multiple realities
Memories
Imagination
Seeing things that are incongruous or out of place
Mythical beliefs
Breaking the rules
The nature of misinterpretation
Themes of temporality and internationality
How geography alters perception in culture and politics
Autism
Neuro-diversity
Drinking coffee
Taking a bath

Table 3
Sources of Inspiration

This list fully justifies the view of artists as responding an almost unlimited range of inspirations, both abstract and concrete; some are truly the "obscure sources" noted by Ferguson (1986). They extend far beyond the remit of any possible library or information service to satisfy. There are essentially no boundaries to what can count as 'art information'; as witness one respondent's listing of 'everything' as an inspiration.

Some themes arose from the results: illustrators and fashion/textile designers were most likely to cite current trends and practitioners in their field as a source of inspiration, and were also influenced by other periods in fashion and older styles of illustration. Nature, anatomy and natural history were all sources of inspiration for painters, sculptors and those working in mixed media. These artists were also the most likely to cite specific or general imagery as inspiring. Performance and installation artists appeared to be more engaged with the theoretical side of their work and cited critical theory, current art writing and research as sources of inspiration. A common theme across all of the disciplines was the importance of human interaction, conversation and contemplation as a stimulant to their creative work.

Other information behaviour
Some aspects of information behaviour were investigated in earlier sections of the survey. This section
dealt with remaining aspects.

As background for understanding information, respondents were asked about information skills training
provided as part of their education. The great majority (60/78) had received instruction on use of a
library, and 45 on e-journal use; evidence that the advocacy authors such as Challener (1999) and
Bennett (2006) for more teaching of teaching of bibliographic skills to art students has been heeded.
However, only 23 recalled instruction on image searching and similar 'sophisticated' information access.
50 had some instruction or advice on career development, but in a rather piecemeal fashion; less than
one third of the respondents admitted to having any specific form of career development advice, e.g.
preparation of a CV or applying for funding. Only 15 had had specific advice on marketing themselves as
an artist. It seems that information skills, beyond basic library use, have to be largely developed by this
group independently. The same applies to finding information for career development.

When asked about personal and social information networks, only 2 respondents were not part of such
a network. These networks were replied on for a variety of purposes, as is evident from Table 4.

	Very Likely – only talk to them about this	Quite Likely – talk to them first	Likely - talk to them and use other sources	Unlikely - might consult them now and again	Very unlikely – might consult them as a last resort	Never - never consult them
Inspiration/ ideas	14	13	32	11	1	5
Technical advice	11	36	22	6	1	
Specific images	6	13	23	22	8	3
Information about careers etc.	10	22	31	11		2
Information about events / exhibitions	15	24	34	3		

Table 4
Personal information networks

Career development

A large majority of the respondents felt that, whatever the other merits of their education, it had done little to prepare them for practice as an artist, and that consequently they had had little idea of the opportunities available to them on graduation. A wide variety of ideas as to what they would have liked included in their training were given, none supported by more than 17 of the respondents. Among the more popular were advice on: self-employment, and the financial and tax implications of artistic practice; the practicalities of managing life and work in this situation; detailed specific instruction on necessary skills, e.g. print-making, and use of design software; marketing; and the writing of proposals and funding applications.

It seems fair to say, as some respondents, acknowledged, that these are unrealistic aspirations. Emerging artists must master these aspects for themselves, as their career develops; hence the need for the diverse forms of information seen above. Stam's (1995) remark that learning about "the business of art" is one of the most practically information needs of the artist seems still to be justified.

Conclusions

The results show that this group of emerging artists are, in information terms, quite similar to artists as a whole, and generally confirm to Hemming's (2008) model of artistic information behaviour.

They are seen to enthusiastic users of traditional books, magazines and journals, and of libraries. The latter finding refutes earlier suggestions that libraries were of no value to artists. Some respondents even choose to ask the advice of library staff, something that previous studies have suggested artists are very reluctant to do (Frank, 1999).

Equally, however, the Internet is integral to their information access and communication, and is, more often then not, the first resource consulted.

This study confirms that almost literally anything can be considered art information inspiration being found in the most idiosyncratic and unlikely of places and forms.

Browsing was not the most popular library search method. In fact, the respondents appear to be much more library-literate than previous research has given them credit for. The results of this study continue in the trend of disproving earlier assumptions about artists' use of libraries. The respondents are comfortable with, and had been educated in, use of bibliographic technologies. Stam (1995B) described artists as being unable to express their needs but, in both their quantitative and qualitative answers, the respondents have shown themselves to be highly articulate.

However, although browsing is seen here to be not the primary means of accessing formal information sources, its importance for this group, in a more general sense, should not be underestimated. Whereas studies of art students have shown that they like to browse art libraries for inspiration (Pacey, 1982; Frank, 1999; Littrell, 2001), it might now be possible to describe emerging artists as browsing in a more abstract way: not actively searching for inspiration in the world around them but being inspired all the same by odd occurrences, daily life or things they find lying around. This is very much the concept of 'encountering', pioneered by Erdelez (2005), and surprisingly not specifically invoked previously for the artist's context, despite previous studies noting the prevalence of accidental discovery (Ferguson 1986).

Emerging artists tend to strongly prefer methods of acquiring information for free. Indeed, the information behaviour of emerging artists can be seen as being governed to a significant extent by cost implications. This results in innovative, if not totally ethical, heuristics, such as the use of bookshops as *de facto* libraries.

There is clearly an 'invisible college', or perhaps better to say a set of communities of practice, in evidence, acting as an important resource for these emerging artists. Earlier studies have suggested this for artists and arts faculty (Cobbledick, 1996; Van Zijl and Gericke, 1998; Challener, 1999), as well as arts administrators (Zach 2005). These results, together with those of Hemmig (2009) show it clearly.

Considering this group as *emerging* artists, and examples of new practitioners, the general conclusion, as noted above, is that their behaviour is largely the same as that of the broader professional group, artists in this case. Where the behaviour differs, the differences can be ascribed to two considerations.

The first is the need to establish a presence as an artist, based upon an academic education which many respondents felt to have left them relatively unprepared for the world of practice. This leads to the need for advice on the career and marketing aspects, which is to a large degree filled by personal interactions. The second is the economic; many of the respondents were short of money and resources, and had to adapt their information behaviour accordingly. The result is that that the most important resources for emerging artists are the Internet and the invisible college / community of practice. The two combine the most prominent traits of their information behaviour: finding information cheaply, or for free, and having a forum for discussion, debate and advice seeking.

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