iConference 2018

Sessions for Interaction and Engagement

Title: Dériving data: Wandering as a research method for Information Behaviour research

Organizers and Key Participants:

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Abstract

The dérive or drift is a technique of urban encounter developed in Pscyhogeography. It is a playful wander through the city that seeks to uncover the interesting and strange in the everyday environment around us. This SIE invites participants to share in the joy of the dérive and to join the organizers in evaluating it as a method for information behaviour research particularly to explore everyday information seeking, the influence on it of space and place, and recognising multimodality, multi- and inter- sensoriality. It is also an opportunity for delegates to encounter Sheffield as a city in an interesting way.

Description

Purpose and intended audience

In the social sciences there is increasing interest in exploring more generative, open ended and creative research methods, e.g. visual and arts-based methods. These have already had some influence in information behaviour research (e.g. Hartel, 2014), but typically the field remains rather conservative in its data collection methods (and theoretical influences).

In the exploration of the daily experience of the urban environment other disciplines have explored new kinds of methods e.g. sensory and walking methods. One rather interesting technique has developed in the field of Pscychogeography: the dérive (Coverley 2012; Richardson, 2015). This is a playful, rather unstructured exploration of over-looked parts of the urban environment animated by an imaginative and creative spirit and drawing eclectically on historical, local and esoteric knowledge. Originating in the leftist Situationist movement in Paris, it has since been used fruitfully in literature, geography, architecture and many other fields.

Such techniques are of potential relevance to our subject given information behaviour's increasing concern with everyday life information seeking (Savolainen, 1995), the decentring of formal information use and interest in multimodality, and in the context of such other theories such as information grounds (Fisher and Naumer, 2005), information tactics (Lingel, 2015), corporeal information (Lloyd, 2010) and other theories of embodied information (e.g. Lueg, 2014; Cox, Griffin and Hartel, 2017).

For the last year, the City senses project team has been exploring the dérive as a mean to get at daily experiences of information in the complex relation between the University of Sheffield and the city in which it is embedded. These explorations have thrown up some emerging insights into aspects of information infrastructures, the role of internal states in shaping how information is perceived, the changing diurnal meaning of information signals and the role and relation of the different senses as sources of information.

The workshop will share some of these findings; but as a method in development will also prompt participants to explore the approach further; and discuss the potential of the dérive in their own information behaviour research.

Proposed activities including agenda, ramp-up (development), and follow-through:
The session will be run in three parts.

The first part will introduce the philosophy of Psychogeography and suggest some links to theories of information to set participants thinking.

In the second part the project team will invite participants to come with us on a guided tour of a few of our most interesting observations about places close to the conference venue. Participants will then have a little time to explore further, independently, capturing their wandering in the spirit of the dérive, be that through photos, sound recordings, notes or other material and where possible tagging it with the session hashtag.

In the third part of the session, having returned to the conference building, participants will discuss the potential of the dérive within information behaviour research.

Follow through
We will ask participants to post material gathered online, be that on Twitter, through Facebook or another platform. Material will be gathered through storify. The character of the method encourages collaboration and we will encourage participants to exchange details. If there is sufficient interest further events could be organised, e.g. at future iconferences.

Relevance to the Conference/Significance to the Field:
The purpose of the session is to explore the potential of the dérive as a new data collection method within information behaviour research. The new technique (probably combined in a mixed methods approach) has the potential to enrich our understanding of everyday information seeking and (urban) space . It also addresses the multimodal , multi-sensory, inter-sensorial nature of information.

As well as being of interest as a discussion of methodology the session will appeal to delegates as way to encounter the conference host city in a novel way.

Duration

90 minute workshop – ideally timetabled towards the end of the day.

Special requirements

We anticipate the event would be suitable for 20-30 participants.

References

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