

**Title:** Just Having Fun: What studying Fun in LIS can tell us about Engaging Communities

**Organizer(s):** Melissa G. Ocepek, University of Illinois; Gary Burnett, Florida State University; Alaine Martaus; University of Illinois; Pam McKenzie, University of Western Ontario; Yazdan Mansourian, Charles Sturt University

**Abstract:** The fun and enjoyable aspects of life have recently gained prominence as an exciting and worthwhile domain for research throughout library and information science. As this area of research has grown, so too have the questions about what “fun” means in a research context and how fun may be used to galvanize individuals into more meaningful information interactions. The goal of this session for interaction and engagement is to explore what recent research in the fun domain can teach practitioners, scholars, and students alike about how to engage people to more easily integrate information into their life and share with their communities.

**Description:**

*Purpose and Intended Audience:* This session is designed to appeal to practitioners, scholars, and especially students to see the benefits of library and information sciences (LIS) research into fun domains. The organizers will present examples from recent research on the more enjoyable parts of life and will consider how the context of fun may galvanize individuals into using and interacting with information. Previous research has shown that finding pleasure in the information pursuit of genealogy drove deep and meaningful engagement with this serious, often time complicated hobby (Fulton, 2007). The benefits of fun or otherwise enjoyable interactions with information and information systems has implications for improving information access and improving engagement. To this end, the organizers will deconstruct the concept of fun to

highlight its diversity and boundaries by addressing the conceptual understanding of fun for LIS by exploring its use in a variety of LIS disciplines and other fields.

*Proposed activities:* The session will be a mix of short research talks, large group activities, and discussions. We will begin with an introduction explaining the goals of the session and structure of the time. Then we will do three exercises, where audience members will use index cards to share two points and the organizers will collate and summarize the audience responses and discuss the themes in their own research. 1) things they do for fun and things that they do not enjoy; 2) research methods that they have used or want to use, and methods they consider playful; and 3) examples of times they enjoyed working with an information system and found it difficult or frustrating. The session will close with a discussion of how the themes identified in the session can be used as inspiration for future research, programs, and design. We will also play music throughout the session and provide prizes for asking and answering questions to encourage a fun and interactive atmosphere.

*Relevance to the Conference:* Recently, LIS has evolved into studying contexts and spaces far beyond the library walls. One exciting and growing area of research addresses fun life-contexts (Ocepek et al., 2018) and how information resources can highlight playfulness along with useful content (Bullard, 2013). As scholars enter these new domains, we must define the ground and borders around this new area to articulate not only what we mean by “fun” but when fun becomes something more like drudgery and loses the enjoyment that generates engaging information interactions. This session will explore the dimensions of research on fun throughout the LIS scholarly community and present different perspectives on how this term has been used and can be useful for researchers and practitioners alike.

This session is a part of a larger conversation taking place among many researchers in the fun domain with the goal of developing this area in LIS and encouraging others to consider the value of studying fun in their research. We believe gaining a deeper understanding of fun can help us build more engaging systems and programs to encourage more beneficial information interaction.

An interactive session at the iConference is an ideal place for this conversation because it has the opportunity to bring a diverse group of scholars, practitioners, and students together to consider how studying fun can improve LIS.

*Organizer Information:*

Melissa G. Ocepek is an Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois in the School of Information Sciences. Her primary research area is everyday information behavior, and much of her work addresses the intersection of food, information, and culture. One of her research studies explores how self-described food lovers are overwhelmed while grocery shopping.

Gary Burnett is a Professor at Florida State University in the School of Information. His research focuses on theory development related to information practices and an analysis of the role information plays in people's lives in a wide variety of contexts and situations. He will discuss the inextricably intertwined categories of "fun" and "work" in "Deadhead" communities, where the goal of maximizing fun through musical experiences is always melded with the often quite rigorous work of documenting all aspects of those experiences.

Yazdan Mansourian is a Lecturer in the School of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University (CSU) in Australia. His main research interests are human information behaviour (HIB), and information seeking and sharing in the context of serious leisure. In his current

research program, he explores the key role of experiencing joy and pleasure in engaging people with various hobbies, amateurism and volunteer activities and how it inspires the participants to passionately seek, share, use and produce information in these contexts. He is also interested in investigating various personal and social benefits of serious leisure for the participants and for the wider community.

Alaine Martaus is a post-doctoral research assistant in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her research focuses on the intersection of youth media, literacy development, and fan practices. She recently completed her dissertation *Modeling Participatory Literacy (In Your Pants)*, which analyzed the convergence of print and new media in an online fan community, the Nerdfighters, fans of the Vlogbrothers.

Pam McKenzie is a Professor in the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at The University of Western Ontario. Her study of how people “keep track” of things revealed two aspects of fun. First, participants used a number of strategies to create and manage information related to things they described as pleasurable. Second, participants used fun and playful ways to keep track; for example, creating or selecting calendars for their playful elements, using and curating physical objects with personal significance, and creating and individualizing their systems of personal information management.

### *Works Cited*

- Bullard, J. (2013). Playfully serious information for serious play: The integration of community values in an information resource. *iConference 2013 Proceedings*, 389-397.
- Fulton, C. (2009, May). The pleasure principle: The power of positive affect in information seeking. *Aslib Proceedings* 61(3), 245-261.
- Ocepek, M. G., Bullard, J., Hartel, J., Forcier, E., Polkinghorne, S., & Price, L. (2018). Fandom, food, and folksonomies: The methodological realities of studying fun life-

contexts. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 55(1), 712-715.

**Duration:** One 90-minute session.

**Special Requirements:** None.