All the World's a Stage: Making Sense of Shakespeare

Michael R. Olsson
Journalism, Information and Media Studies,
University of Technology, Sydney
PO Box 123 Broadway NSW 2007 Australia
Michael.Olsson@uts.edu.au

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the findings of a study examining how theatre professionals (actors, directors and others) make sense of the works of a culturally iconic author (William Shakespeare). The findings of the study are based on interviews with 35 theatre professionals in Canada, Finland and the UK. The study aims a more holistic approach to the study of information behaviour, one which acknowledges the complexity of sense-making as more than the problem-solving behaviour of individuals – as an embodied, social process, involving emotion as well as rationality. In doing so it draws on theoretical approaches from a range of different disciplines and traditions, including Dervin's Sense-Making, Foucault's discourse analysis and Derrida's deconstructionism.

Rather than active searching, the focus of most information research, the events that participants described as having the greatest influence on their understanding of Shakespeare were informal 'social' interactions. Participants in the study frequently explicitly linked their engagements with texts to their interactions with other people. Participants frequently described the significant influences on their constructions in terms of long-term relationships – with other people and with the written work of authors.

For theatre professionals, understanding Shakespeare involved much more than a cerebral process: their professional lives are based on the ability to *embody* their knowledge: they need to manifest their understanding in the physical world as physical actions in physical space.

The study demonstrates the need for information behaviour research to expand its focus beyond active information seeking and searching and to devote greater attention (both theoretical and empirical) to such factors as: informal knowledge-sharing; sense-making as an affective as well as a rational process; and embodiment as a central aspect of information use.

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on the findings of a study examining how theatre professionals (actors, directors and others) make sense of the works of a culturally iconic author (William Shakespeare). The research builds on the theoretical and methodological approaches developed during my doctoral research (Olsson, 2003). The study aims to address critique of prevailing approaches' excessive focus on active information seeking and searching (Julien 1999; Wilson 2000) by developing a more holistic approach, one which acknowledges the complexity of sense-making as more than the problem-solving behaviour of individuals – as an embodied social process, involving emotion as well as rationality.

In doing so, it draws not only on Dervin's Sense-Making but also on a number of concepts from the discourse analytic tradition. These include 'Death of the Author' (Foucault in Rabinow 1984; Barthes 1988) – the notion that meaning is not determined by authors but constructed through discourse – and the embodiment of knowledge (Coupland and Gwyn 2003) – the idea that people's engagement with information involves more than just cognitive processing. It therefore aims to further our understanding of a variety of phenomena relating to knowledge sharing practices, collective sense-making and the discursive construction of knowledge.

WHY SHAKESPEARE?

Shakespeare in performance was chosen as the focal author of the research for two key reasons. Firstly, despite Shakespeare's acknowledged role as an important figure in the cultural heritage of the English-speaking world, it is a context that has been almost entirely ignored by information researchers, Secondly, I believed that it would be a fruitful context in which to explore sense-making in a more holistic way than has generally been the case in information research – to begin to understand sense-making

not merely as logical problem-solving but as a complex, ongoing process.

Despite the acknowledged importance of theatre – and Shakespeare in particular - in the Western world, and despite being the object of research in a wide variety of other disciplines, there has been very little empirical research examining the information behaviour of theatre professionals, indeed of artistic communities in general. Much of what research there has been (e.g. Pilch 1987; Cobbledick 1996; Atkins 2001) has focused almost exclusively on their need for and/or use of formal information sources and services, such as libraries, databases etc. A notable exception to this is Davies (2007) which examined the role of a text (prompt book) as a temporal boundary object – "abstract or concrete objects which both inhabit several intersecting social worlds and satisfy the informational requirements of each of them" (Davies and McKenzie 2004). This study suggested that texts play a vital role in the negotiation and coordination of the disparate understandings and expertises of members of a theatre company. Examining this question would also play an important role in the present study.

Shakespeare is a major cultural icon. His work has been the object of centuries of literary and academic attention in fields as diverse as literary criticism, history, philosophy, cultural anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and psychology, as well as performance studies. During this time, Shakespeare and his work have been constructed in a myriad of different ways by a plethora of scholarly groups drawing on an vast array of different theoretical discourses – for example, semiotics, cultural materialism, feminism, Foucauldian discourse analysis, new historicism and Derridan deconstructionism are all employed by writers contributing to a single anthology on Shakespeare in performance (Bulman 1996). The history of theatrical productions of his work is equally rich and diverse, with major professional productions of Shakespeare in Australia in recent years, for example, drawing inspiration from sources and issues as diverse as Freudian psychology, Japanese kabuki and the indigenous land-rights debate (Golder and Madelaine 2001). Productions of Shakespeare are a lens through which audiences can see reflected society's constantly changing attitudes to love, war, family, jealousy, the supernatural, gender etc – what it means to be human.

As a consequence, examining how theatre professionals make sense of Shakespeare in order to turn centuries-old words into a living production for a contemporary audience, was the perfect site to study Barthes and Foucault's concept of 'death of the author' – the idea that meaning is not determined by authors but constructed by readers (and in this case, audiences). The study has sought to explore the interplay of how these diverse constructions – as well as the sometimes convergent, sometimes divergent interests of actors, directors, designers and technicians – interact in the cooperative environment of producing a theatrical production.

PREVAILING APPROACHES

The second major reason for undertaking the study was the opportunity it afforded to focus on aspects of information behaviour that have been largely neglected in prevailing approaches to research in the field. The historical antecedents of information behaviour research lie in library and information system evaluation (Wilson 2000) and it is therefore important, as Julien (1999) has pointed out, for us to consider the extent to which prevailing 'user-centred' approaches to information research and models of information seeking are based on an implicitly systems-centric perspective. If one of the cornerstones of Dervin and Nilan's (1986) analysis of traditional, systems-centred information research was a critique of its narrow, focus on systems use, then perhaps it is time for us to ask whether the user-centred paradigm has gone far enough.

Since the 1970s, with the work of Patrick Wilson (1977), a range of theoretical and empirical work (e.g. Erdelez, 1996; Williamson, 1998) has highlighted the importance of informal information behaviour, such as interactions with colleagues. Bates (2002) estimated that 80% of information is incidentally acquired or absorbed rather than purposefully sought, while T.D. Wilson (2000) has emphasised that active information seeking and searching makes up only a small percentage of people's information behaviour.

Despite this, as a range of critics (e.g. Julien, 1999; Talja, 1997;; T.D. Wilson, 2000) have pointed out, the overwhelming majority of research in the field continues to focus on active information seeking and searching, with the most commonly studied groups continuing to be certain 'elite' professional and academic groups, such as university students and researchers. As Julien points out:

> A sober analysis of our user-centredness reveals that what we continue to be particularly interested in is the user of information systems, with scant attention to the non-user of formal information systems. Thus user-centredness is essentially an approach not unlike systems-centredness (Julien, 1999, 207).

This tacit focus on systems rather than people has led to an essentially atomistic approach to constructing information behaviour. Major models of information seeking/behaviour (e.g. Ellis, 1993; Krikelas, 1983; T.D. Wilson, 1997) follow a common pattern: a recognised information need/gap/anomalous state of knowledge is seen as instigating active information seeking; this active seeking continues until the need is met/gap is filled or the seeker abandons the search. The parallels between such 'fairy-tale' models (like fairy tales, they have a clearly defined beginning, middle and an end) and a systems-centric world view are clear: they echo the pattern of many information

professionals' interactions with their clients, such as a reference interview or a database search i.e. beginning with defining a query, proceeding through purposive searching and concluding with the client supplied with 'information'. Yet the question we need to ask ourselves is: while such models might effectively represent the information professionals' view, are they equally effective at representing other people's sense-making processes? Are they compatible with the field's stated desire to develop a holistic understanding of people's relationship with information?

This implicit systems-focus has influenced the development of mainstream contemporary information behaviour research in a number of ways. These include: a theoretical and empirical focus on purposive information seeking and searching; a focus on information need as the primary instigator of information behaviour; the prevalence of an individually-focussed, problem-solving construction of information behaviour; and the pre-eminence of cognitivist theoretical and methodological approaches.

Wilson has pointed out that information search behaviour is only one aspect of information seeking behaviour, which is itself only one aspect of information behaviour. Yet, as he also noted, "Models of information behaviour... appear to be fewer than those devoted to information-seeking behaviour or information searching" (2000, 49). Such a narrow focus, calls into question the field's claims to have moved beyond systems evaluation to the development of so-called general models of information behaviour.

SENSE-MAKING, DISCOURSE AND EMBODIMENT
A key aim of the present study was therefore to develop a theoretical and methodological approach to information research which addressed critique of prevailing approaches as atomistic and implicitly systems-focussed. Also, while the influence of cognitivist approaches since the early eighties led to a discourse that constructs information behaviour primarily in terms of the mental processes of individual information seekers, or as Belkin describes them "information processing units" (1990), the present study aimed to develop a more holistic understanding of the relationship between people and information.

While Dervin's Sense-Making remains highly influential amongst information researchers, most citations continue to be to earlier work from the 1980s or early 1990s (Clark & Archer, 1999). This may be why Sense-Making tends to be constructed in our field as a theory relating to the information seeking of individuals and thus closely allied to other models of information seeking behaviour by Belkin, Kuhlthau, Ellis etc. (Wilson, 2000). Yet Dervin's more recent writings have increasingly distanced Sense-Making from such a construction, positing that sense-making is a more complex and less linear process:

> …embodied in materiality and soaring across time-space …a body-mind-heart-spirit living in time-space, moving from a past, in a present, to a future, anchored in material conditions; yet at the same time with an assumed capacity to sense-make abstractions, dreams, memories, plans, ambitions, fantasies, stories pretences that can both transcend time space and last beyond specific moments of time space. (Dervin, 1999)

It was this view of sense-making as a complex, embodied process that the present study would seek to explore.

Dervin's Sense-Making approach is grounded in the assumption that all sense-making is situated – inextricably linked to the social context in which the sense-making occurs. In this, as Talja (1997) has pointed out, there are clear parallels between Dervin's work and that of post-structuralist theorists such as Michel Foucault (1972; 1977; 1980; Rabinow 1984), and Jacques Derrida (1992; 1997). Foucault's theories on the discursive construction of power/knowledge have been used by a number of writers in an LIS context (e.g. Frohmann 1992; Talja 1997; Olsson 1999; 2005; 2009) to problematise and challenge some of the key assumptions that underpin existing approaches to information research and Foucault's approach to discourse analysis has been another major influence on my work, including this study.

Foucault argued that knowledge is not objective – to be measured in terms of its supposed correspondence to an external reality – but rather an intersubjective social construct, the product of the shared beliefs and interpretive practices (what Foucault called the discursive rules) shared by a particular community or communities at a particular point in space and time. "For Foucault, there is no external position of certainty, no universal understanding that is beyond history and society" (Rabinow 1984, 4). Derrida's deconstructionist approach is grounded in a parallel worldview. Derrida argues that since all meaning is contextual and based on difference, any philosophical or social theory that claims to uncover a 'fundamental' truth is inherently flawed. His deconstructionist approach is thus a "method for revealing the radical contextuality of all systems of thought" (Dickens and Fontana 1994).

Another key feature of Dervin's more recent writings on sense-making is that "Emoting …usually marginalized as a non-useful strategy for sense-making takes equal footing along with factizing" (Dervin, 1999, 732). This is in marked contrast to prevailing approaches to information seeking research where affective factors tend to be regarded as "at best only an annoying interference with effective application of cognitive skills to information retrieval but ..., at worst, are the primary barriers to information retrieval" (Julien, 1999, 586). While recent times have seen a growing interest in the role of emotion in information behaviour (e.g. Nahl and Bilal 2007), much of this research is individually focussed and essentialist in its construction of emotion – grounded in a scientific discourse which sees affect as fundamentally acultural. The present study adopts

a different approach, seeking to understand the social role of emotion. The study's theatrical context offered a unique opportunity here: in contrast to most Western professional and academic discourses, the theatre is a context where 'emotional truth' is recognised as an important and legitimate part of the creative process.

While cognitivist theories have led many researchers to construct information behaviour as an essentially mental process, Dervin emphasises that sense-making is an embodied process. This would also be a major focus of the present study, informed also Erving Goffman's (1959; 1983) work on the embodiment of knowledge, as well as an emerging literature examining embodiment among discourse analytic researchers (Coupland and Gwyn 2003).

Embodiment is not a concept that information researchers have given much attention, with the notable exception of the information literacy work of Annemaree Lloyd (2006, 2007). Her doctoral work, studying firefighters, which has many parallels with the present study, found that "[b]ecoming information literate ... requires experience with social and physical modalities as well as with textual information" (2007, 181). The study found that "[i]nformation from the corporeal modality is highly valued ... "you can't develop fire sense just by reading about it"" (2007, p. 188). The present study would also find that participants' sense-making combined social, physical and textual information practices.

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH – A NEW DISCOURSE?

The aim of the present study was therefore to develop an approach to information research which addressed critique of prevailing approaches to information behaviour research. In doing so, it draws on a range of different theoretical and methodological approaches drawn from a range of disciplines.

Savolainen (2007) has outlined the emergence of a new "umbrella discourse" in information studies – 'information practice' – which has emerged in the first decade of the twenty-first century as a critical alternative to the 'information behavior' discourse which characterises prevailing approaches. Savolainen follows Talja in suggesting that the key characteristic of this new discourse is that it represents "a more sociologically and contextually oriented line of research" which:

...shifts the focus away from the behavior, action, motives and skills of monological individuals. Instead the main attention is directed to them as members of various groups and communities that constitute the context of their mundane activities. (Savolainen 2007, 120)

My own research as connected to this emerging discourse: it is grounded in an understanding that participants' sense-making/s are an essentially social process and recognises that they need to develop their understanding in the context of a collaborative creative process. Both meta-theoretically and methodologically, it is a hybrid, drawing not only on

existing information behaviour research but on a range of different ideas and approaches from a variety of disciplines in order to develop an alternative approach – a different lens with which to explore the relationship between people, information and their social context. It been strongly influenced by theories and techniques derived from the work of post-structuralist theorists such as Michel Foucault (1972; 1977; 1980; Rabinow 1984), and Jacques Derrida (1992; 1997), as well as the more recent developments of Dervin's Sense-Making (1999). Foucault's theories on the discursive construction of power/knowledge have been used by a number of writers in an LIS context (e.g. Frohmann 1992; Talja 1997; Olsson 1999; 2005; 2009) to problematise and challenge some of the key assumptions that underpin existing approaches to information research, especially those associated with the influential cognitivist school.

One important conceptual starting point for my research has been Barthes (1988) and Foucault's (1980) notion of 'Death of the Author' - that the meaning of a text is not prescribed by authors but constructed by audiences. Equally significant has been Foucault's notion of pouvoir/savoir – that the discursive practices of associated with the "Battle for Truth" are both grounded in and the producers of power relations. The present study can be seen as a micro-sociological exploration of these concepts in the context of a collective artistic endeavour. Studies of Shakespeare in performance talk frequently of the advent of a 'Post-Colonial' Shakespeare, 'Australian' Shakespeare, 'Canadian' Shakespeare, 'Afro-Caribbean' Shakespeare etc. (Golder and Madelaine, 2001) – that particular national and cultural communities are increasingly finding alternative locally-appropriate ways to construct the Bard. Through working with participants from different countries associated with different theatre companies, the study aimed to explore how their different social contexts shaped their sense-making processes.

METHODOLOGY

The findings of the study are based on interviews with 35 theatre professionals in Canada, Finland and the UK, including 14 from the Stratford Shakespeare Festival of Canada, North America's largest and most prestigious classical repertory theatre, and 12 from Shakespeare's Globe in London. Other participants include actors, writers and directors associated with the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre and the Central School of Speech and Drama in the UK and the Tampereen Työväen Teatteri (Tampere People's Theatre) in Finland. Participants included actors, directors, set and costume designers, voice coaches, dramaturges and writers, with some participant having experience in more than one such role.

The interview guide incorporated aspects of the 'Life-Line' techniques developed by Dervin and her collaborators (Dervin and Frenette, 2001) but was also influenced by the

less structured, more conversational approach advocated by Seidman (1991) as a means of empowering the participants and reducing the influence of my own preconceptions. Participants were asked to describe the events and relationships that have shaped their relationship with Shakespeare and his work, as well as Shakespeare's 'place' – in their own work, in the academy, the theatre world, and in contemporary society.

One major challenge of the present study was that many of the participants, especially actors and directors, were very used to being interviewed – talking to the press being part of their job. This had both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, these participants were confident and comfortable in talking about themselves, with a ready supply of amusing anecdotes to hand. However, this meant that it was important to develop strategies that probed below the polished surface of these oft-told stories, to have participants reflect on what events and relationships were important – and why.

Overall, the research was successful in achieving this – even the briefest interview (cut short by the participant's time constraints) lasted just over an hour, with many running more than two or even three hours. A number of participants commented that they found the interviews a revealing process, offering them an opportunity to reflect on their professional life in a way they had not done before. The interviews were digitally audio-recorded and professionally transcribed prior to analysis.

Given the hybridity of the study's theoretical and methodological approach, this was clearly a study that would need to follow Phillips and Hardy's advice: "the researcher will need to 'customize' his or her method of analysis in light of the particular study at hand" (2002, 78). Although broadly discourse analytic in its approach, seeking to identify the ways in which participants spoke about their experiences and the common discursive repertoires they drew on to do so. In doing so, the study's analysis also adapted iterative, inductive 'constant comparison' techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994), while at the same time rejecting the naive empiricism sometimes associated with the grounded theory tradition. As discussed below, the analysis drew on ideas from Dervin, Foucault, Goffman and others to inform the researcher's understanding of participants' accounts. At the same time, these theories were themselves problematised through their application to a context quite different from that for which they were originally conceived. In this way, established theory informed the researcher's understanding of the data, while, at the same time, the data raised important questions about the theory. This process involved both a detailed micro-analysis of the interview transcripts, aided by the use of NVIVO software, as well as the broader thematic writing techniques advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to explore emergent trends, concepts and theories. Participants played

an active role in the analysis process through follow-up interviews, email correspondence, etc.

FINDINGS
The study's findings produced a very rich picture of both the information practices the participants engaged in to make sense of Shakespeare – a portrait in many ways at odds with the assumptions underpinning prevailing approaches to information behaviour research.

People and Texts
As in my previous research (Olsson 2005; 2007), a strong feature of the findings was the relative lack of importance participants attached to purposive information seeking, especially of formal information sources or systems, with only a minority (6 –two dramaturges, one writer, one voice coach and two actors) reporting it as a significant part of their sense-making.

While a significant minority (14 participants) did talk about reading academic literature relating to Shakespeare and/or the Elizabethan/Jacobean period, this was overwhelmingly described as a background activity, something largely engaged in between or in the early planning stages of productions, something there was "*no time for once the real work starts*" (Jaques, director). The texts were far more likely to be chosen as the result of a personal recommendation form a colleague than via purposeful searching.

Many participants regarded most of the published Shakespearean literature – whether literary criticism or performance studies as not useful:

When I read most of what's written, I just roll my eyes! I find myself thinking "Have they ever seen the play?" They're off in their own world and I don't think it has much to do with what I do... (Hero, Actor)

Well, let's face it, most of them [performance studies academics] *think they know better than us – secretly think they could do better than us – but they can't! If they could they'd be doing it...* (Mercutio, Director)

Indeed, this suspicion of the academy was a strong discourse in many participants' accounts: it was characterised not only by a belief that academic writing on the subject was obscure and irrelevant but a suspicion that academics look down on theatre professionals. One interesting consequence of this was that many participants were much happier talking to me once they ascertained that I wasn't 'one of them' – that I was not a Shakespeare or performance studies researcher. This discourse was closely related to another (discussed below): that theatre professionals are the true custodians of Shakespeare.

Instead of searching for information, the events that participants described as having the greatest influence on their understanding of Shakespeare were 'social' interactions: informal conversations with their colleagues or

mentors, interactions at rehearsals - social activities associated with their role/s as actors, directors etc.:

You learn the most just being in the rehearsal room with other actors ... not that you try and copy them but just seeing how they work, what the process is ... when I understudied for Julia, it was like following her tracks in the snow ... you know, I could see where I should put my feet... (Portia, actor)

Really, it's only when you talk to the director, get a sense of what his vision for the production is, that I can really start to think about my designs. Then I can start coming up with ideas ... see what he thinks... (Sebastian, designer)

Participants in the study frequently explicitly linked their engagements with texts to their interactions with other people:

Obviously I'd read the play, done background research, seen it on stage but it wasn't 'til I got into the rehearsal room, starting working with Iago [the director] and the other actors that I really started to feel I understood it ... that's usually how it goes. (Timon, actor)

When I start out on a new production, I work a lot with our dramaturge. We discuss the text ... I rely on her expertise. And then very often, she'll go out and do some research, based on what we've talked about and come back to me. (Iago, director)

It was clear from participants' accounts that their sense-making was seldom a linear process:

...it's hard to describe, you're reading, you're talking to the director, working with the other actors, doing sessions with the voice coaches, the movement coaches – and all of this is part of your process as you're working out who your character is. (Portia actor)

Ongoing Relationships
Participants frequently described the significant influences on their constructions in terms of long-term relationships – with other people and with the written work of authors. Long term relationships with colleagues were highly valued and seen as greatly facilitating information exchange:

I've worked with Iago before ... I love working with him... You develop a sense of what he wants .... you don't have the worry "Is this what he means?" (Timon, actor)

Of course, for all participants the longest and most significant relationship was with Shakespeare:

I've been performing Shakespeare for more than four decades now. On the one hand, he's like an old friend but I'm always finding something new. You bring your experience, your craft, your sense of what Shakespeare is, to each production. It forms your approach – but then you always find something unexpected – a new insight, something unexpected... amazing. (Rosencrantz, actor)

All of the participants reported being introduced to Shakespeare in childhood. Interestingly, while almost all participants described studying Shakespeare at school, for 34 of the 35 participants, it was seeing his work performed, either on stage or in the cinema, that they regarded as being the crucial starting point for their professional engagement with his work:

I came here ... as a schoolchild.... A while ago I was standing on the main stage here with Margaret and we were wondering how many of us had had that experience... (Andromache, dramaturge)

My mother took me to see 'Romeo and Juliet' when I was about seven. I felt so smart! I was "Of course I understand it, Mother!" ... I knew then that's what I wanted to do... (Imogen, actor and director)

Rather than a series of isolated encounters with information sources, participants spoke of the on-going nature of their relationships. Each individual encounter (whether with a person or a text) built on the participant's previous experience, enriching their constructions of both Shakespeare and their informants.

Affect as a Discursive Construct
Theatre professionals in general, and actors in particular, demonstrated a strong awareness of the importance of emotion for their sense-making:

As an actor, you need to do more than understand the play in an academic way... you need that emotional connection to the character and to the story. I need to FEEL it! (Imogen, Actor)

Emotion, for participants, was clearly more than a matter of hormones and endorphins, it was a social construct. Their exploration and interpretation of their emotions was the product of established social practices within the theatrical community and the focus of much discussion. The discussion of affective factors – 'emotional truth' – was an acknowledged, indeed commonplace feature of theatre professionals' interactions with one another, especially amongst actors and directors:

Some directors are more interested in the spectacle ...treat you like a puppet - "Go down stage and stop here." But the really good directors, what I call 'actor's directors', who really help you find the character, talk a lot about what you character should be feeling at that point in the play. (Antony, Actor)

A striking example of this is shown below. Whereas information research, with its focus on cognitive problem-solving, might lead us to assume that the question asked would be "What do I need to know?", instead the participant tells us:

I was having trouble with one scene, so I went and talked to another member of the company, who I knew had played

the part before... I asked him "What should I be feeling at this point?" (Timon, Actor)

Thus, amongst theatre professionals, 'emotional truth' is both the subject and the generator of discourse, a socially-validated practice and an acknowledged source of authority. This may be a contributing factor in many participants' tendency to regard academic writing on Shakespeare, with its conspicuous lack of an affective component, as "*dry*", "*sucking the life out of it*".

Embodied Sense-Making

The influence of cognitivist approaches modelled on Brookes' (1980) fundamental equation has led information researchers to conceive of information as anything which modifies an individual's knowledge structures. Yet the findings of this study suggest that such a "mentalist" approach (Frohmann, 1992) is too limited to capture the complexity of participants' sense-making. Discourse analytic approaches, which their emphasis on knowledge as a social construct embedded in power relations, go some way in addressing this limitation, yet it may be that their emphasis on language may also leave important aspects of sense-making unconsidered.

For theatre professionals, understanding Shakespeare involved much more than a cerebral process: their professional lives are based on the ability to embody their knowledge: they need to manifest their understanding in the physical world as physical actions in physical space. Designers need to do this through set and costume designs, directors through 'blocking' the movements of their actors, constructing the action to suit the confines and challenges of a particular physical space:

As I'm going through the text, I need to constantly think about how I'm going to make this work ... especially in this theatre with its long thrust stage and audience on three sides... sometimes an actor is going to have to be acting with his back. (Iago, director)

They therefore read the text of Shakespeare's plays through the lens of their material concerns. At the same time, their physical environment can shape their understanding of the text:

We've learned so much working here at the Globe. You realise that Shakespeare was actually writing for this stage. For example, I've found that many of the major speeches, the soliloquies, give actors exactly enough time to get from the balcony above to the main stage. (Horatio, actor and voice coach)

For actors, embodiment is a much more literal process: they need to physically *become* their character (at least for a few hours' traffic upon the stage):

I need to find the character's voice ... the way they move. That's where the voice and movement coaches can be so helpful. (Portia, actor)

A bunch of the young actors, we formed 'Medieval Fight Club' ... we'd get in one of the big rehearsal rooms and really go at it! Because it's no good coming across as a bunch of actors playing about with prop swords, you need to look like you know what you're doing. ...at the same time, it gave me a real insight into the character... as a warrior. (Timon, actor)

Actors' accounts make it very clear that for them to make sense of a character involves not only intellectual and affective elements but also physical ones: how the character walks, talks, laughs etc. – it is this embodied knowledge that is the basis of their performance.

As with affect, it was clear that the participants' embodiment of their knowledge was not an idiosyncratic, individual process. Actors, for example, would work with the director, voice and movement coaches and other actors to develop an embodied performance designed to convey the 'truth' of the character to the audience. It was a social process; drawing on established conventions and accepted practices - they demonstrate that theatre professionals have discourses of the body, as well as linguistic and affective discourses.

Creativity Vs Authenticity

Making sense of Shakespeare was at the heart of the professional, creative lives of all the study's participants. It was a subject that all participants had thought deeply and cared passionately about. For many, it was a question they had literally dedicated their lives to. Yet in analysing the ways in which participants talk about Shakespeare, one is struck by what appears to be a paradox: they all draw on two essentially contradictory discourses.

The first of these, allied to the long-standing tradition of viewing Shakespeare as a 'universal genius', valued *authenticity*:

I feel it's a great honour and a great responsibility to do this work in an authentic way: to be true to Shakespeare's language ... these characters... Shakespeare is bigger than all of us. (Robin Goodfellow, Actor)

This discourse leads theatre professionals to read Shakespeare in a particular way – to seek out its 'true' meaning, clues to authorial intent. This is a discourse that seeks to deny that meaning is something created by the reader, even as they are engaged in exactly this process. Adverse comments about post-modern academic approaches to studying Shakespeare, evident in six participants' accounts, may be partially attributable to this discourse.

A highly sophisticated set of practices for reading Shakespeare, have developed among classically trained actors, directly related to this 'authenticity' discourse:

Shakespeare actually tells you how to speak the lines! If you look at the blank verse, it shows you when to pause, what to

give emphasis to ... He does the work for you... (Rosencrantz, actor)

This 'Shakespeare as Director' discourse, essentially argues that instructions on how to perform Shakespeare are integral to the structure of the text – the blank verse, the use of punctuation in the First Folio etc. Seven participants, all classically trained actors, had a particularly sophisticated engagement with this discursive practice.

Related to this was another discourse, particularly prevalent in the Globe and Stratford companies, one which saw theatre professionals as the 'true custodians' of Shakespeare's work:

You know, I don't think you can really understand Shakespeare, until you perform it ... the plays were written to be performed, not read. (Ned Poins, actor)

It's kind of amazing to think of yourself as being part of a tradition that goes back through the centuries ... to Shakespeare and the Globe. And I think you feel a responsibility to carry on that tradition, to honour it. (Seyton, actor)

At the same time, all participants' accounts also showed an understanding that interpretations of Shakespeare had changed over time, and that their adaptability was a key feature of their enduring popularity:

The reason that this stuff has lasted for as long as it has is .... that there are as many different ways of interpreting it as there are people coming to it. (Hippolyta, actor)

This understanding was the basis for the other major discourse present in all participants' accounts: the *creativity* discourse. This discourse is one that values originality of artistic expression. It can be seen, for example, in many actors refusal to see other productions/films of the play because:

I don't want to just copy what's been done before. I need to make the part mine... find my own truth. (Timon, Actor)

Drawing on this discourse, each participant would strive to bring something "*new and fresh*" to each new production:

We wanted to make this production very political, quite Marxist...Show Shakespeare in a new way, different to what the audience expects (Puck, actor)

You need to find new settings, new approaches to the design ... get away from 'pumpkin pants' Shakespeare! (Sebastian, designer)

Allied to this discourse, is a concern with making the plays relevant to a contemporary audience:

How do you get across the idea of what royalty means to a modern audience? I mean they weren't nice polite guys cutting ribbons ... They were more like mafia dons! (Rosalind, voice coach)

These two discourses are frequently in opposition in participants' accounts, with the one being used to critique the other:

You know, in many ways I envy my overseas colleagues who get to work with Shakespeare in translation, because they don't have to worry about the problems of archaic language that audiences can't understand ... but we're all "You can't change it, it's SHAKESPEARE!" (Andromache, dramaturge)

Well we have a director now, he's very focussed on the look of the thing, making a big spectacle, but to me that's going against what Shakespeare is about – the characters, the language... (Antony, Actor)

It would be a mistake to see participants' use of two apparently contradictory discourses as a 'problem', some failure on their part to comprehend the 'truth'. Discourse analytic scholars have long understood that complex topics will invariably give rise to multiple discourses and that individuals will move between these discourses as circumstances dictate. Furthermore, it is clear from the study that this apparent paradox is not a weakness but a strength. Were the 'authenticity' discourse to be dominant, the likely outcome would be theatre that was simply an exercise in historical recreation, of interest to only a few scholars. Conversely, a production where the 'creativity' discourse was pre-eminent may be rejected by the audience (as avant-garde productions frequently have been) as 'not Shakespeare'. The competing claims of these two discourses frame the '*battle for truth*' (Foucault) within each production, it is the creative tensions between their competing claims that makes each new production both unique and connected to tradition – it is the beating heart of Shakespeare as a living theatrical experience.

National Voices

Nowhere was the battle between the creativity/contemporary relevance and authenticity discourses – and their implications for participants' embodiment of their knowledge – clearer in the extensive discussion of accent by both Canadian and UK participants:

There's a lot of argument her as to whether you should say "the duke" ... or "the dook". (Rosalind, voice coach)

In both countries, there were a number of participants, both actors and directors, who wanted to move away from the Received Pronunciation (BBC/public school English) of 'tradiional' Shakespearian productions to use accents more like the everyday speech of the audience:

I don't see why an Ancient Greek character needs to sound like he went to Eton! (Zero, director)

Contemporary accents, some argued, not only made the characters more accessible to the audience but could be used to convey meaning:

One of the best productions I've seen was a Romeo and Juliet from Quebec... the Capulets were Francophone and the Montagues were Anglophone... (Rosalind, voice coach)

Interestingly, the authenticity discourse could also be employed to justify such an approach:

We had a talk from a language professor from England and he said that the accent in Shakespeare's time would have sounded much more like Americans then RP... (Antony, Actor)

Two Scottish participants made a similar argument:

The language works so much better in Scots – it's more raw, visceral ... and there is a much greater range of sounds... (Ned Poins, actor)

Their spontanious performance of various speeches to demonstrate this were not only convincing but mesmerising – in a way that no words on a page can convey!

CONCLUSION

In seeking to develop a different theoretical and methodological approach, the study In bringing together theoretical and methodological approaches from a range of different disciplines and traditions, the study has aimed to highlight the importance of aspects of people's information practices that have been largely unconsidered in existing research in the field, such as affect as a discursive construct and the embodiment of knowledge. Its aim in doing so has been to develop a new approach which allows us a greater understanding of the complexity of people's individual and collective sense-making.

I hope that some of the concepts and issues the study raises may be applied and adapted by other information/knowledge researchers and practitioners – that a study of a traditional Western cultural icon may make a contribution to the emergence of a new kind of information research in the 21st century. In a world that increasingly recognises the limitations of western thought's post-Enlightenment privileging of objectivist rationality, information researchers need to adopt a more holistic approach to understanding how people make sense, one which acknowledges its affective as well as its rationalist components. Equally, the time may be ripe for information researchers to look beyond a Cartesian model of knowledge-as-cognition: to consider what theatre professionals already know: that knowing can be a matter for bodies, as well as for minds.

Wilson (1997) has highlighted that information researchers' focus on information seeking has led them to neglect information use. However, while 'information use' implies an interaction between two discrete entities (person and information), 'embodiment', in my view, provides a richer understanding of the process by which new sense is incorporated into the participants' practices. It is a concept that might greatly enrich our understanding of the information practices of a wide range of groups, from athletes to architects, surgeons to sculptors.

REFERENCES

Atkins, P. (2001). Information Literacy and the Arts. *College and Research Libraries News,* 62(11), 1086-8.

Barthes, R. (1988). *A Barthes reader*. New York, Noonday Press.

Belkin, N. (1990). The cognitive viewpoint in information science. *Journal of Information Science*. 16, 11-15.

Clark, K. and Archer D. (1999) *Bibliography of journal articles indexed in the Institute of Scientific Information databases as citing Brenda Dervin* [On-line manuscript]. Previously available at: http://communication.sbs.ohio-state.edu/sense-making/

Cobbledick, S. (1996). The information seeking behaviour of artists: exploratory interviews. *Library Quarterly* 66(4), 343-372.

Coupland, J. & Gwyn, R. (2003). *Discourse, the body, and identity*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York : Palgrave Macmillan .

Davies, E. (2007). *Epistemic Practices of Theatre Production Professionals: an Activity Theory Approach*. Doctoral dissertation: University of Western Ontario.

Davies, E. & McKenzie, P. J. (2004) 'Preparing for opening night: temporal boundary objects in textually-mediated professional practice' *Information Research*, 10(1) paper 211. Available at http://informationr.net/ir/10-1/paper211.html

Derrida, J. (1992). *Acts of Literature* New York: Routledge.

Derrida, J. (1997). *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: a Conversation with Jacques Derrida* New York Fordham University Press.

Dervin, B. (1999). On studying information seeking and use methodologically: The implications of connecting metatheory to method. *Information Processing & Management,* 35, 727-750.

Dervin, B. & Frenette, M. (2001). Sense-Making Methodology: Communicating communicatively with campaign audiences. In R. E. Rice & C. K. Atkin (Eds.), *Public communication campaigns* (3rd ed.). (pp. 69-87). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dervin, B. and Nilan, M. (1986). Information needs and uses. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*. 21, 3-33.

Dickens, D.R. & Fontana, A. (1994). *Postmodernism and social inquiry*. New York Guilford Press.

Ellis, D. 1993. Modelling the Information-Seeking Patterns of Academic Researchers: a Grounded Theory Approach. *Library Quarterly* 63 4, 469-486.

Foucault, Michel. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London Tavistock.

Foucault, Michel. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* London Allen Lane.

Foucault, Michel. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* London Harvester Press.

Frohmann, B. (1992). The Power of Images: A Discourse Analysis of the Cognitive Viewpoint. *Journal of Documentation* 48, 365-386.

Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. New York, NY: Aldine Publishing Corporation.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre.

Goffman, E. (1983). The Interaction Order. *American Sociological Review* 48 (1), 1-17.

Golder, J. & Madelaine, R. (2001) 'To dote on such luggage': Appropriating Shakespeare in Australia. In Golder, John and Madeaine, Richard (eds) *O Brave New World: Two Centuries of Shakespeare on the Australian Stage (pp.* 1-16). Sydney, Currency Press.

Julien H. (1999). Constructing 'users' in library and information science. *Aslib Proceedings* 51(6), 206-209.

Krikelas, J. (1983). Information-seeking behavior: patterns and concepts. *Drexel Library Quarterly* 19**,** 5-20.

Kulthau, C.C. (1993). A Principle of Uncertainty for Information Seeking. *Journal of Communication* 49, 339-355.

Lloyd, A. (2006). Information literacy landscapes: An emerging picture. McCrum, R. (1986). *The Story of English*. London, BBC.

Nahl, D. & Bilal, D. (eds) 2007. *Information and Emotion: The Emergent Affective Paradigm in Information Behavior Research and Theory*. Medford, NJ: Information Today.

Olsson, M. (2005). Meaning and Authority: the Social Construction of an 'author' among Information Behaviour Researchers. *Information Research*, 10(2) paper 219 available at http://InformationR.net/ir/10-2/paper219.html

Olsson, M. (2007) Power/Knowledge: the Discursive construction of an Author. *Library Quarterly*. **77** (2), 219-240.

Olsson, M. (2009) Re-Thinking our Concept of Users. Australian *Academic & Research Libraries* 40 (1), 22-35.

Phillips, N. and Hardy, C. (2002). *Discourse Analysis. Investigating Processes of Social Construction*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Pilch, M. (1987) 'Libraries and the amateur theatre' *Information and Library Manager*; 7(3), 56-58.

Rabinow, P. (1984). *The Foucault Reader*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Peregrine Books.

Savolainen, R. (2007) Information Behaviour and Information Practice: Reviewing the 'Umbrella Concepts' of Information-Seeking Studies. *Library Quarterly*. 77 (2), 109-132.

Seidman, I. E. (1991). *Interviewing as qualitative research: a guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, Teachers College Press.

Talja, S. (1997). Constituting "information" and "user" as research objects: a theory of knowledge formations as an alternative to the information-man theory'. In Vakkari, P., Savolainen, R. & Dervin, B. (eds) *Information seeking in context : proceedings of an International Conference on Research in Information Needs, Seeking and Use in Different Contexts, 14-16 August, 1996, Tampere, Finland* (pp. 67-80) London Taylor Graham.

Wilson, P. (1977). *Public Knowledge, Private Ignorance: Toward a Library and Information Policy*. Greenwood Publishing Group.

Wilson, T.D. (1997). 'Information Behaviour: an Interdisciplinary Perspective' In Vakkari, P., Savolainen, R. & Dervin, B. (eds) *Information seeking in context : proceedings of an International Conference on Research in Information Needs, Seeking and Use in Different Contexts, 14-16 August, 1996, Tampere, Finland* (pp. 39-53) London Taylor Graham.

Wilson, T.D. (2000). Human Information Behaviour. *Informing Science* 3 (1), 49-55.