

# **Theorising information use: managers and their work**

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## **Certificate of authorship and originality**

I certify that the work in this thesis had not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signed

Date

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## **Abstract**

The focus of this thesis is information use. Although a key concept in information behaviour, information use has received little attention from information science researchers. Studies of other key concepts such as information need and information seeking are dominant in information behaviour research. Information use is an area of interest to information professionals who rely on research outcomes to shape their practice. There are few empirical studies of how people actually use information that might guide and refine the development of information systems, products and services.

The thesis begins to address this imbalance in information behaviour research by exploring the concept of information use through an empirical study. Fifteen senior managers from two organisations in the cultural industries sector participated in the study. Analysis of interviews revealed that the managers understood and experienced information use in five different ways: as information packaging; as information flow; as developing new knowledge and insights; as shaping judgements and decisions; and as influencing others. These five different ways of experiencing information use are related in a hierarchy that reflects three different views of information: as an object; as a construct; and as a transformative force. Embedded in the hierarchy are different relations between people and information in their work environments, different processes of information use and different criteria for determining the quality of information that is used.

The thesis demonstrates that the concept of information use can be explored empirically using phenomenography as the research approach. This approach, which originated in the field of education, has been used infrequently in information behaviour research. It offers potential for the further exploration of not only information use but also other concepts germane to information behaviour. The thesis highlights the richness of peoples' experiences of information use and points to some directions that might be taken by practitioners in developing information systems, products and services to support people as they 'go about their business'.