

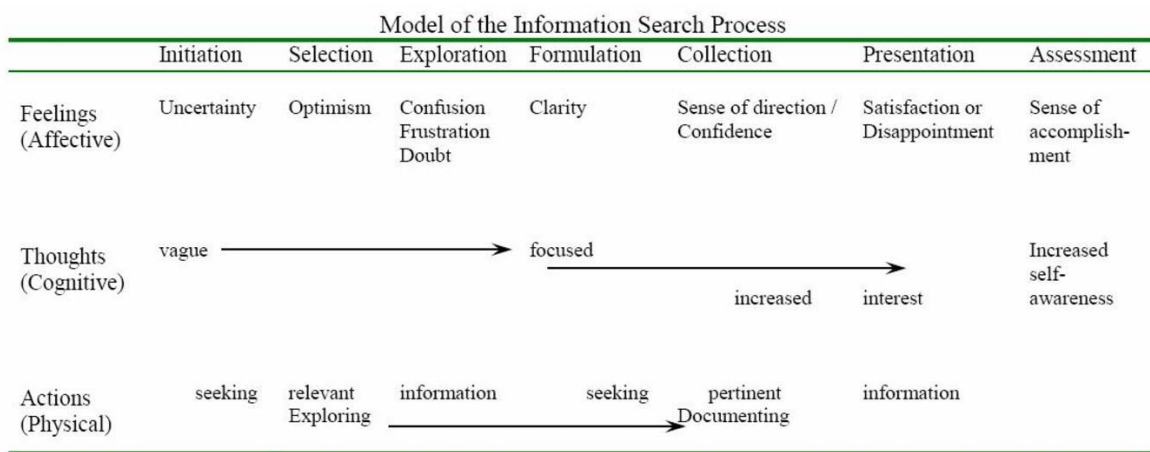
The Information Search Process

What is the information search process?

The information search process was originally developed by Carol Kuhlthau at Rutgers’s University in order to align the thoughts, feelings, and actions students experience as they engage with the various phases of the research process. Kuhlthau refers to the varying steps as the “zones of interventions for librarians.” While Kuhlthau developed this working with students, we can apply it to all researchers.

See: <http://wp.cominfo.rutgers.edu/ckuhlthau/information-search-process/>

Visualizing the Information Search Process



Suggestions for incorporating the Information Search Process into reference

Adapted from: Kuhlthau and <http://eduscapes.com/instruction/inquiry/ips.htm>

Meeting the users at their current “zone of intervention” in the research process and acknowledging their likely feelings can create empathy and lead to more positive interactions. Librarians need to understand, and remember, what it is like for students as they work through the phases of the research process.

Zone 1: Initiating a Research Assignment *Seeking relevant information*

Feelings: Aware of a knowledge gap and lack of understanding. Feelings of apprehension, uncertainty.

Intervention: Have you focused your topic yet? It can be difficult, but we can work together to find some focus.

Zone 2: Selecting a Topic *Seeking relevant information*

Feelings: Considering potential topics and class requirements vs. information available, time, etc.

Feelings of brief elation, anticipation, sometimes anxiety and confusion.

Intervention: Tell me what you’ve done so far. Sounds like you’ve got a start on focusing your topic. Let’s...

Zone 3: Exploring Information *Seeking relevant information*

Feelings: Investigating information from initial searches, seeking to connect and make sense of what they have found. Feelings of confusion, frustration, doubt, uncertainty.

Intervention: We really do have a lot of sources available here, it can be confusing...

NOTE: This is usually the most difficult step in the process.

Zone 4: Formulating a Focus *Seeking pertinent information*

Feelings: Identifying and selecting sources that meet needs of a focused topic. Feelings of optimism, confidence in ability to complete task.

Intervention: Sounds like you're really on track; that must feel good. Let's...

Zone 5: Collecting Information *Seeking pertinent information*

Feelings: Gathering information to support an established focus. Feeling a sense of direction, confidence in ability to complete task, increased interest.

Intervention: You've got a great start. Tell me something about the articles you feel are especially good for your topic...

Zone 6: Preparing to Present *Seeking pertinent information*

Feelings: The culmination of the project, filling in the last needed pieces of information. Feelings include a sense of relief, sometimes satisfaction, sometimes disappointment.

Intervention: Looks like you're really wrapping things up. Is there anything you see missing in your research? We can look together...

Zone 7: Assessing the Process

Feelings: Feeling a sense of accomplishment or sense of disappointment.

Intervention: What can you say at this point?