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ASIST SIG USE Research Symposium Position Paper

### **Social Network Sites and Information Seeking During a Life Transition**

Over the life course, an individual engages in a series of transitions that shape them personally and in the eye of society (Elder, 1998). Common transitions include developmental transitions and health-related transitions; other transitions, including role transitions and social/legal transitions are comprised of a series of transitions or life events (Arnett, 2001; George, 1993). In general, a transition can be theorized as an interruption, in which one's schema, or sense of understanding of the world, is interrupted and new informational discrepancies are revealed (Mandler, 1990).

I am interested in how individuals use social network sites for information seeking during a life transition. The particular context of my study is the high school-to-college transition, a multi-modal transition generally involving relocation, role change, and social network renegotiation. Utilized extensively by college students, social network sites are web-based systems that enable individuals to construct a profile, articulate a list of networked connections, and “view and traverse” this list of connections (boyd and Ellison, 2007). For an in-transition population, the social network site enables sensemaking in the new surrounds; users draw on network-based resources for social and collaborative information seeking.

Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, my study investigates determinants of network participation during a transition, it evaluates supportive outcomes of participation, and it elaborates the process of information seeking in a network-mediated setting. I would like to focus on my third research goal at the symposium. I am interested in the construction of information practice in a social network site: The social and collaborative process through which in-transition individuals address information needs, how these needs inform disclosure decisions, and how information provisioned addresses the “everyday life” information needs of the in-transition population (Savolainen, 1995).

## References

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