

REMARKS ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF INFORMATION SOURCES FOR THE FIELDS OF INFORMATION SCIENCE AND LIFE SCIENCES



Knowledge Organization in the 21st Century: Between Historical Patterns and Future Prospects

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Introduction

In order to support medical and scientific practices, researchers and practitioners of the field of health care need several sorts of information resources.

The heterogeneity of information sources in the domain of health and life sciences requires some management.

The management of information sources results in a better use of such resources, making them really useful for researchers and practitioners. However, the lack of terminological consensus arising from the different perspectives taken on the one hand, by the field of Information Science, and on the other hand, by the field of health and life sciences, has posed difficulties to initiatives of improvement of access to information sources. One real difficulty is to define what really is an information source. Indeed, they are defined from distinct analysis dimensions, which results in a real conceptual nemesis.

Objectives

- To approach conceptual aspects about what really is an information source within the fields of Information Science and health and life sciences.
- To make explicit the different perspectives while seeking for a unique conceptual foundation.

Development

The subject “information sources” is very usual to be found in the scope of several themes for scientific research like: criteria for selection of works, information quality, user’s information needs, to mention but a few.

The technological development and the emergence of the web have been challenging the traditional concepts about information sources, as well as suggesting their revision.

The usual characterization in Information Science for information sources, which in general covers, for example, specialized vocabularies, thesauri, terminologies and even ontologies, is not shared by one working in health and life sciences. In opposite to the former field, within the last field such instruments are taken as systems of semantic reference (Rubin, 2008) and not as information sources.

Through a brief literature review, one can find a multitude of definitions for the concept of information sources, which nevertheless present a perspective somehow fragmented about that concept.

Tabela 1. Fontes de Informação – Definições

Autor	Definição de Fontes de Informação
Araújo (2001)	it is any document, data or record that provide information to certain user’s needs of libraries and other information services.
Ferreira (2004)	it is any person, document, organism or institution that transmit information.
Arruda (2002)	it is some resource that specifies all sorts of media able to contain information to be communicated..
Cunha (2001)	the concept covers manuscripts and publications, as well as object like mineral samples, works of art and museological pieces.
Pellizzon, Población e Goldenberg (2003),	it is any resource that is able to meet users expectations, including both products and services of information, either people or nets of people, as well as computer programs.

Analysis

The myriad informational needs creates different possibilities of queries in several information sources (see Figure 1):

Figure 1 – Information sources



The term “information” comes from the Latin word “informare”, which means to give form, to represent, to create ideas or notions (CUNHA, 1985).

Information sources are ways of representing knowledge, insofar as there is no knowledge without sources (SALES e ALMEIDA, 2007).

Information sources should provide means for the production of knowledge, because specialized knowledge is based in another piece of knowledge already known and properly conveyed in some oral, written or audiovisual source (SALES e ALMEIDA, 2007).

The knowledge represented in a certain format, free of its form, is the basis for defining what can be considered as an information source.

In the field of health and life sciences, information sources as entities and organizations are largely used by professionals, for example: specialized libraries, educational institutions connected to the field of healthcare, the healthcare services, hospitals, clinics and medical records.

Also, it is usual among researchers to make use of terminological systems, for example, vocabularies, classification systems, ontologies, to mention but a few.

Final remarks

One can see that the definition of information sources as a way to represent knowledge is a valid definition in different scientific field without lacking of its specific characteristics.

It is reasonable to define information sources from its basic principles, which can be applied not only to the fields of Information Science or healthcare and life sciences, but also to the sciences in general.

We hope our study can contribute to the construction of an interdisciplinary conceptual view that allows one to reach a unique conceptual perspective.

Our results can make possible to apply such conceptual perspective in the scope of different approaches in the fields of both Information Science and healthcare and life sciences.

In order one can approach information sources in healthcare and life sciences – as well as its particularities, applications, possibilities of interoperability, to mention but a few – it is essential to first define clearly what can be considered an information source.

Then, it will be possible to analyze the characterization of specialized information sources like the terminological systems, databases, controlled vocabularies and so forth.

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