

## **Exploring the Information World in Academic Contexts: Visual Elicitation Interviews with Students Developing Their Master's Theses**

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The thesis-writing process requires great commitment and is an essential part of students' graduate-school journey. Master's students who are typically novice to research especially need to prepare themselves to conduct this very first formal research. It is important for them to seek information that meets their needs with various strategies. Examining how students perceive their interactions with information in academic contexts can help professors and information providers understand how to better guide students through this journey.

Drawing upon Sonnenwald's (1999) information horizons and other information behavior models, Greyson (2015, 2017) proposed information world mapping (IWM) as an arts-based elicitation interview that helps understand individuals' information behavior through their drawings and narratives regarding how people, places, and things help them interact with information. Based on the IWM, the research questions investigated in the current study include: (1) How do students in information-related disciplines perceive their academic information worlds while developing their master's theses? (2) How do their information needs and information seeking behavior change in different stages?

The current study used an innovative multi-phase IWM interview design. Eighteen graduate students were interviewed after each semester ended. While the third-phase of IWM interviews is underway, data from the first two phases were analyzed with qualitative content analysis and situational analysis. Preliminary findings show that the extent to which students' information worlds have changed may be affected by how fast they move forward during their thesis-developing journey. Relevant details provide implications for higher education practice.