Information Outsiders of the 21st Century: Access and Implications for Information Behavior Research

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ABSTRACT
Equity of access is an imperative in the global information world of the 21st Century. For the information outsider however, or those who are disenfranchised by social constructions, or economic, educational, or political circumstances, information poverty is a disheartening reality (Chatman, 1992; 1996; 2000; Burnett, Bessant, & Chatman, 2001). The functions of this panel are to explore the information worlds of select marginalized populations and the resulting implications for information behavior. It is intended to begin providing a framework for understanding the interactions between information, information access, and information behavior. The presentations and ensuing discussion offer insight into physical and virtual or digital information access for information outsiders and implications for Library and Information Science (LIS) education and practice.

Keywords
Information outsiders, information access, information policy, information behavior.

INTRODUCTION
Political, cultural, environmental, and educational factors are critical to information access, as are public policies and social realities. This panel explores these factors as they shape the information worlds of select marginalized populations from their own perspectives and the perspectives of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals. Presentations focus on findings from studies of the lived experiences of public library patrons; people with disabilities; and others, including those who live in rural settings. The presentations also include discussion of

children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their information needs and motivations, as well as their use of web and mobile technologies in museum environments. Research findings on the influence of public conceptions of access on information behavior and the important role that libraries can play as intermediaries that respond to the needs of the information poor will also be presented. As a whole, this research represents much of the first work to acknowledge the perspectives and information needs of these traditionally disenfranchised populations. Exploring the interactions between information, information behavior, and the various social and policy contexts within which it exists, it also addresses information access from the viewpoint of the information outsiders and implications for LIS education and practice.

PANEL APPROACH
The panel should be 1.5 hours in length. Panelists will present their research foci and provide brief 10-15 minute overviews of their work in these areas. Following the presentations, panelists will raise questions based on their areas of research. The questions will be discussed in the panel and with the audience. The questions should motivate the audience to consider the perspectives of information outsiders.

PANELISTS
In the following section we provide brief presentations of the panelists and their research foci.

Jennifer W. Arns
Dr. Jennifer Weil Arns is an Associate Professor at the School of Library and information Science at the University of South Carolina. She holds a BA from the Maxwell School of Citizenship at Syracuse University, a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science from the University of California at Berkeley, a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and a Doctoral Degree

in Information and Library Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her recent research focuses on the contributions that public libraries make to the health and prosperity of the communities in which they are located. She is currently the principal investigator for the IMLS research project *Assessing the Economic Value of Public Library Collections and Services: A Review of the Literature and Meta-Analysis* and co-principle investigator for the IMLS funded project *Cultural Heritage Informatics Leadership (CHIL): An Experiment in Responsive Doctoral Education.*

Arns' Contribution as a Panelist

Over the last decade, a number of individuals and groups in the United States have raised the possibility of a growing social divide based on changes in commonly used socio-economic indicators. Data collected by the Pew Memorial Trust indicates that the number of Americans who see themselves as "have-nots" has doubled within a period of two decades (Allen and Dimock, 2007, n.p.). Research funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation suggests that for many "the door to economic mobility opened by wealth is closed at birth" (Insight Center for Community Economic Development, 2011, p.4), and research funded by the Russell Sage Foundation (Reardon & Bischoff, 2011) concludes that over four decades, high and low income families have become increasingly unlikely to live near one another. Less attention has been focused on the impact of changes such as these on the information worlds of the individuals who live them. Dr. Arns' research and presentation focuses on this topic from the perspective of Chatman's characterization of the *information outsider*, looking first at the intellectual and social antecedents of this construct, and secondly locating it within the broader civic and social framework prompted by Norris's broader internet engagement model.

Clayton A. Copeland

Clayton A. Copeland, Ph.D., is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the School of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina. Dr. Copeland's research focuses upon equity of access to information for underserved populations. She also maintains research interests in Universal Design, Literacy, School Library Media, and Information Behavior. Dr. Copeland teaches courses in the Foundations of Library and Information Science, Information Literacy, Information Resources, and Planning Library Facilities. Her dissertation research was funded in part by a grant from the American Library Association.

Copeland's Contribution as a Panelist

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the basic precepts of intellectual freedom promote the principle of equity of access to information and the understanding that it is imperative for all community members, including those who are differently-able, to be able to obtain information. This inclusive viewpoint is similarly reflected in The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the 1980s "Decade of the Disabled," and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990,

each of which is intended to encourage diversity. The legislation is also intended to build an increased awareness of the needs of those who are differently-able and their rights to equitable education, appropriate employment, and information (United Nations, 1982). As community centers, public libraries are sometimes aware of these issues; however, many appear to be inaccessible to patrons who are differently-able (Copeland, 2011, 2012). Research that focuses on the accessibility of services from the perspectives of people who are differently-able is extremely limited. This presentation begins addressing this gap by examining the lived experience of information access from the perspectives of a group of differently-able public library patrons. It also raises larger equity of access to information issues that present with these populations through distinct, observable, and measurable manifestations. Research findings highlighted in the presentation offer insight into disability as a social construct and explore the implications of this reality for information access and information behavior.

Paul T. Jaeger

Paul T. Jaeger, Ph.D., J.D., is Co-Director of the Information Policy and Access Center and Assistant Professor in the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland. Dr. Jaeger's research focuses on the ways in which law and public policy shape information behavior, particularly for underserved populations. He is the author of more than one hundred journal articles and book chapters, along with seven books. His research has been funded by the Institute of Museum & Library Services, the National Science Foundation, the American Library Association, the Smithsonian Institute, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, among others. Dr. Jaeger is Co-Editor of *Library Quarterly* and Co-Editor of the *Information Policy Book Series* from MIT Press.

Jaeger's Contribution as a Panelist

Data released in April 2012 demonstrate that persons with disabilities continue to be dramatically disadvantaged in terms of Internet access, with only 54% of people with disabilities going online in contrast to 81% of the overall population (Zickuhr & Smith, 2012). As a result of this access gap, people with disabilities have far lower levels of access to online materials and opportunities related to education, employment, civic participation, communication, entertainment, and other major areas (Jaeger, 2011). While the federal government has generally struggled to establish a clear policy approach to promoting equality of access to the Internet (Jaeger *et al*, 2012), policy-making processes have been particularly inattentive to accessibility for persons with disabilities (Jaeger, in press; Lazar & Jaeger, 2011; Wentz, Jaeger, & Lazar, 2011). This presentation will examine the ways in which access is conceived in public policy and the impacts of those conceptions on the information behavior and access needs of persons with disabilities. These explorations will be framed by the theory of information worlds, which provides a framework for understanding and studying the multiple interactions

between information, information behavior, and the many different social and policy contexts within which it exists (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010).

Bharat Mehra
Dr. Bharat Mehra is Associate Professor in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Tennessee. His research explores diversity and intercultural issues in library and information science and furthers social justice and social equity to meet the needs of minority and underserved populations. Dr. Mehra primarily teaches courses on information organization, public library management, collection development, resources and services for adults, diversity services in libraries, and grant development for information professionals. He is the principal investigator of the $567,660 grant entitled "Information Technology Rural Librarian Master's Scholarship Program" recently awarded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services' Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program.
Homepage: http://www.sis.utk.edu/users/bharat-mehra

Mehra's Contribution as a Panelist
Broadband connectivity serves as a backbone for economic development and entrepreneurial use in the 21st century (ITU, 2012). Yet information poor areas such as the southern Appalachia are lagging behind national and regional trends in the adoption of appropriate broadband infrastructures and its effective deployment and use owing to their unique cultural conditions and environmental circumstances (Black, Mehra, and Singh, 2011; Kusmin, 2008; Stenberg et al., 2009). Based on work by a research team from the University of Tennessee and Chicago State University, this presentation explores the perspectives of Tennessee's rural librarians regarding the information seeking practices and use of high-speed broadband by small businesses in the state to determine the role libraries can play in supporting their needs related to broadband internet access and service. It sheds light on the emerging role of rural libraries as intermediaries and facilitating institutions when 48% of current technology users need help from others with new information and communication technologies such as broadband and its applications and devices (Horrigan, 2008; Mehra, Black, Singh, and Nolt, 2011). Bridging intersections between theory, practice, and policy, research findings reported in this presentation begin to address the current gap in the availability of fine-grained data and experiences about broadband deployment and use at a local level (Horrigan, 2007).

Mega Subramaniam
Mega Subramaniam, Ph.D. is the Associate Director of the Information Policy and Access Center and Assistant Professor in the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland. Dr. Subramaniam's research examines the roles of cultural institutions such as libraries and museums in encouraging science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) interest and STEM identity development among underserved, underrepresented, and disadvantaged young people. Her research has been funded by the Institute of Museum & Library Services, the National Science Foundation, and Smithsonian Institution, among others.

Subramaniam's Contribution as a Panelist
As information technologies become more central to information, interaction, and communication, cultural institutions, such as libraries, archives, schools, and museums, struggle to include persons with physical and cognitive disabilities (Jaeger, 2009; Jaeger, 2011; Lazar & Jaeger, 2011). Yet, new technologies such as mobile and web technologies open up opportunities to increase the accessibility of these cultural institutions for persons with disabilities, by delivering content in a new way that can be personalized, available in different formats, and include adaptable components. On behalf of a research team from the University of Maryland and the Smithsonian Institution, Dr. Subramaniam will share one of the first concrete efforts to find solutions to better serve the needs of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families when visiting museums, by implementing a multi-tier research design that captures the needs and motivations of children with ASD and their families and translating these needs and motivations to the design of web and mobile technologies to improve the accessibility of these technologies. Dr. Subramaniam will share the research findings on needs and motivation of these families to visit museums, the delivery of customized online pre-visit materials – including sensory maps, accessibility maps, social stories, extended narratives, and pictorial guides in alternate formats, observation of use of these materials by these families at an actual museum visit and the feedback provided by these families on the use of web and mobile technologies in museum visits (Langa et. al).

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