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METATHEORETICAL

SNOWMEN II

metatheory

“The **philosophy behind the theory**, the fundamental set of ideas about how phenomena of interest in a particular field should be thought about and researched.”

metatheory

“...the often unarticulated premises upon which empirical research and theorization is based...broader and less specific than theories, they are **orientation strategies to the world.**”

Talja, S., Tuominen, K. & Savolainen, R. "ISMS" in information science. *Journal of Documentation*, 61(1), 79-101.

PARADIGM

SENSIBILITY

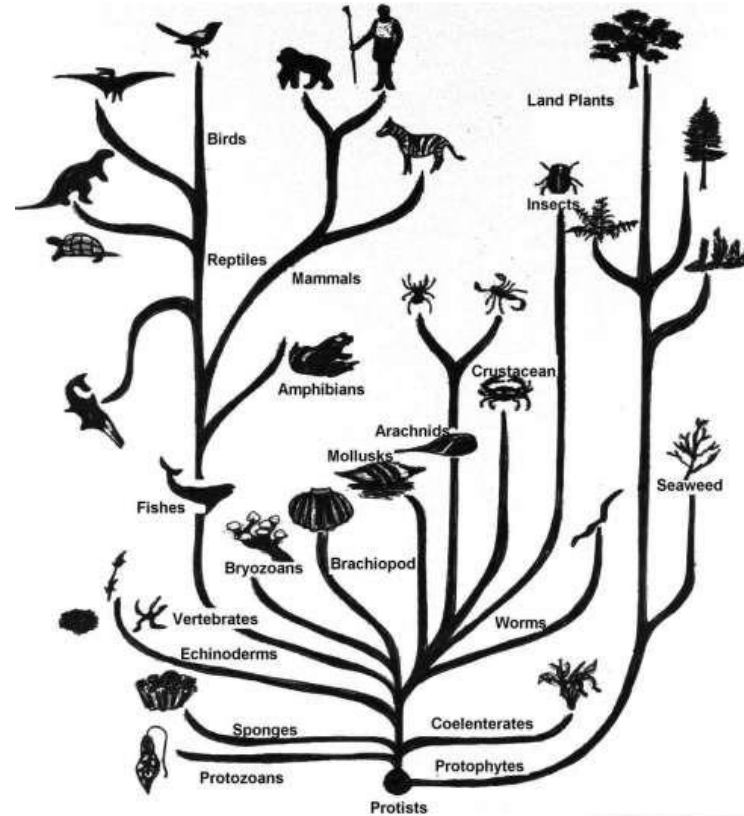
METATHEORY

WORLD VIEW

APPROACH

PERSPECTIVE

metatheory in the natural sciences



theory of evolution

history of metatheory in IS

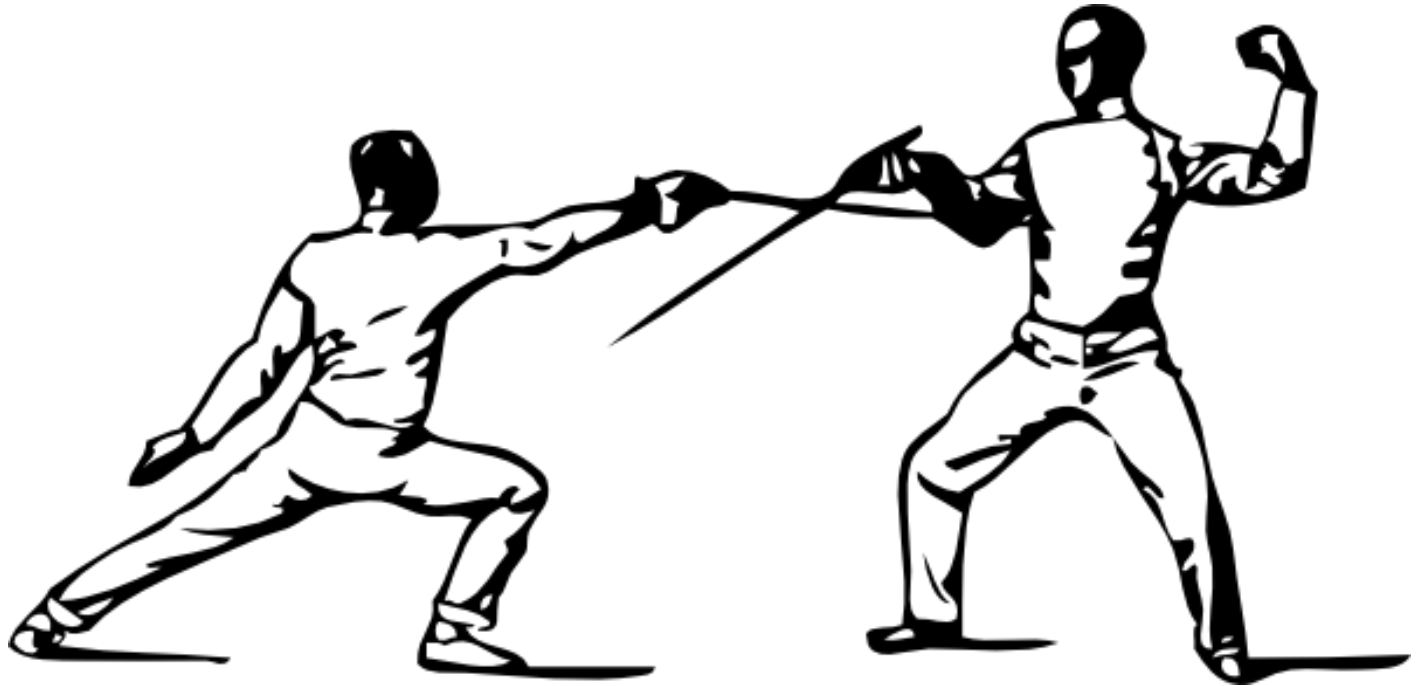
- “sociological problem”
- “psychological problem”
- “historical problem”
- “practical considerations”

metatheories in information science

[Bates, 2005]

CRITICAL THEORY
SOCIO-COGNITIVE COGNITIVE
CONSTRUCTIONIST ENGINEERING
PHILOSOPHICAL-ANALYTIC
CONSTRUCTIVIST
USER-CENTERED DESIGN
ETHNOGRAPHIC
BIBLIOMETRIC PHYSICAL
EVOLUTIONARY
HISTORICAL

conflicting metatheories



socio-cognitivism & cognitivism

compatible metatheories



cultural studies & historical approach
ethnography & socio-cognitivism

impact of metatheory
methodological

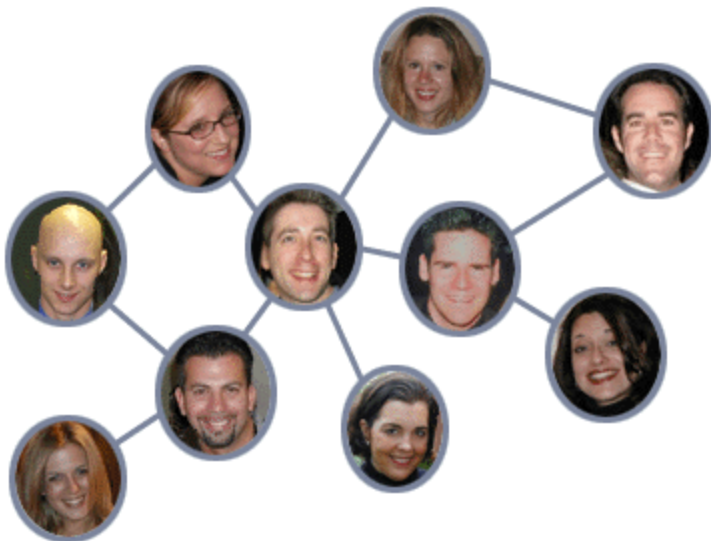


impact of metatheory ontological



**research
concepts**

What is "information?"



Example

106 ... (1.0) all my adult life,
 107 I've been a --
 108 ... an active republican.
 109 except those little times when I was --
 110 when I was locked up.
 111 ... (2.0) and er,
 112 there's a slow coming to terms with that past.
 113 ... (1.0) the --
 114 ... (1.0) how do you put it?
 115 ... (2.0) I'm an active republican.
 116 I was an active republican.
 117 but I'm not a reformed terrorist.
 118 ... neither am I a pacifist.
 119 ... (1.0) er,
 120 ... (1.0) I believed at one point.
 121 ... still believe at one point.
 122 and er,
 123 that er --
 124 ... (1.0) the armed struggle was necessary.
 125 ... that er --
 126 ... (1.0) partition wasn't just.
 127 ... (1.0) and that there w- --
 128 the means weren't there,
 129 to,
 130 politically and constitutionally,
 131 correct that situation.
 132 ... (3.0) er,
 133 thirty years later.
 134 .. I think the means are in place to do that.
 135 ... (1.0) so that's --
 136 represents my journey.

active has a meaning of being physically active that is metaphorical when used to mean politically engaged

little has a meaning to do with physical size that is metaphorical when used with *times*

up has a physical meaning of direction vertically which is metaphorical when used with *locked*

slow has a meaning to do with physical speed that is metaphorical when used to mean taking an extended period of time

coming to terms with is a semi-fixed idiom that is metaphorical in using a movement verb to talk about an emotional or cognitive process

put has a meaning of physical placing that is metaphorical when used to mean saying something

at one point is a phrase with a meaning of physical location that is metaphorical when used to refer to a moment in time

struggle has a meaning of physical engagement between two people, using all their strength, which is metaphorical when used in reference to a violent political conflict

there is a spatial or locational pronoun used metaphorically to refer to time

situation has a meaning of physical location used metaphorically to refer to political conditions

in place has a meaning of physical location used metaphorically to refer to political conditions

journey has a meaning of a physical movement from one place to another that is used metaphorically to talk about a narrative over time

impact of metatheory **social**



impact of metatheory **social**



impact of metatheory personal



What's your metatheory?

impact of metatheory personal



What's your metatheory?

contribution from Finland



Sanna Talja



Kimmo Tuominen



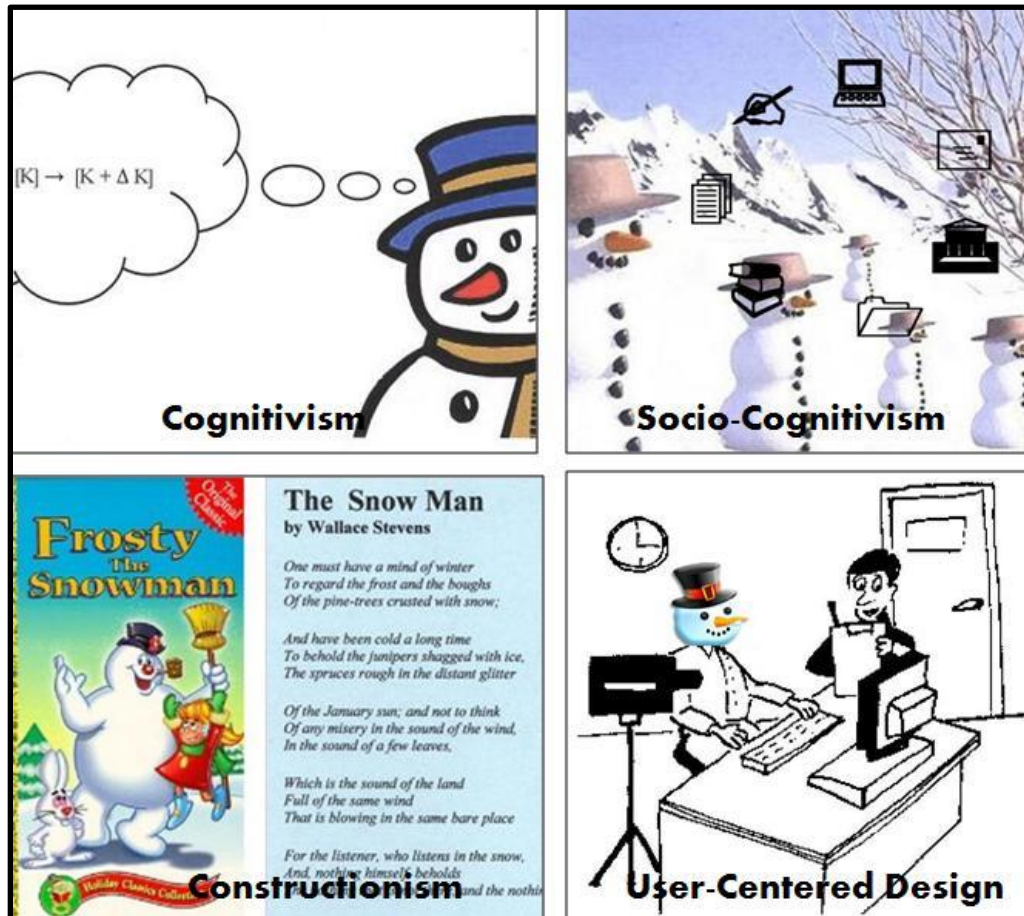
Reijo Savolainen

Talja, S., Tuominen, K. & Savolainen, R. "ISMS" in information science. *Journal of Documentation*, 61(1), 79-101.



“Metatheoretical Snowmen”

(Hartel, ALISE poster, 2005)



gedankenexperiment

“thought-experiment”

The process of employing
imaginary situations to increase
understanding.

five panelists will address:

(in 5 minutes each)

- What is the snowman's reality?
- What is information?
- What is information behavior in the snowman's world?

the jury



academic



non-academic



student

1 (incomprehensible) ----- 10 (eureka!)

grand prizes

asis&t

Your Name Here



**W
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Metatheoretical
Snowmen 2011

panelists & their metatheories

Jonathan Furner – philosophical-analytic

Soo Young Rieh – user-centered design

Michael Olsson – critical theory

Marcia J. Bates – evolutionary approach

Nicholas Belkin – cognitivism

philosophical-analytic

Jonathan Furner

Department of Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles



“...the classical techniques of the discipline of philosophy are brought to bear on information-related matters ”

user-centered design

Soo Young Rieh

School of Information, University of Michigan

“the development and human testing of information organization and information system designs is seen as a path to both scientific understanding and improved information access”



critical studies

Michael Olsson

Journalism, Information & Media Studies Group, University of Technology, Sydney



“the hidden power relations and patterns of documentation within society are revealed and debunked”

evolutionary approach

Marcia J. Bates

School of Education and Information Studies, UCLA

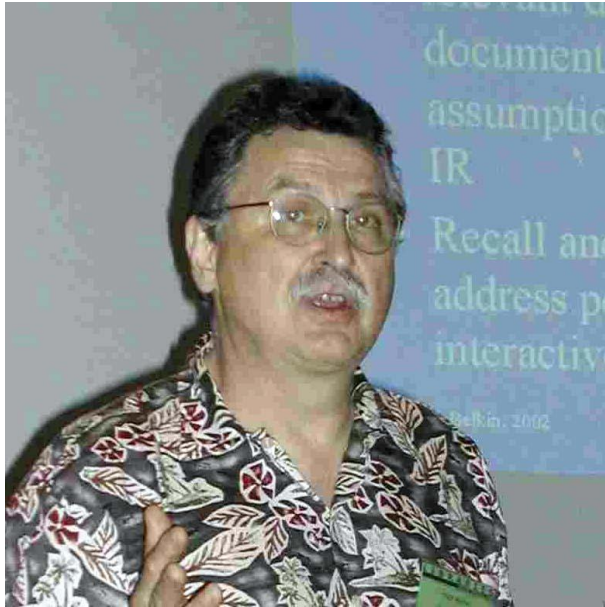
“the insights of biology and evolutionary psychology are brought to bear on information-related phenomena”



cognitivism

Nicholas Belkin

School of Communication, Information & Library Studies, Rutgers University



“the thinking of the individual person operating in the world is the dominating focus of research on information seeking, retrieval, and use”

discussant

Andrew Dillon

School of Information
University of Texas, Austin



And the winner is...

Jonathan Furner – philosophical-analytic

Soo Young Rieh – user-centered design

Michael Olsson – critical theory

Marcia J. Bates – evolutionary approach

Nicholas Belkin – cognitivism

Thank you

Presentation slides are available upon request to
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