Preface

The publication of this work marks a significant milestone in conceptualizations, scholarship, and practice centered on information experiences.

Some four to five decades ago, the emergence of scholarly discourses surrounding people's engagement with information in all of its forms, and how libraries and information agencies enable and empower that engagement through information literacy initiatives, began a rich tradition of engaged scholarship directed to "looking for the red thread of information in the social texture of people's lives" (Bates, 2010, p. 3281). Over the decades, these scholarly traditions have moved from simplistic to more complex understandings of the information worlds and information behaviors of people: from resource use, library use, bibliographic instruction, search, and research skills, to the enablers, drivers, and barriers to information access and use, the information contexts of academic and professional work, and in more recent years, a sustained focus on the everyday life experiences of people. Certainly in the search for patterns of information behaviors and in the development of models, frameworks, and theories about people's engagement with information, we have come to a richer understanding of that "red thread." At the same time, we have learned that, whatever it is, that thread is not neatly woven into people's lives in predictable ways, to create a social and cultural fabric that is certain and stable. We have learned that the information worlds of people are subjective and individual, imprecise, uncertain and fluid, and at times richly disruptive. Grappling with this dynamic and chaotic complexity provides opportunities to continuously reflect on, challenge, examine, and deepen our understanding of the information worlds of people in more holistic ways.

The origin of the English term *experience* appears to come from the Latin *experiential*, which means to try, to experiment, to trial. Even more

insightful is the German word for experience — *Erlebnis* — the *experience of the life*, to *live through something*. This idea underpins this book: making visible scholarly opportunities for richer and deeper contextualizations and examinations of the lived-world experiences of people in everyday contexts as they be, do, and become. It is about people's information life-worlds and lived experiences. As such, this book signifies a deeper consideration, value of, and reflection on the totality of people in an information world. It calls for expanded conceptions of what constitutes information; it engages with multiple meanings of information as in-forming; it explores the interrelationships between in-forming and out-forming of life experiences, unconscious or conscious, as they are lived and known. At the same time, it provides a number of theoretical lenses for examining people's information worlds in more holistic and dynamic ways.

The epistemological and ontological basis for social science research, and indeed qualitative research, is the study of human experience. The book's focus on the lived experiences of people in their information worlds heralds further opportunities for researchers to develop creative approaches to examining and documenting such experiences, continuing to expand our current repertoire of qualitative methods with immersive, interpretivist approaches such as narrative analysis, phenomenography, phenomenology, and ethnography, and engaging with these in rigorous, ethical ways. Such research also fosters the drawing on of a wider range of theoretical perspectives and frameworks, such as cultural studies, critical theories, feminist perspectives, language and linguistic theories: indeed, challenging some of the traditional and longstanding norms that govern information inquiry, and taking a more reflective and participatory stance on the actions, situations, and consequences of people's engagement with information.

Such approaches give further hope in understanding and creating meaningful pathways to solving world problems — all so inextricably linked to information as it is known, shared, and experienced. Here are also rich opportunities to advance education, policy making, social justice and empowerment, and professional practice in creative and more inclusive ways not tried before. And indeed, here is a pathway to the development and evaluation of alternatives to mainstream thinking in information research, seeking to make visible an invisible whole, bringing together many voices and creative approaches to the subjectivity,

uniqueness and fluidity of people's lived experiences in their information worlds. As such, the book represents an opportunity for inclusive capacity-building and strengthening ties among researchers and professional practitioners and the information worlds of people, who form the heart of this work.

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Reference

Bates, M. J. (2010). Information behavior. In M. J. Bates & M. N. Maack (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of library and information sciences* (3rd ed., Vol. 3, pp. 2381−2391). New York, NY: CRC Press.