



*Evidence Summary*

**Younger Adults Derive Pleasure and Utilitarian Benefits from Browsing for Music Information Seeking in Physical and Digital Spaces**

**A Review of:**

Laplante, A., & Downie, J. S. (2011). The utilitarian and hedonic outcomes of music information-seeking in everyday life. *Library & Information Science Research*, 33, 202-210.  
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**Reviewed by:**

Diana K. Wakimoto  
Online Literacy Librarian, California State University, East Bay  
Doctoral Student, San Jose-QUT Gateway Program  
Hayward, California, United States of America  
Email: [diana.wakimoto@csueastbay.edu](mailto:diana.wakimoto@csueastbay.edu)

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**Abstract**

**Objective** – This study’s objective was to identify the utilitarian and hedonic features of satisfying music information seeking experiences from the perspective of younger adults when using physical and digital music information retrieval (MIR) systems in their daily lives.

**Design** – In-depth, semi-structured interviews.

**Setting** – Large public library in Montreal, Canada.

**Subjects** – 15 French-speaking younger adults, 10 males and 5 females (aged 18 to 29 years, mean age of 24 years).

**Methods** – A pre-test was completed to test the interview guide. The guide was divided into five sections asking the participants questions about their music tastes, how music fit into their daily lives, how they discovered music, what music information sources were used and how they were used, what made their experiences satisfying, and their biographical information. Participants were recruited between April 1, 2006 and August 8, 2007 following maximum variation sampling for the main study. Recruitment stopped when data saturation was reached and no new themes arose during analysis. Interviews were recorded and the transcripts were analyzed via constant comparative method (CCM) to determine themes and patterns.

**Main Results** – The researchers found that both utilitarian and hedonic factors contributed to satisfaction with music information seeking experiences for the young adults. Utilitarian factors were divided between two main categories: finding music and finding information about music. Finding information about music could be further divided into three sub-categories: increasing cultural knowledge and social acceptance through increased knowledge about music, enriching the listening experience by finding information about the artist and the music, and gathering information to help with future music purchases including information that would help the participants recommend music to others. Hedonic outcomes that contributed to satisfying information seeking experiences included deriving pleasure and feeling engaged while searching or browsing for music. Especially satisfying experiences were those where the participants felt highly engaged in the process and found new, independent, non-mainstream music. Not finding new music did not automatically lead to an unsatisfying experience for the participants; however, technology malfunctions in digital MIR systems and unpleasant environments such as those with unfriendly staff in physical music spaces (libraries and stores), led to unsatisfying experiences for the participants.

**Conclusions** – As the results show that the hedonic aspects of music information seeking are very important, designers of MIR systems must take into account the hedonic as well as utilitarian outcomes when creating user interfaces. MIR systems should be designed with browsing as well as searching capabilities so searchers can make serendipitous discoveries of new music and information about music. In other words, MIR systems need to be engaging to ensure satisfying interactions for searchers.

### **Commentary**

This study is well positioned in the larger body of research literature on consumer behaviour, information seeking, and music seeking. The

researchers' study extends this literature by focusing on the little studied area of music information seeking in everyday life where a person may have no defined information need. This study is well designed with a clearly explained research problem, theoretical framework, methodology, and results. The researchers presented well-reasoned conclusions connecting the study to the existing literature base as well as discussing how the study extended the understanding of how younger adults interact with MIR systems. The researchers did not over-generalize their conclusions and clearly stated the limitations of their research. They also suggested avenues for future research including studying other populations of individuals in different geographical locations and with other information needs in order to more fully understand music information-seeking in multiple contexts.

This is a very well written and strong study, appraised using the Critical Appraisal Checklist created by Glynn (2006) and found to be valid. It is especially strong in relating the new findings to the theoretical framework and to relevant literature and there are very few weaknesses. The inclusion of the interview guide would have been appreciated and would allow for others to replicate the research. The reporting of the results overall is very organized and answers the research questions posed at the beginning of the article; however, there is no differentiation between the participants' experiences using digital MIR systems and physical MIR systems. This differentiation would be useful for designers of MIR systems who may want to use the study's results to improve the MIR systems. Furthermore, while the article reported the gender of the participants, it did not comment on differences or similarities in experiences or perspectives of information seeking based on gender. Future research into MIR systems could use gender as a lens of analysis to determine if and how gender impacts user satisfaction with MIR systems.

This study extends our understanding of how younger people perceive satisfying music information-seeking experiences and re-

emphasizes the need to take into account hedonic factors as well as utilitarian factors when designing MIR systems. For designers of MIR systems, these results demonstrate the necessity of modifying user interfaces so they facilitate browsing for information and music as the researchers noted that “searching for music for everyday-life purposes are often motivated by a vague or ill-defined need” (p. 209). The study should lead to more research on the music information seeking which will

further help in designing MIR systems and allow librarians to better engage their users in satisfying information-seeking experiences.

### **References**

- Glynn, L. (2006). A critical appraisal tool for library and information research. *Library Hi Tech*, 24(3), 387-399. doi:10.1108/07378830610692154