

The Role of Information in WUSC Scholar Settlement Experiences

This information sheet summarizes reflections and recommendations from a research partnership between the WUSC community and the iSchool at The University of British Columbia. This information sheet was prepared by Saguna Shankar, Heather O'Brien, and Erin Fields, members of the research team affiliated with the iSchool.

Introduction

In 2016, WUSC UBC began a research partnership with UBC iSchool faculty, students, and a university librarian in order to explore the ways in which WUSC Scholars used information pre- and post-arrival. A study was developed in consultation with members of the WUSC community to focus on information practices, or what people do with information. The goal of this project was to generate recommendations to support the effective and timely provision of information to current and future students within the WUSC community.

Research approach

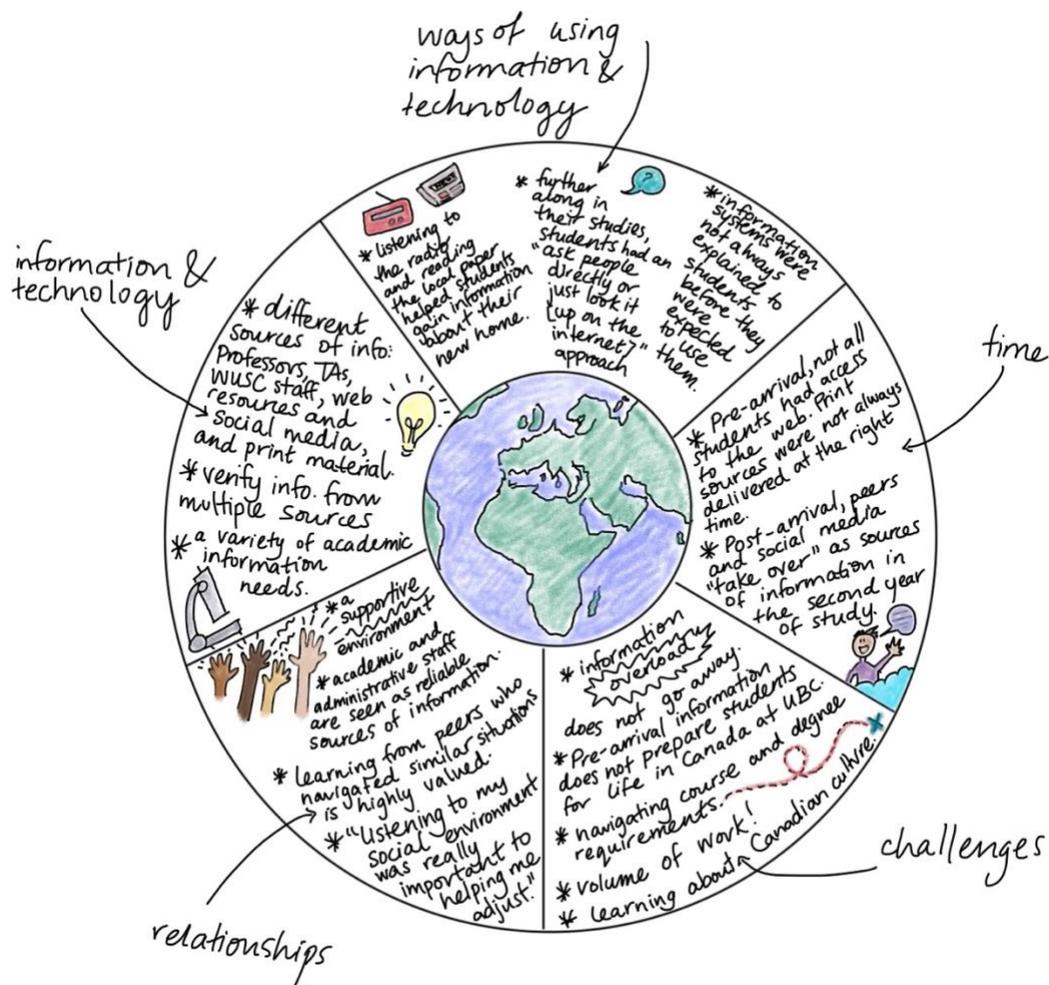
The research team interviewed six WUSC Scholars, conducted a library instruction session, and held a knowledge exchange event. Interviews with students were held between January 2016 and May 2017, and a full report was completed in 2018.

Using different methods, the research team worked with WUSC to identify:

- types of information needed and/or accessed;
- interpersonal, digital or physical sources used to locate information;
- challenges encountered when searching for information;
- cases in which needed information was not found, and the outcome of these situations.

Reflections

The research team observed challenges with respect to when and how information is delivered to WUSC students. There are opportunities to help improve WUSC students' experiences by exploring different ways in which information could be provided pre- and post-arrival. Reflections are summarized by topic below.



Recommendations

Knowledge sharing at the WUSC National level

Issue: Students have little time and limited resources to prepare for life in Canada. WUSC national may wish to experiment with re-designing its communication policies and practices.

Proposal: Create new resources to better meet students' information needs for accurate information about Canada, Vancouver and UBC in accessible formats and modes of delivery that align with students' communication preferences.

Campus life

Issue: Investigate current orientation programs available to undergraduate students and international students and facilitate access to WUSC Scholars.

Proposal: Provide guided supports to connect WUSC Scholars with events, groups, clubs and societies at UBC.

Academic planning

Issue: WUSC Scholars may benefit from learning about graduate and professional programs as they progress through their undergraduate degrees.

Proposal: Look for opportunities to share news of information sessions with WUSC Scholars.

Career planning & job opportunities

Issue: WUSC Scholars expressed a need to build a network and prepare for life beyond UBC. Students were also looking to their futures, and trying to figure out how their studies could contribute to their career prospects, how to prepare a resume, find a first job, and how to gain meaningful work experience.

Proposal: Look for opportunities to expose WUSC Scholars to career opportunities.

Skill building & knowledge exchange

Issue: Find ways to support WUSC Scholars to meet their goals to: assess the quality and validity of information; conduct research and write for academic audiences; create and communicate with new media; learn about Canadian culture and history; manage information overload; organize personal information; protect their privacy online; and search the web for information, among other goals.

Proposals:

1. Identify ways to design resources with WUSC Scholars for current and future students.

2. Develop peer learning programs to practice information-related skills.

Relationships with the library

Issue: Personal relationships and contacts are a primary way WUSC Scholars gain information.

Proposal: Investigate the development of programs and closer partnerships with the library to get support and guidance during the first year of study.

Research and resource development

Issue: WUSC Scholars are a resource for one another, and their knowledge can be documented and shared within the WUSC community so that current and future students may benefit.

Proposal: Learning "scenarios" have been identified in the research and more can be developed by past and present WUSC Scholars to keep the content fresh (e.g., videos, podcasts, zines or blog posts on students' experiences).

Navigating online spaces

Issue: Students noted that finding information pre-arrival was difficult, and that the UBC website did not always provide relevant information.

Proposal: Consult with students to design a timeline of information needs to address the needs of the newly arrived, those within their first few months, etc. to assist with information overload and providing information at the point of need.

Reciprocity in research partnerships

Issue: In research partnerships, WUSC may wish to work closely with partners and consider taking on stewardship of research data in future initiatives.

Proposals:

1. In future projects, consent may be obtained for research data collected from students and staff to be used by WUSC to guide services and provide a fuller picture of students' experiences over time.
2. Working with a WUSC Scholar as a research assistant may strengthen future partnership projects and support a more community-grounded process.
3. WUSC may wish to engage partners by drafting partnership agreements to guide the development of future projects, establish aims and commitments, and ensure reciprocity.

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Glossary

Information need: A need for information to answer a question, resolve a problem, carry out a task, or work towards a goal in order to move forward in our lives.

Information practice: Information practices involve what people do with information. These activities may include reading, searching for, interpreting and evaluating information, and using information to accomplish broader goals, such as completing a class assignment or locating accommodation. Information practices are socially constructed, meaning that they shape and are shaped by the people (friends, academic staff, family in other countries), places (community size and composition, classroom dynamics), and things (technological systems, social norms and values, rules and regulations) that inform our personal contexts.

Information world: The people, places, and things in our lives that help us search for, discover, or use information.