Marcia J. Bates: Past→Present→Future

A panel session by Dr. Jenna Hartel and students
from the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto,
with special guest, Dr. Marcia J. Bates, UCLA

This panel session explores, critiques, and celebrates the work of canonical information scientist, Marcia J. Bates. The timing could not be better; she is the keynote speaker at CAIS 2017 and has just published a landmark, three-volume collection of her life's work. Embracing the conference topic of the "development and future of information science research," at this event Bates' most impactful ideas will be analyzed and then projected into the future. To begin, Dr. Jenna Hartel (Bates' student at UCLA and an authority on her work) will survey her oeuvre. Then, three of Hartel's graduate students at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto, will report on their semester-long explorations of a singular concept by Bates, such as *search tactics* (1979), *berrypicking* (1989), or *Invisible Substrate* (1999). Each student's talk will feature a summary and critical examination of the seminal idea in its original historical context. Then, the same concept will be considered in the light of the informational trends that characterize this Information Age. Metaphorically speaking, each presentation will build a temporal bridge of the "red thread of information" (Bates, 1999) to span past→ present→future. Following each talk, Marcia J. Bates will share her reflections. Ample time will be provided for discussion among Dr. Bates, the panelists, and attendees. To mark this occasion, everyone present will receive a handmade souvenir that is inspired by the red thread of information.

BACKGROUND: READING COURSE ON MARCIA J. BATES AT THE FACULTY OF INFORMATION, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

During the Winter semester of 2017, six intellectually ambitious masters students will participate in a Reading Course on the work of Marcia J. Bates. The Reading Course will be hosted by Dr. Jenna Hartel and entail systematic study of Bates' major writings, plus selected articles that illuminate their immediate context. Participants in the course will gain a coherent perspective on the relationship between people, information, and information systems.

The Reading Course draws upon the recently published, three-volume collection of Bates' writings and will be approached in six topical sessions: 1) Biography and Social Context, 2.) Searching Behaviour, 3.) Information Seeking and Interaction, 4.) Information, 5.) The Information Professions, and 6.) Conclusion. Throughout the semester, analytical attention will be directed twofold; towards mastery of Bates' foundational ideas, and their reinterpretation and application in a contemporary

information environment. In addition to independent reading, all participants will convene for discussion, and Dr. Bates will participate virtually in these sessions.

To fortify newly gained insights, the Readers will generate a substantial Final Paper that re-visions a seminal concept by Bates in today's Information Age. The papers will form the foundation for this panel at CAIS 2017 in Toronto.

MARCIA J. BATES

Marcia J. Bates is an acclaimed theorist, educator, and writer of information science. Her principal achievement can be located at the crossroads of information retrieval systems and user behavior. Bates' early work shed light on the vocabulary problem, interface design, search strategies, and the information seeking habits of different groups. Later contributions have focused on the nature of information and the information professions.

Dr. Bates is a canonical author per White and McCain's (1998) author co-citation analysis of the field. She is one of only three scholars to have received the *JASIS&T* Best Paper Award twice, and she has three articles among the twenty most highly cited library and information science papers of all time. Bates has won the ASIS&T Research Award (1998) and Award of Merit (2005) and the ALISE Award for Professional Contribution to Library and Information Science (2005). After retiring from teaching in 2008, she published philosophical statements about the nature of information and as a magnum opus, she edited the 3rd edition of the *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*. In a nomination statement for the Award of Merit, peers testify that her work stands out as "creative" and "innovative" with great "originality" and "imagination."

Photos from left to right: Dr. Bates, while a student of LIS at the University of California-Berkeley (1968); Dr. Bates and doctoral student Jenna Hartel at the University of California, Los Angeles (2003); Dr. Bates (2016).

2016 marks the publication of a three-volume collection of the selected works of Marcia J. Bates: *Volume I, Information and the Information Professions*; *Volume II, Information Searching Theory and Practice*, and *Volume III, Information Users and Information System Design*. The Reading Course draws primarily from these books , available from Bates' author page at Amazon.com.

Three shortcomings to Bates' enterprise have been registered (Hartel, 2013) and participants in the Reading Course and the panel audience will be encouraged to explore these and other constructively critical positions. Firstly, some of her early ideas may be obsolete due to dramatic

changes in the information environment. Secondly, in ways her later writings are out-of-synch with contemporary theorizing, especially those sensitized by the concept of metatheory. Thirdly, compared to scholars of equal stature (e. g. Carol Kuhlthau, Brenda Dervin) whose work has been propagated through a turnkey methodology, Bates' ideas are highly cited but not expanded by others--and therefore may have fallen short of greater impact.

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