

Exploring 'inspiration' and the library's potential role in the creative process

Cait Peterson

Assistant Academic Support Librarian

Chelsea College of Arts

c.peterson@arts.ac.uk

[@CaitLibrarian](#)

Tuesday 16 July, ARLIS Conference 2019

Background image by [Prawny](#) from [Pixabay](#)

In his 2008 literature review, William Hemmig identified 5 purposes for which artists seek information:

1. inspiration
2. specific visual elements
3. knowledge of materials and techniques
4. marketing and career guidance
5. knowledge of current trends in the art world (p. 355).

Hemmig, W. (2008) 'The information-seeking behavior of visual artists: a literature review' *Journal of Documentation*, 64(3), pp. 343-362.

Background image by [Prawny](#) from [Pixabay](#)



What is ‘inspiration’,
and how is it found?

What is 'inspiration'?

- terminology
- historical
- cultural
- psychological

Csikzentmihalyi's theory of 'flow'

- There are clear goals every step of the way;
- there is immediate feedback to one's actions;
- there is a balance between challenge and skills;
- actions and awareness are merged;
- distractions are excluded from consciousness;
- there is no worry of failure;
- self-consciousness disappears;
- the sense of time becomes distorted;
- the activity becomes *autotelic* (something that is an end in itself) (pp. 111-113).

Csikzentmihalyi, M. (1996) *Creativity: the psychology of discovery and invention*. Reprint, New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2013.

Background image by [Prawny](#) from [Pixabay](#)

How is 'inspiration' found?

- browsing
- Information Encountering (IE)
- satisficing
- serendipity

Practical ideas

Sessions – including theories of creative thinking in library research sessions, ‘Creative Library Research’ sessions run by librarians and Academic Support

Resources – buying across a variety of domains, encouraging users’ suggestions, using Special Collections as inspiration for studio work

Systems – allow for serendipity virtually, for instance, the new books selection on UAL’s Library Search homepage

Spaces – allowing for flexible work spaces, allowing for serendipity, displaying book and journal covers.

Next steps with this research

- upcoming journal article
- potential interview project
- planning more creativity-related library sessions

Thank you for listening!

Cait Peterson
Assistant Academic Support Librarian
Chelsea College Of Arts
c.peterson@arts.ac.uk
[@CaitLibrarian](#)