

**Expanding information horizons for impact:  
Exploring information behaviours in wine industry research  
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### **Introduction**

University researchers are asked, increasingly, to demonstrate the impact of their research. However, adoption of research innovations depends on practitioners' information behaviours, workplace cultures and opportunities for research engagement between researchers and practitioners. This paper presents results of a study that explored winemakers' information behaviours as they engaged with wine scientists sharing research results. The findings point to implications for academic library services for researchers (e.g., including impact in data management strategies) and communication strategies (e.g., appropriate use of social media) for engaging with practice communities.

The wine industry in Australia accounts for \$2.3 billion in domestic sales, annually (ABS, 2013) but is undergoing significant change. Winemakers require research innovations to address climate change, internationalisation, and changing consumer tastes. By sharing information effectively with industry, researchers can ensure that innovations are adopted appropriately. However, little research explores researchers' engagement practices with industry (e.g., Hood and Hill 2014; Cullen, Forbes and Grout, 2013; Hill et al., 2008). None of these studies examined industry members' information behaviours or scientists information-sharing activities.

### **Research Questions**

This study explored winemakers' information behaviours, addressing the following questions:

1. Are current information-sharing strategies (e.g., brochures, seminars, social media) addressing winemakers information needs, effectively?
2. What are the best mechanisms for communicating research results to industry?
3. What role can technologies play in supporting winemakers' engagement with research information?

### **Methods**

The study used constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2008) for data collection and analysis, and to develop analytic themes. The project was informed by Milofsky's (2000) concept of "transparent research," which is "designed to serve the needs of the people studied" (p. 61) through ethnographic case studies. Focus group interviews were conducted with 25 winemakers from four Australian wineries to explore individuals' information behaviours. As an exploratory design the study documented baseline data on winemakers' information needs, technology preferences, and adoption strategies. Participants completed a technology inventory on typical engagement practices and format preferences (e.g., paper vs. online). Participants ranged in age from 25 to 67, with many years of experience (from 6 to 55 years).

### **Study Results**

The findings point to key information needs within the wine industry. First, participants identified a preference for personalised, in-person information sharing rather than mass-distributed materials or untargeted presentations. In-person training was preferred to give participants opportunities to discuss emerging research with scientists and to engage with colleagues about adoption. Second, participants indicated dissatisfaction with typical information-sharing strategies (e.g., webinars, conferences, brochures), which are too general, inappropriate for specific regions, or in unsuitable formats. Participants also indicated that, while social media play important roles in wine marketing, they are not typically used as research-related information sources. Unreliable network infrastructure and inconsistent access were key concerns raised in accessing web materials.

In addition to presenting key findings, the presentation will explore the implications for designing academic library services to support researchers engaging with industry. By documenting industry and community members' information needs and assessing appropriate communication strategies, the study provides unique results for the design of information sharing, broadly.

## References

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