



# College of Information Sciences and Technology

## **Narratives in Collaborative Information Seeking**

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# Motivation

- IIS vs CIS
- If CIS is not just about “Q&A”, then what does it exactly constitute?



# One way to conceptualize this..

... is to think of CIS  
as orchestrated  
via “narratives”



Image Source: [http://media.photobucket.com/image/collaboration%20teams/nota\\_bene\\_/teamwork.jpg](http://media.photobucket.com/image/collaboration%20teams/nota_bene_/teamwork.jpg)

# What are Narratives?

- “...“*thick descriptions*” that provide a holistic account of a set of events and contain a mixture of **beliefs, intentions, actions, and contextual details** that are **temporally** ordered, and have an implied “**plot**” that connects them in terms of causality” (Bartel & Garud, 2009)
- “**event-centered and historically particular, located in a particular time and place.**” (Mattingly & Lawlor, 2000)

# Why are they important?

- Most social information in our everyday life is transmitted in the form of narratives. (Bruner, 1986)
- Our organizational realities too, are transmitted in the form of narratives. (Weick, 1995)
- Information in memory tends to be stored and retrieved in the form of narratives (Fiske & Taylor, 1984)
- People have a predisposition to share and use information in the form of narratives (Ricoeur, 1990)

# Consider this Vignette..

1:40pm: Registration associate RA2 tells me that she feels sorry for the patient in room 20 who is 8-weeks pregnant and was hit by a car. The next shift's charge nurse, CN3, arrives and the current charge nurse, CN2, tells CN3 information about each patient by going through FirstNet.

CN2 tells CN3 that the patient in room 20 was hit by a car and is 8 months pregnant. CN2 remembers the case of a former patient who was 7 months pregnant when brought to the ED and the baby had been lost because no one realized that the patient was pregnant.

5:00pm: CN3 is talking to the attending AP about her patients. She specifically tells AP that she is worried that the patient in room 20 who is 8 months pregnant.

AP (surprised): "How pregnant?"

CN3: "8 months. I've been told baby is ok."

AP is still concerned so he and CN3 pull up the patient's record in FirstNet and discuss various aspects of her case. They don't verify the pregnancy information. They miss that the record says 8-weeks pregnant. They discuss how the patient should be treated given the advanced stage of pregnancy.

*From Paul & Reddy (2010)*

# Narratives in Action

- Vignette illustrates acts of sensemaking during collaborative information seeking. Memories of the past is evoked, and re-contextualized to the “task in hand via a plot.
- Captures how people *work the context to “get things done” and “seek the needed information”*.
- **Temporality is structured.** Past, present, and future are re-ordered to cater to the “task in hand”
- Thereby, narratives play a dual-function – in simultaneously being a device for “**sensemaking**”, and in being a vehicle for “**generating action**”.
- simultaneously implicates “*the physical artifacts (e.g., equipment, databases and documents), work processes (e.g., analytic techniques and standard operating procedures), and people (e.g., expertise, power and political clout)*” (Bartel & Garud, 2009)

# Research Questions

1. What role do narratives play during Collaborative Information Seeking activities?
2. How do narratives help actors in structuring their organizational reality?
  - a. How do narratives structure “temporality” within organizations? (i.e. how do narratives help actors to evoke past memories, attend to present experiences, and anticipate future needs)
  - b. How do narratives aid actors in reconfiguring their everyday work activities (i.e. how does it help actors in balancing between the “routinized” and non-routinized” aspects of work in order to “get things done”)
3. What possible design recommendations could one arrive from the gained descriptive insights?



# Research Challenges

1. What are the different ways to capture “narratives” on the field?
2. What marks the boundaries of a “narrative”? In other words, what is not a “narrative”?
3. How could these “narratives” be best used as theoretical lens to illuminate CIS better ?

# Thank You

## Questions?