Stories Re-Told: Synthesizing the Vocabulary of Adaptation

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Abstract

This paper introduces three umbrella terms (Literal Adaptation, Spirit Adaptation, and Creative Adaptation) that define the broad approaches to creating an adaptation through a consideration of the literature of six different fields and their approaches to the study of adaptation: the study of Classical Mythology (a sub-set of Classics), Cultural Studies, Adaptation Theory (from Film Studies), Fan Fiction Studies (from Fan Studies), Folklore Studies, and Translation Studies. Although Library and Information Studies (LIS) does occasionally deal with adaptation, often in the form of Children's Literature and/or Fairy Tales, there is no widely-accepted theory or method for doing so. It is therefore absent from the six disciplines reviewed, despite having substantial cross-over with each. As scholarship becomes more interdisciplinary, juggling the terms of a variety of fields becomes more important and more challenging. This paper aims to provide three accessible terms for those interested in studying adaptions from a broad or cross-disciplinary perspective that can substitute for the lengthy and specialized vocabulary of each individual discipline. It may also provide an example for others looking to similarly synthesize a set of basic cross-disciplinary vocabularies.

Keywords: Adaptation, Storytelling, Interdisciplinary Studies, Translation

Studying the information that exists and evolves in individual stories that are told over and over can show us which pieces of information were prized across cultures, or through time. Studying adaptations can illuminate the pieces of a story that are present, forgotten, or changed between versions. These changes reflect the attitudes, values, and priorities of the people and culture that are choosing to re-tell them. Many disciplines in the humanities tackle the evolution of stories, yet they rarely agree on a common vocabulary.

In this paper, I will consider the approaches of six different fields with regards to the study of adaptation. They are as follows: the study of Classical Mythology (a sub-set of Classics), Cultural Studies, Adaptation Theory (from Film Studies), Fan Fiction Studies (from Fan Studies), Folklore Studies, and Translation Studies. They are all interdisciplinary fields which borrow heavily from each other and disciplines beyond, and all reflect similar, yet nuanced approaches to studying a story that is told in multiple instances, undergoing changes over multiple axes (such as time, medium, authors, etc.), i.e. adaptation. A deeper discussion of these disciplines' approaches to adaption can be found in Chapter 3 of "Exploring the Digital Medusa: Ssnakes, Sstorytelling, and Sserious Leisure" (Borynec, 2019). A visual summary of the majority of this discussion has been made available as an appendix, which provides context for this paper's goal: to provide three accessible terms for those interested in studying adaptions from a broad, or cross-disciplinary perspective that can substitute for the lengthy and specialized vocabulary of each discipline. This paper may also provide an example for others looking to similarly synthesize a set of basic cross-disciplinary vocabularies.

While Library and Information Studies (LIS) does occasionally deal with adaptation, often in the form of Children's Literature and/or Fairy Tales, my research determined that there is no set theory or method for doing so; it is therefore absent from the six disciplines that were reviewed. However, this paper can serve LIS researchers in several ways. First, as mentioned, information professionals study stories, especially when they are working in library contexts. Being able to broadly understand adaptation vocabularies will help LIS professionals evaluate, use, and recommend sources. Although adaptations do not always need to be treated differently from their originals, being armed with the knowledge of the method and reason behind an adaptation can help LIS researchers determine how to handle it in concert with (or apart from) the original story. Secondly, "Interdisciplinarians face much greater difficulties searching the literature than disciplinarians" (Szostak, 2013, p. 52). These difficulties include a larger scope, and the tendency for library catalogs to be organized around disciplines (using a separate terminology for each field, even though the concepts discussed might be exceedingly similar). Being aware of these challenges, regardless of the topic(s) being

studied, can help Academic Librarians provide high-quality support to interdisciplinary researchers.[1]

New definitions, rather than an introduction to existing terms, are necessary for interdisciplinary researchers. A glossary of terms for each discipline that studies a topic might prove prohibitively long, as well as unintentionally opaque for a researcher without a background in the field from which that particular definition comes. Furthermore, if such a glossary does not exist (and they rarely do), it is unlikely a researcher will have time to do a thorough literature review of each possibly relevant discipline. Moreover, finding relevant papers can be tricky when one is not already familiar with the language they use (Szostak, 2013, p. 52-53). Collaborative research teams from interdisciplinary backgrounds often develop a "pidgin" vocabulary can facilitate team communication and understanding regarding terms and definitions, because existing vocabularies can be contentious, insufficient, or irrelevant (Szostak, 2013, p. 50). This works for individual teams, but the pidgin vocabulary must be reinvented or re-taught for each new group of researchers, and it will not easily translate outside of the research group to non-affiliates. If interdisciplinary researchers intend to communicate outside their research group, whether through conversation or publications, it is often best to break complex concepts into more basic ones that will most readily contribute to shared understanding (Szostak, 2011). As prohibitive as researching endless definitions from endless disciplines can be for an interdisciplinary researcher, it is even more prohibitive to require the same amount of research from prospective readers of disseminated research. Including a list of terms and definitions in a paper is helpful, but only as long as those definitions are approachable and do not overtake the point the paper is trying to make. That is why this paper focuses solely on creating a small collection of basic concepts/definitions for use by interdisciplinary researchers (or readers) studying adaptation. Each definition is named intuitively and is designed to be easy to understand, whether or not one has a background in adaptation or any discipline mentioned by this paper.

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[1] For a set of suggestions for interdisciplinary research strategies, see Szostak (2013) pp. 52-53. Szostak has also written on possible ways to re-organize systems of document classification to be friendlier to interdisciplinarians and interdisciplinary research (Szostak, 2011).

When reading about the approaches to the study of adaptation used by the six fields dealt with in this paper, three overarching methods of adaptation creation consistently recurred. After comparing the adaptive methods and vocabulary used by each of the fields more intentionally, it became clear that each field tended to break down their understanding of adaptations along similar lines, mostly concerning how close the adaptations were to the original text, either in language or in meaning. I identified these approaches through the traditional humanities research method: I read a wide variety of scholarly material, entered into a dialogue (both written and verbal) with other scholars to test my results, and finally put forward my ideas more formally through conference presentations and publications ("How is humanities research conducted?", n. d.).

After identifying these three overarching trends demonstrated by the six disciplines when defining approaches to adaptation, it became important to give them simple and intuitive names. This is the purpose of this paper: to name each approach and give them simple definitions that scholars from any discipline can confidently apply to their research. It should be noted that not every one of these six disciplines used or studied all three of the approaches defined by this paper. Those that did and did not are outlined in the appendix. This paper chose to outline all three umbrella terms regardless of whether they appeared individually in each discipline because this triumvirate covers all of the approaches to adaptation that were identified in the literature review. Defining all three as a complete set remains the most productive way to provide an accessible vocabulary to interdisciplinary scholars.

The three definitions are designed to be straightforward and easily applied; however, as with any definition, there are edge cases that push against these intentionally simplistic definitions. This paper will first define the three methods of adaptation common to the six disciplines, and then illuminate some of the complications that arise when trying to apply the definitions to those edge cases, as the distinction between each method is not always clear-cut.

Much of the language used in this paper is borrowed from Translation Studies, as most people will have at least a passing familiarity with the general act and need for translating texts. Therefore, while the words "translation" (i.e. transferring the story from

one language to another) and "adaptation" (i.e. re-telling a story) may both appear in direct quotations used by this paper, they should be considered more or less interchangeable. After all, translating a story from one language to another necessitates its re-telling. This comparison likewise allows for the interchangeable use of the term "adaptor" and "translator." Both terms will be used to denote a person re-creating a story that was created by someone else. "Author" will be primarily used to denote the creator of an original text.[2] "Text" is used in its broadest definition: the object of study, regardless of whether it is written, sculpted, filmed, painted, etc.

Methods of Adaptation

Each of the six disciplines mentioned in this paper has its own robust collection of words that denote the different methods or processes of adaptation most relevant to their field. Translation Studies has words like "*intra*lingual translation" (rewording in the same language), "*inter*lingual translation" (translating between languages), and "intersemiotic translation" (translating between verbal and non-verbal languages) (Bassnett, 2002, p. 23). Film Studies uses words like "faithfulness/fidelity" (i.e. as close to the original as possible), "supplementation and surplus" (i.e. adding value by bringing fresh insights to an interpretation of the original), and "freeplay" (taking unspecified liberties to create interest and alter meaning) to describe different approaches to adaptation (Slethaug, 2014, p. 7). Fan Studies has an endless amount of words that denote the very specific way a text was modified by a fan author, such as "racebending" (changing the race of existing characters), or "alternate universe" (transplanting the whole story to some world) (Barner, 2017, pp. 90-91). There is a multitude of possibly relevant words for interdisciplinary researchers to familiarize themselves with. I only provided a couple of words from three of the six disciplines discussed in this paper to demonstrate the true breadth of definitions that might apply to an interdisciplinary study of adaptation. Be assured that there are plenty more terms available for consideration both in and beyond those six disciplines, many of which demand a certain level of familiarity with the discipline to be understood. That is why a glossary of terms is much

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2   No text is truly "original" as every work is inter-textual, even if only within its creator's subconscious, but "original text" is used in this paper to mean a select text that was used as the basis for an adaption or a translation at least once.

less feasible than is simplifying the concepts and synthesizing the terms provided by this paper.

Each of the words provided in the previous paragraph (as well as all of the further terms that were not mentioned) mean slightly different things. Each discipline must point to facets of adaptation that are most relevant to their field. It makes sense that Translation Studies will be preoccupied with language, while Film Studies is more concerned with the transition from book to film, and Fan Studies is interested in indicating the exact relationship the adaptation has to the original (i.e. what changes were made to the "canon"),[3] and so on. Each of these terms is useful to and valued by its discipline; however, when studying adaptations more broadly (or across many disciplines), it can be difficult to juggle all of these very specialized vocabularies. Therefore, I would like to introduce three terms that denote the three main approaches to the adaptation of a story: the "Literal Adaptation," the "Spirit Adaptation," and the "Creative Adaptation." Each of the six reviewed disciplines refers to at least one of these three umbrella approaches in their literature, and most of their specialized vocabulary (like the terms noted above) can be understood as a sub-type of these three methods of adaptation.

It should be noted that, while I describe them as "broad" or "umbrella" terms, these three definitions actually fall along a spectrum with Literal Adaptation at one end, Spirit Adaptation somewhere in the middle, and Creative Adaptation on the far opposite end. The boundaries between them are fuzzy, and often debatable. Creative Adaptations and Spirit Adaptations are particularly intertwined, and their relationship will be complicated in a later section of this paper.

The following section of this paper will be dedicated to defining and interpreting the terms that I have coined so that they may be used in interdisciplinary research into adaptation. This is a useful endeavor because interdisciplinary research often forces scholars to prioritize the language of one discipline over the other or redefine the terms

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3   "Canon" can mean two very different things. In the traditional sense, canon is a term used for works of fiction and/or literature that are considered part of a representative collection of a period or genre of writing (Lombardi, 2019). The more contemporary definition, which is often used by fans of various media and/or by scholars studying those media, defines canon as the source(s) considered authoritative by the fan community ("Canon," n. d.). What is "canon" is often under debate, no matter which definition is being referenced, or which community is using it.

altogether before they can begin to speak about their research (Szostak, 2013, p. 50). Hopefully, this paper can spare them that work, at least when it comes to adapting stories.

Literal Adaptation

Literal Adaptation describes when the new text seeks to reproduce the original word-for-word, or scene-by-scene, and ultimately mirror the story exactly. This was once a popular style in Translation Studies before the discipline internalized the idea that each language has different affordances in meaning and that no 'true' equivalence can ever be found (Bassnett, 2002, p. 33). Film Studies, and Adaptation Theory in particular, was also once devoted to "faithfulness" as a measure of what made a film adaptation good: "the literal-minded transcription of the novel in film" (Slethaug, 2014, p. 2). Translation Studies and Adaptation Theory have since pushed beyond this style, recognizing its fallacious assumption that meaning can be exactly replicated when adapting a text. Literal Adaptation is still sometimes used as an interim text during the process of translating a text from language to language and may show up in the adaptor's notes as a way to add meaning and explain the adaptor's choices (Bassnett, 2002, p. 57). Literal Adaptation is evident in the process of adaptation in Classics, most notably when translating poetry, as the adaptor struggles with reproducing the words, the metre, and the rhyming scheme of the original text all at once (Bassnett, 2002, p. 87). The adaptor may use footnotes (or endnotes) to give the text in the original language and the word-by-word literal translation side by side so that the reader can gain a fuller understanding of the original. This comparison is often accompanied by the translator's explanation of the choices they made in the final adaptation and how they interpreted the original (Morford et al., 2011, p. xvi). These are useful techniques, not only for understanding the text being read but also to make explicit the translator's methodology and possible biases.

Spirit Adaptation

Most of the disciplines I examined tend towards the second approach: The Spirit Adaptation. I named it this because it is dedicated to emulating the "spirit" of the original text, rather than its exact form. With this approach, adaptors break the text down into

chunks, translating section-by-section instead of word-by-word,[4] and trying to recreate the sense of that section for the reader in the context of the whole work (Bassnett, 2002, p. 120). "There is a *moral responsibility to the original*, but [the adaptor] has the right to significantly alter the text in the [adaptation] process in order to provide [the] reader with a text that conforms to [the new language or medium's] stylistic and idiomatic norms" [emphasis mine] (Bassnett, 2002, p. 121). This is a much less stifling approach. Films become free to use their conventions to adapt a text, substituting striking camera movements for textual tempo, or a thrilling soundtrack for a description of how the character is feeling, expressing the text in the visual language afforded by film. What prevents the added freedom of Spirit Translations from transitioning into Creative Adaptations is the "moral responsibility to the original" mentioned above (Bassnett, 2002, p. 121): Spirit Adaptations are made to share the original work with new readers, whether adapted through languages, mediums, or cultural times and spaces. Although these adaptations may give added value to the original source or provide fresh insights as to their meaning, their intention is not to create an entirely new work of which they become the author. Rather, they intend to share the work of an existing author. They are a steward of the existing work, not the author of a new work. They act as adaptor rather than author. Many stage productions could be categorized as a Spirit Adaptation: the actors are performing the words of the playwright for the audience, rather than re-inventing the play wholesale, even if significant changes were made.[5]

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4   Section-by-section is not as easy as it sounds. Poems might "easily" break down into translation units via their lines, verses, and stanzas, but prose text is not as linear as it might appear on the surface. Chapters, sections, and paragraphs (as with a poem's lines, verses, and, stanzas), or even individual sentences, must always relate back to the overall work or risk losing meaning (Bassnett, 2002, p. 121).

5   Audiences are often very different to the ones that the playwright may have had in mind when writing, whether due to time, geography, class, etc. As language evolves over time, across space, and within isolated populations, different language must often be used to explain the same ideas to a different audience. Thus, even if the play changes dramatically from how it would have been historically performed, this does not necessarily mean it cannot be classified as a Spirit Adaptation. Of course, this opinion could be considered contentious. Each stage production would need to be classified on its own merits, as would all instances of adaptations, as the authorial (and adaptorial) intent of a text is often relevant to its classification. Furthermore, the role of playwright vs director has been heavily debated for centuries (Luere & Berger, 1994).

Creative Adaptation

The final approach is that of the Creative Adaptation. These are works that abandon that moral responsibility to the original (although they may hold it in high regard and indeed emulate it), and where the adaptor becomes the primary author of the new text (Hellekson & Busse, 2014, p. 3), as opposed to claiming to be an extension of the original author's work. These works are *transformative*. Hellekson and Busse describe the "transformative fan" as one who "take[s] a creative step to make the worlds and characters their own, be it by telling stories, cosplaying the characters, creating artworks, or engaging in any of the many other forms active fan participation can take," (2014, pp. 3-4). Elements such as an alternate ending, or techniques like positioning what was once a minor character in the role of the protagonist, may prompt an adaptation to be classified as a Creative Adaptation (Hellekson & Busse, 2014, p. 1).[6] Film Adaptations tend to fall into this category, because turning a short story into a feature film may require a significant amount of elaboration on the original (Slethaug, 2014, p. 9).[7] Original authors are often included in the process of a film or television adaptation.[8] This might prompt us to categorize it as a Spirit Adaptation, as they can provide insight into the original text's meaning and intent, and ensure the moral obligation to the original work is fulfilled; however, an author is capable of creatively adapting their own works![9]

Complicating Spirit and Creative Adaptations

The distinction between Spirit Adaptations and Creative Adaptations is the "moral responsibility to the original" (Bassnett, 2002, p. 121), or, to understand and represent the intention of the original author in the new work, of which the adaptor is a steward and not author. While this is not all that complicated on the surface, untangling these two approaches can be more difficult than first appears. One solution might be to place

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6   Creative Adaptations are the bread and butter of fan studies, as "what if" questions are springboards for creating new fan fiction.

7   Similarly, turning a book series into a movie might require cutting a significant amount of material that jeopardizes the spirit of the original.

8   For example, George R. R. Martin was heavily involved in the early production of the television series adaptation of his books (D'Addario, 2017).

9   Arthur Conan Doyle originally killed off Sherlock Holmes, only to "resurrect" him when his fans demanded he continue writing the series. This could be considered a creative adaptation of the original! (Bianchi, 2017).

the two on either end of a sliding scale, but the distinction is messier than that due to the moral responsibility clause, without which the Spirit Adaptation becomes a Creative Adaptation. But, just because the adaptor believed they had a moral responsibility to adapt a work in a way that is faithful to the original author does not mean they will succeed in doing so in the eyes of the general public—or the original author.[10]

Economically, the distinction could be made by evaluating the rights-holder. Fanfiction is "often subjected to takedowns for either supposed terms of service or [a] copyright violation" (Hellekson & Busse, 2014, p. 1). Fans are rarely rights holders or employed by the original author to adapt their work, as might happen with language translations or film adaptations. But even this gets murky! Works in the public domain get adapted all the time. Rightsholders may not be the original author, but their estate or a large corporation holding the rights might have a very different idea as to what a moral obligation to the original might look like, let alone the intention and meaning of the original text.[11] Aspirational TV writers often write speculative scripts as an audition piece. They use an existing television show as a framework and a source of inspiration and then write a new episode for it, without being asked or paid for it (Breman, 2018). This, too, could be considered a Creative Adaptation; however, if that writer gets hired, their episode might be produced and aired. Does that retroactively make it a Spirit Adaption, now that the adaptor was offered a contract?

Cultural studies discusses the "structure of feeling" as something that ties people to a particular time and place (and culture), and prevents them from fully understanding those who possess a different structure of feeling (Williams, 1998, p. 53). This refers to the way that the shared lived experiences of a group affect the way they experience their present (Huehls, 2010, p. 420). Those common experiences shape the cultural context in which a person lives and influence any work they might create and leave

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10 For example Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko (the creators of the original TV show "Avatar: The Last Airbender") at first expressed their enthusiasm for the planned movie adaptation that was to be directed by M. Night Shyamalan, stating that the director respected their material, but later expressed their disappointment with Shyamalan's version and even went so far as to say they would like to pretend the film adaptation does not exist (Szymanski, 2007; Channel Surfing Podcast, 2014).

11 Vladimir Nabokov instructed his publishers on how he wanted the cover for his famous book Lolita to look: "no girls." Of course, nearly every edition of the book has a girl on the cover, directly counter to the author's request (Reischl, 2015).

behind for others to experience and/or study in the future, leaving scholars to discover these commonalities through the study of the documentary culture of that time, place, and people (Williams, 1998, p. 48). These documents represent the body of intellectual and imaginative work that records human thought and experience (Williams, 1998, p. 48); however, *intellectual* understanding is not the same as *emotional* understanding. The most dedicated of adaptors will never have the same sense of a text as the original author does... and even the author's understanding of their work might shift over time. This, too, complicates the notion that mirroring the intent of the author is what differentiates a Spirit Adaptation from a Creative one.

The person attempting to undertake a Spirit Adaptation is unlikely to be able to interpret or understand the original spirit of the text as it existed through the author's eyes when it was created. Audiences of the adaption are unlikely to share the same structure of feeling that the audience of the original had, thus compromising their ability to understand the original text. A Spirit Adaptation must take this into account, doing its best to communicate the spirit of the text to an audience who may not have the intertextual roots needed to interpret the original text in the same manner that its original audience might have, though on the surface those changes might be seen as "unfaithful" to the original text.

Furthermore, examining author intention is always a risky business. The "notion of accuracy in translation is dependent on the translator's ability to read and understand the original... [translation] is viewed as a skill, inextricably bound up with modes of reading and interpreting the original text" (Bassnett, 2002, p. 60). And even if one might ask the author themselves about the meaning of a particular sentence, and what they intended for the work as a whole, Barthes argues that the author's intention is not equal to the experience of the reader (2006). The meaning of a text is not predicated on what an author intended the meaning to be when they wrote it. Rather, the meaning of the text is what the person reading it determines it to be, bounded by the set of possible interpretations of that text. A multitude of meanings can exist simultaneously, as each time a book is read its meaning must once more be constructed. Each reader will have a slightly different experience of a book each time they read it. The meaning they constructed the first time they read a text as a child might be substantially different from

the meaning they constructed from that text when they read it as an adult, and neither reading is more correct than the other. "It is language which speaks, not the author" (Barthes. 2006, p. 278); for Barthes, their opinion simply does not matter. The author writes a text that means nothing... until it is read (Barthes, 2006, p. 280).

Conclusion

The point at which a writer considered himself to be a translator of another text, as opposed to the use he might make of translated material plagiarized from other texts, is rarely clear. Within the opus of a single writer, there is a range of texts that include acknowledged translations, free adaptations, conscious borrowings, reworkings, and close correspondences. (Bassnett, 2002, p. 60)

The above quotation expresses the notion that a text does not exist alone. Adaptors must consider not only the original text itself but also all the texts with which it (and its author) interacts. Were these texts also adaptations? "Intertextuality... is a constant and irretrievable circulation of textuality, a returning to, a pointing toward, an aggressive attempt to seize other documents—the results of this procedure of referencing other texts are also complicitly and irrevocably circular and ideological" (Staiger, 1989, p. 399).

Just as all texts are intertextual, all of these disciplines are interdisciplinary. They borrow objects of study, theories, methods, scholars, and perspectives from each other. The lines between them are blurry and overlap. This muddiness extends to the method by which each discipline adapts stories or studies adaptations. Many of them reference similar processes. Some focus on very specific details, while others are only concerned with broad trends.

Although each discipline has its own nuances and preferences, three overall approaches to adaptation can be found: Literal Adaptations, Spirit Adaptations, and Creative Adaptations. Literal adaptation has largely fallen out of style, or has been absorbed as part of the adaptation process, and is no longer acceptable as the finished product. Spirit Adaptations and Creative Adaptations abound but can be hard to distinguish. Economic definitions of authorship, the inability for an adaptor to ever wholly understand an author's intent, and the question of whether author intent is even

important all serve to muddy the waters of what distinguishes Creative from Spirit Adaptations.

Even though intent is a word often used in this section, it should not be the only (or even the main) thing that differentiates Spirit from Creative Adaptations. Instead, the "moral responsibility to the original" as felt by the adaptors should be held as the standard. It is not the economic responsibility to the rights holders or the understanding and skill with which an adaptor duplicates the intent of an author. Indeed, a moral responsibility has nothing at all to do with how good adaptation ends up being (especially as "goodness" is as subjective as reader experience). This responsibility to a text could be expressed through a dedicated study of the documentary culture, insights into the original which heap upon it new and updated meanings, or just the affirmation from an adaptor that they were doing their best to be true to the spirit of the text they were adapting. The difference is a sliding scale, with no real dividing line or tipping point.

As can be seen, synthesizing an interdisciplinary vocabulary is not always an easy task. Specialized vocabulary is necessary precisely because it can serve a particular purpose and lessen ambiguity; however, these strengths often become weaknesses in an interdisciplinary context because researchers are looking for overarching trends across disciplines, or must communicate research to scholars without a background in the field from which those definitions derive. Therefore, even though a basic concept is likely to encapsulate a fair amount of ambiguity, it is often not expected to stand up to intense interrogation. Instead, it is expected to encourage communication and understanding across a wide swath of scholars. In that vein, this paper is being directed at LIS professionals, even though Library and Information Studies was not one of the disciplines included in the literature review. Information professionals are likely to encounter researchers, especially in academic settings, who are attempting an interdisciplinary research project.

Being aware of how many definitions can exist in specialized language across disciplines can help them refine their search strategies. Knowing that concepts often need to be simplified to be understood by an uninitiated audience can help them enable robust communication strategies. And, in the case of this paper, knowing the different

broad approaches of adaptation can help in the evaluation of adaptations: is it important that a text is as literal and faithful as possible, perhaps because the original text is not available and/or accessible to the researcher? Will a creative adaptation be relevant to the research project in question or beyond its scope? Is the researcher aware that it departs severely from the original text? Questions like these are important to consider during a reference interview, and even more important when actively working in an interdisciplinary context. LIS is an interdisciplinary field comprising people with a wide variety of academic backgrounds and research interests. Information professionals often collaborate on interdisciplinary teams among researchers unfamiliar with the LIS field. Whether an existing vocabulary is chosen, a pidgin vocabulary is developed, or a new simplified vocabulary is called for, LIS scholars should consider the words they choose to communicate.

I love the words that were quoted at the beginning of the conclusion because they both raise and answer the question which is central to, but does not define, this paper: why is it that the boundaries between adaptive methods and scholarly disciplines can be so undefined? Because, of course, humans are messy creatures. We build on the works of others, both consciously and unconsciously, to make new—and wonderfully messy—creations.

Conflict of Interest Statement

None declared.

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