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Alice in WISland

"Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle! »
(Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland)

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Background

- 🌐 **Roles of information professionals** currently **redefined** in part due to **technological changes**
 - Web information systems (**WIS**): challenging technology
- 🌐 Organizations making **massive investments in WIS**
 - E.g. governments in moving toward **e-government** model
- 🌐 **No reference model** for key players, organizational units, and competencies
 - Lack of knowledge & consensus on roles of information professionals in WIS

Methodology

- 🌐 **Descriptive & exploratory** study, **qualitative** approach

- 🌐 Data collection: **Fall 2001 to Winter 2003**
 - in depth **interviews** with information professionals involved in WIS
 - ❖ **Information professional**: master degree in information sciences or librarianship and information sciences (or equivalent)
 - ❖ head offices of **seven departments of the Canadian government**
 - relevant **documentation** from their environment

- 🌐 **Qualitative content analysis** of interview transcripts

Findings

Interviewees' profile (1)

- 32 IP involved in WIS from 7 departments
- 2/3 are women
- Majority of interviews in English
- From many disciplinary fields: linguistic and literature, social sciences and sciences, etc., but few with initial training related to technology

Relatively new
in their positions

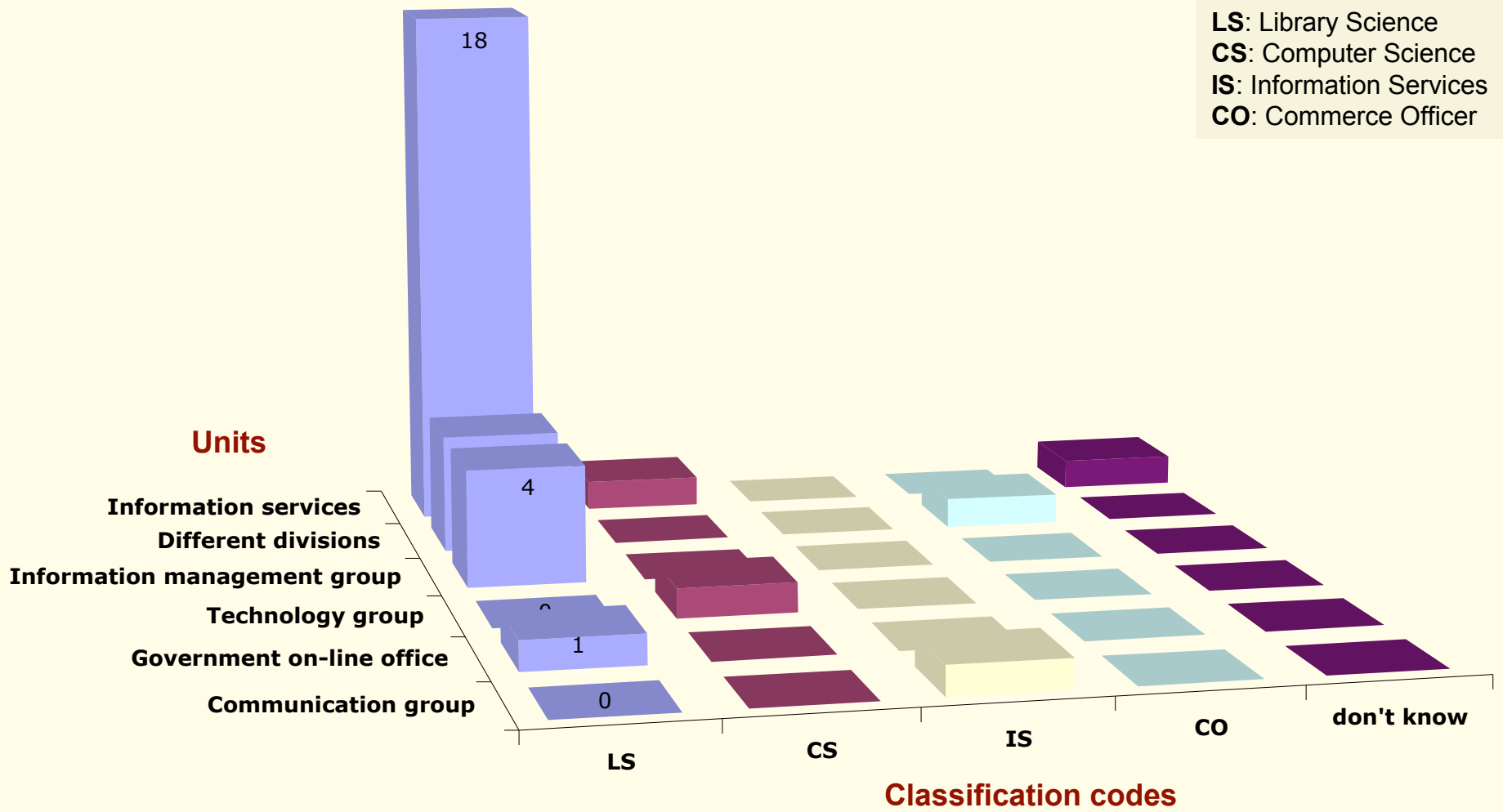
Interviewees' experience (N=32)

Number of years	Number of respondents	
	Actual position	Work with WIS
<1 year	11 (34%)	1 (3%)
1-5 years	13 (41%)	13 (41%)
5-10 years	7 (22%)	18 (56%)
16-20 years	1 (3%)	0 (0%)

Experienced
with WIS

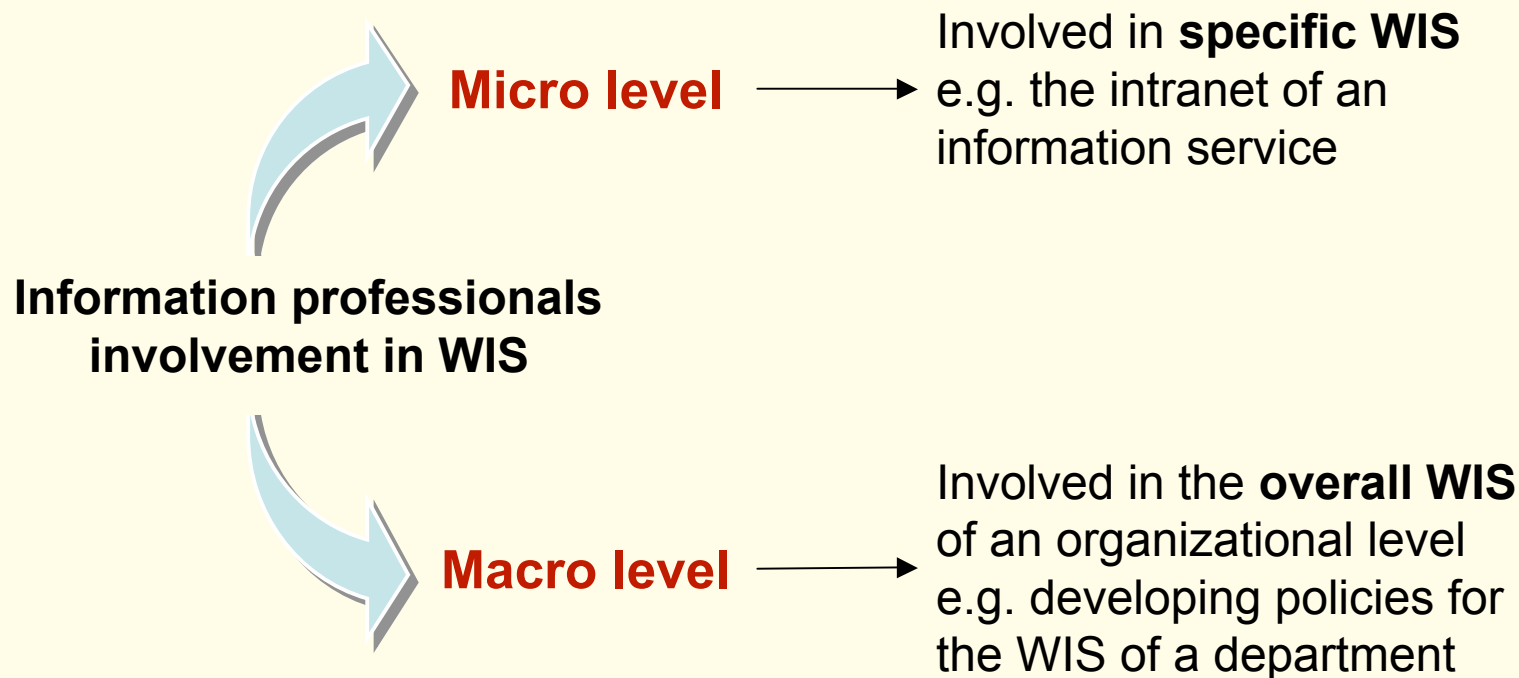
Findings

Interviewees' profile (2)



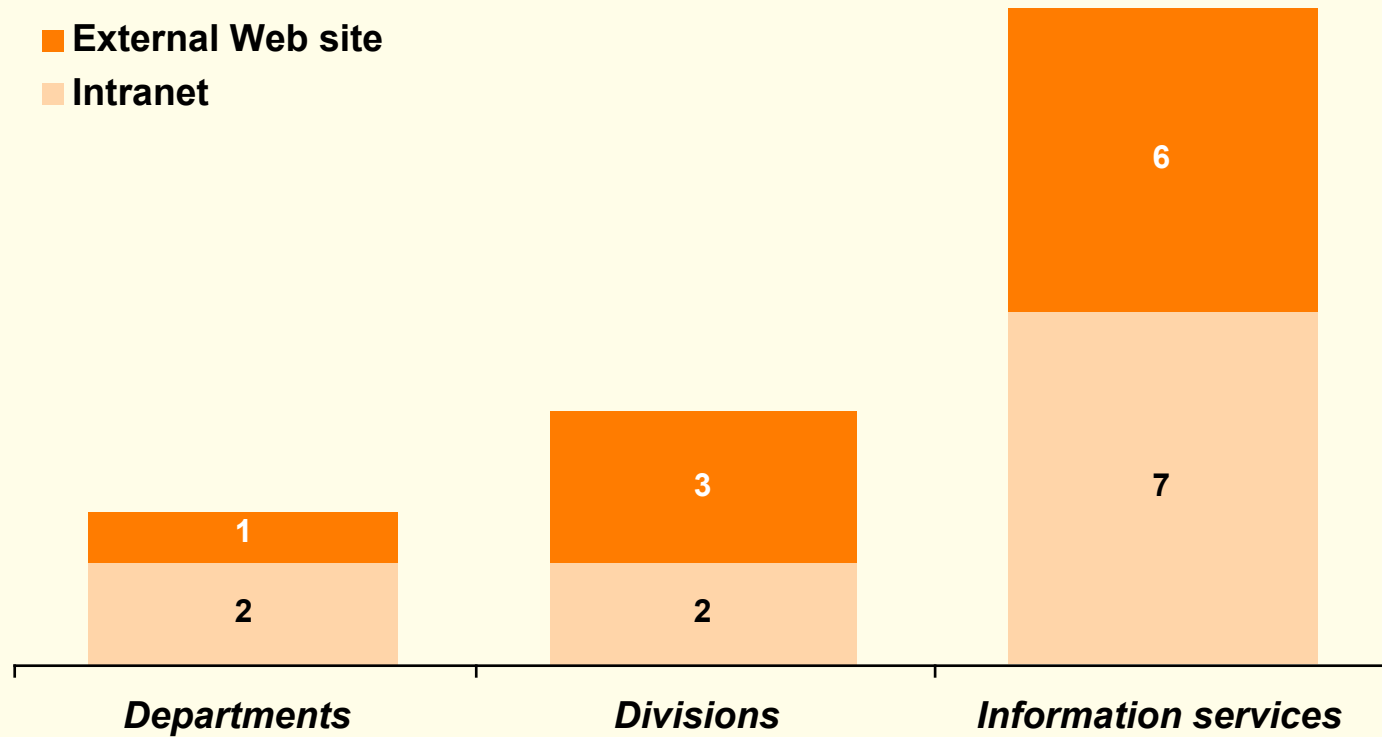
Findings

WIS' profile



Findings

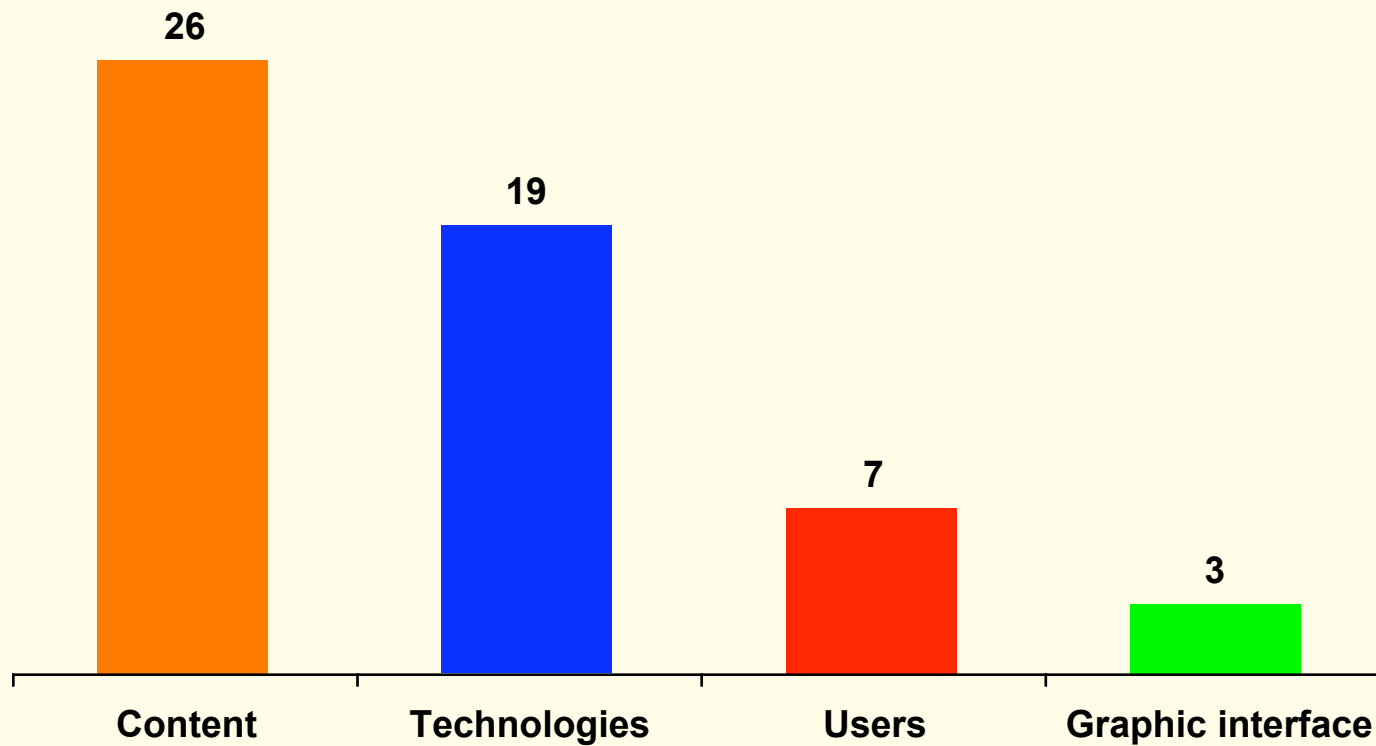
WIS' profile - micro level (N=21)



Findings

WIS-related tasks (1)

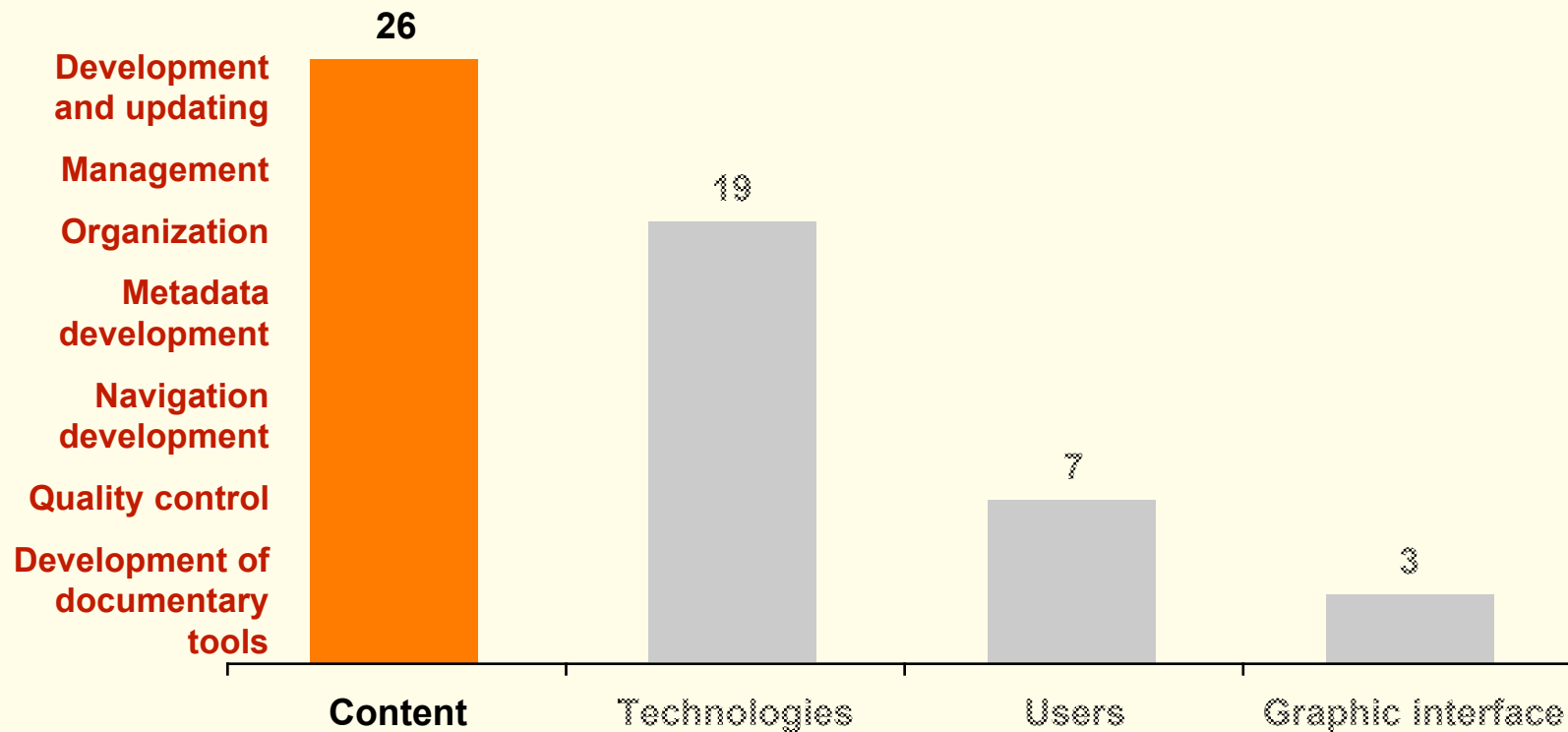
Categories of WIS-related tasks



Findings

WIS-related tasks (1)

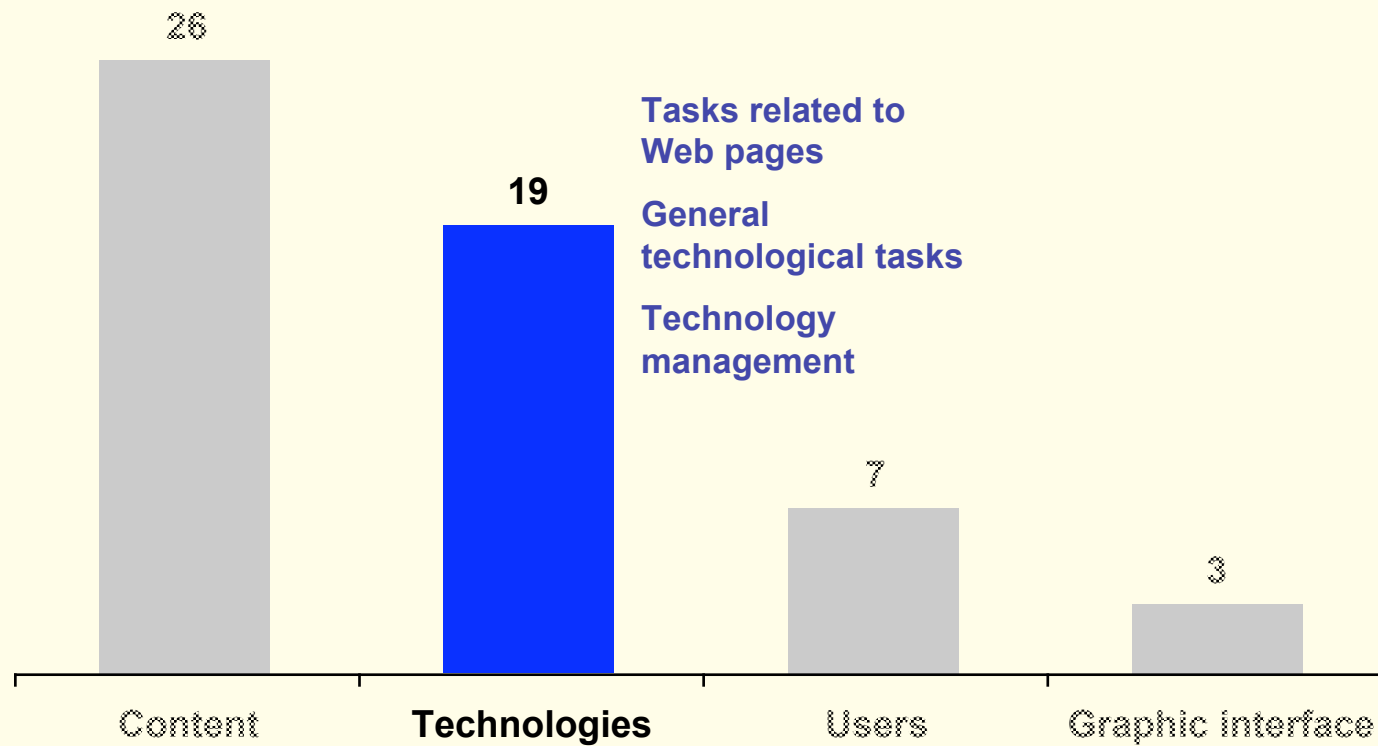
Tasks from the “Content” category



Findings

WIS-related tasks (1)

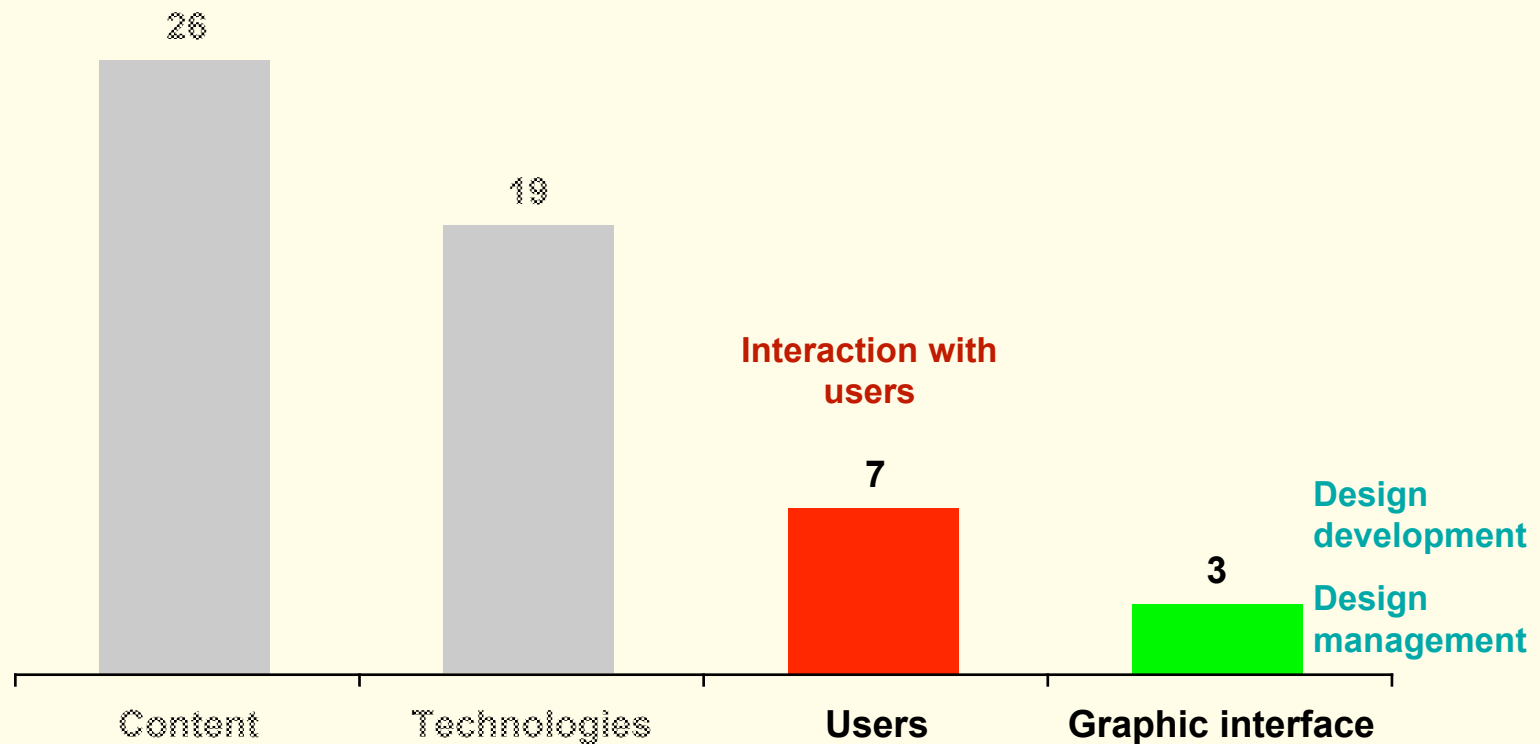
Tasks from the “Technologies” category



Findings

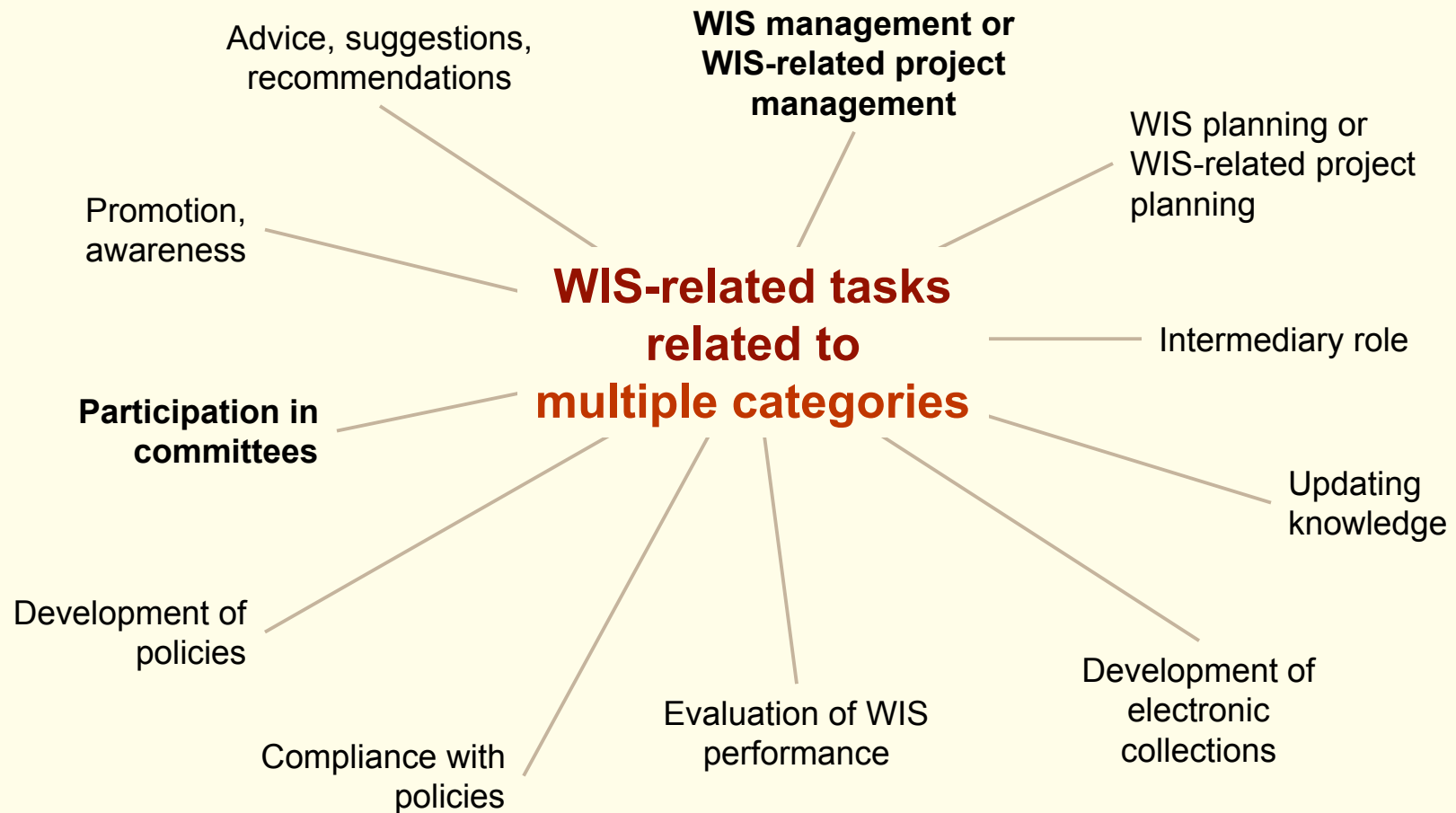
WIS-related tasks (1)

Tasks from the “Users” and “Graphic interface” categories



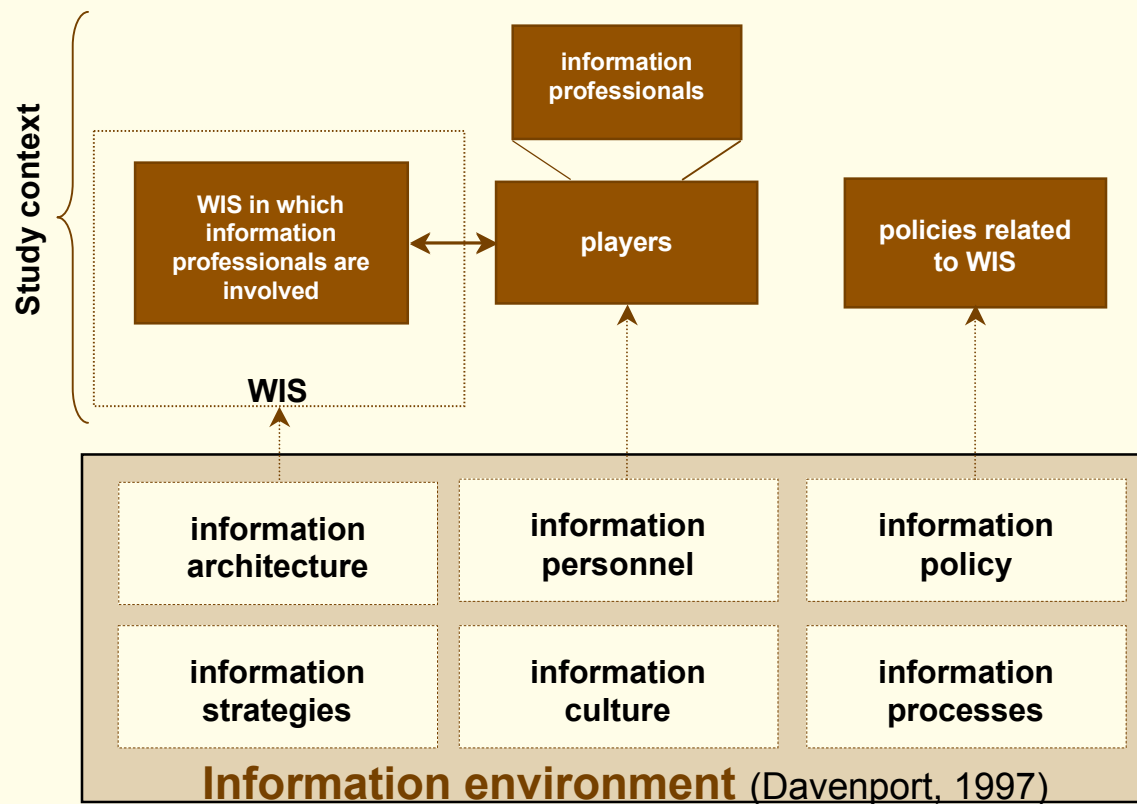
Findings

WIS-related tasks (2)



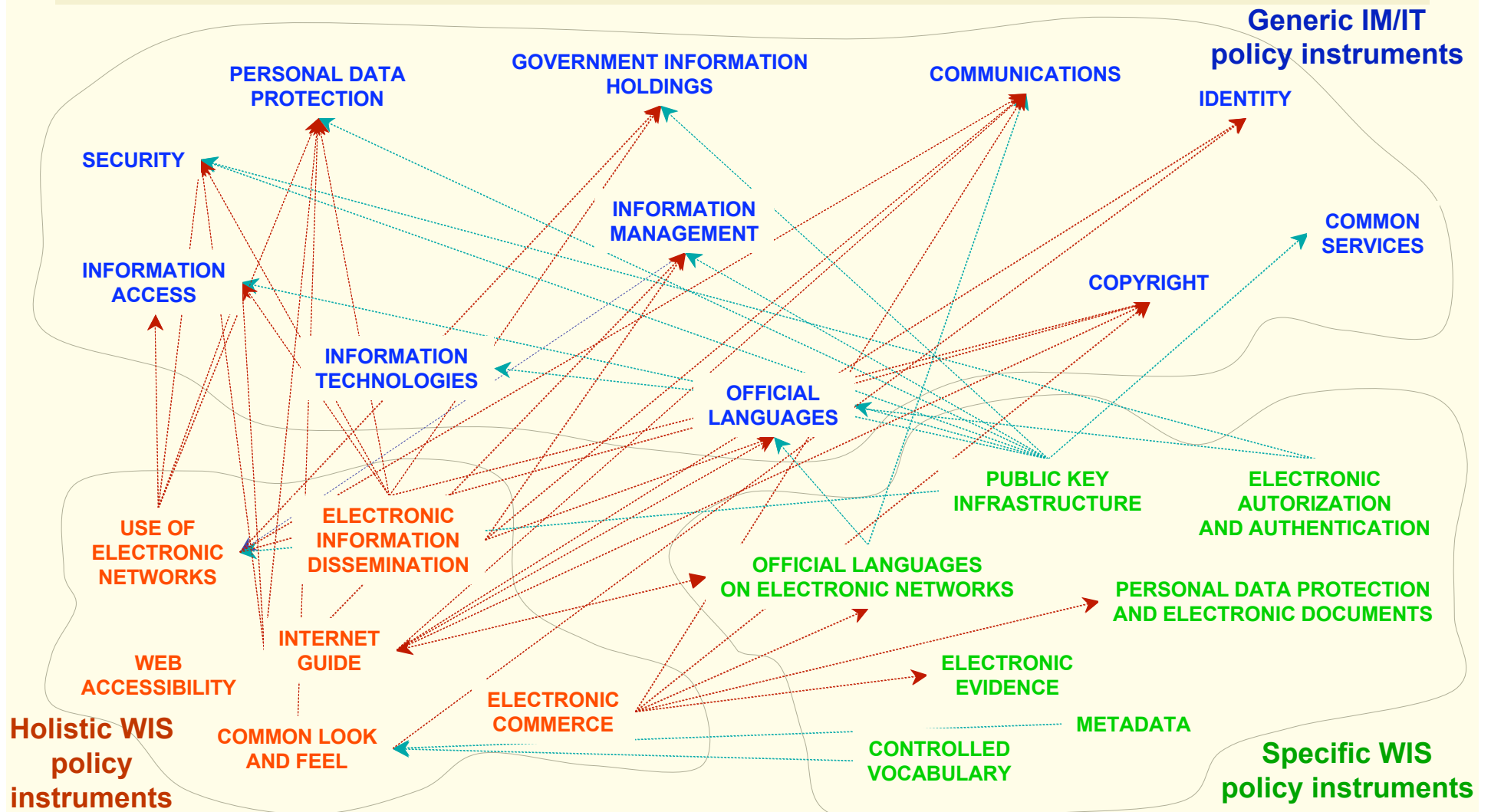
Findings

Information ecology model



Findings

Information policy framework



Findings

Factors influencing WIS-related tasks

General types
of WIS

tasks quite **similar**
except for
electronic
collection
development



**WIS-related tasks
of information
professionals**

Organizational levels
represented

emphasis on task
categories varied
with **WIS scope**

Types of positions
filled

managers,
webmasters,
system librarians

Findings

Place in WIS as perceived by interviewees

Place in WIS

CATEGORIES OF TASKS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS (N=31)
Content	25 (81%)
Users	11 (35%)
Multiple categories tasks	9 (29%)
Technologies	2 (6%)
Graphic interface	1 (3%)

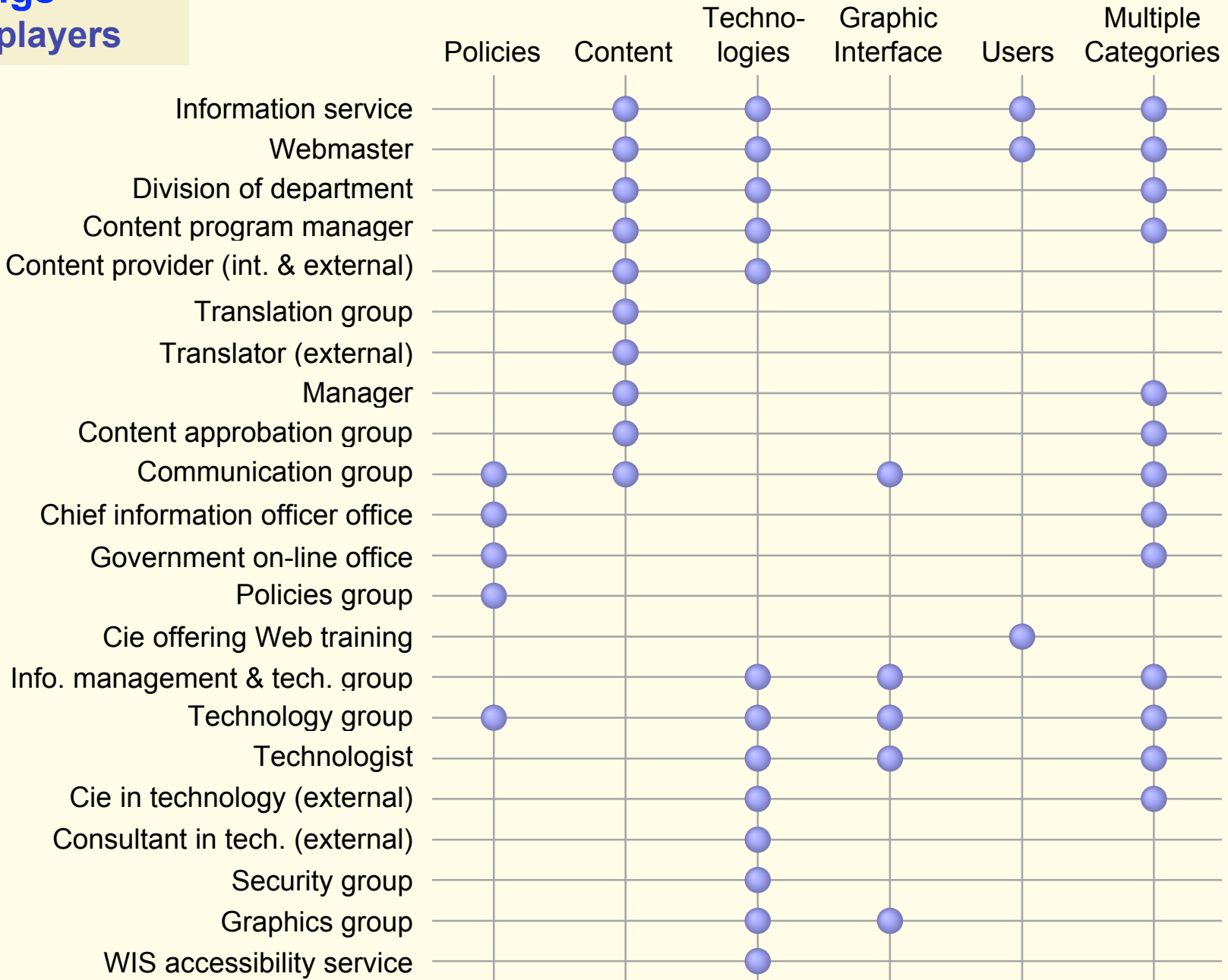
Obstacles

OBSTACLES	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS (N=30)
Characteristics of the IP profession e.g. not a well known profession, feminization of the profession	23 (77%)
Other groups involved / competition	17 (57%)
Individual characteristics: bad “sellers”, passiveness, lack of confidence in their capacities	16 (53%)
WIS characteristics: partial understanding of the WIS, technologies in perpetual evolution	11 (37%)
Incomplete training and competencies	6 (20%)
Lack of resources	5 (17%)
Culture: Web and information considered as source of power	4 (13%)

Findings
Other players

Categories of tasks

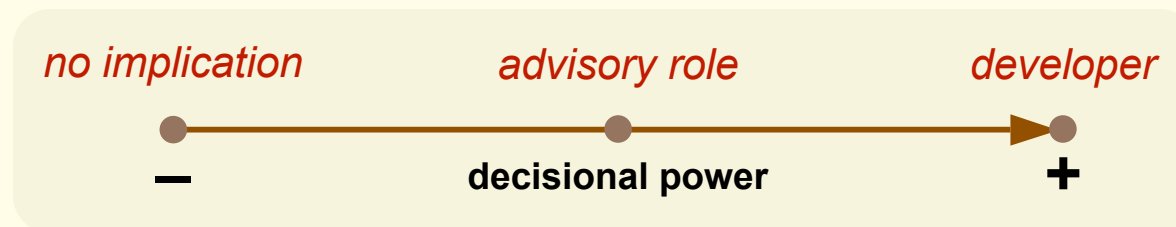
WIS players (other than info. professionals)



Discussion

Literature & Study: Differences and similarities

- 🌐 **Same categories of tasks** *but* **emphasis** sometimes **different**
- 🌐 **New tasks** found in the study
- 🌐 **Greater variety** in tasks related to **information policies** found in the study
 - *Scope of policies & Decisional power of information professionals*



Discussion

Information professionals “multidisciplinarity”

- « it takes somebody whose job it is literally to **coordinate**, and I think someone who understands the **big picture of information** is the best person for that. »
- « we are ideally situated to be the **intermediaries** between the people who write programs that run search engines and people who are producing content and wondering "How am I going to make this available in the modern computerized context". **And our knowledge can bridge those two areas.** »

Conclusions

Information professionals & WIS

- 🌐 **Natural correspondence** between informational dimension of WIS and competencies of information professionals
- 🌐 Information professionals involved in WIS but **few** in WIS representing **broader organizational levels** than information services
- 🌐 Information professionals have to **take their place** in multidisciplinary world of WIS before someone else does



Conclusions

Some general recommendations

- 🌐 Institutions and associations training information professionals in WIS-related context
 - WIS training from **other disciplines**
 - WIS in an **ecological, global perspective**
 - **In depth training** on WIS dimensions more specific to information professionals
- 🌐 Organizations
 - WIS in an **ecological, global perspective**
 - WIS in its **complexity**

Conclusions

Future research

- 🌐 **Other types of WIS** such as extranets, and WIS in which no IP are involved
- 🌐 **Different contexts:** other types of governments, other types of organizations, etc.
- 🌐 **Different perspectives** e.g. impact of competencies of Web team on WIS usability

Thank you!

