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Guest editorial: Information: Interactions and Impact (i³) conference 2015

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1. Introduction

The Information: Interactions and Impact (i³) conference was established in 2007 at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, as an international forum to bring together academic and practitioner researchers interested in exploring the quality and effectiveness of the interactions between people and information and how these can bring about change. This biennial conference provides an opportunity for exchange of research findings and a chance to identify key questions and issues for future research. It aims to be relevant to all those involved in researching, developing or delivering information and knowledge services in any sector, as well as those concerned with the development of skills for a knowledge society.

The fifth i³ conference was held in Aberdeen between 23–26 June 2015, and drew delegates from more than fifteen countries. The principal themes of the 2015 conference included the quality and effectiveness of user information interactions (e.g. information literacies) as well as the patterns of information behaviour in different contexts such as creativity, ethics, ownership, and information reuse. As always, the conference placed considerable emphasis on social, cultural and economic engagement with information, such as the assessment of value and impact. In addition, the conference considered the value of information and knowledge as enablers of resilience and change in organisations and communities.

The keynote speakers for 2015 drew on their own considerable fields of expertise to provide critical and insightful reflections on information literacies in a democratic society, digital preservation and curation and the use of information and knowledge in aiding understanding. Professor Olof Sundin (Lund University, Sweden) explored some of the key challenges for information literacies in the context of a plural, democratic society. Dr William Kilbride (Digital Preservation Coalition, UK) considered some of the preservation, legal and ethical issues which confront the information science discipline as it seeks to build a more dependable digital future. Professor Dorothy Williams (Emerita, Robert Gordon University, UK) attempted to unravel some of the complexities around the relationships between information literacies, behaviours and impact in a keynote entitled ‘An information conundrum’. Professor David Bawden (City University, London) discussed the synthesis, immersion and construction of information and the gaining of understanding. It is a particular pleasure that Professor Bawden along with his colleague Dr Lyn Robinson, has contributed a full paper, based on his keynote, for this special issue and we are delighted that it is the first paper in this issue of the *Journal of Information Science*.

2. Papers in this special issue

In this special issue, we present a range of papers covering many different aspects of the i³ conference themes which provide insights into both theoretical and empirical work undertaken by the contributors. As with all papers at i³, they seek to explore issues associated with interactions and impacts and to assist in broadening the discussion of research

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within the information science field. The 2015 conference contained 54 full and short papers and round-table discussions. This special issue of *Journal of Information Science* contains 12 papers derived from those presented in Aberdeen at the conference.

The first paper, by Bawden and Robinson, entitled 'Information and the gaining of understanding', considers with succinct clarity the extent to which the information sciences must focus on understanding in the context of higher-order knowledge as well as addressing the limited ways in which understanding has hitherto been deployed in the design of information systems, information behaviour, information literacies and in the study of impact.

Three papers explore issues associated with information literacies, learning and young people. Lloyd and Wilkinson in 'Knowing and learning in everyday spaces (KALiEds): Mapping the information landscape of refugee youth learning in everyday spaces', draw on extensive empirical work, based around the use of the photovoice technique alongside focus groups, to document and map how refugee youth in Australia are engaging with everyday learning spaces. The study analyses the information needs, literacies and learning practices used by 16-25 year old refugees in provincial Australia. Pia Borlund also examines information questions in the context of young people in her paper entitled 'Framing of different types of information needs within simulated work task situations: An empirical study in the school context'. This work draws upon an empirical study of teenagers and their teachers, at a boarding school in Denmark, focusing on their information searching of the internet within simulated work tasks. The paper entitled 'Students' collaborative inquiry – Relation to approaches to studying and instructional intervention' by Heinström and Sormunen investigates related territory by presenting the results of an empirical study undertaken in an upper secondary school in Tampere, Finland. The study examines issues associated with inquiry based learning and the need to understand more fully the factors which influence students' work in inquiry assignments.

Hicks and Lloyd in 'It takes a community to build a framework: Information literacy within intercultural settings' draw on examples of previous empirical work to present a conceptual paper which argues for a move from the behaviourist approaches to information literacy. The paper suggests that in doing so attention can be refocused on questions of adjustment and engagement with cultural understanding of information in a more inclusive way to consider the diversity of today's information societies.

Two of the principal facets of information science, information seeking and information use (including decision making) are explored in the papers by Enwald et al and Rasmussen and Hall. Enwald et al in 'Everyday health information literacy among young men compared to adults with high risk metabolic syndrome – a cross-sectional population-based study' examined two different population groups in Finland to reveal that information literacy screening tools appear, indicatively, to be useful in revealing areas to which health communication should be focused. Information and decision making is considered in the article by Rasmussen and Hall 'The adoption process in management innovation: A Knowledge Management case study' which explores knowledge management and its potential role in creating impact through management innovation in a large distributed public sector agency in Europe.

Marcella, Lockerbie and Bloice consider impact in its widest research sense in their paper 'Beyond REF 2014: The impact of impact assessment on the future of information research'. The work draws on the consequences of the United Kingdom's Research Excellence Framework (REF) with particular focus on the examination of the impact case study mechanism. The authors draw on interviews and content analysis of 25 REF case studies to highlight the potential consequences of impact assessment for the information science discipline.

Information and the public policy sphere is explored in two of the papers. Killick, Hall, Duff and Deakin in 'The census as an information source for public policy-making' consider the use of national population censuses as information sources and the extent to which the data they gather is deployed in policy making. The study includes empirical data gathering as well as significant content analysis resulting in evidence that censuses are quite possibly under deployed as a policy-making tool. Burnett and Bloice in 'Linking for influence: Twitter Linked Content in the Scottish Referendum Televised Debates' examines the critical role in which micro-blogging social media facilitate social engagement with political debate. The study focuses on an examination of the use of the Twitter during the period of the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014.

Allied to the public sphere, are two papers examining issues associated with information questions and cultural heritage. Olsson building on a substantial body of previous work further explores the information practices of archaeologists, students and volunteers undertaking excavations on the Orkney Islands in his paper entitled 'Making sense of the past: The embodied information practices of field archaeologists'. The research identifies that participants' sense making practices are both social and embodied in their approach. Tait et al in their article '(Re)presenting heritage: laser scanning and 3D visualisations for cultural resilience and community engagement' report on empirical work being undertaken in partnership with a Scottish local authority involving the digital scanning of an historic

townscape. The article outlines how this project makes significant links to local economic development as well as social learning and community engagement.

The range of papers included in this special issue says much about the breadth and depth of information science research and about the vibrant sense of inquiry within the discipline. It also reinforces the value and contribution which the i^3 conference makes to the development and advancement of creative research within our field.

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