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Thomas Jackson

School of Business and Economics, Loughborough University, Loughborough, United Kingdom

Peter Willett

Information School, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom

Abstract

Purpose – To honour the contributions of Mark Hepworth to library and information science.

Design/methodology/approach – The personal views of the two authors, both of whom knew Hepworth for many years.

Findings – The significance of Hepworth's research in library and information science, in particular to studies of information behaviour and information literacy.

Originality/value – Demonstrates the community's appreciation of Hepworth's contributions to the discipline.

Keywords – Information behaviour, Information literacy, Mark Hepworth, Library and information science teaching and research

Paper type - Viewpoint

This special issue of the journal honours Mark Hepworth, Emeritus Professor at Loughborough University, who for many years pushed forward the boundaries in studies of people's information behaviour and their information experience, and who died on 21st December 2016.

Mark was born in Uganda on the 13th April 1955 and finished school at the Waterford Kamhlaba School in Swaziland. He later moved back to the UK where he studied social anthropology and African history at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. In 1981, he visited a United Nations documentation centre run by his father in Java, and came across Wilson and Streatfield's much-cited article about the information needs of social workers (Wilson and Streatfield, 1977). This had echoes of social anthropology, in that it focused on a community, but concentrated on their information experience and possible solutions to the problems that they faced. This inspired Mark to study for an MSc in information studies at the University of Sheffield (where Wilson was by then the Head of Department), and set the tone for his subsequent career, initially in industry and then in academia. The former included running Datasolve Limited's customer support centre, tailoring training to different customers' information needs. He later became business development manager

for the Pearson/Financial Times group, where he led the development of *freeway*, one of the first end-user graphical user interfaces (Davies and Hepworth, 1993). In 1993, he was appointed as a Senior Lecturer at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, where he helped to develop a new MSc programme in information studies, and then six years later moved to Loughborough University, where he was promoted first to a Readership and then to a Chair in People's Information Behaviour. He retired in 2016 through ill health.

His research at Loughborough concentrated on how people interact with and use information to enable them to achieve their objectives. This interest evolved over many years while studying different groups of people, for example patients with multiple sclerosis (Hepworth *et al*., 2003), carers (Harrison *et al*., 2004) and students (Smith and Hepworth, 2007). This led to understanding their information behaviour, needs and the factors that affect their information experience (Hepworth, 2007), with a particular focus stemming from these studies being the need to consider people's information capabilities and information literacy (Hepworth and Walton, 2009, 2013).

Mark's last major research, the AURA (African Universities' Research Approaches) project, aimed to develop an effective institutional strategy to strengthen research capacity among staff and students in sub-Saharan African universities, in a bid to create societal improvements on a grand scale. AURA was a three-year, multi-million-pound research project funded by the Department for International Development of the UK government and began in 2015. Mark instigated the project in collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex and ITOCA (the Information Training and Outreach Centre for Africa at http://www.itoca.org/), the overarching aim of the project being to develop effective strategies to help foster research capabilities that could be applied in academia, the world of work, the community or for personal advancement.

Over the years Mark taught many undergraduates and supervised many PhDs. The latter provided the opportunity to explore diverse ontological, epistemological, and methodological approaches. Recent PhDs have included studies of the information experience of children with parents who have cancer; young people's perception of information; the information behaviour of female researchers in Saudi Arabia; the information literacy experience of Nigerian doctors; the developmental impact of mobile phones in the Congo; the use of maternal health resources in rural Tanzania; technology adoption in Saudi Arabia; and south-south knowledge exchange.

With hindsight, Mark would have encouraged all universities to enable graduates and undergraduates to get a thorough and comprehensive grounding in research rather than piecemeal courses, beyond the simplistic distinction between qualitative and quantitative or positivist and interpretivist paradigms, for example systemic approaches enabling the understanding of complex living systems. Also, to help new researchers communicate and collaborate their research using available technologies as well as traditional outlets for research; and furthermore, to explore how those capabilities can be taught drawing on innovative pedagogies.

To honour Mark's contribution to library and information science we approached his friends, colleagues and students and the articles in this issue, all of which have gone through the journal's normal detailed peer-review procedures, reflect several of the topics – health information, development studies, and information behaviour – that characterised his career.

Two of the articles report on health-related research. Bath *et al*. ("Making sense of dementia: a phenomenographic study of the information behaviours of people diagnosed with dementia") discuss the information behaviours of patients newly diagnosed with dementia, and demonstrate that there is no single, one-size-fits-all approach that is suitable for the provision of information for such patients. Wella *et al*. ("Myths about HIV and AIDS among serodiscordant couples in Malawi") report on the myths, i.e., inaccurate information, about HIV and AIDS that are believed in by many couples in Malawi. Some of these myths are perpetuated by official HIV and AIDS information when it is translated into the local languages, while others derive from the social norms of the societies where the couples live: these findings have important implications for how HIV and AIDS information providers should engage with their target audiences. A second paper with an African focus is that by Cibangu *et al*. ("Mobile phones for development: An information case study of mobile phone kiosk vendors in the Congo"), which uses the views of mobile kiosk vendors to investigate the ways in which mobile phones can support development in rural areas of the Congo.

Harrison *et al*. ("An integrated model highlighting information literacy and knowledge formation in information behaviour") reviews key models on people's information behaviour, exploring the integration of the concepts of information literacy and knowledge in their designs. It proposes a new model of information behaviour, called Causative and Outcome Factors of Information Behaviour, which stresses the important role played by information literacy and knowledge in people's information behaviour. Information literacy is also the focus of the article by Foo *et al*. ("Assessing information literacy skills among young information age students in Singapore"), who conducted a large-scale survey of primary schools in Singapore. The survey involved a detailed questionnaire to assess students' information literacy skills, and found significant weaknesses, in particular in the students' ability to synthesize and use information and to seek information from sources. Finally, Shenton and Willett ("Comparison of USA and rankings of library and information science journals") investigate UK academics' views of the importance and prestige of journals relevant to research in library and information science (LIS). They show that such research in the UK is wide ranging in scope and certainly broader than if the discipline is defined by traditional LIS journals, and a comparison with a previous, analogous study in the USA reveals considerable divergences of opinion between the two studies.

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