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Editorial: the Information School at the University of Sheffield

The Information School at the University of Sheffield was founded in 1963 as the Postgraduate School of Librarianship, became the Postgraduate School of Librarianship and Information Science in 1967 and then the Department of Information Studies in 1981. It adopted its present name in 2010, when it also became the first UK member of iSchools (at http://www.ischools.org/site/), a consortium of the world's leading library and information science departments dedicated to advancing the information field in the 21st Century.

The School has had a strong research ethos ever since its foundation, with areas such as chemoinformatics, information seeking behaviour and library management having now been under active investigation for almost half a century. During this time, the School has developed an international reputation for research excellence, as has been recognised by it achieving the highest grade in every one of the UK's formal evaluations of the quality of academic research (the Research Selectivity Exercise in 1986, and the Research Assessment Exercises in 1989, 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008). Research in the School is currently organised in seven groups, each consisting of two or more members of academic staff, together with their associated research assistants and research students, and targeting one of the following areas: chemoinformatics, educational informatics, health informatics, information retrieval, information systems, knowledge and information management, and libraries and information society. The eleven papers in the current and next issues of *Aslib Proceedings* reflect this breadth of activity, with contributions in all but one of our areas of activity. The sole exception is the work in chemoinformatics, a highly specialised area that involves the development of computational methods for processing databases of chemical structures and that plays a key role in the discovery of agrochemicals and pharmaceuticals.

Work in information retrieval is exemplified by two articles that involve prestigious external collaborators. Much of the information held by the UK's National Archives makes reference to place and many searches of the Archives' online catalogue involve locational queries. Clough *et al*. ("Space exploration at the UK National Archives) review the use of techniques from natural language processing and geographic information retrieval to extract geographic references from the stored information and hence to improve user access to the Archives. Petrelli *et al*. ("Highly focused document retrieval in aerospace engineering: User interaction design and evaluation") describe the user studies, design and evaluation of a system for searching reports on the servicing of Rolls Royce jet engines. The system uses Semantic Web techniques and is now in operational use at Rolls Royce's Derby headquarters.

There are strong overlaps between information retrieval and both information systems and knowledge management. Work in the former area is exemplified by the case study of Chen *et al*. ("Expanding the concept of requirements traceability: the role of electronic records management in gathering evidence of crucial communications and negotiations"). These authors note that many of the problems encountered by software companies result from their failing to establish exact, clear and definite requirement specifications for the software that they develop. They suggest that such problems can be alleviated by the use of electronic records management and provide a case-study of the use of such an approach by a large software provider in Taiwan. Turning to knowledge management, there are two articles. Idrees *et al*. ("The use of Grounded Theory in PhD research in knowledge management: a model four stage research design") discuss the use of grounded theory in a study of knowledge sharing within the religious tourism and hospitality industry in Saudi Arabia.

Grounded theory can be challenging to implement, but the four-stage approach described here can help new PhD students to develop a clear understanding of the process by simplifying and clarifying its main guiding principles. Cox and Blake ("Information and food blogging as serious leisure") investigate the creation, seeking, sharing and management of information by food bloggers, analysing their data in the light of Stebbins' professional-amateur-public model of serious leisure pursuits.

McKinney *et al*. ("Information literacy through inquiry: a level-one psychology module at the University of Sheffield") describe a curriculum development project in the Department of Psychology at the University of Sheffield that sought to embed information literacy in a level-one module considering the representation of psychology in the popular press. This case study uses the SCONUL Seven Pillars of Information Literacy model to analyse the results of several different techniques that were used to evaluate the revised module. This model also plays an important role in the study by Gumulak and Webber ("Playing video games: learning and information literacy"), who report a survey of young video gamers and who suggest that the findings can be used to enhance the effectiveness of information literacy programmes. Beverley *et al*. ("Health and social care information for visually-impaired people") then report the results of semi-structured interviews with visually impaired people, with the aim of identifying their health and social care information needs. The study shows clearly that visually impaired people are a heterogeneous group, with different needs according to their visual impairments.

There are two librarianship articles. Birdi ("An investigation of fiction reader characteristics using personal construct theory") discusses the perceived characteristics of fiction readers and the genres that they read, using Kelly's personal construct theory and its associated repertory grid technique. Corrall and O'Brien ("Developing the legal information professional: A study of competency, education and training needs") report a study of competency requirements for information work in UK law firms. The article shows that the subject knowledge needed for legal information work in law firms is more extensive than for other sectors and suggests that information departments should strengthen and extend curriculum content to reflect this need.

A bibliometric contribution completes the issues. Comparisons of bibliometric data with external reviews of academic research performance are common, especially in the UK where there are large amounts of Research Assessment Exercise data available for this purpose. Bakri and Willett ("Computer science research in Malaysian universities: a bibliometric analysis") provide the first such comparison for a country where the higher education infrastructure is still under active development, reporting an evaluation of the quality and impact of the research carried out in departments of computer science in Malaysian universities.

It is hoped that these eleven articles give a flavour of the range of research that is currently under study here in Sheffield, and we welcome inquiries from those interested in participating as students or as collaborators in our future studies

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