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Guest Editorial

Information Science at City University London

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Abstract

Purpose – Introduces a special issue of Aslib Proceedings, which contains a series of papers written by staff and research students at the Department of Information Science, City University London

Design/methodology/approach - Introduces the papers and sets them into context.

Findings - Argues that the information science discipline, which has always been the focus of City's research and scholarship, is a valid academic discipline, with a positive future.

Originality/value - Points out the particular strengths and historical continuity of the City Information Science Department.

Keywords Information science, Research, Professional education

Paper type Viewpoint

The papers in this issue reflect the research and scholarly interests of the staff of the Department of Information Science at City University London.

Although the issue began with no explicitly intended theme, I believe that a theme emerges strongly: the continued vitality and variety of the information science discipline.

The City Department of Information Science is the only academic department within the library/information area in the UK to have retained its departmental name unchanged since its establishment: originally as the Centre for Information Science, and later as the Department for the same. It is also the only such department to have offered a course entitled “Information Science” since its inception, and to continue to do so. We are thus well placed to represent this aspect of the library/information spectrum.

It should not be thought that City retains the somewhat sceptical attitude towards librarianship for which it was known in times gone by. On the contrary, in terms of teaching, our relatively new Masters course in Library and Information Studies is our largest course by a considerable margin. But our perspective and focus, particularly in terms of scholarship, are still very much oriented to “information” and to “science”, and I hope the papers in this issue reflect this.

The papers span the whole scope of the subject. I cannot, as issue editor, claim any credit for this. I simply asked my colleagues to write something which they felt appropriate, and the resulting wide spread of content followed naturally. I am

particularly pleased that several of our PhD students have contributed articles, in their own right and as co-authors.

The issue begins and ends with articles focusing on the information science discipline. My own opening contribution - somewhat more theoretical in nature, perhaps, than is usual for *Aslib Proceedings* - seeks to gain an understanding of information itself, which must be the basis of our subject. - I attempt to base this unification on an analysis of the changing understanding of the nature of information, in the physical and biological sciences, and - by extension - to recorded human information. The closing article by Toni Weller and Jutta Haider, two of our current PhD students, argues for a strengthening of information science as an academic discipline.

The traditional concerns of the department are well-represented in several papers: healthcare and scientific information (Bawden and Khudair; Robinson); information retrieval (Macfarland; Macfarland, McCann and Robertson); information organisation (Hidderley and Rafferty); and legal and policy issues (Eisenschitz).

These are complemented by newer strands of the department's activities: geographic information (Mountain and Liarakis); information history (Weller), and discourse analysis (Haider).

Our international collaborations, which have always been an important feature, are represented by a paper authored by one of our visiting professors (Robinson and Glosiene), and dealing with issues of training for continuing professional development, which was the starting point for the City department in the form of the evening courses taught since 1961.

We firmly believe in the validity of information science as an academic discipline, and in its future. This belief is reflected in the work now being begun on our ambitious LIS-RES-2030 project. This project, which will involve Delphi studies and international symposia, has the aim of setting out an agenda for LIS research for the next 20 years. Our hope is that the papers in this issue will convince readers to share our interests and our optimism.