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Re-Positioning Information Science

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ABSTRACT
During the twentieth century there was a strong desire for information studies to become scientific, to move from librarianship, bibliography, and documentation to an information science. In 1968 the American Documentation Institute was renamed American Society for Information Science. By the twenty-first century, however, departments of (library and) information science had turned instead towards the social sciences, but have not been successful in providing a coherent explanation of the nature and scope of the field.

The accepted view of Information Science as an emerging, scientific discipline closely tied with Information Technology and, mainly, textual data, will be challenged. Three brief presentations proposing different foundations and directions as a basis for a moderated discussion: There are other options: The development of Information Science in France has been radically different and has from the start been steeped in the humanities. The scope and focus should be broader to include, for example, the cognitive and aesthetic experiences of museum visitors? If Information Science is really concerned with influencing what people know, what kind of science *can* Information Science be?

Keywords
Information Science, i-schools, history, theory.

INTRODUCTION
During the twentieth century there was a strong desire for information studies to become scientific, to move from librarianship, bibliography, and documentation to an information science. Accordingly, in 1968 the American Documentation Institute changed its name to American Society for Information Science. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, departments of (library and) information science had turned instead towards technology and the social sciences. Leading programs have increased their size and visibility with skillful publicity liberally using the words "information," "society," and "technology." It is now fashionable to call such a department an "i-school" (for "information school"). These programs address a variety of important topics, but they have been less successful in providing a coherent explanation of the nature and scope of the field.

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The program will start with three presentations offering alternatives to the accepted view of Information Science as an emerging, scientific discipline closely tied with Information Technology and, mainly, textual data.

First, there are other possibilities. The development of Information Science in France has been radically different from the US experience and positioned closely with the Humanities and Communication Studies.

Second, the scope should be broader and the focus should include other ways of knowing, such as aesthetic and lived experience as well as other sources of knowledge, such as museum objects.and other materialities..

Third, the fundamental assumptions of Information Science are questionable. If it is concerned with influencing what people know what kind of science *can* Information Science become?

FIDELIA IBEKWE-SANJUAN
The development of Information Science in France has been significantly different from the US and British experience: Information Science arose in the Humanities has been largely subsumed under Communication Studies, and distanced from Information Technology. However, at its beginning there were elements of Information Technology in its make-up, this technological bent is being gradually phased out of the discipline. Dr. Ibekwe-SanJuan will briefly summarize the development of Information Science in France, identify conceptual and practical challenges in Information Science in both the French and also in the Anglo-Saxon versions, will point out some shared problems, and comment on current and likely new developments. While Information Science in France certainly has its own peculiarities that sets it apart from the way IS has evolved internationally, there are fundamental commonalities that are worth bringing to light.

KIERSTEN LATHAM
The focus has been too narrow. Immersed in a world loaded with multiple "layers of understanding," people influence and are influenced by physical objects in the information context. Can Information Science cope with issues in the museum, for instance, *beyond* informatics and speak to the

affective, aesthetic and spiritual experiences of museum users? Could there be a more holistic approach?

Museums, libraries and archives (LAM) all share elements of a similar origin, yet time has led each of these entities to diverge and form their own traditions, methods, and concepts. With the recent emergence of the 'convergence' conversation between LAMs, a tightening of budgets in the cultural and information sectors, and a collaborative 'mood,' in the air, the pendulum may be swinging back to this holistic notion. The concept of 'document' in this scenario becomes not only useful but vital to an understanding of our collective futures. This paper will briefly present the notion of 'museum object as document' in an attempt to demonstrate the usefulness of 'document' as a device to furthering knowledge and as a basis for broader, sounder, and more inclusive Information Science.

MICHAEL BUCKLAND

What kind of science *can* Information Science become if it is concerned with influencing what people know? If we consider three fashionable words: "Information," "Knowledge," and "Interdisciplinary" and make a distinction between *scientific*, *scholarly*, and *critical*, then, so long as Information Science is concerned with what people learn and know, it needs to be seen as a form of cultural engagement. Bibliometrics and Information Retrieval are quantitative and very useful, but built on weak assumptions. If Information Science is any kind of science it is what Herb Simon called a "science of the artificial."

DISCUSSION MODERATED BY JULIAN WARNER

These issues are centrally important for the clarification of the role, scope, and character of i-schools as well as the future complexion of ASIST. Julian Warner will moderate a discussion by panelists and audience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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