Tomato tomahto: European perspectives on information science

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ABSTRACT

'And oh, if we ever part, then that might break my heart' (Gershwin and Gershwin, 1937).

In the lyric, 'tomato tomahto', the marked, or explicitly differentiated term, is *tomahto*, corresponding more to the English rather than the United States pronunciation. The marked term of a contrast characteristically designates the exception or minor term and the distinctions contained in the unmarked term may be implicitly, and incompletely, understood. Analogously, information science has often been implicitly based in the United States and influenced by American modes of thought, while European, including English, developments have been the occasionally marked and often minor term.

This panel explores European perspectives on information science, explicitly and implicitly contrasting them with United States perspectives, from a base in a number of languages and in Europe and beyond.

The panel employs diverse and complementary viewpoints and should make for a lively discussion. It concludes, in sympathy with Gershwin, that cooperation and integration, corresponding to increasing globalization, is the way forward.

The combination of European and beyond and United States perspectives on information science is especially appropriate for the first ASIS&T Annual Meeting outside North America.

Keywords
History of information science, Cultural variation in information science, Europe, Globalization, ASIS&T

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Niels Windfeld Lund. A Nordic Information Science? A highly contested tradition.

Since the early 1970ties there has been a lot of research in the LIS community in the Nordic countries, characterized with a high degree of contest among the members of the community with much discussion and paradigmatic fights.

The paper will look at:

- Nordic discussions on "what is the core of LIS?". Is it culture, libraries or information - Bourdieu - Wersig - Belkin ?
- The different paradigms in the Nordic countries: Culture - Information - Institution - document - the clash between the cognitive and the cultural paradigms - discussions on where LIS belong in the Academic world, in natural sciences (cognitivists), in humanities (culturalists) or in the social sciences with the institutionalists or in all 3 scientific worlds with the documentation paradigm.
- Paradigmatic changes in Nordic LIS education - the scientific clashes had a decisive impact on the Educational programs, in Denmark in the '80ties, moving from 2 distinct educations for respectively Public librarians (Culture) and Academic Librarians (information) to a unified education with information as the hegemonic concept covering the whole library world, and changes in the '90ties with documentation studies in Norway opting for a complementary approach, and a media turn in the 2000ies.
- Collaboration / inspiration across continents: Nordic region - North America - Nordic Research schools, international journals, international conferences, DOCAM a Norway-US collaboration project.

Julian Warner. The whole earth girded by telegraph cables: European influences on information science.

In the late 19th century, the European thinker, Karl Marx, observed

'the last fifty years have brought a revolution that is comparable only with the industrial revolution of the second half of the last century … the whole earth has been girded by telegraph cables.' (Marx, 1981, p.164)

The technology of the technology of the telegraph, fully realized in working form in the mid-19th century as the transcontinental (United States) and transatlantic telegraph, was later theoretically described by the model of communication given in Claude Shannon's 'A mathematical theory of communication'(Shannon, 1948/1993).

This presentation traces some diverse European influences on and contrasts with United States theory and practice in central to information science. First, the working telegraph is understood as a product of the westward expansion of the United States and the increasing links with Europe and the corresponding need for message transmission technologies. The influence of the working telegraph on Shannon's (1948/1993) rigorous account of communication and Warren Weaver's (1949) more expansive interpretation of that account is investigated. Secondly, we trace Norbert Wiener's indebtedness to European thinkers such as Marx for his understanding of technology as a cumulative human construction - 'In all engineering, there is a certain family history, a certain genealogy. The smith's hammers were forged by the hammers of an earlier smith' (Wiener, 1993, pp.46-47) – and for his conception of developments in information and communication technologies as a second industrial revolution. Thirdly, the contrast between the United States and the European Union in their treatment of intellectual property in databases, with the United States retaining the integrity and scope of copyright (Feist, 1991) and the European Union developing sui generis provisions for databases is considered. In this instance, the United States, a more recent formation than many European countries, may have had a greater and more extensive historical sense.

The presentation concludes by pointing to the value of a fully theoretical informed, ecumenical but controlled, framework for understanding information developments.

Fidelia Ibekwe-SanJuan. Information and Communication Sciences in France: the balancing act.

Although Belgium and France can be said to be the cradle of Library Science and Documentation with Paul Otlet's *Traité de la Documentation* (1934), his monumental work on universal bibliographic classification and dissemination system and Suzanne's Briet's *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* (1950), Information Science has not known a "felicitous" evolution in many European countries. Despite providing the founding works upon which Library and Information Science took root and spread to other parts of the world (notably well developed in the US), Information Science has failed to coalesce in Europe into a

solid body of well-identified academic discipline with its core theories, paradigms and methods. Instead, it appears to have been merged into other social sciences and humanities fields. The situation is very disparate in every European country and it is difficult to get a global view. For instance, the phenomenon of iSchools is a North American thing. France's situation vis-à-vis Information is peculiar since the discipline or field is not autonomous but is merged into a composite discipline called Information and Communication Sciences (ICS). We have recalled in earlier panels and publications the historical contexts and epistemological underpinnings of this fusion of IS into one composite interdisciplinary field. In this panel, we will focus on how the marriage with Communication and media studies has shaped the types of theories, methodologies and terminology adopted by Information scientists in France. For instance, the concepts of "info(r)communication" and of "info(r)communicational devices" have been coined over the last decade within the ICS in France to attempt to better link the two concepts and therefore the two communities but also more importantly, in a bid to highlight the fact that information without communication is not an operative concept within the discipline. Information is mostly viewed as a human phenomenon involving communication or media. When taken separately, information is attributed to Computer science. Current IS studies in France seem to be distancing themselves from the quantitative and empiricist approaches which characterized research in the first two decades of the existence of ICS field (roughly between 1980-2000). There is a clear shift towards a more human and cultural focus in research which in turn solicits qualitative and comprehensive methodologies.

Michael Buckland. A (Mostly) European Influence on Information Science: Documentation and Neo-documentalism.

The influences and terminology in the development of Information Science are far too complex, ill-defined, and unstable to permit a simple tidy explanation. However, one strand of early twentieth "Documentation" and its later revival and development in the work of Niels Lund, the Document Academy and others constitutes a (largely) European contribution. Three phases will be noted:

1. Classical Documentation: Paul Otlet and others sought ambitiously to expand bibliographical access through using the newest technology (cards, the Universal Decimal Classification, and potentially much more). To differentiate their form of bibliography from other uses of the word, they eventually adopted Documentation as the term of choice. Suzanne Briet refined and developed Otlet's theorizing for mid-20th century conditions.

2. Watson Davis and, later, Jesse Shera picked up on European Documentation and promoted it, but in limited ways. Davis, the principal founder of ASIS&T (as the American Documentation Institute) in 1937, seems to have been primarily interested in technical aspects, especially microfilm. Shera promoted, by republishing with an introduction, the book *Documentation* by the British librarian, Samuel Bradford's book, but failed to understand Briet's ideas.

3. The U.S. zoologist Herbert H. Field developed a service essentially similar to Otlet's in parallel (also starting in 1895) through the Concilium Bibliographicum, but based in Switzerland.

4. Mutual influences are hard to discern and probably masked by the far stronger development of special libraries in the U.S. when largely absent in Europe.

5. Independently (at first) in Europe and in the USA in the 1990s led to a "neo-documentalist" revival of interest in a "document-centric" perspectives in Information Science.

Neo-documentalist influences include an emphasis on "document-as-thing," an expansive, inclusive view of what might be considered a document, and an insistence the necessary and co-existing presence of physical, social, and mental aspects in any adequate discussion of Information Science. These trends appear to have been widely influenced Information Science and seem likely to do so increasingly.

Isabella Peters. Definitions and perceptions of information science - as provided by members of the ASIS&T European Chapter.

In the paper the members of ASIS&T's European Chapter will be given a voice. It will be reported how they define and perceive the concept 'information science' from their particular point of view and specific background. Descriptions and definitions will be categorized and major as well as outstanding viewpoints will be presented. This will provide a map of concepts related to 'information science' and will provide a 'visual' starting point for discussion during the panel.

Currently, the more than 115 members of the European Chapter come from more than 20 different countries and are affiliated with universities, research institutions, other information service providers, and other institutions and enterprise. Also, the members reflect the entire range of levels of professionality, from PhD students to more senior researchers. Moreover, the student division of the European Chapter will also contribute its view and a long

with it provide details on how people rather new in field understand 'information science'.

Speaker biographies

Niels Windfeld Lund, born 1949 in Copenhagen, Denmark, became the first employee and full professor in Documentation Studies at the Department of Documentation Studies, University of Tromsø, Norway, in 1996 and was responsible for the initial development of the study program of Documentation studies on under graduate as well as graduate level. From 1975 till 1988 Dr. Lund was Associate Professor at the Royal School of Library and Information Science in Denmark. Professor Lund has twice been Visiting Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, (2001 and 2005-06). In 2001 prof. Lund founded The Document Academy, an international network for Documentation studies organizing annual DOCAM conferences in North America and summer schools in Norway at the University of Tromsø. Lund has mainly done research on libraries and general document theory and has recently focused on documents in Health care (Electronic Patient Record) and The Arts (opera). He was part-time affiliated with Tromsø Telemedicine Laboratory (20%) and the Department of Music, Dance and Drama, Faculty of fine arts (30%) from 2006-2014. In 2014, prof. Lund retired, but is still active as professor emeritus, supervising graduate students and participating in research projects.

Julian Warner is a faculty member at the Queen's University Management School, Belfast, Northern Ireland, where he teaches courses in the human aspects of modern information and communication technologies and in information policy. He has been a visiting scholar at the Universities of California at Berkeley, Illinois, Indiana, and Edinburgh. He has research interests in creativity for copyright, information retrieval, and in information technology and the mechanization of mental labor. He has published a number of journal articles in information science and four books, the first of which was translated into Japanese.

Fidelia Ibekwe-SanJuan is a professor at the School of Journalism and Communication, University of Aix-Marseille in France. Her courses are focused on "Theories of Information & Communication", "Digital Culture & Communication", "Innovation, Information & Knowledge Management in the digital age". Her research interests span both empirical applied research and reflective and theoretical research. She has developed methodologies and tools for text mining, information retrieval and has been recently studying the impacts of ICTs, of big data, open data and web 2.0 on science and on segments of the society. She has been researching the epistemology of science, disciplinarity issues and the history of information and library science. She has been a Visiting Research Scholar at the School of Information Studies, University of Drexel, Philadelphia.

Michael Buckland is Emeritus Professor, School of Information, University of California, Berkeley. He served as President of ASIS in 1998 and has written on the history and theory of Information Science.

Isabella Peters is Professor for Web Science at ZBW Leibniz Information Centre for Economics and Kiel University, Kiel, Germany. Currently she is the chair of ASIS&T's European Chapter and researches user-generated content and social media and their use in knowledge representation, information retrieval, evaluation of science (i.e. altmetrics), and open science.

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