Guest editorial

The information journey

A journey is defined as "the act of travelling from one place to another" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). When we think of a journey, various stages come to mind – for example, the preparation for the experience, the experience itself and how experiences could help if/when was to be repeated. The concept of the journey can be applied to different scenarios. In learning, Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) worked on two levels: a four-stage cycle of learning and four separate learning styles. He viewed learning as the process whereby knowledge was created through the tran/sformation of experience. Similarly, within a health environment, the increased emphasis on the personal health journey recognises that individual treatment plans, informed through personalised advice, empowers people to take ownership of recovery and maintaining good health. Irrespective of the focus of the information journey, the quantity and quality of associated information and its interpretation are pivotal in maximising the achievable outcomes.

The changing needs of information over time is a very complex concept and best understood if we continue to consider the holistic information journey and the different elements therein. For the past twenty years phrases such as "stable information needs" and "information needs changing over time" are found in many contributions to information science (Bothma and Bergenholtz, 2013). The use of image is an important communication medium providing a coded well-structured and efficient language (Gherman, 2015). Our brains inherent preference of remembering information through visualisation can be particularly useful. Visualisation is a technique for creating images, diagrams or animations to communicate a message. It has applications in science, education, engineering, interactive multimedia and medicine. Visualisation can make learning more fun and interesting especially when compared to repetitive learning by rote (Smedley, 2018).

Some information lends itself better to be remembered as words. Verbalisation is a process by which different psychological events in individual are made in verbal form, i.e. described "in their own words". Sometimes it is faster, easier, or more effective to use a verbalisation technique. Verbal techniques often do not require the encoding of information so can be faster as little or no decoding is needed. Researchers face difficulties in managing the rapid growth of available scientific information. An important "pain point" that future information tools need to address is helping researchers filter information at the point of need (Reushie and Mitchell, 2009).

The effect of information overload on people and organisations and how this is dealt with along the information journey is a common focus. The design of the information service experience and innovation at different touchpoints and channels as a focus for service innovation is also considered. Maintaining information currency and the generation of new research using the data/information/knowledge aspects of the information journey are also possibilities. Academic and vocational learning and the use of information outside university study/scholarly practice (including the needs of senior managers, leaders and policymakers in education) are also of interest.

Increasingly, analytics encourages the analysis of data, interpreting information and understanding knowledge with different types of information journeys offering greater opportunities to compare and contrast. The smarter use of information through its use and re-use and consequent refinement and/or re-organisation of processes and practice is an important focus. This offers shorter duration times of information journeys as well as more

efficient ways of operation. In combination with a deep understanding of the goals, behaviour, and attitudes that shape how people interact with information, this is key to designing effective information journeys that have positive impact for both end-users and organisations alike.

Transitions between data, information and knowledge and the enabling role of technology are increasingly important considerations in today's fast-moving world. The information explosion has changed the way that information is managed revealing new challenges and opportunities along the information journey. In this special issue of *Information and Learning Science*, the guest editors[1] took the opportunity to reflect the information journey across the spectrum of academia, business, transport, health and well-being through wide-ranging and innovative articles to address diverse conceptual, theoretical and practical aspects.

The first paper by Jalaja Valisireddy proposes a new approach to information management through metering with an accompanying security analysis and performance evaluation of the proposed system. It proposes a transferable methodology for various types of content along the information journey.

The second paper by Nosheen Warrich considers the usefulness and challenges of personal digital information management as perceived by academic staff in engineering. These information management elements are transferable across subjects and genders and reflect the need for staff to overcome the challenges of using technology along the information journey.

Julius Nganji develops this technological theme in his paper where he suggests how the information journey of students with disabilities could be enhanced. He revealed the existence of inaccessible formats and suggested alternative formats of accessible learning materials. Outcomes from sampling 400 articles suggest that those journal articles which are inaccessible for screen reader users could be improved by adopting accessible and inclusive practices. Also, the inclusion of learning materials would support the student information journey.

The penultimate paper by Poppy Gibson emphasises the need for staff and students to possess well-developed digital skills to enable successful engagement along their individual information journeys in the "Information Age". Key emergent themes emphasise the need to find and gather information, to filter information, to process and shape information and use this as the basis to create information and finally, to share information with others on their information journeys.

Finally, the paper by Dias Barreira e Oliveria presents an overview of the design thinking methodology applied to the user aspects of the information journey. It also proposes design thinking methodology as an option to operate various types of research.

The Viewpoint by David Lewis discusses the transformational opportunities that analytics provides along the information journey in UK higher education. UK universities are using their data constructively to enhance student support, improve student outcomes and inform curriculum development or evidence-driven course redesign. Applications are provided from the pioneering partnership between Jisc and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales – the first ever national programme to cover learning analytics.

As these diverse elements of information world have different types of individual impact, how can they contribute to harness greater impact in an information journey? Storytelling provides an ideal approach to information engagement with technology providing a sharing medium to enhance engagement and understanding. The greater the real-life relevance of the collective "story", the stronger the impact of the information journey. With more

organisations innovating and customising their information reach through a variety of engagement approaches, the impact of the information journey will continue to grow.

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Note

1. Jo Smedley recently retired from University of South Wales, UK; Pontus Warnestal, Halmstad University, Sweden; Lis Parcell, Jisc, UK; Nigel Walton, University of Worcester, UK.

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Further reading

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About the author

Jo Smedley has worked in Further and Higher Education in the UK and Europe for over 35 years. Her leadership and management of individual and group learning, teaching and action research initiatives have positively impacted on the enhancement of academic practice, engagement, training and development with local, national and international achievements. Jo's subject expertise in mathematics and computing has provided a useful background for her work in managing data, information and knowledge. She is passionate about creating, providing and ensuring a high quality, positive learner experience with emphasis on encouraging and enabling the efficient and effective management and implementation of information. Intertwining academic learning with professional practice is her speciality, with particular focus on enhancing learning through technology. Her entrepreneurial nature, infectious enthusiasm and down-to-earth outlook has enabled her to inspire change, listen attentively, encourage sharing, enable dialogue and identify individual areas of strength to progress large and small collaborative project achievements throughout her career.