Editorial

Introduction

This issue of *Information Research* marks another step in a development announced some time ago, when we introduced the 'Abstracts in Spanish' feature as a way of making the journal more useful to the Luso-Hispanic countries. In this issue we have papers in Spanish for the first time, and rather than making this the first of a series of 'special' issues, I have asked José Vicente Rodríguez to pass along papers he receives for any issue.

In the October, 2002 issue, I announced the discussion list for *Information Research* and the 'knowledge management' issue provoked a good deal of debate. The list now has 111 members and I hope that some discussion will ensue for each issue of the journal. The list is "IR-DISCUSS@jiscmail.ac.uk" and you can join by following the instructions at the Web page:

http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/IR-DISCUSS.html

The more alert readers will have noticed that I have implemented some changes in the appearance of the journal in this volume - in fact, the even more alert will have seen that the changes have also been implemented back to volume 1 number 1. By 'changes' I mean the introduction of new navigation features on the pages for the papers. There is now a top navigation bar with buttons linking to the contents page of an issue, to the author index and subject index, to the search engine, and to the home page of the journal. Also, at the end of the paper, there are navigation buttons to the contents and the home page. Previously, if someone hit a paper through a search engine output, s/he might have no immediate idea that the paper found was part of something bigger. Now, the first thing that person sees is the name of the journal and the specific volume and part number, together with the array of navigation buttons. I hope not to do this *too* often, since implementing the changes backwards in time is a pretty tedious and time-consuming business! I've changed only the contents lists and the papers to the new format - I may get round to doing the rest sometime but my Editorials are hardly 'deathless prose' and I don't imagine that they are much 'hit' by search engines.

A couple of issues ago I asked readers whether or not they knew of any work on the 'half-life' of electronic journal papers versus that of print journal papers. I received a helpful e-mail message pointing me to Steve Lawrence's paper in *Nature* in 2001. Lawrence looked at papers in computer science and related fields and found:

> ...a clear correlation between the number of times an article is cited and the probability that the article is online. More highly cited articles, and more recent articles, are significantly more likely to be online, in computer science. The mean number of citations to offline articles is 2.74, and the mean number of citations to online articles is 7.03, an increase of 157%.

If we can describe *Information Research* as being at least allied to computer science, this bodes well for authors who choose to publish in the journal. Have any of our authors being keeping track of where their papers are cited?

The 'km' issue and 'blogging'

The last issue of the journal appears to have been a tearaway success, pushing the number of hits on the top page to 30,416 in the year - the highest annual total so far. The highest hit rate on a single day was also achieved, with 666 page views on the top page on 15th October and the highest rate for a single week, with 2041 hits in the first week of publication. The annual total would have been slightly higher but for the fact that the domain name registration service got something wrong over Christmas and the New Year resulting in the loss of the domain name from some DNS servers around the world. I could continue to access the server to load this issue's files and to access the site through my browser, but anyone trying to access from outside was out of luck.

The individual papers also had massive numbers of hits - in total, by 17th January, they had had 16,397.

Interestingly, the contents page for the issue had 'only' 8,056 - which suggests an almost 50:50 split between hits that arrive at papers through the contents list and those that arrive directly - partly through the 'blogger' phenomenon discussed below, or by person-to-person e-mails, or through listing in resource guides.

One of the authors, Chris Kimble, brought my attention to an interesting phenomenon, that of the interlinking of Weblogs or 'blogs'. I'd known about blogs, of course, and occasionally read them, but the fact of their interlinking had not penetrated my consciousness. To demonstrate: if you put the url for Chris's paper into Google's Advanced search system (searching for pages that link to Chris's paper) you find that it returns twenty-four of about fifty-four, and most of these are on the sites of 'bloggers' (people who produce blogs). More than this, the bloggers read each other's blogs and pass on information from one to another, so that a veritable web of connections can be established. The crafty author, then, can pretty well ensure some take up by cultivating a friendly blogger and letting him/her know when a paper has been published - off round the network the news goes and, before you know it, you are on the best-seller list.

The phenomenon has been noted elsewhere and is described as the [Weblogging Multiplier Effect](#):

> This is how the weblogging multiplier effect works: 1) you read something at an online site and post the resource URL plus a commentary in your weblog; 2) then I read your weblog, visit the recommended resource site and put a comment response into your log; 3) next I re-post your item to my weblog and add my own commentary about the resource; 4) then others read my weblog and others continue to read your weblog and continue to add their own comments and do their own re-postings. Within just a few multiplications there are multiple comments, critiques, ideas, observations, and jump outs to additional online resources, print resources, and other information. The multiplier effect can go on and on, depending upon how much attention the postings attract and how often they are blog rolled.

Perhaps we'll see the day when a Blog Impact Factor (BIF) is required of all candidates for tenure or promotion.

For an interesting history of blogs, read [Rebecca Blood](#), and if anyone has a paper on the subject in preparation, let me know.

Editorial assistance

This issue has benefited from the participation of a part-time, unpaid, voluntary Editorial Assistant - Rae Ann Hughes-Stift. Rae Ann drew attention to some problems in a paper published some issues ago and I jokingly suggested that if she needed a job as an unpaid EA, there was one open. Much to my surprise, she volunteered. Rae Ann is currently funding her degree in Library Technology through distance learning from the University of Maine by working in a computer bag factory - let's hope that this kind of experience will help her to get more interesting work. Assistance of this kind is much appreciated, especially as the scale of operations increases.

This issue

The main feature, as noted earlier, is the presence of papers in Spanish, with English abstracts. I hope this will encourage scholars in the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking world to submit papers. They should be send to our Regional Editor for the Luso-Hispanic countries, Professor. [José Vicente Rodríguez Muñoz](#) of the University of Murcia.

The first paper comes from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and deals with the scientific productivity of Mexican scholarship holders for study abroad, using bibliometric techniques to assess evidence for conclusions of interest to the makers of science policy in Mexico. I imagine that the conclusion that the scholarship is of undoubted benefit to the holder but of questionable benefit to the country is one that would strike a chord in many other countries.

The second paper, from the University of Murcia, examines the methods proposed for evaluating Web search engines - I do like the flavour of 'los motores de búsqueda'! I suspect that this is one that the authors will be asked to translate.

The third paper, also from Spain - Carlos III University and the University of Alcalá, both in Madrid, and is in

English. Which prompts me to say that, of course, we welcome papers from the region in Spanish, Portuguese *or* English. This one addresses the Semantic Web theme, which was the subject of thematic issue in [Volume 7 No. 4](#). It proposes a method for developing 'ontologies' from the recognized literature of a field. Sounds an awful lot like the standard method of developing a faceted classification scheme to me.

Moving on to the other refereed papers: we have one on the role of 'telecentres' in providing community information. The research was based on Dervin's 'sense-making' approach. The paper raises concerns about the public provision of free access to the Internet and the need for public systems to provide modes of access that help people with various kinds and degrees of physical handicap.

The last paper comes from the USA and is a study by Micaela Waldman of the role of self-efficacy in the way freshmen (first-year students in European parlance) use of library electronic resources. The research showed that self-efficacy did vary and those with higher self-efficacy scores were more likely to use the library and its electronic resources, and to access those resources from home. It always amuses me that so many educational testing tools are available - all of them researched by university Departments of Education and yet universities rarely, if ever, use them to help students understand their cognitive styles, learning styles and other matters which would help them to evolve better study habits. But, then, I've also noticed that expertise in information retrieval doesn't actually help us to build better filing systems in departments!

We also have a book review in Portuguese, with an English translation.

Finally

In the last editorial I mentioned the need for authors to check their references to online sources because of the rapid rate at which these sources either disappear completely, or have the URL changed (referring to [Wally Koehler's paper](#) on the subject. Quite coincidentally, I received a couple of papers from Dr. Vijai Kumar of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in India, one of which dealt with the demise of Web sites cited in electronic journals. It confirmed that we may need stricter rules for citing Web documents. Many, for example, are citations to documents held on personal Web sites, and when people move from one institution to another, not only is the site likely to disappear, but the same contents may not appear at the author's new site. Sometimes personal sites disappear for no discernible reason. Conference sites are another problem: they may also disappear, particularly if they are housed on an institutional server, when the next conference takes place at a different location. Conference papers may remain on the site for some time, but their archiving is not guaranteed. 'Magazine' articles on many sites are only freely accessible for a limited period of time - they may then move into an archive for which a subscription is needed. Company sites can change very quickly and information available on one occasion may have disappeared without trace. Even electronic journals may move from one site to another and they do not always leave a pointer behind on the earlier site and we have no guarantee that sources that have been around for some years will necessarily continue to exist.

What are we to do in this situation? I am coming to the conclusion that we need to guide authors on what to cite and to reject citations to sources that are likely to be ephemeral. We probably need some kind of guarantee from a site that the material made available will be permanently archived either with the same URL, or, if change is necessary, with a 'refresh' link at the original location. For material that is likely to be ephemeral, should I ask authors to let me have a copy of the original document? Storing html files doesn't use up much space and a local link to a document is more likely to survive than a remote link. We would need the permission of copyright owners to do this, of course, but we could simply reject references that did not meet the requirements or where copyright owners wanted to charge. Do any readers have any bright ideas on how we could ensure more permancence in citations to Web documents?

Dr. Kumar's paper is: "Linking in e-journals: a case study", by E.R. Prakasan, T. Swarna, V.L. Kalyane and V. Kumar, a paper delivered at the XXIII IASLIC Conference, Thiruvanantapuram, 2001.

The 'best-seller' list

'Best sellers': an update on the most 'hit' papers on the site (as of 17th January 2003), expanded backwards in time to Volume 3 no. 4 (as far back as the counters go) - I have now put counters on all of the papers in Volumes 1, 2 and 3 - but they are counting only from December, 2002. Nevertheless, by the time of the next issue they should be

revealing the 'best sellers' in those volumes, as well as revealing the 'longevity' of online documents.

- Vol. 3 No. 4 - [Business use of the World Wide Web: a report on further investigations](#), by Hooi-Im Ng, Ying Jie Pan, and T.D. Wilson, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield, U.K. - **7,255** hits.
- Vol. 4 No. 1 - [The Internet as a learning tool: a preliminary study](#), by Kate Garland, S.J. Anderson, and J.M. Noyes, University of Bristol - **6,471 hits**
- Vol. 4 No. 2 - [Student attitudes towards electronic information resources](#), by Kathryn Ray & Joan Day, Department of Information and Library Management, University of Northumbria at Newcastle, UK - **9,188 hits**
- Vol. 4 No. 3 - [Information in organisations: directions for information management](#), by Joyce Kirk, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia - **12,352 hits**
- Vol. 4 No. 4 - [Digital libraries and World Wide Web sites and page persistence](#), by Wallace Koehler, School of Library and Information Studies, University of Oklahoma - **7,625 hits**
- Vol. 5 No. 1 - [Experiencing information seeking and learning: a study of the interaction between two phenomena](#), by Louise Limberg, Högskolan i Borås Borås, Sweden - **5,378 hits**
- Vol. 5 No. 2 - [Textual and chemical information processing: different domains but similar algorithms](#), by Peter Willett, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield, UK. - **3,338 hits**
- Vol. 5 No. 3 - [Recent trends in user studies: action research and qualitative methods](#), T.D. Wilson, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK - **8,243 hits**
- Vol. 5 No. 4 - [Information exchange in virtual communities: a typology](#), by Gary Burnett, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, USA - **4,242 hits**
- Vol. 6 No. 1 - [Designing internet research assignments: building a framework for instructor collaboration.](#), by David Ward and Sarah Reisinger, University of Illinois, USA - **7,723 hits**
- Vol. 6 No. 2 - [National Information Infrastructure and the realization of Singapore IT2000 initiative,](#), by Cheryl Marie Cordeiro and Suliman Al-Hawamdeh, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore - **3,075 hits**
- Vol. 6 No. 3 - [Determining organizational information needs: the Critical Success Factors approach](#), by Maija-Leena Huotari, University of Tampere, Finland and T.D. Wilson, University of Sheffield, U.K. - **6,437 hits**
- Vol. 6 No. 4 - [Scholarly communication, scholarly publication and the status of emerging formats](#), by Leah Halliday, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University, UK - **1,243 hits**
- Vol. 7 No. 1 - [Environmental scanning as information seeking and organizational learning,](#), by Chun Wei Choo, Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada - **6,338 hits**
- Vol 7 No. 2 - [Critical realism and information systems research: why bother with philosophy?](#), by Philip J. Dobson, School of Management Information Systems, Edith Cowan University, Churchlands, Western Australia - **1,689 hits**
- Vol 7 No. 3 - [The role of motivation and risk behaviour in software development success](#), by Kenneth R. Walsh and Helmut Schneider, Information Systems and Decision Sciences Department, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA - **1,527 hits**
- Vol 7 No. 4 - [The Semantic Web: opportunities and challenges for next-generation Web applications](#), by Shiyong Lu, Ming Dong and Farshad Fotouhi, Department of Computer Science, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, USA - **1,162 hits**
- Vol 8 No. 1 - [The nonsense of knowledge management](#), by T.D. Wilson, Professor Emeritus, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK and Visiting Professor, Högskolan i Borås, Borås, Sweden. **6724 hits**

Professor Tom Wilson, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief
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How to cite this paper: