Special Issue on Environmental Scanning and Competitive Intelligence
Editorial

Chun Wei Choo
Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto

Pierrette Bergeron
École de bibliothéconomie et des sciences de l'information, Université de Montréal

This special issue of Information Research comprises seven papers dealing with various aspects of environmental scanning and competitive intelligence.

The papers may be divided into four categories: (1) conceptual frameworks to study environmental scanning (Choo; Murray-Macintosh); (2) empirical study of information seeking and use by managers (de Alwis and Higgins) and information professionals (Erdelez and Ware); (3) analytical techniques for environmental scanning, foresight and policy making (Tarapanoff and colleagues; Marton); and (4) information systems to support competitive intelligence and knowledge management (Baroni de Carvalho and Araújo Tavares Ferreira).

In his paper, Choo presents a model of environmental scanning as modes of information seeking and organizational learning. This model introduces information processes of sense-making, knowledge creating, and decision making as part of environmental scanning. The framework is consistent with the results of empirical research to date, but further research is needed to test its specific predictions. There is a need for sound theoretically-based models in the area of organizational environmental scanning and competitive intelligence and Choo's framework helps to fill that gap.

Anu MacIntosh-Murray examines a very neglected area in the environmental scanning, competitive intelligence, and decision making literature, that is learning from adverse events. She exposes the lack of knowledge about scanning and vicarious learning from adverse events despite its claimed importance in the management literature in general and within the context of hospitals and hospital personnel specifically. She proposes a conceptual framework for adverse event information scanning and formulates three hypotheses that are relevant to the context of hospitals.

Shrianjani Marie (Gina) de Alwis and Susan Ellen Higgins examine how a group of managers from Singapore use information as a tool for decision making. Few studies have examined information use by managers outside the occidental context, and this paper provides some empirical data about this process in the Singapore context.

In their paper "Finding competitive intelligence on Internet start-up companies: A study of secondary resource use and information-seeking processes", Sanda Erdelez and Nicole Ware report findings from a study of competitive intelligence activities involving Internet start-up companies in the telecommunications industry. In the current context where start-up companies are the focus of many governments and venture capital investors, it is important to better understand how to find appropriate information on this type of organization.

Christine Marton describes the development of an environmental scanning system by a group of academics and health librarians for the purpose of conducting a consumer scan on women's health information resources. Her paper illustrates how a database development approach can be used to analyze a specific environment for policy making purposes.

In their paper "Intelligence obtained by applying data mining to a database of French theses on the subject of Brazil," Kira Tarapanoff, Luc Quoniam, Rogério Henrique de Araújo Júnior, and Lillian Alvares examine how bibliometrics analysis and tools can be powerful data mining tools for CI and foresight analysis. By applying these tools on the subject of Brazil within the context of the French database DocThèses, they "dig up" new insights and knowledge for decision and policy making.

Rodrigo Baroni de Carvalho and Marta Araújo Tavares Ferreira examine how information technology can be used to

support knowledge conversion processes by proposing a typology of knowledge management/competitive intelligence IT tools. This paper supports the claim that CI is increasingly associating itself with knowledge management.

As a final note, the readers will note that this issue continues the "international authorship" trend observed by Tom Wilson in his IR editorials, with papers by authors from Brazil, Canada, Singapore, and the USA.

We hope that the readers will enjoy this special issue of IR. We thank the Editor-in-Chief, Tom Wilson, for providing us with the opportunity to prepare this issue, and, hopefully, modestly contribute to the publication of more empirically grounded research on ES/CI.