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"WELCOME TO INFORMATION SCIENCE" (Panel)

Abstract
Inspired by CAIS' conference theme of "Imagining Information," the participants of this panel will enact the following scenario: At an orientation event for an information science program, a spokesperson gives incoming students a brief address on the theme, "Welcome to information science." Six imaginative versions of that talk are offered here. Each disquisition is inspired by a luminary or paradigm, namely: S. R. Ranganathan, Elfreda Chatman, Marcia Bates, Chinese Information Science, Indigenous Ways of Knowing, and Queering Sociotechnical Systems. Everyone in attendance will have six opportunities to imagine information science at its best, that is, a wide-ranging and multi-perspective discipline.

Introduction

Information science programs are growing by leaps and bounds (ALISE, 2020). Each year we introduce hundreds of new students to the field during the application process, at orientation events, and when courses begin. Most of us attending the Canadian Association for Information Science's (CAIS) annual meeting have at some point served as our field's ambassadors and welcomed a next generation into the fold. To do so, we draw upon a combination of personal predilections, metatheoretical commitments, and institutional traditions. This practice, which imagines and re-imagines our discipline over the years, has gone mostly unconsidered. As an exception, a paper in *JELIS* (and the companion website) entitled "Welcome to Library and Information Science" (Hartel, 2012a) envisages three welcome statements inspired by landmark works of Jesse H. Shera, Howard D. White, and Marcia J. Bates. The opening words of these addresses appear in Figure 1.
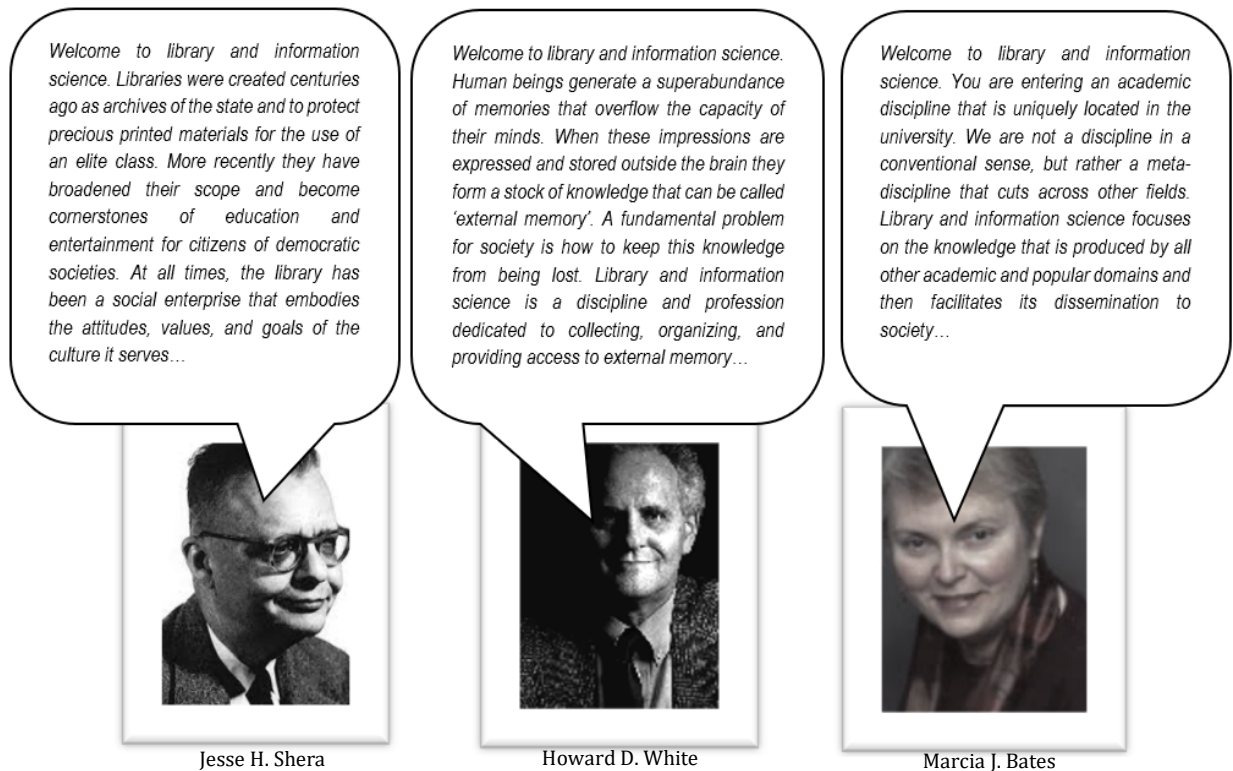
Figure 1. "Welcome to library and information science" statements as imagined in Hartel (2012a).

The collaboration at hand revisits and extends the premise of that paper, adjusts the focus to *information science*, and concocts "Welcome to information science" expositions drawn from the work of three scholars and three paradigms. Overall, the panel invites its audience to imagine and consider: *What is Information Science? How are newcomers welcomed to our community? And what are the implications of our welcoming pronouncements (or their absence!) on our research, teaching, and collective identity?*

Welcome!

To *welcome* means to greet someone who is arriving in a polite or friendly way. From the perspective of interactionist studies of microsociology, it is an "introductory greeting behavior" (Åström, 1994) and includes elements of verbal as well as nonverbal communication. Putting aside what is said, greetings are situated, embodied, and involve kinesics (body movements), proxemics (position in space), haptics (touches), vocalics (paralinguistic expressions) and turn-taking (Baesler & Burgoon, 1987). However, the welcome that is given to incoming graduate students is not so intimate. It more closely resembles what organizational science calls "on-boarding," a step of "human capital management" for newly hired employees, which is implemented with an eye to their rapid productivity. While on-boarding does not map perfectly to the academic situation, the literature offers a helpful three-level welcoming framework (Cesario & Chambel, 2019). The first level (which is the only one of interest here) is a "corporate welcome" that conveys the *history*, *structure*, *mission*, *vision*, *core values* and *ethics code* of an enterprise. These six elements

encapsulate important and defining tenets of a discipline and will be touchstones for the "Welcome to information science" statements on this panel.

The Process of Designing the Panel

Of note, an earlier version of this panel was presented at the 2021 ASIS&T annual meeting (online) to a small audience (<20). Both members of the audience and the speakers felt the panel concept and its topic merited more attention and further discussion. We are therefore bringing an improved and expanded version to CAIS that focuses upon three new sources and paradigms, and enlists three new presenters. Developing our CAIS proposal was a two-step process. The lead organizers, Hartel and Nesset, choose a *source* information scientist or a *paradigm* that marks a particular sensibility and moment in information science history. Second, we enlisted a *presenter* and *expert* who will draw from the source to synthesize and then voice a "Welcome to information science" statement, on the panel.

Step 1: Selecting the Sources

With an eye to historical breadth we considered sources from across the past century, favoring some "foundational" information scientists with substantial publication records and high citation counts. At the same time, in keeping with the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion as well as an exciting feeling of new paradigms emerging, we sought novel perspectives. Ultimately, as sources we selected:

- **S. R. Ranganathan** (1892 – 1972). Indian librarian and educator who is seen as the father of library science in India and whose contributions had worldwide influence. His *Five Laws of Library Science* was the first textbook of its kind and contains fundamentals that remain relevant today.

- **Elfreda Chatman** (1942 – 2002). American scholar of library and information science, known for pioneering ethnographic research into information seeking behaviors among understudied or minority groups. Her work resulted in widely cited, middle-range theories of information poverty, life in round, normative behaviour, and small worlds, among others.

- **Marcia J. Bates** (b. 1942—). American information scientist and one of the most highly cited authors in the discipline, her work in theorizing information as a concept, on information search, human-centered design of information systems, and information practices, continues to inform theory and practice to present day.

- **Chinese Information Science**. Chinese information science dates to the 1950s and is relatively unknown to North American audiences (Wang & Lai, 2021). Its history follows technological and cultural changes, including disciplinary landscape reshaping, basic concepts debate, and the ups and downs of theoretical research (Wang, et al., 2014). The growth of the field has been coloured by state-led initiatives.

- **Indigenous Ways of Knowing**. A complex term that defies simple definition, *indigenous knowledge* or *indigenous ways of knowing* refer to, "…a network of knowledges, beliefs, and traditions intended to preserve, communicate, and contextualize Indigenous relationships with culture and landscape over time" (Bruchac, 2014).

- **Queering Sociotechnical Systems**. Engaging with sociotechnical systems from a queer perspective challenges presumptions of essentialist binaries within society (i.e., good vs. bad information). By queering sociotechnical system one can examine how concepts like experiential and embodied knowledge inform engagements within institutional resources and how communal technology practices can produce unique digital information worlds that protect and center the complexities of LGTQIA+ history and culture. To queer sociotechnical systems requires both praxis-based and theoretical approaches which challenge scholar/practitioner and insider/outsider dichotomies within the already complex world of information science.

Selecting Presenters

A second step was to enlist scholars within the information science community to present at the session. This required an individual with expertise in the work of a source information scientist or paradigm; an interest in composing the welcome address; and a willingness to deliver it at the CAIS annual meeting.

- **Vishma Bhattarai** (*S. R. Ranganathan*) is librarian at Enoch Pratt Free Library, in Baltimore, Maryland. He has library degrees from Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu and Catholic University, USA, as well as a Master's degree in Religion and Society from Liverpool Hope University, England. Mr. Bhattarai has spent years studying the work of S. R. Ranganathan is a translator of his ideas (Bhattarai, 2021 based on Ranganathan, 2009).

- **LaVerne Gray** (*Elfreda Chatman*) is Assistant Professor at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies. Her award-winning dissertation was inspired by her grandmother and the community of women working for betterment in Chicago Public Housing. Her theoretical development and qualitative analysis approaches extends Elfreda Chatman's informational inquiry into marginal community spaces; she also writes about critical approaches to LIS pedagogy and research (Gray, 2021; Gray & Mehra, 2021; Mehra & Gray, 2020).

- **Sandy Littletree** (*Indigenous Ways of Knowing*) is an LIS educator and researcher with interests at the intersections of Indigenous systems of knowledge and the library and information science field (Littletree, Belarde-Lewis, & Duarte, 2020). Her dissertation research focused on the history and development of tribal libraries in the United States. She is a past president of the American Indian Library Association (AILA) and currently serves on several advisory boards for LIS projects in Indigenous communities in the US and Canada. She is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, originally from the Four Corners region of New Mexico.

- **Valerie Nesset** (*Marcia J. Bates*) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Information Science at the University at Buffalo. Her research interests focus on participatory forms of design and how inherent hierarchies between researcher and participant can be disrupted through methods used in Indigenous and Decolonization research.

- **Travis L. Wagner** (*Queering Technical Systems)* is a lecturer in archives and digital curation at the University of Maryland's College of Information Studies where they also serve as the Associate Director of the Center for Archival Futures. Wagner earned their Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina's Department of Information Science in 2022. Wagner's research explores the intersections of queer embodiment with sociotechnical systems. In particular they focus on how queer communities utilize and engage with digital technologies to produce radical queer historiography. In particular, Wagner highlights how this work occurs in opposition to essentialist practices within information organization and digital curation as currently practiced within most institutional settings (Wagner et al., 2022; Wagner, 2021).

- **Lin (David) Wang** (*Chinese Information Science*) received a PhD in information science from Peking University. He is a Professor of information science at Hangzhou Dianzi University. Dr. Wang was a visiting Professor in University of California Berkeley and Nanyang Technological University, and a guest research fellow in the National Information Resource Management Institute at Beijing. Dr. Wang's research interests include foundation of information science and information philosophy.

The Moderator

The panel's moderator, **Jenna Hartel**, is versed in the intellectual history of information science and has a track record of imaginative contributions to the field (Hartel, 2012a; 2012b; 2013, 2014). She will provide introductions to the sources and their representatives on the panel, and then she will host a discussion period. Dr. Hartel is a past winner of the 2016 ALISE Excellence in Teaching Award; and the author of the *JELIS* paper "Welcome to Library and Information Science" that motivated this panel.

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