Introduction

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LUCIANO FLORIDI'S 1999 MONOGRAPH, *Philosophy and Computing: An Introduction*, provided the impetus for the theme of this issue, more for what it did not say about librarianship and information studies (LIS) than otherwise. Following the pioneering works of Wilson, Nitecki, Buckland, and Capurro (plus many of the authors of this issue), researchers in LIS have increasingly turned to the efficacy of philosophical discourse in probing the more fundamental aspects of our theories, including those involving the information concept. A foundational approach to the nature of information, however, has not been realized, either in partial or accomplished steps, nor even as an agreed, theoretical research objective. It is puzzling that while librarianship, in the most expansive sense of all LIS-related professions, past and present, at its best sustains a climate of thought, both comprehensive and nonexclusive, information itself as the subject of study has defied our abilities to generalize and synthesize effectively. Perhaps during periods of reassessment and justification for library services, as well as in times of curricular review and continuing scholarly evaluation of perceived information demand, the necessity for every single stated position to be clarified appears to be exaggerated. Despite this, the important question does keep surfacing as to how information relates to who we are and what we do in LIS.

Floridi's broader program of Philosophy of Information (PI) may provide intellectual coordinates bridging our community's discussion with that of like-minded colleagues beyond LIS. These invited papers do not directly address my own intuitions surrounding LIS as a potential applied PI. The collection as a whole results from some preliminary inquiries along those lines, but practically speaking it required little provocation and amounts to a treasure trove on the subject of information. In the actual working of our libraries, special collections, archives, and physical repositories, we find

ourselves struggling with new information policies and protocols and changing long-term strategies for dealing with a plethora of new and old information objects, types, and artifacts. For instance, the paradox of invention and discovery runs rife through our conceptions of knowledge classifications and retrieval languages. Another difficult challenge is how nonphysicality affects the bases for our assumptions about records, evidence, works, storage, access, ownership, and provenance. Of the multiplicity of additional questions of concern to the reader, the following synopses are offered as all-too-brief overviews of the extensive and complex contents of this issue.

To paraphrase Cornelius, who expresses careful reservations of the practicing librarian, let us not info-educate ourselves beyond the social bounds of our traditional duties. He admits, however, any PI must "offer an explanation for a very wide range of phenomena and practices, from book history and curatorship, reading stories to children, and model-building in information retrieval (IR) and information seeking." This is the exciting challenge, and Cornelius cites as wide-ranging goals for better understanding information within a future PI both our subjective identities, personal and library-practitioner, evincing our individual cognitive apparatus, as well as efficacy in the social context of our host environments. Frohmann disclaims a putative status for information as a primary category, favoring instead documents, practices, and ties of documentary authoritativeness. His phenomenological tour de force supports a Wittgensteinian shift "away from mentalistic pictures of meaning and toward practices with documents . . . from *theories of information* to *descriptions of documentary practices.*" [emphasis in original] Frohmann presents four properties for the latter: materiality, institutional embeddedness, social discipline, and historicity, with examples of how a document becomes informing.

While Day investigates the paramount linguistic and, generally, affective bases for these social relations in his exploration of an anti- or a-metaphysical concept of information, his engagement is through political philosophy and ontology. He utilizes a Negrian critique of representation, agency, and power and a Heideggerian and Negrian critique of time, arguing for a concept of information as an event and for a concept of being as a codeterminate emergence, both grounded in information as affect and respons(ibility). Furner, too, delves into the philosophy of language in an analysis disclosing deeper questions into the relationship of classes and propositions with purported information objects or structures. His terminological distinctions and information taxonomy are delivered in a general ontological system of categories rich in detail and implication for further study. Budd expounds a dynamic theory of relevance and describes the importance of the dialogic, phenomenological, transformative, and performative qualities of relatively inner and outer information contexts. Among his sources are Habermas and Bakhtin, and particularly pertinent is his

assessment acknowledging the sheer complexity of the relevance concept, noting its psychological, cognitive, and linguistic aspects.

Fallis questions the accuracy of information sources from the standpoint of testimony and verifiability, notions in flux in our networks of knowledge. His epistemological treatment applies to the issues of authority, corroboration, plausibility, and presentation, with the hope that LIS professionals have important techniques to offer. Hjørland borrows from the realist–antirealist debate in the philosophy of science to advocate and reintroduce a realist and proper sociohistorical perspective for LIS. He criticizes antirealism, idealism, or nominalism as absolute methods for information science, outlining support for his theory of domain analysis and its pragmatic investigation of knowledge: "[a] philosophy is not something that you just choose, it is something you work out or construe in order to solve problems related to your field of study and your profession." Thellefsen introduces his method for investigating the knowledge domain using Peircean semiotics, an intriguing and innovative basis in pragmatics for knowledge organization termed "knowledge profiling." His work may provide an exemplar for the design and problem-solving character of an applied PI in the realm of concepts and categories.

Jacob puts forward a new and essential study of information dynamics in her insightful inquiry into the differences between systems of classification and categorization. She imposes a rigorous analysis on the concepts of order, organization, and structure with respect to semantic information. Mills articulates a thorough and intimate case study in concept analysis and logic in the design of faceted classification for information retrieval. He elaborates the detailed methodology for implementation of indexing and searching information in a manner optimally predictable for locating and relating it. Svenonius identifies foundational qualities of retrieval languages and classification systems by examining theories of meaning: operational, referential, and instrumental. Her aim is to clarify the design implications for each theory through better understanding of their effectiveness at representing knowledge. Paling links classification and rhetoric in his deconstructivist study of the development of bibliography and retrieval, expanding on Gadamer's idea of "intellectual horizon." Paling's own notion of a classificatory horizon "represents a convergence of ideas from related fields that, taken together, can provide a theoretical framework for studying rhetorical aspects of classification" and "a better understanding of the material and cultural limits that act on the representations in our classificatory systems."

Olson describes the notion of hierarchy as a negative example of the rigid application of axiomatic rule-making over propositional elements associated with a nineteenth-century information concept. She explores the practices of Melvil Dewey and Charles Cutter in relation to Hegel and Scottish Common Sense philosophers. Spink and Cole probe the provocative

relationship of human information behavior and evolutionary psychology. Their ambitious work emphasizes the conceptualizing phase of an information process, integrating problem solving along a continuum from preattentive and nonpurposive through adaptive intelligence. Brier summarizes his theory of "cybersemiotics" as a foundation for LIS: "What is new in the Cybersemiotic approach is the knitting together of a theoretical framework for LIS from recognized theories of cybernetics, systems, semiotics, communication, and language that span the gap between technical, scientific, social scientific, and humanistic approaches to the design and development of [document retrieval]-systems in LIS. This trans-disciplinary framework will make communication between the different approaches and theories of these processes possible, without reducing everything to mere information processing." Brier argues forcefully that, among other things, the scientific aspect of LIS should not be dominated by a design model in which knowledge is a purely rational, truth-oriented cognitive structure.

Lastly, Floridi offers his reappraisal of LIS as applied PI in the Afterword. Explaining his approach to PI from a liminalist and constructionist perspective, he further clarifies his metaphysical stance with respect to information ethics. Any implications of Floridi's notion of stewardship of the infosphere for the global responsibilities and traditional duties of librarianship (together with the more recent information disciplines) are yet to be discovered. The LIS community shares responsibility for the design of services and systems affording our patron communities a continuous and integrated information environment respecting the vast polycultural heritage entrusted to our care. We may variously encounter information as an engineered object of practical communications, as a potential structure in the devising of our increasingly digitally influenced experiences and perspectives, or perhaps we may treat the notion as a pseudoentity worthy of disdain or ambivalence. This issue promises a richer understanding of all informational aspects and entities, however conceived.