

Education & Research Update

Information Management at Monash University

Information management (IM) education and research at Monash University goes back to 1975. The following recent achievements and activities exemplify the breadth of the discipline and some current directions.

A new Bachelor of Information Technology and Systems has been introduced, which has an Information Management major. This major will give graduates a recognised LIS qualification as well as preparing them for the future impact of IT on the profession.

The March 2007 ALIA Board Meeting granted recognition of the Monash LIS courses for the maximum period of seven years. The courses involved are the Graduate Diploma in Information and Knowledge Management (and the former Graduate Diploma in Information Management and Systems); the LIS streams of the Master of Information Management and Systems and the Master of Information Management and Systems Professional; and the Information Management stream of the Bachelor of Information Technology and Systems.

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'Pluralizing the Archival Paradigm through Education' is an international collaborative project funded by UCLA's Pacific Rim Program. It explores the archival education needs of Indigenous, marginalised and diverse ethnic communities in Pacific Rim nations, and how far existing programs meet these needs. Findings support the development and delivery of archival education and research training programs that are inclusive of Indigenous and minority community knowledge and practices; that are culturally sensitive and responsive, and that are driven by community and local needs. Two research workshops have been held, including the very successful 'Pluralising the Archival Paradigm' workshop that focused on the archival education and research training needs of Indigenous communities in Australia.

The IM and community informatics group has recently seen the completion of five PhDs. Gillian Oliver earned the prestigious Mollie Holman Award for the best thesis in the Faculty of Information Technology, as well as the Emerald/EFMD Outstanding Doctoral Research Award in Information Science (sponsored by the *Journal of Documentation*). Gillian's thesis investigated the influence of national, corporate and occupational culture on the management of information in organisations, and issues arising from globalisation. These included the application of international standards to information management, record keeping by multinational companies and international organisations, the transborder flow of information, and increasing international mobility of information management professionals.

Kerry Tanner's thesis, entitled 'Human Capital, Organisational Systems and Technologies in Knowledge-enabled Organisational Change', developed a conceptual framework for understanding knowledge, learning and change processes in organisations. A novel conceptualisation is the notion of human capital as a composite of intellectual capital, social capital and emotional capital.

Don Barker's thesis overturned the myth that mechanics' institutes had a short useful lifespan, by exploring their changing roles in Victoria from the 1830s to the 1950s. Relying on income from subscriptions and from government subsidies, mechanics' institutes were the primary public library for colonial Victorians. A marked decline in the quality of these libraries in the twentieth century following the effective withdrawal of subsidies, but they adapted in order to meet fresh community needs. The introduction of post-World War II legislation led to greatly improved free library services.

The findings of Larry Stillman's PhD have been used to develop a new large-scale project with the Victorian Council of Social Services to promote organisational capacity with ICTs using an action-research methodology. He researched how technical systems are understood by community workers, who are part of complex systems of social support, education and community development.

Thomas O'Daniel's PhD included a case study in the social shaping of technology — the Internet over time from several angles. A unique case of a distributed information system, the Internet became an essential component of many other systems. It was also an infrastructure project, an evolution of existing technology. A number of powerful, complex organisations are implicated in it. Thus it provided a concrete research space for theory and analysis of the negotiation of international standards, including of site name and hosting preferences.

The IM group at Monash falls within the Centre for Organisational and Social Informatics. Further information is at <<http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/centres/cosi/projects/monashprojects.htm>>

Links: <<http://im.infotech.monash.edu.au/>>; <<http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/centres/cosi/>>; <<http://www.ccnr.net/>>.

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