

Editorial

Rather belatedly, we have come to the final issue of *Library and Information Research* for 2009: and, regretfully, this will be my final issue as joint editor. Editing the journal is a very rewarding, but time-consuming, role, and there comes a point when the demands of the day job have to come first! Indeed, this issue would have been even more delayed had it not been for the sterling work (as ever) of my co-editor, Miggie Pickton, ably aided by Jonathan Jones, who has joined the team as Editorial Assistant. Between them, they have undertaken the lion's share of the copy editing of the papers in this issue, and ensured that it has come to virtual press without greater delay.

However, with my resignation it is a case of out with the old and in with the new! The Editorial Board of *Library and Information Research* is delighted to welcome warmly a new joint editor, Dr. Alison Pickard, from the School of Computing, Engineering and Information Sciences at Northumbria University. We are sure that Alison will be a real asset to the journal, and that she will make an invaluable contribution to the work of the Library & Information Research Group. We wish her all the best in her work for the journal. We would also like to extend a similarly warm welcome to Jonathan Jones who, as mentioned above, has also joined the team and has already volunteered a significant amount of time to the journal, both in terms of assisting with editorial work and with scanning and uploading earlier hard copy issues into the journal site, thus creating an online open access archive for the journal.

And, as ever, we are sure that you will find the papers and reviews in this issue of both intrinsic interest and of practical use, whatever your role and working context may be. The editorial team at *Library and Information Research* are constantly seeking to extend the sectoral coverage of the journal, so it is particularly pleasing to include in this issue a number of papers that focus primarily on the work of schools libraries – in this case, in Scotland.

But first, one of the main concerns of *Library and Information Research* has always been to introduce readers to new – and sometimes quite challenging – research methods, thus extending the range of techniques available in the methodological toolbox available for LIS research into practice. Thus Naomi Hay-Gibson's paper discussing the pros and cons of her use of Skype to conduct 'remote' interviews with participants of her PhD study into risk management within records management. In addition to the use of VoIP, Hay-Gibson also used an internet-based electronic whiteboard application to provide some genuinely participative online collaboration between the researcher and the interviewee. Although the methods were not entirely without problems (as they say, never work with children, animals or technology!), they certainly offer interesting potential for enabling data collection from across the globe without the expense – or time – involved in extended travel.

Staying with the theme of innovation in research techniques, Andrew Shenton discusses the development and potential benefits of the use of modelling-through-reaction in user studies, to investigate the specification of preferred features of the 'ideal information entity'. In particular, he focuses on the potential of the method to help bridge the gap between empirical research and the information professional to whom he suggests such research all too often may seem, on the surface, 'irrelevant to their real areas of interest'.

The paper by David Bawden *et al.* pursues the theme that is surely dear to the heart of most of those working in library and information services: how do we measure and demonstrate the value and impact of what we do on the users of our services? Whilst it is relatively easy to measure *performance*, as the authors comment, measuring *impact* is another matter altogether. However, in a time of threatened budgets such as the present, it is ever more important that we are able to do just that. In the paper, the authors report their experiences evaluating the impact of public library services in a couple of case study settings, using an approach based on Christine Urquhart's Value project for health care information services.

In an educational environment where widening participation is high on the policy agenda, Muir *et al.*'s paper discussing research into the accessibility of the content of e-books for students with diverse needs is of considerable value in itself. However, it is especially pleasing to be able to publish the paper on a further two counts: firstly, it is good to note that the paper was jointly authored by a team that involved collaboration between an academic, a practitioner and an MSc student – this very much embodies the collaborative and collegial spirit of *Library and Information Research*. Secondly, the research was partly made possible by funds given to Dr. Muir as successful recipient of the 2008 CILIP LIRG Research Award. It is good to see the Award being put to such beneficial use: we hope that the research findings will be used by all those involved in the future design, development, publication and provision of e-books.

We are also delighted to include the paper by Ian McCracken, outlining a holistic approach to engage secondary school pupils in Govan in Glasgow in developing their own skills and becoming independent learners. Collaboration between teachers and the school library – and the pupils themselves – has led to pupils not only developing their own transferable and employability skills levels, but being able to *identify* and demonstrate these skills, with a concomitant impact on subsequent employment levels. The paper also reports significant impact of the project in terms of pupils' enhanced self-esteem, behaviour and life chances.

With a rather broader remit, but still focussing on skills development, Christine Irving discusses the use of case studies as exemplars of good practice to enrich the National Information Literacy Framework in Scotland. It is heartening to note the attention being given at national level to the development of information literacy skills and to read about so many good initiatives taking place at grass roots level in schools, colleges and other organisations across Scotland. The recognition given in the paper to the benefits to be had from sharing practice and lessons learnt is also very welcome and certainly offers food for thought. And in a continuation of the theme of information literacy initiatives in Scotland, Sue

Cromar discusses the work of the Libraries R 4 Learning project, which was funded by the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) to develop and deliver a programme of advocacy - designed to inspire and encourage effective, equal working partnerships between librarians and teachers in local secondary schools – again, echoing the theme of collaboration and collegiality in the achievement of shared objectives.

This issue of *Library and Information Research* also introduces a new feature that we hope to be able to bring you on a fairly regular basis: a round-up of links and references to recent research on a topical subject. In this issue, Janet Clapton, Project Information Manager at the Social Care Institute for Excellence, has identified recent work on open access publishing. Although she is quick to point out that this is intended to be a ‘taster’ rather than a comprehensive review, it will provide an excellent starting point for anyone wanting to evaluate the recent evidence on the chosen subject, and we are grateful to Janet for all the time that has gone into the preparation of the review.

Finally, we offer a number of reviews of recently published books. These include Philip Thornborow and Phil Oakman’s review of Graham Matthews *et al.* latest work on disaster management in archives, libraries and museums; Rachel Fitzgerald’s review of Michael Sauers’ book on the latest search techniques and tools facilitated by Web 2.0; Rob Howe’s review of Jane Devine and Francine Effer-Sider’s book entitled *Going Beyond Google*; and last but not least, Kate Littlemore’s review of Sarah McNicol’s work on joint-use libraries, a concept which is surely set to be a growing feature of the 21st Century library landscape. The reviewers are all practitioners at The University of Northampton. We thank them for the time spent on preparing these book reviews and would like to remind readers that writing a review for *Library and Information Research* offers an excellent means of dipping your toes in the publication water: if you or your organisation would like to contribute to the book reviews section of the journal then we would be pleased to hear from you.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and that these papers stimulate ideas for research that you can carry out in your own work context, and hopefully write about for the journal. And please remember that we are always happy to receive your feedback on the content of the journal.

Louise Cooke