

Editorial

This new issue of *Library and Information Research* continues an earlier theme evident in issue no. 98, in that it focuses once again on our users, their information seeking behaviour and their information needs, and, in the context of the potential of Web 2.0 applications in libraries and LIS education, a new emphasis on user-generated content and user interaction. Although there has been much hype about the potential use of social networking sites by libraries, so far the response on the part of library staff and users alike appears to be cautious, with a bias towards the viewpoint that such sites are indeed *social* and not intended for research and educational purposes (see, for example, the survey carried out at the University of Michigan by Chapman et al., 2008). It is early days to judge whether such perspectives will prevail in the long term, however, and early responses to new uses of technology do not often determine their ultimate success or failure. For those wishing to start to experiment with Web 2.0 applications in their library, Christine Levey's review of Phil Bradley's *How to use Web 2.0 in your Library* suggests that the book would be a very useful starting point.

Within an academic context, we cannot fail to acknowledge that our students are now 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001), who arrive at university with expectations and assumptions regarding the integration of ICT into their experience of higher education. This includes the collaborative and user-focussed applications that we now recognise as being part of the Web 2.0 landscape. Indeed, in the fascinating paper by David Bawden and colleagues, we are offered an overview of how these applications can be – and indeed are being – harnessed to enhance the learning experience of LIS students across the world. The paper also gives us an insight into how the LIS curriculum is evolving in response to changes in the professional context and in the technological environment. The theme of educational innovation, and the potential of Web 2.0 in the learning process, is further explored in the report from the Beyond Distance Research Alliance 'Learning Futures – the Campus and Beyond' conference that took place at The University of Leicester on 8th and 9th January 2008.

The paper by Andrew Shenton and Andrew Johnson represents the final contribution in a series of papers that explore new and previously underused methods of data collection that offer new insights into users' information behaviour. Here the authors discuss the potential offered by the investigation of usage data from organisational intranets: in their research, they focussed on investigating the information behaviour of school pupils via analysis of the usage data from their school intranet. As they note themselves, such research has specific advantages in terms of the avoidance of bias induced by the 'researcher effect', but also raises some ethical questions with regard to the integrity of such covert observation. Together with the earlier papers in *Library and Information Research* 96 and 98, this paper contributes significantly to our awareness of the range of potential methods and relatively untapped sources of data available to us that can help us better understand the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of our users.

The engagement of users is also central to the paper by Audrey Marshall and Flis Henwood, this time within the context of the provision of health information. Originating from a presentation at the Umbrella conference held at the University of Hertfordshire in June 2007, in this paper the authors discuss a project aimed at involving community participants in the design and implementation of health information provision. Findings from the project illustrate the difficulties of achieving such engagement in circumstances where real – or perceived – power imbalances can undermine full understanding and appreciation on the part of community participants of the full and very valuable contribution that they have to offer such initiatives.

We hope that you will enjoy reading the contributions in this issue, and, as ever, warmly welcome your feedback and comments.

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References

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