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**GILCHRIST, Alan (ed.) *Information science in transition*. London: Facet Publishing, 2009.**

**401 pages. ISBN 978 1 85604 693 0. Price £49.95 (£39.96 to CILIP members).**

This book was previously published in 2008 as a special issue of the *Journal of Information Science (JIS)* to commemorate the founding of the UK Institute of Information Scientists (IIS) 50 years earlier.

In 2002 the Institute of Information Scientists (IIS) merged with the Library Association (LA) to create the Chartered Institute of Information Professionals (CILIP). Not everyone was happy about this. Sometimes the book reads as a lament for the passing of the IIS. In a guest editorial, Brian Vickery reflects: ‘The IIS has now disappeared within CILIP and Jason [Farradane] would have been very dismayed at this development’.

Jack Meadows traces 50 years of UK research in information science. He introduces two main areas – information retrieval and information seeking (both covered in later chapters) – as well as the parallel growth of research into communication studies. He also discusses the funding of information science research, especially the role of the British Library Research and Development Department (BLRDD). He points out that “information science has matured to the stage where even the study of its history has become a legitimate topic for research”.

Other chapters on research are by Tom Wilson and Elisabeth Davenport. Tom Wilson’s contribution on the information user documents the growth of information behaviour as a subject of academic research. He notes a current disconnection between research and practice – formerly researchers were practitioners, today they are academics. Elisabeth Davenport explores the connections between two historical lines of research: social informatics in the United States and sociotechnical studies in the UK, and focuses on UK research at Manchester, Edinburgh and the London School of Economics.

David Bawden provides an overview of developments in information science and illuminates the philosophical basis of the subject from 1979, when *JIS* was first published. Discussing ‘the information science discipline’ and its foundations, he covers Farradane’s ideas of information science as a science in its own right as well as Brookes’ arguments for basing information science on Popper’s World III of objective knowledge. He also writes on the relations between discipline and profession as well as education for information science.

While David Bawden approaches information science from the perspective of a scientist, Blaise Cronin looks at the influence of social scientific thinking on the development of the field’s intellectual base. In a chapter entitled ‘The sociological turn in information science’, he touches on linguistics, analytical philosophy, critical theory, structuralism and social constructivism.

Steven Robertson describes the history of evaluation in information retrieval. He covers key experiments at Cranfield, followed by SMART and Medlars in the USA, and the current domination of TREC (the Text REtrieval Conference). In a fascinating aside, he considers the disputes between Cyril Cleverdon and Jason Farradane.

The book includes subject approaches such as chemical documentation (Peter Willett) and health informatics (Peter Bath), as well as chapters on knowledge organisation (Stella Dextre Clarke), visual information retrieval (Peter Enser), information policies (Elizabeth Orna) and the role(s) of information professionals (Barry Mahon). There is also a personal contribution from Eugene Garfield: “How I learned to love the Brits”, an account of his dealings with British information science. He notes that the name of the IIS stimulated a name change for the American Documentation Institute, which became the American Society for Information Science (ASIS).

Several contributors point to the significance of J D Bernal on the development of information science: Eugene Garfield on the key role he played at the 1948 Royal Society Scientific Information Conference; Tom Wilson on a paper he presented at this meeting – to determine what scientists read, why they read it and what use they made of the information (an example of early research on information use); and Elizabeth Orna on his vision of information policy.

Although the editor states that the book “does not purport to be a history of information science”, many of the chapters are of great historical interest. The “transition” part of the title is more evident in contributions covering areas that did not exist when the IIS was founded: electronic scholarly publishing and open access (Charles Oppenheim), social software (Wendy Warr) and webometrics (Mike Thelwall).

The historical aspect of the book is particularly important because much archival material relating to the IIS was pulped when the Institute merged with the LA. Written by some of the most eminent figures in information science, the book makes for an intelligent and entertaining read.

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