

BAWDEN, D. and ROBINSON, L. *Introduction to Information Sciences*. London: Facet Publishing, 2012. 224 pages. ISBN 978-1856048101. £47.45

This book acts as an excellent primer setting the context for study in the area of Information Sciences. It provides an overview of all major topics, with references to key authors, and recent developments in the field, in addition to useful summaries at the end of each chapter. It provides the reader with a firm foundation in the subject, written in an accessible style.

The fifteen chapters of this book examine the entire arena of Information Sciences; covering its historical development as a discipline and associated paradigms, the key concepts underpinning the discipline and its wider discourse, fundamental aspects including information organisation, information and digital literacy, research, and the future of the discipline.

Clear definitions of key concepts are carefully explained, with reference to theorists and further reading. In addition current examples are used to illustrate key points, and to provoke thought in a variety of areas.

The first chapter considers what Information Science actually is, viewing it as a wholly unique meta-discipline with resulting links to a variety of other disciplines. The broad and diverse topics of Information Science are considered, in addition to the historical development of the subject and related professional associations over the past few hundred years.

A brief, albeit informative, chapter is provided on the history of information, and the interconnected nature of social, technological and academic developments on the world of information is considered. Interestingly, the authors point out that we are still largely operating in a Victorian information environment.

In addition, there is a chapter that attempts to explore the 'why' of information science, considering the paradigms and philosophies that form the basis of our thinking.

The concept of information, with a multiplicity of meanings, and a lack of consensus, often dependent on the underlying paradigm, is also explored. Concepts such as collection, 'aboutness', and information use are examined to help provide a foundation to our understanding.

The 'bread and butter' of information science, information organisation, is also succinctly tackled.

A chapter on digital literacy considers the concept of information literacy and what it means to be information literate, looking at how this then relates to the idea of digital literacy. The importance of this concept in the information world is rightly stressed, alongside a consideration of how such skills can be engendered in the information user.

Information Science research is discussed looking at the paradigms underpinning such research, and the methods of enquiry that exist for the information researcher. Useful examples of current research using a variety of methods are given, which will be of great value to the reader.

Finally, the future of Information Science is examined by considering the predictions of history, which arguably although influential, have rarely become true reality. The authors clearly identify that such speculation, although interesting, is almost always wrong. One also has to be aware that the future of Information Science is not just technology driven, but impacted upon by economic, social, political and demographic factors. The next 20 years are briefly considered, from business as usual to developing into the ‘clouds’, and the authors end on a positive note – arguing that Information Science has a bright future, but inevitably will change in ways we simply cannot imagine.

This book was an interesting read, and I can certainly see it being a useful start for anyone wishing to learn more about Information Sciences. Certainly, my Masters students would benefit from reading this prior to their studies – in order to gain a general overview of the concepts surrounding this discipline. It synthesises the discipline in a clear and succinct way – providing just enough information to use as a launch pad for further independent discovery.

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