

A Decade of SIG/USE: Celebrating SIG/USE and Information Behavior Research Introduction

by Crystal Fulton, Guest Editor of the Special Section

Special Section

It hardly seems possible that 10 years have passed since a group of researchers committed themselves to developing a new special interest group in ASIS&T – Information Needs, Seeking and Use (SIG/USE). Our special anniversary year (2009) culminated in celebrations at ASIS&T Annual Meeting in November. This special section of the *Bulletin* revisits the various conference events that commemorated this anniversary.

SIG/USE began with an initial planning meeting on October 27, 1998, during the 1998 ASIS&T [then ASIS] Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh. Forty-nine people signed a petition to charter the SIG, with another 43 adding their support by email.

In spring 1999 SIG/USE was officially chartered at the ASIS&T Mid-Year Meeting. The following officers accepted their roles: chair, Barbara Wildemuth, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; chair-elect, David Robins, Louisiana State University; communication officers, Sarah P. Brown, Yale University Library, and Jane Starnes, Intel Corporation

The first SIG/USE-sponsored panel occurred at the same 1999 Mid-Year Meeting. The panel, entitled *Information Use in the Professions*, was moderated by Nancy Roderer, National Library of Medicine, and featured the following panelists: Anne Hotta, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley; David Burch, William M. Rains Law Library, Loyola Law School, Los Angeles; Debra Ketchell, Health Sciences Libraries, University of Washington; and Marcia J. Bates, University of California, Los Angeles. The first SIG/USE-sponsored panel at an Annual Meeting took place later that year and was entitled, *The Influence of Discipline/Domain on*

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Information Seeking Behavior. David Robins moderated the panel, which included Eileen Abels, Marcia Bates and Barbara Wildemuth.

In 2001, Barbara Wildemuth, Ann Peterson Bishop and Ruth Palmquist organized the first SIG/USE Research Symposium, with the theme, *Effective Methods for Studying Information Seeking and Use*. Six papers were presented and led to publication in a *JASIST* “Perspectives” section [1].

Membership has grown substantially over the past decade. From a total membership of 84 at the end of 1999, SIG/USE has flourished with a membership of over 300 members in 2009.

SIG/USE continues to encourage research about cognitive and affective information behavior with an emphasis on the following areas [2]:

- shaping and identifying information needs
- seeking (and not seeking) information that will address those needs
- exploring information sources present in one’s context/situation
- retrieving information from available information sources
- sharing information with others
- managing personal information collections
- communicating and collaborating with others concerning an information need or information resources
- personal and group-based information use.

SIG/USE supports a number of events and activities such as organization of the Annual Research Symposium, sponsorship of panels at ASIS&T Annual Meetings, sponsorship of several research and travel awards and



publication. To-date, two monographs have resulted from symposia, the royalties from which support the work of SIG/USE: *Theories of Information Behavior*, edited by Karen E. Fisher, Sanda Erdelez and Lynne McKechnie [3], and *Information and Emotion: The Emergent Affective Paradigm in Information Behavior Research and Theory*, edited by Diane Nahl and Dania Bilal [4]. *Information and Emotion* was named the SIG Publication-of-the-Year in 2008. For its ongoing contribution in all of these areas, SIG/USE was named SIG-of-the-Year in 2008.

Celebrating 10 Years of SIG/USE at ASIS&T

A variety of events marked SIG/USE's 10th anniversary at the ASIS&T 2009 Annual Meeting in Vancouver. A highlight of the festivities was the induction of 10 fellows into SIG/USE's newly created Academy of Research Fellows. The following researchers were recognized for their work in information behavior research: **Marcia J. Bates**, University of California, Los Angeles; **Elfreda A. Chatman**, Florida State University (posthumously); **Brenda Dervin**, Ohio State University; **Raya Fidel**, University of Washington; Karen Fisher, University of Washington; **Carol Kuhlthau**, Rutgers University; **Catherine Ross**, University of Western Ontario; **Reijo Savolainen**, Tampere University; **Robert S. Taylor**, Syracuse University (posthumously); and **Tom D. Wilson**, University of Sheffield. (Tom D. Wilson was also this year's recipient of SIG/USE's Contribution to Information Behavior award.) SIG/USE fellows were nominated by SIG/USE members and voted upon by the SIG/USE Cabinet. Future recipients of the Contribution to Information Behavior award will also be inducted into the Academy.

Fellows were inducted at the SIG/USE 10th Anniversary Evening Reception, held on Saturday, November 7, 2009. Colleagues read biographical sketches reminiscing about inductees' research careers as they were congratulated as new fellows. A special cake completed the evening. An anniversary poster, illustrating 10 of the theoretical models SIG/USE members chose as some of the most influential models in information behavior research to-date, was promoted at the reception and throughout the meeting.

An anniversary panel, *Celebrating 10 Years of SIG/USE: A Fish Bowl Dialogue on Information Behavior Research Past, Present & Future*, drew

together over 125 researchers to explore the future of information behavior research. In addition to speakers Donald Case, Karen Fisher, Heidi Julien and Barbara Wildemuth, the panel featured a fish bowl dialogue, which enabled audience participants to debate the future of information behavior research. As ever, SIG/USE also supported a number of other panels in Vancouver, demonstrating the enduring interest in information behavior research.

Although the official 10th anniversary of SIG/USE has now come and gone, celebrations for this SIG promise to extend through the year with the achievement of another milestone: 2010 marks the 10th anniversary of the SIG/USE Symposium, held annually at the ASIS&T Annual Meeting. Preparations are already underway, and SIG/USE looks forward to welcoming everyone again this fall in Pittsburgh.

Articles in Celebration of the 10th Anniversary of SIG/USE

To commemorate SIG/USE's 10th anniversary, this issue of the *Bulletin* offers articles reflecting on a number of aspects of information behavior research. Articles report on various aspects of our development as a special interest group (SIG), as well as the conference events surrounding our celebrations at ASIS&T 2009. The intent is not only to document our past, but also to probe the important ideas and possibilities for exploration in the next 10 and more years of information behavior research.

The first article considers the historical development of information behavior research. As the recipient of SIG/USE's Outstanding Contribution to Information Behavior Research Award 2009, it is fitting that Tom Wilson presents this piece as SIG/USE reflects on the development of our research area. Wilson has long been a key player in the field of information behavior. Among his many accomplishments are his theories of information behavior, landmark publications in our field such as *INISS (Information Innovations in Social Services Departments)* [5] and the creation of the online journal *Information Research* [6]. In his article for the *Bulletin*, Wilson revisits his overview of the history of information behavior and projects future directions for this field.

Continuing on this historical theme and drawing upon their SIG/USE anniversary panel presentation, Barbara Wildemuth and Donald Case

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consider the early years of information behavior research. Exploring patterns of investigation in our field, they consider the contribution of the pre-1999 period to the foundation and future of information behavior research.

The 2009 SIG/USE Research Symposium explored research possibilities present and future for information behavior research with the theme of collaboration. Symposium organizers Nadia Caidi, Guillermo Oyarce and Soo Young Rieh reflect on SIG/USE's Annual Symposium, held this year in conjunction with SIG/Social Informatics (SIG/SI). They bring together the main findings from an afternoon of discussing and brainstorming research pathways for collaboration and information sharing in our field.

As much as 2009 marked a 10-year milestone for SIG/USE, there were also firsts to celebrate, in particular, embracing new social technologies for reaching out to members. In addition to our Facebook group, simply called *SIG/USE*, and our photo gallery in Flickr, members can now follow us on Twitter. All links to social networking tools are available via the SIG/USE

website [2], where announcements and full information about SIG/USE and its activities are also found. An exciting innovation has been the integration of Second Life into our conference events. SIG/USE is ASIS&T's first SIG to develop real estate on ASIS&T Island [7]. Diane Nahl reports on our first experience with incorporating this method of meeting into our symposium and anniversary panel.

Finally, Gary Burnett and Sanda Erdelez summarize the lively discussion from our 10th anniversary panel, *Celebrating 10 Years of SIG/USE: A Fish Bowl Dialogue on Information Behavior Research Past, Present & Future*. They predict an exciting future for the next 10 years.

The year 2009 was, indeed, an eventful and memorable year. As SIG/USE chair during the year of celebrations, I'd like to thank everyone for their support, in particular Barbara Wildemuth, the SIG/USE Cabinet and all the members who made the anniversary celebrations and this issue of the *Bulletin* possible. ■

Resources Mentioned in the Article

- [1] Wildemuth, B. (Ed.). (2002). Effective methods for studying information seeking and use. *JASIST*, 53(14), 1218-1266.
- [2] *SIG/USE*: www.asis.org/SIG/SIGUSE/about.php
- [3] Fisher, K E., Erdelez, S., & McKechnie, L. (Eds.) (2005). *Theories of information behavior*. Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- [4] Nahl, D., & Bilal, D (Eds.). (2007). *Information and emotion: The emergent affective paradigm in information behavior research and theory*. Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- [5] The INISS (Information Innovations in Social Services Departments) Project. This project spawned numerous publications. See, for example, Streatfield, D. R., & Wilson, T. D. (1982, December). Information innovations in social services departments: A third report on Project INISS. *Journal of Documentation*, 38(4) 273-81.
- [6] *Information research: An international electronic journal*. <http://informationr.net/ir/>.
- [7] *Second Life: ASIST Island*. <http://slurl.com/secondlife/ASIST%20Island/125/130/27>