



SIG HFIS Newsletter September 2015

<http://www.asis.org/SIG/SIGHFIS>

Yet another year has rolled around and SIG HFIS has been rather active: some of the actions are behind the scenes, some more visible. HFIS has been active this year in seeking opportunities to promote its activities and stimulate proposals from its members and the wider LIS communities and encourage new membership, especially from students.

This newsletter serves as a channel to communicate to members what has been done this year and what actions or events are upcoming at the next AM in St. Louis.

IBEKWE-SANJUAN Fidelia (chair 2014-2015)

Highlights

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AM in St Louis: 6-11 nov. 2015

This is the big event of the autumn and I hope many HFIS members will attend so that we can have a fruitful business meeting and decide future orientations of our SIG. Here are some of the events and HFIS related papers/panels.

Sun 8 nov.

10 am: SIG Cabinet meeting: Meeting of all the SIGs representatives where SIG policies are crafted

12 pm: New Members/First Conference Brunch.

3:30pm: Panel “Visualizing Information Worldwide” (co-sponsored by HFIS)
International panel led by Jenna Hartel (U. Toronto) which takes the iSquares protocol to an international level.

Mon 9 nov

1:30pm: Information Ethics & Policy (papers)

4:00PM - 5:10PM : HFIS Business meeting. (save the date !!)

Location: Sterling 6

Tue 10 nov

8:30am: Information privacy (papers)

10:30: The right to be forgotten (Panel)

3:30pm: Cultural Diversity in LIS research (Panel)

ACTIVITY REPORT 2014-15

The activities and communication outreach the SIG engaged in this academic year were the following:

A. SIG SPONSORSHIP OF EVENTS

1. Co-Sponsorship of a panel within the 3rd ASIS&T European Chapter's Workshop, Osijek, Croatia, 2015

"Towards Unified Approach to Information Science in Europe"
(<http://web.ffos.hr/aew2015/en/program.php>)

2. Call for i-Stories

The idea is to popularise the SIG's identity and purpose by eliciting stories about information in a non-academic format from students, practitioners and scholars allowing a wider participation and not requiring mastery of academic writing with all the expectations (problematics, hypothesis, methodology, results, etc) in a bid to attract new members. The call was posted twice on many lists (sig-l, asis-l, isko-l, eurchap.org, ...).

We received two I-Stories from two LIS scholars (one published at the end of this newsletter), both were awarded the \$30 gift cards. The feedback I got from people who submitted the two stories were very positive. The initiative is new and should be pursued for it to take hold in the community.

3. Sponsorship of Webinar "*From iSquares to cSquares: Teaching Information and Communication theories using the Draw & Write Technique*"

- *Presenters:* Fidelia Ibekwe-SanJuan & Jenna Hartel
- <https://www.asist.org/events/webinars/webinar-from-i-squares-to-c-squares/>
- *Date:* 18th June 2015
- *Brief Description:*

Information and communication are at the basis of how we know things (epistemology), they are omnipresent in every field of activity. This also makes them very slippery concepts or realities: they often mean different things to different people, hence their exploration is endless. Many of us have grappled with how to convey what we think information and communication mean in our teachings or in our research. Teaching information and communication theories in a pure academic manner can be dead boring for instructors and students alike. Hence, the idea of using an arts-informed technique to approach the different conceptions of Information is a fun and creative alternative (Hartel, 2014; www.iSquares.info). The current webinar builds on an earlier one about the "iSquare" to introduce the "communication square" or "cSquare" – a compact drawing that visually captures the nature of communication. Our webinar reports how Masters' student in a French School of Journalism and Communication (Aix-Marseille University) produced *both* iSquares and cSquares, to reveal a host of distinctions and commonalties concerning the two elusive concepts. In addition to these substantive insights, the webinar will provide a template for those who wish to take drawing methods in other new directions.

2. ADMINISTRATION OF ASIST HISTORY RESEARCH AWARDS

A decision was reached by the Advisory committee for 2015 to increase the amount for the History Research Fund from \$1000 to \$2000. Best Paper award remained at \$500.

Submissions

4 proposals were received for the History Research Fund.
2 proposals for Best History Paper

Results:

The awards jury voted unanimously to award the **History Research Fund** to Professor Ronald Day of Indiana University at Bloomington for his project on a book exploring the relationship between "*Documentarity, the Literary and the Right to Truth*".

The awards jury decided unanimously not to award the **Best Paper Award** as none of the papers submitted were strong enough and needed further substantial work.

While Professor Ronald Day acknowledged his pleasure and gratitude to the jury awards for this distinction, he has very graciously and generously offered to forfeit the monetary part of the award which can then be funnelled back to support such historical and discursive research, in particular undertaken by students or junior faculty in need of financial support.

ASIS&T History Fund Advisory Board for 2015:

Fidelia Ibekwe-SanJuan (Chair SIG HFIS)

Ken Herold (chair-elect SIG HFIS)

Robert Williams

Michael Buckland

Kathryn La Barre

Trudi Bellardo Hahn

Awards submission link: <https://www.asist.org/about/awards/history-fund-awards/>

3. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

According to latest figures, all SIGs have witnessed an increase in membership since the \$10 fee for 2nd SIG membership has been waived. As of 14th July 2015:

FY15 (111 members)

FY16 (208 members) [\$553 allocation]

increase of +97 (187%) over FY15

4. OFFICERS FOR 2015-16

We are pleased to welcome our incoming officers for FY16:

Chair : Ken Herold

Chair-Elect : Jenna Hartel

Secretary : Emma Zhang

Webmaster (Sarah Buchanan)

Past-chair (Fidelia Ibekwe-SanJuan)

5. An iStory

Getting Hammered and Going Far.

21st Century Information Needs and a 19th Century Mystery in Southern France

Seven years ago, I was sitting on the floor in the stacks of the main library at Florida State University in Tallahassee, a three-volume collection of the complete and unedited letters of Vincent van Gogh open in front of me, taking pictures of certain pages with my smart phone, and emailing them to my father, a retired professor of French living in Phoenix, Arizona.

Fighting prostate cancer and unable to travel, he had emailed me a somewhat cryptic list of the letters he needed for a paper he was writing on the relationship between Vincent van Gogh and Émile Zola, which looked something like this:

- letter 226, 19 august 1882, I need only the last third of letter, volume 1
- letter 378, october 1884, I need the whole letter, volume 2
- letter B19, october 7, 1888, first half is enough, volume 3

Fortunately, I had a good deal of experience deciphering similar records requests...

Several years earlier, my brother-in-law, a professor of religion specializing in the study of van Gogh, had asked my father whether he thought it possible that van Gogh's painting *The Night Café* (1888) could have been inspired by Zola's novel *L'Assommoir* (1877) — and it was this off-hand comment by his son-in-law that inspired my father to embark upon an extensive quest to learn everything he

could about the relationship (or lack thereof) between Zola and van Gogh.

Born in Paris in 1920, this World War II veteran with a distinguished academic career was not about to let cancer stand between him and the information he needed for his research, and over the years my father's research agenda took him through a wide variety of media and formats, and across a vast spectrum of information sources and services.

Whole-heartedly throwing himself into the project, he identified and tracked down an extensive set of information resources, including physical books (many of which were snail-mailed between Tallahassee and Phoenix), the online resources of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and real-time Google Street View images printed out to create a 3D cardboard model mapping the location of van Gogh's "Yellow House" in Arles as it may have stood 120 years ago.

Today, 95 years old and bed-ridden with stage IV bone cancer, my father pursues his research on his iPad, reading and re-reading digital scans of van Gogh's original letters (courtesy of the Van Gogh Museum at <http://www.vangoghletters.org/vg/>), while waiting for the page proofs of his latest (and final) article to come from his journal editor.

What does "information" mean to someone like my father?

Can we find it in the French dictionaries he surrounded himself with as he developed a text-to-speech synthesizer for the French language in the 1980s? Is it hidden in the computer-assisted language learning software he created for the PLATO project at the University of Illinois in the 1960s and 1970s? Perhaps it lingers in the magnetic tape left over from the language learning labs he installed up and down the east coast of the United States in the 1950s, or in the secret documents he translated while serving as a liaison officer in World War II between the Free French and the American Forces...

What, pray tell, is the “information” a school boy receives when he shakes hands with the mayor after placing first in his class and hears, “Tu iras loin, jeune homme!”?

For a young boy in Paris in the 1920s, Phoenix certainly would have seemed a long way to go...

There is no doubt that information is a slippery concept for information scientists – scholars and students alike – but for that young school boy, now at the end of his own long scholarly road, information is quite simply the freedom to pursue the life of the mind, while life leaves the body.

And in case you are wondering whether van Gogh was indeed inspired to paint *The Night Café* by reading Zola’s *L’Assommoir*, the answer, in true academic fashion, after nearly ten years of research and 30,000 words of published work, is “probably not.”

By Professor Paul F. Marty
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