Beginning our second decade of successful and vibrant gatherings at the ASIS&T Annual Meetings, Special Interest Group/Social Informatics (SIG/SI) held the 11th Annual SIG-SI Research Symposium, on Saturday, November 7, 2015 at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Information Science and Technology in St. Louis, Missouri. The symposium, organized by Pnina Fichman and Howard Rosenbaum, both of the School of Library and Information Science at Indiana University and co-chairs of SIG-SI, was co-sponsored by the Rob Kling Center for Social Informatics.

Since 2004, established scholars, young researchers and doctoral students have shared more than 100 panels, papers and posters illuminating the intellectually challenging and engaging work of social informatics, and this year was no exception. The theme of the symposium was “The Impacts of Social Informatics Research,” and presenters discussed issues related to this theme in five papers and a panel discussion. The call was for research with particular focus on the impact of social informatics work on industry, government, local/national/global community groups, individuals, information systems and other practice contexts.

After opening remarks by Howard Rosenbaum, Natalie Pang (presenter) and Shubert Foo described the contribution of social informatics to the study of information and communications technology use in marginalized communities. They examined human rights in Indonesia, taking a value-oriented approach in social informatics research, efforts to create a safer internet and ways big data marginalize individuals through algorithms used in quantitative analyses. A panel considered where social informatics fits in the IT curriculum of iSchools. An examination of social connectedness through digital channels and devices won the Best Paper Award.

Pnina Fichman and Howard Rosenbaum, co-chairs of the SIG-SI Research Symposium, are on the faculty of the Department of Information and Library Science, School of Informatics and Computing and the Rob Kling Center for Social Informatics, Indiana University. They can be reached at fichman<at>indiana.edu and hrosenba<at>indiana.edu respectively.
with each other, there was a panel discussion about IT education in iSchools and the role of social informatics in the curriculum. Participants included Laura Spears, Marcia Mardis, Nicole Alemanne, Ken Fleischmann, Susan Winter, Flora McMartin and Larry Dennis. The panel raised a number of important pedagogical issues of concern to those of us working to incorporate social informatics into our courses and programs.

Following the panel, Abdul Roman (presenter) discussed the significance of a values-oriented approach in social informatics research, using a case study of human rights in Indonesia. J.P. Allen (presenter) focused squarely on the symposium theme, using social informatics as a critical lens to analyze the “Bright ICT” initiative proposed by a fellow organization, the Association for Information Systems, questioning the role of the organization in efforts to develop a safer internet. The last paper, from Theresa Anderson (presenter) and Simon Buckingham Shum, also addressed the theme, using social informatics to critique the tendency they see in the rise of big data to marginalize people in the quantitative analyses that result from algorithmic-driven data mining. This paper was notable because Anderson was discussing her work with the audience from her home in Australia; unable to travel, she was able to take advantage of ICT to deliver an engaging presentation.

During the last session in the symposium, the 2015 Social Informatics Best Paper Award was given to Mary Chayko of Rutgers University for her paper “Techno-Social Life: The Internet, Digital Technology, and Social Connectedness,” published in Sociology Compass in 2014 (full citation below). Her presentation was very well received and engendered much discussion from the audience.

The symposium ended with closing remarks from Emad Khazraee, who provided a clear and concise summary of the papers and the panel, emphasizing that the state of research and theorizing in social informatics is healthy and exciting.

The symposium was a success with high quality papers, a lively panel and discussion and an international audience. SIG-SI is already planning the symposium for ASIS&T 2016 and we expect to have another stimulating event in Copenhagen.