

Editorial

Special Issue on “Information and Spirituality”

The purpose of information support in any domain is essentially to enable individuals to perform their functions and tasks based on reliable and relevant information and knowledge. According to a holistic (integral) view supported by the major spiritual movements and religions of the world, the human being consists of the physical layer, emotional layer, intellectual layer, and spiritual layer. The objective existence of the spiritual layer is uncertain as yet, but at least it manifests itself in the forms of spiritual experiences, information and beliefs. We can see that each layer has its functions. To perform the functions effectively with discrimination and in a balanced manner, information and knowledge (external and internal) should be accessible to the individual. Another aspect is that each layer also generates information and knowledge, which can then be communicated and used. Such a model can be projected to apply to communities made up of individuals, as well. It is the spiritual layer which has been least studied in connection with information phenomena, and therefore this area needs special attention. Please see [1] for a bibliography of previous studies in this area.

The Open Information Science Journal is continuously providing the opportunity to publish on important or timely subjects related to information. We took heed of the Journal's call by inviting authors to submit papers for a Special Issue on the topic of Information and Spirituality. Such a collection of articles has never been published before, so this has been a great opportunity indeed to display cutting-edge research in a historic issue. The Special Issue provides a forum for publication of original refereed mini-review articles, as well as full-length research and review articles on new research findings and developments in information research and spiritual studies. The theme of the Special Issue is interdisciplinary and interfaith in scope. We have contributions from information science, futures studies, social sciences, and psychical research. Since the research area is highly important, it requires co-operation between research communities from all over the world to share their knowledge and experience in order to prevent the fragmentation of relevant research, to build a new research front, and to enhance intercultural understanding.

The theme of the Special Issue is to be understood broadly. Thus, "information" in the articles variously refers to memories, knowledge, data, transformative memes, messages, knowledge representations, documents, et cetera; and "the spiritual" is understood as referring to quantum field, that which is beyond the material, spirits, the extraphysical, ultimate reality, religions, the anomalous, the sacred, et cetera. We did not wish to impose any particular definition on the authors. The theme of the Special Issue is therefore quite inclusive: any scholarly paper examining the two subjects (information and the spiritual) together (whatever their relationship may be) was considered. This Issue aims to be a most reliable source of information on current developments and research in the field of inquiry. The nine articles which make up this issue can be seen to exhibit three themes: representing and organizing documents related to spirituality [2-3], spiritual information from the perspective of mind, consciousness and language [4-7], as well as the outcomes, roles and applications of spiritual information [8-10].

Knowledge representation in the spiritual and cultural domains is the topic of K.S. Raghavan's contribution. Knowledge organization systems such as thesauri are intended to structure and represent concepts in a domain in a manner that facilitates their effective employment in knowledge representation, i.e. representation of subjects of information resources (classification & indexing) and users' queries (search & retrieval). Representation of 'aboutness' of a discourse and of the concepts in it is, to some extent, a function of the nature and characteristics of the 'domain'. Design of multilingual thesauri for multicultural domains such as 'spirituality' presents many problems – both structural and semantic. Based on experiences of working on two multilingual thesauri in culture-specific domains, Raghavan identifies the principal issues that arise, and illustrates them with a few examples. The strategies that have been adopted to overcome the problems are also explained. Furthermore, a few general principles that could serve as guidelines in building multilingual thesauri especially in culture-specific domains are suggested [2].

K.N. Prasad presents case studies of using integrated bilingual and multilingual thesauri linked to lexicons in the domain of sacred works of the Hindus. The hyper-linking is shown to facilitate data mining and knowledge discovery. The paper emphasizes the importance of collaboration between subject specialists / scholars and information specialists in developing integrated knowledge organizing tools [3].

J.J. Hurtak and Desiree Hurtak discuss - based on earlier research - the so-called consciousness field and how it may function as a source of information. Textbooks tell us that our brain is the source of all thought. Like a computer, we learn to react and make decisions based on past programming and what we have learned from our environment. However, now scientists like Henry Stapp from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and Stuart Hameroff from the University of Arizona are researching brain functions that work beyond classical physics. They are no longer content with seeing thought as being simply the chemical processing of neurotransmitters. What has emerged are theoretical proposals that the brain's processing of information takes

place through quantum mechanical processes where consciousness, itself, is being seen as part of a second-order quantum field. Quantum mechanical processes have provided researchers with an entirely new field of understanding of thought and memory processes. They are examining the chemical processes in the ionic flow of elements which are equally if not more complex than the chemical neurological processes. In quantum mechanics, electrons behave like waves. In a quantum world, there exists also the wave-particle duality of matter, where the wave can contain all the dynamical information about the system, in the manner of a hologram. This means that the total information of the system is available in every part, and information becomes active in a "non-local" environment. "Non-locality" reveals that photons can exist simultaneously in an infinite number of locations or quantum states within the wave showing measurable interactions at a distance [4].

Marcus Bussey's paper explores microvita theory and its relevance to information science. The first part of the article is theoretical and outlines microvita theory as an epistemological product of the Tantric theory of consciousness and mind. The civilizational value of such a theory is contextualized via a consideration of Gilles Deleuze's concept of transcendental empiricism. Links to information science are made particularly with regard to Bates' evolutionary reading of information and to Dervin's sense making epistemological chronology. The second part of the paper explores microvita theory as an emergent possibility by profiling six developments in cultural practice. Each hint at the transformative possibilities before us when considering information from broader epistemological contexts than the given Western rational-field we generally accept as the context for research. It is suggested that microvita theory invites in a shamanic disposition or temper which is comfortable with paradox and aporia. To navigate such terrain - writes Bussey - requires an appreciation for the spiritual within the working context of the world. The spiritual is taken as simply another form of data collection in a universe that is as mysterious as it is wonderful [5].

In his paper, David Rousseau identifies a link between the problem of explaining anomalous access to information ('psi' or 'psychic ability') and the problem of giving an account of the nature of consciousness ('the mind-body problem'). He argues that progress with understanding psi requires selecting a suitable ontological model for dealing with the mind-body problem. Rousseau reviews alternatives and argues, on philosophical and empirical grounds, for the viability and suitability of a model he calls Naturalistic Structural Dualism, in which minds are spatially extended substances, as a working hypothesis for further analysis. He concludes that in such a dualistic model psychic ability is best conceptualized as mediated by sensori-motor channels of the mind. Rousseau predicts from this the existence of further sensory channels that engage with purely mental aspects of reality. He shows that there is empirical support for this theoretical proposal, and argues that this sensory capacity, which he names axionesis, underpins both ordinary perceptiveness and our capacity for deep spiritual experiences. The outcome is an expansion of the concept of psi to reference two distinct groups of sensori-motor channels of the mind, one group relating to the classical concept of psychic ability (and reflecting the mind's direct engagement with physical aspects of reality) and one group relating to the classical concept of spirituality (and reflecting the mind's direct engagement with mental aspects of reality). By establishing a relationship between spiritual perception and sensory channels of the mind, a framework is created that enables the study of spirituality in terms of information theory [6].

A contribution by Alexander MacRae deals with the so-called Electronic Voice Phenomenon (EVP), where phrases received are attributed to spiritual sources of information. The paper first derives definitions for information and spirit that relate to each other. An experiment that seeks to stimulate the human phonological store is then described and the responses obtained are analyzed, using a unique monitoring method based on variations in electrical permittivity when neurons fire. The importance of the non-sensory inputs to the sub-vocal rehearsal system in the phonological loop is also mentioned. An experiment is outlined wherein a mental stimulus is applied to the subject and the electrical response is monitored and converted to audible speech. This is thus non-vocal speech and its characteristics are examined in relation to the original stimuli. The results revealed openings for further research [7].

Jarkko Kari's article explores the outcomes of spiritual information via publications containing such information. Outcome of information is defined as any process that ensues from receiving a message, and the defining feature of spiritual information is that it is perceived as a message originally provided or received by extraphysical means. Finnish texts reportedly produced by means of a spiritual (not cognitive) method were sought out. As a result, 109 documents ranging from the 1940s to the 2000s were obtained, processed and analyzed. The qualitative data analysis was carried out inductively, following the tenets of the interpretivist methodology. The data suggested that spiritual information is of great significance in all contexts, especially in everyday life, albeit there were also outcomes that can be regarded as trivial. The main result of the analysis is the discovery of five types of information outcome: processing, dispositions to, communicating, using, and effects of information. These types are also categorized at a general and specific level, yielding more detail about the concepts. The real contribution of this study is that it pulls together a multitude of various outcomes of information, and organizes them into a coherent, holistic typology. In so doing, the conceptual structure simultaneously implies that research areas which have earlier been considered as separate (e.g. information use and information sharing) can in actual fact be connected, if there is just a will to do it [8].

Paul Sturges' case study concerns the role of spirit messages in African conflicts. Whilst African civil conflicts are usually presented in the media as either political struggles, terrorism or mere banditry, in some at least there is a substantial spiritual element. Conflicts in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and elsewhere apparently contain highly significant contributions from spirit forces intermediated by mediums, traditional healers, and prophets. Aspects of the Acholi insurgency in Northern Uganda have been initiated and led by spirit mediums, notably Alice Auma and Joseph Kony. Because Kony's career as an insurgent leader has been marked by atrocity and the lack of an explicit political programme, he has often been dismissed as a terrorist. The arti-

cle argues that he at least deserves the status of ‘social bandit’ as defined by Hobsbawm, and that his role as a voice for spirit messages is still a significant factor. It is concluded that without recognition of the role of spirit messages in African conflicts, these will be imperfectly understood and their resolution will be correspondingly more problematic [9].

Finally, the purpose of Marcus Anthony’s paper is to initiate a broader dialogue on the use of integrated intelligence (or INI) in formal research. The application of INI in research is referred to as integrated inquiry. The idea of integrated intelligence, and its specific applications, can be viewed as genuine cognitive processes, or for the more skeptical, as provocations to inspire the researcher toward greater creativity. The first part of Anthony’s paper briefly defines important terms and situates the idea of integrated intelligence within a historical and civilizational perspective. The most important section of this paper outlines specific and practical ways in which INI can be used by the modern researcher. The five INI tools are the Intuitive Diary, Free-form Writing, Meditative States, The Feeling Sense, and Embracing Synchronicity. The essential argument of Anthony’s paper is that integrated inquiry can greatly enhance research [8].

The articles in this issue examine the theme of information and spirituality from quite different angles. Some of them represent rather conventional information research which is ‘just’ contextualized in the spiritual, whereas others go well beyond that which is familiar in information science. However, there seems to be at least one thing in common: a qualitative approach (except in [7]). This makes sense, because there has been so little research on information and spirituality, particularly in information science. Thus it is sensible to first try and understand how the two classes of phenomena relate to each other. And what are the contributions of this exploration? Here are some highlights:

- theoretically novel ways of accessing information
- philosophical elaboration on the nature of information
- enlarging on knowing through perception
- new kinds of information sources
- discussing mental information retrieval
- scrutinizing non-local information
- looking at information transmission which happens at an infinite speed
- analyzing the connections of information and quantum phenomena
- drawing new theories from other fields
- how the spiritual can make information phenomena more intelligible
- pondering on information shamans as information intermediaries
- a novel type of literacy
- showing the significance of spiritual information
- connecting research fields which have been separate before
- emphasizing the collaboration of various parties to effect greater integration in information tools
- designing multilingual and multicultural thesauri
- developing novel research methods
- considering information in warfare
- equating information with spirit
- analyzing spoken information.

To discover meaningful connections between informational and spiritual phenomena is a true challenge. This Special Issue has been perhaps the first attempt at teasing out fruitful starting points for an interdisciplinary research front. As envisioned by one of the authors, there is great promise in taking such work forward: “This understanding opens up information science to deeper realities and to a range of information possibilities denied it by the parochial perspective promoted by Modernity’s empirical and largely utilitarian tradition” [5]. But we need to remember that the ultimate goal of this endeavour should not be to amass knowledge for its own sake, but to know and share the knowledge for the highest good of humanity.

We wish to thank all the authors - both those whose submissions were accepted and those whose submissions were rejected - for working so hard for this Special Issue. Also the referees deserve our gratitude for taking the time to review the manuscripts. Last but not least, we express our heartfelt appreciation to **Bentham Science Publishers** - especially **Sana Mokarram**, the Assistant Manager Publications - for giving us the opportunity to create this issue, and for kindly guiding us through the publication process.

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