iSchool Philosophy and the EU Region

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Image: Pieter Breugel der Älterer, Babelturm
Origins

Information science has many origin stories. The oldest go back to the study of "documentation" in the mid 20th century.

"In December 1950, the Institut National des Sciences et Techniques de la Documentation (INTD) was created in Paris with the goal of training “documentalists”, the precursors of modern information scientists, who would not necessarily work in libraries." (Seadle, 2016)
In 1951 Suzanne Briet published "Qu'est-ce que la documentation?" Michael Buckland describes her argument as follows:

"There is discussion of an antelope. An antelope running wild on the plains of Africa should not be considered a document, she rules. But if it were to be captured, taken to a zoo and made an object of study, it has been made into a document. It has become physical evidence being used by those who study it. Not only that, but scholarly articles written about the antelope are secondary documents, since the antelope itself is the primary document." (Buckland, 1997)
Michael Buckland himself wrote about attempts to define “documentation”, a precursor concept to “information”.

"There are numerous writings on the definition, scope, and nature of "documentation", much of it concerned with the relationships between documentation, bibliography, and librarianship. Unfortunately, many of this literature, like much of the later discussion of information science and librarianship, is undermined by the authors' attempts to create or amplify distinctions where the differences are not really fundamental but, rather, a matter of emphasis." (Buckland, 1997)
iSchools emerge

In the later 1990s many US library schools renamed themselves as "Information Schools". Daniel Atkins (University of Michigan) provided an intellectual basis for the iSchools that went beyond slogans:

'In the same way society now depends on highways, water systems, and power grids, the panel contends, scientific research in the coming years will depend on the quality of the cyberinfrastructure -- the integrated information, computing, and communications systems that tie us together. "It's not just the raw technology, but also the organization and the people," says Atkins'

See the abstract to "Revolutionizing Science and Engineering Through Cyberinfrastructure: Report of the National Science Foundation Blue-Ribbon Advisory Panel on Cyberinfrastructure 2003-01" [Link].
The iSchools themselves offer a definition close to what Atkins wrote:

"The iSchool Caucus seeks to maximize the visibility and influence of its member schools, and their interdisciplinary approaches to harnessing the power of information and technology, and maximizing the potential of humans." (iSchool Website)

The emphasis is on the triad: information - technology - humans. This helps to define the breadth of the iSchools and their interdisciplinary character.
iSchool History

- 1988 Toni Carbo (Pittsburgh) forms the "Gang of Three" with Syracuse & Drexel.
- 2003 it grew to 10 US schools
- 2005 the first iConference took place at Penn State
- 2008 Singapore joined as the first non-North American school
- 2009 Berlin and Copenhagen join as the first European iSchools
- 2014 the Berlin iConference is the first outside of N. America.
- 2014 Berlin's dean is first chair not at a North American school.
- 2015 the iSchools incorporate in Washington DC
- 2017 the iSchools have 87 members including associates.
iSchools Governance

At present the Board of Directors of the iSchools is the 29 member iCaucus, which is N. American dominated. There are discussions underway to make a smaller and more representative board.

The executive committee of the iSchool includes the current chair, the chair-elect, and the past chair, as well as the treasurer and three regional representatives. The executive director is also ex officio a member of the executive committee.

The iSchools has no employees in the legal sense, but pays a communications specialist, two part time tech staff, and will pay the executive director (after Oct 2018). Program is currently about two thirds of the budget (less in 2017, more in 2018)
iSchools in Europe

There are currently 25 iSchools in the European region, which includes the Middle East. There are regular meetings (generally one in the early autumn, one at the iConference) and joint activities.

The EU iSchools have the only joint doctoral colloquium, which presently involves Berlin, Copenhagen, Boras, and Northumbria.

The EU region has groups working on teaching, research, and relations with industrial partners. It is currently the most active of the 3 iSchool regions.
Who am I

iSchools: current executive director and past chair. Email: mseadle@ischools.org

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: Director of the Berlin School of LIS, Prodekan (former Dean) of Humanities, former University Council Chair.

Recent books:

- Seadle, Michael, 2017, Quantifying Research Integrity, Morgan Claypool
- Seadle, Michael, Chu, Clara, Stöckel, Ulrike, 2016, “Educating the Profession: 40 years of the IFLA Section on Education and Training” DeGruyter. IFLA Series.