Isabel Meirelles & Katherine Gillieson

Editorial

Information+ Special issue of IDJ

Dear readers

We are pleased to introduce the Information+ Special Issue of IDJ, which features nine contributions that originated from accepted presentations at the Information+ conference. Before we introduce the articles, a word about Information+. The inaugural Information+ was held June 16–18, 2016, at Emily Carr University of Art + Design in Vancouver, BC, Canada. It comprised a conference, a workshop, and an exhibition aimed at bringing together researchers, educators and practitioners to discuss opportunities and challenges in information design and visualization. Our goal was to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge sharing in these rapidly changing fields while nurturing research that is relevant to academia, industry and government.

The Information+ conference included two keynotes, Tamara Munzner (University of British Columbia, Canada) and Colin Ware (University of New Hampshire, U.S.); four invited speakers, Gregor Aisch (*The New York Times*, U.S.), Catherine D’Ignazio (Emerson College, U.S.), Scott Murray (O’Reilly Media, U.S.), and Chad Skelton (Data journalist, Canada); and 29 contributed presentations selected using a peer review process with three independent reviewers per abstract. The latter were selected from 111 submissions from 16 countries. The acceptance rate for paper presentations was 22%,

and 44% for lightning talks. Speakers came from both academia (60%) and industry (40%) in eight countries, 45% of whom were women.

The articles

The present volume includes five articles and four case-studies that were accepted for publication using a peer review process, with two independent reviewers per contribution.

The first three articles investigate the impact of data and visualization in society, from required literacies to civic engagement and natural disasters. Catherine D’Ignazio discusses inequalities in the information age and the asymmetry between what she calls the “data-haves and data-have nots”. She proposes a “creative data literacy” program to empower citizens to gain knowledge about their world. The program, which has been successfully put into practice, encompasses five tactics to empower learners to read, work with, analyze, and argue with data. Next, Patricio Dávila proposes a theoretical framework for the analysis of visualization practices that combines two well-known philosophical approaches: Latour’s actor-network theory and Deleuze and Guattari’s *assemblage* theory. He then uses the framework to examine the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, which documents the dispossession of San

Francisco Bay Area residents in California, U.S. Klaus Kremer then describes the benefits of incorporating “calm technology” strategies in the design of interfaces used in emergency situations, when most people are under great stress. Kremer demonstrates this approach with Floodscape, a mobile app designed primarily for educating local communities in New Zealand about tsunamis, which also supports evacuation plans.

The next two articles examine the role of visualizations in broad cultural contexts. Marian Dörk and co-authors discuss visualizations of cultural heritage collections and the challenges posed by their complex nature on one hand, and the need to provide meaningful experiences to broader audiences that goes beyond search-only access on the other. With these challenges in mind, the authors scrutinize a set of visualizations they developed for the German Digital Library (DDB) depicting its large aggregated collections of over 7 million digital artifacts. Alice Thudt and co-authors look at the power of visual storytelling. The article presents a survey of techniques used to express and communicate subjective experiences, which they exemplify with a selection of projects. They then organize techniques by the stages used to create visualizations, starting with that of data collection.

The last four articles investigate the role of information design in communicating information to broader audiences, from readers of Wikipedia to experts in the sciences. Firstly, Michele Mauri and co-authors examine the role of visual content in Wikipedia. They describe a pedagogical program that engaged graduate students in the creation of diagrams for the online encyclopedia, and discuss the implications of generating visuals aimed at communicating knowledge that is open, free, and reusable. Next, Karen Cheng and co-authors study how Graphical Abstracts (GA) in scientific communication affect reader’s impressions. They describe research that involved re-designing GAs based on well-established

visual design principles, which were then used to test the reader’s understanding of the scientific content of the articles. Will Stahl-Timmins follows with a discussion of the challenges he faces at *The BMJ* where he designs interactive visualizations that summarize key scientific issues from the journal’s articles to their online readers. In this case study, he presents the design stages of an infographic depicting medical evidence on sepsis treatment. In the last article, Guillermina Noël and co-authors describe their study on improving the quality of patient care by using information design as a means to effectively communicate health-related data. The study, which was conducted at the Vancouver Coastal Health system in Canada, shows that different types of visualization might help support specific decision-making processes by healthcare providers.

We would also like to mention another presentation at Information+ 2016 that has made its way into the *Information Design Journal*. María Gonzalez Cossío’s article “Railway in Mexico: Understanding History through Information Design” was published in IDJ 22.2, as part of the special issue on Traffic & Transport.

Concluding

We would like to end by acknowledging and thanking our distinguished interdisciplinary Program Committee of 31 members from 10 countries who helped ensure the quality and substance of the Information+ conference. A subset of the Program Committee had double duty and graciously also served as reviewers for this special issue of IDJ. Information+ 2016 would not have been possible without the generous financial support from our home institutions, OCAD U and ECUAD, and from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Finally, we are indebted to Carla Spinillo, IDJ’s general editor, for the invitation to edit this special issue.

Our goal is that Information+ will become a biennial event dedicated to interdisciplinary exchanges in information design and visualization. While we identify the location of the 2018 edition, we would like to invite IDJ readers to visit the Information+ 2016 online presence, which includes, among other material, video of all presentations: www.informationplusconference.com.

We are very excited with the breadth and depth of the articles in this special issue, and we hope you will enjoy reading it!

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Guest Editors, Information+ Special issue of IDJ