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Handbook on information sciences

Review of Heisig, Peter (ed.). *Handbook on information sciences*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2024. xviii, 364 p. ISBN 978-1-0353-4369-0

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The handbook edited by Peter Heisig is a vast and critical examination of the current state of information science. It is particularly interesting in terms of the origin and affiliation of the contributing authors, who together depict a broad and diverse panorama of the field. The contributors represent nearly all continents and a wide range of countries. Notably, however, the majority are affiliated with institutions in Germany, Canada, Brazil, and Sweden — an interesting and perhaps telling constellation. In addition to this geographical distribution, the book offers a significant variety of perspectives on information science and its constituent parts across its 21 chapters.

A strong historical perspective is evident in the chapters on the development of information science as a discipline, classification and knowledge organisation, document theory, knowledge management, and, to some extent, information behaviour research. While these chapters explicitly emphasise historical development, similar approaches can be found throughout the volume. I would consider this historical dimension a strength of the handbook, particularly within this genre. Establishing the foundations of the discipline is essential to clarifying its originality, explaining its evolution over time, and anticipating its future directions.

Technological developments are examined in the context of information retrieval, research data management, data and text mining, and information visualisation. Methodological approaches and research practices are addressed in chapters covering research methods in information science, experimental research, informetrics, and bibliometrics.

As is common in handbooks of information science, several chapters are devoted to the modern information society, information literacy, and the education and training of information professionals. However, the inclusion of a chapter on public libraries as social institutions came as a welcome surprise, as this topic is often omitted from similar publications. In this volume, the chapter complements the one on the information society, and professional readers will likely detect further thematic connections throughout the book.

I would also like to highlight the fact that four of the contributing authors are affiliated with the Swedish School of Library and Information Science at the University of Borås. This seems particularly relevant in a review published by a journal associated with this institution. David Gunnarsson Lorentzen and Gustaf Nelhans contribute a chapter on informetric indicators and their wider meanings and limitations. Thomas D. Wilson, who recently served as a Visiting Professor at the University of Borås, co-authors a chapter on information need with Charles Cole from Canada. The handbook concludes with a chapter by the late Professor Jan Nolin on the relationship between information science and sustainability research — a significant and timely addition to the scope of modern information science. This final chapter also stands as a collaborative effort, completed by colleagues who finalised Nolin's manuscript after his passing.

Of course, information science is a dynamic field, and during the time required to produce and publish this volume, new topics have come to the fore. As such, subjects like artificial intelligence, data security and privacy, and a stronger emphasis on data science are noticeably absent. Nonetheless, every book has its limitations, and future handbooks will undoubtedly address these emerging areas.

It is important to emphasise the consistently high quality of the contributions in this volume, written by competent and knowledgeable scholars. This is a timely and valuable publication, which will serve a broad audience not only within information science but also in related fields such as economics, information systems and technology, computer science, sociology, sustainability, and information policy. While it is unlikely that any single reader will read the entire book from cover to cover, each reader will find chapters that address their particular interests, while also offering a broader context to understand the place of their topic within the wider discipline.

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