Editorial

For the past 31 years, *Business Information Review* has sought to address the needs of the business and commercial information sector. Over that time, the journal has carved out a unique place in the information world, balancing professional and scholarly publishing with a highly accessible style. Although it has been through many changes, the ethos of the journal has remained the same. It provides a forum for evidence-based practice by publishing the best professional and scholarly articles geared towards a professional readership. The regular readers and contributors of the journal are overwhelmingly drawn from commercial information practice and business education. That readership has grown to include knowledge managers, business researchers and other specialized roles alongside the older special libraries sector. The journal has therefore exemplified the idea of traditional professional skills finding value in emerging commercial contexts and embodies the ethos that professional practice must be sustained by a robust base of scholarly and professional research. It is this commitment to the foundations of the profession – shared by this journal – that has often underpinned the important contributions of librarians, knowledge managers, information scientists and business researchers to commercial enterprise across the world.

This issue sees the journal begin a new chapter. After five years at the helm, Sandra Ward and Val Skelton stand down as editors. Sandra and Val have edited *Business Information Review* since 2010. Over that time, the journal has gone from strength to strength, building a loyal readership and a strong team of regular contributors. Under their stewardship, *Business Information Review* published over 118 papers, 28 regular column articles, 22 editorials and 6 annual surveys. Every one of these has been carefully overseen by the editors. But over that time, *Business Information Review* has become more than merely another journal in a crowded marketplace. It is now also a community of practitioners and educators sharing experiences and best practice in the often-isolating and fast-changing world of business librarianship and information management.

As we take over the editorial role with this issue, we do so with some trepidation and an acute awareness of the contribution made by Sandra and Val to the success of *Business Information Review*. In recent months, we have held discussions about the future direction of the journal with a very wide range of contributors, editorial board members and other interested parties. The sentiment impressed upon us time and again through these conversations was just how highly valued Sandra and Val's stewardship of the journal has been. Our aim as we take the journal forward is to maintain the high standards and editorial direction that Sandra and Val have left and help *Business Information Review* and the community it reflects confront the challenges of the future.

Continuity and change

During the editorial handover, Sandra and Val have been invaluable in providing help and guidance for which we are very grateful. Regular readers will see their hand guiding in both this issue and future issues, as they will see perhaps the continuation of themes established by earlier editors. The regular contributors who have helped define the style and reach of the journal in recent years will continue to write for the foreseeable future. *Business Information Review* will continue to commission and publish its Annual Review of the sector. Many of the authors in this issue and in the future will also be familiar, drawn from the community the journal has fostered. The journal will continue to provide up-to-date and well-informed content covering the whole range of issues that press upon business information management, professional practice and professional.

However, a change in the editorial team inevitably brings with it some changes to the direction and make-up of a journal, many of which will evolve over time. We bring our own perspective and experience to the issues confronting the business information sector. Therefore, it feels appropriate to give a brief overview of our backgrounds and outlooks. Luke Tredinnick started his career in the museums and heritage sector, before moving into commercial librarianship in 1998. By 2004, he had become systems librarian and intranet content manager, before moving on to take a job as a senior lecturer in information management at London Metropolitan University, where he has remained ever since. Luke has written quite widely about information management, professional practice and digital technologies in a range of academic and professional journals. He has also written three books. He tends to focus on technological aspects of information management and on professional issues.

Claire Laybats is Head of Information and Knowledge consultancy at TFPL. Claire has worked for TFPL for over 10 years in the information and knowledge management field working in recruitment, then heading up training and events before moving into her current role in September

2013. She has been involved in and led key pieces of research into skills development in the information profession and has worked actively on consulting projects with clients in both the corporate and public sector nationally and internationally.

We hope that the different skills and experiences that we individually bring to the editorial role will be reflected in the pages of the journal over coming issues.

The next five years

In their final editorial in the last issue of *Business Information Review,* Sandra and Val took the opportunity to reflect on the changes to the profession over the past five years (Ward and Skelton, 2015). It seems fitting therefore that in our first editorial we address what we see as the future challenges to the business information profession – the ways in which the profession seems set to change over the next five years or so – and how that might be carried through the pages of *Business Information Review*. As far as we can see, the journal needs to remain at the cutting edge of changes to both the profession and the context of professional practice. It needs to not only reflect the best of current professional practice but also innovate new ways of thinking about business information services. This overview of some of these emerging issues is by no means exhaustive but reflects some of the themes on which we have been reflecting over recent weeks.

The current landscape of commercial information work continues to be quite turbulent. The implications of the global financial crisis and credit crunch continue to be felt across the sector, and the age of austerity government presents challenges to both the public sector and those parts of the corporate sector dependent on it. Business information management roles in central and local government have come under particular pressure as a result. Whilst the economy continues its slow recovery in Britain, the Eurozone is facing an uncertain economic future with the fallout from the Greek debt crisis. Such economic conditions emphasize the importance of securing real efficiencies in information services and increasing importance of regulatory compliance and risk management. In practice, increasing efficiency often equates to doing things cheaper or doing things better. Whilst the contingencies of austerity have placed a renewed emphasis on cost cutting, the editors are of the opinion that successful information services generally succeed through innovating to meet the changing needs to their client bases, to create new customers and to create new value from existing assets and resources. It is through innovation that the profession will secure its future strategic relevance.

One critical component of innovation in information service provision over the lifetime of this journal has been technology. When *Business Information Review* published its first issue, online information was just beginning to make an impression in the sector, and the first issue carried an article by Allan Foster on the growing importance on online data sets (Foster, 1984). The profession is now entering an age when the mobile computing platforms are becoming the primary ways in which people interact with information and information services. Information is no longer tied to the desktop. With wearable technology constantly just over the horizon, we are perhaps approaching a period when textual information may be declining in importance, and the long-heralded *visual culture* and *secondary orality* take secure hold. We also imagine a time when cheap and accessible virtual reality devices might make data visualization and reality augmentation an everyday part of the business environment, with Google recently relaunching Glass for the business market and Microsoft's HoloLens integration in Windows 10 indicative of future developments.

Side by side with the eternal technological revolution has been a data revolution. The information profession once traded in the scarcity of information. Now, it must trade in its ubiquity. Being able to find scarce data in an uncertain environment is more often than not no longer the issue of contemporary business success. Being able to filter vast sets of data for the underlying patterns, trends and insights is rapidly becoming the primary problem not only for information professionals but of contemporary life. In an age of big data, information is no longer an asset to be hoarded, it is a resource to be spent often with scatter-gun profligacy. Information and technology are cheap and becoming cheaper by the day, and the flare, skill and creativity with which they are wielded are rapidly becoming the key component to commercial competitive advantage.

The pace of these changes has meant that the role of business information professionals has also changed. Creativity, persuasiveness, soft skills and analytical skills are increasingly at the forefront of emerging sector requirements, supplementing more traditional information management and librarianship practice. Indeed, technological dependency has in many ways made us only more aware of the very human factor in business success. When commercial enterprise shares a more even information environment, the harnessing of latent talent becomes more critical to business success than simply controlling hard-to-access data. We know that the latent talent in the information and library sector often outshines external perceptions of the discipline. One key challenge is how the profession stakes its claim for the future.

There is a paradox at the heart of the commercial library and information sector that has been often commented upon. Whilst professional jobs and professional membership have declined, the body of professional knowledge at the heart of information management practice has become ever more important to industry. The profession as a whole has failed to capitalize on the opportunities of

the Internet age and knowledge economy. The issues have been widely discussed, and we have no intention to rehearse them all here, other than to say that whilst we see information professionals in every sector making the case for their value to organizations, and making invaluable contributions across the commercial world, we do not see the profession as a whole making that case quite so successfully. In many people's eyes, information professionals still belong in the public sector rather than in the boardroom. A major challenge for the future is how we collectively make such a case.

Finally, our growing dependency on technology places a new importance on some long-standing debates in business information management. A string of high-profile data security failings over recent years have reminded us perhaps how dependent we are on information security and understanding risk. The weakest link in the chain is often not a flaw in the technological architecture, but human fallibility in handling data and emotional investment in information and knowledge. The critical importance of information, data and knowledge to companies demands a constantly renewed focus on strategic management and development of information as a key asset or resource. Meanwhile, the growing political awareness of the influence of data on our lives means that business has to develop a political sensitivity in its information practices, responding not merely to regulatory and compliance issues but to the wider social and political context.

These are some of the issues that we intend to explore in the journal over the coming months and years. It is not an exhaustive list, and no doubt many of the most important challenges for business information management in the near future are as yet unanticipated. Whilst we intend to focus on some of these topics in the future issues of the journal, we will of course continue to reflect the core professional values and practices underpinning information work in all its forms. Nevertheless, it perhaps gives a flavour of some of our plans for the future.

Overview of issue

With this issue of *Business Information Review*, we are delighted to welcome back some regular contributors to the journal and showcase contributors new to the journal whom we hope may become regular contributors in the future. We are also pleased to present a familiarly eclectic mix of articles addressing librarianship, knowledge management, information management and information consulting. It has been a very great pleasure working on this issue of *Business Information Review*, and we are delighted with the result. However, we would like to include a brief note of thanks to new and returning contributors for their patience with us in developing the content of this issue.

Information anorexia: Starving for information

Three years ago, Scott Brown of *Social Information Group* published 'Coping with Information Obesity: A Diet for Information Professionals' in *Business Information Review* (Brown, 2012). This article explored the causes and consequences of a glut of information in the workplace. In this issue, Scott returns to explore the flip side of obesity: information anorexia. This idea describes not just a lack of relevant available information but a positive refusal to take on board available information in the decision-making process, a recognizable social behaviour that is just as much a response to the proliferation of data sources as information obesity itself. An analogy that springs to mind is the frequent tendency in public policy for politicians to eschew evidence in favour of their own instinct. Despite out best intentions, decision-making is of course often more irrational than we would like to admit, and the reissue of Stuart Sutherland's *Irrationality: The Enemy Within* by Pinter and Martin (2013) came as a timely reminder that the greater availability of information in the digital age by no means changes the ways in which we form our opinions and beliefs on the basis of easy-to-come-by data. Information anorexia contributes a deliberately provocative and challenging metaphor that forces us to think about the ways in which we approach and respond to available information in the workplace and in our wider lives.

Knowledge adoption: The influential factors in the process

We welcome to this issue two new contributors to *Business Information Review*, Suphong Chirawattanakij and Vichita Vathanophas Ractham from Mahidol University, Thailand. Their article develops the empirical underpinning of knowledge management by addressing the factors influencing the knowledge adoption process. Knowledge adoption describes the receiving end of the knowledge sharing process that is often at the heart of knowledge management and knowledge enterprises or the tendency for individuals to respond to opportunities to enhance their knowledge and understanding on the basis of their social interaction in the workplace. As the authors note, whilst there has been a significant body of research on knowledge sharing over the past 20 years or so, much less research has been undertaken on knowledge adoption. This is curious, given the two are flip sides of the same social process. It challenges us to think about not only who is talking in the knowledge enterprise but who is listening, and we welcome this contribution to filling out that gap in the research. The study, based on a wide survey, tests a number of hypotheses relating to the motivations for knowledge adoption in the workplace. The authors find that knowledge adoption is driven by a range of personal and environmental factors, including

career advancement, future reputation and perceptions of expertise.

Good knowledge drives good business

Another regular contributor to *Business Information Review*, Paul Corney shares his experiences of working with emerging enterprises and business start-ups in developing good knowledge and information management practices. Reflecting on the experiences of small and medium-sized enterprises in the business and third sector, Paul illustrates in his article why information and knowledge management matter to new businesses. As Paul notes, 'ultimately a business is worth the value of its intellectual capital/intellectual property. These "Knowledge Assets" might take the form of patented products, an efficient process, a unique piece of software or brand and reputation built over time'. The lessons here for directors of start-up are obvious, but there are lessons also for those who work with information on a day-to-day basis within larger or more established organizations.

Embedding library and information management techniques into business processes: A case study

New contributor Thérèse Aherne and returning contributor Jacqueline Beattie share their experiences of embedded librarianship at Neftex, a geoscience consultancy based in Oxfordshire, UK, and industry leader in the provision of Web-based sequence stratigraphic products and their global application. Thérèse and Jacqueline's case study describes the principles on which library and information management practices are embedded in business processes, developing a model of best practice that can be read as a road map for others embarking on a similar project. The issues that they raise around the use of information management practices and the incorporation of core professional knowledge within the organization generally highlight the ways in which the traditional role of the information professional underpins much contemporary commercial practice. There is much in this case study that we think will strike a note of recognition among experienced information professionals.

Perspectives

Martin White returns with his regular *Perspectives* column this issue. *Perspectives* aims to highlight interesting and relevant studies published across Sage's range of journals that might otherwise go unnoticed by the information profession. Because of their status, an interdisciplinary field and social practice information management and librarianship do draw eclectically on ideas and research that originates in a wide range of independent fields. However, much of this is originally published in outlets that are unlikely to be on the reading list of many members of the profession. Martin's diligent trawling of the research literature brings us an early glimpse of studies and papers likely to be influencing the profession in the future and certainly of interest in the present. This issue is no exception.

Initiatives

We also welcome back Allan Foster with his round-up of developments in the *Initiatives* column. This issue sees Allan discussing new research from Gartner on the role of information citizens and on technological changes to education, the *EC's Digital Single Market Strategy* and Weber Shandwick survey on the use of social media by CEOs, among other things. *Initiatives* has become vital reading for anyone involved in commercial information practice, and this issues column is no exception.

Editorial board changes

Finally, it is with regret that we report that Anthony Capstick has decided to stand down from the Editorial Board of the journal. Anthony has been a long-standing member of the board and has been involved in the journal for almost 15 years. Everyone who has been involved with *Business Information Review* over that time will want to issue their thanks for the enormous contribution that he has made.

Claire Laybats and Luke Tredinnick
Editors

References

Brown S (2012) Coping with information obesity: a diet for information professionals. *Business Information Review* 29(3): 168–173.

Foster A (1984) Business Information from Databanks: the potential of online numeric databases. *Business Information Review* 1(1): 38–45.

Paul J Corney (2015) Good knowledge drives good business. *Business Information Review* 32(3): 168–170.

Sutherland S (2013) *Irrationality: The Enemy Within; forward Ben Goldacre, afterward James Ball*. London: Pinter & Martin.

Ward S and Skelton V (2015) Editorial: new editorial team for business information review. *Business Information Review* 32(2): 86–89.