

**Guest Editorial****Need for Re-conceptualizing the Information Education****Abdus Sattar Chaudhry**

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This editorial reflects on the need to re-conceptualize the information education in view of development of a wide range of capabilities in information professionals to be responsive to the imperative of the digital economy. To achieve this objective, the academic content and substance in the information field have to be brought in line with the requirements of the digital environment. Flexibility in delivery of programs will also have to be introduced taking advantage of the options of online and web-based systems.

For remodeling the information education, courses offered by information studies programs ought to be reviewed and new curricular opportunities explored. Changes in the nomenclature of information education programs have been made in numerous educational institutions. For example, the names of degrees, programs, departments, schools, and colleges were appropriately changed from library and information science to information studies or information management to reflect the expanded scope of the field. But, desired corresponding changes in the curriculum and teaching strategies did not take place to support the semantic shift. There is a need that information education is looked at in a broader context and a wider perspective to educate graduates to work in changing and expanding information environments. These changes are expected to attract students to information studies programs from non-traditional markets enhancing the chances of stronger technical foundation and therefore opening up new markets for information studies programs.

The digital transformation of economies is increasing the need for more innovation, a faster dissemination of knowledge, operational efficiency, and improved services. This in turn requires educational institutions and academic programs to be more responsive to changing trends, putting additional pressure on information institutions, which were already striving to cope with the



unprecedented connectivity and availability of networked resources and services. Information institutions are expected to use new operating models to emerge globally and provide needed information services. These developments have led to the launch of new services and the review of current practices for information professionals to stay relevant and responsive to the imperatives of the new environment. Practitioners need relevant and appropriate competencies to take advantage of new opportunities in the digital context, given the challenges of the emerging socio-economic environment. New trends in information practices require the introduction of new courses, course concentrations, and programs. Information education programs are expected to stake out unclaimed areas, such as the organization and management of information and knowledge, collection development, and reference and information service. The scope of courses in these areas should be expanded to include topics that go beyond building, managing, and organizing library collections. Courses in the area of information and knowledge organization have always been taught traditionally in an institutional context (collections of information resources in libraries or information centres). New environment requires a shift in this context by expanding the scope to include personal information organization and management. Like-wise, reference and information services courses have emphasized on literature searching and bibliographic databases. These courses need to be expanded by focusing more on how to empower the knowledge workers in finding information from their personal archives, professional networks, and social media. Similarly, instead of always emphasizing on the intermediary role of information professionals to assist collecting information, information studies courses should also focus on strategies how knowledge workers should be assisted in leveraging on information that is pushed to knowledge workers by their colleagues, professional forums, and social networks. Similarly, information literacy courses should go beyond resource-based information searching and target building information competence from a broader perspective.

Need for electronic records and digital archiving resulted by the initiatives of the digital economy have open up new opportunities for information education programs requiring information education institutions to make swift changes to claim the ownership of these emerging areas. Also, emerging areas such digital preservation and archiving should be emphasized in the information studies programs to capture the new markets. Another potential market that remains untapped in information studies programs is entrepreneurship. Courses on



information entrepreneurship and knowledge outsourcing will bring a new dimension to the discipline of information studies/management.

Faculty members in information education programs need to follow new trends in educational practice to explore new content areas and embrace appropriate curricular opportunities and become active in introducing desired changes at their institutions. Information education needs to reflect the shift towards educating graduates to work in broader information environments. Emerging interdisciplinary connections, collaborations, and the converging information disciplines represented by the recent i-School phenomenon confirm the need for a broader context. But, these initiatives have not been affectively embraced by information education programs world over. Re-inventing the information education curriculum has become necessary for making it more proactive. Given the rapidity of change in digital economies, imaginative solutions to organizational problems have become crucial. A successful information professional in the changing information landscape must be capable of adapting to change and willing to work in interdisciplinary positions. This has to be inspired by information education institutions. To prepare graduates to work in such dynamic environments, the information education needs to be re-conceptualized. Educators need to articulate clearly how information studies courses can help their graduates develop the skills they need to work in these environments. Future trends in information education and research will be influenced by the advancement of information and communication technology and its applications in information services. Institutional responses to these developments ought to be quick and fast. Information schools will have to find innovative ways to survive and achieve their educational goals in the changing environment. Information studies programs have tried innovating but they have to be more proactive to exploit the opportunities made available in the new environment. To realize the potential of the digital economy, collaborative approaches will have to be adopted, new alliances will have to be made, and strategic partnerships will have to be struck with relevant stakeholders in academic institutions and anchor information industries. Natural allies for information studies/management programs appear to be schools of computer science, business management, and disciplines in cognitive sciences. Collaborative efforts can take different forms, e.g., teaching courses by visiting faculty from the afore-mentioned disciplines and relevant industries, offering elective courses in these areas, and conducting joint research projects.