

Chapter 7. Further research

“Societies will, of course, wish to exercise prudence in deciding which technologies –that is, which applications of science—are to be pursued and which not. But without funding basic research, without supporting the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake, our options become dangerously limited.” – Carl Sagan, *The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence* (Sagan, 1978: 245).

“That is, if we investigate further, we find that the statements of science are not of what is true and what is not true, but statements of what is known to different degrees of certainty: ‘It is very much more likely that so and so is true than that is not true’, or ‘such and such is almost certain but there is still a little bit of doubt’; or – at the other extreme—‘well, we really don’t know.’ Every one of the concepts of science is on a scale graduated somewhere between, but at neither end of, absolute falsity or absolute truth.” -- Nobel laureate, Richard Phillips Feynman, *The Pleasure of Finding Things Out*, (Feynman, 2001: 248).

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the broad recommendations for further research that emerged from this project. These are the further research steps the researcher intends to follow in order to disseminate the findings of the research, and themes for further research that the author and other researchers might pursue in the future.

7.2 Steps for communication of the findings of this thesis

These are some of the steps the researcher intends to follow in order to communicate widely the findings of this study:

1. In order to increase the readership of the research findings, the author will explore the possibility of publishing them in book format through a commercial publisher. Not for the sake of making a profit, but to reach a public audience that could only access it through commercial venues. For instance, the book *Public Library and Community Analysis* by Satyanarayana (1997), which was of paramount importance for this thesis, was originally a LIS PhD thesis from India, and then communicated in book format by a commercial publisher. Thus, the researcher could access this valuable thesis only through the commercial services of Amazon.co.uk. Therefore, that may be the only logic behind the idea of assessing the possibilities of communicating this thesis through commercial publishers.
2. In addition, the researcher will present the findings of the thesis through international conference papers. He will also publish articles in international journals –especially open access journals where users can access the content free of charge. Moreover, he will continue developing in the near future the lines of research that emerged from this thesis, and consequently he will continue communicating its future findings.
3. Moreover, the researcher will try to create or join international networks of academic research with those authors whose current projects were found to be compatible and relevant to this thesis, about lines of research that gave birth to this thesis, as well as those that emerged afterwards. For instance, he might contact these authors in order to create or join networks related to *community profiling tool* or *community analysis* applied in LIS: (e.g. Cooper,

et. al, 1993; Satyanarayana, 1997; Sarling and Van Tassel, 1999; Westbrook, 2000; 2001; Galluzzi, 2001; and Long, 2006). Also of interest are networks relating to *community profiling tool* from different social sciences other than LIS: with Roger Green (e.g. 2000a; 2000c), and Hawtin, Hughes, and Percy-Smith (1994).

7.3 Themes for further research

These are some of the themes for further research that the author and other researchers might pursue in the future:

1. The continuation of the study towards the creation of an *integral analytical model for Library and Information Science or The Eratosthenes Research Spirit model for LIS*. In the last few years the author (Muela-Meza, 2008; 2007; 2006a; 2005b; 2005c; 2004b) has been working towards the creation of this model, to be used as a theoretical framework for LIS practitioners and researchers. This model would combine (or 'triangulate') concepts from the natural sciences, the social sciences, and humanities, in order to obtain a comprehensive, and integral analysis of LIS phenomena. This model in progress assumes that LIS research phenomena should not be studied only from a LIS theoretical perspective, but also from perspectives other than LIS. This thesis is a clear example of the configuration of the historically grounded model, in that it has been inspired by Eratosthenes (ancient Greece, 246 BC). Eratosthenes was a classical librarian or LIS practitioner and researcher, geographer, poet, humanist, and scientist. However, the author came to know about him from authors other than LIS authors: for example, US astronomer Carl Sagan (2001), Armenian-Mexican astronomer Shahen Hacyan (1986), and Italian philosophers Giovanni Reale and Dario Antiseri (2004a).

2. Further research into the informal information networks of people who act like/as if they were gateways to information. As explained in Chapter 5 relating to the provision of information of cultural information needs, the traditional documental information institutions (DIIs) such as libraries, or the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) did not satisfy adequately the widest range of cultural information needs. In such a case there are intercultural gateways within the neighbourhood which might satisfy community's cultural information needs. From data several names of these gateways who might act as information providers emerged. However, these gateways are residents of the neighbourhood who might have small shops, but they did not have any premises as documental information institutions have (e.g. libraries, and Citizens Advice Bureau). Hence, even though the author was aware that they might be acting as information providers of a gateway type, he had no success in approaching them. This was due, according to findings analysed and discussed in Chapter 5, to the fact that these providers provided information in selective ways based on tribalism, kinship, religious brotherhoods, ethnic background, and nationality. Hence, the author did not have any of those characteristics that could make him become a viable candidate to be served by these selective 'underground' and informal information providers of gateway type. Hence, since the services of these 'underground' providers were not open for all citizens, and they socially excluded people, it was not possible to assess to what extent, quality, and

professionalism they satisfied people's information, advice, or help needs. However, in this study emerged that the information these 'underground' might provide is open to question, and might have more negative impact on the users being served. As for Broomhall, they emerged as a very closed informal network, less publicly accountable, and more prone to provide inadequate services, because basically no one knows about their facilities or where they provide them, or the conditions, quality, extent, or professionalism of how they provide them. Thus, such non publicly accountable gateways or 'underground' information providers have been found as negative activities which undermine human and citizenship rights (e.g. Marquand, 2004). Nevertheless, this study was not focused on assessing *per se* the provision of information through gateways, as others have focused (e.g. Agada, 1999). However, more research is needed on how to approach 'underground' informal gateways who claim to act as information providers, but actually act as hurdles to information provision in relationship to the application of community profiling and the analysis of community information needs.

3. Further research into the surrounding issues of provision of information via the unsolicited postings that people receive through their letterboxes. As explained in Table 5.3 in Chapter 5, 72 documents were received through the author's letterbox from 16 September 2006 to 16 March 2007 while he lived in Broomhall. Of these: a) 55 are related to commercial information (19 are related to fast food takeaway shops and 15 about supermarkets: CostCutter from Broomhall and Somerfield from Broomhill); b) 11 from voluntary sector; and c) 5 from statutory sector, Sheffield. Given the nature of this grey literature and elusive documents, the author could not establish which of these documents can be considered useful for the residents and which 'rubbish unsolicited post,' because any of them could be either useful or useless by different residents. Hence, this could be a research theme for further research by LIS practitioners if they wanted to find out: a) what are the types of documents households receive in a given neighbourhood and on a given period; b) the quality of information provided; c) if residents find useful the information received; d) if the written information through leaflets, and booklets is enough in itself to inform residents, considering that some commentators have found that that information is not enough in itself, and that instead, the assumption that this information might inform families was considered as "simplistic and potentially dangerous" (Mitchell and Sloper, 2002: 78).

4. Further research into the controversial issues on the privatization of information provision in publicly funded institutions. All the interviewees of this study, except one (a working class respondent, R.I.07, from section A), did not have any problem or complaint regarding the borrowing of books to borrow books through the Sheffield public libraries, and they did not pay any fare to borrow them. From the perceptions of interviewees it was apparent that they did not have any problems or complaints related to book borrowing. However, there are some new laws within the European Union relating to intellectual property and copyright, which have become controversial issues relating to the privatization of information provision in publicly funded institutions. Due to these laws EU citizens are paying extra taxes to read in publicly funded libraries or other documental institutions. For instance, a study from the Copy/South Research Group, *The Copy/South Dossier* :

Issues in the Economics, Politics, and Ideology of Copyright in the Global South (Story, Darch, and Halbert (Eds.), 2006), in which the author of this thesis collaborated, found that the British government, at central and local levels, in compliance with European Union EU1992/100 directive, is taxing all the books bought and lent –checked out for home reading– throughout all the public libraries in the country. This directive has been enforced throughout the EU since 1992. However, a LIS researcher notes that in the UK this tax has been enforced in similar terms as in the European directive since 1978 through the British copyright law (Gimeno Perelló, 2007b). Hence, through this British 1978 copyright law and EU1992/100 directive, every time a book is lent to a user through any British public library –or through any other library from any other EU country– the taxpayers have to pay an extra tax to the copyright holders of that book on top of the regular taxes they already pay to the government. It was not found through the literature how much British taxpayers pay to copyright holders through the British government; however, Spanish taxpayers pay them € 1 euro per each book lent through their public libraries (Muela-Meza, 2005c). In addition, a LIS researcher (Gimeno Perelló, 2007b) found in an European-wide study that such EU100/1992 directive has been the main cause in the UK for the reduction of 30% of book lending in 2003 as compared with previous decade: “At the same time, the number of book loans in the British libraries descended until 30% in 2003 in relation with the previous decade: from 563 million loans in 1993 they descended to 406 million in 2003. These are direct consequences of the application of the European Directive [100/1992 on Intellectual Property taxes on library book lending]” (Gimeno Perelló, 2007b). Allegedly this tax is exacted from libraries in order to give an extra incentive to authors for their creativity, however, most of that money is collected by copyright holders (Story, Darch, and Halbert (Eds.), 2006). In addition, from the scarce money authors get, only the most checked out books as home loans get the maximum benefit: “In the UK, during the 2002-2003 period, 67% of the British authors obtained a profit of less than 143 Euros, whilst a 1.3% obtained the maximum benefit stipulated by the Law: 8, 663 Euros” (Gimeno Perelló, 2007b). Hence, further research relating to the negative issues of the copyright law as the new mechanism of privatization of the publicly funded documental information institutions is needed. For common citizens, these negative issues are generally hidden from their consideration; therefore, it is suggested that LIS practitioners conduct further research in this area; because publicly funded libraries and another documental information institutions: a) have an endemic problem of not having enough budget to acquire all the information their users need (Gimeno Perelló, 2007a; Rikowski, 2007); b) that money that the government pays to copyright holders could be invested in libraries to keep them open, better staffed and stocked, or to build new ones, c) copyright law has become a sensible barrier to access to information through publicly funded documental information institutions (Story, Darch, and Halbert (Eds.), 2006; Muela-Meza, 2006a; 2005c).

7.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the broad recommendations for further research that emerged from this project: a) those further research steps that the researcher might follow, b) themes of research that the researcher might follow,

and c) themes of research that the researcher suggests to the international academic community to follow.

This study has not tried to prove any theory, or methodology, or method, or tool, or anything. It has simply tried to understand a particular phenomenon, namely, the issues and features, information needs and provision of the people of the Broomhall neighbourhood through the application of the community profiling tool of analysis, and the implications for policy makers, the profession, and the human development based in a particular territory, a particular place in time: Broomhall. The research has been conducted with reflexivity, with humility, with analytical and critical rigour, without any vested interests at all. The aim has only been to understand the phenomena and advance the scientific endeavour and understanding, and most of all to foster the spirit of community. By writing this thesis, which will eventually be more widely communicated, that is, made public, (e.g. through libraries, or papers, or conferences), it will foster the spirit of community. As an author puts it: “without communication there is no community, because through it reality is made common to everyone, at its diverse levels and forms” (Sander Villarino, 1992: 39). Thus this thesis will be made common to everyone who can access it and read it. If at times, the findings and discussions emerged as only having negative and critical implications, then the reader is advised to be critical and sceptical of the content of this thesis, and is invited to corroborate the evidence submitted here for public debate and scrutiny. If they do so, then they will –hopefully– understand why the picture of this phenomenon emerged as it did.

As a final remark, not exactly related to the phenomena researched here, the author also recommends that British, European, US, and all academic sponsors from around the world, sponsor academic research, like the author’s sponsor, the Mexican CONACYT, for the sake of knowledge itself, ‘for the pleasure of finding things out’ (Feynman, 2001) on whichever subjects. Academic research funding should be encouraged and carried out for academic purposes with non-vested commercial, corporate, ideological-political interests (Sagan, 1978: 245). Academic inquiry should also be completely free from any pressure (ideological-political, commercial, corporate, etc.). Researchers can research purely theoretical or practical research, but it is recommended that they also try to conduct research incorporating social transformation, for a betterment of all humans (not only dominant classes), all other species, and a better material and cosmic balance, as this doctoral research thesis has tried to accomplish.

In the remaining pages of the thesis the reader will find: a) the Bibliography; and b) the Appendices.