

## **e-Research Crosses the Pond: Contrasting transformations in the U.S. and U.K.**

A panel sponsored by SIG-SI at  
The American Society for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T)  
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### **Overview of panel:**

e-Research activity is expanding rapidly in the United States and the United Kingdom. e-Research goes by many names, including *cyberinfrastructure* in the U.S. and *e-Science*, *e-Social Science*, and *e-Humanities* in the U.K., Europe, and elsewhere. Generally, these terms refer to distributed, collaborative, data- and information-intensive research activities. Research practices core to the IS community, such as dissemination, organization and retrieval of knowledge, are likely to undergo fundamental changes and demand new approaches. Furthermore, e-Research offers new funding opportunities to develop IS as a field and engage more strategically with those scientific and scholarly communities we wish to support.

The panel will open with a short overview of recent research by each participant (7-10 minutes each -- see descriptions below) to frame discussion. Audience discussion will be organized by a set of key issues of particular interest to information scientists, such as the dissemination of knowledge, data sharing, collaborative practices, and research policy and funding.

### **Key issues for discussion:**

1. What are the similarities and distinctions between e-Research in the U.S. and the U.K.?
2. How much, and in what forms, are information science scholars collaborating between the U.S., U.K., E.U., and other countries?
3. What role do (and should) information scientists play in the shift towards large, online, collaborative research infrastructures that host data, connections to remote research instruments, software tools, workflows, publications, and a host of other resources?

4. What roles do institutions such as universities, libraries, disciplinary-based societies, and private enterprise play in e-Research?
5. What roles do institutions and individuals play in sharing and curation of research data?

Note: The final presentations will be available after the conference on the Oxford Research Archive.

**Panelists:**

**Christine Borgman's** eResearch endeavors include six years studying data practices and building information systems for the Center for Embedded Networked Sensing, which is a large, National Science Foundation-funded Science and Technology Center; a monograph assessing the changes in research practices and infrastructure for eResearch, *Scholarship in the Digital Age: Information, Infrastructure, and the Internet* (MIT Press, 2007); participation in multiple UK initiatives; and chairing a Task Force for NSF on CyberLearning. She will discuss key issues for understanding eResearch from an information science perspective.

**Clifford Lynch** has been the Director of the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) since July 1997, and has published extensively on the role of research libraries in e-Research. CNI, jointly sponsored by the Association of Research Libraries and EDUCAUSE, includes about 200 member organizations concerned with the use of information technology and networked information to enhance scholarship and intellectual productivity. Prior to joining CNI, Lynch spent 18 years at the University of California Office of the President, the last ten as Director of Library Automation. Lynch, who holds a Ph.D. in Computer Science from the University of California, Berkeley, is an adjunct professor at Berkeley's School of Information. He is a past president of the American Society for Information Science.

**Jenny Fry's** research has been focused on how differences in knowledge creation practices across the disciplines shape the production and use of networked digital resources. Before joining the Department of Information Science at Loughborough University she was a research fellow at the Oxford Internet Institute where she was studying the social/cultural and institutional factors shaping UK e-Research. Her presentation will focus on 'openness' within the UK e-Science programme, which will be based on findings from empirical research conducted in collaboration with colleagues from the Oxford e-Social Science project. 'Openness' in the context of e-Research goes beyond Open Access publishing and needs to be more broadly conceived as encompassing open source development, open technical standards, and the sharing of data, tools and resources. In particular, Jenny will discuss the juxtaposition between policy and practice with regard to 'openness' and its implications for Information Science.

**Eric Meyer** is a researcher on the Oxford e-Social Science (OeSS) project. The OeSS node of the UK National Centre for e-Social Science (NCeSS) focuses on understanding the social shaping that takes place as social scientists grapple with

implementing Grid-enabled approaches to research. Meyer will describe the work of the OeSS, report on the findings of the first phase of the project (which finishes in September 2007), and outline the future directions the project is taking as it begins its next phase. One key theme that has emerged from the project is how transformations have taken, or failed to take, place. The types of transformations range from relatively straightforward transformations experienced by e-Research projects over their development cycle to the much more complex transformations that e-Research advocates have promised in the nature of scientific behaviour, the types of scientific questions asked, and the role of technology for enabling collaboration and sharing. Examples from OeSS case studies will illustrate our current understanding of these transformations.

**Carole Palmer**'s research investigates information use problems in science and scholarship, with a particular focus on barriers to scientific discovery and interdisciplinary inquiry, and the changing nature of "collections" in the digital information environment. She will give an overview of several projects related to different aspects of information infrastructure development for e-research in the sciences and the humanities. The projects to be discussed include a study of "high impact" information in the process of scientific discovery; a research and development project profiling data curation needs across sciences, including chemistry, biology, agronomy, and environmental sciences; and an extended 8-year initiative to develop digital collection aggregations that retain the information richness and context necessary for scholarly use. The presentation will illustrate a broad base of basic and applied LIS research that is examining e-Research from the perspectives of scientists and scholars, as well as digital resource developers.