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The Nature of Information Science

Understanding a discipline's nature is an integrating act of knowing its focus, locating its scope, identifying the problems it addresses and the way problems are addressed. Theory of science conceptually discusses the history and sociocultural formation of a discipline (Chalmers, 1992) and argues that paradigm centered thinking gives birth to a form of knowledge (Kuhn, 1970) which shapes a perspective unique to a discipline. Academic disciplines are the outcomes of a historical development that involves a set of intellectual traditions laid over a sociocultural—social, economic, technological, political, and philosophical—platform.

Information science (IS), once known as science of documentation, is now also called information studies by many. Buckland and Liu (1995) discussed IS's historical development and Hjørland (2000) showed IS's use of different theories and methods indicating the focus and scope of IS. Perhaps there is a need to investigate the present trends of IS to understand its nature as it is now.

In this presentation I will report on the findings of abstract analyses of 100 articles published in ARIST from 1994 to 2004 and 100 IS dissertations to show their focus and domain. It is hoped that this will give us a picture about the recent major trends in IS.

Later in this presentation I will discuss Bilgan's (1973) classification and Bernstein's (1999) horizontal and vertical model to orient my findings in the direction of commenting on the nature of IS.

Reference:

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    Philosophical Basis. *Information Processing & Management, 36* (3), 501-531.

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