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Information Research comes to Borås

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Abstract

Introduction. This short paper reflects on the history of *Information Research* from the perspective of the Swedish School of Library and Information Science at the University of Borås (Sweden), which was entrusted with the journal's sustainable continuation by its founder Tom Wilson in 2016.

Method. A short, informal survey among the authors was used to gather valuable insights from current and former colleagues at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science who all contributed to the journal in some form or other, and to compile a chronology of significant events for the journal and its current home base.

Conclusion. After thirty years, *Information Research* remains a key publication venue in the field – not least because of its founder's trailblazing dedication to Open Access publishing *avant la lettre*. The Swedish School of Library and Information Science is proud to look back on its involvement in the journal over the years, and remains dedicated to ensuring that it continues to offer a sustainable home for information research in the future.

Introduction

In 2016, when *Information Research* was in its twenty-first year, Professor Tom Wilson asked the Swedish School of Library and Information Science at the University of Borås, Sweden, if they were interested in taking over ownership of the journal. The University of Borås agreed to take responsibility for *Information Research* and in 2017 the move to the Swedish School of Library and Information Science was realized.

In this retrospective, some of the staff at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science who have been central to the management of *Information Research* as well as Tom Wilson reflect on the importance of *Information Research* for the Swedish School of Library and Information Science (and vice versa) and the mostly invisible work by many contributors that goes into the acquisition and the day-to-day management of a diamond open access journal. In this retrospective, some of the staff at SSLIS who have been central to the management of *Information Research*, along with Tom Wilson, reflect on the importance of *Information Research* for Swedish School of Library and Information Science (and vice versa). They also highlight the often invisible work contributed by many individuals to the acquisition and day to day management of a diamond Open Access journal.

The agreement

A central value of *Information Research* is its true Open Access model in its original meaning, i.e., that authors can publish in the journal for free and that readers can access its content for free, which is now called the diamond model. As founder Tom Wilson reminisces, supported by a community of volunteer editors, copyeditors, and reviewers, he succeeded in keeping the journal alive and thriving as a diamond model since its first issue in 1995. There have been offers from commercial publishers to buy the journal, but they would have changed the Open Access to earn a profit. As time went on, he started looking for an institution that would ensure that the journal would always stay diamond Open Access. As Tom became better acquainted with the Swedish School of Library and Information Science as a visiting, later senior professor to the school, he felt that the institution would be willing and able to ensure the journal's survival as a true Open Access journal and offered to gift *Information Research* to the University of Borås in 2016.

As the dean of faculty Ann-Sofie Axelsson wrote at the time, as there already were two regional editors from the Swedish School of Library and Information Science and many of its researchers had published in or reviewed articles for *Information Research*, The Swedish School of Library and Information Science was a good fit. The journal fit well into the strong research environment of Library and Information Science at and would help raise the academic status of the university college. In September 2016, Vice Chancellor Björn Brorström signed the agreement undertaking to ensure that *Information Research* would remain a diamond Open Access journal. The university further pledged to sustain the quality of the published articles, work with the existing community of editors, editorial board, reviewers, copy editors etc. The Swedish School of Library and Information Science would make sure to meet all deadlines for production, fund an editor-in-chief and work together with Lund University Libraries where the technical infrastructure was housed. Tom Wilson agreed to stay on as editor-in-chief during a transition period. In fact, the transition period would last until the summer of 2024.

Bringing the journal home

There had been several attempts made to move the infrastructure of *Information Research* from Lund to Borås already before 2017. They became more urgent in 2017 since *Information Research* was housed on an outdated server that needed to be decommissioned. At the same time, discussions had been ongoing at the University of Borås for several years about how publishing activities and journal work should be organized. Even though an internal report recommended that the University of Borås establish an electronic publishing platform with a clear policy for Open

Access, based on its own installation of an Open Journal System (OJS), this was never implemented. Thus, the Swedish School of Library and Information Science had to find a solution for *Information Research* on its own.

After some false starts, Alen Doracic, then assistant head of school at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science, was tasked in 2019 with the responsibility of bringing home *Information Research* from Lund University Library and installing and sustaining an Open Journal System platform to host the journal. For several years, Alen served as a kind of super user for the University of Borås' Open Journal System installation, combined with the role of managing editor for the journal, which meant that he regularly assisted both editors and authors with technical and editorial support.

Alen organized the move as a project with three sub-projects:

Sub-project 1: Open Journal System installation

This included creating the conditions for having an Open Journal System installation at the University of Borås and procuring, among other things, operation, updates, patches, etc., with the IT department, which resulted in the Swedish School of Library and Information Science launching its own Open Journal System installation in 2020. Alen particularly remembers his efforts in convincing the IT manager to invest resources in the project, something which was not self-evident as the university college did not see supporting journals as a priority.

Sub-project 2: Migrate content and editorial work

The migration from Lund (Open Journal System v.2) to Borås (v.3) involved several administrative, economic, and technical challenges, which were handled successively and successfully. According to the agreement with Lund, the operations there were to be phased out, and March 25, 2022, when the Lund server was shut down. The editorial work at Lund ended in the autumn of 2021 and has since been conducted entirely in Borås. Alen and Tom conducted extensive system tests to ensure that the new installation worked according to the desired workflow. When the system was up and running, they conducted training for the editors in the system.

Sub-project 3: Crossref and DOI management

Lastly, Alen arranged the University's membership in Crossref and implemented routines for DOI management in the system. He also saw to the transfer of the ownership of the domain <http://www.informationr.net/ir/> to Borås, and started work on modernizing its design and structure, while also participating in the National Library's national initiative to create a platform for scientific journals.

Publicera and Editor-in-Chief

After Alen left the Swedish School of Library and Information Science and *Information Research* in 2022, Birgitta Wallin took over his overall responsibility for *Information Research* as assistant head of school and first Tobias Carlsson, then Anton Carlander Borgström took over the role of managing editors. During her time, Birgitta initiated contact with representatives of the National Library's platform Publicera, that was now ready to host Open Access journals, and together with the managing editors they prepared for yet another move to a new infrastructure. So far, the issues from the last couple of years have been moved over as well as the Open Journal System supporting the article workflow, so there is still quite some work ahead to move about 27 years' worth of volumes to the same platform. Birgitta also, finally, found a replacement Editor in Chief, Crystal Fulton, in 2024, thereby ending a seven year transition phase and an impressive twenty-nine years Editing in Chief for Tom Wilson.

Behind the scenes

The work of regional editors, copy editors and managing editors is mostly invisible but central to the successful running of *Information Research*. In this part, Elena Maceviciute and Ola Pilerot

share the point of view of Regional Editors, and Tobias Carlsson and Anton Carlander Borgström give insight into the work of Managing Editors.

Elena was the first to publish a peer reviewed article in *Information Research* in 1998 and soon after she agreed to become a regional editor for Eastern Europe and Middle East. Later she was a book review editor together with Tom Wilson. When the Swedish School of Library and Information Science took over the journal in 2017 she became Deputy Editor, until the summer of 2024, when Wout Dillen took over the roles of both Deputy Editor and Book Review Editor. Ola was a Regional Editor for Western Europe in from 2014 to 2019.

As Regional Editors, Elena and Ola took care of the manuscripts sent in from their regions, assessing the quality, searching for and contacting reviewers and working with authors, reviewers and volunteer copy editors to prepare the articles for publishing. In the role of Book Review Editor Elena ordered interesting books to review, found reviewers and wrote many informative reviews herself. As Deputy Editor she marketed new issues of the journal on social media and email lists and helped prepare material for Web of Science, among other tasks. As she worked through the different versions of the Open Journal System, she got to know many tricks to make it do what was needed. So, she used to consult some regional editors or copyeditors helping them to find their way in the system. Both Ola and Elena also spent a considerable amount of time applying for publication grants to external funders such as the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Swedish Research Council, often with success.

Tobias and later Anton took on the role of Managing Editor after Alen Doracic moved on from the Swedish School of Library and Information Science. Tobias became involved with the journal when it was time to transition the publishing of the journal to the University of Borås' own Open Journal System platform. His role was to help facilitate that shift, which involved adjusting the workflow for editors and authors, and to make the Open Journal System ready for the readers as well. It involved everything from implementing new web design to creating new instructions. For the web design, another colleague with a designer background, Emma Anderstedt, came up with a proposal, which Tobias and Editorial Assistant Ty Nilsson implemented in CSS and in Word templates as well as they could.

The readers of the journal were always prioritized, but new web standards and a new workflow demanded change. As Managing Editor one of his primary responsibilities was to oversee the transition and the (somewhat) new workflow. It was also about helping editors and staff with various technical issues and managing updates and problems with the software and server. Tobias also managed the transition from one Open Journal System server to a new one, where they also integrated the legacy website/archive. The team wanted to keep the domain name (informationr.net), which was the primary reason they wanted to migrate to a new server, even if it was technically demanding for the institution.

Anton became involved with the journal when Tobias Carlsson stepped down in the autumn of 2023 and has worked as Managing Editor for almost two years. He acts as support contact for authors, reviewers, as well as members of the editorial team when dealing with Open Journal Systems and is also responsible for the production-phase of publishing the journal together with Ty. For Anton, this mainly entails taking care of metadata aspects and putting the issue together in the Open Journal System. For the time being, Anton is working on migrating the journal to the Publicera platform, with tasks mirroring the ones Alen and then Tobias took on in the last shift.

These are only a few of many, time consuming but invaluable responsibilities that have been taken on by many colleagues at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science and all over the world to support the journal. An unusual feature of *Information Research* is the possibility to publish peer-reviewed articles in Spanish and Portuguese as well as English, which makes its access even more inclusive and open. This is made possible by Regional Editors and Copyeditors

such as Jose Vicente Rodriquez Munoz and later, Javier Martinez Mendez, contributing their time. As Ola puts it, the journal is, in a sense, a collective project. The founder's and long-time Editor in Chief's contribution is, of course, of enormous importance to the journal's success, but we should not forget all the voluntary and unpaid contributions made by many other people.

Significant events

We have asked all contributors to this retrospective to name some events that they see as significant in the history of *Information Research*. We present them here in chronological order.

1995: *Information Research* was founded.

1998: In issue 4, volume 3, Tom Wilson wrote, 'This issue of *Information Research* marks a change in policy for the journal: a move towards a fully peer-refereed scholarly journal' (<https://informationr.net/ir/3-4/editor34.html>). It is interesting to note from a Swedish School of Library and Information Science perspective that Elena Maceviciute authored the first peer-reviewed article.

2000: An editorial board for *Information Research* is formed. As Ola explains, the editorial board clearly signals through its composition of renowned researchers that *Information Research* is a significant force to be reckoned with. But it also signals something else important, namely that the journal is, in a sense, a collective project

Beginning of 2000s: *Information Research* is registered by the Web of Science. Elena remembers: It took significant effort and finally we got there with the help of Eugene Garfield who recommended the journal to be included into the database.

2017: The ownership of *Information Research* is transferred to Swedish School of Library and Information Science. This was an exciting move ensuring the continuity of the journal as a diamond Open Access journal.

Ca 2017-2023: *Information Research* receives grants from the Nordic Council of Ministers and Vetenskapsradet to support its development into a Scandinavian Open Access journal.

2022: *Information Research* migrates from Lund to Borås after many years hard work, creating the opportunity to use the whole workflow on the Open Journal System platform. This also involved challenges with workflow, new web design, new Word templates and a new way of publishing, much anticipated, in PDF format.

2023: Issue 1, volume 28, 2023, was the first issue with the new, stylish layout and articles in PDF format (with page numbers!).

2024: Crystal Fulton takes over as Editor in Chief, with Wout Dillen as Deputy Editor. *Information Research* starts the migration to Publicera and moves to a continuous publication schedule.

2025: *Information Research* celebrates its thirtieth anniversary, and the remarkable fact that the journal, based on one person's passionate initiative and persistent work, has grown to what it is today!

The Importance of *Information Research* for the Swedish School of Library and Information Science (and vice versa)

The Swedish School of Library and Information Science is proud and honoured to publish *Information Research* and develop it as a diamond Open Access journal. Over the past years, there have been several offers from commercial publishers to buy the journal for a significant sum. We have rejected the offers and will continue to uphold the diamond Open Access model, not only

because we have pledged this in the agreement with Tom but also because we firmly believe in the value of true Open Access.

With the support of the National Royal Library and its platform Publicera, it appears to be a sustainable model for academic publishing, away from commercial publishers, that removes inequity in modern academia at least to some extent. Its contents can be, and are, used all over the world, in the richest and poorest countries, by largest and smallest universities, high level academics and librarians from public libraries. The journal operates on the same principles as public libraries do - open and accessible for all. It is a mission of the Swedish School of Library and Information Science and in the best traditions of Swedish library and information science and library work, to support such openness and access to information. It also offers an opportunity to be published in a quality journal to authors facing difficulties either because of financial reasons or because of threats to their academic freedom.

Information Research creates a vital, creative hub for research and collaboration within library and information science, which is beneficial for the research at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science. We now publish the proceedings of three central conferences in the field: Information Seeking in Context, CoLIS and the iSchool conference.

It is also an asset that raises the profile of the Swedish School of Library and Information Science. This is not the only journal published in Northern countries, but others are more of a regional nature while *Information Research* is truly international in all respects. There is nothing wrong with regional or national journals, but this is a direct global outlet for Swedish and neighbouring countries' library and information research in our hands. The community that is built around the journal has long proven its international value and worth for all continents.

Even though it can sometimes be perceived as, and also be, a lot of work to sustain the journal, we remain convinced that it is a so-called win-win: the Swedish School of Library and Information Science deserves this well-established quality journal, and *Information Research* deserves the Swedish School of Library and Information Science. With sixty-odd staff members at the institution, there are many knowledgeable and helpful colleagues all contributing to the journal in various ways and capacities, for example as regional editors, reviewers, designers, and support staff. With the support of the global community, we are committed to publish *Information Research* for another thirty years at the minimum.

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