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Information management according to Professor Wilson

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Abstract

Introduction. This paper reports the outcomes from a review of literature written by Professor Wilson on information management to identify the source of interest in the subject, main topics emerging from the publications and relation to other research subjects.

Method. A thematic literature review was done on selected publications produced by Wilson between 1961 and 2025. The selection of articles and analysis were guided by the model of information management process.

Results. Wilson's research in information management emerges during his working career as a special librarian in the Nuclear Research Centre. His long-term career brought opportunities to investigate all elements from the information management cycle, but studies of information needs, information strategies, innovative information technologies and services in organisations dominate. Exploration of information needs in organisations opened the path to information seeking and information behaviour studies and later projects related to information behaviour in working organisations.

Conclusion. Wilson's ability to bridge theoretical frameworks with practical applications ensures his research has tangible impact on both academic understanding and professional practice. His contributions to understanding organisational information ecology demonstrate remarkable foresight, with many of his early observations about networked organisations and digital transformation proving prescient decades later. The consistent thread throughout his work—recognising the centrality of human factors in technological adoption and information use—represents a significant contribution to information science that continues to be relevant in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Introduction

Professor Wilson is an undisputed authority and contributor to information behaviour research, having introduced some of the most influential models in this field. He has worked extensively to develop a coherent theory recognised by many researchers, not only in library and information science but also in disciplines that are sometimes quite distant from his original research area (e.g., Eisman et al., 2018; Shin et al., 2019).

However, the Wikipedia article about Wilson notes that “his research has focused on information management and information seeking behaviour,” placing information management first, and highlights that he “was the founder and first editor of the *International Journal of Information Management*.” Wikipedia also mentions his work on information systems and business performance, the business use of the World Wide Web, and mobile systems in policing, though this area of his research is summarised in only three lines (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_D._Wilson).

Having worked with him over the years on various projects and research endeavours, one inevitably comes to acknowledge Wilson’s broad interest in information science in general, and especially his deep understanding of what is often referred to as “information in organisations” or “information management.” The University of Borås and the Swedish School of Library and Information Science have experienced this firsthand, as in 1999–2000, Wilson was involved in designing their first programme in information management and supervised a doctoral student who defended the first doctoral dissertation in information management (Nowé Hedvall, 2007), followed by many more over the years. He was also instrumental in bringing to the University and assisting in the organisation of an influential International Symposium for Health Information Management Research in 2003 (Bath et al., 2003).

Looking at his profile in Google Scholar, one can observe that the fifth most cited article, with over 1700 citations, is “The Nonsense of Knowledge Management” (Wilson, 2002). This article also contributed to the highest impact factor for the online scholarly journal *Information Research* while it was in the five-year range of its measuring. Additionally, the influential *International Library and Information Science Encyclopedia* commissioned him to write an article on information management (Wilson, 1997; 2002).

There are already several research articles addressing different aspects of Wilson’s work. David Bawden examines the influence of his first article on user studies, published in the *Journal of Documentation*, on the overall development of information science and studies in information behaviour (Bawden, 2006). Elin Jacob analyses his work on information behaviour in context, specifically in relation to classification use in organisational contexts (Jacob, 2001). Wilson’s contribution to information management research was presented in the *Laudatio in Honorem del Thomas Daniel Wilson* at the inauguration ceremony of Professor Thomas Daniel Wilson as Doctor Honoris Causa by the University of Murcia, published in *Anales de Documentación* (Rodríguez Muñoz, 2011). Wilson himself has carried out assessments and comparisons of his information behaviour models alongside those developed by other information science researchers (Wilson, 2020; 2022). However, I was unable to find a more comprehensive text representing his research in information management.

As I have been involved in co-authoring several texts in the area of information management with Wilson (e.g., Wilson and Maceviciute, 2025) and have taught information management courses at both Vilnius University and later at the University of Borås, I have been increasingly curious about the extent of Wilson’s involvement in this more instrumental and applied area of research. Specifically, I wondered:

- How does his interest in information management manifest itself in his publications over the years, and where does it originate?
- What are the main aspects of information management and related issues that emerge in his published works?
- How does information management tie into or relate to other research conducted by Wilson?

At this point, I should mention that the idea to investigate these issues was also solidified during a recent conversation with Wilson, in which he named information management as an equally important research area in his life. Prof. Crystal Fulton, who invited me to write an article for this special issue of *Information Research*, also contributed to this direction. In combination with my own interest in information management, the idea to investigate Wilson's work related to information in organisations was born.

Conceptual approach and the method

Looking for a suitable framework for selection and analysis of Wilson's work in information management, my first idea was to use the life-cycle of information. It was developed by Wilson on the basis of the archival information life-cycle and presented in several publications, including encyclopaedia articles (Wilson, 1997; 2002) as a verbal model. However, I have found a graphic representation of it in the old slides prepared by Wilson for Information Management course in the University of Borås (fig. 1).

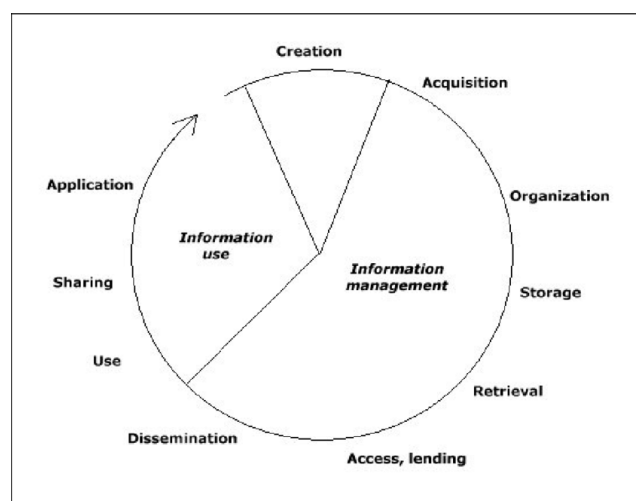


Fig. 1. Extended life-cycle of information (Wilson, 2005)

This model divides the whole information life cycle in organic organisations into three areas: information management in organic organisations, and information use and information creation. The latter two lie outside information management activities according to this model. However, this model misses one of the key information management areas that Wilson has explored intensively, namely, research and assessment of user information needs and a link to information behaviour. Therefore, the process model by Choo (2002) has been chosen as more suitable for the purpose of the task (fig. 2).

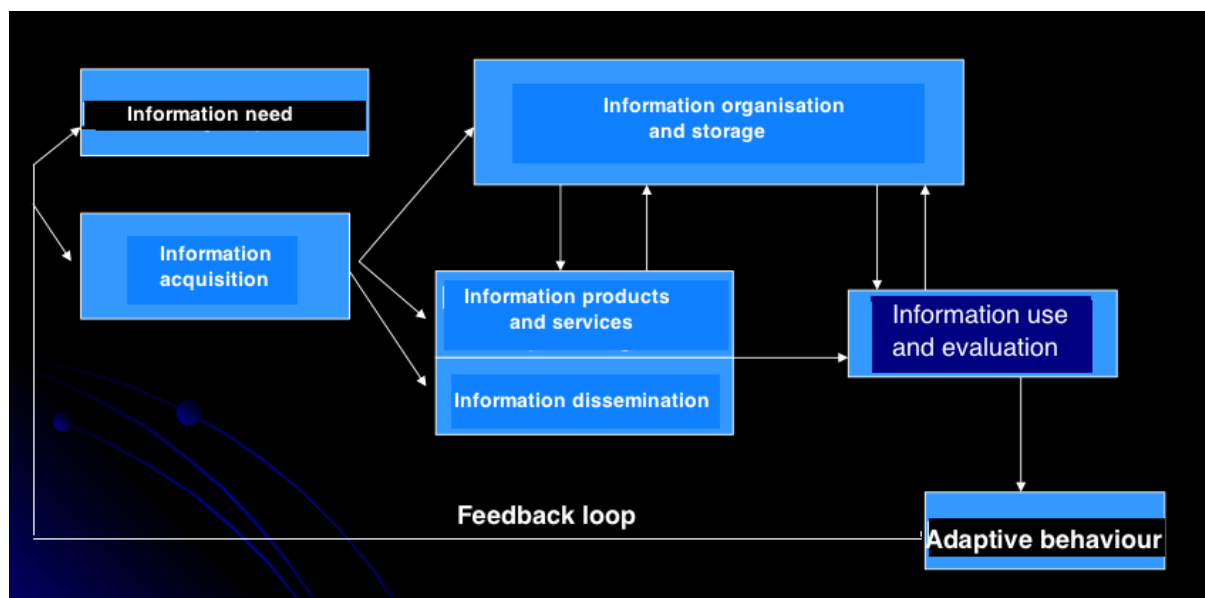


Fig. 2. Information management cyclic process (adapted from Choo, 2002, p. 24)

Choo has defined information management

“as a continuous cycle of six closely related activities [so that the organisation learns and adapts to its changing environment]: identification of information needs, information acquisition, information organisation and storage, developing information products and services, information distribution, and information use” (Choo, 2002, p. 24).

The elements of the process in this model have helped to devise the criteria for selection of Wilson’s articles on information management and were used for their thematic analysis. Wilson’s archive on WordPress (<https://proftomwilson.wordpress.com/>) served as the main source for selection and getting full texts. I have also used Google Scholar and library databases to verify bibliographic data and get access to the texts that were not available through the archive. I am very grateful to Professor Wilson for this source that saved me a lot of time in doing historical research and retrieval.

Results of the analysis

According to my estimation, since 1961 to this day Wilson has published 161 publications that may be labelled as dealing with information management topics (see Table 1).

Type of publication	No
Books	2
Book chapters	15
Articles	63
Conference papers	33
Reports	23
Popular texts	24
Memorial lectures	1
Total	161

Table 1. Types of publications authored or co-authored by Wilson

One can observe that there is some overlap between the different genres of publications. Material from a research report migrates to conference presentations, research articles, popular texts, or book chapters, or even a translated version. An initial version of a conference paper or article may be further revised and published as an updated version of the text in a book. It is also evident that there is a balance between individually published articles, those co-authored with a colleague, and multi-author texts. Each of these categories makes up roughly one third of the total. His two books are also the result of a complex process of collaborative work. One of them, *Information and Business Performance: A Study of Information Systems and Services in High Performing Companies* (Owens et al., 1996), is the outcome of long-term cooperation among UK and Nordic scholars (a loose group called the “Åbo Consortium”) (Owens et al., 1996a) and studies of business information at the University of Sheffield (White and Wilson, 1987; 1987a; 1987b). The other, *Introducing Information Management: An Information Research Reader*, is an edited volume of the articles on information management that were published in *Information Research* and received the highest number of hits. These articles were updated and revised for this edition (Wilson and Maceviciute, 2005).

The first publications from the 1960s listed in the archive of Wilson all pertain to the area of special librarianship. The first of these (Wilson, 1961) introduced the Nuclear Research Centre Library, where he worked at the time, and there were five semi-annual reviews of literature in special librarianship published between 1963 and 1966. These can be regarded as an indication of his strong interest in the professional matters of what was then the main source of information service provision in organisations – special libraries.

There is a clear shift towards bibliography, knowledge organisation, and information education topics during the next decade, visible in the publications between 1967 and 1975. Since 1974, library cooperation becomes evident (Masterson and Wilson, 1974), and in relation to this, document delivery tests were investigated, connecting this issue with the effectiveness of information services in organisational decision-making (Wilson, 1974). During this decade, he also began research into information support for social welfare and social services (Mann and Wilson, 1974), which became one of the leading topics during the next decade, branching into studies of local government information management. More importantly, it laid the groundwork for the subsequent modelling of information seeking behaviour (Wilson, 1981) and the development of information behaviour theory (Wilson, 2022). Nevertheless, this text focuses on the information management topics that Wilson has explored in his publications.

He has created and gradually developed a definition of information management since 1988 (Wilson, 1988c), which appears in the encyclopaedia articles (Wilson, 1997; 2002):

“The application of management principles to the acquisition, organisation, control, dissemination, and use of information relevant to the effective operation of organisations of all kinds.” (Wilson, 1997)

In these articles, he draws on a wide range of research sources, presenting the origins of information management, its relation to related concepts, and describing elements and tools of information management, including innovative digital instruments such as computer networks and intranets. It is worth pointing out that these articles also address issues such as security and privacy, which have become a focus in today’s treatment of information in organisations, as well as the acute problem of organisational information systems management. The institutional information policy and strategies are highlighted in these articles, along with the higher education of professional information managers and potential directions for research in the area. While reflecting the state of the art of the period, these articles also offer important insights into the future developments and issues in information management practice.

Changing landscape of information management

Wilson has explored the intersections between information science, information systems, and organisational knowledge management. His early research in 1989 focused on curriculum development, specifically addressing information management education at the University of Sheffield. This publication provided a comprehensive classification of the field, identifying key research areas including information management functions, information technology management, organisational information systems, economics of information, and artificial intelligence applications (Wilson, 1989a). This was the first of a series of articles on the evolving landscape of information management research, which has experienced significant transformation and is characterised by increasing disciplinary diversity and geographical expansion. Researchers in the field have a broad spectrum of academic and professional backgrounds, including management, computer science, information retrieval, information systems, library and information science, consultancy sectors and economics.

Maceviciute and Wilson (2002; 2005) have documented that information management research areas from the 1980s largely persist, though with notable shifts in focus. Systems theory and artificial intelligence applications have declined significantly within two years. Economic perspectives within information management have pivoted towards market economics. Research increasingly concentrates on strategies for increasing competitive advantage, leveraging information technology to support business strategies, exploring commercial and corporate information networks, and analysing the economic implications of information systems. By 2004, e-commerce emerged as the most significant research topic. A pronounced trend has been the growing emphasis on organisational culture, environmental contexts, and human-centric issues. User behaviour research has gained prominence, supplanting the previously dominant information needs research.

Strategic information management research has become more distributed across specialised domains like information and communication technologies, telecommunications, and information systems. The research landscape in 2004 demonstrated a marked focus on Internet consumer behaviour and information sharing. System-oriented journals increasingly explored sense-making processes of information technology, examining how organisations adopt, accept, and are transformed by technological systems. Researchers have recognised the critical role of professional behaviour among information systems developers, software engineers, IT officers, information managers and librarians as their professional practices directly influence product and service quality, necessitating closer scholarly attention (Maceviciute and Wilson, 2005).

The information systems domain has undergone substantial transformation, with increased focus on human factors, organisational environment and culture, and user involvement and satisfaction. Information networking, including the Internet and intranets, has garnered attention across multiple levels—from individual user behaviour to macro-economic considerations. Telecommunication policy research has concentrated on market regulation policies within telecommunications services, while knowledge management has emerged more as a terminological innovation than a genuinely novel field of study. These developments illustrate the dynamic and interdisciplinary nature of information management research, highlighting its continuous evolution in response to technological, economic and organisational changes.

An opinion paper by Koenig and Wilson (1996) explores business literature to understand and reconcile the productivity paradox with business process reengineering concept, suggesting that investment in information systems in organisations requires time and reaching certain levels of integration before the change in productivity happens. The authors suggested that the "productivity paradox" has just been a latency period... before the new enabling technology, information technology, produces dramatic effects" (p. 253). Wilson has further pursued the changing landscape of information in organisations and examined information management

through the lens of Google Alerts, revealing the increasing convergence of information management, information systems and information technology management. His analysis highlighted emerging trends such as enterprise information management systems, the integration of internal and external organisational information, and the growing importance of sectors like healthcare information management, which increase the productivity and effectiveness in respective sectors of economy (Wilson, 2011). Similar aspects of historical development of information management from the middle of the 20th century to present day are outlined in the UKeIG's (UK electronic information Group) seventh annual Strix Memorial lecture, which he delivered on acceptance of Jason Farradane Award (Wilson, 2023).

More recent work (Wilson and Maceviciute, 2025), continued to track the field's evolution. This research noted the dominance of information systems approach in the development of information management systems and the information science approach in empirical user studies. It has also drawn attention to the shift of a major part of information management research to the Luso-Hispanic region. The authors noted the emergence of personal information management as a conceptual area and explored the increasing interdisciplinary nature of information management research, with contributions spanning diverse geographical regions and academic disciplines.

In collaboration with other scholars, Wilson delved into the distinctions between information science and information systems. A notable publication with Ellis and Allen (Ellis et al., 1999) systematically explored the fundamental differences between these disciplines, examining not just their approaches to information, but also the institutional challenges they faced in academic environments. They defined information systems as the technological means by which organisations process and utilize information.

Wilson's research on knowledge management should also be mentioned in this context. He documented this area in publications from 2002–2005, demonstrating a critical approach to emerging terminology (Wilson, 2002a; Wilson, 2005) and ideas. Meticulous analysis of definitions of knowledge, tacit knowledge and knowledge management led to an ultimate conclusion that many of these concepts were largely repackaging existing organisational and information management practices. Despite this critique, he recognised the potential strategic value of such frameworks for information professionals in providing organisational competitive advantages (Streatfield and Wilson, 1999).

Information needs

The investigation of information needs in organisations emerged as one of the main research areas in Wilson's work in the 1970s, with a project devoted to social service departments in the UK, which can be traced as far as 1974 (Mann and Wilson, 1974) and leaves traces in his latest texts on information behaviour (Wilson, 2020). Wilson explains how this area of research was identified by using Delphi techniques among the participants of the "forum" for social welfare research (Wilson, 1975) and two surveys in local authority social services departments (Wilson and Dunn, 1976), concluding that "there should be a full-scale study of information needs and information services in local authority social services departments" (Wilson and Dunn, 1976, p. 174). This led to the funding of an INISS ('Research Project on Information Needs and Information Services in Local Authority Social Services Departments') project by the British Library Research and Development Department in 1975, with a second phase funded by the government's Department of Health and Social Services (Wilson and Streatfield, 1977).

The results of the project were published in four research reports (Wilson and Streatfield, 1977a; Wilson et al., 1979; Streatfield and Wilson, 1980b; Wilson and Streatfield, 1980) and seventeen articles or conference presentations. These texts report the findings from structured observation (Wilson and Streatfield, 1977; Wilson and Streatfield, 1980) and structured interviews (Wilson et al., 1979), revealing how information was used by employees as well as their needs for information at

different levels and in relation to particular tasks (Wilson, 1979a). This led to the evaluation of information services in social services departments (Streatfield et al., 1981), their improvement (Streatfield and Wilson, 1979a; Wilson and Streatfield, 1980b) and innovation (Streatfield and Wilson, 1982), as well as suggestions on improved staff competence and training (Wilson and Streatfield, 1980).

In addition to producing practical results, this project set Wilson's research agenda for many years. While still working on INISS, he conducted a feasibility study on information needs in the agricultural sector in Tunisia (Wilson, 1978) and began investigating information needs in local government (Wilson, 1979; Wilson et al., 1981), looking into information need studies for information system design (Wilson, 1985b), as well as exploring business information needs (Messenger et al., 1983).

The work on information needs in business was further developed, exploring the match between information needs in business organisations and information resources (Wilson, 1987a). Roberts and Wilson (1987a) extended this work by investigating managers' information-related attitudes in 71 British manufacturing firms, exploring how these personal determinants of information behaviour translate into organisational information management practices and the willingness to develop and expand information management as an innovation within an organisation.

Wilson also conducted case studies on the needs of business organisations and their managers in relation to strategic and operational information (Wilson, 1987; 1987b; 1994; 1995). He concluded that

"Information needs in business are of two kinds: Information needed by individuals to pursue their roles in the organisation, and information needed by the organisation regardless of who is engaged on the organisation's behalf... In other words, considering the individual information user is not enough" (Wilson, 1993, p. 19).

In relation to this, he suggested learning about business information needs by analysing sectors of industries, market operations and activities of companies, as well as applying specially designed research tools to understand the needs of employees, both managers and workers, in business organisations, to design and develop information service sectors (Wilson, 1994b). Later, together with his doctoral student, he added a Critical Success Factor approach to the research tools to investigate information needs in pharmaceutical and publishing companies (Huotari and Wilson, 1996) and also to a comparative study in non-profit organisations – British and Finnish universities (Huotari and Wilson, 2001, 2005).

Information needs in an academic environment was a natural subject to explore for a university researcher. Thus, Wilson has tested the Critical Success Factor approach in examining the information needs of heads of university departments (Pellow and Wilson, 1993), which was later consolidated in a fundamental research report (Loughridge et al., 1996), showing that their information needs are also shaped by different organisational factors, such as the external environment, institutional setting, relative power position of the department, and departmental culture. The heads leading the more successful departments emphasised informal contacts that they and their staff had developed as vital for gaining access to information useful for securing external funding and keeping up with developments in their discipline ("invisible college"). Informal networks were also important for locating information at the interface between the department and the university, though more formal monitoring and evaluation systems afforded the heads of departments a broader picture than informal sources of information (ch. 7).

In the latest publication on information need (Cole and Wilson, 2024), the focus on its organisational perspective is lost in favour of discussing the social constructivist and cognitive

approaches to conceptualising information need, and is limited to mentioning working roles and contexts.

Acquisition of information

In terms of organisational information acquisition, the studies of environmental monitoring and scanning seem to be the most relevant. Two studies of this topic stand out. The first one looks into information monitoring by County Planning Authorities in the UK. Two 'stereotypes' of monitoring activities emerge from this investigation. These stereotypes relate to a division between those authorities that define information as 'hard data' and those that have a wider definition, which includes 'qualitative' information. County Planning Authorities that adopt the former definition are likely to have a policy of restricted information acquisition and regular reporting to committees and others. They are also more likely to perceive a lack of relevant information. In relation to the planning characteristics these authorities tend to give highest priority to traditional land use matters. CPAs that adopt the more 'general' definition of information are more likely to have a policy of comprehensive information acquisition and to make use of ad hoc reporting practices (Wilson, 1984a). Authorities falling into this stereotype are more likely to regard information retrieval, processing and evaluation or lack of effective channels of communication, as the most serious information management problem. (Masser and Wilson, 1983; 1984; Wilson and Masser, 1984).

In the second study, the factors affecting information acquisition in organisations through environmental scanning were explored by Correia and Wilson (1997; 2005). They have established that the environmental scanning changes due to how top managers perceive environmental change, especially, strategical, information consciousness (value attributed to information) and information climate in organisations, their openness to external influences and frequency of contact with well-informed people and information rich contexts.

Information organisation and storage

Though knowledge organisation tools were the focus of Wilson, these publications were related more to library work and teaching of these subjects and rarely figured in relation to organisational information. However, Wilson was involved in European projects on digital preservation in data intensive organisations.

Participation in the SHAMAN project has focused Wilson's attention on digital preservation issues and resulted in 13 publications (reports, articles and conference papers) over the period of 2009-2011. The proposed preservation framework (Innocenti et al., 2009; 2010) and technologies were developed and tested in memory institutions (Birell et al., 2010; 2011; Maceviciute et al., 2011), industrial design and engineering companies (Maceviciute et al., 2011a) and e-science institutions (Maceviciute et al., 2011b). Wilson has summarised research and development experience from this project in a key-note paper for the ASIST Annual Meeting (Wilson, 2011a) by drawing the distinction between preservation and archiving, intelligibility of preserved materials, and the new problems in preservation arising with the advent of digital information: technological (obsolescence and deterioration of carriers and data), semantic, organisational and social. This project was also useful in understanding and mapping different concepts of the user in information systems and information behaviour research (Maceviciute and Wilson, 2010).

The work was carried on in PERICLES, the project concentrated on the preparing of digital information for long-term re-use in complex environments (art/media and advanced space research companies). It has used a linked data paradigm for resource description in preservation environments, developing analytical methods for identifying and capturing preservation-related information - semantics, users, and interpretative contexts - from digital content and its environment. The outputs and approaches of the PERICLES were assessed and evaluated in real

life case studies at the Tate Modern and B.USOC, one of the European distributed operation centres of the International Space Station (Hedges et al., 2014).

Information products and services in organisations

One of the spin-off topics from the INISS project in Wilson's research, is office automation that has developed since 1979 (Streatfield and Wilson, 1979). I have regarded this topic under the heading of information products and services as this research mainly explores issues of what information professionals provide for employees to carry out work tasks in any organisation. These tools and services make work more efficient and effective, be it word processors, filing and scheduling programmes or large library/information and decision support systems (Wilson, 1983a; 1985). Already in 1984, he explored the consequences of the early document transmission and computer technology introduction into organisational programmes, such as ALVEY, ESPRIT and INSIS predicting an emergence of a networked organisation permeated by information and communication technologies (Wilson, 1984b; 1984c; 1987d). The predictions of the wide application of information and communication technologies in the banking sector and publishing together with office automation raise Wilson's major concern with fundamental change in information professionals and librarians' work and competence, as well as new demands for their education and training (Wilson, 1987; 1987b). One can regard his involvement in the development of business information courses (Roberts et al., 1988), programmes of training for information management in urban planning (Masser and Wilson, 1987) and information intermediaries for Portuguese business information (Barrulas et al., 1989) as an effort to address these concerns and test training ideas.

Wilson explored economic restraint, rationalisation of work and technology in local authorities and other organisations, raising challenges and opening opportunities to organisation-wide information resource management based on new information technologies rather than printed matter (Wilson, 1984; 1984a). Later studies into high-performing companies developing information systems and information services has shown that their effectiveness is affected by different external (state of the market, nature of business and competition, legal regulations) conditions, but also by such internal factors as information ethos of company executives (Owens et al., 1996; 1997). The defining role of organisational structures and culture on adoption of innovative information tools was also found in a study of implementing health information management systems (Gladwin et al., 2002; 2003) and resources (Gladwin et al., 2000) in East Africa. The study used a theoretical model linking organisational fit and diffusion of innovation (Gladwin and Wilson, 2000).

The interest in business information needs and studies of changes in the organisational information environment has led to the interest in developing information services and offering them on the market to industries. The collaboration with the Portuguese colleagues provided a perfect opportunity to conduct studies into the European information service market (Carvalho et al., 1993) and to participate in shaping such a market in Portugal (Correia and Wilson, 1993.) Part of this study led to the development of professional training of information intermediaries (Correia and Wilson, 1988; Barrulas et al., 1989) and information specialists for less-favoured European regions (Owens et al., 1996b). These activities later resulted in the establishment of a Master of Science programme in Information Management taught in Portugal by partners from the University of Sheffield (Correia and Wilson, 1993).

Information dissemination

In some studies of information needs and service provision the internal dissemination of information to the members of an organisation was explored (Barnes and Wilson, 1984; 1986a). But one of the empirical studies was carried out in the Portuguese aerospace sector and tested a survey instrument to find out how information from this sector was disseminated and acquired by a small sample of respondents professionally active in the aeronautical sector (Soveral-Dias et al., 1994). This study revealed differences with what was found in a similar American study (Blados et al.,

1990) in preferences for information sources, due to the uneven development of these areas in both countries, the size of the research communities and other factors.

Another study on information dissemination looked into the Internet use by business, surveying 300 companies working in manufacturing, retail and service provision. It was then found that the companies mainly use it for maintaining websites with information about the company and its products or services. Very little online ordering or payment was used mainly due to the lack of security, but also the lack of competence, experience and established business practices of the time (Cockburn and Wilson, 1996; 1996a).

Subsequent studies have found dramatic differences: an increasing number of businesses involved in making use of the Internet and the World Wide Web, increasing sophistication in use as well as increasing diversity of business sectors. Though electronic commerce and online transactions were still used by a minority of respondents, its potential was appreciated (Ng et al., 1998). It was also established that there was no difference between American and British companies' usage of the Internet for publicity or business performance (Greaves et al., 1999).

Information use and evaluation

Information use was also one of the topics of intensive focus in Wilson's research and spans different organisations and issues starting with use of computer-based information as it emerged from the INISS project (Wilson, 1988f). Another interesting INISS output in this respect is the article by Barnes and Wilson (1984; 1986; 1986a) looking into the use of research information produced inside the social service departments and suggesting, what is at present called, sharing of applied organisational research (or dissemination) inside organisations, with the service users, who are also collaborating in research, and local citizens.

It is interesting to note that activity theory was used often in the studies related to information use (Allen and Wilson, 2003; Nowe et al., 2002). One of the important aspects in this topic area relates to information overload explored in the context of health care services (Wilson, 2001; 2001a), telecommunication and financial/banking institutions (Allen and Wilson, 2003). In both cases, the studies have found that the cause of perceived information overload lies not so much in the increased flow of information or ubiquitous ever-changing information technologies, but in the modern management practices and organisational climate and culture and how successfully affected member of the organisation find and apply coping strategies.

Wilson was involved in a big project investigation the introduction of innovative information technologies, namely, mobile computing into police and law enforcement forces in the UK carried out by the Leeds University Business School AimTech group. Rich data collected in the project demonstrated "the complexity of the social and organisational issues related to the mobilisation of information technology" and also enriched understanding of information behaviour of different groups of employees in these organisations (Allen and Wilson, 2005). Using activity theory and social construction theories the group has explored how the members of the force accept and appropriate innovation as users and how it changes the organisation. The study demonstrated the dynamics of the process of innovation and recognised the contextual nature of innovation (Vardaxoglou et al., 2007; 2008). It contributed to understanding of *"consensus developed among the stakeholders in various phases of the innovation process to exploit new ideas and bring an innovative technology in service."* (Vardaxoglou et al., 2015, p. 11)

The study of information use in a non-governmental voluntary organisation identified an interesting gap between the formally proclaimed aim of organisational activity and its actual societal purpose of functioning that explained the contradictions and tensions in its information activity system, especially, deliberately inefficient practice of information sharing during the leadership transition process (Nowe et al., 2002).

The evaluation of information products and services is not often visible in the publications by Wilson, though some studies on user information needs include aspects of evaluation. One of the earlier studies set evaluated current awareness services in local governments (Wilson, 1982) preceded by preparing a manual for evaluation of current awareness bulletins (Wilson et al., 1981). The paper on data collection for quality assurance in hospital libraries can also be regarded as a guide to special library service evaluation using various methods (Wilson, 1987e).

A study establishing quality criteria for evaluation of databases across Europe was reported by Wilson (1998). The study used a survey of database users and tested the SERVQUAL method to identify users' expectations of databases. It was established that the quality criteria are highly consistent in respect to databases, the main being database coverage followed by accessibility, timeliness, consistency and accuracy. The differences were found by country and database type. It was established that librarians and information workers can discriminate usefully among the various elements of quality. Another project with strong evaluative element is NetLinks supporting networked learners and implemented by Department of Information Studies at the University of Sheffield (Levy et al., 1998). The evaluation demonstrated that the project succeeded in reaching a wide audience, involving them in the learning process and contributing to it.

Adaptive behaviour

There are two types of adaptive information-related organisational behaviour that emerge from the texts by Wilson: development and implementation of information strategy, which in itself is a form of adaptive behaviour built on information about changing environment, and behavioural change introduced by collaboration.

The first study into strategy dates back to 1989 presenting a recent survey of the Times 500 companies together with 47 financial services companies to determine the extent to which the idea of 'information system strategies' was recognised and implemented in these organisations (Wilson, 1989). Good response to the survey based on initial qualitative interviews provided reliable data that has shown the idea of information systems strategies accepted by many companies in the Times 500 group and even stronger in the financial services sector. These strategies were deemed important in providing competitive advantage to the company. Though the formal process of strategy formulation was rarely followed by the responding companies the interviews have proved information systems strategy to be evolving rather than set deliberately. The implementation of the strategy was affected by the nature of the business, difficulty of measuring the its benefits, lack of resources for user education and investment in existing IT (Wilson, 1991). This survey also pointed to the emerging networked global corporation with production units, market outlets, research and development departments and information resources spread worldwide without a clear headquarters mentality (Wilson, 1992). Similar conclusions were drawn in the study of IT strategies in changing insurance companies in the UK (Coddington and Wilson, 1994), however organisational strategies should include also business process redesign as *"the difficulty in distinguishing exactly where the competitive edge comes from shows the complexity of the basic elements of an organisation: strategy, operations, technology and people"* (Melliou and Wilson, 1995). According to Wilson, the need of strategic thinking in organisations relates to the concept of value chain that defines strategic areas for developing information resources and services in the strategically important links of the value chain of a particular organisation. The problem is exacerbated by the difficulty of measuring the value of information itself (Wilson, 1994a; Barrulas and Wilson, 1995).

The other big investigation of information strategy pertains to the higher education institutions in the UK. The study explores the status of information strategy in higher education, suggesting that at the time it existed in the rhetoric, but not in deed. It could be developed in collaboration, rather than in competition, by the providers of information services, managers of information systems and those responsible for the delivery of the education and research (Allen and Wilson, 1995; 1995a).

The concept of information strategy was inclusive and incorporated information management strategy, IT strategy, information systems strategy and change strategy subordinated to overall academic strategies (Allen and Wilson, 1996; 1996a). The empirical study of the UK universities has revealed that the development and implementation of information strategies was highly sensitive to organisational culture and ethos of individual institutions that were essentially knowledge processing in their essence (Allen and Wilson, 1995). A longitudinal and interpretive study conducted in this sensitive environment showed the significance of organisational trust on a vertical level and a model of factors that encourage organisational mistrust or trust influencing both the process of information strategy formation and its possible content (Alen and Wilson, 2003).

The study of collaborative efforts in production of local information resources and coordinating the work of provincial libraries in Thailand in relation to the collection, curation, and sharing of local cultural information shows how the collaboration changes the concept and practice of work with local information in Thai provincial universities. Using the activity theory this study concentrated on the collaboration of different actors within a national group that sought to introduce new technologies and work practices in the area of local information. The research focused on cultural and instrumental influences that change or preserve the competence of local information professionals and contribute to unrecognised contradictions in the activity system. (Nonthacumjane et al., 2022)

Discussion and conclusions

It was not easy to assign Wilson's publications to a certain topic as many of them include more than one. In some studies, focused on user needs, use or services the changing (adaptive) behaviour emerges as a result of organisational changes. In others the line between internal work flows or used knowledge organisation tools and external service development is ambiguous. So, my approach may seem idiosyncratic, but I tried to explain my reasoning at least to some extent.

The variety of conceptual and methodological approaches over time should not be surprising. It is worth noting in this respect that Wilson seems to be faithful to the pragmatic world-view and chooses theories and methods that may deliver the most interesting results and broaden general understanding of researched phenomena. Despite this versatility, his knowledge of the applied research instruments, be it activity theory or phenomenology, structured observation or qualitative interviewing, is always rigorous and well-informed.

It is clear that Wilson's research in information management emerges during his working career as a special librarian in the Nuclear Research Centre. The first publications relate to special librarianship and some early research projects explore information needs and use in British public organisations. His long-term academic career brought opportunities to investigate practically all elements from the information management cycle, though information needs and innovative information technologies and services in organisations seem to dominate this area. Research into information strategy issues is also a significant topic.

Exploration of information needs in different organisations opened the path to information seeking and information behaviour studies and many later projects in this area were related to working organisations. It is very interesting to follow how the change of information environments in different organisations and countries is reflected in Wilson's research over time. He boldly takes up challenges of predicting the next turn of the information technology development, includes barely emerging technical or social innovations in his studies to demonstrate how fundamentally the human factors and organisational culture and climate affect their adoption. This body of work can be useful in researching historical changes of organisational information behaviour. I certainly regretted that I have not taken this approach for this paper, but it was not evident for me at the start of the work.

One can also notice that Wilson always remains not only an academic and researcher, but also an information professional. Many of his investigations lead to the clearly formulated implications for information work in organisations and even more often to the information management curriculum or training. This interest in education and training of information professionals and higher education institutions as information rich organisations with conscious information policies and strategies spans decades and still remain in the focus of his research at present (Wilson, 2025).

What is particularly noteworthy is Wilson's ability to bridge theoretical frameworks with practical applications, ensuring his research has tangible impact on both academic understanding and professional practice. His contributions to understanding organisational information ecology demonstrate remarkable foresight, with many of his early observations about networked organisations and digital transformation proving prescient decades later. The consistent thread throughout his work—recognising the centrality of human factors in technological adoption and information use—represents a significant contribution to information science that continues to be relevant in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape.

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