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Letter to the Editor

In response to: White and Oppenheim

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We thank Martin White and Charles Oppenheim for their interest in our original paper [1], and for their efforts in setting out the extra information and interpretations given here. Detailed historical accounts, based on personal knowledge and unpublished work, are too rare in our field, and the comments which we make below should not be seen as distracting from our recognition of the value of their contribution. Our paper was intended to stimulate discussion, and we are gratified that it has succeeded. We hope that others may feel stimulated to join in.

We are, first and foremost, in complete agreement with the points on the international orientation and presence of British information science. However, given that the purpose of our paper was to try to identify national characteristics of the British approach, we had of necessity to avoid a focus on internationalism.

Martin and Charles take us to task at a number of points for not citing what we entirely agree are significant publications, and for not mentioning particular topics, which we again agree are important. Our response is two-fold. First, our paper was very clearly intended to set out a particular perspective, arranged thematically, rather than to give a detailed chronological account of British information science, and the references were chosen to relate to this perspective. Second, our paper includes 84 references, and it would have been trying the patience of the editor and readers to have added more.

We are surprised that Martin and Charles were "disappointed and surprised by the informal and uninformative reference" to the Dorking Conferences, as 'without the full title it is impossible to track down information". We suspect that these conferences are well enough known among the JIS readership for a name check to be sufficient: otherwise a Google search on "Dorking Conferences information science", if nothing more professional, does the job nicely.

When Martin and Charles say that we produce no evidence for the attitude of some members of the IIS to its merger, we reply that it is the same kind of evidence which supports several of the points which they make: personal recollection, since we were there, and we remember.

We are, in particular, rather sad that Martin and Charles feel that a recognition of the diversity and depth of British information science is lacking in our paper. That is rather the opposite of what we were trying to convey, from the title of our paper onwards: if "so wide and varied" does not convey the idea of diversity, we are not sure what would. We also imagined that our use of phrases like "another example of British information science being ahead of the trend" would make our views clear. We entirely agree on the extent of the contributions made by British information science, and a paper enumerating these would be a welcome contribution to the literature; it would, however, be different in nature from ours, which sought to identify characteristics rather than contributions.

Finally, we are gratified by the mention of Monty Hyams, certainly a seminal figure in British information science, and pleased to be able to say that, thanks to the good offices of Charles Oppenheim, an archive of Hyams' papers has found a home at the Department of Library and Information Science at City University London. We hope that it will valuable for further historical studies into these topics.

References

[1] Robinson L and Bawden D. 'So wide and varied': The origins and character of British information science. *Journal of Information Science* 39(6) (2013) 754-763

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