



Centre for Social Informatics



The Centre for Social Informatics (CSI) was established at Edinburgh Napier University in the late 1990s by Professor Elisabeth Davenport. Since then researchers within the group have developed a distinctive body of work that reflects a shared interest in socio-technical interaction at different levels of organisation, and at different stages in the system life cycle. This work has also considered methods to support research in these areas. The Centre provides critical perspectives on, as well as analysis of, ICT trajectories, socio-technical and organisational issues with particular focus on:

- ▶ Democratic digital engagement
- ▶ e-Government
- ▶ Information policy
- ▶ Information seeking behaviour and use
- ▶ Knowledge management
- ▶ The Information Society
- ▶ Online communities
- ▶ Open data and open government

The Centre's research is funded by a variety of bodies including: charities e.g. the Carnegie Trust for Scotland; companies; government agencies, e.g. Skills Development Scotland; professional bodies, e.g. the Archives and Records Association (ARA) and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP); and the UK research councils, e.g. Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

In the last UK assessment of research (REF2014) the Centre continued to demonstrate its research excellence with 74% of research output submitted to Unit of Assessment 36 judged to be world-leading (4*) or internationally excellent (3*). The research environment also attracted a high score: 90% 4* and 3*.

Dr David Brazier, Lecturer: David researches information interactions of users in online environments, web search, and e-government platforms, with particular interests in information seeking behaviours and information literacy.
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Pritam Chita, Lecturer: In his research Pritam uses Activity Theory to explore facets of project management.
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Peter Cruickshank, Lecturer: Peter's main area of research is the information practices involved in the use of Internet technologies around identity, and participation in democratic processes, particularly at the hyperlocal level.
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Dr Wegene Demeke, Lecturer: Wegene's research focuses on the interactions between technology and society, including the adoption of Information and Communication Technologies, and the impacts that they have on society.
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Dr Brian Detlor, Visiting Professor: Brian's research interests lie at the intersection of users, information, and information systems, with a particular focus on digital literacy. Brian is based at McMaster University, Ontario, Canada.
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Dr Hazel Hall, Professor: Hazel's main research interests lie in information behaviour and use, online communities and collaboration, library and information science research, and research impact, with a strong focus on information sharing in online environments.
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Dr David Haynes, Lecturer: David's research focuses on the regulation of the digital environment with a focus on privacy and risk, with a strong interest in the ways that knowledge organisation systems can be used to improve information governance and online safety.
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Debbie Meharg, Lecturer: Debbie's research interests lie in the impact of technology on policy issues, especially as related to gender.
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Dr Bruce Ryan, Researcher: Bruce's research is mainly concerned with the use of ICT in government at hyperlocal levels, and patient information use/non-use in healthcare settings.
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Dr Colin Smith, Associate Professor: Colin's research examines the relationships between ICTs, innovation and organisational change, particularly in the contexts of e-government and e-democracy.
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Dr Ella Taylor-Smith, Researcher: Ella's research within the Centre for Social Informatics focuses on the use of online and offline spaces in democracy. She is also interested in digital skills/careers and creative research methods.
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Dr Gemma Webster, Lecturer: Gemma's main research interests lie in the field of human computer interaction, health care, older adults, and community and assistive technologies. She enjoys collaborative partnerships that involve 'real-world' environments, problems, and partners.
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Najla Alamri: Najla is a part-time PhD student based in the Faculty of Computing and Information Technology at King Abdulaziz University. Her research explores interactive education for female students in Saudi Higher Education.

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Thokozani Kachale: In his doctoral study Thoko is adopting an organisational evolutionary approach to investigate the interactions of information systems and organisational strategies, using a range of methods of data collection.

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Lynn Killick: The focus of Lynn's AHRC-funded research is the future of the population census and its role in informing the good society.

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John Marshall: John's Skills Development Scotland/ESRC-funded research is concerned with work-based learning environments for fostering industry-relevant skills and optimal economic performance. He is currently completing his MScR in Science and Technology Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

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Marina Milosheva: In her Skills Development Scotland/ESRC-funded doctoral study Marina is developing theoretical insight on the enhancement of career information literacy and career decision-making skills of young people.

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Rachel Salzano: The focus of Rachel's PhD research is the ways in which culture influences the use of public library resources amongst newcomer populations.

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Katherine Stephen: Katherine's Skills Development Scotland/ESRC-funded research is focused on the measurement and development of meta-skills, in particular in the workplace.

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Natalie Wangler: Natalie is working on a doctoral study on the links between levels of trust in digitisation and democratic thinking.

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Marianne Wilson: In her Skills Development Scotland/ESRC-funded research Marianne is exploring the ethical and effective application of artificial intelligence dialogue systems to support the delivery of careers guidance in Scotland. She is currently completing her MScR in Science and Technology Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

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Recent PhD completions:

Dr Leo Appleton: *The 21st century public library in England and Scotland: epistemic, community and political roles in the public sphere* (2020)

Dr Iris Buunk: *Social media as facilitators of tacit knowledge sharing practices amongst public sector employees* (2020)

Dr Lyndsey Middleton: *Exploring the development of innovative work behaviour of employees in multiple workplace contexts* (2020)

Dr Alicja Pawluczuk: *Youth digital culture co-creation: measuring social impact in Scotland* (2019)

Dr Frances Ryan: *Reputation management in a digital world: the role of online information in the building, management, and evaluation of personal reputations* (2019)

- Brazier, D.,** Walton, G., & Harvey, M. (2019). An investigation into Scottish teenagers' information literacy and search skills. *Information Research*, 24(1). <http://informationr.net/ir/24-1/istic2018/istic1819.html>
- Chita, P., Cruickshank, P., Smith, C.F.** & Richards, K. (2020). Agile implementation and expansive learning: identifying contradictions and their resolutions using an Activity Theory perspective. In V. Stray, R. Hoda, M. Paasivaara & M. Kruchten (Eds.) *Proceedings of the 21st International Conference on Agile Software Development, XP 2020*, Copenhagen, Denmark, June 8–12, 2020, pp. 3-19. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-49392-9_1
- Cruickshank, P. & Hall, H.** (2020 in press). Talking to imagined citizens? Information sharing practices and proxies for e-participation in hyperlocal democratic settings. *Information Research*.
- Demeke, W.,** Olden, T., & Abdelnour-Nocera, J. (2016). Factors affecting the adoption of information and communication technologies: small hotels and tour operators in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. *Libri*, 66(2), pp. 151-165. doi:10.1515/libri-2016-0029.
- Detlor, B.,** Nasery, M. & Julien, H. (2019). The efficacy of digital literacy training led by local community organizations. In *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology Annual Meeting 56(1)*. doi:10.1002/pr2.115.
- Hall, H., Cruickshank, P. & Ryan, B.** (2019). Closing the researcher-practitioner gap: an exploration of the impact of an AHRC networking grant. *Journal of Documentation*. 75(5), 1056-1081 doi:10.1108/JD-12-2018-0212.
- Haynes, D.,** & Vernau, J. (Eds.) (2019). The human position in an artificial world: creativity, ethics and AI in knowledge organization. *Proceedings of the Sixth ISKO UK Biennial Conference*, London, 15-16 July 2019. Baden-Baden: Ergon Verlag.
- Killick, L., Hall, H.,** Duff, A. & Deakin, M. (2016). The census as an information source in public policy-making. *Journal of Information Science*, 42(3), 386-395. doi:10.1177/0165551516628471.
- Mowbray, J. & **Hall, H.** (2020). Using social media during job search: The case of 16-24 year olds in Scotland. *Journal of Information Science*. doi:10.1177/0165551520927657.
- Pawluczuk, A., **Hall, H., Webster, G. & Smith, C.F.** (2020). Youth digital participation: measuring social impact. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 52(1), 3-15. doi:10.1177/0961000618769975.
- Salzano, R., Hall, H., & Webster, G.** (2020 in press). Investigating the 'why' rather than the 'how': current research priorities on the influence of culture on new-comer populations' use of public libraries. *Information Research*.
- Stephen, K.,** Muir, L. & **Hall, H.** (2020 in press). Towards a definition of metaskills. *Information Research*.
- Taylor-Smith, E., & Smith, C.F.** (2018). Investigating the online and offline contexts of day-to-day democracy as participation spaces. *Information, Communication & Society*. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2018.1469656.
- Taylor-Smith, E.,** Smith, S., Fabian, K., Berg, T., **Meharg, D.,** & Varey, A. (2019). Bridging the digital skills gap: are computing degree apprenticeships the answer? In *Proceedings of the 2019 ACM Conference on Innovation and Technology in Computer Science Education*, pp. 126-132. doi:10.1145/3304221.3319744.

Opportunities to take part in research at the Centre for Social Informatics

PhD research

Rachel Salzano's PhD topic is on the influence of cultural factors on public library use in forced migrant populations. She is looking for organisations that facilitate engagement with potential participants to gather information on why certain public library resources are used by forced migrants. The work is framed around the needs, requirements, thoughts, and experiences of forced migrants, rather than current public library provision.

If you are a representative of, or have contacts in, an organisation that works with forced migrants that would be interested in supporting or working with Rachel on this research, please contact her by e-mail at r.salzano@napier.ac.uk or through Twitter at [@librarygryphon](https://twitter.com/librarygryphon).

Information professionals and volunteers as 'digital proxies': impact on effectiveness of clients and employees of informal support in accessing services.

Governments and organisations are increasingly providing vital services online as a default. As recent events have shown, access to online systems has become both essential and inherently complex for many citizens, leading to negative impacts for some vulnerable individuals. Many people cannot access digital services independently due to their social or personal context. As a result, front line staff (employees and volunteers, often from civil society) find themselves acting as 'digital proxies' for clients. The extent of formal and informal support provided to clients is unclear, leaving staff without guidance or support, and putting them at legal risk.

We will be running digital workshops in February 2021 to investigate how staff within local government, libraries, and civil society organisations help or support people to access online services. The goal is to evaluate the impact of these practices on staff roles, and to develop recommendations and guidelines for organisations to ensure the protection of staff and safeguard clients.

If you are, or have contacts in, an organisation that would be interested in attending the workshops or supporting the work on this research, please contact Gemma Webster by e-mail at g.webster@napier.ac.uk.

