This book is a must for the information-aware scholar and professional. It provides the reader with ten central perspectives of the broiling topic of social information research by learned information scientists. The deeply multifaceted nature of social information is viewed from three highly relevant positions: The user perspective and social construction; Social context and networking; and Content sharing, interaction and knowledge production through novel social media. Chapters deal with sense-making and information practices, wikis in knowledge constructs, social tagging in everyday information seeking, Twitter research, social media and internet games, semantic web as an academic network, impact of YouTube in scientific communication, social media in organizations, and recommendation systems for researchers.

Review

This book provides the reader with and excellent introduction to the research area and the historic understanding of the concepts of social information and social media. Ten central dimensions of the broiling topic of social information research are authored by well-picked information researchers. The deeply multifaceted nature of social information is viewed from three highly relevant positions: (1) The user perspective, information seeking and social construction; (2) Social context and networking; and (3) Content sharing, interaction and knowledge production through novel social media.

The brief but to-the-point Introduction by Vidén and Holmberg offers a broad overview of the variety of understandings of the concept ‘social information’, with links to social informatics and social media. The concept may now-a-days refer to the products of social media as well as what actually constitute such media.

The second chapter provides a first-rate discourse by Michael R. Olsson on sense-making and information practices viewed broadly as processes of social construction. Inductive analysis based on Dervin’s sense-making and Foucaultian discourse analysis was carried out on extended conversational interviews of 35 prominent theatre professionals on events and relationships that shaped their bond to Shakespeare and his work. The third chapter by Natalya Godbold addresses the collaborative knowledge construct process through discussion groups centred on kidney patients – also applying sense-making methodology. This analysis nicely illuminates the dynamics between social and individual sense-making. Chapter four by Janica Heinström and Eero Sormunen looks into wiki writing. This empirical investigation addresses how attitudes toward group work and the idea of publishing in wikis influence students’ collaborative knowledge construction. The authors make use of content analysis, frequency and correlation analyses of transcriptions from pre- and post-questionnaires and group interviews of 58 secondary school students. The interesting results demonstrate that ways to undertake group work do influence the learning experience.

The last chapter under the heading ‘User perspective, information seeking and social construction’ is by Marit Kristine Ådland and Marianne Lykke. Focussed on comparisons of social tagging of blogs and browsing structures in support of cancer patients’ information interaction it explores how social tagging can be useful for cancer patients and their relatives. Findings show that social tagging has great potential by bridging the everyday user perspective and language use to scientific viewpoints and terminology. Importantly, some tags add to and supplement the content instead of factually describing the blog contents.

Contextual dimensions of social information are covered by three chapters. First, Chapter 6 by Caitlin A. Bagley provides a quite brief but very welcomed overview of research done on Twitter blogs since 2006. The literature review seeks to take a long form approach by attempting to discuss parts of Twitter that should remain stable
and hence valuable in the future. Chapter 7 examines intriguingly the information phenomena associated with game-related social media. It is authored by J. Tuomas Harviainen, Richard D. Gough and Olle Sköld. This promising contribution of a novel field of enquiry also involves a research review but combined with results from two empirical studies. The contribution presents admirably initial guidelines on where to start researching game-related social media. Chapter 8 by David Stuart investigates with webometric tools the crucial potential of semantic web as a source of information about social networks within academia.

The content perspective is covered by the last three Chapters. Based on YouTube content analysis tweeted by academics Chapter 9 by Mike Thelwall, Kayvan Kousha, Katrin Weller and Cornelius Puschmann assesses the impact of online academic videos in a scientific communication perspective. Do they provide appropriate credit to their authors and which types have most value? Chapter 10 examines the nexus of established information practices and the uptake of social media to facilitate or extend these practices. Sally Burford uses qualitative multiple case studies and grounded theory in her excellent research design. Chapter 11 by Tamara Heck focusses on researchers’ need to find partners to collaborate with. To this end she studies author recommendations based on social academic information by comparing and evaluating different similarity measures.

The book is well-written with a proper layout. Each chapter abstract is nicely structured into Purpose; Design/Methodology/Approach; Research findings; Originality/Value; and Social/Scientific implications. The index is a mix of author names and topical terms. But in my opinion too few names mentioned in the text as authors of theories or methods applied are indexed. Although Dervin and Foucault are indexed I miss the names of, e.g., Chatman, Pettigrew or Eisenhardt.