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Book Review

The Turn: Integration of Information Seeking and Retrieval in Context. Peter Ingwersen & Kalervo Järvelin. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: [Springer](#), 2005, XIV, 448 p., Hardcover, ISBN 1-4020-3850-X, € 59,95

In July 2004, I was one of the participants at the *Workshop on Information Retrieval in Context* ([IRiX](#)) which was held in conjunction with [SIGIR](#) conference. The workshop was very encouraging for me because I realized researchers in Information Retrieval's (IR) camp acknowledge the importance of context in the process of seeking and searching for information and tend to move towards more subjective and cognitive aspects of IR. However, two years later in April 2006 when I attended another IR conference, the *European Conference on Information Retrieval* ([ECIR](#)), I noticed despite all recent efforts to support common grounds of research in IR and Information Seeking (IS), we still have a long way to reach an optimal point where researchers in both camps can efficiently cooperate with each other. Luckily, a recent book entitled '*The Turn: Integration of Information Seeking and Retrieval in Context*' can help us to pave this way.

The Turn is a valuable book which aims to demonstrate how and why IR and IS research should move side by side. The book provides us with a holistic review of IR and IS as two main lines of research in human information interaction. The authors call both groups of researchers to appreciate the values and limitations of both fields. The book shows why any progress in Information Science requires paying equal attention to both camps.

The book consists of nine well-organized chapters including introduction, the cognitive framework for information, the development of information seeking research, system-oriented information retrieval, cognitive and user-oriented information retrieval, the integral IS&R research framework, implications of cognitive framework for IS&R, towards a research program, and conclusion. Moreover, the book has a very useful section at the end called 'definitions' which include definitions of important concepts of the book in a very informative and succinct way.

In the introduction chapter, the authors explain the central concepts related to the book in five sub-sections including (1) the participants or components of IS&R which are cognitive actor, information objects, information space, IR system, interface, and context; (2) the tasks which are daily life tasks or interests, work task and search task; (3) the contents which are information and knowledge; (4) the needs and relevance which include information needs, request, query, and relevance; (5) the processes: information behaviour, information interaction, information retrieval, interactive IR and information seeking. If you seek to encapsulate key components of IS&R you will hardly ever be able to add more elements to the above list which cannot be accommodated in one of the mentioned categories. In fact, these five categories cover almost all aspects that people in IS&R deal with. When you read the rest of the book you will find out that the authors did their best to meticulously cover all of these aspects succinctly. Obviously, when you decide to address all of these issues in one single manuscript then inevitably you cannot address everything

in full detail. However, the wide breadth of the topic has not stopped the authors to point out the most pivotal points in each part.

One of the main features of the book which somehow makes it distinctive from other IR and IS books is its cognitive viewpoint in IR&S. The authors in page 23 of the book declare:

"Information Science is one of several disciplines dealing with aspects of human cognition and cognitive processes through communication and interaction . . . there exist several epistemological and philosophical ways to approach such activities . . . the process may be viewed from a standpoint of pragmatism, rationalism, hermeneutics, and phenomenology, or approached with a language-philosophical, semiotic, constructivist, sociological, or cognitive point of view in mind. We have based this monograph on the cognitive viewpoint because it demonstrates explicit models for Information Science and points to solutions of, foremost, Information Retrieval problems not solvable otherwise."

Furthermore, they explain their perceptions of 'the cognitive information concept in IS&R' and reported in page 32 as follows:

". . . we are not looking for a definition of information but for an understanding and use of such a concept, which may serve Information Science and does not contradict other information-related disciplines. However, at the same time it needs to be specific enough to contribute to the analysis of IS&R phenomena."

The book has written in a very informative way, in a reasonably plain language and well-supported by a fairly extensive list of relevant references from early days of IS&R research to year 2000 and beyond.

The only small point which might be considered as a minor criticism about the book relates to the level of comprehensiveness of the references in some areas. Although the reference list is extensive enough for the purpose of the book, it could have been improved by considering more works which are particularly relevant to some discussions in the book. For example, information seeking on the Web is an important area of IS&R which is discussed in chapter five under the subsection of 'Web IR Interaction'. Regarding the importance of Web search studies, the reader can expect to see more explanations in this section. For instance, there is not enough citations to some well-known works in the area of information seeking on the Web (e.g. [Choo et al.](#) 1998; 1999; and 2000). Besides, in addition to [Jansen and Pooch's](#) (2001) paper which is mentioned in the book there are many other review publications of the area which could be introduced (e.g. [Hsieh-Yee](#), 2001). As the book mainly covers the publications up to year 2000, I did not expect to see recent review publications related to the Web search studies (e.g. [Spink](#), 2003; and [Spink & Jansen](#), 2004) or reviews of general online searching (e.g. [Ondrussek](#), 2004)¹ in the main discussions. However, as the book is mainly based on the review of the literature and was published in 2005, considering some of these recent works in a supplementary section such as 'further readings' could enhance the comprehensiveness of the reference list. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, this is just a minor point and no one expects a complete list of references in any publication, because this is neither possible for authors nor desirable for readers. Certainly, this minor issue does not lessen the value of the book and I believe '*the Turn*' is a landmark work in IS&R.

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Footnotes:

- Ondrusek (2004) presents a thorough and comprehensive review of online IS&R from 1977 to 2000.
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