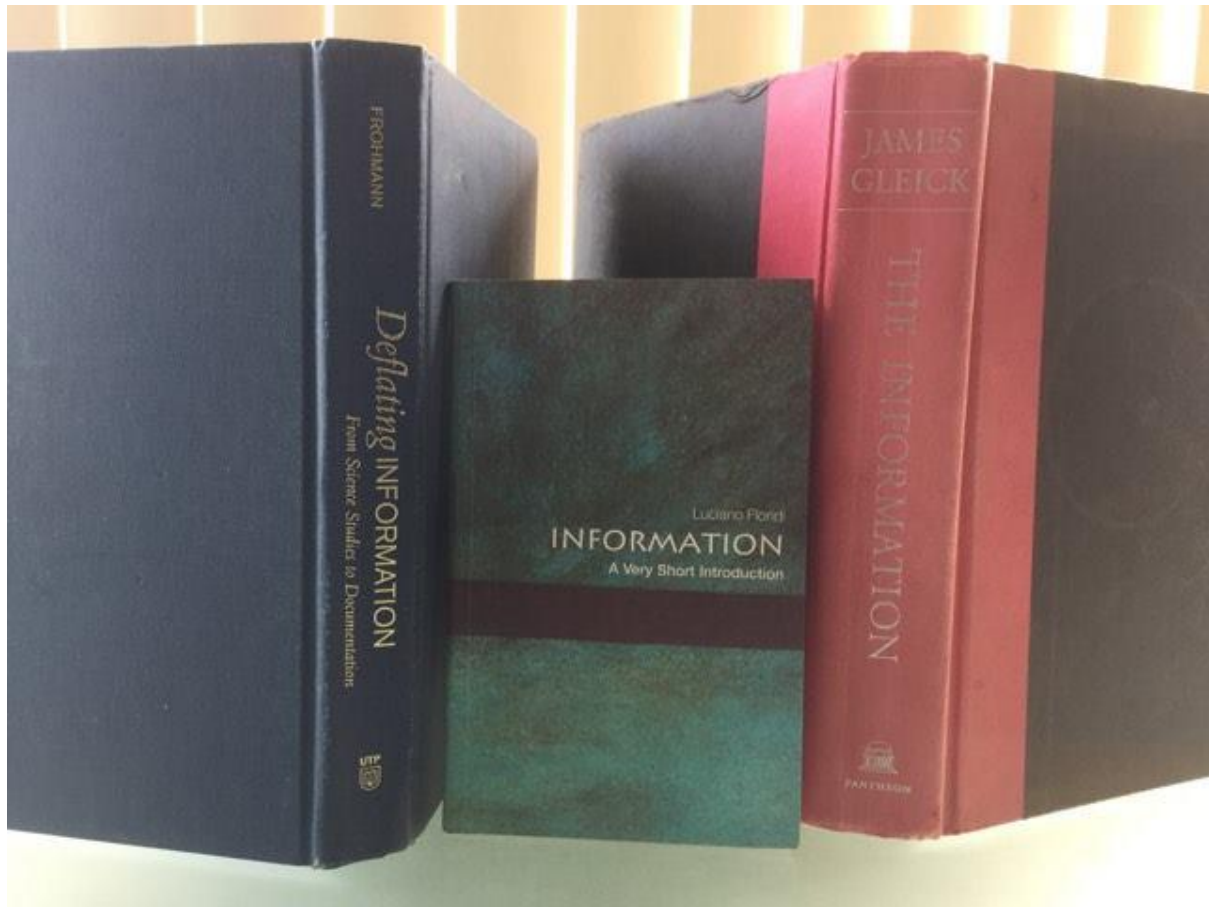


MARC KOSCIEJEW

Department of Library, Information, and Archive Sciences at the University of Malta
(WG1)



Frohmann, Bernd. 2004. *Deflating Information: From Science Studies to Documentation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

The publication of Bernd Frohmann's *Deflating Information: From Science Studies to Documentation*, a significant theoretical contribution to Library and Information Science (LIS) generally and documentation studies specifically, coincided with the commencement of my doctoral studies in the fall of 2004. I was introduced to this book in the early weeks of that first semester when Professor Frohmann delivered an illuminating guest lecture on its theoretical implications for the LIS discipline. The presentation sparked, what was to become, my scholarly passion for documentation studies.

This book's arguments, perspectives, and examples greatly informed and inspired many of my ideas and scholarly directions. I continually consulted and returned to this book to help construct, expand, and enrich the conceptual scaffolding of my work. It therefore became central to my PhD research and dissertation, in addition to my other academic publications and presentations; in fact, it presently remains a vital resource for my current scholarship and pedagogy.

The book's main contention is that documentation – that is, documents and practices with them (documentary practices) – has constitutive effects. Frohmann deflates the privileging of information as seemingly more important than documents, arguing instead that “information...exists only as an effect of the ontologically primary elements: documents and documentary practices. It has, therefore, only a secondary or derived ontological status; it is an effect of the relative stability of documentary practices. Once practices stabilize, information can emerge”. Documentation, in other words, helps to constitute and materialize the otherwise abstract concept of information. He states that, in order to better understand documentation, its

important roles, and its constitutive effects, it is necessary to “investigate how documents are produced, the uses to which they are put, their zones of circulation, and the effects produced by practices with them”.

I was privileged to have Professor Frohmann serve as my academic advisor throughout my doctoral career. His stewardship and supervision were indispensable in and for my scholarship. I am grateful for his attention to and interest in my scholarly development. This book reminds me of his own commitment to my academic development and success.

Gleick, James. (2011). *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood*. New York: Pantheon Books.

James Gleick's *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood* was published one year after the successful completion of my doctorate in Library and Information Science (LIS). Although I was aware of its publication, particularly because of many strong scholarly reviews on it, I did not immediately or intentionally set out to acquire it. I came across it by chance when, on a summer afternoon, I was casually browsing a bookstore's shelves with my mother and nieces. As soon as I saw the book, I picked it up and would not relinquish it.

This book's main contention is that information is the blood, the fuel, and the vital principle of our world and existence. Its main focus is on the historical developments, and contemporary understandings and uses of, the diverse concepts and practices of information. It explores some of the major historical developments of different kinds of information communication technologies (ICTs), including writing and written alphabets, to talking drums and the Morse Code, to analogue and electric telegraphs, to computers. It further examines some of the most important theoretical contributions to and for information theory, such as concepts presented by Charles Babbage, Ada Lovelace, and Claude Shannon.

This book is an essential resource for everyone interested in (the historical reasons for) how and why we find ourselves now in this so-called information age/economy/society. The book presently is a staple for parts of my pedagogy. I employ it in many curricula for historical and theoretical lectures. In fact, on this very day (a sunny late-winter day in the Mediterranean) of composing this autobiographic entry, I delivered an informative and exciting lecture to undergraduate students focussing on Gleick's second chapter about talking drums.

Floridi, Luciano. 2010. *Information: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Luciano Floridi's *Information: A Very Short Introduction* entered my life when I began lecturing in Europe and designing a new curriculum for a course on information theory. I discovered it whilst conducting my own research on, at the time, the latest theoretical developments in Library and Information Science (LIS). This little green book, like an emerald gem, has become mandatory reading in this required foundational course for both first year undergraduate and diploma students. It is a book that has contributed numerous conceptual explorations and academic directions to many lively class conversations.

Floridi's stated goal “is to provide an outline of what information is, of its manifold nature, of the roles that it plays in several scientific contexts, and of the social and ethical issues raised by its growing importance”. It is not meant to be exhaustive in its approach and focus, but, instead, it serves as a selective introduction to the field and study of information. The book, for example, introduces different kinds of information, such as mathematical, semantic, physical, biological, and economic, in addition to topics like the information revolution, the language of information, and the ethics of information. Floridi's stated hope is that it will help its readers “make sense of the large variety of information phenomena with which we deal on a daily basis, of their profound and fundamental importance, and hence of the information society in which we live.”

This book is indeed a vital resource for my teaching. It is also a crucial academic resource for the learning development of my students insofar as (an introduction to) information theory is concerned. It helps provide them with a solid basis on which to build and expand their understanding of and knowledge on this important aspect of LIS and, of course, the wider information environment in which we all live, work, and exist.

Link to Marc's Almanac entries
on **DOCUMENTS/DOCUMENTATION** and **INFORMATION**.