Introduction to the Digital Media: Content and Communication Track

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The Digital Media: Content and Communication Track has been running for several years. Its name has changed a few times over these years to better reflect the changing nature of the Track itself and thus reflect the dynamic nature of digital media. As well, the minitracks making up the Track have changed often and this year is no exception. This year we have a mix of new and old minitracks, as described below, with some of the “new” minitracks being morphed versions of previous editions as we try to keep up with this dynamic field. A brief description of each minitrack follows.

Socio-materiality of Information: Documents and Work. This Minitrack addresses the socio-materiality of information. The notion of document serves as one lens into the socio-material (and socio-technical) nature of what organizational members do day in and day out. Documents are socio-material in that they are both material – and, thus, embody the technical infrastructure – and social – as they embody both the work practices and shared understanding of those involved.

Information Access and Usability. In an increasingly digital culture, we are seeing the potential for significant shifts in expectations by users related to increasing scale, increasing mobility, and increasing use of social networks. This minitrack focuses on enabling people to engage in meaningful ways with the information and the access modes that define this digital culture, whether mobile or not. The discussions will centre on emerging digital artifacts, innovation in access and presentation of information, studies of user behavior, and appropriate evaluation metrics.

Social Media and Data Analytics. Social media is changing how we work and play. It is also changing the way we access and consume media, stay in touch with family and friends, as well as how we communicate with government and businesses. This mini-track focuses on research that brings together social media (or social networks) and data analytics. For example, research and practice that advances the state-of-the-art in the acquisition, management, and analysis of data originating primarily from social phenomena. We include both theoretical and practical papers whose approaches are within the scope of data analytics and closely related areas (e.g., data warehousing, data mining and business intelligence).

Decision Support and Operational Management Analytics. This minitrack builds upon earlier HICSS minitracks on visual analytics, mobile computing, and digital media at scale. It seeks to define analytical methods and technologies that use interactive visualization to meet challenges posed by data, platform, and application.

Both algorithmic “data sciences” approaches and human-centered “visual analytics” human-computer interface methods hold great promise for operationalizing massive datasets and streaming data in support of a broad range of human activities. Applications in basic scientific research, business analytics, health sciences, environmental science and in engineering R&D all explore the implications of these methods for advancement of knowledge and strategic planning. Applications in coordination, command and control of complex human activities such as disaster relief, law enforcement, and anti-terrorism add the constraints of real-time performance and distribution of planning to the challenges faced.

Common themes running through these minitracks are how to make sense of masses of data in different media, how to access that data, and what are the barriers to accessing that data.