ABSTRACT
As more information is digitized or born online, issues with assessment and preservation, in the forms of determining, reviewing, and describing it, increase. This is particularly true for what we might term high-stakes information, or information that if not carefully assessed or preserved can result in harmful consequences. With the premise that scholarly information is high-stakes information, the panel will take a tripartite approach to the consideration of what constitutes information quality in three distinct contexts: quality as an element of the research process, quality as a component of the scholarly communication process, and quality as a factor in the storage and long-term access of the product of research. The researchers on this panel will present reviews of the literature and their research findings. After the presentations, the panelists will raise a series of questions in order to foster discussion with the audience.

Keywords
Authority, publication, quality control, scholarly communication, peer review, metadata

INTRODUCTION
As more information is digitized or born online, issues with assessment and preservation, in the forms of determining, reviewing, and describing it, increase. This is particularly true for what we might term high-stakes information, or information that if not carefully assessed or preserved can result in harmful consequences.

The information transmitted through scholarly communication should be considered high-stakes information. At the extreme, for example, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) awards over $30 billion per year to medical research (http://www.nih.gov/about/budget.htm). This commitment indicates that the information generated by this research has considerable value to not only the professional careers of the researchers using these funds but also to the public who provides the funds and who benefits from the research. If that information cannot be properly assessed, if the products and methods we use to communicate that information are faulty, or if the norms we use to determine the quality of that information rest on problematic epistemological and social assumptions, then the results may include real and meaningful loss.

When high-stakes information entails high-quality information, it begs for definition in a well-defined context. Within information studies the term information quality can have the limited meaning of “authority,” in the sense of assurance that names, subjects, and other elements of a document (writ large) are verified and applied according to agreed-upon sets of rules. This is, of course, a vitally important component of the definition, and its relationship to high-stakes information will be an essential part of the complex evaluation addressed by this panel. There is more to the matter of quality in the creation, publication, and dissemination of content, though. With the premise that scholarly information is high-stakes information, the panel will take a tripartite approach to the consideration of what constitutes information quality. This will include presentations and engagement with the audience about how scholars judge the quality of scholarly information and associated products, how new scholarly publishing models influence changes in the peer review process and what this implies, and what changing metadata standards mean for access and preservation.

THE PANEL
Indicators of Quality – Dr. John M. Budd

The first panelist will examine what scholars take to be criteria for, or indicators of, quality within a literature. This will be achieved, first, by reviewing a substantive literature on assessments (e.g., Chang & McAleer, 2013), ranking (e.g., Gorman, Kanet, & Christ, 2011; Xie, Cai, & Pan, 2012), and the like and, second, by surveying faculty at uni-
versities in the Midwest to inquire directly into what are taken to be markers of quality.

The survey will include scholars across disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences from universities in Midwestern states of the U.S. Each individual will be asked about personal judgments made in determining quality (and, thus, use) of informational items. Categories of questions will include:

- Reputation of the source (perception)
- Importance of editorial boards
- Reputation of editor
- Reputation of publisher
- Ease of access to content
- Assessed quality of content
- Scholar’s experience with the source
- Citation and/or impact ranking of the source

The scholars will be encouraged to offer comments related to quality as well. The results will form the first portion of the panel and will lead into the examination of editorial, peer review, and other control issues.

Scholarly Communication and Quality – Dr. C. Sean Burns

The second panelist will tackle the issue of peer review and editorial control over the formal publication of research and scholarship. This will include a discussion of both the aesthetic and the “epistemic disruption” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) evident in renewed efforts to make the peer review process more transparent and public. Additionally, findings based on a content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002) of public peer reviews of a random sample of 30 published articles by PeerJ (https://peerj.com/), a new publisher of research articles covering the biological, medical, and health sciences, will be reported and used to start a discussion about the aesthetic and the epistemic capabilities of a publicized peer review system. The study will involve an analysis of the reviewer's, editors', and authors' comments and rebuttals in order to provide insight into how the peer review process aligns or deviates from the normative view of science. Issues involving the acknowledgment of duplicate publication, retraction as a result of misconduct, and other confounding issues will be raised.

The purpose of this talk will be to discuss how the editorial criteria, which include the evaluation of basic reporting, experimental design, and validity of findings, employed by PeerJ are used in practice. Although the editorial criteria seem normative (Merton, 1973), PeerJ’s editorial motto includes the line, “Judge the soundness of the science, not its importance” (https://peerj.com/about/editorial-criteria/). This motto leaves it to the authors and the readers, and not the editorial criteria used by the peer reviewers, to employ their own “sense of taste, of judgment, in seizing upon problems that are of fundamental importance” (Merton, 1973, p. 453). This aesthetic move represents a shift in the role of editorial control and the implications will be discussed.

Standards and Access: Metadata – Dr. Heather Moulaison

The third panelist will discuss the increasingly complicated tasks of describing and organizing complex informational items. As new and revised standards become a part of the task of enabling access and discovery through human and machine methods, providing quality metadata, and subsequently, assuring access, becomes more daunting.

Digital repositories affiliated with universities, for example, house and make available the campus’s unique intellectual capital (c.f. Cullen & Chawner, 2011). Long-term access should be straightforward: if carefully planned and maintained, electronic content and surrogates should retrievable for the next 500 years. The reality is much messier, however. Preserving content for long-term access is best carried out through the use of accepted standards and through the use of approaches supported by the information community, yet the standards and best practices are currently in flux. The panel will begin with a discussion of the metrics for metadata quality: largely considered to be completeness, accuracy, and consistency (Park, 2009; Zeng & Qin, 2008) and will include measures being taken to ensure long-term access to high-quality curated content through libraries and cultural heritage institutions. The case for thoughtful and careful preservation of digital content ranging from raw data to published research papers will be made. Repositories as systems for providing access will then be explored, with an emphasis on community-supported endorsements such as the Data Seal of Approval (http://datasealofapproval.org/).

PANEL STYLE

The panel will last 1.5 hours and will include 15 minute presentations by each panelist. Following the presentations, John Budd will deliver a brief synthesis of and commentary on the three presentations as they relate to information quality, and this will be followed with audience interaction in the form of a question-and-answer session. Questions for the audience will be based on the panelists' and the community's current and past research. Although some emphasis will be placed on empirical findings, the panelists will offer questions that pertain to the theoretical, sociological, and practical issues related to high-stakes information.
BIOGRAPHIES

John M. Budd is a Professor in the School of Information Science & Learning Technologies of the University of Missouri. He has published several books and more than 100 works in many journals, including JASIS&T.

C. Sean Burns’ primary research interests include academic libraries and scholarly communication. Specifically, he investigates how scholarly communication practices affect academic librarianship and academic library collections and services. He received his Master of Arts and his PhD in Information Science and Learning Technologies from the University of Missouri (USA). He is an assistant professor at the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Kentucky.

Heather Lea Moulaison’s primary research interests focus on the organization of and access to information. She is particularly interested in studying the use of technologies, including digital libraries and cloud computing, as mechanisms for long-term organization and access. Dr. Moulaison also has a strong interest in comparative librarianship. Dr. Moulaison earned a doctorate in Library and Information Science from Rutgers University, (USA) and an MSLIS and an MA in French, both from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (USA).

REFERENCES


