



AHRC project *Understanding Information Quality Standards and their Challenges* (2011-2013)

last updated: 28 March 2012



Welcome

This is the website of the AHRC project Information Quality Standards and their Challenges.

Academic years: 2011-13

Institution: Department of Philosophy, School of Humanities, University of Hertfordshire

PI: [Luciano Floridi](#)

Postdoctoral Research Fellow: [Phyllis Illari](#)



Summary

The most developed post-industrial societies live by information, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) keep them oxygenated. So the better the quality of the information exchanged, the more likely such societies may prosper. But what is information quality (IQ) exactly? So far, our answers have been less than satisfactory.

In the United States, the Information Quality Act, also known as the [Data Quality Act](#), enacted in 2000, left undefined virtually every key concept in the text. So it required the Office of Management and Budget “to promulgate guidance to agencies ensuring the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information (including statistical information) disseminated by Federal agencies”. Unsurprisingly, the guidelines have received much criticism and have been under review ever since.

In the UK, some of the most sustained efforts in dealing with IQ issues have concerned the health care system. Already in 2001, the [Kennedy Report](#) acknowledged that: “All health care is information driven, so the threat associated with poor information is a direct risk to the quality of healthcare service and governance in the NHS”. However, in 2004, the [NHS Information Quality Assurance Consultation](#) stressed that “Consideration of information and data quality are made more complex by the general agreement that there are a number of different aspects to information/data quality but no clear agreement as to what these are”.

Lacking a clear and precise understanding of IQ standards (such as accessibility, accuracy, availability, completeness, currency, integrity, redundancy, reliability, timeliness, trustworthiness, usability, and so forth) causes costly errors, confusion, impasse, and missed opportunities. Part of the difficulty lies in constructing the right conceptual and technical framework necessary to analyse and evaluate them.

Some steps have been taken to rectify the situation. The first [International Conference on Information Quality](#) was organised in 1996. In 2006, ACM (Association of Computing Machinery) launched the new [Journal of Data and Information Quality](#). The [Data Quality Summit](#) now provides an international forum for the study of information quality strategies. Pioneering investigations and research programmes (see the [Information Quality Program](#) at MIT) have addressed applied issues, plausible scenarios and the codification of best practices. So there is a wealth of available results that could make a difference.

The AHRC requests that

"Acknowledgement of support from the AHRC accompanied by the AHRC logo must be included in any publications, publicity or marketing material – including printed material such as books, exhibition guides, press releases or electronic communications such as a website. In the case of broadcast coverage (radio or television) of research that AHRC has funded, acknowledgement should also be given where possible."

and that the following description should be made available:

"Each year the AHRC provides funding from the Government to support research and postgraduate study in the arts and humanities, from archaeology and English literature to design and dance.



Only applications of the highest quality and excellence are funded and the range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. For further information on the AHRC, please see our website www.ahrc.ac.uk"

However, such results have had limited impact because research concerning IQ has failed to combine and cross-fertilise theory and practice. Furthermore, insufficient work has been done to promote the value-adding synthesis of academic findings and technological know-how.

This AHRC project seeks to bridge the gap between theoretically sound and technologically feasible studies, by bringing together the epistemological and ethical research, developed by the Principal Investigator (PI) in the philosophy of information, with the know-how of a major information service provider, Google UK.