

Sally Jo Cunningham

Short Bio

Dr. Sally Jo Cunningham is an Associate Professor in the Computer Science Department at Waikato University (Hamilton, New Zealand). Her main area of research is in Digital Libraries, specifically in user needs and information behaviour for digital, multimedia collections. She is a founding member of the New Zealand Digital Libraries Research Group, who are the developers of the Greenstone digital library software.

She has worked in Digital Libraries since almost the inception of the field—attending her first ACM Digital Libraries conference in 1995. She contributes as a reviewer to JCDL, TPDF, and ICADL, and has served as Programme Co-Chair for ICADL (2009), DL 2014, and JCDL 2015, and as Publicity Chair (2010) and Doctoral Consortium Co-Chair (2013) for JCDL. In addition to her work in Digital Libraries, Dr. Cunningham is a senior academic in Human-Computer Interaction in New Zealand. She is currently Chair of the ACM CHI-NZ SIG, and has served as Program Chair for the 2011 ACM CHI-NZ conference and the 2003 Asia-Pacific CHI conference.

Dr. Cunningham holds the membership grade of Distinguished Scientist of the ACM. She is also a member of IEEE, a Fellow of the Institute of Information Technology Professionals (New Zealand), a member of the American Library Association, and a member of the Design Institute of New Zealand. She has a BA in Humanities (Asian Studies) and a BS in Computer Science from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in 1984, and in 1990 earned a PhD in Computer Science (minoring in Chinese History and Library & Information Science) from Louisiana State University. She has a longstanding interest in, and commitment to, interdisciplinary research.

Position statement

The field of Digital Libraries is at a crossroads. While it successfully weathered the period of decreased funding at the end of the worldwide large-scale DL research funding programmes, the attendance at the core digital libraries conferences (JCDL, TPDF, ICADL) either holds steady or decreases, it is increasingly difficult to find senior academics willing and able to chair those conferences, and when I attend the conferences I see an increasing proportion of grey heads. The field is in danger of being re-absorbed into its origins of information retrieval, computer science, information systems, and library science, even as practical digital libraries are becoming a standard part of the infrastructure for many commercial, governmental, and of course research organizations.

TCDL has engaged in a set of initiatives to counter that trend. I see the future of TCDL—and of Digital Libraries—as being dependent on the continuation of, and expansion on, those initiatives. Specifically:

- *Building collaborations and greater commonality between the research communities represented by JCDL, TPD, and ICADL.* While each conference has a distinct focus within digital libraries, the majority of attendees are within the conferences' natural geographic region. TCDL is ideally poised to support the sharing of material across the different conference series—for example workshop and tutorial organization—that could disseminate the special expertise of each series to the others.
- *Opening up opportunities for younger researchers to contribute to TCDL and to Digital Libraries as a field.* I fully support TCDL initiatives to invite a wide range of people to play leadership roles within the TCDL community and the digital libraries conferences. Recognition of service is particularly important to the careers of younger researchers, as is encouraging Master's and early PhD candidates to join the community through opportunities to serve and publish in the DL related conferences and journal issues.
- *Supporting smoother pathways to journal publication of conference research.* The rejuvenation of IJODL and its special issues based on the best papers of digital libraries conferences has great potential for raising the profile of the conferences. A logical next step is for TCDL to assist conference and workshop organizers in creating proposals for special issues of other journals, to build the profile of the conference series and of the field of digital libraries itself
- *Encouraging contributions from practical digital library professionals.* Digital libraries is a practical, applied field, with significant research problems frequently uncovered and addressed by practitioners. Increased outreach to practitioners, supported by TCDL, could further enrich the conference series.

I see TCDL continuing to play a significant role in supporting and shaping the future of the field of digital libraries, and would be honoured to participate in working towards that future.