## CONTENTS

List of Practical Insights from Corporations xv
List of Figures xvii
List of Tables xix
Foreword xxii
Preface xxvii
Acknowledgments xxix
A Note from the Series Editor xxxi
Contributors xxxiii
About the Editors xxxvii

### 1 INFORMATION OVERLOAD: AN INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE TO PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS 1

*Judith B. Strother, Jan M. Ulijn, and Zohra Fazal*

1.1 Definitions, Causes, and Consequences of Information Overload 1
   1.1.1 Definitions of Information Overload 1
   1.1.2 Causes of Information Overload 2
   1.1.3 Consequences of Information Overload 3

1.2 Perspectives on the Concept of Information Overload 4
   1.2.1 An Information and Time-Management Perspective 5
   1.2.2 A Supplier/Producer/Writer and Client/User/Reader Perspective 5
   1.2.3 An International/Intercultural Perspective 7
   1.2.4 An Innovation Perspective 7

1.3 Readers of this Book 7

1.4 Structure of this Book 8
   1.4.1 Section I: Causes and Costs of Information Overload 8
   1.4.2 Section II: Control and Reduction of Information Overload 10

References 11
### SECTION I. CAUSES AND COSTS OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD

**2 OF TIME MAGAZINE, 24/7 MEDIA, AND DATA DELUGE: THE EVOLUTION OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD THEORIES AND CONCEPTS**

*Debashis “Deb” Aikat and David Remund*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Introduction</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Theory and Concept of Information Overload</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Information Overload as a Twentieth Century Phenomenon</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Evolution of Information and Its Proliferation in Society</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 The Early Quest for Information and Knowledge (320 BCE–Thirteenth Century)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2 The Age of Renaissance (Fourteenth–Seventeenth Century) and the Printing Press</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3 The Industrial Revolution (Eighteenth–Nineteenth Century) and Its Information Innovations</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4 The Era of the Mind and the Machine (Twentieth Century)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.5 Internet Boom and Information Explosion of the 1990s</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.6 Data Deluge and Information Overload in the Twenty-First Century Digital Age</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Information Overload Concepts</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1 Definitions of Information Overload and Related Concepts</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2 The Context of Information Overload</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.3 Causes and Consequences of Information Overload</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Conclusion and Four Lessons Learned</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PRACTICAL INSIGHTS FROM IBM

**3 THE CHALLENGE OF INFORMATION BALANCE IN THE AGE OF AFFLUENT COMMUNICATION**

*Paulus Hubert Vossen*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Quantitative Aspects of Information Overload</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Qualitative Aspects of Information Overload</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Philosophical Perspective: Information in Science and Technology</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2 Political Perspective: Information in Modern Society and a Global World</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3 Economic Perspective: Information as a Commodity on the Market</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.4 Societal Perspective: Information as the Glue Between Communities 48
3.3.5 Psychological Perspective: Information as a Basis for Knowing and Acting 49
3.3.6 Ecological Perspective: Information as a Prerequisite for Living Creatures 50
3.4 Conclusion 51
3.5 A Call for Fundamental Research 52
References 53

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS FROM XEROX 55
Xerox Takes on Information Overload 55
Identifying the Problem 55
Sharing Information 56
Sorting Information 57
Cutting Through the Clutter 57
Life-Saving Software 58
Urban Central Nervous System 58

FROM CAVE WALL TO TWITTER: ENGINEERS AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS AS INFORMATION SHAMAN FOR DIGITAL TRIBES 61
Anne Caborn and Cary L. Cooper
4.1 Introduction: The Dawn of the Information Shaman 62
4.2 The Magic of Metaphor 64
4.3 The Audience: The Emergence of Digital Tribes 65
4.4 Quill to Keyboard: The Writer and New Media 66
4.5 Helping the Reader: Techniques for the Information Shaman 68
4.6 The Magic of Hypertext Techniques: Journeys at the Speed of Thought 70
4.7 Conclusion: The Responsibilities of the Information Shaman 72
References 73

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE LIMBURG MEDIA GROUP 75
Newspaper Position in The Netherlands 76
Managing Information Overload Using an Evolutionary Approach 76
A Revolutionary Perspective 77

THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON INFORMATION OVERLOAD 79
Jan M. Ulijn and Judith B. Strother
5.1 Introduction 80
5.2 Levels of Culture 81
5.3 Cultural Patterns of Discourse Organization 82
5.4 High Context Versus Low Context 83
7.7 Cost of Information Overload
  7.7.1 Cost Framework 135
  7.7.2 Scenario 1: Ideal Scenario 136
  7.7.3 Scenario 2 136
  7.7.4 Scenario 3 136
  7.7.5 Scenario 4 136
  7.7.6 An Example from the User’s Perspective: Denim Corp 137
  7.7.7 An Example from the Producer’s Perspective: Logistics Corp 137
7.8 Conclusion 138
References 139

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS FROM HARRIS CORPORATION 141
Sources of Information Overload 141
Strategies for Dealing with Information Overload 142

SECTION II. CONTROL AND REDUCTION OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

8 TAMING THE TERABYTES: A HUMAN-CENTERED APPROACH TO SURVIVING THE INFORMATION DELUGE 147
Eduard Hoenkamp
  8.1 Introduction 148
  8.2 Reducing Information Overload by Being Precise About What We Ask for 150
    8.2.1 Conversational Query Elaboration to Discover Support Groups 150
    8.2.2 Constructing Verbose Queries Automatically During a Presentation 151
  8.3 Steering Clear of Information Glut Through Live Visual Feedback 152
  8.4 Improving Search Engines by Making Them Human Centered 156
    8.4.1 Case 1: The Basic Level Category 158
    8.4.2 Case 2: The Complex Nominal 162
    8.4.3 Case 3: Exploiting Natural Language Properties 165
  8.5 Conclusion 167
Acknowledgments 167
References 168

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE LABORATORY FOR QUALITY SOFTWARE 171
References 173

9 TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEALING WITH INFORMATION OVERLOAD: AN ENGINEER’S POINT OF VIEW 175
Toon Calders, George H. L. Fletcher, Faisal Kamiran, and Mykola Pechenizkiy
  9.1 Introduction 176
  9.2 Information Overload: Challenges and Opportunities 177
11 DROWNING IN DATA: A REVIEW OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS AND THE VIABILITY OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES 231

David Remund and Debashis “Deb” Aikat

11.1 Introduction 232
11.2 Defining Information Overload within Organizations 232
11.3 Evolution of the Information Overload Concept in Organizations 234
11.4 Implications of Information Overload within Organizations 235
  11.4.1 Organizational Implications 235
  11.4.2 Employee Implications 237
11.5 Traditional Strategies for Addressing Information Overload 238
  11.5.1 Organizational Strategies 238
  11.5.2 Individual Strategies 239
11.6 Strategic Communication Principles: A Viable Solution? 240
11.7 Putting Strategic Communication into Practice 242
11.8 Further Research 243
11.9 Conclusion 243
References 243

12 BLINDFOLDED THROUGH THE INFORMATION HURRICANE? A REVIEW OF A MANAGER’S STRATEGY TO COPE WITH THE INFORMATION PARADOX 251

Arjen Verhoeff

12.1 Introduction 252
12.2 Decomposing the Information Paradox 253
  12.2.1 The Control of the Internal Information Process 253
  12.2.2 The Control of the External Information Process 254