

Methodologies for analysing neurospatial activation patterns associated with information retrieval tasks conducted on search engines

The purpose of the trip was to contribute to the NeuroIS meeting held in Gmunden, Austria that was organized by Professor Rene Reidl. My particular contribution was to participate in a panel discussion on the use of brain imaging techniques in the study of neural correlates of “relevance” during information retrieval tasks. This turned out to be an interesting panel discussion that had a good group of international participants and engaged much discussion. The work I presented had recently been favorably received at the 2013 meeting of the European Conference on Information Retrieval in Moscow and it was an excellent opportunity to discuss findings with the NeuroIS community.

The scientific level of the conference was high and the excellent keynote speakers brought a nice perspective to the general presentations. The general presentations covered a wide range of topics within the use of neuroscience tools for addressing important questions in Information Science Research. For example, one study using fMRI examined the neural processes involved in a user terminating a search, another study using EEG examined neural measures that correlate with success in collaborative computer activities. These are just examples, and overall there were clear indications that researchers were using state of the art neuroscience approaches to examine information systems at both a theoretical and a practical level.

The spirit of the conference was informal and collaborative and this brought many opportunities to discuss research and to meet new colleagues. I was happy to have several opportunities to have in-depth discussions with Professor Reidl and many of his colleagues. My background is more of a psychologist/cognitive neuroscientist working in aspects of information processing while observing complex human actions. Thus, this was my first exposure to the greater NeuroIS community outside my work with collaborators in Glasgow. It was clear that there are many opportunities for deeper collaboration with this community and I look forward to pursuing these opportunities. I am thus very grateful for the funding support that enabled me to attend the meeting.

Finally, there is much to compliment the organization of the conference. Despite the main venue being flooded for one day of the meeting due to serious flooding within the city of Gmunden the meeting went forward at a local hotel. This was an impressive feat that the scientific program was not disrupted by the substantial disruption to logistics.