

## Interdisciplinary Practices in iSchools

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# Interdisciplinary Practices in iSchools

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## Abstract

Interdisciplinarity is in the DNA of the iSchools. This workshop invites you to discuss how interdisciplinarity plays out in theory and practice. The workshop addresses the uniqueness of the iSchools, provides an interactive framework to discuss and reflect on interdisciplinary practice. It suggests some models and tools to describe relations between disciplines, while offering a venue to brainstorm and envision issues of interest with like-minded colleagues. The purpose of this workshop is to establish a setting for continuous dialogue among colleagues on how interdisciplinarity plays out in practice. The workshop aims to create a forum for reflection on local inter-disciplinary practice(s) and to consider the possibilities of forming research networks. The workshop opens with a panel presentation from iSchool deans and senior faculty discussing current interdisciplinarity practices in iSchools and with presentations that address theoretical frameworks of interdisciplinarity. These presentations will form the basis for small group discussions in the afternoon.

**Keywords:** interdisciplinarity, interdisciplinary practices, interaction, cooperation, research networks

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## 1 Introduction

Interdisciplinarity is in the DNA of the iSchools. This workshop invites you to discuss how interdisciplinarity plays out in theory and practice. The workshop addresses the uniqueness of the iSchools, provides an interacting framework to discuss and reflect on interdisciplinary practice. It suggests some models and tools to describe relations between disciplines, while offering a venue to brainstorm and envision issues of interest with like-minded colleagues.

Please visit the workshop website at <http://interdisciplinarity.cci.fsu.edu/>.

## 2 Organization

### 2.1 Organizers

- Dorte Madsen, Copenhagen Business School, dma.ikl@cbs.dk
- Shuyuan Mary Ho, Florida State University iSchool, smho@fsu.edu

### 2.2 Panelists

- Elizabeth Liddy, Dean, Trustee Professor, School of Information Studies (iSchool), Syracuse University
- Mike Eisenberg, Dean Emeritus, Professor, School of Information (iSchool), University of Washington
- Kathleen Burnett, Chair, Professor, School of Library and Information Studies (iSchool), College of Communication and Information, Florida State University

- Steve Sawyer, Professor, PhD Program Director, School of Information Studies (iSchool), Syracuse University
- Harry Bruce, Dean and Professor, The UW Information School
- David Fenske, Dean, College of Information Science and Technology, Drexel University

### 2.3 Presenters

- *Interdisciplinary theory on relations between disciplines - a theoretical framework for discussing multi- inter- and transdisciplinarity*: Dorte Madsen, Associate Professor, Copenhagen Business School
- *Measuring interdisciplinarity*: Staša Milojević, Assistant Professor, School of Informatics and Computing (iSchool), Indiana University
- *Challenges in Interdisciplinary Communication*: John M. Budd, Professor, School of Information Science & Learning Technologies (SISLT), University of Missouri

## 3 Overview

As described in the iSchools' vision<sup>1</sup>, an iSchool provides the venue that enables scholars from a variety of contributing disciplines to leverage their individual insights, perspectives, and interests, informed by a rich, "trans-disciplinary" community – and iSchools foster the development of an intellectual space where true interdisciplinarity plays out.

In this workshop we invite participants to discuss and refresh our visions and practice of interdisciplinarity. In particular, we hope to identify ways the contributing disciplines are informed by the transdisciplinary community. Moreover, we are interested in discovering the relationships between information, technology, policy, people and society as translated in daily practice through:

- research projects
- curriculum development
- teaching

We believe that the specific disciplines - and combinations of disciplines – will emerge to connect and represent these relationships across information, technology and people (Madsen, 2013).

Following interdisciplinary identification, we would further discuss and discover new patterns of interaction – between people and/or between disciplines. For example, how are collaboration bridges built between disciplines? Which are the building blocks of these bridges? (e.g. concepts, theories, methods, or interdisciplinary research groups / faculty?). What types of problems have iSchool researchers encountered? Are they

1. questions identified within a single discipline?
2. questions found in the intersections of disciplines?
3. questions found in the gaps between disciplines?
4. questions that cross disciplines? Or,
5. issues and questions without a compelling disciplinary basis? (Lattuca, 2003).

The workshop opens with a panel presentation from iSchool deans and senior faculty discussing the current interdisciplinary practices in iSchools and addresses frameworks of multi-, inter- and transdisciplinarity. These presentations will form the basis for small group discussions in the afternoon.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://test.ischoolsorg.syr.edu/about/history/vision/>

### 3.1 Purpose

With this initiative, our short-term goal is to invite colleagues to discuss how interdisciplinarity plays out in practice, to create a forum for reflection on local interdisciplinary practice(s) and to consider the possibilities of forming effective research networks.

Moreover, the long-term goal of this workshop will foster the development of connecting interdisciplinary practices with interdisciplinary theory, which is the theory development of the Information Field. This goal requires the development of a research network where

- *reflections* on disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices come together
- *relationships* between information, technology, and people are analyzed and mapped
- contributing disciplines – and relations between disciplines - are mapped. Such *mapping* is intended to serve as a point of departure for analyzing multi- inter- and transdisciplinarity in the Information Field.

### 3.2 Intended Audience

iSchool faculty, researchers, administrators, Deans, Associate Deans, and stakeholders.

Among strategies to engage attendees is a pre-survey analysis; composing groups with similar or different interests; focusing on attendees own practice(s).

### 3.3 Goals or Outcomes

The workshop addresses the uniqueness of the iSchools, provides an interacting framework to discuss and reflect on interdisciplinary practice, and offers some models and tools to describe relations between disciplines. Furthermore, the workshop offers a venue to discuss issues of interest with like-minded colleagues.

### 3.4 Relevance to the Conference

The workshop intends to create common ground and a common working language for addressing issues of multi- inter- and transdisciplinarity. Long-term relevance might be *identity building* and *theory building* of the Information Field.

## 4 Draft Agenda

Duration	Topic
9.30-9.45	Informal self-introductions over coffee
9.45-10.00	Brief introduction to agenda, co-organizers
10.00-11.15	The goal of the workshop – presented by Madsen. Presentations (Madsen) and panel discussions, cf. above.
11.15-11.30	Coffee break
11.30-1.00	Panel discussions ctd.
1.00-1.30	Group lunch
1.30-2.15	General warm-up discussion Break-out group discussion prompts:

- What do you see as your home discipline?
- How is your home discipline informed by other disciplines?
- How do you understand interdisciplinarity?
- What does disciplinarity and/or interdisciplinarity mean to you in your daily practice?

Presentations (Budd): *Challenges in interdisciplinary communication*

Discussion of specific interdisciplinary practices within pre-determined groups. Groups sit together at tables, organized according to pre-survey analysis.

Discussions on the basis of input from the morning sessions and from essays submitted prior to the workshop.

- 2.15-3.30
- Which challenges are you facing in your work in connection with interdisciplinarity?
    - in research projects, (e.g., research methods, theories, etc.)
    - in curriculum development,
    - in teaching.
  - In research projects, how would you characterize the types of research questions you pursue in terms of a disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary basis?
  - Case studies: How do you experience cooperation with people from disciplines other than your own? Do you have and/or develop a common working language and/or a shared conceptual framework? to which extent is it required to make explicit e.g. the basic assumptions of each discipline?

Half of the groups will present summaries (organizers will offer structure for the presentations)

3.30-3.45 Coffee break

Presentations (Milojević): *Measuring Interdisciplinarity*

Continued ... Discussion of specific interdisciplinary practices within pre-determined groups

3.45-5.00 Second half of the groups present discussion summaries (organizers will structure this) Synthesis by organizers.

- What did we learn that might shed light on the participants' own interdisciplinary practices and which shared interests may be identified?
- Can opportunities for future collaborations be identified?
- Research network(s)?

Final wrap-up and sharing time

- 5.00-5.30
- Collect feedback from the participants on the day's events, debrief with attendees.
  - Brainstorm ideas for future events

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Please visit <http://interdisciplinarity.cci.fsu.edu/> for any updates.

## 5 Building an iCommunity

The workshop has its own website <http://interdisciplinarity.cci.fsu.edu/> that includes:

### 5.1 Pre-Workshop Participants Survey

All participants are asked to fill out a questionnaire that will be used to understand the potential participants' disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary backgrounds, the domain area they are teaching in, the curriculum they develop (individual vs. collaborative in nature), etc. We also invite short essays submitted by each participant describing his or her personal view of interdisciplinary practice. With their consent, we will make these submissions available to the public.

### 5.2 Website for Interdisciplinarity in iSchools

To continue the discussions from the workshop, and to provide a forum for reflections on interdisciplinary practices and shared insights, resources and cases, we have created a website that is intended to serve as a meeting point beyond the workshop.

## 6 References

- Lattuca, L. R. (2003). Creating interdisciplinarity: Grounded definitions from the college and university faculty. *History of Intellectual Culture*, 3(1).
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