President Reports
Survey Ideas on AIS Future

By James Welch IV
AIS President

In studying the AIS constitution, I discovered the following:

"Article VI, Section 5. All actions taken by the Board of Directors shall be reported promptly to the membership of the Association through a regular publication of the Association or otherwise."

Therefore, starting with this newsletter, I would like to begin fulfilling this edict by reporting to the AIS members what your Board of Directors is up to. This is an effort to help keep you informed, engaged, and afforded the opportunity for feedback.

As a veteran of AIS board meetings, I have always been impressed with the ability of such a diverse and often strong willed group of academics to be so collegial and productive. Especially since midyear board meetings require us to sit in a room together for 8 hours, two days in a row! This meeting was no different, although the Chicago weather was a little dreary.

In preparation for the meeting, I conducted a survey of the board, using a version of the Delphi Technique, to assist in determining collective priorities for AIS moving forward. Here are the top ranked ideas that resulted from this survey:

1. AIS should continue to define and advocate for best practices in interdisciplinary pedagogy, assessment and curriculum. We should continue to supply support and training in these areas through our conference workshops, website content and develop other means as well.

2. The AIS mission of diversity, especially in the inclusion of non-dominant groups, has not been realized. Strategies need to be developed that will allow us to make this happen.

AIS board members met March 31-April 1 to discuss the Association’s future, including ideas about best practices, diversity, new directions for research, improving the AIS website, and refining the annual conference. From left clockwise are James Welch IV, Marcus Tanner, Jennifer Dellner, Roz Schindler, Khadijah Miller, Paul Hirsch, and Machiel Keestra. (Photo by Tanya Augsburg.)

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Midyear Report

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move diversity from a theoretic ideal to a core entity within the organization.

3. AIS should focus more on research and areas of real world application by expanding in new directions and promoting relationships with institutions doing applied interdisciplinary research.

4. Although our present website is solid and offers a good selection of resource, it will need an upgrade.

5. The annual conference should continue to be a centerpiece of our organization. We should continue to examine ways to refine the conference experience, and assure its financial and organizational sustainability into the future.

I believe this exercise helped us focus our deliberations and set our priorities for strategic planning. I will make the entire results of the survey available to the membership in the near future.

Here is a summary of meeting highlights and business conducted:

The Treasurer reports that AIS is financially sound. Scott Crabill was appointed to the position of Business Manager, and reports the AIS office at Oakland University is running smoothly.

The Vice President of Relations, Tanya Augsburg, continues to promote more AIS activity on social media. Tanya and At-Large member Khadijah Miller will be establishing an Outreach Committee this summer. This committee will be working on enhancing “interdiversity” of AIS, especially in preparation for the 2018 conference in Detroit. All members interested in participating in this committee should contact her.

The editors of Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies, Gretchen Schulz and Simeon Dreyfus, reported there are several submissions for the 2017 volume in various stages of revision. The festschrift honoring Bill Newell is also coming along nicely.

We discussed ideas for the rotation of IIS co-editors and the revamping of the Editorial Board. The board of directors continues to explore possibilities for housing IIS at a University Press, and weighed various financing models.

We had a vigorous discussion about the pros and cons of taking an open access approach to our publication model. This discussion will be taken up by the Publications Committee, led by Past President Machiel Keestra.

Although we decided to continue exploring publication models, the board did decide to experiment with an online pay model for articles from the current, password protected, volume. Non-members will be charged $10 per article. This is very much in line with practices of similar organizations. We will monitor the response to this while we look at other publication models. The board did vote to release all issues of Integrative Pathways from password protection. Feel free to share it with one and all! Brian McCormick reported that the sections continue to develop, and we discussed ways to encourage more participation in them at conferences, in the newsletter and on the AIS website.

Marcus Tanner, who has been overseeing our National Honors Society, submitted a revision of the organization’s bylaws for Board approval. As part of that revision, the position of Executive Director was established as an ex-officio member of the AIS Board of Directors.

Our Information Technology Director and VP of Development, Jennifer Dellner, led a discussion on ways to revamp the AIS website so that it is more easily navigable, and information on the essential purpose of our organization is more visible.

A list of new tabs and other subject areas was generated in our brainstorming session. At-large member, Robin DeRosa, continued our ongoing discussion of establishing Creative Commons licensing protocol for material on our website.

The board spent some time discussing the recent publication of several books and articles heavily critical of interdisciplinarity, and often of misperceptions of the scholarship generated by AIS. Several of these books have been reviewed in Integrative Pathways.

The board is planning to generate a considered response to these developments, to be published in this newsletter and elsewhere. At-large member Paul Hirsch will be proposing a session at the upcoming Baltimore conference that will address these issues in an engaging and creative manner.

The board also conducted conference planning with reports supplied by our conference liaison Roz Schindler, examining reports from conference planners through 2019, supplying them with feedback, ideas and proposals for events and sessions.

Lastly, we began our discussion over the revision of the AIS constitution and by-laws. This will proceed virtually over the summer, with teams of board members working on individual sections, and then bringing it all together at our next meeting in October.

All in all, a productive meeting, with lots of irons in the fire and things to do. I hope you not only find this informative, but also become inspired to join one of these efforts. AIS is a participatory organization and we always welcome advice and assistance from anyone in the organization. Just contact me and let me know what you’d like to help out with!

James Welch IV
jlfwiv@mac.com
Co-Navigator began as an interactive introduction for an interdisciplinary graduate course at the University of Copenhagen and is currently being developed as a tool for interdisciplinary courses in general – building on knowledge and experience from our research on interdisciplinary learning and collaboration. As a spinoff from the presentation of the tool at the AIS conference in Ottawa, hopefully, come fall, the tool will be part of the curriculum in undergraduate courses at University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

**Mobilizing interdisciplinarity in monodisciplinary structures.** The University of Copenhagen (UCPH) is a traditional European faculty-structured university with a strong monodisciplinary subject-based framing, leaving little room for interdisciplinary teaching and learning. Nonetheless, the university offers an increasing number of interdisciplinary courses and programmes, which reflects the political mobilization of interdisciplinarity oriented towards solving problems which cannot be solved by “one discipline alone.”

This mobilization has, in a Danish and European context, led to large funding initiatives directed towards interdisciplinary research projects. In turn, this has caused a push towards more interdisciplinary educational activities.

In a monodisciplinary UCPH setting, creating interdisciplinary activities has therefore often been an art of the possible and resulted in one-off events that appear as various disciplines “glued” together by a common theme or a joint problem. In other words, the political mobilization has promoted the production of interdisciplinary activities but not necessarily enough to secure proper embedding or pedagogical cohesion.

**How it all began.** Our collaboration – and essentially the tool CoNavigator – is a very direct result of one such politically mobilized project, namely an interdisciplinary research project called “Governing Obesity.” In this project Hillersdal, as a social anthropologist, was exploring how politically mobilized interdisciplinarity was translated into practice. Lindvig was simultaneously studying the ways in which this interdisciplinary research project translated their research into educational activities (e.g., PhD programmes, undergraduate courses, summer schools). At the end of a two-year field study on these educational activities, Lindvig was approached by one of the course administrators and asked to step in and contribute to a summer school arranged by the research project. In order to make this happen, Lindvig teamed up with Hillersdal and Earle, who as a partner at the think tank Braintrust, was used to creating and developing interdisciplinary tools and processes.

We were invited to present the concept of interdisciplinarity to the students attending the two-week summer school. The tool we developed was inspired by a more lengthy workshop format (Braintrust Labs). The idea was to boil the format down, from two days to just three hours, adding our knowledge and experience on interdisciplinary teaching and collaboration and thereby changing it into something that could be implemented in an interdisciplinary course. This required it to be easy to explain to students coming from all types of disciplines and backgrounds.
Co-Navigator

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Developing the Tool. Often the way to approach interdisciplinary learning and collaboration is to first find a common/joint topic to collaborate on and then set up the issues one might want to address. In this case, the topic and issues were already decided. The theme given was obesity and governing the issues related to the growing challenges of an obese population. While the students knew about the topic and issues, they did not know how their discipline and skills matched the other disciplines and skills present, nor even how their discipline and skills might be perceived by the others.

“How can we communicate across disciplinary and methodological divides without compromising, reducing or oversimplifying our research and without losing face or academic identity?” This was one of the questions that drove our collaboration. It stems from previous experience of facilitating and collaborating with other disciplines and the ways in which implicit politics of knowledge act as barriers. The grounded ideas of each discipline end up taking center stage – to the point where the parties involved are left as mere disciplinary representatives – and not as active collaborators. Furthermore, we saw a tendency to move as quickly as possible to finding solutions to complex problems, without first exploring the complex interdisciplinary connections and roles, or understanding the interdisciplinary ‘landscape’ of a given topic. In this sense, the tool addresses a problem which the participants tend not to think exists, that already is covered by the agreement to collaborate. With this tool, we have therefore tried to make tangible the assumptions, prejudices and knowledge from each present participant – synchronizing maps and expectations and even the meaning of the concept “expectations”.

Overall, the tool encompasses three steps:

1. Making the Tacit Visible and Tangible. The first task of the newly formed group is the making of a Tool swatch by sharing one’s own and others’ competences through short interviews. By explaining their skills to a person with a completely different background, the interviewee is forced to re-evaluate, re-formulate, and translate skills in a way that increases their own disciplinary awareness. And by using open-ended questions such as ‘What’, ‘Who’, ‘How’, and ‘Why’, the interviewer gets the interviewee to not only draw from his or her usual disciplinary vocabulary, but to unfold and explain what, for instance, ‘action research’ or ‘regression analysis’ means in practice, and how it can be used.

Each competency that is identified is written onto a separate Tool Swatch, and each participant then ‘presents’ the competencies of the person they have interviewed to the rest of the group. This approach allows for a practical and situated approach to what disciplinary competence is. The participants define positively the competencies and experiences they have without having to represent ideal versions of their respective disciplines. Following this, the participants then begin the creation of elements to go in the joint map.

Each participant is encouraged to identify the key areas of the map from their perspective, rather than be initially influenced by the viewpoints of others within the group. Each point is written (or drawn) onto a single tile. Rather than specifying challenges and problems, participants are encouraged to identify themes and interests, so as not to direct or narrow down the scope too early in the process.

2. Negotiating and Organizing a Context. Once the individual tiles are created (as many as are needed), the group must negotiate how each tile will be positioned within the collaborative map. During the negotiation
INTEGRATIVE PATHWAYS

Co-Navigator

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phase, the participants stand up with all chairs pulled away from the table so they can freely move around and arrange the tiles together.

During this process the tiles begin to cluster into small or bigger areas, reflecting the specific interests of the group. The crucial element in this step is how the participants negotiate with each other – there is never just one right way to create and plan the topography of the map. Also, the individual tiles of the participant may very well carry themes, points and interests that are very different in terms of details and coverage, which must then also be taken into consideration when constructing the joint map.

This phase of the CoNavigator tool resembles other mapping exercises already existing in the field, however, one difference is the emphasis on themes and areas to be explored and navigated instead of problems to be solved. When we did the testing of the tool, we found that an orientation around the problem created divides on the map (between stated problems and stated solutions), which narrowed down the scope and eventually also created divides and discussions among the participants that we found were not particularly fruitful at this stage.

3. Infrastructuring. The last step of the tool is about “infrastructuring” new routes on the co-developed contextual mosaic. The infrastructuring process challenges the players to connect to and navigate through themes and interests of the other players. The more links the better.

The new infrastructures created are then related to each participant’s individual Tool swatch developed at the beginning of the game. Each player then assesses where and how singular competencies can be used to deal with the newly developed infrastructure.

An important point at this stage is to keep the participants in the process and to let them explore connections and arguments which are open-ended, instead of leading them towards a common goal, project or solution.

Though it is tempting to finish off the process with a final conclusion/solution, the crucial thing is to stay with the diversity of the created map. Furthermore, if the tool is part of a longer interdisciplinary process (e.g., a course), large format posters can be made from photos of the finished construction. Revisiting it later on in the course can lead to new insights.

Inspiration and acknowledgements.

In the process of developing this tool we have been greatly inspired by the idea of a Visual Lingua Franca, defined as visual languages systematically used to make communication possible between people not sharing the same mother tongue.

In the process, we have also drawn on works by Repko, Szostak, Newell and Klein, the Interdisciplinary studies project, Ground Zero as well as the td-net’s toolbox to name only a few. Furthermore a number of students and groups of colleagues have helped us test the tool in various rounds (a special thanks to the Edinburgh team including Catherine Lyall and Laura Meagher).

What the future holds. At the AIS conference in Ottawa, we presented the tool in a shared a session with a group from Baltimore, led by undergraduate student Maniraj Jeyaraju. He and his colleagues Eric Brown, Stephen Freeland and Steven McAlpine all inspired us and shared our interest

The tactile nature of the tool is designed to encourage collaboration and negotiation, while the writable tiles and connectable cubes enable rapid, collaborative visualization. The topographies are easy to photograph for later use, while each participant takes with them their individual “tool-swatch”, which can help them to identify and contextualize their role in future collaborations. (Photo provided.)

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Ordinary Wars: Doing Transdisciplinary Research

By Genevieve Durham DeCesaro and Elizabeth A. Sharp

Transdisciplinary projects are messy, complicated, and exhilarating. They stretch collaborators, sometimes uncomfortably, beyond the predictable, expected, and routine. Making public the private tensions of “ordinary” cultural expectations associated with singlehood, marriage, and motherhood, the authors used a kinesthetic analysis of social-science qualitative data to create an evening-length professional dance concert.

Ordinary Wars: Doing Transdisciplinary Research is an exploration of the project, from its inception through its current state. It focuses on providing readers with an understanding of the ways in which working collaboratively on a transdisciplinary project is both incredibly challenging and unpredictably rewarding. Readers are invited “backstage” as we expose our discomfort, missteps, confusion, successes, and lessons learned. We argue that transdisciplinary research is a vehicle for affecting transformative, cultural change.

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Co-Navigator

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in developing interactive methodologies and games for interdisciplinary learning. They showed an interest for the tool and, as a direct spinoff from this meeting, we have now started collaborating with the aim of introducing the tool at University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) this fall. This is something we really look forward to and we believe fits fully within the goals and aspirations of the annual AIS conference itself.

Katrine Lindvig (b. Denmark), is a PhD research fellow at the Department of Science Education, University of Copenhagen (UCPH). In her dissertation she studies the linkages between interdisciplinary research and interdisciplinary teaching practices through an ethnographic case study of five large interdisciplinary research projects at UCPH.

Line Hillersdal (b. Denmark), is a social anthropologist working on eating, obesity and cultures of science. She currently holds a postdoctoral position at UCPH in a project on interdisciplinarity and obesity science, where she studies how obesity as an object of intervention emerge in interdisciplinary collaborations intertwined with technologies, people, and values in practice.

David Earle (b. Ireland), is a partner and visual consultant at Braintrust – a think tank based in Denmark – since 2012. David has focused on developing visual and tactile tools and methods to help students learn to navigate through their academic knowledge, and to work more effectively in multi- and interdisciplinary teams.
To celebrate the legacy of its founder and retiring executive director, the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies will dedicate a special volume of *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies* to honor **Dr. William H. Newell**.

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to plan for an appropriate way to commemorate his contributions to the field.

The Special Volume will be a collection of new, high-quality essays that critically reflect on and advance Dr. Newell’s scholarship or advance the field of interdisciplinary studies to which his work is dedicated.

Email submissions of complete papers with abstracts are welcome. Suitable submissions will undergo peer-review.

Prospective authors should e-mail their papers as attachments in Microsoft Word to P. Sven Arvidson (arvidson@seattleu.edu), who will be working with the *Issues* co-editors.

The manuscripts (between 7,000-12,000 words) should be double-spaced, conform to current APA style, and include an abstract (100-150 words). Photographs, illustrations, and other graphics should be attached separately in a JPEG or TIFF format.

To ensure anonymity during the refereeing process, manuscripts should bear only the title as a means of identification. Contributors should send a cover letter giving title, author, affiliation, a brief biographical note to be included in the article, their full mailing address, phone number, and email address.

Submission Deadline: Nov. 30, 2017
AIS 2017

University of Maryland • Baltimore County
Oct. 19-21, 2017

Submissions Deadline Extended:
May 10, 2017

We are seeking workshops, presentations, & performances that explore interdisciplinary approaches to project-based learning on (and off) college campuses.

Areas of focus should be:

1. **Defining, executing and assessing project-based learning**: Using project-based learning to address complex problems, adapting existing initiatives such as NAE’s Grand Challenges for Engineering, and assessing student learning outcomes from applied learning.

2. **Adding value through the scholarship of interdisciplinarity (SOI)**: Facilitating meaningful connections between disciplinary perspectives, and making integrative strategies such as common ground and bridging strategies explicit in the learning process.

3. **Integrating the arts into other disciplines**: Analyses of projects such as arts-integrated STEM (STEAM) initiatives and conflict resolution through theatre that creates “added value.

4. **Articulating the role of interdisciplinary studies programs within the evolving ecosystem of traditional disciplines, applied fields, and emerging interdisciplines on a contemporary college campus that includes faculty, professional staff and professionals of practice.**

Presentations also welcome on any interdisciplinary education and research, including those that examine the role of the academy in fostering interdisciplinary collaborations and more general presentations that advance the AIS mission of promoting the interchange of ideas among scholars, administrators and practitioners in all of the arts and sciences on intellectual and organizational issues related to advancing interdisciplinary studies.

All submissions must be made electronically using the proposal submission form on the 2017 Conference website, ais2017@umbc.edu. The following are required for all submissions:

- contact information for presenters and co-presenters
- proposal title (20 words or less)
- short description of no more than 50 words
- an abstract of no more than 250 words
- relevant keywords, and the type of presentation (Hermes presentation, Athena panel, Hephaestus workshop or Odysseus experience).

For further information, contact ais-2017@umbc.edu.
For the first time, I will have gotten something out of a class besides a letter grade: an education.

Interdisciplinary studies was able to transform the way that I understood and interpreted information without forcing busy work, assigned textbook readings and lectures.

Initially, I wasn’t sure what this course would be like or what I would get out of it, but the end result has been truly rewarding.

The word “interdisciplinarity” didn’t hold meaning to me until I began curating my program of study. I quickly found that there was a paradox within developing my contract. A contract, defined as a legally binding and enforceable agreement, was the way that I found freedom in learning.

A contract can be a restricting commitment, but I found my interdisciplinary contract to be a covenant of educational liberation.

I’ve reinterpreted my understanding of what interdisciplinary studies is by dismantling and rebuilding the lessons learned in class and applied them outside of the classroom.

For the first time, the information that I was learning was relevant enough to exist within my own life. In August, I only implied that interdisciplinary meant more than one discipline and now I recognize it as a collective learning experience. Being interdisciplinary allowed me to combine my distinct disciplines to invent a program that I was able to be excited about, one that I identified with.

The open pedagogy approach became a hallmark of IDS mindset. I was taught how to build a personal learning network, how to research, how to write and how to learn. Open pedagogy put an emphasis on student construction, a main focus point in the course.

With the ability to build my own program, I created a major that encompassed my passion for business while still having the allure of creativity. For the first time, I was excited to be learning.

Outreaching was the moment I realized I was exactly where I needed to be to get the education that I worked so hard for. For the first time, a class revolutionized my ability to articulate the special vision I had for my career by creating a different kind of learning experience.

In class we discussed topics of open education and connected learning by recognizing how we can better utilize them in an interdisciplinary education. We learned to work together as a class to build a textbook and then separately, to build our specific programs of study. My peers and I collaborated closely to present work that was lasting and would reflect the progress that we had made through the semester.

My sincere hope for the future of interdisciplinary studies here at Plymouth State and beyond is for it to continue establishing its educational platform.

For the first time, a single major defied the conventions which had glorified single discipline programs. This allowed students to have the subtle luxury to choose courses based on their unique interests and career goals instead of taking a “one size fits all” major, which can marginalize students who don’t fit within that single discipline.

For the first time, the educational intent of a program is pioneered by the student and not their university. Interdisciplinary studies reflects the changes in our technology and society by encouraging its students to stay connected by empowering them to continue learning outside of the classroom. A degree should not be the final word in education, but the start.
CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS

“A Difference that Makes a Difference: Systemic Change for Environmental and Social Justice”

Human Science Institute Conference
Salt Lake City, Utah
Sept. 27-30, 2017

Recent social and political events in the United States and in other Western democracies have surprised and shocked many of us committed to “creating a humane and ecologically sustainable future.” We use the phrase “a difference that makes a difference,” drawn from the work of anthropologist and system’s theorist Gregory Bateson, to guide our discussion on facilitating change that goes beyond immediate problems to changing the way we think about and engage with today’s complex issues. Broadly, our theme is about how can we bring forth systemic change that protects the rights of individuals and communities and the natural world upon which we depend?

Please join us in considering how we can create more transformational and effective collective efforts at this historic juncture in our national story, at this time of global tumult.

Whether you are an educator, researcher, non-profit administrator, social service worker, social or environmental activist, green business entrepreneur, therapist, etc., what systemic perspective and efforts are you encouraging to create change that will be “a difference that makes a difference?”

Deadline for Submission: June 26, 2017
Notification of Acceptance: July 17, 2017
Presenter Attendance Confirmation: Aug. 7, 2017
Presenter Conference Registration: Aug. 16, 2017


Please see full submission guidelines at:

Selected papers will be published in HSI’s journal Human Science Perspectives. If you wish to have a paper based on your presentation considered, please submit it no later than Nov. 1, 2017. See the Submission Guidelines posted on the Institute website.

Presenters are required to register for the Conference by Aug. 16, 2017 to confirm their acceptance and be included in the Conference Program. Accepted presenters who do not register by the deadline will not be included in the Conference Program. The conference schedule will be finalized Sept. 11; no changes to the conference program will be made after this date.
Verse, Unspoken

If the universe could speak in verse –
With atomic tongue,
Molecular lips &
Genetic articulation

And the essence of poetry
Is what the words say –
Without saying

Then what has the universe been saying
– That has not yet been said

John de Carlo

CALL FOR PAPERS

Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies

Co-Editors • 2017 edition

Gretchen Schulz
Professor Emerita of English
Oxford College of Emory University
Simeon Dreyfuss
Independent Scholar

Prospective authors should e-mail their papers as attachments in Microsoft Word to Gretchen Schulz (gschulz@emory.edu).

The manuscripts should be double-spaced, conform to current APA style, and include an abstract.
Photographs, illustrations, and other graphics should be attached separately in a JPEG or TIFF format.
To ensure anonymity during the refereeing process, manuscripts should bear only the title as a means of identification.

Contributors should send a cover letter giving title, author, affiliation, a brief biographical note to be included in the article, their full mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address.
Establishing myself within this program and its community of learners has created a triumphant return of my love for education, and it feels as if I’m learning again for the first time.

Kayleigh Bennett is studying Marketing and Creative Services through the Interdisciplinary Studies program at Plymouth State, where she works as a Community Advisor, Orientation Leader and was recently elected student body representative of the USNH board of trustees. She lives with her mom and together they have a tradition of making rice krispie treats whenever Kayleigh is home. She says she loves spending time with friends, her cat Momo, and painting.

About “First,” she says she wrote it as a reflection to her Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies class. “I was passionate about what I was learning and the ideology behind IDS,” she says. “Robin DeRosa has had a powerful influence on my learning experience and truly did give me the feeling as though I was learning again for the first time.”