

## Editors' Introduction

New beginnings: it is our pleasure to introduce ourselves as new co-editors of *Issues in Integrative Studies*. Francine Navakas is Svend and Elizabeth Bramsen Professor in the Humanities and Associate Academic Dean, Integrative Programs, at North Central College, Naperville, Illinois. Joan Fiscella is Bibliographer for Professional Studies and Associate Professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. We have had extensive experience in the Association as board members, as liaison to the annual conference planners and as president, respectively. Both of us have taught in interdisciplinary programs and have been active in their development.

We are honored to join the company of earlier editors of *Issues in Integrative Studies* at a time when interdisciplinary or integrative work is being overtly and warmly recognized in undergraduate education, in graduate studies, and in research. We are aware, too, of challenges to the existence of pioneering programs of interdisciplinary studies and to the changing dynamics of the budgeting environment in which many of our institutions function. It is our hope that the growing literature of interdisciplinarity will continue to engage not only those who study and teach across departments and institutions, but those who administer them, and those who practice outside of academic organizations. We look forward to your continued submissions, your ideas for further development of *Issues*, and your encouragement of others to read and contribute to the journal.

The 2004 volume of *Issues* includes two articles that focus on interdisciplinarity in the workplace. In the lead essay, Henrik Bruun and Aino Toppinen examine three discourses concerning the production of knowledge. Two of the three discourses look at the institution's role (local research site or firm) in knowledge production, while the third focuses on the thought processes of the individual. The three discourses are brought together through the analysis of a case study centered on the invention of the polymerase chain reaction (PCR). We are pleased to welcome this international contribution to the journal as one of two global perspectives in this edition, reminding us of the groundbreaking theoretical work and theoretically-informed integrative and interdisciplinary practice that originates outside the United States and how that contribution promotes a lively conversation about transdisciplinarity.

Jeremy Smith and William Newell, in the final essay of the volume, argue from the example of one type of contemporary workplace, a firm that creates

commercial websites, that project developers will work more effectively when their teams are overtly interdisciplinary and when the functions based on areas of expertise are integrated rather than linear in their aspirations, operations, and outcomes. This argument draws out the implication that interdisciplinary education is essential for contemporary types of work where specialists from across the professions co-exist. Deeply grounded in the foundational work of interdisciplinary studies and complex systems, the essay offers a model of how an interdisciplinary framework might be used to examine initiatives that must rapidly adapt to new knowledge and user expectations.

Both articles hold promise for future workplace studies; for example, in what ways is the ability to work closely with those with different kinds of expertise becoming a necessity in the workplace? How are new forms of technology integrating formerly distinct departments in organizations? What are the implications of such workplace changes for interdisciplinary education, specifically, and for educational policy more broadly? How are today's students being prepared to enter the workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and what role might interdisciplinary theory and methods play in promoting adaptive organizational structures?

Marcia Bundy Seabury's discussion is especially appropriate for the 2004 "new beginnings" volume, for it not only encourages scholarly publication about interdisciplinarity, but also provides a conceptual framework for thinking about both the growth potential of the field and the ways in which its scholarship can be enriched. She points out what needs might be served by expanding and deepening the inquiry. These include: (1) needs of faculty to see more congruence between the kinds of teaching they practice and the nature of their scholarly work and to see the product of such work better understood and recognized; (2) institutional needs to find a language and a structure to embrace the evolving fields of study that transcend traditional disciplines and to find a rich framework for promoting curricular and program coherence; and (3) needs within the community of interdisciplinary scholars to refine, sharpen, and extend inquiry that has been widely accepted as contributing to human knowledge. Bundy Seabury lays out detailed suggestions for the brainstorming, writing and revising processes, guidelines for meeting expectations of quality and rigor, and, increasingly pertinent, ways to assess such work for institutional and external audiences.

Marc Spooner's article provides one such example of enhancement of interdisciplinary inquiry, in this case by drawing upon the language and processes of a parallel field of study – creativity – to flesh out the dynamics

of processes of integration and interdisciplinary understanding. His close attention to the intersections among stages of activity in differing process models reveals promising ways in which techniques and methods honed by scholars of creativity can be adapted to the study of interdisciplinary synthesis. Spooner's invitation to see two integrative fields in conversation with each other offers an avenue for understanding key facets of mental work and intellectual "play." It also provides a template for future comparative work.

Finally, let us mention our appreciation to Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich for providing us with her keynote address to the 2004 Annual Conference for the Association for Integrative Studies, delivered at Johnson C. Smith University, North Carolina. There Kamarck Minnich addressed the foundations of interdisciplinary study in her presentation, "Reflections on the Wellsprings of Interdisciplinary Studies and Transformative Education." Kamarck Minnich affirms the growth and importance of interdisciplinary or integrative fields, while cautioning against the danger of losing the "wellsprings" of integrative work – a willingness to continue questioning accepted knowledge and the methods by which it is generated. By posing markers of thinking that she characterizes as free, engaged, individual and socially meaningful, she challenges us to reconsider what it means for interdisciplinary programs to be accountable and prompts us all to remain true to the expansive, transformative goals that originally inspired interdisciplinary innovation.

We look forward to your feedback on the positions taken, queries posed, and challenges identified in the essays now before you. We hope that you will take this opportunity to participate in the ongoing conversation about interdisciplinarity and integrative studies through presentations at the national Association for Integrative Studies Conference and other interdisciplinary venues; workshop and teleconference involvement; submissions to the *Newsletter*, *Issues*, and other publications that feature interdisciplinary scholarship; and, lastly, through the INTERDIS listserv (sign up through the AIS website: [www.muohio.edu/ais](http://www.muohio.edu/ais)) where interdisciplinarians routinely network regarding issues of mutual interest and concern.

Francine Navakas and Joan Fiscella

