iSchools and L-Schools: Converging or Diverging Communities?

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ABSTRACT
The panel will discuss the intellectual differences between iSchool and Information Science programs that are not part of the iSchool Caucus, referred here as L-Schools. The panelists, who represent both communities, will discuss the foundational, philosophical, and formal differences between the two types of programs, and focus on the intellectual diversity of the two academic communities.

Keywords: iSchools, LIS education, disciplinary identity

INTRODUCTION
Since the iSchool Caucus was chartered in 2005, there has been a steady interest in various dimensions of the iSchool movement as evidenced by the popularity of the topic often discussed in conferences and widely addressed in the literature (Cronin, 2005; Dillon et al., 2006; Seadle, 2007; Chen, 2008; Hsieh-Yee et al., 2009).

Two recent publications emphasize the intellectual diversity and interdisciplinary as constitutive dimensions of the iSchools community (Wu, et al., 2011; Wiggins and Sawyer, 2012).

The panel will extend the analysis of intellectual trends in the information science communities by incorporating Wu et al. (2011) and Wiggins and Sawyer (2012) findings into a broader discussion about the differences and similarities between iSchools and Information Science programs that are not part of the iCaucus (L-Schools).

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT I- AND L- SCHOOLS
The history of the i-movement has been associated with attempts by some library and information science programs to distinguish themselves from the more traditional library programs by merging, reengineering and/or simply renaming their academic units. Given the institutional history of the iCaucus movement in addressing programmatic needs, some of the formal differences between iSchools and L-Schools are somewhat clear and have to do with accreditation, degree offerings and rebranding. However, the disciplinary articulation of the i-movement and the intellectual differences between the two communities are less obvious.

In the aforementioned study examining the intellectual diversity of the iSchool community, Wiggins and Sawyer (2012) found a large degree of variability in the levels of interdisciplinarity, structure of academic units and faculty composition within iSchools. By analyzing the proportions of faculty from various subject areas, the authors were able to group iSchools into four clusters: the Computational Science, the Sociotechnical, the Library and Information, and the Niche clusters (the latter cluster being composed of schools where there is no strong representation of any particular subject area, e.g., Computer Science).

The panel organizers hypothesized that a parallel analysis focusing on the faculty composition of the L-Schools will show comparable results with regard to diversity within the dimension of interdisciplinarity as well as the structure of
academic units and faculty composition. The study findings related to the similarities and differences in composition and research interests of the iSchools and L-Schools faculty will be shared during the panel discussion.

The findings will help to frame the discussion on the potential differences between the i- and L- academic communities, increase our understanding of their intellectual boundaries, and present a more comprehensive intellectual map of a field that is loosely identified as information studies.

PANEL PROPOSAL
The panel will bring together representatives of iSchools and L-Schools who are involved in the history of the field research, curriculum development, faculty hiring decisions, and student mentoring. The panel will be structured as a discussion, rather than a set of presentations. The panelists will share their views on the current state of library and information science programs and offer ideas about future developments within their specific programs and the information science community at large. The proposed structure of the panel is as follows:

Introduction
1) Irene Lopatovska will serve as the moderator and will start the session by introducing the topic and the panelists
2) Cristina Pattuelli will discuss the findings of the follow-up study that examined the diversity of L-Schools.

Main discussion
Each panelist will spend 3-5 minutes discussing the following questions:
3) What are the significant differences between iSchool (iCaucus) and L-School programs? Are they philosophical, practical, intellectual, etc.?
4) How do terminal degrees obtained from iSchools, L-Schools, or other related programs (e.g. computer science, education, etc.) factor into faculty hiring decisions?
5) Where do PhD graduates from these fields find jobs?
6) How will the two academic communities evolve?
7) The Moderator will facilitate the discussion amongst panelists and the audience on the challenges and opportunities in building information communities (30 minutes).

Conclusion
8) The Moderator will summarize the main positions expressed by the panelists and the audience during the discussion (5 minutes).

The panel will be of relevant to anybody who is interested in the history and multi-disciplinary nature of library and information science. The panel will explore the field’s disciplinary dimensions and career development options within the field, which will be of particular interest to those who are involved in doctoral training, as well as to prospective, current or recently graduated doctoral students in library and/or information programs.

Panelists
Each panelist brings a unique perspective on the issues of library and information science research and education.

Marcia Bates is a Professor Emerita, Department of Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles. She served as Associate Dean and Department Chair. Dr. Bates has extensively published in the areas of information science theory and history of the library and information sciences. Dr. Bates will address theoretical and historical trends in the information disciplines’ development.

Michael Buckland is a Professor Emeritus, School of Information, University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Buckland's interests include online catalogs, library planning, and the social context of information services. Dr. Buckland will address theoretical and historical trends in the information disciplines’ development.

Marija Dalbello is an Associate Professor and Director of doctoral studies at the School of Communication and Information (an iSchool), at Rutgers University. Her Ph.D. is from the University of Toronto iSchool. Her current research and teaching focus on text-image relations, visual epistemologies, history of knowledge, and history of the book. Dr. Dalbello will address disciplinary trends and hiring patterns of graduates of one of the oldest and largest doctoral programs in the iCaucus.

Tula Giannini is a Professor and Dean of the Pratt Institute School of Information and Library Science where she oversees a multidisciplinary Library and Information Science Master program with concentrations on Cultural Informatics and World Information, Society & Environments. Dr. Giannini will discuss multidisciplinarity of the Pratt academic community and plans to develop a PhD program in Information Science.

Samantha Hastings is a Professor and Director of the School of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina. The School is a part of the College of Mass Communications and Information Studies and is one of the nation's youngest schools of library and information science. The School offers undergraduate and graduate degrees and is not a member of the iCaucus. Dr. Hastings will discuss the interdisciplinarity of the University of South Carolina SLIS program.

Organizers
Irene Lopatovska is an Assistant Professor at the Pratt Institute School of Information and Library Science. Dr. Lopatovska graduated from Rutgers in 2009 with a Ph.D. in Information Science. Her research interests include decision making and emotions in information seeking
contexts; economics of information; structure, use, evaluation and management of print and digital information resources; and research methods.

Cristina Pattuelli is an Assistant Professor at the Pratt Institute School of Information and Library Science. Dr. Pattuelli received her Ph.D. in Information and Library Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research and teaching interests include knowledge organization, semantic web technologies for libraries, museums and archives, knowledge information behavior and interaction, and LIS education.

REFERENCES