

Editors' Introduction

Regular readers of *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies* will remember that the most recent volume of the journal, the second of the two volumes published in 2018, was the *Festschrift* honoring William H. Newell, the founder and long-time Executive Director of the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies. Though already quite ill, Bill was able to attend the 40th annual AIS conference last fall and accept the accolades that accompanied the official introduction of that special volume and its remarkable collection of essays (including the extended interview with Bill that editor Sven Arvidson correctly characterized as itself constituting “an intellectual history of IDS and AIS” and the “Comprehensive Bibliography” of Bill’s work, also provided by Sven and appended to the end of that interview). Bill’s hard-fought battle with cancer took him from us in April of this year, but, of course, his inspirational influence lives on. Indeed, it’s not too much to say that this volume of *Issues* – like every other volume there has been and will ever be – is itself a *festschrift* of a sort, full of work that manifests the power of the cause Bill served so long and so well.

Before we turn to our introduction of that work, however, let us first introduce the two pieces with which we have prefaced the articles that follow. The first is a reprint of a tribute that Julie Thompson Klein composed for the AIS newsletter, *Integrative Pathways*, in the fall of 2016 when Bill retired from his many years of service as Executive Director of the Association. Julie has given us permission to once again proffer “Bill Newell Announces Retirement as AIS Executive Director: Tributes and Testimonials.” And you’ll once again have the chance to enjoy the compilation of comments from the many leading interdisciplinarians who responded to Julie’s invitation for input on that occasion, not least the comments from Julie herself. In closing, she acknowledges the “different views” and “different trajectories” that emerged in the long history of her personal and professional relationship with Bill but celebrates the “common passion for interdisciplinarity” that they “shared” and the “bedrock” of “friendship” that underlay their “intellectual differences.” With further permission, we follow Julie’s piece with a reprint of the obituary in which Bill’s daughter, Silvia Newell, “tallies his accomplishments, dedication to the field of interdisciplinary studies, love for his family and friends, and appetite for life.” We think you’ll agree it’s suitably wonderful.

The first of the articles that follow comes from three assistant professors teaching in Leadership Studies programs, two of them, Ben Brooks and

Katharine Schaab, at Kennesaw State University in Georgia, and the third, Natasha Chapman, at the University of Maryland, College Park. The title of the article, “Integration and Metacognition: Engaging Metacognitive Capacity Building Strategies to Enhance Interdisciplinary Student Learning,” suggests the combination of theory and practice that is the article’s greatest strength. As the authors explain, their objective is “to aid interdisciplinary educators in developing the integrative thinking and reasoning processes of their... students by reviewing the metacognition literature and by demonstrating the value of specific pedagogical practices that explicitly and critically engage students” in developing the metacognitive capacity that itself helps develop the skills necessary for interdisciplinary work of every kind.

The heart of the article offers detailed discussion of three lessons that thus enhance student learning, one on implicit bias (that can be completed in two to three class meetings), one drawn from Case Studies AAC&U has made available through its STIRS program (that can be completed in a couple of weeks), and one involving digital storytelling and particularly effective with more advanced students (that can take a semester to complete). When Bill Newell, who continued to read submissions to *Issues* until the last month of his life, told us that this article was a winner, we were not surprised. Nor were our peer reviewers.

Bill was also much impressed with the second of our articles, one in which Robert Pecorella of St. John’s University, an interdisciplinarian much further along in his career than the younger scholar/teachers just mentioned (or those younger still whose work is represented later in this volume), shares his thinking on ways in which research in political science, the ID field in which he’s most at home, can be improved. Entitled “Understanding Political Institutions in a Messy World: Establishing Interdisciplinary Common Ground,” the piece “presents an interdisciplinary research [model] grounded in a constructivist institutional approach,” “simultaneously narrow[ing] the focus and broaden[ing] the scope of political research by encouraging a return to the ‘political’ in political science while also opening political research to a variety of other disciplinary approaches,” in particular those offered by sociology and history.

We think you’ll agree that Bob is persuasive on the value of the research model he is recommending.

By emphasizing interdisciplinary integration, grounded in a field of consciousness approach, the...model promises a more comprehensive understanding of how the standard operating procedures [SOPs] governing political institutions are viewed by the actors working within them. In this fashion, the model opens the door to a more complete understanding of how institutions

maintain their core values while adapting to social and political change.

“[I]n a time when virtually all national and international institutional arrangements are under intense political attack, the model offers a path to increased understanding of how institutional actors in diverse situational contexts may react to [and address] these challenges.” And surely that’s a path worth following.

The next article in this collection also focuses on interdisciplinary research – though this time it’s research that has actually been conducted by the five authors who represent a decidedly productive combination of more and less established scholar/teachers, current and recent graduate students in the Department of Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education at Michigan State University, Alexander Gardner, Benjamin Espinoza, Chelsea Noble, and Patricia Farrell-Cole, and the Chair of that Department, Marilyn Amey. The subject of their research is “Conducting Research in the 21st Century” – and, more specifically, “How Life Scientists Conceptualize, Operationalize, and Value Interdisciplinary Research.”

They interviewed “established life science faculty to understand the researchers’ lived experiences and perspectives on participating in IDR.” They report that “[s]ix themes emerged from our data,” themes such as “IDR requires the integration of insights from different disciplines” and “[c]ollaborators should be intentionally selected” and “[d]ifferences in languages must be reconciled.”

Of course, you may well be reacting as we did when we first read the list of “themes” they derived from their “data.” You may well be muttering “So who doesn’t know that?” But what’s valuable here is another confirmation of a persistent phenomenon – namely, that many of those doing interdisciplinary research do *not* know what they ought to know when undertaking work of this kind. Many have not had the training that undergraduate and/or graduate programs in ID might have provided them. Nor have most had the benefit of support from the institutions they now inhabit that might help them address the resultant deficiency in their preparation for such work, via immersion in the literature, attendance at conferences, consultation with experts, and so forth. They’ve been forced to learn while doing, *by* doing. And it’s clear that the process has often been painful for the life scientists. On the other hand, it’s also clear that the process, however painful, has itself been teaching them what they need to know to do good work – and clear that they have come to understand just how worthwhile good interdisciplinary work can be. Like the authors of the article, we co-editors (and Bill) were much heartened by this positivity. We think you will be, too.

Kirsi Cheas, the author of the final article in this collection, also represents the many interdisciplinary researchers whose degree programs offered insufficient training in how best to handle such research. However, even before she had completed her Ph.D. in a combo of area studies, media studies, and communication studies, fields that promised a much more interdisciplinary orientation than they delivered, she had set about learning what wasn't being taught, on her own, by means of the aforementioned "immersion in the literature, attendance at conferences, consultation with experts, and so forth." Then, within months of completing her Ph.D. last year, she took action intended to help others in her situation (in particular, others in Finland) learn more about interdisciplinary approaches to work in their fields, as well. Inspired by her engagement with AIS (and its literature, conferences, and experts), she partnered with others "trying to expand frameworks within the strict structures of [their] academia" to found FINTERDIS, the Finnish Interdisciplinary Society, dedicated to supporting "students and early-career researchers" interested in interdisciplinarity "while collaborating closely with more advanced scholars in an effort to enhance intergenerational communication and exchange of ideas" in this area.

It won't surprise our readers to hear that Julie Thompson Klein, one of the most generous among the "more advanced scholars" in IDS and IDR that Kirsi mentions, has already done much to encourage this collaboration. In fact she suggested that Kirsi to submit an article discussing her research, research much influenced by Julie's work on disciplinary boundaries, to the special volume of *Issues* celebrating the wide-ranging influence of Julie's work that is due out later in the fall of this year. Kirsi did submit that article. And when we co-editors of *this* volume of *Issues* realized that its length would need to be much curtailed for inclusion in *that* volume, we persuaded Tanya Augsburg, guest editor of that volume, to let us claim it for our own. We publish it here in the fully developed form it so richly deserves under the title "Permeating Boundaries in News Media and Academia: A Comparative Analysis of Overlapping News Frames and Disciplinary Perspectives."

As Kirsi explains,

This article extends Julie Thompson Klein's ideas on boundary work and typologies of interdisciplinarity from the context of academia to the context of international news media. It draws a metaphorical connection between news frames and the perspectives of academic disciplines, perceiving both as providing selective, limited views on the world. Building on Klein's observation that boundaries of disciplines both enclose and are permeable, I explore how and to

what extent boundaries between frames and boundaries between academic and societal fields sponsoring these frames are permeated in the news, forming wider frameworks of interpretation.

She illustrates her points by drawing upon work she did while pursuing her Ph.D., a “study of international news articles produced and published in the U.S. and Finland, concerning complex developments in South Africa and Brazil,” a study that

has revealed how news material is organized very differently in American and Finnish contexts, with American media featuring stories with a broad range of integrated views, and Finnish media, stories with a narrow range and segmented views that together nevertheless form a multifaceted picture, as long as the audience reads enough of them to accomplish integration of the views themselves.

Of course, Kirsi’s overarching point is a much broader one – and one she hopes those resistant to change “within the strict structures of...academia,” Finnish and otherwise, will take to heart: Interdisciplinary approaches to research have much to offer in almost every field imaginable, and students in almost every field would benefit from the incorporation of instruction in how to handle such approaches into their degree programs.

Until that happens, we can be thankful that all of us involved in interdisciplinary work have as much access to relevant expertise as we do through organizations like AIS (and FINTERDIS) and the publications and presentations and consultations they make available. Not to mention the friendships like those so many of us enjoyed with Bill Newell and continue to enjoy with Julie Thompson Klein and other experienced interdisciplinarians of their so wonderfully supportive ways.

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