



THE NEWSLETTER

INTEGRATIVE PATHWAYS

OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

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James Welch IV, Editor

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40th Anniversary of AIS Celebrates ‘Homecoming’

*By Roz Schindler
Conference Liaison*

To quote our esteemed AIS president, James Welch, the 40th anniversary conference was a “homecoming” for our AIS family. Yes, family. AIS is for me, and for so many of us, an extended personal and professional family, and that is a huge part of why we look forward so much to this gathering each year. Yes, families argue, they disagree with each other, but they also have a strong commitment to and affection for each other. I cherish this community, which for decades has had and continues to have a very special place in my heart and mind.

It was a special privilege and a great joy, therefore, to welcome participants to the 40th anniversary AIS conference. It was the fourth time that Wayne State hosted an AIS conference, and I am proud, as WSU Associate Professor Emerita, that our distinguished university holds this new record. Thank you, Wayne State

University, whose provost, Keith E. Whitfield, made wonderfully warm and welcoming remarks on behalf of Wayne State at the Friday luncheon. Provost Whitfield—a psychologist, a neuroscientist, and a gerontologist—is highly supportive of IDS, having initiated a series of new IDS hires at Wayne State. We were delighted to hear his discussion of IDS and his congratulatory remarks to AIS.

The organizing team and volunteers. Words do not suffice to thank them appropriately. All worked tirelessly with me as Chair to make this conference a successful experience for all:

Nicole Coleman, Assistant Professor, German, CMLLC, WSU; Scott Crabb, Associate Professor, Communication, Oakland University; Sharon Finch, IS Master’s Alumna, WSU and retired Wayne County Circuit Judge; Antonetta Johnson-Gardner, ISP alumna; Carole Keller, ISP alumna;

Julie Koehler, Lecturer and Coordinator, Basic German Language Courses, CMLLC, WSU; Daphne Ntiri, Professor, African American Studies, WSU; Irene Bazan Waller, IS Bachelor’s Alumna and Michigan Dept.



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Conference Report

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of Health and Human Services Director, Lapeer, Huron, and Tuscola Counties

In addition to acknowledging the Planning Committee members and other volunteers for their superb work and wonderful collaboration, special appreciation goes to the following: Former Wayne State University Provost and Professor Emerita Margaret E. Winters and Chair, CMLLC, Anne Duggan for their support and encouragement from the start of the planning process.

The venue for all conference activities and sessions (plenaries, board meetings, keynote panels, meals, presentations, concurrent workshops and panels) was the Detroit Crowne Plaza on the beautiful Detroit riverfront. Taxi, Uber, and Lyft options were available from Detroit Metro Airport to the hotel; no special shuttles were available. Conference participants were provided



AIS Conference attendees grab a bite to eat between presentations at the 2018 Annual Conference of the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies, held recently in Detroit.

with helpful information about the Q-Line and People Mover for transportation within the downtown and midtown Detroit area, a variety of restaurants, and a variety of sightseeing options within easy reach. Many participants took advantage of these options to explore Detroit. No special excursions were planned by the

conference committee as there is so much to explore in the city. Dinner circles and other options were arranged for a variety of restaurants and the participants who chose these enjoyed them very much.

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Dr. James Welch IV, second from left, president of the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies, was one of 140 presenters during the 2018 annual conference, which was held in Detroit in October. A total of 80 presentations on the theme of "Inter/diversities: Intersecting Race, Gender, Class, Abilities, Theories, and Disciplines" were made at the international conference, which was attended by members from six countries.

Conference Report

Continued from page 2

Planning duties were shared among the committee members. These duties included securing a venue and conference hotel, publicizing the conference and creating the Call for Proposals, developing a website with both detailed conference and hotel information as well as the online registration site, selecting sub-themes (with AIS Board input), contacting keynote panelists (one keynote panel on the conference theme and the keynote 40th anniversary panel), two other special plenary sessions (A Black Woman Speaks and the Keti Koti Dialogue Table), reviewing and selecting proposals, and organizing rooms, meals, a special reception, and so forth. Hotel arrangements were made by Roslyn Schindler and her phenomenal hotel contact, Ashley Vance.

The overarching theme of the conference —“Inter/diversities: Intersecting Race, Gender, Class, Abilities, Theories, and Disciplines”—was decided collaboratively by the AIS Board and the planning committee, based on several years of AIS Board discussion of this theme as appropriate for a future conference and Detroit as host city for this conference. And the planning committee agreed that, instead of an individual keynoter or two (as has been the case at former conferences), this special 40th anniversary conference would highlight and celebrate AIS’s own.

I want to acknowledge here with great appreciation those who constituted the two keynote panels that provided special insights into our conference theme and celebration:

“Initial Perspectives on Inter/diversities”: Tanya Augsburg, San Francisco State University; Brian McCormack, Arizona State University; Khadijah Miller, Norfolk State University; and Karen Moranski, So-

noma State University.

This session provided insightful definitions and discussion of the major conference theme and its variations. AIS has a long history of exploring race, class, and gender in its conferences, but the term “inter/diversities” has emerged recently as a path through the intersectional and intercultural connections between interdisciplinarity and diversity. The panelists provided ways of thinking about the term as a theoretical construct, grounded in many disciplines and as a call to action, inside the academy and in society-at-large.

The 40th anniversary Keynote Panel: Where Do We Stand and Where Are We Going? Machiel Keestra, Universiteit van Amsterdam; Julie Thompson Klein, WSU; Wil-

liam H. Newell, Miami University of Ohio; and James Welch IV, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma.

Over its long history, AIS has been a leader in the evolving landscape of interdisciplinary studies. The growing influences of interdisciplinarity have affected not only academic practices and theories but also effectuated an overall sea change in the culture of knowledge itself. Our panel of three past presidents and our current president explored how AIS has impacted and been impacted by the state of interdisciplinarity over the years, examined its place in the present state of the field, and explored possibilities for future positioning in the shifting kaleidoscopic and international terrain of interdisciplinary studies and related fields.

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The atmosphere of a family homecoming felt at the annual conference of the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies is exemplified by two AIS stalwarts – Executive Director Emeritus Bill Newell (at left) and Conference Liaison Roz Schindler. The conference was held in Detroit at Wayne State University in October.



Conference Report *Continued from page 3*

We received a total of 81 proposals by the extended deadline of April 24. Proposals were received from six different countries: Australia, Canada, Finland, Lebanon, the Netherlands, and the United States of America. Fifty-seven U.S. institutions or organizations and seven foreign institutions were represented. We had the following number of individuals from the countries represented: 159 U.S., 10 Netherlands, 5 Canada, 1 Lebanon, 1 Australia, 1 Finland.

Of significance was the number of students who attended, most of whom presented: 31. And the "Emerging Scholars Forum" was greatly appreciated by the participants though there is always room for improvement in interactions with students at different levels of their graduate work. AIS's future lies in its emerging scholars.

The proposals were evaluated by the conference committee for both quality and adherence to the conference theme and sub-themes and research-based interdisciplinary content. Essentially, all, a few with some tweaking, responded very well to the



Many attendees purchased books at the several displays at the Annual Conference of the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies, held in October at the Crowne Plaza in Detroit.

conference theme and sub-themes. Eighty proposals were accepted. The total number of concurrent sessions was 55, the number of plenary sessions was six, and the number of presentations within concurrent sessions was 89. The total number of presenters was 140; some presentations had up to 4 co-presenters. In total, there were 177 conference participants and eight committee members and volunteers who assisted during the conference days.

We acknowledge all the excellent suggestions for future conferences made by those who completed the conference evaluation form. And we are so grateful for the very positive comments by many. Among them are the following: "I am so glad I went. I learned a great deal. I wish I could go to Amsterdam"; "A positive and thoughtful conference"; "Excellent opportunities for networking with and learning from colleagues, always a highlight of an AIS conference"; "Great to be in one location"; "Thank you for organizing this terrific conference!"; "I loved the location and the city of Detroit and what the city has to offer."

The Nuts and Bolts pre-conference workshop had eight participants, and the online IDS pre-confer-

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First order of business was checking in at the registration table at the 2018 Annual Conference of the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies, held in October in the Crowne Plaza hotel in Detroit.

Conference Report

Continued from page 4

ence workshop had four participants. Both were deemed very worthwhile by the participants. In addition, the Sections and GUIDE breakfasts were appreciated by those who attended. AIS strives to increase and improve its networking and mentoring opportunities for members both at and between conferences.

All concurrent sessions were set in either 60- or 75- minute blocks, including the plenary sessions. Workshops and panels were allocated the full 75 minutes. Paper presentations were mostly clustered into groups of two or three, with some solo presentations in 60-minute sessions. Attendance at the plenaries mostly included the full complement of conference participants. Attendance in concurrent sessions ranged from 10 to 30, except for Saturday afternoon, when attendance dwindled to three to five per session, as is often the case at conferences since some participants leave the conference early and there is no way to predict that in advance. There were only four actual cancellations, a low number, and we were able to make shifts as necessary for those who needed them (e.g., plane departures changed, and presentations had to be shifted from one time slot to another or even from one day to another). An errata sheet was given to each participant, and it was updated daily as necessary.

Especially engaging on Friday evening was the Ketu Koti Table Dialogue plenary. The Ketu Koti Dialogue Table came into being to give voice to the silenced Dutch-Surinamese history of slavery and to facilitate the urgent need for a dialogue between Black and White and was inspired by the Jewish Passover table. It found its rightful place at this conference focused on diversity and had very appreciative and



Dr. Allison Upshaw's performance of "A Black Woman Speaks" was among the highlights of the 2018 Annual Conference of the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies, held in October in Detroit.

enlightened participants. Professor Machiel Keestra (University of Amsterdam) and Mercedes Zandwijken (Founding Director, Ketu Koti Table Foundation in Amsterdam, ketikotitafel.nl) led the plenary session in a highly effective and inspired manner. All participants were seated in two rows facing each other as "couples"—in twos—in an almost circular pattern in the plenary session room. They were asked to partner with someone they did not know or they did not know well so as to have a meaningful dialogue between people who were seeking to learn about each other's perspectives in response to particular prompts, questions that ran from the personal to the general, with the ultimate goal of being able to engage in productive, substantive dialogue about what is a highly difficult topic without becoming hostile or belligerent.

The performance on Saturday morning by Allison Upshaw was moving and inspiring as well as motivating regarding the major conference theme. A Black Woman Speaks

was written and presented by actress/activist Beah Richards in 1951. The performance provided an oral history of the relationship between Black and White women and laid the foundation for honest dialogue between Black and White feminism. Dr. Upshaw broke the audience into small groups and then larger groups to share thoughts and feelings in response to specific prompts. The musical aspect of this session as well as the discussion left participants wanting more.

This session, like the Ketu Koti Dialogues, focused on personal as well as group identity and diversity, which concern everyone. These interrelated themes and variations across the disciplines emerged in many of the concurrent conference as well. The conference served to enlighten everyone present to think critically about and embrace the intersection of race, gender, class, abilities, theories and disciplines—the overarching theme of the conference that addressed the complex world in which we all live.

Finances, digitization, & engagement

AIS President Reports on Board of Directors

By James Welch IV
AIS President

The AIS Board of Directors met on October 10th and 11th, 2018, in the Executive Boardroom at our conference hotel, the Crowne Plaza in downtown Detroit.

Our first order of business was a discussion of AIS finances. Bill Newell had stepped down from his longtime position of Treasurer, so we discussed the logistics of moving our funds to a national bank account, and adding some of the Treasurer responsibilities to those of our Business Manager, currently Scott Crabill. Scott offered to oversee the transfer of the account and coordinate this with Bill Newell. Bill was also responsible for the paperwork that incorporated AIS as a non-prof-

it organization in the state of Ohio. Marcus Tanner, who as Executive Director of the AIS Honor Society is familiar with the process, will be taking over this process. We are investigating the procedures for non-profit status in several states. The board also discussed various fundraising strategies to be revisited during our midyear meeting.

Scott Crabill reported that the AIS office houses a large number of documents, including various files, records, back issues of our journal and newsletters. He and our office assistant, Shaunda Mankowski, will inventory the documents and determine what needs to be archived. The library at their home institution, Oakland University, has offered to house these archives, and we are

making plans to digitize them.

Vice President of Relations Khadijah Miller is setting up an outreach committee to send letters to various "Studies" programs publicizing AIS resources and membership benefits. All AIS members are welcome to participate in this endeavor.

We discussed several strategies for engaging graduate (and undergraduate) students in AIS, including publication opportunities. Jennifer Dellner, Vice President of Development, showed the board the organizational structure of Eliterature.org, as a model of what similar associations are doing. Khadijah will continue to conduct outreach efforts with assistance from AIS members.

Jennifer Dellner, who is also our Director of Digital Initiatives, reported on efforts to move our website from the Oakland University servers to an independent server, which will give AIS more control over the site and allow us to upgrade its capabilities. We are conducting a similar effort to move our listservs from university servers to independent servers. We will distribute a membership survey gaging interest in various board initiatives, including diversity relations, sections, and digital and web-based projects.

Sven Arvidson, co-editor of *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*, reported on our successful publication of two issues for the first time this year—

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AIS board members and friends dined together at one of Detroit's many restaurants during the Annual Conference in 2018, held at the Detroit Crowne Plaza.

AIS Board Report

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our regular annual journal and the special issue *Festschrift* honoring the work of Bill Newell. Sven and co-editor Gretchen Schulz (who was not present at the meeting) concur that the two-editor model is the best approach to publishing IIS, and we discussed the qualifications of possible candidates who might assume that role whenever Gretchen decides to step down. Next year, we are planning to publish our regular issue as well as a special issue focusing on the work of Julie Klein. We are also in the last stages of finalizing a contract with Texas Tech University Press, to publish and distribute *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*.

Our contract with EBSCO should be finalized shortly, as well. James Welch, editor of *Integrative Pathways*, our quarterly newsletter, reported that printing services at his home university are no longer available, and we discussed moving the newsletter to solely electronic distribution, although he is also contacting a local print shop as well. He discussed possibilities for enhancing layout options if the newsletter goes electronic. Also, there is the possibility of expanding bilingual articles in Spanish and English.

Marcus Tanner reported on the Alpha Sigma Iota Honor Society. It currently has 10 institutional chapters and 127 student members. Michele Buchburger has signed on as co-chair to help Marcus out. They are



Members of the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies enjoyed dinner together during the 2018 Annual Conference, held in October in Detroit. The Conference offered choices of several Detroit restaurants during the meeting.

working on job descriptions for officer positions.

Our International Liaison, Brian McCormack, reported on his efforts to bolster participation in AIS Sections. He showed us various models of how sections work in other organizations, and we discussed ways to enhance engagement in our sections. Brian led a discussion of engagement strategies at breakfast that Friday morning. We also discussed ways to promote and publicize sections as we revamp our website.

Conference reports followed. Our conference liaison and coordinator of the Detroit conference, Roz Schindler, reported statistics for this year's conference participation, including the budget. The board discussed possibilities for revamping future pre-conference workshops. Machiel Keestra and Linda de Greef reported on preparations for next

year's conference in Amsterdam, including possibilities of networking with European interdisciplinary organizations and encouraging non-traditional presentation models.

The board reviewed Karen Moranski's report on the planning for the 2020 conference at Sonoma State University in California. We discussed possible conference themes, including some centered on various facets of sustainability. Cynthia Kimball Davis reported on the planning for the 2021 conference at Southern Utah University. We discussed ideas for the conference theme, and the idea of supplying some sort of institutional certificate for graduate students and others, acknowledging participation in conferences.

Finally, Texas Tech, with Marcus Tanner as the Coordinator, will be host for the 2023 AIS Conference. We are seeking a host institution for 2022!

And with that, we adjourned our meeting and made ready to begin our conference. If you have questions or would like to help out with any of our projects, please contact me at jlfwiv@mac.com.

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President,
Association for Interdisciplinary
Studies

Save the Date!

AIS Goes to Amsterdam 2019

The Association for Interdisciplinary Studies 41st Conference will be crossing the Atlantic for the first time and set up base in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, so save the date!

From 24-26 October 2019, the conference will be hosted by the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (IIS) at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). In 2019, the theme of the annual AIS conference will be 'Interdisciplinarity in Global Contexts'. Since a defining feature of interdisciplinarity is not to abstract or isolate problems but rather to approach them in their real-world contexts, this conference theme asks participants to consider the global and local contexts of interdisciplinary education and research.

You are invited to send in your proposal at www.aisconference2019.nl/callforproposal. We are especially

looking for proposals that can start a debate, encourage audience involvement and a lively dialogue with both AIS members and new participants.

In Detroit, some of you were already persuaded to

interdisciplinary academics from Europe or other parts of the world, all bringing their own backgrounds and expertise.

We will follow up with more information about the 41st conference shortly.

If you would like to dive into the practical matters associated with traveling to Amsterdam right a way, such as hotel accommodations, please go

to www.aisconference2019.nl/practicalinfo. Or if you just like to stay on top of things, please consider signing up for the AIS2019 conference newsletter here.

Spread the word! Please share on FB: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1424140241062637/>.



come over to Amsterdam by the typical Dutch keychain clogs and almost instantly said yes. Yet, Amsterdam has much more to offer, as it is a diverse, open and global city, maintaining many of its historic characteristics and cultural heritage. Furthermore, this next edition is a great opportunity to share your experiences with in-

Book Review

Enhanced Collaborations Suggested by Academic Librarians

By Rick Szostak

Mack, Daniel C. and Craig Gibson, eds. *Interdisciplinarity and Academic Libraries*. Chicago: Association of Research and College Libraries, 2012. ISBN 978-083898615-8.

The AIS literature has tended to focus on interdisciplinarity as experienced by instructors and researchers. Both groups will benefit, though, from learning about the ways in which academic librarians experience and address interdisciplinarity. The ten chapters in this book are almost entirely written by professional librarians working in university settings. The book suggests many possibilities for enhanced collaboration between librarians and both teachers and researchers.

The world of the academic librarian has changed dramatically in recent decades for a variety of reasons, including digitization, budgetary pressures, and interdisciplinarity. As a result, academic librarians are seeking to redefine their role. Libraries' strategic plans often speak of closer collaboration with researchers and teachers. There is, then, a historical opportunity to encourage academic librarians to see facilitating interdisciplinarity as a key part of their professional

role. Note here that the mission of academic libraries is inherently inclusive, driven by their long-standing commitment to provide access to a broad and coherent collection of scholarly resources.

Though university libraries operate outside the disciplinary structure that characterizes most universities, they have often mimicked this structure internally. Acquisition budgets are often allocated on a departmental (hence, generally disciplinary)

The world of the academic librarian has changed dramatically in recent decades for a variety of reasons, including digitization, budgetary pressures, and interdisciplinarity. As a result, academic librarians are seeking to redefine their role.

basis, and liaison librarians are assigned to work with particular departments. When new interdisciplinary programs or centers are created on a campus, these often struggle to gain an appropriate share of library acquisition budgets that are based on deep historical precedent that winds up penalizing newer programs.

Multiple authors saw an important role for librarians when new programs are being created in identifying areas where university library collections need to

be enhanced. More generally, librarians worry that evaluation in terms of department-based metrics hampers their ability to serve interdisciplinarity. Most also see a need to move beyond department-based budgeting.

Multiple authors noted that interdisciplinarity may be aided as budget pressures have induced some libraries to move toward a smaller number of acquisition "pots" in place of large numbers of disciplinary allocations. Yet the literature on interdisciplinarity has often recognized that budget-driven clustering of academic units often yields multidisciplinary at best.

There is enhanced collaboration across subjects between liaison librarians. Some university libraries have created formal committees and/or established acquisition budgets for interdisciplinary materials that are managed collectively. Most librarians would like to see even more collaboration. Though often trained in a particular discipline, they welcome the opportunity to facilitate interdisciplinary exploration.

Libraries are also increasingly purchasing packages of journals

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Book Review

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centrally from publishers. Many librarians speculated that this practice may better serve interdisciplinary than the previous system whereby individual librarians purchased journals for “their” departments. This advantage depends, of course, on interdisciplinary journals being available in these large packages.

Many chapters also spoke of a need for increased collaboration with teachers and researchers. Only then can librarians fully appreciate their precise needs. (Some libraries track inter-library loan requests and similar inquiries about resources in order to identify gaps in their collections.) Multiple authors bemoaned inadequate attention in the literature on interdisciplinary search to the role that librarians can play. They suspect that scholars are discouraged by the disciplinary identification of subject librarians, do not recognize that aiding scholarly search is part of the professional responsibilities of most academic librarians, and may fear unnecessarily that they need to define their search goals by themselves. Librarians are generally willing and indeed excited to move outside their areas of disciplinary expertise.

Finally, there may be scope for strategic collaboration between instructors, researchers, and librarians. Academic librarians may prove an important ally in institutional struggles over the place of interdisciplinarity.

Moreover, they are used to aiding searches about topics with which they have limited familiarity: They have expertise in search itself. They might in particular play an invaluable role on interdisciplinary research teams, aiding with not only searching but internal communication and perhaps data management. Moreover, librarians in close contact with diverse researchers could identify research synergies — a task that university administrators often struggle to achieve.

Chapter 9, in particular, addresses the topic of “Teaching Research across Disciplines: Interdisciplinarity and Information Literacy.” The author, Maralyn Jones, draws heavily on literature associated with AIS, including textbooks by Augsburg and Repko, in order to identify goals of student interdisciplinary research. Jones urges librarians to help students not only search across disciplines but also to identify relevant disciplines, to understand and develop disciplinary adequacy, to learn and identify the elements of disciplinary perspective, and achieve

other goals of interdisciplinary education. Her recommendation is all the more important because instructors of interdisciplinary courses often underestimate the aid they and their students can obtain from academic librarians.

There was widespread recognition in the book that current systems of library classification are grounded in disciplines and thus hamper interdisciplinary search. Some technologies — such as the ability to perform full-text searches across large databases — aid interdisciplinary search but challenges remain. It was noted that search engines such as Google lack precision: often they cannot guide a researcher to very specific information. Yet the popularity of such search engines deters libraries from investing in internal search capabilities that might enhance interdisciplinarity.

Finally, there may be scope for strategic collaboration between instructors, researchers, and librarians. Academic librarians may prove an important ally in institutional struggles over the place of interdisciplinarity. Though many librarians may be assigned to work with disciplines, this book shows that they have a natural desire to encourage interdisciplinary search and collaboration. They also generally appreciate the limitations of disciplinary structures.

Many chapters also spoke of a need for increased collaboration with teachers and researchers. Only then can librarians fully appreciate their precise needs.

AIS Welcomes New Board Members – Meryl van Goch & Allison Upshaw

By James Welch IV
AIS President

This year's AIS Board of Directors election was held over the summer. We had two open At-Large positions, and through the efforts of the nomination committee had an extraordinarily strong slate of candidates from all over the world. I believe this reflects the reach and impact that AIS has achieved in the expanding field of interdisciplinary studies. I'd like to personally thank all of the candidates for stepping up and providing us with extensive information about their backgrounds, interests and research. Please stay involved with us and think about running again!

I'd also like to express my gratitude to outgoing at-large members Robin DeRosa and Paul Hirsch for their time, effort and wonderful contributions to the work of the AIS Board of Directors.

And now we welcome our new board members, Merel van Goch and Allison Upshaw. I will let them introduce themselves with excerpts from their candidate statements. Thanks to Merel and Allison for joining the fray, and we are all looking forward to the work ahead!

Merel von Goch

"As tenured assistant professor in Liberal Arts and Sciences at Utrecht University, the Netherlands, I am actively involved in interdisciplinary higher education, since our undergraduate program centers around an integrative core based on the interdisciplinary research process. My research integrates educational sciences and cognitive psychology and focuses on the cognitive development of students in interdisciplinary higher education.

"To innovatively tackle complex, interdisciplinary problems, the people involved need a broad set of skills: they need to learn how to collaborate and communicate across disciplines, they need to be flexible and adapt easily, they need to continuously reflect on their knowledge, beliefs and skills, and they need to solve problems efficiently and creatively... I study how higher education institutions can foster students' innovative development by mapping students' development throughout interdisciplinary and disciplinary undergraduate education, and by identifying program characteristics that foster critical aspects of innovative development.

"Currently, next to lecturing in



our program, I am the departmental coordinator for the School Liberal Arts in the Humanities Honours Programme, in which I teach an interdisciplinary honors track. I also guest lecture on the interdisciplinary research process to students and lecturers in a wide range of departments at our university. I also actively support the open science movement. Naturally, I peer review and present my work at conferences, and I'm a member of several scientific organizations, including AIS. AIS

is especially dear to me, as a warm community of like-minded interdisciplinarians.

"I will demonstrate my involvement with AIS and interdisciplinary higher education along three themes: the scholarship of interdisciplinary teaching and learning, diversity, and a focus on students. These three themes resonate with objectives I'd like to devote my time and energy to as an At-Large board member. I am actively involved in the scholarship of interdisciplinary teaching and learning. I call for evidence-based education through empirical research using methodological pluralism. I support AIS' focus on encouraging diversity in the board and membership. I would want to continue and elaborate on the work that has been done by the AIS board, subcommittees and task forces with respect to diversity. My points of interest include internationalization and the inclusion of the younger generation of interdisciplinarians. Diversity brings valuable new perspectives. Also, it is important to me to actively involve students in education. Higher education's main goal is to prepare students for the future. AIS is the leading association with respect to

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New Board Members

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educating interdisciplinary students: let's bring them in.

"I am very enthusiastic about the position of AIS At-Large board member, and I am excited to learn more about this opportunity. I can be contacted at m.m.vangoch@uu.nl."

Allison Upshaw

Allison Upshaw completed her doctoral program in interdisciplinary studies (aesthetic meaning-making/performance/arts-based research methods) from the University of Alabama. She holds two degrees in voice performance and, in addition to her work as a professional stage actress, often performs recitals of music by composers of African descent. She is a qualitative bricoleur, braiding arts-based research methods, critical performative autoethnography, and the storied lives of Black women.

Allison's vocational journey has been a road of twists and turns, both before and after her doctoral program. She worked as the coordinator for minority recruitment and retention at Oberlin Conservatory, first-year counselor for first generation college students at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, director of the African American Cultural Center at Louisiana State University, and voice instructor at Point University. She owns her own arts education consultancy—Classroom OPERAtunities, and has even worked full time as a poetry performer.

Allison has been an active participant in AIS conferences since 2015, where her presentations have continued her work as a performative researcher... Allison has been active in efforts to increase diversity within AIS, in terms of membership, content and expression. She has demonstrat-



ed her ability to work with others in collaborative forums, including panel discussions and performances. Allison is well known for her collegial and supportive spirit.

After graduation, Allison returned to the rural community of her birth. She traces ownership of the family land back five generations to the freeing of her great-great-grandfather from slavery and, in honor of that lineage, will be working with community organizations to produce an interdisciplinary documentary film based on African American orality. Collaborators include the county historical society, the local arts council, and the board of education. She is also planning a research project on the impact of the arts on the success of rural African American students.

She said, if elected to a board position, she would utilize her extensive background with diversity initiatives to increase the voices of ethnic and cultural minorities within AIS, support graduate student participation in AIS administrative practices, and bolster participation from interdisciplinary artists, researchers, teachers and scholars.

She noted the AIS conference has been so welcoming to her (and her work) that she is committed to increasing the presence of interdisciplinary artists, and people of color within the organization. That is not something that will happen overnight, she says, but she's committed to the process.

Allison also submitted a poem for our edification:

An Introduction

Blood memories...
Run through my veins like fire
Sluggish with red clay soil, soggy cotton,
the heat
Of LA (lower Alabama), and the stories
of Black Women.

Blood memories...
Flowing from Sasa to Zamani and back
Storied living, framing communities
Identifying strands, braiding performances
My/Their/Our Lives artfully academic

Blood memories...
Anchor the academic journey
Carving out living spaces within dead
halls."

FINTERDIS

Finnish Interdisciplinary Society Inspired by AIS

By Kirsi Cheas, Ph.D.

Postdoctoral Researcher • John Morton Center for North American Studies • University of Turku, Finland

President, FINTERDIS

kirsi-mari.cheas@fulbrightmail.org

Author's Note

FINTERDIS – The Finnish Interdisciplinary Society is an autonomous registered association founded in Helsinki, Finland, on October 4, 2018. Launched and directed by early-career researchers frustrated with the inflexibility of the current academic structures, FINTERDIS aims to support the interdisciplinary efforts of students and junior scholars in particular.

One of FINTERDIS's principal goals is the internationalization of Finnish scholars and promoting the exchange of interdisciplinary ideas, practices, tools, and theories across national boundaries. In this article, Kirsi Cheas, founding member and current president of FINTERDIS, describes how her AIS experience inspired the creation of this new community and prospects for intergenerational implementation of interdisciplinarity.

October 2017. I remember feeling anxious as I was getting closer to Baltimore, where I was about to attend my first Association for Interdisciplinary Studies conference, organized at the University of Maryland. Back then, I was still a doctoral candidate, getting prepared to defend my thesis which compared American and Finnish foreign news on the Global South from the joint perspectives of area studies and media and communication studies. At my home institution – the University of Helsinki, Finland – I was forced to affiliate either with area studies or media studies, rather than being able to create connections between these separate faculties. Even though a number of interdisciplinary doctoral programs do exist in my country and at this university, these programs are limited in scope, not allowing the students to explore the kinds of new and unexpected connections I have been interested in.

My experiences echo claims by Pfirman and Martin, as well as Dooling and colleagues, on that early-career interdisciplinary scholars are in especially vulnerable positions within the current academic structures, and that the voices of junior scholars are rarely heard by administrators responsible for interdisciplinary programs (Oxford Handbook on Interdisciplinarity, 2nd edition, 2017). As a new member, I did not know what to expect from AIS, but the conference title “Beyond Talking Heads” led me to cautiously hope for an atmosphere where a doctoral student like me could openly explore connections between diverse fields and approaches, without having to apologize for my curiosity or feel like an intruder.

Even if I had high hopes for AIS, there is no way I could have even imagined the incredible community I was about to encounter and the new possibilities AIS would help me perceive in my home country. After endless talks with Heidi Upton about frames and homophonic and polyphonic expressions in music and media; building micro houses with matches while discussing creativity with AIS's President James Welch; and exploring tools to enhance cross-disciplinary communication in the guidance of Machiel Keestra and Michael O'Rourke – just to name a few fascinating activities – I ended up in a lunch table with a number of AIS Board members on the last day of the conference. I then shared my concerns with them about the lack of interdisciplinary collaboration in my home country. Rather than telling me that I was being too ambitious with my research and that it would just be easier for me to adapt to the existing structures, as I was used to hearing from more advanced scholars, these AIS members encouraged me to keep going and continue pushing boundaries, while telling me how they all had been through very similar experiences. On my way back to Finland, I realized that the AIS conference had not only helped me establish my identity as a media scholar with an interdisciplinary focus – AIS had also inspired me to reach out to other broad-minded people in my home country and join forces with them, to promote better opportunities for innovative thought. I became determined to establish an interdisciplinary society in Finland, building on the model provided by AIS. I was – and continue to be – amazed by

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how readily and happily different AIS members, including very highly esteemed scholars, would listen and offer support to a novice member and junior scholar like me. I believe other researchers in my home country deserve similar kind of support, and it became my mission to make it happen.

October 2018. Like the year before, I am headed for the annual AIS conference, this time to be organized at Wayne State University in Detroit. Again, I am feeling anxious, although this time, I am not concerned about how the conference will be – I already know it will be fantastic – but because I fear I will not make it in time due to severe flight delays, cancellations and overbookings. While spending endless hours at airports – first in London, then in Frankfurt, and then in Chicago – desperately trying to depart for Detroit, I find myself thinking about the things that have happened over the past 12 months, and that would not have happened without the impact that AIS had on me in the previous conference.

I knew many junior scholars who had struggled with their interdisciplinary work back in Finland, but convincing them that we needed to do something about it took time. Many junior scholars and students felt the need to please their superiors rather than claiming more space for their independent ideas. I spent months having confidential conversations with different individuals about their experiences. One day, I ended up in Hoplop – an amusement park for children – with a new colleague, Dr. Anna-Leena Riitaaja; postdoctoral scholar whose daughter was approximately the same age as mine. Watching them play and build mansions out of huge blocks, we talked about the importance of

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imagination in learning, and how this should not change when we move from pre-school to a university. Students and junior scholars are the researchers of the future, and if we wish to have innovations in the years to come, students have to be provided with grounds to work on such initiatives early on, or their unique potential will be lost. This was the moment – watching our kids in this park - when we felt the time had come to found the Finnish Interdisciplinary Society, which we soon started calling FINTERDIS. Our project embraces interdisciplinary learning as a life-long process, where advanced scholars and teachers can also learn from junior scholars, students, and even children, not just vice versa.

Soon after this playdate between Anna-Leena and I, three other members joined our FINTERDIS working group: Janina da Silva Golcalves, Master of Science currently wrapping up her MA degree; Grace I An Gao, a doctoral candidate who had emigrated to Finland from Taiwan; and Dr. Harri Kettunen, a docent with plenty of interdisciplinary research, teaching, and supervision experience. By forming a group consisting of members at diverse career stages and focusing on different areas of research, we wanted to pave the way for a community that would be as open, inclusive and international as possible.

With the working group, we planned the principal activities for

FINTERDIS, including workshops, networking events, and informal peer-support groups for students, junior scholars, and their teachers and supervisors around Finland. We planned a website, online forum, and newsletters which will allow the members of FINTERDIS to engage with interdisciplinary theory, tools, and methods and present their ideas in Finnish and in English. We also planned a survey and group and individual interviews with Finnish and foreign scholars at different career stages working in the Finnish academic context, to gain systematic and multifaceted understanding about the possibilities and limitations they are encountering in regard to interdisciplinarity. As a collective, the goal of FINTERDIS is to give a voice to Finnish junior scholars and students in particular; gain knowledge about their experiences and share it with university professors, administrators, and policy makers and convince them about the fact that junior scholars equally deserve an opportunity to cross different boundaries, rather than having to limit ourselves to existing programs designed by more advanced faculty. Our working group also found it important to promote the internationalization of Finnish junior scholars, while introducing interdisciplinary practices from other countries in Finland and vice versa. We received substantial support and advice in

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this planning phase especially from Machiel Kestra, past president of AIS and professor at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Amsterdam. Our working group met both excitement and resistance around us, and I would turn to Machiel whenever I started losing hope that a change driven by our working group could be possible. I am profoundly grateful for his remarkable patience and for providing us with the strength and motivation to keep going, rather than being overwhelmed by the cynical voices.

On September 20th, our working group sent out open invitation letters to the formal FINTERDIS founding meeting to be organized in Helsinki on October 4, 2018, welcoming scholars at all career stages to attend and join as members. A bilingual invitation, including English and Finnish, was distributed widely with the help of mailing lists in different universities around the country. In the end, we had to change the founding meeting hall three times, because more and more people kept signing up and we would not have enough chairs – a challenge we were thrilled about. In the end, some fifty scholars affiliated with different universities around the country showed up, and on top of that, our working group received over 100 emails from

Rather than bragging about their vast knowledge, all the people at the FINTERDIS founding meeting were humble and aware about the limits of their own expertise, eager to learn new things from each other – an atmosphere that reminded me of AIS.

individual scholars and other organizations expressing enthusiasm and wanting to participate in the activities of FINTERDIS. The founding meeting established rules for the Society, made plans for activities to be organized in the near future, and elected a Board of directors for the period 2018-19. The people present unanimously agreed that the majority of Board members including the president and vice president should be early-career researchers – below docent level, which in Finland means adjunct professor or full professor level – at the time of their election, to maintain the Society’s focus on junior scholars’ and students’ interdisciplinary efforts.

I was catching my breath during the founding meeting as I was getting to know the incredibly intelligent, open-minded, and curious people who were committing to this initiative. For instance, Dr. Samuli Mäkinen, who became FINTERDIS’s Deputy Board member, holds a Ph.D. from theoretical philosophy, while currently working on another Ph.D. in epidemiology at the Faculty of Medicine. Board member, Dr. Elina Mäkinen, currently associate professor of New Social Policy at Tampere University, holds a Ph.D. from Stanford University, and has conducted research on transdisciplinary practices in the U.S. while currently promoting such approaches in Finland. Board member, Dr. Blair Stevenson works as principal lecturer and founding manager at the Oulu Educational Product Design Lab, which brings together students and professionals to create innovative learning games and other products. Board members Essi Huotari and Annika Nuotiomäki are graduate students specializing on holistic approaches on the environment and sustainability. And so forth. Rather than bragging about their vast knowledge, all the people at the FINTERDIS

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founding meeting were humble and aware about the limits of their own expertise, eager to learn new things from each other – an atmosphere that reminded me of AIS. As I finally arrived in Detroit, over 24hrs late, I was thrilled to find so many AIS members now enthusiastic about the FINTERDIS initiative, which Machiel had kindly presented on my behalf in the conference's open plenary session while I was still stuck at the airport.

October 2019. The AIS conference will be hosted for the first time outside of North America, at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies of the University of Amsterdam in

the Netherlands. This time, I plan to travel well in advance, to make sure possible flight delays will not cause me to miss a minute of this extraordinary event. What is more, I now plan to travel accompanied, with other FINTERDIS members by my side. We are all eager to learn from practices of the IIS at Amsterdam, while my Finnish colleagues cannot wait to finally attend an AIS conference, having heard so much about these events from me. I no longer get overwhelmed by cynical voices, as I feel empowered by all the curious, open-minded and brave people around me, while perceiving AIS as a model of what can be achieved when such brilliant minds are brought together to promote a common cause.

About AIS

The Association for Interdisciplinary Studies is the U.S.-based international professional association devoted to interdisciplinary teaching (including service learning), research, program administration, and public policy. Interdisciplinarity integrates the insights of knowledge domains to produce a more comprehensive understanding of complex problems, issues, or questions. AIS serves as an organized professional voice and source of information on interdisciplinary approaches and the integration of insights from diverse communities to address complex problems in education and research. Founded in 1979, it is incorporated as a non-profit 501(c)3 educational association in the state of Ohio.

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www.oakland.edu/ais

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