

## Tribute to Gretchen Schulz

It is with the heaviest of hearts that I write this tribute to Dr. Gretchen Schulz, my co-editor of six years for *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*, who passed away recently as we were putting final touches on this series of articles. The AIS President and Board of Directors informed our membership in September.

Dear Members of AIS,

We write with very sad news. The AIS Board has learned that Gretchen Schulz, co-editor of *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies* from 2012 through the present and longtime member of AIS, died suddenly at home on August 30th. As we mourn her loss and contemplate ways to celebrate her life and work, we wanted to inform the membership and reach out to you. We are working to plan ways to honor her memory at the Sonoma conference in November and will share plans with you for written tributes as these unfold. As all of you know, Gretchen was a remarkable human being, scholar, friend, and fiercely nurturing editor of every writer whose work she brought to publication. She touched the lives of so many members of this organization and will be deeply missed. Her obituary appeared in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on September 12th. Let us keep Gretchen and each other in our thoughts as we navigate this difficult loss.

I think about Gretchen many times every day. I miss her tremendously.

I first “met” Gretchen as an author new to the journal. When I received word about my submission, I read the phrase “Sven, it is almost perfect.” I was elated. Then I looked at the document that accompanied the email. Gretchen’s marginal comments on my submission numbered 102! There were suggestions for word substitution, dangling modifiers (her favorite), consistency of argument and verb tense, and so on. I soon learned what all of our authors learned over the last 11 years. Gretchen Schulz took every paragraph, every sentence, every word, as seriously as if it were her own creation. Gretchen’s ability to “close read” a text was the most remarkable skill I have ever encountered in a scholar. She had an uncanny ability to hear what the author was trying to say, as if she were somehow inside their head, and especially, to understand how they might say it better. And this ability was accompanied by a very large generosity of spirit—a genuine desire to help a writer craft their ideas well. Many of us now have Gretchen’s encouraging voice in our heads as we write.

After publishing several times in *Issues*, and with the journal in need of a co-editor to work with Gretchen in 2017, we got the chance to meet in person. Gretchen was at a conference in Seattle and I drove to meet her between sessions. She recognized me as I got to the top of the stairs and welcomed me, arms outstretched—a stranger—with the biggest hug you can imagine! Gretchen convinced me, over the next month or so, to join her as co-editor and it was one of the most rewarding decisions in my career. Later, she embraced

my phrase “hugging” for the copious marginal comments she would make on an author’s submission: “I hope I didn’t hug it too tightly” she would say to me.

Gretchen embodied the *attitude* of the journal, an attitude she said she learned in her first year with her first co-editor, long-time Executive Director of AIS, Bill Newell. *Be nurturing for authors*. This is not authors’ typical experience with journals, and it had certainly not been my experience over the years from journal editors. I have come to see it as the single most important characteristic of *Issues* co-editors—nurture authors to bring out their best ideas even if it takes a ton of work that may not even lead to publication. Gretchen and I have worked with some authors for several years and a number of drafts to bring their ideas to the printed page. There is no incubator or greenhouse for interdisciplinary studies scholarship. People who do this scholarship and teach in this field usually do not have PhDs in interdisciplinary studies, but have terminal degrees from a range of disciplinary fields. There is no formalized and agreed upon professional preparation for interdisciplinary practice. Editors in burgeoning fields such as IDS are deeply involved in nurturing, shaping, and curating the ways in which the field’s scholarly agenda and foundations grow. This field is in discovery, still forming, changing, and, for better or worse, *Issues* co-editors are scholars helping determine that formation through the yearly edited volume. Bill taught Gretchen about this responsibility and she taught me. I quote Gretchen from our 2018 annual report to the AIS Board.

PLEASE NOTE: Sven and I (and the peer reviewers whom we recruit) make a concerted effort to offer critiques that can be helpful for the authors whose work is rejected (and comments that are as supportive as they can be in the circumstances). This reflects the editorial policy of “tough love” that Gretchen learned from Bill Newell and has passed on to Sven. We want to nurture incipient (or otherwise inadequate) expressions of interdisciplinarity, even if they haven’t manifested as good work (appropriate for our journal) yet. Upon occasion, authors whose work has been rejected with extensive suggestions for revision and resubmission do revise and resubmit—with success. Worth noting, too, is that we have quite a collection of “thank you” notes from authors whose work was accepted with extensive suggestions for revision who express what seems to be heartfelt appreciation for the close reading and compassionate critique that yielded the suggestions they feel have indeed improved the work. Given the hard work involved, that’s very satisfying, something we hope those of you who might be considering editing in the future will bear in mind.

The work is not easy, as Gretchen observes, and the result is not perfect. But one thing is absolute: The field of interdisciplinary studies has lost a stalwart champion.

In her 11-year tenure (2012–2022)—responsible as a co-editor for the largest number of annual printings (15) of anyone in the 40-year history of

the journal—Gretchen also anchored the journal’s most substantial advancements. For the first time, *Issues* is now published by a university press, Texas Tech University, starting in 2020 with Volume 38 (numbers 1 & 2). For the first time, *Issues* has an international Editorial Advisory Board whose expertise superbly represents the field. For the first time, *Issues* published a *Festschrift* for the founder of AIS, William Newell. For the first time, *Issues* published an entire special volume number dedicated to the field’s top scholar and previous co-editor of this journal, Julie Thompson Klein. For the first time, *Issues* published special collections of articles on interdisciplinarity in Latin America and on interdisciplinary collaboration. The list goes on, but you get the picture. Here is the full list of Gretchen’s volumes and her collaborators.

- 2012 Gretchen Schulz with William H. Newell, volume 30
- 2013 Gretchen Schulz with Pauline Gagnon, volume 31
- 2014 Gretchen Schulz with Pauline Gagnon volume 32
- 2015 Gretchen Schulz with Simeon Dreyfuss, volume 33
- 2016 Gretchen Schulz with Simeon Dreyfuss, volume 34
- 2017 Gretchen Schulz with P. Sven Arvidson, volume 35
- 2018 Gretchen Schulz with P. Sven Arvidson, volume 36 (1 and 2)
- 2019 Gretchen Schulz with P. Sven Arvidson, volume 37 (1 and 2)
- 2020 Gretchen Schulz with P. Sven Arvidson, volume 38
- 2021 Gretchen Schulz with P. Sven Arvidson, volume 39 (1 and 2)
- 2022 Gretchen Schulz with P. Sven Arvidson, volume 40 (1 and 2)

During this period Gretchen also worked with guest editors: Tanya Augsburg, Bianca Vienni Baptista, Machiel Keestra, and yours truly. I have no doubt that we are all the better for it.

Who was Gretchen Schulz? Perhaps I should be able to answer this after six years of nearly daily conversations about interdisciplinary studies and many other things. But really, I can best respond from my own window of our shared scene. In a phrase, Gretchen was my intellectual sister. And she was so much fun!

I once shared that I had been watching the old 1960s *Rawhide* series late at night, about a group of cowboys driving cattle from Texas to the Midwest stockyards in the 1860s. She immediately sent me the theme song lyrics, which I had already been singing all day, every day, it seemed, and confessed to loving the old westerns (and preferring, as a young girl, the lead actor Eric Fleming to the not-yet-famous Clint Eastwood). You may know the song:

*Keep Rollin', Rollin', Rollin',  
Though the streams are swollen,  
Keep them dawwgies rollin', Rawhide!*

In some stretches of co-editing, the work can become grueling with deadlines looming like hungry wolves on the cattle trail. Just when we both needed motivation, I would find the following as a melodic subject line of an email from Gretchen: *Rollin' Rollin' Rollin'*.

Gretchen Schulz, wherever you are sister, Keep Rollin', Rollin', Rollin'.

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