A Faculty of One: Navigating the Complexities of Interdisciplinary Work

R. David Lankes, Follett Chair
The Formula for Success in Academia
The Formula for Success in Academia

While \( ME < Fish_{\text{Biggest}} \) {
    then (pond ÷ 2) ;
}
The Formula for Success in Academia

While $\text{ME} < \text{Fish}_{\text{Biggest}}$

then $(\text{pond} \div 2)$;
The Information Field
Information Science as a Revelatory Case

- Growth of Undergraduate Education
- Strongly Aligned Professional Communities
- Strong Societal/Service Mission
- Interdisciplinary
• Public Policy
• Theology
• Education/Literacy
• Information Retrieval/Data Science

• Film Production
• History
• Librarianship/Archives
The Information Dilemma
The Information Dilemma

• Information Fields?
  • Digital Humanities
  • Technology
  • Analytics
  • Computer Science
  • Transportation
The Information Dilemma

• Information Fields?
  • Digital Humanities
  • Technology
  • Analytics
  • Computer Science
  • Transportation

• Discipline
  • Trans-Disciplinary
  • Post-Disciplinary
  • Cross-Disciplinary
  • Inter-Disciplinary
  • Meta-Disciplinary
The Information Dilemma

- Discipline
- Trans-Disciplinary
- Post-Disciplinary
- Cross-Disciplinary
- Inter-Disciplinary
- Meta-Disciplinary
• Buckland: as knowledge, as process, as thing

• Zins: 54 Scholar Delphi
The field of information science is not defined by a set of methods, research questions, theories, or indeed a single shared definition. Rather it is defined by a community having a sustained conversation.
The field of information science is not defined by a set of methods, research questions, theories, or indeed a single shared definition. Rather it is defined by a community having a sustained conversation.

The death of a field can be defined as the lack of meaningful productive conversation.
The field of information science is not defined by a set of methods, research questions, theories, or indeed a single shared definition. Rather it is defined by a community having a sustained conversation.

The death of a field can be defined as the lack of meaningful productive conversation.

Productive = Changes in understanding or direction of conversants.
Information Science started primarily as a discussion of library science looking beyond the institutions of libraries.
Information Science started primarily as a discussion of library science looking beyond the institutions of libraries.

This conversation was joined by a growing roster of conversants from other domains.
Information Science started primarily as a discussion of library science looking beyond the institutions of libraries.

This conversation was joined by a growing roster of conversants from other domains.

This can lead to feelings of marginalization.
Information Science started primarily as a discussion of library science looking beyond the institutions of libraries

This conversation was joined by a growing roster of conversants from other domains

This can lead to feelings of marginalization

However, a conversational view is one of engagement
That these are challenging, often difficult, times for academic libraries is no news … Concern for professionalism, with its attention to accountability and responsibility, abounds. Unprecedented growth in technology provides vast new opportunities for communication, and the availability of information far outstrips most people’s capacity to digest it all. In the face of this information explosion, it is ironic that academic librarians are casting about for an appropriate myth or model for library service … I suggest that we begin to think of libraries as centers for conversation and of ourselves as mediators of and participants in the conversations of the world.

Joan Bechtel 1986
That these are challenging, often difficult, times for academic libraries is no news … Concern for professionalism, with its attention to accountability and responsibility, abounds. Unprecedented growth in technology provides vast new opportunities for communication, and the availability of information far outstrips most people’s capacity to digest it all. In the face of this information explosion, it is ironic that academic librarians are casting about for an appropriate myth or model for library service … I suggest that we begin to think of libraries as centers for conversation and of ourselves as mediators of and participants in the conversations of the world.

Joan Bechtel 1986
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
School of Information Studies

Unity. We are a faculty of one. The faculty sits as a whole, not as individuals or groups who represent the specific program in which they teach or ascribe affiliation. Students and faculty are challenged to benefit from the paradox of a single information field that is manifested in many professional expressions. Students and faculty learn from each other through shared intellectual experiences and appropriate curriculum integration across the degree programs.

Continuity. We are an enduring organization. With over a century of innovation and leadership behind us, the school makes a lasting contribution to our field. In building our school, we concentrate on building an organization that goes beyond the influence of any particular dean or member of the faculty.

Goal
To transform the information field through leadership in research, development, and education.

Our Points of Distinction
• Whatever we do, we do through information and for people.
• Through information we transform individuals, organizations, and society.
• We recognize that information technology and management processes are means and not ends.
We are a faculty of one
Teaching
Common Values:
Respect
Commitment to Converse
Transformative Social Engagement
So What?

• Move Past Depth versus Breadth False Dichotomy

• Depth in Engaged Conversation
  • Concepts of Public Scholarship Help
  • Focusing on Impact Breaks Down Boundaries

• Thematic Texts, Summer Workshops, Internal “Visiting Scholars,” High Impact Thematic Courses
Robert Calin-Jageman
Lund-Gill Chair
Opportunity

- The College That Shall Be Named
- Moving From School to School of Thought