

Editors' Introduction

It is an honor for both of us to edit this volume of *Issues in Integrative Studies*, which celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Association for Integrative Studies. We have both been members of the AIS Board and regular AIS conference attendees for several years. Both of us have taught interdisciplinary courses, administered interdisciplinary programs, and written books and articles regarding interdisciplinarity. We have found the advice of AIS scholars and the AIS literature to be invaluable in all three of those pursuits. Moreover, we have valued the support, encouragement and camaraderie of fellow members of AIS. The AIS is an important scholarly organization with a unique mission. It has contributed an enormous amount to our collective understanding of all aspects of interdisciplinarity. It manages to maintain both high academic standards and a very collegial atmosphere. We are pleased to have been a part of it over the last few years and look forward to many more years of involvement.

Our easiest task as editors was to commission an article that would both look back and forward on the role of AIS. Bill Newell founded the organization, served as its first president, organized its first conference, and then has served as Executive Director for decades. The achievements of AIS are due chiefly to his focused leadership and unwavering commitment to interdisciplinarity. He has not only written a great deal himself regarding interdisciplinary teaching, research, and administration. He has encouraged the efforts of countless other interdisciplinarians (including ourselves). Newell's paper provides his unique personal perspective on both the history of AIS and the development of interdisciplinary undergraduate education over the last decades. Rich in historical detail, the paper nevertheless is framed in terms of the big issues that were faced in each decade.

While Newell's paper represents the only "official" celebration of AIS's 30th anniversary in this volume, each of the other papers provides evidence of the expanding scope of the Association's interests and the excitement of research on interdisciplinarity. Collectively, they explore interdisciplinary teaching, research, writing, course development, curriculum development, administration, assessment, and public policy. They draw inspiration from a variety of fields including: international political economy, economics, systems thinking, technical writing, poetry, arts and media studies, arts education, social economics, and critical thinking. They all draw upon and advance the literature on interdisciplinarity itself.

Ray Miller's paper is based on his keynote address to the 2008 AIS conference in Springfield, Illinois. While the paper has been edited for the page, it still hopefully carries much of the energy of the spoken version. Miller draws on his recent textbook in International Political Economy in order to identify three broad approaches within that field: neoclassical (market-oriented), institutionalist, and Marxist. He then applies these approaches simultaneously to interdisciplinarity itself, higher education, and the global economy. Throughout, he draws comparisons across these three areas of application. The paper thus exemplifies Miller's lifelong devotion to the practice of integration. It also communicates Miller's passion for social justice and for educating students to think deeply about their world. The paper is a call for us to continue to strive to provide a truly interdisciplinary education for our students, and it is peppered with a lifetime of advice on how to do so.

Leah Greden Mathews and Andrew Jones discuss how systems thinking can enhance the teaching of interdisciplinary integration. Systems thinking involves mapping the linkages among the key phenomena involved in a particular question. The literature on interdisciplinarity has long appreciated that interdisciplinarity is (most) useful in addressing questions that span multiple disciplines. It follows that interdisciplinarians must generally grapple with the sort of question that involves the interactions of several phenomena (so that an interdisciplinarian concerned with inner-city poverty would want to understand how economic, social, cultural, and political variables interact). Interdisciplinarians must first identify the most important relationships before they can proceed to the integration of diverse insights regarding each of these (while not losing sight of the emergent properties that might exist at the level of the system as a whole). Systems thinking provides a visually expressive way of doing just that. The paper introduces the reader to systems thinking, shows how this was applied in a particular course, and discusses the effects that systems thinking had on student learning outcomes. While the focus of the paper is on teaching, the authors at many points discuss how systems thinking is related to the process of performing interdisciplinary research. Interdisciplinary researchers can thus also learn about an invaluable tool from this paper.

David Major probes the problem of collaborative writing. While interdisciplinarians often work alone, it is common for interdisciplinary research to involve teams drawn from different disciplines. In our teaching, we often require our students to participate in group writing projects. It is important, therefore, that interdisciplinarians be aware of both the challenges inher-

ent in collaborative writing and possible strategies for overcoming these. Major takes an admirably interdisciplinary approach to this question. After identifying several key problems faced in collaborative writing, he turns to the practice of collaborative poetry writing in Japan for possible solutions. He appreciates that there are important differences between poetry and professional/scholarly writing. There are also important cultural differences between Japan and the West. With respect to each of the several problems, he first identifies how Japanese poetry copes with these, and then asks how these strategies might be adapted to classrooms and research projects elsewhere. The paper thus exemplifies the practice of integrating insights from quite different perspectives. And the paper is full of practical advice for interdisciplinarians who are either engaged in collaborative writing or are asking their students to do so. By the way, readers are encouraged to read the title slowly.

Ian Watson explores another aspect of the interdisciplinary endeavor that has been relatively understudied in the literature on interdisciplinarity: What role should/might the arts and media play in an interdisciplinary education? He describes the development of a new interdisciplinary visual arts program at Rutgers University—Newark. The faculty involved in designing the new program read and consulted widely, and thus he is able to describe in detail both the philosophical and practical motivations for the new curriculum. He argues that creativity is not only studied by many disciplines but that creativity itself is inherently integrative: Creative acts are integrative acts. Moreover, creativity has applications across diverse human activities. An interdisciplinary arts program can thus prepare students for occupational or entrepreneurial success across a wide range of fields. There are also synergies with service learning, and thus students can simultaneously learn how to use their skills to support community groups. While the paper is most obviously useful for those who teach interdisciplinary arts or who wish to include an arts component within an interdisciplinary program, the paper's messages concerning synergies between creativity, economic mobility, service learning, and interdisciplinarity should be of interest to all interdisciplinarians.

The last three papers were inherited by us from Joan Fiscella and Fran Navakas, the preceding co-editors of this journal. They had already obtained referee reports on all three. We thank Joan, Fran, and all of those referees for their thoughtful consideration. We thank the authors as well for cheerfully attending to our editorial suggestions. We hope that in editing we have managed to sail between the dangers that are identified by David Major in

his paper of being overly bossy or overly solicitous. We think that all of the papers in this issue have important things to say to interdisciplinarians and that they say them well. Each of them has made important contributions to the rapidly expanding literature of the field of interdisciplinary studies. Last but not least, we thank Phyllis Cox for her dedicated work in copyediting and typesetting.

Rick Szostak and Allen Repko