

# Breaking Down and Building Up: Accelerating Sociotech Scholarship in the iSchool Community

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## Abstract

The annual Consortium for the Science of Sociotechnical Systems (CSST) workshop at the iConference perpetuates a tradition of providing sociotechnical scholars with a place to surface areas and domains ripe for new or renewed attention, highlight synergies that have gone unidentified previously, and establish new relationships. This year's workshop, "Breaking Down and Building Up: Accelerating Sociotech Scholarship in the iSchool Community," will pivot around the dual orientation of community building and scholarly action; the full day agenda will combine a morning of introductory talks and discussion with an afternoon of hands-on feedback sessions built around project ideas and paper drafts. We are particularly keen this year to bring together scholars from a wide variety of disciplines, nationalities, and histories so that our work together can itself break down barriers between ideas, schools, countries and perhaps continents to establish new mechanisms and pathways for integrated sociotechnical scholarship.

**Keywords:** sociotechnical systems, social informatics, mixed methodology, pedagogy, collaboration, mentorship

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## 1 Introduction

Since 2008, the Consortium for the Science of Sociotechnical Systems (CSST) has provided a place for sociotech scholars at the iConference to surface areas and domains ripe for new or renewed attention, highlight synergies among scholars that have gone unidentified previously, and establish new relationships. Continuing in this spirit, yet attempting at the same time to reach beyond convention, we propose a full-day workshop at the 2014 iConference that will have the dual orientation of community building coupled with moving interested and active sociotech scholars into concrete scholarly action. We are particularly keen this year to bring together scholars from a wide variety of disciplines, nationalities, and histories so that our work together can itself break down barriers between ideas, schools, countries and perhaps continents to establish new mechanisms and pathways for integrated sociotechnical scholarship.

In addition to a brief introduction to the sociotechnical approach within the larger iSchool community of scholars, the morning half of the workshop will showcase a series of rapid talks from established sociotech researchers on a broad range of pragmatic topics, i.e., sociotech approach and tenure; sociotech approach and journal publishing; sociotech approach and teaching, sociotech approach and methods, etc. Confirmed speakers include Payal Arora, Erasmus University Rotterdam; Greg Downey,

University of Wisconsin-Madison; Kristin Eschenfelder, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Sean Goggins, University of Missouri; David Ribes, Georgetown University; Steve Sawyer, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Kalpana Shankar, University College Dublin.

The afternoon will be directed to two hands-on feedback sessions in which workshop participants can seek guidance, critique, counsel or any other form of constructive input within a small group setting. In advance of the workshop, each participant will be asked to provide an abstract or précis of a project or paper so that members of the review team (comprising both senior scholars and peers) can prepare to provide dedicated feedback. Feedback sessions will be grounded in an ethos of mentoring, but with the added benefit of creating intellectual spillover as participants share their work not only for expert critique, but also peer feedback. The workshop will end with a time for synthesis, in which senior scholars will identify emergent themes and areas for research based on their involvement in the mentoring sessions.

We expect a variety of outcomes from this workshop ranging from individual project guidance to strengthened international ties among CSST enthusiasts. More specifically, we will also write a blog post for the CSST website ([www.sociotech.net](http://www.sociotech.net)) detailing the projects presented at the workshop to enable others who were unable to attend to approach authors with questions or other forms of feedback.

Interested participants should submit a 750-1000 word abstract or annotated outline for discussion by February 3, 2014. Members of each mentoring group will receive one another's materials for pre-workshop review by February 17, 2014. With regard to the number of attendees, we welcome anyone interested to attend the workshop as an observer, but can only accommodate 36 people as part of the mentoring sessions.