Bridging Social Informatics and Sociotechnical Research: In Honor of Rob Kling

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Abstract

2013 marks the 10th anniversary of the death of Rob Kling, one of the founders of social informatics in North America. This session for interaction and engagement will provide researchers in the field an opportunity to reflect on his legacy, to discuss the current state of the social study of technology, focusing on building bridges between social informatics and sociotechnical research, and looking to the future of the overlaps between these fields. This session is intended for doctoral students, early career and established researchers interested in social informatics and/or sociotechnical research and, more broadly, in the social study of computing

1 Purpose and Intended Audience:

2013 marks the 10th anniversary of the death of Rob Kling, one of the founders of social informatics in North America. This session for interaction and engagement will provide researchers in the field an opportunity to reflect on his legacy, to discuss the current state of the social study of technology, focusing on building bridges between social informatics and sociotechnical research, and looking to the future of the overlaps between these fields. This session is intended for doctoral students, early career and established researchers interested in social informatics and/or sociotechnical research and, more broadly, in the social study of computing. One expected outcome is for a conversation to begin among participants about the ways in which they can position their research agendas within the social study of computing, taking advantage of insights from social informatics and sociotechnical research. The session will foster also connections that begin to bridge the gaps between the sociotechnical and social informatics scholarly communities.

2 Proposed activities including agenda, ramp-up (development), and follow-through:

This will be an interactive panel that will begin with several short presentations (10-12 minutes) by: John King, Steve Sawyer, and Ingrid Erickson. These three scholars, at different stages of their careers, will present their thoughts on the relationships between sociotechnical research and social informatics, ways to build bridges between these epistemic communities and the important research questions that researchers interested in the social study of computing should be concerned with going forward. They will also comment on the legacy of Rob Kling. There will be time for questions after these presentations.

Following their presentations, the audience will move to small discussion tables, each of which will be led by one of the panelist/organizers, listed below. Three of the table leaders (Fichman, Rosenbaum, and Shankar) are senior scholars who have published and presented extensively on social informatics and the fourth (Nemer) is an advanced doctoral student who is working at the intersection of social and community informatics. Participants will be asked to discuss their own work in light of the presenters' comments and speculate about the types of research initiatives and questions that will motivate social informatics and sociotechnical research in the next five years. Table leaders will be taking notes as the discussion proceeds, looking for interesting themes. After 30 minutes, table leaders will report back to the audience, summarizing the themes.

3 Relevance to the Conference/Significance to the Field:

The topic of bridging social informatics and sociotechnical research is relevant for the iConference because researchers in both communities make up a considerable number of conference attendees, faculty and students at iSchools. There have been sessions on these topics at past conferences and there should be considerable interest in the session. This session is of significance to the field because many researchers in the social study of computing, especially early career people, are thinking hard about how to position their work, and the discussions may give them a sense of how to proceed. We hope that this session will be of use to scholars from both communities as we learn how to build bridges that will open paths for productive collaborative research into the social study of computing.

Length: 90 minutes

Preferred number of participants: Open

Participants

Panelists

- Jon King, University of Michigan, jlking@umich.edu

- Steve Sawyer, Syracuse University, ssawyer@syr.edu

- Ingrid Erikson, Rutgers University, ime7@scarletmail.rutgers.edu

Organizers/ Table Leaders

- Howard Rosenbaum, Indiana University, hrosenba@indiana.edu

- Pnina Fichman, Indiana University, fichman@indiana.edu

- Kalpana Shankar, University College Dublin, kalpana.shankar@ucd.ie

- David Nemer, Indiana University, dnemer@indiana.edu