

**Question 1: At least at first blush, the so-called I-School movement (the emergence of a variety of examples of information-like schools like SI) seems like it might reflect a number of course concepts, such as common ground, network effects, policy formation, etc. Do you think the concepts in our readings are relevant to this phenomenon (feel free to draw on concepts beyond those just mentioned, and beyond this semester if appropriate)? If so, why? If not, why not? We are less concerned that you are historically accurate about specific I-Schools, but rather want to hear about which course concepts you think are relevant to a movement like this.**

The information school movement, as a multi/inter/trans-disciplinary pursuit, has endeavored to bring together traditional disciplines and practices to generate new theories and methods of understanding the role of information in a rapidly evolving world. The subject matter of SI 701, the Doctoral Foundations course in Information, addresses a number of the determinants in the need for such programs, and justifies the information school movement.

The explosion of information technologies, and information created to be delivered by those technologies, have created a need for information management professionals, and new theories of management beyond those embraced by traditional library science. The I-School represents an attempt of the academy to evolve in parallel with this emergent need. New dimensions of understanding electronic artifacts and formats require new scholarship [1, 2]. Similarly, new frameworks of policy, law, and business strategy surround information enterprise. The need for updated views on intellectual property, accountability, governance, security, and market theory are apparent, and the I-School movement seeks to fill these niches [3, 4]. IT and information shape and transform social structure, and organizations bear significant benefit and risk from accelerated information flows [5-10]. The establishment of the I-School not only provides a forum to explore these issues, but can benefit itself and the academy in general by understanding the transformative effects of IT and information as a social driver of intellectual evolution [11].

Machlup and Mansfield draw significant disciplinary lines separating information science from other fields, such as computer science, informatics, hard science, and others [12]. While many of these disciplines have been, in part, incorporated into information studies, it is clear that information science is emerging as a separate discipline. Before the emergence of the I-School, scholars who thought about information-related subjects were separate, residing in traditional departments. Collaboration across these boundaries was incidental, and the formation of a community of practice was impeded [13-15]. From a network theory perspective, the development of a multidisciplinary idea, and the connections needed to develop that idea, were spread across a network. The probability of resources traveling a reasonable, much less geodesic/minimal-distance path through this network was low, and highly reliant upon weak ties [16]. The work of Mark Newman and other network theorists shows that identification of community structure, in this case the aggregation of scholars of like mind, could be more easily identified by looking at disciplinary relationships, the ties of the network, rather than the attributes of the scholars

themselves, such as departmental affiliation, or of the departmental infrastructure at the individual scholar's level [17-19]. By bringing together these scholars and forming a legitimated departmental structure, others could recognize the value of these boundary-crossing efforts and the potential of these collaborative relationships [20]. After the first of these departments was created, through significant cost and effort of the founders, other schools had a working model on which to base their own efforts, a process of legitimate peripheral participation [13, 14]. As more I-Schools emerged, it became easier to justify the creation of new schools within institutions that had not yet joined the I-School movement. There is a growing effect of this interdisciplinary effort – as more schools join the movement, more schools will be created, exhibiting a network effect [21, 22]. The network effect follows through to the creation of new faculty. As a new generation of interdisciplinary scholars completes PhDs in the I-School movement, there is a new demand for faculty positions within I-School type programs. The diffusion into the academic market both of these new and unique skill sets, as well as the theoretical foundations, innovations, and philosophies underlying the I-School vision creates new markets for cross-disciplinary cooperation, a natural evolutionary consequence [23].

Finally, from an economic perspective, the founding of information schools to train professionals in the management of information is a logical evolution in education. Since information science is multidisciplinary, and demands mastery of disparate domain knowledge, one would traditionally need to invest time and effort – high cost resources – in finding and experiencing the subject matter in different departments. The faculty in these departments are not specifically interested or trained in making connections outside of their fields, leaving the cost of interdisciplinary sensemaking solely to the student, who is still a neophyte in the research field [24]. Following on this cost-based theme of resource location, the concepts of information foraging and berrypicking are especially relevant. Higher costs are associated with finding new information that is, on the surface, dissimilar to (or previously unexplored in relation to) an insular domain is difficult, and the ties are not apparent [25, 26]. The foraging process becomes overburdened, and it is difficult to discern which new pieces of information are particularly ripe for picking. The information school movement has value in co-locating these domains in a concentrated environment, thus lowering the costs of selection and location for the student. In this vein, the benefits of such interdisciplinary study are realized sooner, contributing to the social capital of the academy [27]. The co-location of intellectual resources within the information school also solves an economic information bundling problem. Upon inspection, it would seem that although many I-Schools have common roots and themes, many have unique “slants” on information science. For example, SIMS at Berkeley concentrates significantly on the management and business sides of information science, while a school like SI concentrates on the theoretical aspects. For students with particular interests, the bundling of information science-related curricula and philosophies in different schools, while sharing a common set of principles, allows for more consumer choice in pursuing a graduate information education. Like the efficiency university libraries gain in information bundles of scholarly journals, flexible enough to serve the needs of a specific population at lower cost, so does the I-School serve to bundle information for the graduate student who wishes to receive a multidisciplinary and flexible degree [28].

(970 words)

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