

SUMMARY OF MEETING

Prepared May 1, 2005

Rob Kling Center for Social Informatics

Advisory Committee Meeting

April 13, 2005, 3:30-5:30pm, Kelley School of Business Conference Room 0037

Advisory Committee members present: Bill Aspray (waspray), Alan Dennis (ardennis), Chris Ogan (ogan), Howard Rosenbaum (hrosenba), Harmeet Sawhney (hsawhney), Alice Robbin (arobbin)

Advisory Committee members unable to attend: Tom Gieryn (gieryn) [on sabbatical], Jeff Hart (hartj), Anne Massey (amassey)

Recorder: Alice Robbin

Please note that after the AC approves these minutes (with changes, if necessary), a copy will be sent to the deans of the two schools.

1. Status of RKCSI

1.1 History

Alice gave a brief summary of the history of RKCSI, which was formed in September 2004 with funding support from the School of Informatics (SoI) and School of Library and Information Science (SLIS). The RKCSI currently has an annual budget of \$20,000, with half contributed by SoI and half by SLIS. David Hakken (on leave spring semester 2005) was appointed by the SoI Dean and Alice Robbin by the SLIS Dean to be co-directors.

Co-directorship proved not to be an optimal organizational arrangement, and Bill and Alice met early in January 2005 to discuss alternatives to the organizational structure. Their discussion led to a proposal to form an Advisory Committee (AC) composed of (at least initially) IUB campus tenured faculty members with an interest in social informatics that would be responsible for naming a director for a two year term. Bill and Alice compiled a list of potential AC members which was nearly identical to the CSI Faculty Fellows when Rob was alive. Members of the Advisory Committee were sought from schools/departments where faculty conduct research under the rubric of "social informatics." IST was the only unit that did not respond.

1.2 Activities

There were two brownbags hosted by RKCSI during the first semester and a speaker series during the second semester. The nine second semester talks were filmed and digitized and materials publicly available on the speaker series web page. For the second semester schedule, see: <http://www.slis.indiana.edu/research/rkcsi.html>

1.3 Budget

The budget statement prepared by Sarah Burton, SLIS Budget Officer, for the meeting shows a balance of \$9,726.56, but did not include all the expenses of the RKCSI Spring 2005 Speakers Series. The budget statement does not include administrative and technical support staff expenses which have been absorbed by SoI and (principally) SLIS, largely for the speaker series, which would have been considerable had RKCSI been billed for their services.

The recommendation was that the budget include an item for expenses associated with the administrative and technical support services that are now being absorbed, in the event that the RKCSI director would not be from SoI or SLIS.

1.4 Staffing

Kathryn Clodfelter, a first year SLIS doctoral student with interests in social informatics, was hired on an hourly basis (\$15/hour, up to 10 hours/week) to assist with organizing the speaker series, working with the administrative and technical support staff, and providing expertise in web design.

1.5 RKCSI Web Site Redesign

The current Center for Social Informatics and Social Informatics web sites, as well as the Rob Kling personal web site are in need of major revisions. Alice asked the startup web design and software consulting firm Noteway Media, Inc. (former SLIS students) to prepare a draft prospectus and contract, which was circulated to the Advisory Committee members. Alice set the initial budget to create the site at \$3,000.

A short discussion followed.

1) AC members accepted the prospectus. Recommendations were made and communicated to the vendor to be incorporated in the final version prepared by the vendor:

- * A domain name was important to establish a site identity separate from SoI and SLIS. (Currently, CSI, SI, and Rob Kling web pages are located on SLIS servers.)
- * UITS be contacted to determine whether IU could provide space on an IU server, rather than the vendor's server.
- * A RKCSI logo not be designed at this time.
- * Several mockup designs be provided to the Advisory Committee before full-scale redesign is undertaken.

Kathryn Clodfelter will work with Noteway Media staff and be responsible for keeping the web site current.

Revised prospectus/contract is attached.

2) Alice asked AC members to please review the CSI and SI sites and make recommendations for changes. AC members discussed the need for major revisions to the "course page"; they strongly recommended very early and intensive action be taken to ready this page so that doctoral students around the campus know what is available. Chris and Harmeet have provided Howard with the list of courses from their units. (Howard serves as the advisor of the social informatics minor.)

2. What to Do: What Should the RKCSI Look Like?

2.1 Organizational Mission/Goals/Objectives

Alice distributed the existing “mission” statement on the CSI web site and asked that AC members review it and other parts of the CSI and SI sites to determine what changes need to be made. Appendix 1 contains the urls for the home pages, the CSI mission statement (CSI site), and the “Conceptions of Social Informatics” (SI).

There was consensus on these issues:

- * The Center should create a “sense of community” around social informatics.
- * The Center should be an “enabler” for various constituencies.
- * Cross-fertilization of disciplinary interests should be a goal/objective.
- * Doctoral students with interests in social informatics need a “home.” Special efforts should be made next year to focus on doctoral student engagement.

2.2 Structure

When Rob ran the Center, he was the Center, and it was a “one man show.” Because he was also editor-in-chief of *The Information Society* journal, the Center was informally its home. Rob named faculty as “Fellows” and named doctoral students as “student fellows.” Rob accomplished a great deal through informal contacts and his very large social network. Howard agreed several years ago to be responsible for the social informatics minor. Harmeet was named editor-in-chief of *TIS* after Rob’s death, and the journal is formally independent of the Center.

Discussion covered a number of topics:

1) Funding the Center

- * RUGS is being organized, and most Centers will have to be self-supporting. There is no longer any reason to be a RUGS Center. “Seed money” is, in principle, available from OVPR.
- * The breadth of the Center goes beyond any one academic unit. How should additional members, if any, be added? What level of financial support, if any, should academic units be asked/willing to contribute?
- * Kelley School faculty have expressed interest in supporting the Center and are willing to develop a proposal to submit to their dean to contribute financially to the Center. During the first semester, the SoI and SLIS deans had rejected the Kelley School offer; however, their response was not ‘cast in cement’; they should be approached again. This issue contributes to the as yet unresolved issue about the organizational structure (see below).

2) Organizational Structure

Although the issues of organizational structure (e.g., “founding” and “supporting members”; role and membership of the AC) were not resolved at the meeting and will be on the table for discussion at the next meeting, the following was agreed on:

- * There would be a director appointed by the AC. Alice Robbin was asked to be director, which she agreed to subject to full support from other AC members who would take

responsibility for planning the various activities. The directorship would rotate, with a new director chosen every two years.

- * Associate Directors with specific responsibilities associated with activities (see below) were identified. These include: i) Working Papers series; ii) doctoral students, minor advisor, and courses (responsibility for compiling SI courses); iii) program (e.g., speaker series), workshop, and conference coordination.
- * Some sort of linkage will be made to/established with *The Information Society*.
- * Administrative support for the Center could be provided by the unit of whoever serves as director. Or certain expenses could be paid for through the Center's budget.
- * Release time for the director was proposed.
- * The performance of the Center should be evaluated, and metrics for evaluation developed.

3) Activities

The previous section's description of the role of associate directors identifies the types of activities that the Center could undertake. In addition, there was discussion about:

- * how the Center could stimulate the development of grant proposals (e.g., by bringing an interdisciplinary group of faculty together; providing seed money to develop grant proposals).
- * how the Center could play an important role in the intellectual life of doctoral students across the campus who were interested in social informatics. Strong support was given for a focus on the doctoral students during next academic year.
- * the too demanding Spring semester's speaker series. Recommendations were for fewer talks and coordination and joint sponsorship of talks with other units.

Appendix 1. Web Site Redesign

Current Home pages:

<http://www.slis.indiana.edu/CSI>
<http://www.slis.indiana.edu/SI>
<Http://www.slis.indiana.edu/~kling>

Mission Statement [url: <http://www.slis.indiana.edu/CSI/mission.html>]

The Center for Social Informatics is dedicated to support research into information technology and social change. Social Informatics (SI) refers to the body of research and study that examines social aspects of computerization -- including the roles of information technology in social and organizational change, the uses of information technologies in social contexts, and the ways that the social organization of information technologies is influenced by social forces and social practices. Social Informatics overlaps other areas including computer-mediated communication (CMC), information

systems, information science, "Internet Research," and even parts of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI).

The Center organizes seminars for faculty and graduate students, serves as a home at Indiana University for visiting scholars, publishes a working paper series, and serves as an editorial home for *The Information Society* journal.

For more information, please browse the Center's web site, visit the Social Informatics Home Page (<http://www.slis.indiana.edu/SI>) or *The Information Society* (<http://www.slis.indiana.edu/TIS>).

Conceptions of Social Informatics [url: <http://www.slis.indiana.edu/SI/concepts.html>]

Social Informatics (SI) refers to the body of research and study that examines social aspects of computerization -- including the roles of information technology in social and organizational change and the ways that the social organization of information technologies are influenced by social forces and social practices. [

1] SI includes studies and other analyses that are labeled as social impacts of computing, social analysis of computing, studies of computer-mediate communication (CMC), information policy, "computers and society," [organizational informatics](#), interpretive informatics, and so on.

SI studies and SI courses are organized within diverse fields, including information systems, anthropology, computer science, communications, sociology, library and information science, political science and science and technology studies (STS). It is often difficult for scholars within these various disciplines to locate others who share common interests in the social aspects of information technologies. It is difficult for interested students to locate relevant courses and advanced degree programs in social informatics.

Social Informatics is a relatively new term that can serve as a banner for those who are interested in contributing to these studies. The name "Social Informatics" can also serve as a pointer, by which we can help lead others to appropriate theories, key ideas, studies, findings, books, articles, courses of study, etc.

The term "Social Informatics" emerged from a series of lively conversations in February and March 1996 among scholars with an interest in advancing critical scholarship about the social aspects of computerization, including Phil Agre, Jacques Berleur, Brenda Dervin, Andrew Dillon, Rob Kling, Mark Poster, Karen Ruhleder, Ben Shneiderman, Leigh Star and Barry Wellman. As the conversation developed, it became clear that labels that could energize scholars in one sub-community could readily turn off participants in other communities. Various participants preferred different labels; a sufficient consensus emerged around "Social Informatics" that it can serve as a working label.

"SI studies aim to ensure that technical research agendas and system designs are relevant to people's lives. The key word is relevance, ensuring that technical work is

socially-driven rather than technology-driven. Relevance has two dimensions:

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and substance. Design and implementation processes need to be relevant to the actual social dynamics of a given site of social practice, and the substance of design and implementation (the actual designs, the actual systems) need to be relevant to the

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of the people they affect. SI sets agendas for all the technical work in two ways:

1) more superficially, by drawing attention to functionalities that people value, thus setting priorities for design and implementation; and 2) more fundamentally, by articulating those analytical categories that have been found useful in describing social reality, and that which therefore should also define technical work in/for that reality as well. Unfortunately, many technical professionals have viewed social concerns as peripheral. One key role of SI is to stand things back on their feet, so that social concerns are central and define the ground that technical work stands on. (Phil Agre, 1996)"

This collection of web pages is designed to help you locate research related Social Informatics resources. In order to make this effort manageable, I have focussed on those Social Informatics topics that are not included within organizational informatics. You can locate a rich collection of organizational informatics journals, conferences, and programs of study via ISWORLD's web pages.

** Note: Organizational Informatics overlaps the field of information systems; not all information systems journal, conferences, and degree programs are good sources for Organizational Informatics. However, the IS research community has built a rich collection of materials that include many good. Organizational Informatics resources via ISWORLD. In the short run, it pays to develop the Social Informatics pages to include materials that are not yet well collected rather than to duplicate existing collections.)

[Social Informatics: Rob Kling \(2001\)](#)

[What is Social Informatics and Why Does it Matter?](#) D-Lib Magazine (January 1999)

[Learning about Information Technologies and Social Change: The Contribution of Social Informatics.](#) by Rob Kling. [The Information Society](#) 16(3) (July-Sept, 2000):217-232 (Adobe acrobat pdf version)

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