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**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION  
PROFESSOR ROB KLING  
(1944-2003)**

Rob Kling was Professor of Information Systems and Information Science at the School of Library and Information Science, Adjunct Professor in the Department of Computer Science, and Director of the IU Center for Social Informatics. He was born in August 1944 and passed away unexpectedly at 58 years of age on May 15, 2003 in Bloomington, Indiana. He was a visionary and institution builder who tirelessly promoted a new area of research, Social Informatics, the interdisciplinary study of the design, uses and consequences of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Rob Kling was a brilliant scholar and prolific writer, and his scholarly accomplishments were legion. He was a valued mentor, educator, contributor to public policy, member of national and international editorial and advisory boards, organizer of national and international professional societies and conferences, and Editor-in-Chief of *The Information Society*. In addition to his teaching, he also directed the SLIS Master of Information Science (MIS) Degree Program and oversaw program planning and student recruitment. He “juggled a workload that made the rest of us blanch. I’d routinely tease him that he had more bees in his bonnet than an apiarist, but the man was not for turning. As soon as a new problem, challenge, or opportunity presented itself, he was off,” said Blaise Cronin, Dean of the School of Library and Information Science.

Rob Kling completed his undergraduate studies at Columbia University (B.S., 1965) and his graduate studies, specializing in Artificial Intelligence, at Stanford University (M.S., 1967; Ph.D., 1971). After graduate school, he joined the Department of Computer Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as an assistant professor from 1971 to 1973. He then spent more than two decades, from 1973 to 1996, at the Department of Information and Computer Science at the University of California at Irvine as an assistant, associate, and full professor, where his interests shifted to studying the role of computers in society, organizations, and public policy. He joined the School of Library and Information Science at Indiana University Bloomington in 1996. He was a research fellow at Harvard University in 1982; a visiting researcher at the Gesellschaft für Mathematik und Datenverarbeitung, Bonn, Germany in 1983; and a visiting professor at the Copenhagen School of Business and Economics in 1986 and at the Solvay School of Management at the University of Brussels between 1991 and 1993.

Rob Kling spent his career formulating the grounds of a new research speciality that combined insights from computer science engineering, information systems design, and the social sciences. His prodigious corpus of research is an extended exploration of the character of ICTs. Since the early 1970s, he was a leading expert on the study of social informatics which investigates aspects of computerization — the roles of information technology (IT) in social and organizational change and the ways that the social organization of IT is influenced by social forces and social practices.

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His research interests were wide-ranging. He studied how intensive computerization transforms work practices and how computerization entails many social choices. He early observed that complex information and expert systems are integrated into the social life of organizations and conducted studies in numerous kinds of environments, including local, state and national governments, insurance companies, pharmaceutical firms, law offices, and high-tech manufacturing. He provided us with the conceptual underpinnings that illuminate the complex and contextually embedded nature of socio-technical networks and the interactions between ICTs and social structures that shape how people use technology. His most recent research examined electronic publishing, digital libraries, professional communities, and scientific collaboration.

In addition to his scholarly work, he wrote textbooks to introduce students to social informatics and published articles on the challenges of teaching the social uses of computing. He was among the first to recognize the political character of computerization. He wrote extensively about value conflicts and social choices and advocated that social values be incorporated in the design of computer-based information systems and in the computer science, information science, management of information systems, and informatics curriculum. He lobbied for changes in public policy and made the debates about computerization come alive in the classroom.

Beyond the classroom, he was an enthusiastic, inspiring, generous and nurturing mentor to students and young scholars. So many of his students and colleagues have written about how energized they were by his commitment to the academy and to scholarly pursuits. "I learned much from him about the world of ideas and about what it means to be a serious academic scholar," said the SLIS faculty colleague Howard Rosenbaum. Stanford University Professor Roy Pea recalled how much Rob taught him "about the sociological and organizational aspects of HCI and computing generally that I came to use in much of my thinking and work." Former student and currently Dean of the School of Information at the University of Michigan John King wrote: "He was...the most dedicated scholar I've ever known. Rob's work wasn't just a big part of Rob -- it WAS Rob. Occasionally we'd make a pact to spend some time talking about other topics, but we'd inevitably drift back to research issues."

Rob Kling extended our horizons. Lisa Murphy, former IU doctoral student now assistant professor at the University of Alabama, wrote of Rob, "I can say with certainty that he altered my thinking about what it means to know and what it means to ask questions." SLIS faculty colleague Noriko Hara recalls Rob's contribution to her scholarly development: "I cannot begin to describe how much he has taught me. His advice varied from recommending helpful articles to helping foster critical thinking skills to encouraging me to take an acting class in order to become a better lecturer. He was also extremely generous with his time and knowledge and gave me many opportunities that I otherwise would not have had as a junior faculty member. Most importantly he believed in my capability."

His contributions were recognized by awards and recognitions. He received the Silver Core Award from the International Federation of Information Processing Societies in 1983 and a Professional Service Award from the Association of Computing Machinery in 1984. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Free University of Brussels in 1987. He became a Fellow

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of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2001. In 2003, he was the recipient of the Association for Information Systems (AIS) Fellow Award; the Award for Excellence from the Literati Club of Emerald Publishers for his article, "A Critical Professional Education about Information and Communication Technologies and Social Life," published in the journal *Information Technology & People*; and a Best Paper Award for his co-authored article, "Reconceptualizing Users as Social Actors in Information Systems Research," published in *MIS Quarterly*.

In a flurry of e-mails — entirely appropriate to Dr. Kling's passion for the socially transforming nature of online communications — colleagues from around the globe responded to his untimely demise with initial reactions: "an icon in our field," "such an original thinker," "he is truly a hero in our community," "he had a deep concern, personally and professionally, in the welfare of the public and the impact that technology has on quality of life," "a great man and a person contributing so much," "a presence larger than life," and "a brilliant and creative colleague...but more importantly he was a good friend who took the time to support and mentor those who sought him out. He will be missed for his academic contributions, his leadership, and his perennial good nature."

Once you met Rob, you became another of the many CoK (colleagues of Kling) and part of his "amazingly extensive social network," said Howard Rosenbaum. And that also meant you participated in everything that Rob loved: food, wine, travel, walks on beaches, gadgets, the movies, bird-watching, politics, and talk about nearly everything under the sun. He was energized by life, he was engaged, he was irreplaceable, and he lived life with great gusto, good humor and with a twinkle in his eye. And he shared it all with us.

Rob Kling had a far-reaching impact on the professional worlds of social informatics and information technology. His great legacy is to his colleagues and the generations of students he introduced to social informatics, those whom he inspired, nurtured, mentored, collaborated with, and to whom he communicated his deep engagement with intellectual life and the world and his commitment to an ethical and moral life. We miss him terribly.

This resolution is a permanent part of the minutes of the Bloomington Faculty Council. Copies should be sent to his wife Professor Mitzi Lewison and to his sister Ellasara Kling.

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