

iSchool PhD Research Days 2018: Research around Margins, Boundaries and Translations  
**Schedule**

THURSDAY		2018-04-19
9 :00	<i>Breakfast</i>	
AM :30	<b>Opening Remarks</b>	BL417
10 :00	<b>A. Panel - Crossover topics in Museum Studies</b>	BL417
AM :30	Hillary Walker-Gugan, Sandrena Raymond, Lindsey Small, Maya Hirschman	
11 :00		
AM :30	<b>B. Works in Progress</b>	BL417
12 :00	Zachary Batist, Brian Griffin	
PM :30	<b>C. Panel - Thinking about Protest Space</b>	BL417
1 :00	Jessica Lapp, Rianka Singh, Rebecca Noone	
PM :30		
2 :00	<i>Lunch</i>	
PM :30		
3 :00	<b>D. Panel - Feminist Theorizing and the Transnational Turn</b>	BL417
PM :30	Jamila Ghaddar, Mariam Karim	
4 :00	<b>E. Works in Progress</b>	BL417
PM :30	Madison Trusolino, Heidi Overhill, Karen Dewart McEwen	
5 :00		
PM :30		
6 :00	<b>Keynote</b>	
PM :30	<b>Entrepreneurial Citizenship and the Subsumption of Hope</b> Inforum Prof. Lilly Irani, UC San Diego	
7 :00		
PM :30	<i>Reception</i>	

FRIDAY		2018-04-20
9 :00		
AM :30	<i>Breakfast</i>	
10 :00	<b>Workshop with Prof. Lilly Irani</b>	BL417
AM :30		
11 :00		
AM :30		
12 :00	<i>Lunch</i>	
PM :30		
1 :00	<b>Celebrating Doctoral Students</b>	Inforum
PM :30	<b>F. Lightning Talks</b> Anh Thu Nguyen, Nathan Moles, Curtis McCord, Brian Sutherland, Dawn Walker	BL417
2 :00		
PM :30	<b>G. Presentations</b>	BL417
3 :00	Sarah Lubelski, Zia Babar, Allen Kempton	
PM :30	<b>H. Works in Progress</b>	BL417
4 :00	Katie Mackinnon, Michel Mersereau, Jack Jamieson	
PM :30		
5 :00	<b>Closing Remarks</b>	BL417
PM :30		

Full PhD Research Days Program: <http://uoft.me/ischool-research-days>

Last Updated: April 14, 2018

iSchool PhD Research Days

## ***Research around Margins, Boundaries and Translations***

April 19-20, 2018

### **Conference Program**

With the theme of *Research around Margins, Boundaries and Translations*, the Faculty of Information's 2018 PhD Research Days aims to recognize the varied background of our students and faculty, and the plethora of topics and many different fields of our doctoral studies.

In our information research, what different worlds do we encounter and how do we navigate, bridge, or deepen the boundaries between them? How do we draw or cross boundaries within our own Faculty? Where and when do we recognize space at the margins? Is the concept of the marginal useful or relevant in our work, and if so, should it be re-centered? Are we committed to engaging in 'cooperative work without consensus', and when or how is conflict otherwise resolved?

### **Thursday Sessions**

#### Opening Remarks

*Heather MacNeil, PhD Research Days Organizing Committee*

#### A. Panel - Stories and Things: Crossover Topics in Museum Studies

*Panelists: Hillary Walker Guban, Sandrena Raymond, Lindsey Small, Maya Hirschman*

*Chair: Cara Krmpotich*

After a brief introduction to each student's work, four of the museum studies focused PhD students will present a panel discussing how narrative and materiality convey information within museums. Topics to be addressed include: who constructs official narratives; objects as evidence; the cult of personality; narrative in relation to affect and objects; nationalistic narratives; and absence.

#### B. Works in Progress Morning

*Chair: Siobhan Stevenson*

### **Documenting archaeological knowledge construction as socially-embedded information practices**

*Presenter: Zack Batist*

*Respondent: Brian Griffin*

This paper presents some preliminary results from my doctoral research, which is an ongoing attempt to better understand the epistemic culture that frames archaeological research. Archaeology is an incredibly collaborative and interdisciplinary field, in which a wide range of tools and expert knowledge are mobilized to assemble and give meaning to objects that might shed light on alternative lived experiences, particularly but not exclusively of others in the past. Such collaborative meaning-making entails the use of encoded disciplinary language in order to situate one's tacit, local experiences in relation to common interests or modes of reasoning.

Communication among archaeologists is therefore considered as a process of enculturation, whereby a shared understanding of the pragmatic conditions and expectations that underlie a record's construction facilitates its continued use by others. By observing archaeologists as they work, partly through the use of GoPro cameras affixed to their foreheads that enable me to obtain first-person perspectives, the physical, cognitive and communicative processes that comprise common fieldwork practices are formally identified and related. These observations are integrated with interviews and analysis of recording practices in order to better understand individuals' affective roles within their socio-technical research environments, as well as the communicative processes that enable research to be distributed among archaeologists and across various settings. In sum, I trace the relationships among archaeologists, their tools, the ideas they draw from, and the archaeological record itself, as knowledge is constructed under realistic and social conditions.

### **Information activities of amateur musicians**

*Presenter: Brian Griffin*

*Respondent: Heidi Overhill*

Music is a multimodal activity that requires many different kinds of information, making it an ideal place to study information creation, sharing and use. Textual information including repertoire and histories of instruments and composers is essential. However, members of a classical music community also require information about local and distributed social worlds, as well as technical information about how to perform. Social world knowledge and an understanding of the physical aspects of playing an instrument are difficult to document, and instead such information is usually communicated informally and in person. The complex physical skills associated with performance are often taught through a combination of talking and demonstration. Studying these kinds of information activities requires a methodology that can bring us closer to these practices. Audio and video recordings and photography, despite being imperfect accounts of visual or auditory experiences, can nevertheless be used to create representations or documents of experiences and to elicit descriptions of sensations and feelings. First-hand researcher participation can also give some insight into community meanings of experience and understanding. This talk discusses the theoretical and methodological challenges and opportunities involved in the study of multimodal activities, like musicianship.

### **C. Panel - Thinking about Protest Space: Staging, Mapping and Memory**

*Panelists: Jessica Lapp, Rianka Singh, Rebecca Noone*

*Chair: TL Cowan*

Through discussions of bodily orientation, affect, relationality, navigation, reification and archivalization, the members of this panel will explore the spatialities of protest and resistance.

#### D. Panel - Feminist Theorizing and the Transnational Turn: Archival memory and Cyberfeminisms in the Middle East & North Africa

*Panelists: Jamila Ghaddar and Mariam Karim*

*Chair: Jasmine Rault*

What is transnational feminism? What solidarities and futurities does it envision? How does it generate, support and enrich scholarship that produces anti-colonial and anti-racist knowledge on a region like the Middle East & North Africa (MENA), and elsewhere in the global South? And how can this research be attune to Indigenous theorizing on the importance of place, and the potential limits and pitfalls of transnational and global frameworks? Our panel will think through these questions in relation to our doctoral research projects on the MENA: one on the politics of archival memory and another focused on cyberfeminist activism by women's movements. Central to this discussion are the tensions between "One-Third World" and "Two-Thirds world" feminisms (Mohanty, 2002) and the ways in which they manifest within broader transnational contexts and 'global feminist' systems. For example, in the online encounter with westernized feminist discourses, "the construction of the Other as ignorant is nevertheless implicit in some cyberfeminist narratives" (Gajjala, 1999, p. 616). In turn, the orientalist grand archival narratives continue to construct the MENA as a region of violent patriarchal terrorist men and downtrodden women in need of saving, in contradistinction to the civilized western subject imagined as a free, rational agent. Through this panel, we reflect on and situate ourselves as emerging scholars within a vexed interdisciplinary/cross disciplinary space within the western academe; in relation to the people and region we study and work with; and in the context of the white supremacist heteropatriarchy of settler colonial Canada.

#### E. Works in Progress Afternoon

*Chair: Rhonda McEwen*

#### **Standing Up Against Misogyny: Collective Responses to the Harassment of Women in Comedy**

*Presenter: Madison Trusolino*

*Respondent: Karen Dewart McEwen*

In November 2017, The New York Times published testimonies of five women who accused comedian Louis C.K. of sexual misconduct. In January 2018, the little-known online magazine Babe released an interview with a woman who was allegedly coerced into sexual activity with comedian Aziz Ansari. Although perhaps the most well-known cases, C.K. and Ansari are but two of the many male comedians called out recently for their sexual harassment as well as physical and/or sexual abuse of women in and outside of the comedy industry. This presentation will attempt to work through the nuances of women comedians' responses to these allegations within their community as well as their collective strategies to address harassment. I identify the comedy club as a workplace where, due to the precarious and informal nature of comedic work, women are left without formal avenues to address harassment such as unions or human resource departments. Comedy blurs the lines between personal and professional relationships meaning women often feel silenced by the, frequently, male gatekeepers of the industry. The labour of creating safe workspaces, responding the allegations of their colleagues and speaking out against their harassers often falls to women making them vulnerable to abuse and ostracization.

## **Matter, idea, agency: What is a “thing”?**

*Presenter: Heidi Overhill*

*Respondent: Zack Batist*

The dissertation that I am currently developing at the iSchool aims to conceptualize the common Western domestic kitchen as a site for 'information'. One of the central issues in this effort concerns the relationship between information and 'things,' a topic that seems to have attracted relatively little attention in the information literature apart from Briet's antelope and Buckland's tree. Using the kitchen as an example of an information-rich environment proves to be curiously astringent, revealing that traditional Cartesian separations of immaterial idea from material substance are entirely inadequate in describing the urgent information conveyed when someone touches a hot pot lid. Kitchens also reveals the inadequacy of the commonplace understandings of things as 'objects,' because things in the kitchen are found in solid, liquid and gaseous states, as well as in electromagnetic radiation, and in non-material artifacts like memorized recipes. Finally, things in the kitchen demonstrate that agency is not exclusive to human beings, because not only does the cat push back when it wants to be fed, but so does the cake when it fails to rise; demonstrating the profound limits to anthropocentric hubris even in our age of the Anthropocene.

## **Economies of the self**

*Presenter: Karen Dewart McEwen*

*Respondent: Madison Trusolino*

In this presentation, I discuss my doctoral research on the economization of daily life through self-tracking technologies and practices. More specifically, my research looks at how the incorporation of self-tracking technologies and practices into contemporary health insurance programs assigns value to bodies and activities in both direct and indirect forms. I frame this assignation of value as part of a genealogy of self-investment through insurance technologies, which both reconfigures and extends historical forms of racialized, gendered, and classed categorization of bodies and lives.

## **Keynote with Reception to follow**

### **Entrepreneurial Citizenship and the Subsumption of Hope**

Professor Lilly Irani, Assistant Professor, UC San Diego

In this talk, I explain the rise of what I call entrepreneurial citizenship in India – a call for citizens to take up the developmental work of a liberalizing state. These calls emanate from Davos, the World Bank, and the Government of India alike; they promise that the methods of innovation – optimistic hacking and design – correct capitalism's failings by making civil society more inclusive. This talk shows practices that emerge in response to this call through an ethnographic account of a design studio in India and its practices at the intersection of philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and finance. As studio members leave corporate jobs to participate in development, they seek to make “not a living, but a life.” As they put their ideals and critiques to work, I show how “innovation” practices invite critique and subsume political desire for the production of value. The talk draws from 14 months of ethnography over half a decade, forthcoming as a book *Innovators and their Others* (Princeton University Press).

## Friday Sessions

### Workshop: Research around and alongside boundaries with Prof. Lilly Irani

Drawing from this Research Days' theme, which asks us to consider whether notions of Margins, Boundaries and Translations aid us in locating our research as part of an Information field, this workshop provides space to collectively reflect on the arrangement of tensions connecting our research. Starting from a discussion of Dr. Irani's decade-long work on politics of technology work practices and "innovation cultures" through Turkopticon and Entrepreneurial Citizenship in India, participants will workshop a set of problematics of information practice--for instance how time is (re)structured through innovation in order to work against sustained solidarities and resistances to cooptation. We will then turn to participants' own projects, drawing on our previous conversation in order to characterize active problematics they face in their research.

### Celebrating Doctoral Students

*PhD Research Days Organizing Committee*

### F. Lightning Talks

*Chair: Patrick Keilty*

How to Write as Remembered

*Presenter: Anh Thu Nguyen*

This project is an exploration of the Pali word "sati" (translated as both present-awareness/mindfulness and recollecting/memory) from the lens of information behaviour and spiritual information. By way of repeating and translating verses from the Pali canon, and being subjected to different encounters during this process, I examine how spiritual information is "othered" and made meaningful differently when practicing a religion (Buddhism) by means of a sacred language (Pali), and how a different engagement with written information can bring us into a state of meditation. This project is interested in a process of translation that is linguistic and historical, and blurs the boundaries between the spiritual and the everyday.

Are Open Government Datasets boundary objects?

*Presenter: Nathan Moles*

This lightning talk will explore the question of whether or not Open Government Datasets are boundary objects from the perspective of data curation within the City of Toronto. It will consider the use of datasets amongst different user communities as well as the boundary that separates the municipal administration from external users. Focus will be placed on processes of curation and the transformation of datasets that occurs as part of their preparation for release to the public.

Democracy, Information, Systems

*Presenter: Curtis McCord*

Governments often attempt to enrich democracy through appeals to new technologies and principles, but what, if anything, are they changing? This talk explores the ways that governments leverage imaginaries like "Digital Democracy", "eParticipation" and "Open Government" to renovate their modern ossification. I will discuss the ways that patterns of transaction, hierarchy and centralization continue to constrain the understandings of what an information democracy

might look like. If, as I argue, old power structures, and old mistakes, are being presented in these new forms, how can we seize the potential of these contemporary democratic innovations and employ them for renewed democratic purpose?

### Zero Energy Pervasive Computing

*Presenter: Brian Sutherland*

Advances in electrical, computing, and materials engineering have made possible prototype information system designs that incorporate "energy harvesting", "energy neutral", "energy autonomous" or "zero energy" operation. These devices are sensing computers which ostensibly absorb energy from their surroundings to run, much like wrist watches without batteries that are powered by walking, body heat, or solar energy. What information use practices might be made possible as these singular, long-lasting information-gathering boundary objects accompany societies though time, pervasively at the margins of spaces, objects and people? Speculative prototypes will be presented for discussion.

### Justice in Design

*Presenter: Dawn Walker*

Communities are engaging with concerns through data collection and analysis—creating tools, platforms, and networks to collaboratively document and hold businesses and the state to account. However “crowd-sourced” data can serve to retrench existing inequalities. Aiming to address this tension, activists and scholars have called for the investigation of harms from data using the frame of “digital justice” and “data justice” which are matched by an interest in designing more equitable systems through participation in the design process. Emerging frameworks seek to model research that can be “appropriated at the grassroots level” (Balestrini et al., 2017), recognizing that participatory interventions do not always ‘improve’ communities, nor can they require everyone to become a designer (McCarthy & Wright, 2015). Reflecting on these, I profile accomplishments from select grassroots data collection projects in order to trace how they “speak back” to design and could inform other emerging civic practices.

## G. Presentations

*Chair: Alan Galey*

### **Revising Gender: Literary Production and Bentley’s Women Readers**

*Presenter: Sarah Lubelski*

This presentation examines how Bentley and Son’s women publishing workers altered the firm’s understanding and expression of gender. This included encouraging the Bentleys to publish authors and works with progressive views on gender ideology, adopting new editorial policies which changed how gender was represented within texts, and evolving the firm’s definition of women’s literature and the woman reader. The work of two women publishers’ readers—Geraldine Jewsbury and Gertrude Townshend Mayer—will be considered in depth. Letters and readers’ reports drawn from the archives will be used to demonstrate how they used their influence at the firm to promote the publication of gender-progressive titles (e.g. the controversial *Made in Heaven*), provide women with new types of texts to engage with (including an edition of Plato’s writings), and promote the work of women writers (e.g. Townshend’s anthology *Women of Letters*).

## **Designing Business Process Architectures for Enterprise Cognitive Computing**

*Presenter: Zia Babar*

Business processes can be enhanced with cognitive capabilities by employing analytics and machine learning approaches to help with key decision-making process activities. However, these business processes need to be designed in a manner that support the evolving nature of engagement between human users and cognitive systems, manage the contextual shifts that may result in process reconfigurations, while also considering the creation of additional supporting processes that support such cognitively-enhanced business processes. A systematic conceptual modeling approach is proposed that will help guide the design and configurations of process architectures that enable enterprise transition towards the acquisition and management of cognitive capabilities.

## **Scripted Objects and Meaningful Play: Theorizing Play in Video Game Modifications**

*Presenter: Allen Kempton*

This paper theoretically examines the place of video game modification (modding) within the contexts of play, agency, and algorithms. Video games are products of scripts and code, but require human interaction to execute and have meaning. Despite their algorithms, players derive their own dynamic meanings and understandings of the game, whether this means game community or individually derived meaning. Mods and modding practices provide an inlet for play research to examine how we can work towards a phenomenological understanding of dynamic and meaningful play of video games specifically as an algorithmic object. This presentation will discuss how Schutzian phenomenology can be blended with play theories to research and understand meaningful and dynamic forms of play against a context of video games as algorithmic objects. Situating modding as a deliberate form of playing with algorithms, I aim to explore how players exercise agency over algorithms to construct worlds of meaning, changing intended meaning, including what constitutes “real” play, changing the meaning of the game more broadly. Taking a synthesis approach, this paper blends Schutz’s phenomenology of the social world (1932) with theories of play, particularly Bakhtin (1984), Caillois (1955), and Grimes’ and Feenberg’s critique of Caillois (2009) to examine how agency is exercised in making meaningful play out of video games contextualized as pre-determined, algorithmic objects. Drawing on modding studies, such as Postigo (2007) and Somataa (2010), and algorithmic gaming (Galloway, 2006) to add context, I discuss the challenges and benefits of Schutz’s phenomenology (theory and methodology) as a broader theoretical framework to fit play theory within to study video games and meaning-making practices such as modding.

## **H. Works in Progress Afternoon**

*Chair: Nicole Cohen*

## **The Land Before Time: Yahoo! Acquires GeoCities, 1999**

*Presenter: Katie Mackinnon*

*Respondent: Jack Jamieson*

Before there was Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, there was an online community called GeoCities. In the late 1990s, GeoCities was poised to become the most trafficked site on the Internet. People who used the site were called “Homesteaders,” a word used to encompass a

philosophy that encouraged Internet users to meet and interact with their neighbours with similar interests to create their own "home on the web." This online space grew significantly within a span of 4 years, with 2.1 million members across all neighbourhoods by 1998. The popularity of the site certainly makes it hard to believe that a mere 10 years later, there was nothing left to the site but ruins. How did this once-thriving community of people, organized around shared interests and connected by web-learning and identity creation, become a barren wasteland of broken links? Yahoo!'s acquisition of the site in 1999 marks a significant turning point in the trajectory of online communities and might offer some answers. Through an examination of GeoCities homesteader's reaction to Yahoo!'s acquisition, accessed through web pages archived by the Internet Archive, we can begin to reconstruct a history of GeoCities and early platform blogging to witness the influx of commodification in web communities.

## **The Essential Internet**

*Presenter: Michel Mersereau*

*Respondent: Katie Mackinnon*

Join me for an open discussion related to my efforts in designing and operationalizing a *systems based* methodology in support of an upcoming study at the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC). The interest motivating this study is to develop a framework for understanding the extent to which broadband internet service can be characterized as an *essential technical resource* for the individuals and communities that comprise the TCHC's primary operating environment. As a general descriptor, a systems theory can be described as an interdisciplinary approach to understanding complex biological, mechanical, or chemical relationships. Systems thinking itself emphasizes a shift in attention from the part to the whole (Seidl & Schoeneborn, 2010; Tinajero & Páramo, 2012), considering complex entities as purposeful, interacting, probabilistic and self-regulating arrangements whose constituent components behave differently in an organized state than they might individually. When observed from a systems perspective, the collections of practices and activities that characterize the operational and residential environments of the TCHC can be understood as a dynamically interrelated system; one where the role of broadband internet services can be more precisely identified, and where testable hypotheses related to the *essentiality* of the technology may be generated.

## **"Tools of our enemies": Developing alternatives alongside corporate social media**

*Presenter: Jack Jamieson*

*Respondent: Michel Mersereau*

Alternative social media projects pursue visions of the Internet that are distinct from the corporate hegemony of Facebook, Google, and other mainstream platforms. A major obstacle is the ubiquity of corporate platforms, which means that ASM must operate alongside, or even with dependence upon, their deepest rivals. This paper presents findings from my study of the IndieWeb, "a people-focused alternative to the 'corporate web'" (IndieWeb.org, 2016). One of IndieWeb's defining features is its simultaneously dependent and antagonistic relationship to corporate platforms, as remarked by one of its founders: "We still use the silos [corporate platforms] as a distribution mechanism. We will use the tools of our competitors, of our enemies, to further our own causes" (Çelik, 2014). IndieWeb's developers reinterpret corporate APIs as a distribution mechanism for "independent" web-content. Through participant-observation and close readings of technical artifacts, I investigate the extent to which these APIs exert pressure against IndieWeb's

goals, and how developers respond. Studying this relationship draws attention to power relationships with platforms and highlights vectors through which different forms of resistance to corporate social media are allowed or restricted. This will contribute to knowledge about how to build alternatives that reflect their creators' principles when operating alongside much larger rivals.

### Closing Remarks

*Seamus Ross, PhD Research Days Organizing Committee*