

AIGA DESIGN EDUCATORS CONFERENCE

**NEW CONTEXTS / NEW PRACTICES**

Moderator **Dori Tunstall** and  
writer **Julie Lasky** have a report  
on Interdisciplinarity: Making  
ourselves attractive to  
collaborators.

## Interdisciplinarity: Making ourselves attractive to others

### Trends and areas of impact:

- **expertise (developing a core)**
  - Visual realm, making meaning -> situating ourselves in design
  - Speaking for those that can't speak well for themselves
  - Borrowing from others? Mutual Thieving
  - Discovery vs invention -> are they the same/connected?
  - Differentiation from art -> systems thinking or other design fields or merge (general design degree) -> perspective shifts
  - Core shifts -> from craft to behaviors
  - Process + meaning making, framing problems
- Collaboration
- Distinction b/w design + craft
- Design is about how things mean

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## Trends and areas of impact:

- What happens in practice is “more” than form making
  - how to ask questions, critique etc.
- Clients are experts
- No single method or place interdisciplinary; change over time happens
- Everyone participates in design

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## Trends and areas of impact:

- CORE COMPETENCES
  - Process facilitation + visualization
  - Manipulating communication mediums in order to entertain, inform, etc.
  - Organizing thought, Forming arguments, External cognition
  - Meaning analysis
  - Ideation
  - “Making things pretty” as technology of power

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### Dilemmas:

- We don't model behaviors for students
- How do we situate graphic designers with other disciplines and within design?
- The individual should not be interdic. -> should be experts
- Graphic design centric
- Bureaucratic framework -> making it happen in the classroom
- Need to be logical
- Realities of what students want -> to make particular things, getting a job
- Making not related to critical discourse
- What is critical discourse in design?
- Most design students won't practice design

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### Dilemmas:

- How does critical discourse affect what happens in the classroom?
- We are critical of members of the design discipline but not of the discipline
- Collaboration doesn't happen among students in University settings
- How do we “claim” our work? We need the credits academics

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### Hotspots:

- Information visualization, sense-making
- Research -> use of resources (ex. Librarians)
  - Laddering
    - 1) become an expert on something
    - 2) make connections
    - 3) take a stance
  - Design faculties knowledge of critical discourse in design + other fields
- Connecting critical discourse to studio work (craft)
  - How you teach not curriculum
  - Repetition + memory
- Design research defining the discipline
- Various kinds of programs at different schools

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### Hotspots:

- Critical engagement with work as it is embodied
  - Critique to literature -> sharing this with other disciplines
- Understanding what non-designers see as valuable what are their perception of us? Is this deferral?
- Communicating our value -> How we want to be seen as designers?
- Languages that students need to speak
  - “No tribal language”/general communication skills vs context-specific language
  - In terms of **purpose, situation and context** -> needs of students change over time

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### Hotspots:

- IN RESEARCH
  - Defining methodology
    - 1) So it can be used or contested
    - 2) Can be borrowed from practice
  - Adept ability to work structure to structure
  - One can be adept at interdisciplinarity w/o being expert at everything -> understanding structure
  - Mirroring others' methodologies -> bringing structure
  - Inquiry as a place for interdisciplinarity

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### Hotspots:

- In CURRICULUM
  - Developing ability to be context specific -> ability to define methodology
  - Understanding structures -> ability to take different perspectives
  - Characteristics of adept
    - 1) deep listening
    - 2) understanding structure
    - 3) empathy
    - 4) respecting difference

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### Hotspots:

- In CURRICULUM
  - Creating opportunities to acquire skills:
    - 1) empathy -> methods to help students to understand others (non-peers)
    - 2) sharing way of thinking
    - 3) understanding components + rules for combination + how you add to the system
    - 4) building a culture -> opportunities for inquiry + valuing it
    - 5) implementing rigor about methodologies
    - 6) show them how it works (modeling) and put them in that condition
    - 7) expose them to other experts
    - 8) not a class!