

AIGA DESIGN EDUCATORS CONFERENCE

**NEW CONTEXTS / NEW PRACTICES**

Moderator Judith Gregory and  
writer Deborah Littlejohn have  
a report on Design research:  
Building a culture from scratch.

Design research: Building  
a culture from scratch

## Design as a Discipline: We're ready!

- Multiple meanings of design research
- Pre-paradigmatic stage
- Little infrastructure
- Overcome isolationism
- Flipping the curriculum

TODAY	TOMORROW
Year 1: Design skills	Year 1: Design thinking
Year 2: Design thinking	Year 2: Design skills

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## Trends and areas of impact:

- Other disciplines are questioning themselves and looking at design as a way of getting out of their boxes
- Other disciplines are looking at the same issues that interest us
- Other disciplines have changed
- Reading and learning have changed
- Other disciplines are entering design schools
- Other disciplines want to collaborate with designers
- Sustainability and complex social problems have become important concerns in design research and other fields
- The emergence of different design programs

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## Dilemmas: definitional

- Lack of clarity in our definitions of research (and design research)
- Inconsistent use of terminology (within and across texts)

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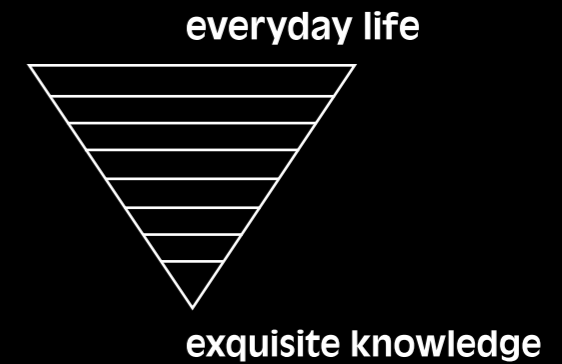
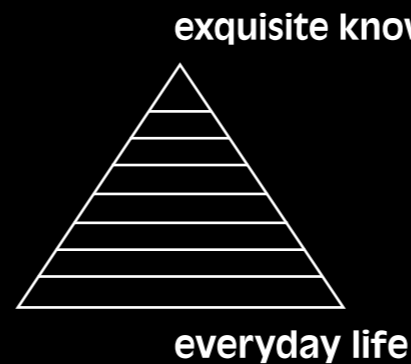
## **Dilemmas: teaching & learning**

- **Designers don't learn to read critically**
- **Lack of faculty who can teach design research**
- **Lack of reflexivity in our educational and professional practices**
- **Constraints of courses and curriculum**
- **Little consistency, continuity and distinction between graduate and undergraduate degrees**

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## Dilemmas: knowledge(s)

- **Doing vs. inquiring**
- **Creativity vs. research**
- **Pure vs. applied**



- **Few peer-reviewed design journals to disseminate knowledge**
- **Awareness of the dialogues taking place & how to find out about them**

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### Hotspots:

- **AIGA can provide leadership in developing design research resources including a flagship peer-reviewed journal and mentoring systems**
- **AIGA can develop a framework for curating and publishing design cases that highlight empirical research and methods**
- **Invite 'Knowledge Buddies' in design collaborations for complex social problems**
- **We are ready to begin operationalizing design methodologies e.g. prototyping is a point of access for what design uniquely offers**
- **Allow students in other disciplines to take our courses**
- **Partner with other disciplines, organizations, and institutes to apply for cross-disciplinary grants**
- **Pose design questions that are important to society as well as research questions fundamentally important to design**

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### **Entry points:**

- **Provide a research tool kit**
- **Be a research partner**
- **Read other disciplines' literature to get familiar with their vocabularies**
- **Rethink current graphic design forms and tools in learning fields to move towards designing dynamic learning experiences**
- **Identify how design can open up other disciplines' assumptions and research practices**
- **Establish 'the visual' as a space for analyzing and articulating research questions and inquiry**
- **It's about us knowing them... and them knowing us**