

## AN ICONFERENCE WORKSHOP PROPOSAL

# THE INFORMATION AND CONTEMPLATION SALON

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### ORGANIZERS

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### ABSTRACT

This hands-on workshop invites participants to entertain the merits of "contemplation" as a new frontier for the iSchool community. Founding members of the Information and Contemplation Salon - a virtual research group - will introduce concepts at the crossroads of information and contemplation, each serving as a point of departure for dynamic discussion that is then encapsulated and experienced through a virtual activity. Topics include: the emerging discipline of Contemplative Studies; Contemplation as Information Behaviour; The Tree of Contemplative Practices; Contemplative Infrastructure; and Intellectual Humility. This workshop will be offered in the spirit of Contemplative Pedagogy, which honors an egalitarian, holistic, and uplifting learning environment. Participants will be gently immersed in an alternative universe of information-related concepts and leave with a new perspective.

## DESCRIPTION

**Purpose and Intended Audience.** The Information and Contemplation Salon is an international group of researchers within Information Studies who have come together to discuss fruitful overlaps between our longstanding central concept of *information* and the idea of *contemplation*. Our interests span theoretical, methodological, and practical levels and attend to developments in popular culture as well. Through a workshop at the 2021 iConference, our Salon hopes to engage colleagues across the broad iSchool community in an interactive session which implements the alternative and emerging paradigm of contemplation into scholarship, pedagogy, and professional practices. We also aim to establish new collaborators and like-minded fellows. Though the term “contemplative” may suggest connotations with religion, by design, our project is secular, and welcomes individuals of all faiths (or none). The workshop is intended to appeal to people with any level of comfort or interest in Contemplative Studies, contemplative practices, and/or mindfulness and meditation practices and who would like to explore what it means to situate these concepts within the world of information.

<b>AGENDA</b>		
Time	Topic	Activities
45	<i>Introduction to the Information and Contemplation Salon.</i> Welcome; a brief introduction to our research group; our agenda for the workshop; and what we envision the crossroads between Information Studies and Contemplative Studies to be.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ A brief mindfulness meditation.</li> <li>✦ A fun ice-breaker.</li> </ul>
30	<i>Topic 1 – The Tree of Contemplative Practices (Duerr, 2011).</i> A graphic representation that helps scholars, educators, and students understand the main principles and major types of contemplative practices and in which all contemplative practices and principles can find a home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Sampling the Generative branch.</li> <li>✦ Sampling the Movement branch.</li> </ul>
30	<i>Topic 2 – Contemplative Infrastructure.</i> Infrastructure that concerns itself with the contemplative dimension of life, and a way in which opportunities for contemplative practice can be embedded within, across, and beyond information institutions such as libraries and iSchools (Samson, forthcoming).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Visualization planning.</li> </ul>
30	<i>Topic 3 – Contemplation as Information Behaviour .</i> A broad conceptualization that invites scholars to examine the ways in which they have considered the mind merely as a “black box” in information behaviour models, and to explore those internal actions and processes which transform information into experience or being (Chabot, 2019).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Self-reflection.</li> <li>✦ Guided meditation on the mind.</li> </ul>

15	<i>Break</i>	✧ Rest.
30	<i>Topic 4 – Intellectual Humility.</i> A guiding virtue that brings a much-needed depth and compass to information seeking behaviour, and which will be presented as a central concept upheld by the Salon. A cohort of scholars have begun researching intellectual humility specifically as a cornerstone of the intellectual virtues; while there are myriad aspects to the concept, at heart it has to do with being open to the possibility that one might be mistaken (Church & Samuelson, 2017).	✧ Belief interrogation and audit.
30	<i>Reflective Closing.</i> We will invite participants to discuss their experience of the workshop; their major takeaways; their own experiences with contemplative practice; and ask them to share which contemplative practice during the workshop resounded most with them. We will turn to the Creative branch of the Tree of Contemplative Practices to engage in an arts-based reflective activity, which will be used as a springboard to a closing discussion.	✧ Reflective drawing.

**Engagement.** Our workshop will broadly enact Contemplative Pedagogy - an educational philosophy that prioritizes the development of student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, compassion, creativity, and altruistic behavior - and lightly touch upon foundations and relevant precedents of this emergent form of instruction (Zajonc, 2013). Applied to graduate education (and to scholarly conferences, too), contemplative pedagogy may lead to a more liberating, authentic, and spacious classroom culture; alternative forms of assignments and evaluation; and the use of contemplative practices during class (Berbezat & Bush, 2014). Following of each topic, we will lead the group in a contemplative practice, tailored specifically to a virtual environment and exemplary of mindful engagement and collaboration over digital communication technologies. These activities will be designed to help ground each topic in first-person contemplative experience with the aim of a fuller understanding and embodiment of the ideas presented during the workshop. Participants will produce small artefacts and writings that will serve as a physical manifestation of the session's explorations and may serve as a jumping-off point for further research outside of this workshop.

**Goals or Outcomes.** Attendees will leave our round-up style session with new perspectives at the crossroads of information and contemplation, and will have:

- ✧ A working knowledge of *Contemplative Studies; Contemplation as Information Behaviour; The Tree of Contemplative Practices; Contemplative Infrastructure; and Intellectual Humility,*
- ✧ Gained new contemplative practices that can be carried into their personal and professional lives,
- ✧ Made new colleagues and friends with whom to continue the discussion
- ✧ Seen *Contemplative Pedagogy* and can try it in their classrooms.

**Relevance to the iConference.** This workshop is directly relevant to the iConference's 2021 theme: Diversity | Divergence | Dialogue. We hope to break down the esoteric and abstruse notion of contemplative practice and help make it evident and accessible to learners by highlighting the already-contemplative nature of many participants' knowledge practices and indicate where they can build on these in dynamic and divergent ways. In a world rife with divides – digital, political, and social – observations can be made that suggest a breakdown of civic and scholarly discourse. If we hope to improve dialogue among dissenting perspectives, one approach to take is to help people build skills in speaking and listening, broadly construed, and we will discuss how a contemplative framework nurtures and values these skills. This constitutes a virtue-based approach, as it focuses on instilling certain character traits in people, in this case intellectual or epistemic virtues (Heersmink, 2018; Vallor, 2016). During a fragmented Information Age, contemplative theory and practice invites a missing sense of holism into our field of inquiry. At the intersection of Information and Contemplative Studies, we need to ask not only whether contemplative practices might be informational, but also *whether information practices might be contemplative* (Latham et al., 2020). Through our workshop, we hope to highlight various opportunities for iSchools to take up these concepts, both in and out of the classroom.

**Duration:** 3.5 hours (half day)

**Attendance:** 15-20 participants

**Special Requirements:** None

## REFERENCES

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