i4G: Shaping iSchools' Identity and Interaction in a Globalized World

Type：Panel

Organizers：

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Abstract：

The iSchools Organization encompasses 123 members around the world and keeps expanding. The diverse nature and characteristics of iSchools members present a set of challenges for people within and outside the global iSchools community to understand impacts of various human, social and organizational factors on its members. This 90-minute panel aims to present contemporary and significant findings from a grant funded project *i4G: Shaping iSchools' Identity and Interaction in a Globalized World.* Presentations and discussion will be carried out on issues that are on the minds of iSchool leaders and junior scholars in the iSchools community. An introduction to and trial of a newly designed database for enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation inside and outside the iSchools community will also be included. This panel will represent an opportunity for the broader library and information science community to offer input as to iSchools' future directions.

Description：

■ Purpose and Intended Audience:

The iSchools Organization seeks to improve the visibility and influence of its member schools, and their interdisciplinary approaches to harnessing the power of information and technology, as well as maximizing the potential of humans. At the end of September 2021, the iSchools Organization included 123 schools of library and information science around the world and is still expanding. As a global organization, iSchools aim to contribute to research, scholarship and knowledge exchange on a global scale, while at the same time, meeting the needs of the member institutions. However, the diverse nature and characteristics of the iSchools present challenges for

people within and outside the community to understand the impact of human, social and organizational factors on its members.

Based on the above context, a research project called "*i4G: Shaping iSchools' Identity and Interaction in a Globalized World*" (i4G) was funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and began in February 2020, with a focus on the current situation The research project includes three main parts:

1. A series of interviews with iSchool leaders to gather data on the views, perceptions and impact of the iSchools organization on individual iSchools in three different regions: North/South America, Europe and Asia-Pacific. The interviews focused on three key issues for iSchool leaders, including (1) views on the field of information, (2) faculty and institutional relationships, and (3) expectations for the iSchools Organization.

2. An online survey to of junior scholars (doctoral students and candidates, postdoctoral fellows and associates, and early-career faculty) to gather data on the views, perceptions and impact of the iSchools Organization within the global iSchools community. The online survey focuses on junior scholars' engagement in the iSchools community and the impact of the iSchools organization for its branding, activities and benefits.

3. Technical work to build a sustainable database of the various entities – people, teaching, research, collaborators/partners, etc., of the global iSchools community that could be used for building knowledge graphs to link people, research, publications, grants and projects.

The main purpose of this panel is to present the most significant findings of the three parts of this research project, including a demonstration of the database and to conduct a discussion around key issues about how the organization might evolve.

Intended audiences of this panel include anyone who is interested in understanding the current situation of the iSchools organization and offering input for possible future directions, as well as suggestions for database design improvement.

■ Proposed Format:

This panel will start with a brief introduction to the *i4G* project by the moderator.

Then, a group presentation will include results from the interviews with iSchool leaders. A representative from each of the three regions will present the issues from their regional perspective. To enable comparison between regions, the presentations will be organized within a three-part framework that includes: (1) views on the field of information, such as trending topics, major challenges, and the evolving research; (2) faculty and institutional relationships between the iSchools and their parent institutions, their collaborations and their funding sources, and their graduates' employment

prospects and statistics; and (3) expectations for the iSchools Organization, particularly for its branding, common identity, community-building, and services.

Next, a short presentation will highlight the online survey focusing on junior scholars within the iSchools community. The methodology and key findings of the survey will be presented within a four-part framework: (1) the research areas and discipline of junior scholars, (2) the iSchools' impact on personal development, (3) the iSchools' organizational impact, (4) the engagement of junior scholars with the iSchools community. After this presentation, a panel discussion will enable participants to share their opinions about these frameworks.

Finally, a short presentation will be given about the newly built database for the iSchools community. The process and structure for building the platform will be explained, and its functions will be demonstrated. Participants will be invited to try using the database, followed by a discussion.

The panel presentations will take no more than 50 minutes. 40 minutes will remain for audience questions and discussions, and a synthesis about possible next steps.

■ Engagement:

Two periods will be specially designed for attendees' engagement. The first is an audience question period after presentations on the iSchool leaders' and junior scholars' inputs. About 15 minutes will be available for attendees to discuss the iSchools Organization's vision, goals and identity.

The second one is a trial and discussion of the iSchool database. About 10 minutes will be available for attendees to try the functions of the new iSchools database, another 10 minutes will be given for attendees to give feedback.

■ Goals & Outcomes:

Goals for this panel are fourfold. Firstly, this panel aims to share the latest and most significant findings of the *i4G* project. Secondly, this panel will introduce and demonstrate functions and services provided by the newly built database for the iSchools community to all its members. Thirdly, it provides a chance for attendees to try database functions and give instant feedback for its design and improvement. Finally, it offers an opportunity for community members to exchange ideas and thoughts for the vision and common identity of the iSchools Organization. A report will be prepared and shared after the panel to summarize key inputs from the attendees.

■ Relevance to the iConference:

At the iConference 2021, a panel for the *i4G* project was organized to present the preliminary but most significant findings of the interviews. Sequentially, the panel proposed here will share final results of the *i4G* project about the issues that are on the minds of iSchool leaders and junior scholars. The newly built database for the

iSchools community aims at providing a new technical tool for enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation inside and outside the iSchools community. The data gathered and findings shared for this panel are quite timely and reflect the changes that have occurred in iSchools education and academia over the last 24 months, furthermore, they can be contextualized by a diverse international team. This panel will also present an opportunity for the broader library and information science community to offer input about future directions for the iSchools, and how the iSchools might live up to their vision of influencing individuals, organizations, and society.

Duration: One Session (1.5 hours)