

Welcome

Interdisciplinarity has become an increasingly popular buzzword in academia. It is posited, without elaboration, as a desirable process or state for education and research. But the term lacks specificity: Can it be practised from within traditional disciplines or does it call for a more radical upset of established structures? Does it refer to the products of research, the institutions which enable knowledge creation, or the social practices and identities that are formed within and around disciplines? More foundationally, what defines an academic discipline? Where are the epistemic boundaries that interdisciplinary work claims to transcend?¹ Do they exclude any knowledge housed outside of academic institutions; or, does interdisciplinarity suggest a possibility for new forms of research which attend to a greater range of ways of knowing about the world?

More often than not, the term seems to be used in a shallow sense—taking the products of disciplinary research and laying them side by side, without integrating the perspectives, aims, or methods of diverse ways of knowing. We created the *Journal of Integrative Research & Reflection* (JIRR) with the aim of facilitating deep, critical engagement with interdisciplinarity, in addition to ways of knowing informed by identity and lived experiences. As such, JIRR is a cross-disciplinary journal; we are interested in research and discussion across diverse domains of knowledge, not just those currently deemed credible by the academy. As a journal, JIRR provides an open-access platform for cross-disciplinary work done by undergraduate students be it applied research which employs multiple ways of knowing, creative projects that disrupt disciplinary boundaries, or theoretical work on cross-disciplinarity in undergraduate education. By providing this space, we hope to encourage young scholars to reflect critically on the methods, aims and paradigms of disciplinary and interdisciplinary projects. Through the creation of this journal, we are building a community of cross-disciplinarians across faculties, campuses and levels of expertise.

Work on JIRR began in winter of 2017 with a small team of Knowledge Integration students at the University of Waterloo. This team, now our Editorial Board, identified a gap in publishing opportunities for undergraduate students at our university. We recognized that undergraduate publishing creates value for students through encouraging them to engage with their work as scholars and allowing for learning about peer-review, a foundational structure of the academic research community. Cross-disciplinarity was a natural choice of focus for our journal. The Department of Knowledge Integration is a center of expertise in cross-disciplinarity, providing us with access to advisors and other information resources for developing the journal.

Our choice of focus for the journal presented unique challenges: there were few precedents for peer-reviewing and evaluating integrative cross-disciplinary work. The editorial team spent much of our first year developing an understanding of existing theory on cross and interdisciplinarity, including research from philosophy of science, pedagogy and social epistemology. We integrated these perspectives to create a unique, double-blind review process for cross-disciplinary projects. This includes an evaluation framework that accommodates for cross-disciplinary projects of a broad range of mediums and a peer review process that leverages our reviewers' diverse expertise and lev-

¹Krishnan, A., (2009). What are Academic Disciplines: Some observations on the Disciplinarity vs. Interdisciplinarity Debate. ESRC National Centre for Research Methods.

els of study. The process was also designed so as to provide training for inexperienced reviewers.

Our months of preparation paid off and we celebrated a very successful first edition. As a community building project, JIRR exceeded our expectations: over 60 people, including editors, authors, reviewers and advisors, from all levels of study and across Canada and the U.S., came together to realize our first edition. We received 20 submissions, of which eight were selected for publication (including the artwork depicted on our cover). Each of the articles explores a unique topic through multiple disciplinary lenses; some pieces also consider ways of knowing derived from social identity and stakeholder knowledge. We congratulate the authors for their talent and their dedication to a challenging project. The following works begin the process of interdisciplinary inquiry they do not answer the wicked questions posed above; but, their creation and development in collaboration with the JIRR team fostered countless discussions, between authors, editors, and reviewers, about the theory and practice of cross-disciplinarity. Through this process, we have come to recognize the challenge of creating work that steps outside of and reflects back on disciplinary research. This new understanding reinforces our belief in the importance of beginning conversation about these topics at the undergraduate level.

This edition of JIRR is our first step. We have created a roadmap, and illuminated countless opportunities for growth. In future years, we hope to expand our reach to more students in more schools around North America. And, to improve our communication around cross-disciplinarity, integration and social epistemology, in hopes that stronger communication of our vision will translate to submissions that engage more deeply with these concepts. We also aim to strengthen the JIRR community through creating more opportunities for connections between supporters.

We hope you enjoy reading our inaugural edition of the *Journal of Integrative Research & Reflection*, and that you return to follow the growth of our project, and community, for many years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bronwyn McIlroy-Young". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bronwyn McIlroy-Young,
Editor in Chief