

Roundtable Session 2: iSchool Health and Medical Research Initiatives and Opportunities

Chair: Hartmut B. Mokros

The Annual iConference offers an important opportunity for information sharing among member iSchools. Proposed for iConference 09 is a Roundtable Discussion that provides a forum for information sharing about existing and planned iSchool initiatives, and discussion of opportunities related to Health and Medical Research. Because of the transdisciplinary scope of research problems and practical demands in relation to Health and Medical Research, initiatives in these areas offer significant opportunities for cross-disciplinary research collaboration and interdisciplinary partnership with other units in the development of professional training programs.

Developed research initiatives at the Indiana University School of Informatics and the University of California-Irvine Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences offer examples. At Indiana, four faculty members and one post-doc contribute to the bioinformatics area. Their interests include gene sequence pattern recognition, comparative genomics, structural genomics, fragment assembly in DNA sequencing, systems biology, models of evolution, and molecular modeling and drug design. At UC-Irvine, nine faculty are identified as contributors to its Bio-Medical initiative. Areas of research include medical information access, knowledge representation for health-care guidelines, structure in biomedical data, biomedical simulations, discovery of gene expression control, knowledge discovery in clinical databases, computational biology, and bioinformatics and probabilistic modeling. Both institutions initiatives have a computational emphasis, but quite distinct research foci and differing collaborative opportunities no doubt.

The University of Michigan's School of Information and the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science offer examples of training programs. Michigan offers a dual-degree program in Information and Nursing and a five-year Medical Degree/Master of Science in Information dual degree. Illinois has developed a Master of Science in Biological Informatics, "an entirely separate program from the existing GLIS M.S. degree" that is currently under university-wide review.

Developments at three other iSchools offer examples of emergent interest in Health and Medical research and training initiatives. At Indiana University, the School of Library and Information Science recently hosted an NSF sponsored workshop to examine Frontiers in Health Information Delivery. At Florida State University, the College of Information hosted a Health Informatics Symposium in August 2008. The symposium sought to identify existing and proposed health informatics projects, potential areas for collaboration and possible funding sources. Finally, at Rutgers University, the School of Communication, Information and Library Studies identifies Health and Wellness as one of three initiatives for faculty development over the next several years. Health Communication Campaigns, Bio-Medical and Health Journalism/Media, Bio-Medical/Health Informatics, and Social/Information Medical/Health Interaction are areas specifically targeted. Discussion of possible mutual opportunities are currently underway with the Pharmacy School at Rutgers with an invited working conference to discuss opportunities in Health and Medical Research funded by Johnson & Johnson planned for spring 2009.

The proposed Roundtable Discussion offers a venue for information sharing about current and planned Health and Medical initiatives, including lessons learned from existing programmatic developments, and for discussing opportunities not yet realized by member iSchools including possible cross-iSchool collaboration.