Navigating multi-disciplinary spaces
The result of a student-organized workshop for doctoral students in the UC iSchools.

This proposal is submitted by the UC Information Studies Workshop organizers

PROPOSED ROUNDTABLE

Purpose
We propose a roundtable discussion to report results of the first UC Information Studies Lab workshop and discuss implications with a broader audience. The workshop is conceived and organized by doctoral students for doctoral students from the three "iSchools" in the University of California system: UC Berkeley's School of Information, UC Irvine's Department of Informatics, and UCLA's Department of Information Studies in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. The UC Information Studies Lab will host the doctoral workshop on January 22-23, 2009. This proposal includes details about the objectives of the workshop, motivation, work-to-date, and intended audience. We hope to report and discuss the planning, results and experiences from the workshop at the iConference.

Objectives
We have four objectives for the roundtable discussion:
1. Share our collective experiences in organizing this event from its inception to its execution, including outlining the workshop goals; rallying institutional support; raising the necessary funds; reporting what did and did not work at the workshop; and discussing proposals for next steps and future cross-campus collaboration.

2. Report to the greater iSchools community on the "findings" of the workshop, including the diverse research agendas of the doctoral students, and our collective understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing us as prospective scholars in the iSchools.

3. One of the goals of the workshop is to better engage with the larger iSchool community, and we are eager to solicit feedback from both members and "outsiders" to the UC iSchool community.

4. Explore options for wider collaborations across more schools and between doctoral students and faculty.

ABOUT THE UC INFORMATION STUDIES WORKSHOP

Background
The motivation for the upcoming workshop grew out of conversations at the iSchool conference held at UCLA in February 2008. These conversations brought in focus overlapping curricula and research interests as well as similar intellectual and professional challenges at the three UC iSchools. Because the individual departments across our schools are all relatively small (especially in comparison to the wider UC system), we found many doctoral students looking for intellectual camaraderie, possibilities for collaboration, and professional networking opportunities. We felt that there was a tremendous opportunity for cross-campus engagements between doctoral students who share concerns about the challenges and opportunities of interdisciplinary research and careers.

First steps
A group of five students from the three programs applied for and won a grant from the UC Berkeley Bears Breaking Boundaries Idea Labs Contest [1]. The deans of the three iSchools supported this initiative. The funding granted us the opportunity to form the UC Information Studies Lab in the summer of 2008 including but not limited to challenges such as increase collaboration among these three campuses. During this phase, our group grew from five to eight members. Over the past six months, the UC Information Studies Lab members from the three campuses have held two all day meetings and a series of remote planning sessions. We raised money from our respective departments, larger institutions, and corporate sponsors in order to have an event that was totally free for participants. We have also finalized the event program and have commitment for attendance from approximately thirty students, roughly ten from each school.

Goals
The goals of the workshop are ambitious:
1) Improve the quality of our research in information studies
2) Foster and encourage community amongst the UC iSchools
3) Identify opportunities for intra-UC collaboration and to grow the field and continue to attract new and dynamic scholars
4) Develop and share professional growth
5) Engage with the wider iSchool field

Plan
The workshop is organized into three main sections. In the first, we will be focusing on the individual researcher as we try to form a collective understanding as to what kind of work each student attending is actually doing. Each student will have the opportunity to present their research, present the challenges of their work, discuss the kinds of theory and methods in which they engage, and get feedback from a small group. This is part of an effort to map the research agendas at the UC iSchools from the students perspective and from the ground up.

Then we will be building up foundations for future collaboration and intellectual exchange by organizing around themes. These themes will be generated by workshop participants and may include topics such as: locating creative practice, information technology and development, social theory in information studies, and alternative voices in information studies. A team of students will work on each topic. Students will present a short paper that positions their research and interests within their topic. As a group, students will examine how their work might shape a common set of questions within a given topic and identify opportunities for cross campus collaboration.

Finally, we will end the workshop by looking at the bigger picture. We will be discussing what we see are the current debates and future questions. We hope to address some of these questions: What new research areas are opening up by new instruments and new methods? What are the outlying ideas from other fields of scholarship that could have a dramatic shift in information-studies research? What are the disruptions and challenges to the future progress of information schools? Following this discussion we will map out next steps for the workshop, including plans to develop spaces for collaboration, opportunities for future meetings, and expansion to other campuses.

Conclusion
We are confident that the workshop will both be revealing in helping us understand the collective endeavor in which we are engaged and productive in helping us improve our research and finding collaborators. Finally, regardless of the achievements or unanticipated outcomes from the workshop, we would appreciate the opportunity to share our experiences and discuss future possibilities with the larger iSchool community.

References
[1] The Bears Breaking Boundaries contest is an annual contest sponsored by Thomas Kalil, the Special Assistant to the Chancellor for Science and Technology at UC Berkeley. See: http://contest.berkeley.edu/.