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Tracing the Evolution of iSchools Through Language (Lightning Talk)

Abstract (240 words)

This talk examines the trajectory of information schools in North America, beginning from the 1980s, through the perspective of language. We apply discourse and semiotic analysis to information school promotion and branding strategies to investigate how the priorities, visions, and scope of iSchools have changed over time. Using the University of Toronto's iSchool as a case study, we explore the evolution of its academic degrees from conception to present, observing the increasing multidisciplinary nature of the program.

We consider our timelines in the context of the 1988 North American iSchool movement (Shu and Mongeon 2016, 360) which transitioned the field from being a library science school to an iSchool, and the creation of seminal journals in information studies during the 1990s (Burke 2007, 3). Further, broader societal movements undergird our analysis, namely, the birth of Web 2.0 and the Internet, which facilitated an online space for encouraging user collaborations, sharing, and interactions (Murugesan 2007, 34). In the 2010s, the emergence and popularization of platforms resulted in a shift towards the ubiquity and connectedness of users, and discussion of the political and economic consequences of collecting and analyzing data (Gillespie 2010, 7). These datafication practices have advanced artificial intelligence and machine learning—technologies that characterize a new direction in information science. We conclude by looking towards the future of information science in higher education and engaging the audience in discussing their perspectives on information as an academic pursuit and career advancement.

References

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