

Interdisciplinarity of Cognitive Science

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The Cognitive Science Society: Interdisciplinarity Now and Then

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Definitions of cognitive science typically emphasize the field's interdisciplinary roots. As a case study of the field of cognitive science, we analyzed the activities of the Cognitive Science Society with a particular emphasis on the interdisciplinary nature of the field, now and since its inception. Analyses of departmental affiliations, training backgrounds, research methodology, and paper citations suggest that the journal Cognitive Science and the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society are dominated by cognitive psychology and computer science, rather than being an equal division among the constituent disciplines of cognitive science. However, at many levels, a growing percentage of work was found to involve a conjunction of multiple disciplines, such that approximately 30-50% of recent work in the Cognitive Science Society is interdisciplinary. The goal of this symposium is to discuss the factors (psychological, historical, sociological, and others) that have led to the current state of affairs, and what may be done to further increase interdisciplinarity in cognitive science.

Being Interdisciplinary: Trading Zones in Cognitive Science

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As Peter Gallison describes in his recent book on twentieth century physics, interdisciplinary research requires "trading zones" in which people from different fields are able to achieve at least partial communication. This talk will discuss some of the trading zones that make interdisciplinary work in cognitive science possible, taking into account some of the people, places, ideas, and methods that have contributed to the development of cognitive science. In particular, I will analyze the trading zone between psychology and artificial intelligence involving computational models of cognition, and the trading zone between psychology and philosophy involving descriptive and prescriptive accounts of thinking.

Making Interdisciplinary Collaboration Work

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Interdisciplinary work is a fundamental goal in cognitive science, but its achievement requires more than two researchers with different areas of expertise. This talk will report on some actual collaborations in cognitive science and attempt to identify the attributes that make them, in the judgment of their investigators and external arbiters, particularly successful. Consideration will be given both to relatively obvious features, such as discipline and topic, and to less obvious ones, including institutional environment and funding agency.