a²ru — ALLIANCE FOR THE ARTS IN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

Digest #4 Overview of a2ru Terms & Definitions

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Introduction

We have a lot to learn from each other about re-integrating the arts with other disciplines for research, teaching and practice. We also have a lot to map out and articulate in terms of how not only artists, but all creative activity shows up in the central research enterprise in higher education, the civic space, governance, and industry. As one of many actors in this important work, a2ru is honored to welcome working group participants to this symposium and leverage our collective knowledge. We want to activate the arts, artists, and artist methodologies to build on a body of research that has emerged since a2ru's founding and to collaborate on a concrete agenda and discrete programs to advance the arts together as a driver toward a better world.

Terms & Definitions

For the purposes of this convening, we are offering some baseline definitions for our work together, so we spend less time in working group conversations getting on the same page and more time building on the foundational work of a2ru's first decade.

In that first decade of a2ru's work, through many interviews, discussions and forums, a2ru members and researchers refined and synthesized language and definitions around arts integration; this is critical to establish a shared understanding and mark out territory for the field of arts integration in higher education.*

What do we mean by "The Arts?" Here at a2ru, when we talk about the arts we are referring to *the mindsets and practices of creativity and making*—strongly associated with the humanities and the fine, performing, and applied arts & design—*rather than the discipline labels themselves.*

What do we mean by "Integration?" Integration can mean different things to different people, and arts integration is no exception. Practitioners take both formal and informal approaches—from thinking in terms of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary archetypes, to simply showing up and working together. Successful integration actually involves two complementary activities:

Differentiation: recognizing the distinctions between fields, perspectives, practices and possibilities.

&

Integration: recognizing the meaningful applications and connections between fields, perspectives, practices and possibilities—as well as their contingencies.

What is arts integration? "Arts integration" implies that the arts are woven into the fabric of the university as an integral and valued part. To provide a few examples, the arts are integrated when:

- arts and design faculty are resourced equitably and have a clear path to promotion;
- all students have access to arts experiences;
- the university publicly celebrates arts accomplishments alongside STEMM, business, and athletic accomplishments;
- faculty who want to co-teach across disciplines are supported, as is interdisciplinary research that includes the arts.

There are many more ways arts integration happens; look around for new manifestations in the classroom, lab, studio, residence hall, public spaces--everywhere.

Why "Arts *Integration*" instead of just "the Arts"?

Why integration? The negative impact of the disciplinary knowledge being fragmented and the disciplines being disconnected—geographically and administratively—is difficult to overcome on campuses. Students and faculty are discouraged and disincentivized to integrate their learning experience, interests, skills and talents because the legacy and pull of siloed structures is so strong. Working together, the a2ru network helps individuals and institutions swim against this strong current and find channels for integration.

A2ru serves the arts and artists along the full higher ed spectrum from monodisciplinary practice "art for art's sake" all the way to art applied in a team setting . We champion all colors in the spectrum: the value of the arts in and of itself as pure inquiry (art for art's sake) to the arts as an equal partner fully integrated in transdisciplinary, collaborative team inquiry. Transdisciplinary research, teaching, and practice is predicated on deep, singular discipline activity. We believe any individual operates along this continuum during their academic and lifelong career and we support all the points on that continuum.

Arts Practice			Arts in a Collaborative Setting
(pure)			(applied)

Artists can spend their entire careers at any one point in this continuum, but many artists spend their time at different points on the spectrum at different times. We also encourage those who are non-artists to engage in learning its methodologies, as these are valuable transferable skills for any endeavor.

Mission

The Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities (a2ru) fosters and champions a central role of the arts and design in higher education. Our mission is connect knowledge and empower leadership to uphold and advance the arts and design in research, teaching, scholarship, and creative practice to acknowledge, articulate, and expand the vital role of higher education in our global society.

Why a2ru is transdisciplinary?

A2ru has evolved to champion what is underappreciated and undervalued in the arts. The arts are not leveraged to their full potential by our colleges and universities if they are not integrated in teaching, research, and practice. But it can be argued --and this is especially important for the future of our network--that any artificial dividers we put between our disciplines or hierarchy we impose on them does a disservice to our educational missions. We do need to provide, at crucial points, channels for disciplinary exchange and exploration for students and faculty to do their best work.

In context: a2ru and other initiatives

A2ru was founded at a time where interdisciplinary collaboration was heralded as an urgent need for higher education: "Over the past 15 years, interdisciplinary centers and institutes have

skyrocketed at public and land-grant universities, often focused on SEAD*. ..These initiatives echo the Kellogg Commission's call to action" (Zacharias and Wisnioski, 2019). Our task is articulating and championing where the traditional arts disciplines can thrive as equal partners in this transdisciplinary space. There exists a need for a2ru beyond our tenth year as we still see many internal and external projects and funding leaving the arts out of the picture or struggling to incorporate them in any sense other than instrumentalizing them (as a way of communication or aestheticizing). But we see many bright spots with campus-wide challenges including artistic skills and research methodologies and institutions such as the CDC and NSF including the arts in their calls for proposals. There is also very positive research and movement in interdisciplinary areas that holistically include the arts including great strides in the formalizing of creative place making and arts in health. These arts-integrated fields are paving the way for robust arts-integrated fields in xr, humanizing tech, climate justice, and addressing systemic poverty and racism.

The National Science Foundation has had several collaborations over the years with the National Endowment for the Arts to define this arts integrated space, including a 2010 SEAD symposium and the more recent "The Arts and the Algorithm: An Amalgamation," a 2022 workshop about the arts and tech.

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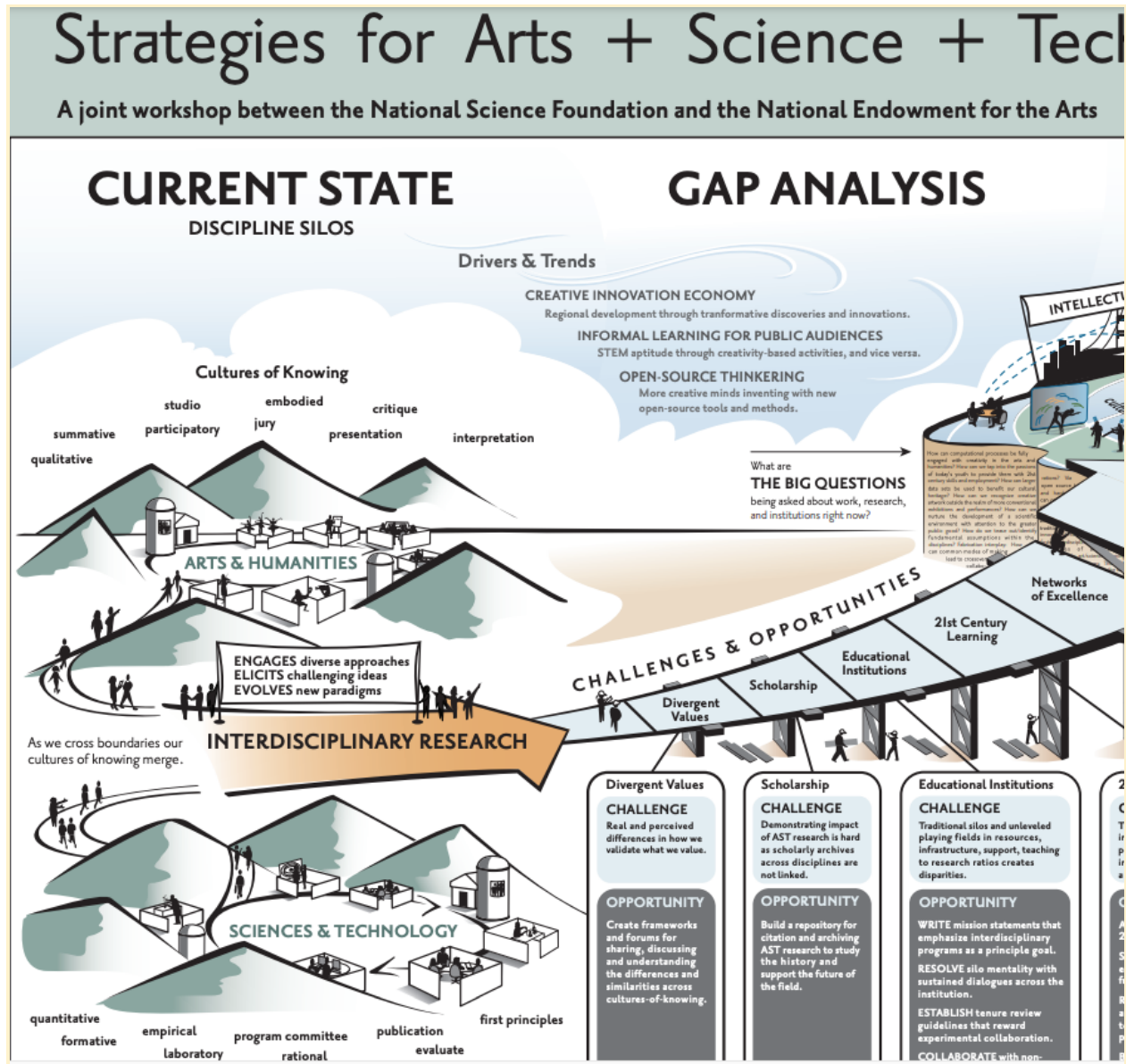
excerpt from 2010 NSF/NEA workshop. Visit

http://sead.viz.tamu.edu/about/pdf/NSF-NEA-Workshop-Storymap.pdf for the whole map.

SEAD is science, engineering, art and design, a network that advocates for collaboration among the sciences, engineering, arts and design, fostering innovation and learning that impact community sustainability and economic growth

Challenges

At a2ru we hear a lot about barriers and challenges to arts and arts integration on our campuses. We list these obstacles and -- borrowing a term from mathematics--use them as inflection points to start a conversation about how we can overcome the history of how our institutions have been designed in ways that no longer serve us, and how we can do better. Our approach is to revisit the barrier and take an expansive and inclusive approach to it.

We are also committed to balancing any calls for system-wide change with the push for change on a granular level, being pragmatic by working within current systems to empower those in leadership to find practical solutions.

Issues we have been focusing on led us to look at arts infrastructure on campus and identify the following challenges:

- Arts assets are siloed and competing for resources. The scarcity mindset sometimes gets in the way of collaboration and systematic approaches.
- Lack of support for artists on campus to seek funding with few sponsored programs staff dedicated to artists and arts schools and colleges.
- Artists in residence are not integrated in non-arts schools and colleges.
- There are few systematic ways to track performance metrics for arts faculty; assessment tools often use categories that aren't useful for the arts.
- Arts staff and advising staff expertise is often underutilized, undercounted, and undervalued. Arts work on campus is often paired with full teaching loads.
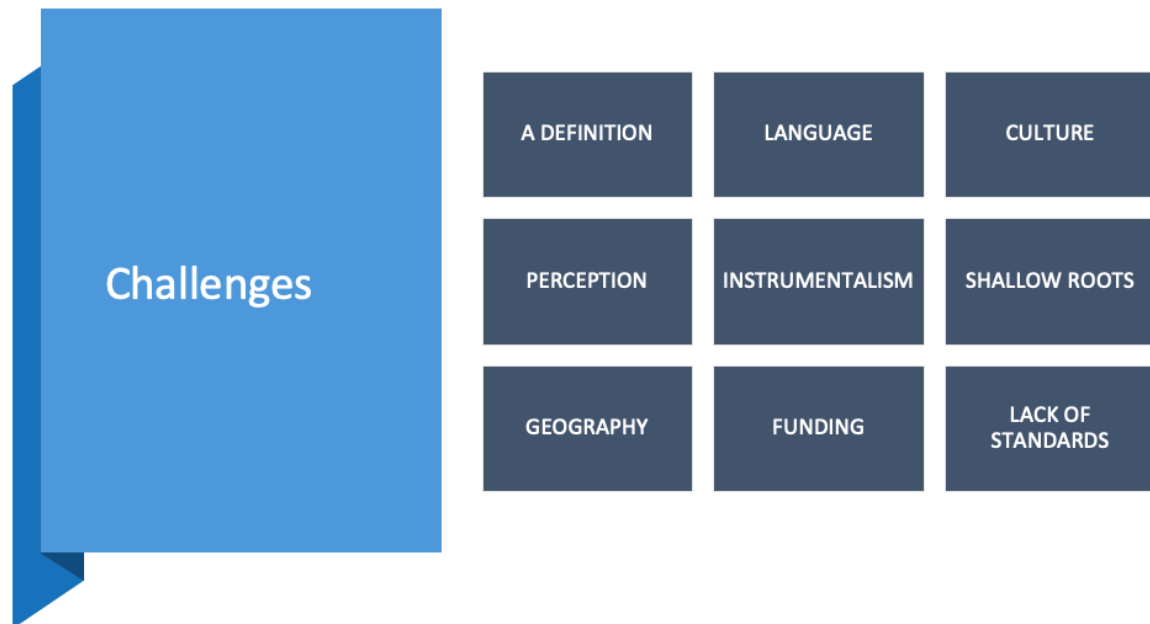
FAQs

Please take some time to visit the FAQ section on a2ru.org (https://a2ru.org/about/faqs/)
Where we address:
"What IS arts integration, anyway?" Below, find the answer to this and some of our other most commonly-asked questions!

Definitions
What do you mean by the arts? What disciplines are considered the arts?
What is integration?
What is arts integration?
What's the difference between "interdisciplinarity" and "transdisciplinarity"?
 What We Do
What are a2ru's major activities?
Why do the arts need a support network in higher education?
Is a2ru an advocacy organization?
What about workforce development? How does a2ru interface with industry on behalf of the arts?
How does a2ru promote equitable practices in its activities?

A brief history of the alliance

2006 – Arts On Earth/ArtsEngine launched at the University of Michigan

2011 – Michigan Meeting at U-M

2011 – ArtsEngine receives 1st Mellon Grant to study arts integration in research universities

2012 – a2ru launched in 2012 with 27 original partner universities

2013 – First a2ru annual conference held at Penn State

2014 – First a2ru Emerging Creatives Student Summit held at Stanford University

2015 – *Surveying the Landscape: Arts Integration at Research Universities* published

2015 – a2ru receives 2nd Mellon Grant: Supporting Practice in the Arts, Research, and Curricula (SPARC)

2016 – 4 Year Strategic Plan launched

2017 – Business Plan developed (supported by Mellon Foundation)

2018 – a2ru Case for Arts Integration Casebook and Workbook, based on Mellon project data

2019 – GroundWorks Launched/ Investment from ArtPlace /Arts engagement project

2020 – a2ru's fist virtual conference, Land & Equity: the art and politics of place
            Teaching arts online series

2021 – a2ru broadens network to include liberal arts institutions, community colleges and individuals
Creative Placemaking Resource Hub launched

References

A2ru. Position paper "How Integrating the Arts and Sciences Can Help Save a World in Crisis" In progress.

Kari Zacharias, Matthew Wisnioski; Land-Grant Hybrids: From Art and Technology to SEAD. *Leonardo* 2019; 52 (3): 261–270. doi: https://doi.org/10.1162/leon_a_01479

All a2ru research is available at https://a2ru.org/research/

For more about foundational SEAD work, visit the Network for Sciences, Engineering and Design http://sead.viz.tamu.edu/about/index.html

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