

We are Textiles and Apparel  
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The president's address started by viewing the video *We Are Textiles and Apparel*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9W9A1ck2ReA&feature=youtu.be>

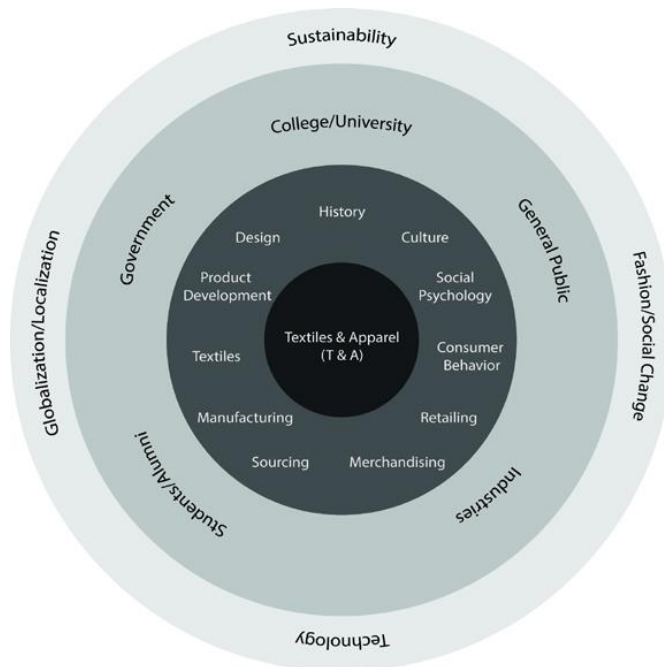
This makes me very proud to be a member of ITAA and a scholar in our Textiles and Clothing discipline. It is the visual and perhaps the emotional side of the monograph *Envisioning Textile and Apparel Research and Education for the 21st Century*. The monograph was developed based on discussions about our discipline's future at a retreat held in Sedona, AZ. I'd like to share some of the key points from the monograph as it is a call to action for each one of you to chart the future of our discipline and this organization.

We have a strong history rooted in the values of Home Economics. Those strong, thoughtful and determined women embraced the changes in society as we grew from domestic science to Home Economics to Human Ecology-and even though our current names may not reflect our roots, our mission to expand knowledge to support consumers, families and individuals use and acquisition of textiles and apparel is as critical today as it was during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Teaching and research has been core to our discipline though it took some time and much effort for early faculty to earn doctoral degrees and build a culture of textile and apparel research. We've shifted from preparing students to manage the home to preparing them to become leaders in industry-though I hope there is more focus on how to make a life rather than making a living. Linda Welters and Sara Marcketti share a more detailed history in the monograph.

What would our world be like if our T & A discipline disappeared? Yes, that is a frightening question to consider, but it is meant to be jarring. Andy Reilly and Susan Kaiser present a possible scenario and suggest that as a basic human need, clothing and textiles –the materials and products enabling individuals to fashion their bodies –will never disappear. We need to work with our universities to be a key player in innovative research, teaching, and outreach that is relevant to the needs of people and the planet linked to one of our most basic human needs.

To explain relevancy, we really need to know ourselves, and as a result of the changing environment we have developed a diverse yet fragmented identity of ourselves in academia. Juyeon Park, Susan Kaiser, Dee Knight and Jung Ha-Brookshire propose a model of our core discipline that is solid and unifying that will help us to articulate the sustainable, relevant, field-shaping contributions of our discipline to higher education and the world. This circular diagram consists of a central core and three outer rings. The heart of the model represents our collective identity as a discipline. The innermost ring represents diverse subject matter within our discipline. The second ring represents external stakeholders that shape the organizational image of our discipline; and the outermost ring represents social and environmental drivers that guide the direction of our discipline.

**Figure 1. The Academic Core of the Textile and Apparel Discipline**



We've all been called upon to define our discipline and the value of our scholarship, though consciously or unconsciously, may have displayed uncertainty about the idiosyncratic identity of our discipline. We should clearly be able to define who we are among ourselves, so that we can convey a unified message to others and solidify our discipline's identity in the public domain. We are united to discover new knowledge, educate future generations, and serve society, with a goal of improving the quality of life through Textiles and Apparel

Once we are clear on whom we are and what we have to offer, another way to strengthen our standing in the academic community and to encourage a focus on preparing researchers and industry professionals for the future is to engage in interdisciplinary research and education. Many academic disciplines and industry leaders recognize that an interdisciplinary approach is critical to solving complex societal problems. In their monograph chapter, Karen LaBat and Dee Knight call for us to prepare for, seek and promote interdisciplinary research and education.

This path can be challenging, though I know from personal experience that the rewards are worth the extra effort. One idea suggested by the Sedona group is to hold more interactive methods of discussing research studies and concept papers during our conference where members ask for constructive feedback and identify potential collaborators. Also, we could identify potential partners from other fields inviting them to participate in conference sessions beyond the typical formal speaker roles. I invite you to join the [Special Topic Session - Round 2: What Does Textile and Apparel Interdisciplinary Research and Education Look Like in the 21st Century?](#) The goal is to share ideas about how to identify individual and program strengths, form further collaborative ties with ITAA members, and form interdisciplinary linkages to address important societal and cultural problems.

There is a really rich variety of scholarship that is shared at our conferences. Last year I went to many presentations that were outside my usual niche and I felt it was one of the most stimulating experiences that I've had at ITAA and one that I totally controlled. There is often much discussion about the quality of the scholarship at ITAA: that should be published; how did that get accepted; I've heard that before; or I need to find out more about the method that was used. Jung Ha-Brookshire and Sara Marcketti challenge us to consider the quality of our own research. Quality scholarship and new knowledge changes our society and our lives. Any discipline that produces new knowledge that has value will not have to worry about the relevance of the discipline or program. Quality scholarship also trains the next generation of scholars with rigor, and therefore, drives the discipline and ourselves as researchers to thrive. That is, quality scholarship lies at the core of our future.

We know that quantity does not always equal quality, yet we are increasingly judged through the promotion and tenure process or merit by numbers and impact factors. Now is the time to initiate conversations on how to define and identify quality scholarship especially within our field. Quality scholarship develops new knowledge based on a set of values, serves an audience, and is linked integrally with teaching and service. One scholar suggests a backwards approach to quality scholarship by first determining (a) how the research findings could be implemented; and (b) which group of people and communities the findings would help. This removes much of the "so what?" questions of research and focuses the research so that the findings will be relevant and valuable to people and communities.

How can we discover new knowledge that has value? One way is to challenge existing paradigms to identify anomalies that are not explainable by existing theories. If all of our research simply supports existing theories, society will not be able to progress. We also have to question authority and think for ourselves training future researchers how to think rather than what to think. This also includes training future scholars on the hallmarks of scholarship quality and constructive peer-reviews.

Blind peer reviews are the gold standard in academia. We need to make sure that ours are thoughtful, honest and focused on directing the scholar to improve the quality of their scholarship. Personal opinion that devalues the efforts of colleagues only serves to diminish the respect that is required for peer review.

Jung and Sara suggest several things that ITAA members could do to foster and produce quality scholarship. ITAA could offer an outlet for "failed" research. Creating safe and productive settings for researchers to share studies that were rejected for publication could lead to improved research encouraging researchers to re-think a study. Second, ITAA could provide expanded venues for sharing conceptual and opinion papers. Exploratory or controversial research could also be shared. These early ideas should be valued as highly as empirical findings, worthy of conference presentation and publication. For the long-term success of the discipline, we need to do things that are different, difficult, and challenging by welcoming new thoughts and expanded boundaries.

Minjeong Kim and Rita Kean contributed the thoughtful reflections in *Professional ethics: Integrity, responsibility and respect* that capture so many of our questions and concerns, though we will need to find the answers together. ITAA has a code of ethics; however, we don't tend to discuss our ethical values until there is a breach. To make matters even more complex, the rapid changes in technology and the global environment present new questions of ethical behavior that we have had little time to consider.

In general, our professional ethics are implicitly expected. Though many of us are not fully prepared, we are expected to educate our students, both undergraduate and graduate students about being ethical and making ethical decisions. Do we know what it means to be ethical in our role as a scholar and a teacher?

The suggestion was made that ITAA form an ad hoc committee of faculty and graduate students to formulate a 'best practices' code of professional ethics, including ethical practices in scholarship as well as in the classroom. To effectively educate and inspire our students and faculty, we recommend ITAA establish a code of ethics, and publish examples of "unethical or questionable cases." These cases then can be used for further training/development in our role as educators and scholars of textiles and apparel.

As you can tell, there have been many difficult conversations getting to this point of the monograph. The conversations were guided by principles and practices from the Art of Participatory Leadership which is built on the belief that together we have collective wisdom-and through respectful dialogue we can find ways to move forward. Part of moving forward often involves taking risks. Though we often look at risk negatively, in our paper on transformative risk, Jana Hawley and I encourage you to reframe risk as an opportunity to succeed or a path forward into an uncertain future. Each time we courageously step out of our comfort zone we learn things that may lead us to new understanding. As we continue into the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

Let's understand and embrace our history, who we are today and the potential we have in the future.

Let's enhance the ways in which we tell our stories to the media, our students, campus administrators, industry, and funding agencies.

Let's do meaningful scholarship and teaching that has impact on human lives or our textile and apparel industry.

Let's find the mettle to reach out to scholars in other disciplines who can partner with us to address the most critical issues of our society.

Let's model ethical values and behaviors for our colleagues and students even when it would be more comfortable to look the other way.

Take action so that together we can be a more inclusive, relevant and dynamic ITAA . Members were invited to take a post it on the table and make a pledge to take action to move ITAA forward over the next year. There were over 75 pledges that included: "be disruptive", "promote meaningful scholarship", "diversify ITAA leadership", "build bridges", "complete my PhD", "mentor junior scholars towards ethical, rigorous research practices", and many, many more. There is momentum and commitment in the organization to position and promote our discipline as vibrant, relevant, and ready to lead change.