

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

On December 1st morning, I first heard reports via colleagues that Roberta had passed away. They seemed unreal because we had been emailing about matters related to TIS in our normal pattern. Later in the day there was an official announcement from her dean that confirmed the shocking news that Roberta had passed away on November 29th after a brief battle with cancer.

I had been working with her on TIS manuscripts since I started serving as the Deputy Editor of TIS in Fall, 2000. However, our interaction was almost entirely over email. I met her only twice at gatherings that provided opportunities for brief conversations. I was looking forward to her visit to Bloomington this Spring to give a talk at the Rob Kling Center for Social Informatics because that would allow for an extended conversation. Unfortunately, that was not to be.

Since our interaction was limited to e-mail exchanges on TIS manuscripts, I will leave reflections on her as a scholar to colleagues who are in a position to paint a richer picture. I am currently in the process of organizing a set of reflections by her colleagues that will be published in TIS later in the year. Here I will share a few of my own thoughts based on my interactions with her.

While serving as the Deputy Editor of TIS, I was struck by the review packages she sent on the completion of the review process for a manuscript. Each package was neatly organized. The cover letter was written on her letterhead and scanned, as opposed to a simple email. The letter provided her thoughtful editorial comments and also the names and email addresses of all the reviewers, a detail that often got overlooked and required a follow-up email from me. The reviews themselves were invariably substantive. Furthermore, the review packages reached me in a very timely manner. Quite clearly, she chose the reviewers carefully, corresponded with them to keep the review process moving, and finally took care to assemble the entire package and provide her own comments. Everything was so exquisitely done that it was an editor's delight.

After Rob Kling, the former Editor-in-Chief of TIS, passed away, we needed someone to write a short piece in his memory in two weeks for the issue that was in press. I approached Roberta because she had always been reliable and was a former student of Rob. I did not know what to expect and waited rather anxiously. What I got was one of my favorite pieces of writing. It was boldly honest, venturing into realities that are usually glossed over in obituaries. As she herself said in the very third paragraph, "So while most remembrances would end on this note of praise and solemn admiration, I'd like to reflect further on what shaped a phenomenon like Rob, and what we have really lost in his passing" (Lamb, 2003, p. 195). She went on to paint a lively portrait, capturing the good and the not so good. I personally felt that I had gotten to know Rob better and in an even more endearing way. I was also deeply impressed by Roberta's honesty and deep insight.

After I became editor, I invited her to serve as the deputy editor because she brought the right sensibilities to TIS. We also complemented each other in terms of areas of research and thereby the scholarly communities within which we were active. In my experience, she had a very unhurried and thoughtful editorial style. She simply did not like to cut corners even on weak manuscripts that had little chance of success. She gave each manuscript the attention it required because she deeply cared about good research.

I always thought about Roberta in terms of the future—a growing leader within the social informatics community. I am deeply saddened that we lost her so soon.

Harmeet Sawhney
Indiana University, Bloomington

REFERENCE

Lamb, R. 2003. The social construction of Rob Kling. *The Information Society* 19(3):195–196.