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Opportunities Abound: ETDs as Harbingers of Institutional Change

ETD

METADATA

LINKED DATA

LEGEND

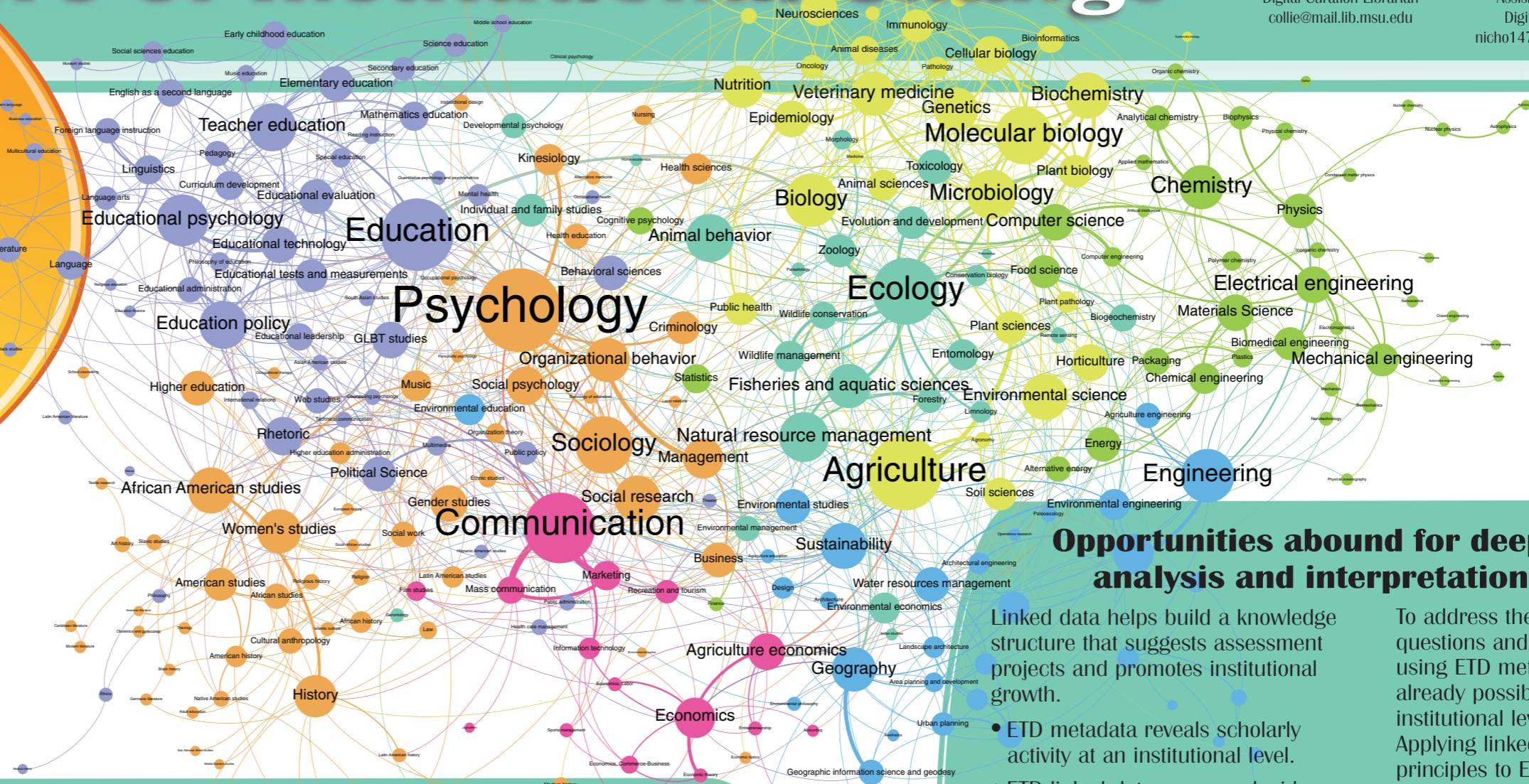


COLORS indicates affinity groups.

SIZE AND THICKNESS of nodes and edges indicates frequency of occurrence across dataset.

"NODES" (CIRCLES) – Categories applied to ETDs by their authors

"EDGES" (LINES) – Connections between categories that appear together in ETD metadata



Metadata provides not only a basis for access to resources, but a body of knowledge in itself.

Because an ETD collection is generally produced at a single institution, its metadata can:

- Model interdisciplinary connections on campus
- Show departmental collaborations
- Suggest disciplinary directions and information flows
- Provide a “portrait” of academic activity

Linked Data provides a means for modeling this body of knowledge that highlights the richness of its connectivity.

ETD information is highly interconnected with other datasets, including:

- Institutional data-streams (about faculty, programs, departments)
- Data-streams and networks from outside of the institution
- Author and name authority streams

Using a linked data schema allows ETDs to extend in many directions.

- Faculty publication histories connect to larger world of library data
- An ever-growing network, an information ecology
- “Rhizomatic” visualization vs. “Arborescent”

Opportunities abound for deeper analysis and interpretation.

Linked data helps build a knowledge structure that suggests assessment projects and promotes institutional growth.

- ETD metadata reveals scholarly activity at an institutional level.
- ETD linked data can reveal wider scholarly trends (and the institution’s position relative to them...).
- “Which departments are collaborating at other institutions (but not here)?”
- “Which new avenues of inquiry does our interdisciplinary map suggest?”
- “How do students describe their work relative to librarians?”
- “Where are interdisciplinary connections forming and where are they not?”

To address these questions and more using ETD metadata is already possible at an institutional level. Applying linked data principles to ETDs offers us the chance to disrupt not only cataloging procedures, but habitual modes of thinking about interdisciplinary collaboration. Increased cooperation between institutions using standardized ontologies will only help push the local, institutional insights ETDs offer into wider networks of meaning.