History Professor Margaret O'Mara Talks Tech on "GeekWire" Radio Show

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History Professor Margaret O'Mara recently shared her expertise on the technology industry's impact on politics, culture and place in an interview with Todd Bishop and John Cook of the tech radio show GeekWire. O'Mara, whose research focuses on Silicon Valley, talked about place-making in the context of Seattle's innovation economy. The Seattle technology community thrives due to the presence of three requisite conditions. Innovation, explains O'Mara, is made possible by: 1) The presence of resources such as available investment capital; 2) Institutions (like the University of Washington) that serve as "sandboxes" for would-be innovators to get together and play around with new ideas; and 3) Quality of place—all of the things that make Seattle a great place to live and build community.

In Seattle "we're totally connected, and also separate" explains O'Mara, a unique combination of characteristics of place that makes the city a great incubator for innovation. From a historical perspective, O'Mara points out, although somewhat geographically isolated in the Pacific Northwest, the Puget Sound has long been a crossroads where different people and cultures come together and connect. This is the key to Seattle's potential for innovation says O'Mara --- "that's where new ideas come from... it's not from people from the same background saying the same thing."

Hear the full interview with Professor O'Mara and the impact of the tech industry on KIRO Radio GeekWire (interview begins at 08:30). Or read GeekWire's description of the interview with Margaret O'Mara.

Margaret O'Mara is an Associate Professor in the Department of History. Her book Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley (Princeton, 2005) explores the rise of Silicon Valley in the context of the Cold War.