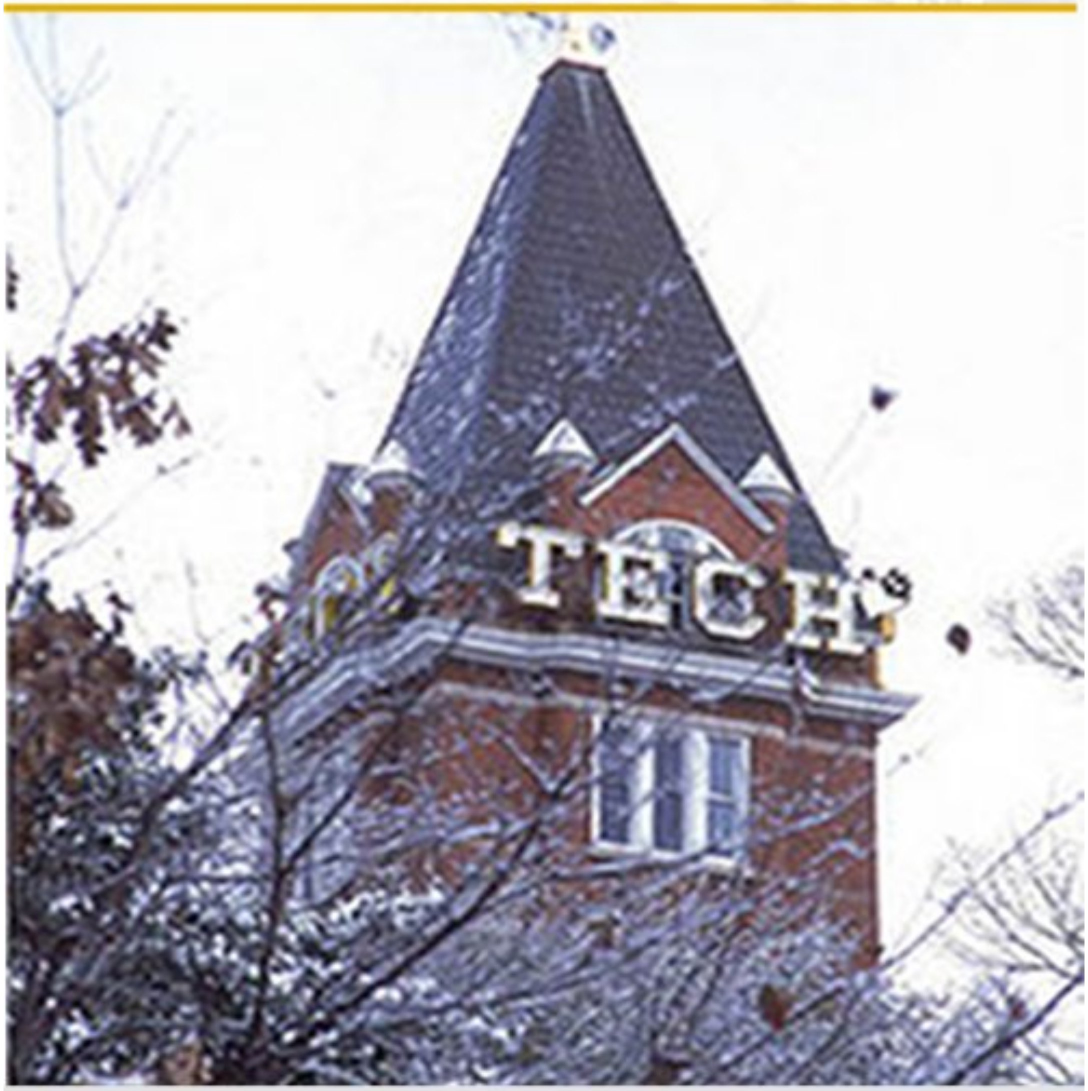
TECH Style

A forum for digital pedagogy and research
by the Brittain Fellows at Georgia Tech



Edited By

Roger Whitson

TECHStyle: The First Year
Edited by Roger Whitson

Contents

Introduction and Acknowledgments - Roger Whitson..6

Welcome to TECHStyle! - Roger Whitson...8

How to Annotate Digital Texts - Leeann Hunter.. 11

WikiLeaks: A Teachable Moment? - Nirmal Trivedi 15

Social Networking Tools in the Multimodal Classroom - Melanie Kohnen 19

Using Mediawiki in the English 1101/1102 Classroom - Andy Famiglietti 22

Multimedia and the Middle Ages - Robin Wharton 25

Future Media Fest: General Introduction - Andy Famiglietti................................. 29

Future Media Fest: The Rhetorics of the Information Society - Andy Famiglietti 30

Future Media Fest: The Startup Technology Showcase - Roger Whitson 32

Future Media Fest: Brief Thoughts About the Consumer Experience - Andy Famiglietti 34

Future Media Fest: In Defense of Cookies - Leeann Hunter................................... 36

Who's Afraid of Collective Intelligence? - Roger Whitson...................................... 38

Future Media Fest: The Technology and Ethics of Immersive Worlds - Jesse Stommel and Chris Ritter... 40

Future Media Fest: Digital Media Skills for Citizens? Workers? - Roger Whitson 43

Future Media Fest: What Does Camouflage Sound Like? - Robert Blaskiewicz45

Future Media Fest: Recap – Public, Private, or Corporate? - Roger Whitson.... 48

Truth-Con 2010: I Come in Peace - Tom Lolis 50

Why I Love THATCamp - Roger Whitson 53

Whither THATCamp Unpress? - Roger Whitson.. 56

Gothic Realness - Jesse Stommel 59

Brittains Celebrated for Teaching - Diane Jakacki 62

First Annual Comics Symposium - Roger Whitson 63

The Road Not Taken: Non-Academic Career Options - Candice Welhausen..... 65

Zotero in the Classroom - Zach Whalen 68

YouTube in the Classroom: A Frustrating Archive? - Rob LeBlanc 73

Teaching in Real Time - Diane Jakacki 77

More Adventures in (Hyper)Real-Time Teaching - Diane Jakacki 83

Feed: Texting, Twitter, and the Student 2.0 - Jesse Stommel 86

Salman Rushdie, StoryCorps, and SMARTech: Adventures in Digital Archiving - Kathryn Crowther 95

Universal Access to Information - Malavika Shetty 98

(Steam)Punking Pedagogy: - Kathryn Crowther 101

The Parachut<e>: A Grading/Marking Workflow - Robin Wharton 110

The Parachut<e>: Post-assessment Peer Review? - Robin Wharton 114

5 Things Everyone Should Know About Copyright and Open Access - Robin Wharton 119

Who Knows What Evil Lurks: Shadow Scholar, Paper Mills, and the (Alleged) Demise of Higher Education - Candice Welhausen 126

What Does It Mean to do the Humanities? - Andy Famiglietti 128

Unease in the Digital Humanities - Regina Martin 131

Watson + Capitalism = ??? - Andy Famiglietti 133

Your Students Care More Than You Think - Candice Welhausen 135

News and Notes from the DevLab - Andy Famiglietti 137

End of Semester Wrap Up: Fall 2010 Edition - Roger Whitson 139

End of Semester Wrap-Up: Poetry, Art, and Science in the Age of Wonder - Crystal Lake 144

End of Semester Wrap-Up: Thinking about Feedback - Kathryn Crowther 145

End of Semester Wrap-Up: Collaboration in the Classroom - Leeann Hunter 148

End of Semester Wrap-Up: Looking Backward…a Little - Diane Jakacki 153

End of Semester Wrap-Up: Bridges Over Jordan - Paulette Richards 155

The Rear-View Mirror - Diane Jakacki 158

Looking Forward - Nirmal Trivedi, Regina Martin, and Doris Bremm 162

A Time of Transition - Diane Jakacki 165

Introduction and Acknowledgments - Roger Whitson

TECHStyle began with a simple premise. I wanted all of the great discussions about multimodal and digital pedagogy occurring in the Marion L. Brittain program at Georgia Tech to be recorded and archived somewhere. Brittain Fellows come from all across the country and have very different specialties. All of them, however, have some interest in the intersections between teaching and technology. As director Rebecca Burnett continually emphasizes, the Writing and Communication program where the Brittain Fellows teach follows a WOVEN (Written, Oral, Visual, Electronic, and Non-Verbal) curriculum. We teach students not only how to write an essay, but to create short films, design websites, craft concise and stunning oral presentations, and construct dazzling visual images.

Most of the fellows entering the Brittain program are from humanities programs that emphasize traditional forms of scholarship. I wrote my dissertation on the intersections of Romantic literature and contemporary multimedia, but I did so with in written modality that had traditional chapters. It's one thing to be interested theoretically in Media Studies. It's quite another to become a practitioner and teacher crafting media content. My transformation from a traditional scholar writing essays and a traditional teacher assigning argumentative writing to a digital humanist and a teacher of GoogleMap essays, Twitter backchannels, and comic book production was a difficult but hugely rewarding one. My story is not unique. Most Brittain Fellows find themselves in an alien but exciting new world of media content with highly intelligent and motivated students just waiting to challenge all of their preconceptions about teaching and research. Further, the conversations that emerge between Fellows regarding their teaching, the theoretical foundations of their craft, and the emergence of the digital humanities are fascinating, productive, and in a word...powerful.

In the summer of 2011, I came to Assistant Director Andrew Cooper with an idea. What if I created a group blog that could function as a hub for all of the Brittain Fellows's ideas, and used it to nurture further innovation in teaching and research. He and Rebecca were behind my idea from the start. I designed the first iteration of what became TECHStyle (a word that was Cooper's), and invited my colleagues to participate in the development of the project.

What follows in this edition are some of the best articles from the first year of TECHStyle's existence. I must admit, I never dreamed that the Brittain Fellows would be as creative with their submissions as they clearly demonstrate in these amazing pieces. Topics range from annotating digital texts to classroom collaboration, the state of the humanities, teaching students about conspiracy theories, and investigating WikiLeaks. I should take this opportunity to thank all of the contributors, Rebecca and Andrew, and the 2010-2011 social media committee (specifically Julia Turner, Kathryn Crowther, Diane Jakacki, Jesse Stommel, Nirmal Trivedi, and Andy Famiglietti) for helping TECHStyle to become a reality. This book is for you.

Welcome to TECHStyle! - Roger Whitson

This site is designed to serve three basic functions.

First, it houses the official Brittain Fellow Handbook. You can find the Handbook under "Handbook" on the Navigation bar.

Second, it hosts a blog network that may be used by any Brittain Fellow interested in maintaining a weblog of their teaching and research activities. The blog network can also be used to advertise events, host videos and podcasts of conferences and symposia, and feature profiles of Brittain Fellow alumni. Important or interesting blog posts will be featured on the front page along with announcements and archived events.

Third, it serves as a social network for Brittain Fellows, with an activity stream, profiles, groups, and forums. Communication between individual profiles is also possible TECHStyle is based on the latest version of Wordpress (3.0.1). It also uses Buddypress (a basic social network bundle created for the Wordpress CMS), PSAuto Sitemap (a dynamic plugin that creates a quick map for easy navigation), TwitterTools (a Twitter feed for Brittain Fellows), and Breadcrumb Navigation XT (creates a dynamic breadcrumb trail for enhanced navigation). Having said that, TECHStyle is still a pretty basic site. We hope that -- with time, experience, and the insights of Brittain Fellows -- we will be able to adapt this site to serve the needs of the program. Here are some basic things to remember when using the site:

Remember your login and password: Logins are generally your first and last name. Passwords are emailed with the TECHStyle invitation and can be changed at any time.

Use the Dashboard Effectively: Wordpress is based upon a dashboard system. The basic functions of the dashboard can be viewed by looking at the navigation board on the left side of the dashboard. For detailed information about how to use the dashboard, please check out this video tutorial:

Be active in Buddypress and Social Networking on the Site: TECHStyle uses the Buddypress system for social networking, forums and individual communication between members. Each of you should have been emailed a "Welcome Pack" for Buddypress when you became members. Take a look at the Welcome Pack for detailed information on how to use the Buddypress features of this site.

Blog: Blogging on TECHStyle is pretty easy, especially if you have used Wordpress before. The new feature for this website is the ability to create new Blog sites. If you wish to have a blog site of your own, you will need to email one of the site administrators. They will ask you for a name for your blog (the default is "firstnamelastname"), and create your blog. Many of the following directions are paraphrased and adapted from Jason Whittaker's Using Your Blog.

- **Accessing:** Select "MyBlogs" from the top menu on the TECHStyle front page. This will show a pre-made post with a single sentence "Hello World!" You will want to edit this to make your first post.
- **Blog Settings:** Click on the "Settings" link and look at the default settings of your blog.
    - *General:* The tagline for your site is set to read "Just another TECHStyle Sites site." You will want to edit this before posting.
    - *Writing:* This subsection lists categories and tags for your posts. Categories and tags are used on the site to organize your posts.
    - *Reading:* Here you can change what people see on the front page of your blog.
    - *Discussion:* You can enable or disable comments on this page.
    - *Media:* You can determine the size of video files or change settings for other types of media on this page.
    - *Permalinks:* This changes the settings for how URLs are calculated for your pages. If you don't have a reason to change these, leave them alone.
- **Blog Appearance:** The default theme is TwentyTen. A future post will cover all the things youc an do with TwentyTen. But you can also change many things about your blog's appearance.
    - *Themes:* As I said before, TwentyTen is the default. But the theme network also features the flexible theme Atahualpa and the flashy Mystique theme. As we get a sense of Brittain Fellow needs, we will add more themes to the network.
    - *Widgets:* Widgets add new functionality to your site. For example, you can add a calendar that lists all blogs posted on a particular site. To use a widget, simply go to "widget" under appearance, select a widget, drag and drop that widget into the sidebar where you wish it to be located.
    - *Menus:* The ability to create custom menus is one of the big innovations of Wordpress 3.0. For more detailed information on how to use custom menus, please see the site: http://bavatuesdays.com/wordpress-3-0-you-had-me-at-custom-menus/.

- *Background and Header:* The TwentyTen theme allows you to change the backgroudna nd header. You can do that here.

- **Adding a New Blog Post:** On the "Hello World!" post you found at the beginning of this tutorial, click "Edit." This will bring up a WYSIWYG (What You See is What You Get) editor, along with an .html editor. If you are comfortable using .html, by all means use it.
  - *Categories and Tags:* Categories and tags are used to organize your posts within the site. If, for example, you create a post about pedagogy, you might want to create a pedagogy tag to group all of your pedagogy-related posts. As this site on optimizing your Wordpress Blog shows, you shouldn't confuse tags with categories. Both do the same thing, but "[c]ategories are your file cabinet draw where you file a document under one particular topic. Tags allow you to describe your post in more specific terms that help people find your information. By properly tagging your posts with relevant keywords, you help people find and cross reference your post with others."
  - *Status, Visibility, and Update:* The status of your blog shows you if a post is published, pending review (for moderated posts), or is still in draft form. The visibility link shows who can see your post. You may want to set it to public (for everyone), password protected, or private (only you can see it). Click publish or update to publish or update your blog.

Moderating Comments: Sometimes you will want to delete certain comments. You can set whether people can comment on your blog in the Discussion settings. If you go to comments you will see a site that allows you to accept, reject, or edit comments that have been published to your blog.

Hopefully, these suggestions will allow you to use TECHStyle effectively, at least in a basic capacity. Subsequent posts will look at more advanced practices. Enjoy!

How to Annotate Digital Texts - Leeann Hunter

In a recent discussion on "The Real Cost of College Textbooks" in the *New York Times*, Anya Kamenetz, author of *DYI U*, suggests that professors abandon print textbooks in favor of eBooks and online resources. In "Get Rid of Print and Go Digital," Kamenetz asks:

Why should we be content with static, rapidly outdated, heavy print textbooks that can cost community college students as much as their tuition, when professors and students can work together to create dynamic, rich-media learning environments instead using free and open source software tools?

While her proposal inspired some readers to reflect on new ways of looking at reading material in the classroom, it also caught the attention of staunch traditionalists. Many critics who wrote in response to Kamenetz's proposal suggest that reading on the computer is characterized by short attention spans and excessive distractions. Print books, the critics argue, force students to shut off the technology and focus, enabling them to more fully engage in the material object of the book, complete with highlighting, annotating, and tagging the pages directly. One respondent writes:

Paper texts are easier to make notes in and to reference, both critical processes for students. If you want to read throw-away novels, go for the e-text. If you want a tool to use for passing a class and for ongoing use in your educational or professional life, use the traditional technology.

What if there were a way to interact with a text, while also producing substantial typed notes that can be searched and indexed? For the many critics who lament the loss of the ability to annotate print textbooks, I have a mini-guide to several tools now available, for mostly free, that not only facilitate student-text interaction, but improve upon it. My three favorites are: Diigo, A.nnotate, and, somewhat surprisingly, Kindle for PC.

Diigo

Like the popular del.icio.us, Diigo is a social bookmarking tool. Unlike del.icio.us, Diigo functions as an information management resource that allows users to annotate webpages and collaborate on research. It works as a plug-in for Firefox, giving you the ability to quickly bookmark, tag, share, and annotate any findings on the web. Moreover, all of your bookmarks, tags, and notes are completely searchable for fast retrieval.

Best Feature: Users can access their libraries from any browser, however, the best feature available on Diigo is the Sidebar. The sidebar splits the screen between Diigo and the page you're viewing, and if you click on "This URL" in the sidebar, you can view Page Comments, Highlights & Sticky Notes for the current page. This is a very comfortable tool for accumulating and collecting notes. Moreover, you can choose whether or not to view Page Comments made by other users, a feature that might be most beneficial for students working in groups. Brittain Fellows often assign online student projects, such as blogs, webpages, or wikis. Diigo is a great way for the professor to comment directly on those pages. Professor's can easily email private annotated links to students by selecting "Share > Get Annotated Link." Or, if your want your comments to be visible to the entire class, when you post your notes, you can choose "Groups" instead of "private."

Other applications of Diigo: Because Diigo allows users to create groups and post page comments/summaries, it would serve as an excellent platform for Prof. Michael Wesch's Smart Mob method. In "How to Get Students to Find and Read 94 Articles Before the Next Class," Prof. Wesch discusses his method of having students research and share five articles on a selected topic prior to the class meeting. In sharing their links, along with summaries of the articles, students are exposed to a wide variety of scholarship on a subject within just a few days.

Shortcomings: While Diigo is useful for annotating most webpages, it does not currently support the annotation of PDF or Word documents. Also, although Diigo is web-based, it does require the plug-in and toolbar in order to take advantage of its best features.

A.nnotate

Diigo does not currently offer the option to annotate PDFs or Word files. Since much of what we read in the college classroom is generated through PDFs (online journal articles or scanned chapters from books), this feature is important. A.nnotate offers this function, and it does it all within the browser -- no add-ons or downloads necessary. What's more, users can upload any basic document, including powerpoint slides and word documents, and save them to a private database. The webpage function is particularly interesting because it creates a "snapshot" of the page, a static version of the webpage that will remain in your documents folder, even after the original URL changes or disappears.

Best Feature: In addition to highlighting and commenting on text, A.nnotate allows users to mark up images, circling individual components and commenting on them. This feature could be very useful for Brittain Fellows giving feedback on student posters, web designs, and photographs.

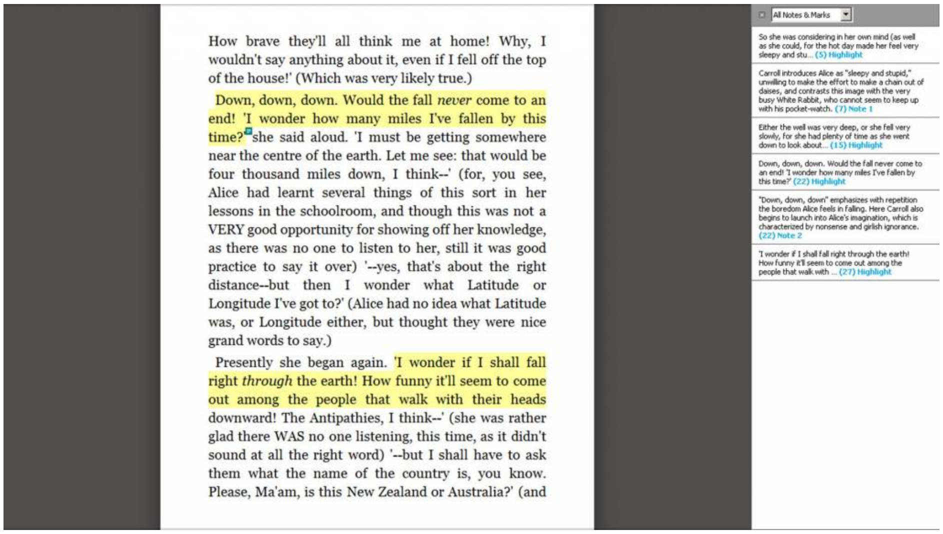
Like Diigo, the documents can be highlighted, annotated, and shared with other users.

Shortcomings: The disadvantage of using A.nnotate is that the free basic service offers very limited usability. While all of its capabilities are enabled with the basic service, the number of pages you can upload each month is limited to approximately 25 pages of PDFs. Webpages use fewer credits, but if you plan on only annotating webpages, I recommend using Diigo. However, since many of the more complex reading that students and scholars perform usually appear as PDFs, A.nnotate offers the best solution. The lowest access fee is affordable at $5.95 per month, offering enough credits to cover 200 pages of uploads per month. Alternatively, students can, for a one-time fee of $19.95, receive enough credits to cover 200 pages. The monthly rate is clearly the better deal, but for temporary use -- such as a single research project for a class -- the one-time payment is convenient.

Kindle for PC

While Diigo works best for internet articles, and A.nnotate is best for PDF articles, Kindle for PC is the best solution for reading and annotating eBooks, including free eBooks from Project Gutenberg and the Internet Archive.

Best Feature: The software itself is unremarkable. However, you gain access to all the books available in Kindle format, which includes over 600,000 new titles, without buying Kindle hardware. Currently, Kindle for PC is also compatible with free books offered on Project Gutenberg and the Internet Archive. Access an entire library of free Kindle books here.



Shortcomings: The software currently has few features beyond highlighting and annotating. Amazon does not currently offer Kindle for Mac. Texts that can be uploaded to the software are also limited to those available in Kindle format, which excludes most everything outside of books. On the other hand, it includes over 600,000 books in the Amazon store. As more and more people move to digital texts, and Kindle gains in popularity as a format, I expect that the software will evolve.

Final Thoughts

While many annotation tools are now available to students and researchers, there is still a long way to go before any one of these tools becomes a long-lasting viable option. In some ways, I agree with the traditionalists who cherish the durability of the book. A print copy of a book marked up with layers of marginalia that will stand the test of a lifetime is invaluable. However, for most students, these permanent records are obsolete. Only the PhD student or seasoned professor will enjoy returning to a text they marked up decades ago. For the average college student, what is most important is that they develop the skills that enable them to learn how to interact with texts and adapt those skills to evolving technologies.

If you have tried annotation software with any success or failure, please share your experiences in the comments below. What other methods have you used for facilitating critical reading online? What are your thoughts on "going all digital"?

WikiLeaks: A Teachable Moment? - Nirmal Trivedi

A persistent challenge I face when teaching my course "Media, Culture, Society" is talking to students about “bias”. Students are routinely taught that bias is fundamentally a bad thing; it's associated with illicit behavior, with secret motivations, hidden agendas, an invidious ideology. Its typical counterpoint--and one that is imbued with positive connotation--is "fact": undisputed, transparent, and accessible. Those of us invested in teaching media as a social and narrative practice know well the problem of disentangling these two concepts from their conventional associations, as we attempt to avoid the traps of relying on convenient labels like "the mainstream media" or its opponent "the alternative media." The risk with these labels is that we invariably end up characterizing one as fact-based while the other as biased, or even worse, both as biased, and thus dismissible.

The Wikileaks release of "Collateral Murder" in April 2010 and the "Afghan War Diary" in July 2010 stages the debate between "bias" and "fact" in complex ways that can get our students talking about the deeper, implicit, issues that tie fact and bias to questions of ethics, democracy, citizenship, and agency.

Bias

Too often, students turn away from the challenge that the question of news bias poses. But this abdication is less about students refusing the challenge, or about apathy, than about them not knowing how to talk about bias without being, well, biased. The fallback position is to talk about the news in general terms as simply a medium that should report on what happens, objectively, without asserting a prescriptive stance on what should or should not happen. Let the viewer, listener, or reader decide on what is ethically right or wrong.

This rather conventional understanding is captured by Larry Sanger’s (co-founder of Wikipedia) project of Citizendium (CZ), which essentially goes by the slogan: “we, humanity, can do better.” We can do better than Wikipedia, says Sanger, which is "full of serious problems. Many of the articles are written amateurishly. Too often they are mere disconnected grab-bags of factoids, not made coherent by any sort of narrative." Contributors "'squat' on articles and insist on making them reflect their own specific biases. There is no credible mechanism to approve versions of articles." Too many people, writing anonymously, take advantage of “Wikipedia's eminently gameable system.”

Resisting bias, it would seem, is wrapped up in our belief that as a community of citizens, we can mutually benefit each other as long as we don't confuse a*description* of a controversial topic with our personal opinion about it.

We might well ask of Sanger, or of any of our students, the following:

- What constitutes amateurism, or, when does one become a professional or expert?
- What is the threshold between a series of facts and a narrative?
- Is knowledge-production through authorship rather than through anonymous contribution more mutually beneficial than, say, relying on the Wisdom of Crowds?

Fact

If we should be respectful to not "game" each other with biased accounts, what happens when we lose the trust that our society won't game us? Certainly, our students face a global economy that rises and falls in a virtual world of imaginary credit that has very real consequences. Transparency, openness, visibility, would seem to lead us out of this nightmarish playground.

The release of "Collateral Murder" and "The Afghan War Diary" is Wikileaks founder, Julian Assange's response to an adolescent boy's global war game in the vein of Kipling's Great Game, Risk, and Dr. Strangelove. Instead of writing a news report vetted by a professional class of journalists and editors, in the conventional sense that Sanger might recommend, Assange calls for "scientific journalism": "If you publish a paper on DNA, you are required, by all the good biological journals, to submit the data that has informed your research—the idea being that people will replicate it, check it, verify it. So this is something that needs to be done for journalism as well" (Quoted in Khatchadourian). Information is not authorized by a group of experts, but by the masses--let anyone, Assange seems to say, verify the information in the reports and they'll see its truth. We, the people, not you group of experts, have humanity's interest in mind.

With the releases, Wikileaks moves the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan from the battlefield to the internet, where the weapon of choice is information, and where anonymity (rather than authorship) is at a premium.

Discussion Topics

Compare the 2010 "Collateral Murder" to a 2007 news report on the incident. How does each frame the incident? How do we understand the event when we look at both together, or one in isolation of the other?

- Collateral Murder
- Report from *Brand Republic** Report from *The Guardian*

Compare how Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Julian Assange think differently about accountability.

- "Gates said the videos released by the group WikiLeaks were out of context and provided an incomplete picture of the battlefield, comparing it to war as seen 'through a soda straw.' 'These people can put out whatever they want and are never held accountable for it,' said Gates, speaking to reporters aboard his plane en route to Lima, Peru, for a defense ministers conference this week" (Barnes).
- Julian Assange in response to accusations that "The Afghan War Diary" put Afghan collaborators with the U.S. in danger. "Because the information is sort of well structured, you can get a computer program to just add it all up. And so, there are around 20,000 [U.S. military responsible civilian causalities]. Accounts of 20,000 deaths are in this material [Afghan War Diary]. And, you know, the Afghan government has complained that last week there was a NATO attack that killed fifty-two. So, it really is quite extraordinary that the press is—that some parts of the press are concentrating on some hypothetical threat to some people (Democracy Now! interview).

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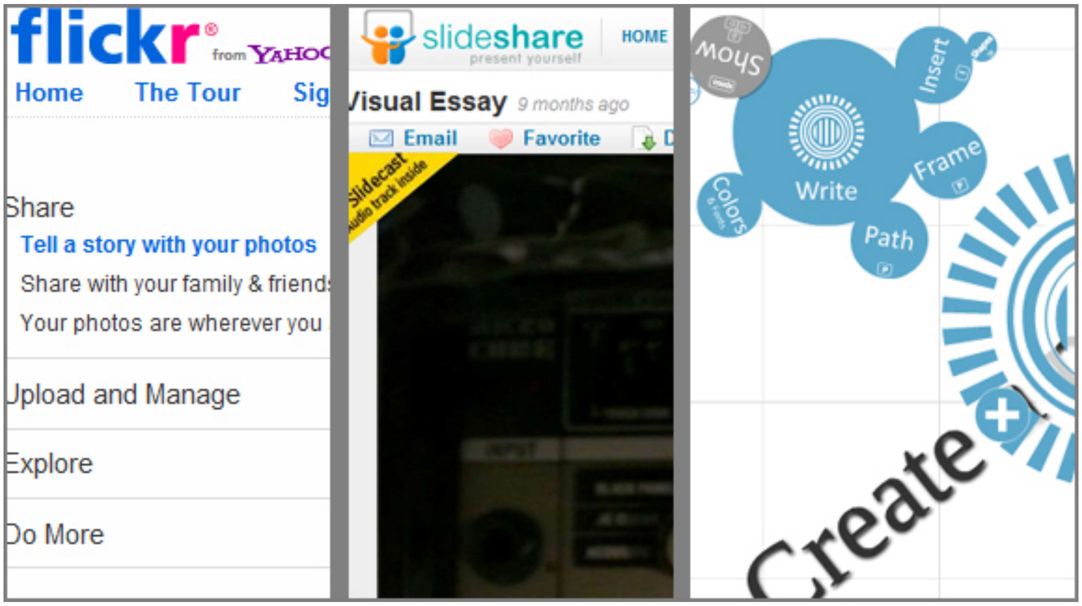
Wikileaks, Collateral Murder.

Wikileaks, Afghan War Diary.

Social Networking Tools in the Multimodal Classroom - Melanie Kohnen

Here is a brief overview of social networking tools I have used in my classes this past year.



flickr

[flickr](#) is an online photo-hosting site similar to Photobucket or Picasa. I prefer flickr because it offers a number of free features and the possibility of adding Creative Commons licenses to uploaded photos.

Pros

- Free accounts (upload limits: 2 videos and 100MB worth of photos each calendar month)
- Option to organize photos into sets. These sets can be viewed as a slideshow and slideshows can be embedded in outside blogs/websites (more info).
- Option to add notes to photos. These notes appear when you hover over the photo. Visit one of my former student's slide shows to see how Heather used notes on her photos.
- Tagging (including geotagging)
- Free online photo editor, called picnik
- Creative Commons licensing (more info)
- Upload photos via browser, desktop or mobile apps

Cons

- Not open source/for profit (flickr is owned by yahoo)
- Interface takes a while to get used to
- Student projects are not hosted on a Tech server

Tips

- Set aside one class meeting during which students set up their flickr accounts and familiarize themselves with the interface
- Pass out list on which students write down their usernames (several of my students forgot their usernames)
- Require students to attach photos to their T-square assignment submission so they aren't lost in case the student decides to delete his/her flickr account

Take a tour of flickr's features here

Visit my Visual Essay assignment to see assignment guidelines and sample student projects.

Slideshare

Slideshare offers online hosting for "slide casts." A slide cast is slide show combined with a podcast. For example, students can upload a Power Point or Keynote presentation and synch it with a recording of their voiceover or with music.

Pros

- Free account
- Online synching of images and audio via built-in editor (much easier than trying to embed audio into Power Point)
- Possibility of embedding slide casts in external blogs/websites

Cons

- For profit
- Student projects are not hosted on a Tech server

MP3 files need to be hosted on a different server (Slideshare will not host them)

Tips
Same as for flickr

prezi

prezi is an excellent alternative when you are tired of yet another Power Point presentation consisting of bullet-point lists.

Prezi is a "zooming presentation editor" that offers the possibility of creating dynamic, multimedia, and non-linear presentations.

Learn how prezi works by watching this tutorial:

Pros

- Free accounts. Anyone who has an .edu mailing address can register for an edu account that offers more features than a free account (more info)
- Possibility of embedding prezis in external blogs/websites
- Non-linear presentation possibilites: Since the entire presentation is mapped out onto one canvas, viewers can find their own paths. Or they can follow a path you create
- Seamless integration of images, video files, and Youtube videos
- Possibility to use existing prezis as templates

Cons

- Easy-to-learn interface, but conceptualizing presentations in a non-linear format takes a while to learn (I would give students at least two weeks to familiarize themselves with prezi)
- Possibility to use existing prezis as templates: clarify in assignment guidelines in how far students are allowed to use existing prezis as basis for their own presentations

Further Reading

For more digital pedagogy insights, feel free to browse my booksmarks on delicious. I also recommend *The Chronicle*'s ProfHacker column for great links and advice on incorporating digital media tools into the classroom and into your own workflow.

Using Mediawiki in the English 1101/1102 Classroom - Andy Famiglietti

Wiki software, as I'm sure most of us are already well aware, is a tool for creating websites that users can quickly and easily edit. First introduced by computer-scientist Ward Cunningham in the mid 1990s, wikis have become an important and visible part of the internet landscape. The free encyclopedia Wikipedia (which is, by at least one estimate, the seventh most visited site on the web) is, of course, the most famous example of wiki technology in action, but there are many others, including fan wikis devoted to cataloging even the most minor details of popular culture, wikis documenting software projects, wikis for organizing political action groups, and many more. Over the next few blog posts, I'll be discussing some techniques for using the wiki software employed by Wikipedia, called Mediawiki, in the English 1101/1102 Classroom at Georgia Tech. I've decided to focus this post on such a specific teaching situation, in part, because there are a wide variety of already existing resources discussing teaching with wikis more broadly.

In these posts, I will discuss three techniques for using wikis in the classroom: having students interact with an already existing wiki, using a wiki of your own with a structure you have designed yourself, and using a wiki of your own and inviting students to participate in developing the structure of the wiki they are working on. These three techniques are not in opposition to one another. In fact, I use all three in a hybrid method for my fall English 1101 class. For each of these three techniques, I will talk a little bit about the opportunities and challenges that the method provides, the tools and resources available to instructors at Georgia Tech for using this method, and how I integrate the method into the teaching of multi-modal communication (which is, after all, what we're all here to do!).

This post will focus on the first technique: having students interact with an already existing Wiki. More after the jump.

Using Already Existing Wikis in The Classroom

Having students interact with an already existing wiki, like Wikipedia, in a class assignment can be a good way to introduce students to Wiki technique, and to give them experience writing for an audience. Unlike traditional class writing assignments, which might be read only by an instructor and a few classmates, students who write for Wikipedia really are writing for the world, giving them a sense of purpose.

Opportunities and Challenges

As I mentioned above, considering the audience isn't just an academic exercise when students write for Wikipedia. By contributing to the Wikipedia project, students are volunteering their work for a global audience. Most importantly, some elements of that audience can (and most likely will) talk back, informing your students of how well or poorly their work has satisfied Wikipedia's style conventions and content standards. Since all real writing is done for a community, this interaction can provide students with important experience negotiating community expectations.

At the same time, Wikipedia's community can present a challenge to educators who want their students to interact with the site. Over Wikipedia's nearly 10 years of evolution and growth, the site has developed a fairly complex set of policies and practices that guide the creation and revision of Wikipedia articles. These policies can seem daunting to novice users. In addition, users or groups of users may be protective of articles they have contributed extensively too, and use these policies to prevent others from making revisions they disapprove of.

None of these challenges should prevent you from assigning Wikipedia editing to your students. To make your assignment a success, I would suggest you take several steps to get your students ready for their interaction with Wikipedia. First, make sure that they review the most important Wikipedia policy, the Neutral Point of Viewand its sister policies, Verifiability and No Original Research before beginning. Start students off with smaller, well defined and uncontroversial edits to Wikipedia, and make sure they review and understand the relevant policies for these edits. For example, you might ask them to add a source to Wikipedia after reviewing the policy on reliable sources, or to make a style edit after reviewing the Wikipedia manual of style. Move on to longer and more complex editing tasks only gradually, allowing time for students to learn the culture of the site.

You might also choose to use another public wiki, rather than Wikipedia. Most other wiki sites have a less established community with less established policies and practices than Wikipedia. This may provide an environment where students have more freedom to make the changes they want, however it may also provide less clear-cut guidance as to what is and is not acceptable behavior.

Resources Available at Tech

Asking students to edit Wikipedia requires very little technological support. After all, Wikipedia was designed to be edited by "anyone." That said, the fact that Georgia Tech's undergraduates are required to have laptops, and the near ubiquitous presence of high-speed wireless on campus means that you can assign internet-based tasks, like editing Wikipedia, without worrying about problems of technological access. All of your students will be able to access the site, and do so at a time and place convenient to them.

However, as a instructor at Tech you also have access to another important resource for this assignment: the skills of your students! Most Tech undergrads, of course, do not enter our classes as "digital natives," already knowing the ins and outs of wikis and other social media. In my experience, the vast majority of them have never edited Wikipedia or worked on another public wiki. However, most sections will have one or two students with Wikipedia editing experience, and that experience can be quite extensive. Allowing these students to share their knowledge with their peers through group activities and other means can be a great way to help resolve basic media literacy problems and get the class focusing on the rhetorical skills you really want to teach.

Multi-Modal Communication

Editing Wikipedia can be a great way for students to learn about the written, electronic, and visual modes of communication. Learning, and following, Wikipedia's style rules helps students understand that textual conventions aren't just arbitrary rules issued at the whim of their instructors, but important tools for facilitating communication and cooperation. Wikipedia is also one of the most densely hyperlinked environments on the internet, helping students to learn about the power of hyperlinks and the non-linear modes of organization they allow to electronic communication. The Wikimedia foundation (the non-profit group responsible for Wikipedia) maintains a repository of freely available multimedia, including images, video, and audio, called the Wikimedia commons. Students can contribute visuals and other multimedia texts to the commons, and use those available on the commons for remixing and redistributing in their own projects. In addition, Wikipedia uses an extensive library of visual elements, called templates, to facilitate the incorporation of design and graphic elements into pages. These templates, while somewhat complex, can provide an entry point for discussing color, chunking, and other elements of page design.

More about templates next time, when I discuss setting up your very own Wiki, and how you might structure participation on such a wiki!

Multimedia and the Middle Ages - Robin Wharton

Before introducing any new strategy in the classroom, whether it involves technology or not, I think we must always ask ourselves: what is the pedagogical imperative? After all, just because we *can* do something, doesn't mean we *should*. So, I'll start by trying to answer the question: what can multimedia resources, particularly digital or new media, provide that texts alone cannot?

Why use multimedia in the medieval literature classroom?

One answer stems from my belief that any introduction to medieval texts should include an introduction to medieval studies as a discipline, one that has long since entered the digital age. One of the highlights at this year's International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo was the revelation of the identity of the Chaucer blogger, Brantley Bryant, whose *Medieval Studies and New Media* was released this year by Palgrave Macmillan. During July's biennial meeting of the New Chaucer Society, Stephanie Trigg organized a session on medievalist blogging (Jeffrey J. Cohen offers a session redux on In the Middle, a self-proclaimed "medieval studies group blog"). On Thursday, August 5, the fan base for the Medievalists.net Facebook page surpassed 7,000 users. Increasingly, the web houses important new media tools for medieval scholarship, such as the *Middle English Compendium*, and pedagogy, such as the invaluable TEAMS digital editions produced by the Medieval Institute. Medieval scholarship has become a multimedia affair, and students should be familiar with how it has evolved with the assistance of and in response to digital and new media.

The second answer arises out of my desire to bring pre-modern texts alive for my students by immersing them, both the texts and the students, in rich historical context. Increasingly, we can access that historical context online via digital images and archives, and other web-enabled technologies. Further, we should not forget that medieval culture itself embraced a variety of modes and media. In an age with multiple definitions of literacy, visual art, architecture, and drama provided important alternative media outlets for transmitting ideas and texts religious and profane. Exploring how that process continues via the world-wide-web, documentary photography and videography, film and television adaptations, and even the medievalism of immersive gaming gives us insight regarding the life and afterlife of medieval texts. Studying the "multimedia, multimodal Middle Ages" can help students come to terms with those texts, which can, let's face it, be intimidating in their historical and aesthetic estrangement from the modern.

Using multimedia texts as secondary sources -- the lower-division classroom

So now that we have covered the "why," let's turn to the "how." One can, of course, integrate multimedia resources as secondary material to supplement the primary text. This approach works particularly well in composition and lower-division survey classes. As part of a unit on Chaucer, for example, I might have my students do some research onFlickr, running keyword searches for terms such as "Canterbury Tales," "Ellesmere Chaucer," "Canterbury Cathedral," "Thomas Becket," "relic," and "pilgrimage." Then, in class, we would pull up some of the found images on screen for discussion along with textual passages to which they are relevant.

We might also use Google Earth to take a virtual tour of Canterbury Cathedral, and to plot the route Chaucer's pilgrims might have followed in their literary journey. Exercises like these help students understand that the text, an act of imaginative generation, nevertheless had a connection to a real historical context. More than six hundred years later, the historical context endures in fragments, like the text itself, that have been incorporated into our modern cultural environment. Medieval literature, like medieval architecture, is "of the past," but it is also part of the present, a part that we have taken pains to preserve. The conversation about why we have preserved it, and what medieval texts and artifacts have become versus what they may once have been can provide a point of access for close reading and analysis that moves students beyond plot and character summary.

Using multimedia texts as primary sources -- the upper-division classroom

For more advanced students, multimedia resources can be essential tools in an introduction to textual scholarship. Very few of us are lucky enough to work at schools with ready access to manuscript archives. Fortunately, a number of projects are working to make original texts available in digital form. One of the best is the Auchinleck Manuscript sitemaintained and hosted by the National Library of Scotland. The site provides full-text searchable transcriptions of the manuscript text, a digital facsimile of the entire MS, as well as excellent background information on the manuscript and a comprehensive bibliography of scholarship dealing with the MS as material artifact and as text. Beginning Middle English paleographers can use the digital facsimiles for exercises in transcription and basic recognition of different "hands" or writing styles. They can find an excellent overview of textual studies and late-medieval manuscript culture in the bibliographic material. The lacunae left in the manuscript by the vandals who raided it for miniatures are poignant and telling reminders of the significant differences between *manuscripts* handcrafted from vellum, ink, and gold leaf, and digital *texts* comprised of computer code and created with machine assistance. Thus, as a convergence point between the digital/postmodern and the manuscript/medieval in the history of the book, the site itself can become an important object of study.

Multimedia and multimodal assignment design

Finally, in addition to studying multimedia primary and secondary sources, one can take a multimedia approach to assignment design. During the Spring, I taught a first-year composition class where we studied adaptation, transformation, and appropriation as creative performance. In that class we looked at how adaptation can in some cases work as a kind of interpretive scholarship. Our discussions of *The Canterbury Tales* framed Chaucer's text as an adaptation of his source material. We studied stage andtelevision adaptations of *The Canterbury Tales*, and then I designed a progressive assignment sequencein which the students created and reflected upon their own adaptations of Chaucer's work. Along similar lines, Cynthia Camp, allowed her upper-division students at the University of Georgia to create a "Choose Your Own Chaucer" videography project, adapting Chaucer's "Legend of Dido" from the *Legend of Good Women* for the small screen. In undergraduate classes such projects can be a welcome relief, for both teachers and students, from formulaic essay assignments in which many students resort to reproducing well-worn arguments about "what Chaucer was really thinking."

Future Media Fest: General Introduction - Andy Famiglietti

During the week of October 4, Georgia Tech will play host to Future Media Fest, a conference that bills itself as "an interactive mash-up of talent, ideas, trends and technology." This event promises to provide a glimpse at some emerging technologies and social formations involving digital media, including social media, distributed content creation, digital games, and augmented reality. In addition, it will be an interesting window into the minds of some of the technologists, researchers and business people working on these technologies. In short, a great opportunity to do some good thinking about how technology, media and culture are changing together... maybe even some first draft sociology of science and technology! Look for blog posts in the coming days from the following TECHStyle bloggers:

- Andy Famiglietti will be covering the political economy of media technology, and especially the emerging relationship between media "prosumers" and media companies.
- Roger Whitson will be covering the attitude of media producers towards emerging forms of collective intelligence in social media and augmented reality formats.
- Leeann Hunter will be covering the future of business and advertising amid developments in collaborative consumption, social media, and digital technologies.
- Chris Ritter will cover trends and forecasts in educational uses of digital games, virtual worlds, and augmented reality programs.

Future Media Fest: The Rhetorics of the Information Society - Andy Famiglietti

24 hours of video per minute

That's the rate at which digital footage is being uploaded to YouTube, according to Michael Jones' opening keynote presentation at Future Media Fest. Jones, who is Chief Technology Advocate at Google, cited the number as part of his argument that digital communication technology is becoming ever more ubiquitous. Understandably, he saw Google as playing an important role in this ubiquitous information environment.

This image, of thousands of camera-phone eyes feeding days of video into Google as minutes tick by may, for some media theorists, call to mind the image of the Panopticon, the model prison made famous by French philosopher Michel Foucault, in which prisoners arranged in transparent cells at the perimeter had their every move watched by a concealed figure in a central tower. The Panopticon, Foucault explained, was designed to teach prisoners to internalize the values of their guards, because they never knew if a guard was watching, they began to watch themselves.

Is Google a modern day Panopticon, watching over us all, invisibly guiding, Foucault would say "disciplining," our behavior? Jones didn't think so. He went to great pains to describe Google as a passive entity. "We are your servant," he said at one point. At another, he claimed, "we don't make decisions, we take what humans do and we amplify it." As examples, he cited the ways in which Google tried to reflect the needs of its customers. He described how users of Google maps were active participants in the process of drawing the maps that Google served, especially in developing countries. Explaining the motivations of contributors to the Google maps project, Jones said ,"they didn't want me to have their map, they wanted their friends to have their map." Finally, in response to a questioner who asked how Google could claim that they were a reflection of already existing behavior when values were always embedded in technology, Jones replied that data harvested from users was used to develop the technology itself. For example, he explained that the size of buttons in Google's Gmail webmail service had not been designed by some top-down process of expertise, rather different button sizes had been provided to different users, and the ideal button size had been determined based on data collected on the users' reaction times when using the various buttons.

All this, should, of course, be taken with a grain of salt. Anytime an executive officer of major corporation argues that his company is basically powerless, it suggests the company has become aware of popular anxieties about its power. Certainly, this is true for Google. Jones' claims that Google is passive and reflective also seem to overlook an observation that he made earlier in his presentation, when he noted that, "Henry Ford changed the way cities were designed." Just as the automobile transformed the American urban landscape, leading to, among other things, the rise of the suburbs, so too, it is difficult to imagine that a technology as powerful as search could fail to transform our patterns of behavior.

That said, however, I think that Jones' apology for Google makes clear important differences between the 19th century technology of the Panopticon and the 21st century technology of search. Unlike the Panopticon, where a human agent stood in the tower and imposed rational, intentional values on the confined prisoners, encouraging them to adopt regimented work habits and abandon dangerous transgressions, nothing human could possibly process the surveillance performed by Google. Just to watch a day's worth of YouTube video would require a three-year effort! Instead, what seems to stand in the center of Google's apparatus of search (to the extent that there is such a thing) is something else entirely, something lashed together out of computer algorithms and pre-conscious thought. Something that adjusts buttons without us noticing and sums together collective contributions to make a map.

This should not be, in and of itself, frightening. The mastery of human consciousness was always a bit of an illusion. However, I do think we may need to do some reflection about who the mechanisms of search benefit, and what larger transformations this shift from intention to algorithm may entail.

(Crossposted to Copyvillain.org)

Future Media Fest: The Startup Technology Showcase - Roger Whitson

How can crowdsourcing and social media applications be used to provide more personalization over media content?

That was the focus of the Startup and Reception Technology Showcase, which featured several new companies exploring the odd middle-ground between collaboration, control and privacy.

And while many of the companies featured in the showcase created products geared towards advertising and marketing, small modifications in software could also provide new opportunities for pedagogy and teaching. I'll list a few of these new startup groups before giving a short reflection on the opportunities and dangers implied in their products and their use in teaching pedagogy.

1. Swyzzle: Swyzzle provides markup for embedded video. Swyzzle uses markup to embed links to information about products appearing in popular television, films, or youtube features. Their vision is to remove all kinds of commercials that interrupt filmed content. The Swyzzle company also offers tracking and analysis features that can chart when consumers decide to link to product information.
2. Stronico: Stronico tracks connections between people. It takes information from different social media sites and creates a giant map listing who is connected to whom. You are not only able to see who you are connected to, or who your friends or friends of friends are connected to, you can also see how they are connected. If you, for example, meet an important person in a meeting -- for example -- and do not get connection information from that person, you can use Stronico to find this person. Stronico is, in this sense, a powerful form of online networking in which you can find important contacts almost instantaneously.
3. Likeminds: Likeminds connects people with similar interests, and uses their reviews on amazon.com, Netflix, GoodReads, Flickster and other social media applications to suggest other books, music and films you may

be interested in. They envision a marketing environment where advertising becomes increasingly more personalized.

4. looxii: A social media analytics provider created by former students at Georgia Tech, looxii is committed to making analytics simple. looxii is primarily made for social media marketers, but it can also be used by academic sites that want detailed analyses of their traffic.
5. 9th Period.com: 9th period uses existing social network sites to connect students with one another across the country. Students are able to crowdsource questions to students taking similar classes anywhere in the world. For example, if a student is taking an introduction to philosophy class and has a question about Plato's definition of justice in *The Republic*, they can search out other students taking philosophy and ask them. 9th Period.com is designed for elementary, middle and high school education but can also be used by college students, graduate students and faculty.

Many of these technologies represent new attempts to personalize commercial products and provide consumers more choices when looking for something specific. However, they also represent unprecedented incursions into individual privacy. For example, Cardlytics, a program devoted to giving consumers coupons with discounts that are linked to their debit cards, uses information on purchases from your online bank account to determine what products you buy and how much you spend on them. Cardlytics are implemented by individual banks looking to recoup losses after the changes made by the recent Federal Financial Regulation Legislation. They provide consumers with targeted and personalized coupons. Consumers have to opt-out of the program if they do not want corporations to have access to their purchasing information.

Despite the privacy issues that emerge with several of these social media applications, they can also provide new opportunities for teaching. The technology that drives Swyzzle could also be implemented to markup video for grading student films, or to add important historical, technological or biographical information in an "Introduction to Film" class. The programming that powers Stronico could also be used to create historical maps showing the ways different historical figures, events, ideas, and technologies relate to one another. Finally, it would be interesting to envision an academic version of Likeminds, where graduate students and faculty suggest new avenues of research.

The Startup and Reception Showcase only underlined the promises and the perils of the social media era. While the attention to personalization provides powerful new forms of online collaboration, no one seemed too interested in maintaining pre-Facebook levels of privacy for their clients or users.

Future Media Fest: Brief Thoughts About the Consumer Experience - Andy Famiglietti

All of the members of Future of Advertising and Marketing panel were in absolute agreement: targeted online advertising is not "Big Brother." Tracking cookies and other technologies that allow for online ads to be customized for individual users, like the stuff that tells your browser to show you car ads after you visit the Ford website, might seem disconcerting at first, but panelists hoped that the browsing public could be educated out of their discomfort with these technologies. After all, they argued, the goal of these forms of tracking isn't to spy on the user, but rather to provide him or her with an "enhanced consumer experience." No more obnoxious ads trying to sell you stuff you don't want! Just ads targeted just for you!

Its true that targeted advertising can be quite convenient. When mattress shopping recently, I didn't mind getting ads announcing Mattress King ads popping up on random sites. As I suggested in my post yesterday, I don't this sort of information usually acts as "surveillance" in the Foucauldian sense, since there is no human agent to read it, or to enforce normative judgments about it.

However, we shouldn't overlook the possibility that this data could end up in human hands, and maybe hands who mean to do ill with it. Security breaches have become an all to common feature of our contemporary information environment. Think, for example, of the woman whose location was revealed to her abusive ex-husband by faulty privacy settings in Google's "Buzz" software . Could a hacked or accidentally exposed database of advertiser data have similarly disastrous consequences?

Furthermore, even if these sorts of accidents could be avoided, what of the tracking technologies original intent, the "enhanced consumer experience?" Is an "enhanced consumer experience" always a feature? If we believe that human beings ought to exist as more than just consumers, an ever more tightly fitting and transparent experience of consumption might, in fact, be something we want to avoid.

Future Media Fest: In Defense of Cookies - Leeann Hunter

At today's panel on the Future of Advertising and Marketing at FutureMedia Fest, panelists noted some public confusion about the infringement of privacy that is incurred when personal information is tracked through cookies and sold to advertisers for marketing purposes. In the long run, they argued, targeted marketing will enhance the consumer experience. While very few members of the audience voiced any public objections to the collection of personal data for marketing purposes, the Twitter back channel reveals significant disagreement with the future of the advertising industry in social media. The buzz word of the session was “creepiness.”

The Startup Showcase on Monday evening provided an inside look at how companies are gathering, sorting, and using personal information for the purposes of advertising. While some of the methods were indeed creepy, many of the Startups are simply trying to revolutionize the way massive amounts of data are processed on the Internet. LikeMinds, for example, is creating a hub that will connect people who share media interests, providing recommendations for consuming new media based on the personal data that is collected from all of its users. While Amazon.com bases its recommendations on the buying habits of strangers who make similar purchases, LikeMinds attempts to funnel these recommendations through the interests of people in your social network. As media outlets amass into monstrous amounts of data additional metrics are essential to making recommendations more relevant.

Few of the staunchest critics would condemn the practice of collecting private data when it is applied to cultural founts of information, including film, television, and literature. However, what is the difference between recommendations for reading material related to what you have indicated that you “like” and an advertisement for a local thrift store targeted at you based on your gender, age, and political affiliation--information that you have voluntarily supplied to social networking sites? If that information can be further narrowed through the use of analytic or predictive data based on users’ browsing and clicking habits, certainly the consumer will be well-served. If only this technology could be directed toward the interests of academic researchers--if only WorldCat could track my research habits!

Another Startup, Swyzzle, offers a new technology that both tests the boundaries of the social marketing landscape while also providing a new way of collecting and delivering data via videos. Instead of banner ads, commercials, and awkward product placements to accompany videos on the Internet, Swyzzle integrates advertisements into the content itself by embedding hyperlinks inside the images. While these Swyzzle links could replace commercials and footer ads, they would forever change the landscape of the video screen. I can already imagine the infiltration of hyperlinked images across all video content.

But I would argue that this process of tagging and hyperlinking video images would only make more visible what is already festering under the surface of the entire entertainment industry: media content is driven by consumer viewing and buying habits. We have to stop consuming "free" content, or fundamentally change our consumer habits, if we want to eliminate advertising from the media experience. At the same time, while advertising media specialists claim that critics are naive in their understanding of cookies and tracking systems, they would be more effective if they treated consumers with respect for privacy when they explain how these systems work.

Who’s Afraid of Collective Intelligence? - Roger Whitson

FutureMedia fest 2010
DISCOVER • EXPLORE • COLLABORATE
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Georgia Institute of Technology

The afternoon panel on "Social Media for Collective Intelligence" emphasized some of the benefits and challenges of the emerging form of collective intelligence to marketing and journalism. Collective Intelligence or "the wisdom of the crowds" depends upon a group of people providing collective answers to questions or problems. David Clinch, the moderator and founder of Clinch Media, proposed that typical forms of crowdsourcing are scary for media journalists and that what is often needed in any media outlet is what he called "elite sourcing": an ability to distill the most reliable and useful information from the stream of internet chatter.

Many of the panelists discussed their own experience with collective intelligence. Jenny Scmitt the Founder of Atlanta-based Cloudspark discussed the famous Tropicana incident, where the company spent millions of dollars to change their brand only to have it rejected almost immediately by the blogging and social media community. Steve Schwald, Director of News and Digital Content for CBS, discussed the pitfalls of exclusive news video that is picked up by other agencies and used without compensation. Most of the conversation, however, focused on how marketers and journalists can exploit the massive amount of information provided by social media to enhance their brand.

Collective intelligence is indeed an interesting topic for educators, as a business professor from Georgia State University indicated in one of the questions at the end of the panel. He stressed that a question mark should be placed at the end of the term, indicating that whatever emerged from the crowds might not be either intelligence or wisdom. Clinch replied that neither the internet nor Google made anyone smarter or dumber, the issue at hand was the sheer number of voices not their quality.

And yet, it seems that the panel did not delve into the cultural implications of the emergence of collective intelligence in ways that might go further in answering the question of whether crowds offer intelligent decisions. In a recent interview with Vinicius Navarro, Henry Jenkins explains that we are really caught in a transitional cultural moment:

> the rise of participatory culture represents the reassertion of the practices and logics of folk culture in the face of a hundred years of mass culture. We now have greater capacity to create again and we are forming communities around the practices of cultural production and circulation. We now have the ability to share what we create with a much larger public than was possible under folk culture, and yet our templates for what culture looks like are still largely formed around the contents and practices of mass culture. This is why fan culture thrives in this new environment. Participatory culture cannot grow without the capacity to archive, appropriate, and recirculate media content; it cannot sustain itself long term without an expanded notion of fair use and a reduction on the capacity of corporate media to exert a monopoly control over our culture.

The transitional moment Jenkins describes is a powerful rejoinder to Nicholas Carr's 2008 article in *The Atlantic* titled "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" In the article, Carr personalizes the anxieties of a culture going through a profound change in the way it thinks. "Over the past few years I've had an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with my brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory. My mind isn't going—so far as I can tell—but it's changing. I'm not thinking the way I used to think." The article seems like the beginning of a cyberpunk thriller, where intelligence is being sucked out of individuals and placed in the hands of shadowy entities lurking with nefarious intentions.

Should we be afraid of collective intelligence? Is it just a matter of filtering, as Clinch suggested? Or does it mark a much more profound cultural moment, as Carr and Jenkins argue? The panel at Future Media Fest emphasized this moment as one of opportunity, where entrepreneurs can design new careers that exploit the intelligence of crowds. And yet, apart from new kinds of profit, collective intelligence can also provide new ways to enjoy media that aren't limited, as Jenkins points out, to the cultural monopoly of corporate media. In other words the struggle isn't over intelligence or stupidity, but whether corporations end-up exclusively exploiting collective intelligence for profit or whether the wisdom of the crowd can lead to a more democratic relationship between media corporations and everyday people.

Future Media Fest: The Technology and Ethics of Immersive Worlds -
Jesse Stommel and Chris Ritter

Moderator:

Benn Konsynski, George S. Craft Distinguished Professor of Business Administration for Information Systems and Operations Management, Goizueta Business School, Emory University

- Christopher W. Klaus, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Kaneva, Inc.
- Michael R. Macedonia, Vice President and Chief Scientist, Analysis, Simulation, Systems Engineering and Training Business Unit, SAIC
- Jonathan Shaw, Research Scientist at the Georgia Institute of Technology and Associate Director of the College of Architecture's IMAGINE Lab
- Lora G. Weiss, Aerospace, Transportation and Advanced Systems Laboratory Chief Scientist, Georgia Tech Research Institute

Today's panel on Immersive Worlds at FutureMedia Fest offered an interesting insight into the values of virtual world developers: where we're going, and how we're getting there, are more important than why. This emerged during the Q&A, which comprised the bulk of the discussion. Here are the more significant questions and their answers, some from the panelists and some from us.

1. *What new technologies do we need to create more and more immersive worlds?* The first question from the floor lead to a flurry of answers from the various panelists. The first response was a joke about bio-implants, which led to a slew of awkward giggles from the room. It was a telling moment, a comment tossed-off as a joke, even though it is perhaps the most serious, the most truthful, response to the question. Virtual worlds will become more and more immersive as the apparatus that controls them moves deeper and deeper inside our own bodies. The rest of the responses were more immediately plausible and, likewise, more palatable:

facial expression recognition, camera-detection of bodily movement, caps that measure brain activity, 60" screens projected from a visor onto our retina, etc. One clear similarity in all of these responses was their emphasis on our physicality. Whether the tech moves inside our body or not, it is clear that we will engage the tech with our bodies and that it will engage us in a way that is increasingly “multi-sensory” (a word used several times during the hour and a half session). Interfaces will become more transparent, even if they are not entirely invisible.

2. *When and to what extent will college classes move online into immersive worlds?* People have been suggesting this and experimenting with virtual pedagogy in Second Life for many years, but it has basically failed to come to fruition. In fact, the technology used in online classes (including learning management systems like Blackboard, D2L, WebCT, etc.) remains extremely low-fi, bound in a version of Web 1.0 that no longer exists elsewhere on the internet. Why hasn't the technology used for online classes advanced at the rate of other technology used on the Web? From a pedagogical standpoint, moving education online feels somewhat radical, fundamentally reshaping the space of the classroom; however, the technical results so far have been far less than radical, creating spaces that feel and look traditional and standardized. Even as the internet becomes more and more democratic, allowing free access to a nearly endless array of content, the most popular pedagogical tools used for online education (like Blackboard) have become more and more restricted, with password-protected access to content.
3. *To what degree are virtual worlds overlapping with reality?* This begs a related question, do we really want more immersive/realistic virtual worlds? The responses to an audience member’s question about what it would take to achieve fully immersive virtual worlds indicated an interesting set of positions from the panel on the value of realism. Christopher Klaus’s Kaneva project is apparently working for better mapping of physical identities onto avatars, he claims, because it’s better to have one’s virtual skin perfectly match one’s physical skin than to masquerade behind a stylized avatar. Macedonia echoed the sentiment, claiming that closer mapping of physical to virtual bodies will give virtual worlds more legitimacy. We found this position surprising, not only because it runs counter to common celebrations of virtual worlds’ capabilities for escaping the body, but also because the fixation on realism can be dangerous. The danger with having more and more realistic worlds and more and more realistic avatars is that we run the risk of running into a problem with the uncanny valley, where there is a discomfort in viewers/participants interacting within a virtual world that comes very close but not close enough to resembling reality. Dave Bryant writes in “The Uncanny Valley” <http://www.arclight.net/~pdb/nonfiction/uncanny-valley.html>, “Stated simply, the idea is that if one were to plot emotional response

against similarity to human appearance and movement, the curve is not a sure, steady upward trend. Instead, there is a peak shortly before one reaches a completely human ‘look’ . . . but then a deep chasm plunges below neutrality into a strongly negative response before rebounding to a second peak where resemblance to humanity is complete.”

4. *Where does ethics (from the creator side of the table) come into play when putting this technology out into the market?* Does a virtual world require "real" morals and ethics, or do virtual worlds demand virtual ethics? What does an ethics of the virtual look like? On this question the panelists were perhaps unintentionally evasive. Most seemed to have given more thought to what is possible for us to create and less thought to what we should create. The question about ethics was re-posed to the panel a second time, in a somewhat impassioned plea that we all pause to consider the effects of virtual worlds upon the participants. Weiss responded essentially that it’s the society’s duty to choose the good technologies from the bad. Klaus added that most industries tended towards responsible self-regulation (i.e. the games industry with the ESRB), but that the process has to happen over time. Moderator Konsynski said, “The worst thing you can do is regulate in the beginning.” The danger is that you don’t address the ethical questions at the stage of creation, when sometimes irrevocable decisions are made about the trajectory of a technology. For example, at this point, we couldn’t want a round cell phone (even if it were better), because the creators of the technology have already taught us to want rectangular cell phones.

As a final aside, once the session was over, we were left wondering about an off-the-cuff criticism of Grand Theft Auto: Why does Grand Theft Auto get so much flack? The game is often mentioned during discussions about the morality of virtual gaming environments as one unworthy of salvation, as though the game’s ethics (or lack thereof) are no longer in question. It's an easy whipping-boy or straw man for questions of virtual ethics; however, we agree that the game takes this question head on, offering a shrewd satire of the ethics of interactive gaming and virtual environments.

Future Media Fest: Digital Media Skills for Citizens? Workers? - Roger Whitson

The Digital Media Skills panel underlined the importance of communication skills for all students looking to get jobs in media and technology. Eric Berger argued in his introduction that, in the future, communication will be the skill employers will look for when hiring. Most of the panel agreed. Rebecca Burnett added that "just as important as what you say is how you say it, who you say it to, why you say it, and the medium in which you say it." Other panelists agreed, suggesting that given a highly technically skilled job prospect and one who is perhaps not as skilled but is a better communicator, most employers will hire the communicator.

Still, two of the most important topics for the panel were only mentioned briefly: the need for funding communication instruction and the need for communication to integrate what one member of the audience, a Business professor called, a "global sensibility." He argued that rhetoric may be necessary for the future workplace but that it isn't sufficient. Awareness of the cultural context of communication is important in our more globalized age, where workers compete with people from China and India.

In terms of funding, Rebecca Burnett suggested that initiatives like Plain Language, a program designed to improve communication between the government and the public, can provide a framework for the kinds of public monies needed to improve communication skills for students and workers. Burnett's example of Plain Language also hinted at a perspective that was in the background of this panel, and many of the other panels at Future Media Fest: that of the citizen. While the omission is understandable, given that many of the presenters were focused on marketing, the question of the importance of communication skills for the public good cannot be overlooked.

For example, what kinds of digital skills are going to be important for citizens to maintain our democratic way of life in the future? Funding programs for communication skills in order to remain competitive with China and India, but so is having a government that can ensure the free and equal use of the internet for all people. The recent rulings against FCC efforts to enforce net neutrality have only made this process more difficult. If communication is important for the worker, it is doubly so for the citizen who must navigate through corporate lobbying, politicians who are more than happy to help spread falsehoods in order to win elections, and media corporations who are becoming less and less willing to challenge those falsehoods.

Future Media Fest: What Does Camouflage Sound Like? - Robert Blaskiewicz

Last week, I found it difficult to relate to the other attendees of Georgia Tech's FutureMedia Fest 2010; in fact, I failed to connect with them rather spectacularly on many levels. Moving back and forth between academia and a considerably more commercial environment is jarring. I failed to share the speakers' interest in markets, business models, and monetization. I didn't have an iPad, Blackberry, laptop, twitter feed, or cell phone--or even a wristwatch (they're just a fad, I keep telling myself). And even if I had been plugged into Intertoobies like everyone else around me, I wouldn't have been able to communicate with them. They seemed to be using a sort of Pidgin English that uses many of the words I am familiar with, but which recombines them in ways that make the meaning go away. They coined words that shouldn't be, like "megatrend"; they piled on unnecessary verbiage, as in "we provide download solutions" (no, you provide downloads); they abbreviated phrases which nobody in the history of language has ever thought needed abbreviating ("BC" allows the busy exec to downsize the superfluous letters in "business community").

The last straw was a VP for Coke told me (and a hundred others), without irony, "Coke stands for authenticity." I sipped a Pepsi as he spoke.

For most of the conference, then, I have felt slightly out of step with the rest of the crowd. At least until Thursday, when Georgia Tech's researchers opened their labs to conference goers. Almost two full floors of labs and workspace were available to tour. I spent a good deal of time talking to people in theSonification Lab, an interdisciplinary lab that draws on the insights of both computer science and psychology. Many of the projects in this lab that I saw translate the visual world into meaningful, navigable audioscapes. For instance, take the SWAN Project, which Ph.D. student Jeff Lindsay showed me. He gave me headphones and a videogame controller, and I apologize ahead of time to the researcher if I mangle my description. When you put on the headphones, you are listening to an audio space. You hear a guitar string being plucked, and when you turn your head, the “location” of the plucking string moves as well, as if you were listening to surround sound. As you “walk” toward the object using the controller, the speed of the plucking increases. Then you hear another object in the distance, turn your head to “face” that object, and off you go again. Those sounds, he explained can be used to represent objects or obstacles, doorways or fire hydrants, and can be used to help a visually impaired user navigate a sidewalk. Jeff (I think it was Jeff) explained that as it was, the system would probably not replace a cane, but that it offered the user an enhanced environment.

Another project in that lab is the Bonephones Project. This one was not a little surprising. Basically, these headphones conduct sound straight into your skull, not into your ears. The headphones that they gave me made contact near the ear but not in it, allowing me to simultaneously hear music coming through my skull and carry on a conversation. They pointed out that you could combine SWAN and Bonephones to offer a highly enhanced audio environment for the visually impaired.

At some point during my tour of the Sonification Lab, somebody mentioned that I should go see the fish. At first I thought it was some sort of code, but when I saw a brightly lit aquarium through a window in a lab, I took it to be the demonstration that they were talking about. The Accessible Aquarium Project is an attempt to allow the visually impaired (that’s “V.I.” to the busy execs) to experience dynamic complex visual motion. To achieve this, you need:

1. 4 brightly colored fish
2. high speed video cameras
3. a computer, loaded with tons of custom software
4. speakers

The high-speed video cameras film the fish from (at least) two different angles, the computer identifies the type of fish, tracks their speed (and other components of motion), and translates each fish’s movements into music. On the screens, little vectors appear in real time over the image of the fish, plotting their motion, and I assume those are what are translated into music. Hard to imagine? Check out this .mov and track the little Nemo-looking clown fish. When he appears in shot, you will hear a new tune play, when he speeds up, you’ll hear that as well, and when he disappears, his song vanishes. It’s sort of like *Peter and the Wolf* in the Matrix.

Oh, and to answer the question posed in the title, the sound of camouflage is silence.

The most gratifying aspect of the demonstrations was the ability to sit down and talk at length to the researchers, and the best conversation I had was with Claudia Rebola, a designer and researcher who was demonstrating a small, user-friendly multimodal platform designed for older adults, but which seemed positively bulging with educational potential. What was most interesting about our conversation, however, and what left me wondering why Dr. Rebola was not giving talks to the Brittain Fellows, was that she had done her dissertation on non-verbal communication in electronic environments. I gave her the names of a few contacts in the Writing and Communication Program, and we exchanged business cards. We will, I assume, be in touch.

Making personal connections with enthusiastic researchers was, for me, by far the most important and fruitful part of the conference.

Future Media Fest: Recap – Public, Private, or Corporate? - Roger Whitson

The Future Media Fest emphasized, for me, the increasing tension between the public sphere and private enterprise or, in other words, the struggle between corporate profit and public good over the move to more collective forms of identity. In my first post, on the Startup Technology Showcase, I looked at several new applications and suggested possible uses for them in the digital classroom. However, I also noted the willingness of several of the vendors to use private information to help fund private enterprise. Most distressing was the example ofCardlytics which accesses personal bank information to deliver purchasing information to businesses and coupons to consumers. While the delivery of personalized coupons to one's credit card might seem to be a useful consumer service, the fact that a company like Cardlytics can get access to bank information without the "opt-in" approval of individual consumers is disturbing. It also signals to me the degree to which public consciousness is not yet operating at the level of the ambition of corporate entrepreneurs.

I became even more firmly convinced of the future political struggle over collective identity when I wrote about the Social Media panel in Who's Afraid of Collective Intelligence?. Several of the panelists had it completely right: it is important to know how intelligent or wise the crowds can be. As Howard Rheingold says about smart mobs, for example, "[s]udden epidemics of cooperation aren't necessarily pleasant experiences. Lynch mobs and entire nations cooperate to perpetuate atrocities" (175). Smart mobs and collective intelligence can be unbelievably dumb. Yet they can also be powerful. Unfortunately, the panelists had very little to say about the opportunities of audiences to take more control over the products and services being delivered by businesses and media corporations. Collective intelligence, in the hands of a capable and media-literate public, can fundamentally challenge the mass culture model of funding that ensures the perpetuation of large media conglomerates. As I mentioned in a Tweet during the "Future of Advertising and Marketing Panel," "let's talk about education and empowerment." I would have liked an emphasis on both topics in most of the panels I went to during the week.

Finally, the "Digital Media Skills" had a refreshing emphasis on communication, but lacked a connection between communication and the public as I stressed in "Digital Media Skills for Citizens? Workers?." Despite the attempt by Rebecca Burnett to discuss public funding, public communication, and the need for a public debate over the future of copyright, most of the panelists were more interested in emphasizing the importance of communication for students looking for jobs in the private sector. Such a discussion is undeniably important, especially during this time of economic uncertainty. However, also important is the centrality of rhetoric and communication to the future of our democracy. In other words, what is the role of public education in teaching communication skills? Do educators like myself merely act as a vessel for career training or is there something more vital to our work that has a direct impact upon the public good?

As this year's Future Media Fest demonstrated, we are only beginning to sort out all of the legal, philosophical and political implications of the shift from private, individual forms of identity to more public and collective ones. Two questions emerge from my thoughts about collective intelligence at the Future Media Fest. 1) Are corporations playing a more central role in defining future forms of collective identity? and if so 2) Do they have a responsibility to invest in, and help cultivate, our public democracy? Such questions, I feel, would fit into a great panel topic for next year's conference.

Reference

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Truth-Con 2010: I Come in Peace - Tom Lolis

It's so easy to condemn a believer. Thanks to the advent of modern science and the birth of post-Kantian rationalism, most of us no longer live in a world in which we might battle a demon, request an audience with an angel, or receive a vision of another cosmos from God. While we have marked the decline of such claims as a signifier of progress, the early modernist in me remains a touch nostalgic for the good old days of Agrippan magic, Paracelsian medicine, and Fluddean cosmology. Indeed, I can hardly think of a better reason to lament the rise of the scientific metanarrative than my current inability to receive a cosmic vision. However, such astounding receptions of otherworldly knowledge have not entirely disappeared from the cultural landscape. Enter Atlanta's TruthCon 2010.

There is perhaps no better environment in which to muse upon the transience of epistemology than the three-day Truth Convention, an event that provides an open forum for a host of paradialogues on alien visitations, secret societies, government cover-ups, transdimensional stargates, psychic healing, mastery over gravity (via magical means), the rise of the antichrist, and the channeling of ancient gods. At a cost of $100 per day—although slightly cheaper rates are available for those attending the entire convention—this is not an event for the mildly curious. On the contrary, TruthCon is a gathering of firmly entrenched believers in search of kindred spirits.

To the point: Am I one of these kindred spirits? Not exactly, I admit, though it is not my aim to rid the world of nontraditional communities. At Tech, I teach a course on the rhetoric of conspiracy culture, and I have spent many years researching the way in which conspiracists work both with and against the grain of popular culture, engaging in discourses that simultaneously resurrect the past and anticipate the future. Conspiracists embrace the languages of hope and fear in one fell swoop, and the world they inhabit is stunningly complex. It is this complexity that fascinates, as conspiracists' aim to rebuild the world with which (for a wide range of reasons) they have become disenfranchised. Consequently, when attending an event like TruthCon, I aim for immersion, not conversion. I have no interest in convincing an attendee that s/he hasn't been abducted by aliens. I am not equipped with the psychological training necessary to safely dismantle someone's world.

Attending TruthCon is like being swept up in a conspiratorial whirlwind, and the event embraces far too many marvels and terrors to address in this short piece. I'm instead going to briefly discuss the most charismatic presenter that I witnessed during the event, Steven Greer. According to his bio, Greer is an emergency physician and "a former chairman of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Caldwell Memorial Hospital in North Carolina." While impressive, such earthly accolades do not earn Greer the right to appear at TruthCon as a keynote speaker. Greer is also the founder of "The Disclosure Project," an organization that aims to expose the Secret Government's efforts to conceal the existence of extraterrestrial life. The Secret Government, as far as I can tell, is an international organization that dominates this planet and is comparable in scope to conspiracists' encroaching fear of a militaristic New World Order. As a kind of public escapee of the Secret Government's clutches, Greer's account of his life's mission is captivating stuff. In his talk, he discussed the Government's plot to murder of some his close associates, a mysterious attempt to buy Greer's silence with a two-billion dollar payoff (which Greer nobly refused), and his own close encounters with the citizens of the Andromeda Galaxy. Scoff if you must, but I attest that listening to Greer is more entertaining than watching *Lost*.

During his presentation, Greer's rhetoric occasionally became inflammatory. When Greer exclaimed that the Secret Government would only be able to stop his investigation if they managed to successfully render him "feet up," I felt a chill as I was reminded of the late William Cooper, a fellow ufologist who made similar pronouncements in the 1990s. In November of 2001, Cooper was killed in a shootout with Arizona police who sought his arrest on tax evasion charges. Cooper has become a martyr of the conspiracy movement, and, of course, theories abound regarding the 'true' cause of his 'murder.' I hope that Greer has no wish to emulate Cooper's posthumous success, despite his alarming choice of words. I was much relieved when Greer ceased making such pronouncements and showed off some extremely blurry video of his many meetings with the Andromedans.

As the convention drew to a close, I realized that few of the speakers offered any sort of corroboration with their peers. I struggled to create a grand narrative that encompassed all of the contesting dialogues, and I failed miserably. If aliens have been visiting us since antiquity, why is it that we only acquired an FTL drive from alien emissaries (that's "faster than light" for those of you who didn't watch *Battlestar Galactica*) in the twentieth century? What does the New World Order have to do with the cabal of Chinese Jesuits who are awaiting the coming of the devil's child? Did JFK really threaten to blow the whistle on UFOs? Did that upset the New World Order, the devil, or both? Who's responsible for anything unusual I might find in my water supply, and why? Is the good water all being transported through a stargate? And what's really going on at Bohemian Grove? (Even I think that place is just *weird*.)

More importantly, if the speakers at TruthCon are all vying for purchase on "the truth," who's to say that my interpretation is any better? I'd rather not play judge and jury, although I don't wish to be naïve about the genealogy of conspiracism. It's true—that is to say, I believe it is true—that conspiratorial rhetoric is often laden with hateful ideologies. Within the subculture of conspiracists, the forces of racism, anti-semitism, homophobia, gender discrimination, and class warfare remain, I am sorry to report, very much alive.[1] My truth be told, I would prefer that we teleport these underlying ideologies to another universe. Nevertheless, I do not wish to suggest that every conspiracist has a secret agenda. Sometimes, someone just believes that they've been abducted by a twelve-foot tall lizard from the fifth dimension. And really, what's the harm in believing that?

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[1] To his credit, Steven Greer eschewed such stereotypes in his talk, sarcastically commenting on popular interpretations of "good ETs [that] look like white Anglo-Saxon Protestants."

Why I Love THATCamp - Roger Whitson

THATCamp T-Shirt, Photo by Brian Croxall

As a master's student in my introductory theory course, I became particularly enamored by Roland Barthes's essay "Why I Love Benveniste." At the end of the essay, Barthes says that

Working with him, with his texts [...],we always recognize the generosity of a man who seems to listen to the reader and to lend him his intelligence, even in the most special subjects, the most improbable ones. We read other linguists (and indeed we must), but we love Benveniste.

What a magical feeling! While I tried desperately to be like those scholars I most admired, Barthes saw in Benveniste a figure who would lend his readers his intelligence. Derrida had an unearthly ability to evade me. Deleuze was so cool that I wanted to ride the wave of his hyper-prose. I knew I could only be, at best, a pale imitation of these thinkers. But the magic of Barthes's sentiment is that Benveniste didn't want you to be like him; he wanted to share with you.

I can't think of a better way to characterize my experience at THATCamp. So much of my experience in the humanities has been centered around finding, and defending, an increasingly small track of academic land. Conferences have often filled me with a sense of the resentment that I feel almost programmed to acknowledge as the proper approach to academic life. Most recently, I remember having a discussion about the role of love in philosophy. One participant remarked that we should be critical of love, that it often keeps us starry-eyed with a thinker or a topic while ignoring important problems. I didn't necessarily disagree, but I was truly disgusted. You mean I can't even really love what I do anymore?

But THATCamp? I felt the love even before the unconference started. Within session proposals and comments as they appeared on the THATCamp SE website in the week before our gathering, I recognized a group of people who were more interested in making and working than they were with intellectual property. I volunteered to help teach a bootcamp session on Wordpress, Drupal, and Omeka. Wordpress was pretty familiar to me, Drupal would be handled by another camper, and I ambitiously convinced myself that I would learn Omeka before the presentation. Of course, as procrastination increased and THATCamp loomed, I did not learn Omeka in the way I expected to.

Anxiety ensued. I started the Bootcamp with my trusty co-presenters Tim Bryson and Andy Famiglietti, who were themselves heroically helpful in successfully introducing Wordpress and Drupal. However, I knew that neither of them were able to discuss Omeka. I had typed up a few notes, but I was certain that I wouldn't be able to represent Omeka adequately. When it came time to discuss Omeka, Miriam Posner immediately dispelled my anxiety. "Do you need a volunteer to talk about Omeka?" She took over the presentation and helped me contextualize a system I knew next to nothing about. Anxiety was replaced with a magical feeling of possibility.

Now I'm not suggesting that, had I been in the same position at a regular conference, people would have let me rot onstage. But the fact that I assumed that I could not ask for help from the audience reveals to me the degree to which my intellectual upbringing has been poisoned with the isolating and guilt-ridden ideologies of academic, all-too-academic, conferences. The idea that one person, alone, is the only repository of knowledge that matters (or doesn't matter) is anathema to THATCamp. It is a philosophy expressed by Tom Scheinfeldt in his collegial rule for THATCamp (shared with us by Brian Croxall at the beginning of the weekend):

At most conferences, the game we play is one in which I, the speaker, try desperately to prove how smart I am, and you, the audience member, tries desperately in the question and answer period to show how stupid I am by comparison. Not here. At THATCamp we're here to be supportive of one another as we all struggle with the challenges and opportunities of incorporating technology in our work, departments, disciplines, and humanist missions. So no nitpicking, no tweckling, no petty BS.

The rest of the weekend only deepened my love for the collaborative camraderie of THATCamp. From GoogleDoc guides on sessions to proposed blog posts, addictive white-boards to friendly tweets, campers found every means to extend, transform, archive, build, and hack the conversations that occurred. We talked, sure, but we also found every opportunity to create useful stuff for members who attended the sessions and even those who could not. For example, you can find links to notes from sessions aboutDigital Humanities in Higher Education, Messy DH, Games, Sexy Good Web Design, Alternative Academic Careers (#alt-ac), the Digital Tool Show-and-Tell ("building with spare parts"), andEnvisioning Librarian/Scholar Collaborations.

I know that I left every session with new tools, new assignments, new coding strategies, but most of all I left with a new sense of what it meant to collaborate with other people. Working with the participants at THATCamp, with their ideas about pedagogy and their programming languages, I enjoyed the generosity of campers who listened to me and lent me their intelligence. I will go to other conferences (indeed I must go to them), but I will always love THATCamp.

Whither THATCamp Unpress? - Roger Whitson

"We already have an UnPress and it is called the internet" - Trevor Owens

THATCamp Prime, at George Mason University's Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, taught me that a word does not make a new publishing model. The UnPress session was, surprisingly perhaps only to my naive mind, very complicated - with many tweets expressing frustration at just what an UnPress is or what it could contribute to scholarly publishing.

Despite the complexity, there was a feeling that the word "UnPress" (if nothing else) was compelling. For me, the power of the word was evidenced by its use in Jennifer Howard's piece in *The Chronicle* on"Building a Better University Press" and its plug in the live-podcast recording of digital campus at THATCamp on Friday. There were also several suggestions for what an UnPress could accomplish in the session. For example, Dan Cohen and Amanda French discussed the possibility of an UnPress promoting content from scholars with low clout. Further, backchannel contributor Andy Famiglietti observed that a model of distributed review loosely based upon Wikipedia would be an interesting difference from traditional peer review. Here is a link to a GoogleDoc of the notes from the UnPress session.

However, I do agree with the sentiment that focusing on written forms of communication (the journal, the monograph) limits the potential of an UnPress. In the spirit of doing something with the UnPress that, as one camper exclaimed “push[es] for [what] hasn’t been possible before,” I’d like to outline some potential uses for the UnPress that go beyond traditional written academic communication.

THATCampers congregate at the beginning of the first day. Photo by George Williams.

1. **Multimodal Projects**: As Mark Sample discussed in the session, Nick Montfort's Curveshipapplication offers users the ability to "tell events out of order, using flashback and other techniques, and can tell the story from the standpoint of particular characters and their perceptions and understandings." Montfort uses it to create interactive fiction, but it could easily be ported to critical work. Curveship, in fact, made me think that perhaps the point of an UnPress is not to push for a certain form of content, but to encourage experimentation with modalities and styles that aren't currently used by scholars.
2. **Undergraduate Research**: Both Tonya Howe's session on "Undergraduate Archiving" and Mark Sample's session on "Building a Better Backchannel" mentioned the need for more ways to display and disseminate undergraduate research. The UnPress could serve as a repository for exhibiting undergraduate work like databases, archives and digital media applications. This would give students the ability to see their work impacting spaces beyond their particular classroom and, further, question the traditional assumption that scholarship is something separated from the act of teaching.
3. **Backchannel Archiving**: I believe that backchannel conversations create a form of scholarly communication that should be recognized more as professional work – despite what David Morgen called the "fun" aspects of Twitter conversations. Since, as the "Backchannel" session emphasized, there is a need for better ways of archiving backchannel conversations – why not envision the UnPress as a space that encourages backchannel archiving (whether of conferences, speakers, or classes) as a form of publication?

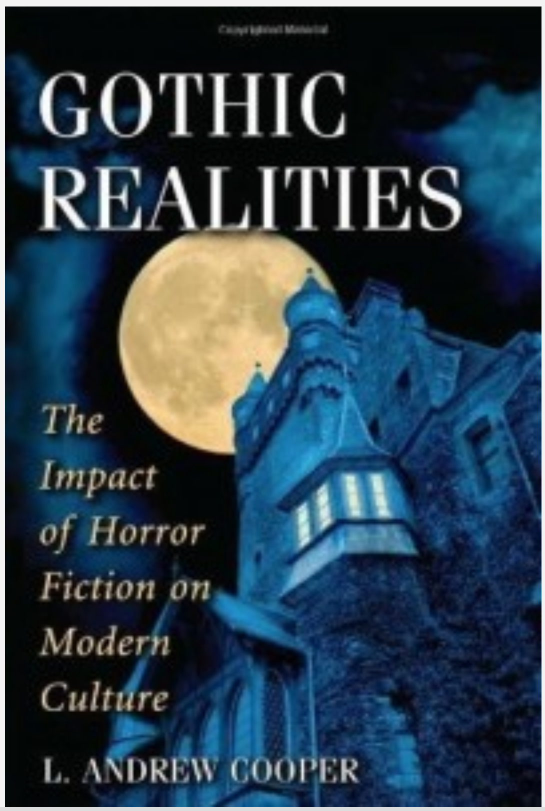
4. **Bridging academia and publics**: As David Parry argued a while ago in “Be Online or Be Irrelevant,” academic publishing needs to connect with a public who all-too-often doesn’t understand the value of work in the humanities. I think an UnPress needs to, in fact, drop the idea of scholarly communication and just talk about communication. Why should an UnPress feature work only by academics? Interesting work could emerge, for example, between academics and people working in social media PR. Of course, to me, an UnPress would be dedicated to open-source forms of sharing, but I’ve already learned quite a bit from my friends in the PR industry.

If the University Press is about publishing individual research and enhancing the prestige of scholars and institutions, I envision the UnPress as a space that encourages ongoing, multimodal, and innovative collaboration connecting scholars to audiences who have traditionally been separated from academic discourse. The internet might be a place where an UnPress can exist, but in my view, there needs to be a more focused effort in making archivable and public collaboration happen.

You might be saying, "Yes, yes, Roger...that's great, but let's have an example project." That's what I, and hopefully some of you, could work on in the near future.

Gothic Realness -
Jesse Stommel

As the start of an on-going series of reviews, Jesse Stommel here discusses L. Andrew Cooper's recently published book Gothic Realities: the Impact of Horror Fiction on Modern Culture *(2010). In this and future reviews (which will include reviews of both publications and presentations), we hope to engage in dialogue with the subject of the review, so if you have questions for Dr. Cooper about his work, please post them in the comments section below.*



Cooper's work inspires contemplation, invites discussion, and opens the field for further consideration of the relationships between Gothic fiction, contemporary horror film, and real violence.

Gothic Realities: the Impact of Horror Fiction on Modern Culture. L. Andrew Cooper. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010. $35.00 (paper).

L. Andrew Cooper writes in *Gothic Realities*, "Gothic fictions give form to social phenomena . . . but they are not the culpable cause for the phenomena's reality" (19). This is what I see as the thesis of Cooper's book, an idea he traces across continents and through four centuries, from Mathew Lewis's Gothic novel *The Monk* (1796) to James Wan's "torture porn" film *Saw* (2004). Cooper's approach to literary criticism and theory is rooted in time and place, aware of cultural and historical dimensions, but not limited by an excessive reverence for geographical distinctions or historical periods. And while his work is attentive to the differing effects of various media, he does not focus on one medium at the expense of all others, moving instead deftly from Gothic novels to contemporary film, touching also on news media texts, popular non-fiction, video games, etc. He explores his central questions in a focused (and sometimes personal) way, using all the critical and theoretical tools at his disposal.

When he writes that "gothic fictions give form to social phenomena," he suggests that literature and film have the ability to influence reality--that stories can (and do) inspire real events; however, his use of the word "form" suggests that they can also make reality manifest in a more material way. As he points out here and elsewhere, stories of violence can't be blamed for real acts of violence (fictions can "cause" but are not "culpable"); nevertheless, they do help us (or change the way that we) read, experience, and interpret reality. Our understanding of reality, and our determinations about what *is* and *is not* real, depend on literary tropes. We have become so accustomed to the conventions of literature and film that we often won't recognize reality as real if it doesn't obey literary conventions. Cooper discusses this with reference to ghost fictions, remarking that they (and other Gothic fictions) have "sought a degree of mimetic authenticity, a way to make their fictional ghosts seem real by making their attributes conform to popular expectations" (118). He later calls this a "parasitic technique" (127), or perhaps a more symbiotic one, given that he also says that "the fictional and the true borrow from and shape one another" (118).

These remarks remind me of Andre Bazin's famous remarks about film realism in *What is Cinema?*: "The photograph as such and the object in itself share a common being, after the fashion of the fingerprint" (15). For Bazin, film is an asymptote of reality, in constant relation to reality but never quite subsuming it. His use of the fingerprint as a metaphor is telling, because it suggests that film and reality touch one another in a material and intimate way. Bazin continues, "Every image is to be seen as an object and every object as an image. Hence photography ranks high in the order of surrealist creativity because it produces an image that is a reality of nature, namely, an hallucination that is also a fact" (16). *Gothic Realities*flirts with similar descriptions of the relationship between Gothic fiction and reality, and like Bazin, Cooper never settles on an exact description of the nature of the relationship, ending the book instead with the very provocative (and even frightening) notion that "the Gothic will keep on intruding on our realities, giving shape to the violence we see, believe, and do" (207). Again, there is this notion here that the Gothic gives "shape," that it can "intrude," and that there is necessarily a distinction between what we "see" and what we "believe."

Given that *Gothic Realities* is about the relationship and play between the two phenomena of Gothic fiction and reality, it is a clever structural decision that the book is broken into four parts with each part containing two chapters in dialectical conversation. For example, in "Part 2: Gothic Sexualities," Cooper pairs a chapter about the birth of homosexuality in Gothic novels and sexology of the nineteenth century with a chapter that analyzes how this discourse plays out in contemporary horror films. Here, the book hits a high point in a chapter titled "Romps in the Closet: The Persistence of Nineteenth Century Notions in Contemporary Pop Culture." It's the chapter that both inspired me most and raised the most questions for me as a reader. (In fact, I wrote almost an essay's worth of commentary in the margins of this chapter, which is a clear sign that the chapter is doing its work.)

For example, in this chapter, Cooper writes, "Reclaiming the queer, the homosexual, and the monstrous as a viable and valorized category of identity isn't a simple, finite act. Queer theory has been celebrating queerness for decades, but the same queer celebrated in rarefied (and rare) academic circles faces a very real physical threat on Main Street U.S.A." (83). This quotation comes in a section about (and critiquing) reverse discourse, and Cooper talks at length about the problems with recuperating both the queer and the monstrous. Queer theory, though, often insists that the queer disrupts rather than reverses discursive constructions. Likewise, reclaiming the monstrous does not merely upset the hierarchical binary of good/bad; rather, celebrating the monstrous has the ability to dismantle this binary (and others) altogether. In this sense, queerness and monstrosity don't reverse signification; they short-circuit signification.

What I find so elegant and exciting about Cooper's *Gothic Realities* is the way that it leaves space for exactly this sort of marginalia, encouraging me as I read to engage (on the page) in my own thinking about film, queer theory, and horror. Cooper's work inspires contemplation, invites discussion, and opens the field in important ways for further consideration of the relationships between Gothic fiction, contemporary horror film, and real violence.

Brittains Celebrated for Teaching - Diane Jakacki

March 17 was Celebrating Teaching Day at Georgia Tech. As part of the festivities, a number of Brittain Fellows presented posters of their successful approaches to improving student learning. Those whose work was displayed included Doris Bremm, Kathryn Crowther, Andrew Famiglietti, Jo Anne Harris, Robert LeBlanc, Jennifer Parrott, Paulette Richards, Malavika Shetty, and Roger Whitson.

In addition, at the luncheon that followed the resource fair and poster display, nine Brittain Fellows were honored for their dedication to teaching with "Thank a Teacher" citations. The Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (CETL) sponsors the Thank a Teacher program, which allows students to "show [their] appreciation to individuals who have made a difference in their education.... By encouraging students to recognize teachers who are making a difference in their education, CETL hopes to continue to strengthen the learning environment at Georgia Tech by connecting instructional staff with the kudos they deserve." Recipient-Brittains included: Robert Blaskiewicz, Leigh Dillard, Diane Jakacki, Crystal Lake, Thomas Lolis, Irene Middleton, Michelle Miles, Jennifer Parrott, and Malavika Shetty.

Congratulations to all!

First Annual Comics Symposium - Roger Whitson

On Saturday, April 9, Georgia Tech's Writing and Communication Program, The University of Florida English Department, *ImageTexT: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, and Xerographics Print and Copy Center present the First Annual Atlanta Comics Symposium. The symposium will feature Brittain Fellows, faculty from Georgia State University and the University of Florida, Georgia Tech undergrads and Atlanta comic artists.

The overarching theme of the first comics symposium is multimodality. Comics have always been considered a multimodal genre, combining as they do the "sequential" visual language of comic panels with written forms of communication. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, comics are also becoming more and more enmeshed in an increasingly multimedia world. Both Marvel and DC are now run by multimedia corporations: Disney and Time-Warner respectively. Furthermore, dwindling sales are forcing comic artists to adopt digital mediums to distribute their work more widely. This first symposium will ask how changes in technology have and are impacting the identity of comics and graphic novels. Presenters discuss how comics relate to film, video games, radio, photojournalism, writing, and medieval illuminated printing.

Schedule

8:00-9:15 Comics and Other Media
Brandy Blake (Georgia Tech) - "How Media Changes the Monster: *V for*

Vendetta from Text to Film"
Ted Friedman (Georgia State University) - "Comics as Myth: How Warren Ellis Rewrites Pulp Archetypes"
Aaron Kashtan (University of Florida) - "Okamiden"

9:30-10:45 "We Don't Kill the Living": A Roundtable on Robert Kirkman's The Walking Dead
L. Andrew Cooper (Georgia Tech)
Thomas Lolis (Georgia Tech)
Jesse Stommel (Georgia Tech)

11:00-12:00 Lunch (On Your Own)

12:15-1:30 Creating Comics in the Writing Classroom (Roger Whitson, Chair)
Justis Blasco and Erin McPherson - "The Adventures of Captain Victorious Across Time and Space"
Alex Kessler and Danny Ji - "Fighting Fate"
Heather Yutko - "The Little Siren"

1:45-3:00 Atlanta Comics Creators: "Supervillains, Poverty, and the Perils of a Career in Comics"
Van Jensen - Writer of *Pinocchio The Vampire Slayer*
Andy Runton - Writer and Aritst of *Owly*

3:15-4:30 Comics and War
Anthony Coman (University of Florida) - "Framing Perspective in the Art of *WAR FIX*"
Kellie Meyer (Georgia Tech) - "Medieval Nostalgia: The Warrior Code in *Northlanders* and Early Medieval Poetry and Prose"
Nirmal Trivedi (Georgia Tech) - "A Reluctant Foreign Correspondent No More: The Case of Joe Sacco's Footnotes in Gaza

5:00-7:00 Keynote Speaker - **Tony Harris**, artist of *Starman*, *Ex Machina*, *War Heroes*, and *Spiderman: With Great Power*

The Road Not Taken: Non-Academic Career Options - Candice Welhausen

Odds are that less than half of the young scholars currently serving as Marion L. Brittain Fellows will develop their careers in traditional tenure line faculty positions. Yet Brittain Fellows have acquired transferable skills in the course of their research, teaching, and service activities.

On Tuesday, April 12th (from 4:30-6 in Skiles 302) please join the Writing and Communication Mentoring Committee for a panel presentation entitled **"The Road Not Taken: Alternative Career Paths in English Studies."** The panel will feature three guest speakers (one a former Britt) with academic backgrounds in writing and communication who are currently working professionally outside of academia. Through this presentation, the Mentoring Committee strives to present several alternative career paths options that Brittain Fellows might find professionally and personally satisfying while applying their expertise in writing and communication. Refreshments will be provided. Speaker bios are listed in alphabetical order below.

Lisa Rosenstein earned her doctorate in English at Emory University in 1989. In 1987 while she was finishing her graduate work, she became part of the first class of Brittain Fellows. At that time, Britts taught four classes for three quarters. Yes, 12 classes/year. Despite writing a brilliant dissertation on George Eliot, she never taught one stinking course in Victorian fiction. Left, like a good 19^{th} C heroine, to her own devices, she made her way in the world by taking any decent job that came along. That included grading mountains of lab reports for Chemical Engineering and teaching three sections (back to back to back) in the School of Management. She birthed and began rearing two sons all the while. When the job in Civil and Materials came along, she was perfectly poised to apply for and be offered the position. (Providence, anyone?) In 1998 she developed the highly successful in-house engineering communications programs that she continues to run today. She finds her work extremely satisfying, but still keeps an ink portrait of George Eliot on her office wall.

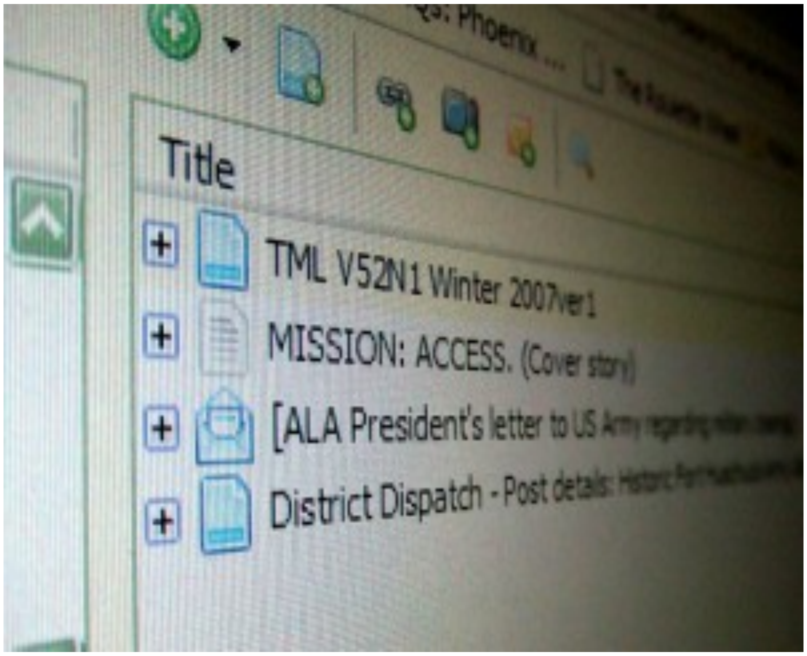
Amy Rowland is a communications professional with more than 15 years of media and public relations experience. She holds a BA in Commercial Spanish and earned her MSc. in Organizational and Social Psychology from the London School of Economics & Political Science. Currently working at CDC?s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Amy provides media relations support and leads social media activities and entertainment education for the Center. Prior to beginning a career in public service, Amy lived and worked for twelve years abroad as a correspondent, speechwriter, and directed foreign features on-location in the DR of Congo, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Ukraine and the Baltic states to name a few favorites. By far her biggest adventure to-date has been raising her 4-year old son, Heath.

Karen Schriver, PhD, (KSA Communication Design and Research Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania USA) is a designing woman on a mission. She helps organizations around the globe to realize the social and economic benefits of excellence in information design. As an information designer with an empirical bent, Karen advocates for evidence-based decision-making in writing and visual design. Karen is a former professor of rhetoric and communication design at Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), where she co-directed the graduate programs in professional communication and document design. She created some of the first courses in the United States on integrating word and image, usability testing, and information design.

For the past two decades Karen has led her own research and consulting firm, Karen Schriver Associates (KSA), which specializes in improving the quality of communications in technology, science, education, and health. Karen brings expertise in designing content that is clear, usable and memorable for expert or lay audiences—from websites to instructions to educational tools to forms to marketing materials. Karen challenges organizations to re-imagine their design strategies on the basis of research into their everyday practices in writing and design. Karen's clients include Microsoft, Sony, Apple, ATT, IRS, US Postal Service, Sprint, Fujitsu, Mitsubishi, Lutron Electronics, IBM, MIT Press, Hoffman-LaRoche, and the New York City Department of Transportation. Karen's book, ***Dynamics in Document Design: Creating Texts for Readers*** (New York: Wiley)—now in its 9th printing—is regarded as an essential work in the field. An internationally acclaimed leader in the field, Karen has been a guest speaker for writers and designers in Japan, South Africa, Brazil, France, Netherlands, UK, Canada, Spain, Portugal, and Slovenia. Winner of 10 national awards for her research and communication design, Karen has appeared on TV, radio and websites. Karen serves on the Board of Directors for the Center for

Plain Language (Washington, DC) and is a Fellow of the Communication Research Institute (Melbourne, Australia). Her ongoing research investigates (1) the nature of expertise in information design, and (2) how reading online is shaped by the design of text and graphics.

Zotero in the Classroom - Zach Whalen



Zach Whalen is Assistant Professor in the English, Linguistics and Communication Department at the University of Mary Washington, where he teaches courses in video games, the graphic novel, media studies, and electronic literature. He is co-editor (with Laurie Taylor) of Playing the Past: History and Nostalgia in Video Games.

I am a fan of Zotero, an open source bibliographic tool created by the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University. I use Zotero nearly every day when I prepare for classes or do my research, and I always introduce it to my classes as early as possible in the semester so they can start using and benefiting from it. I've also used Zotero for assignments, and recently, I've started thinking even broader, to treat Zotero as an archival tool, to take Zotero, in other words, beyond the typical workflow (*collect* ->*organize* -> *export*) into something else -- ideally, something that adds the all-important functions of*dissemination* and *discovery*.

I don't think I'm there yet, but I've had some experience creating assignments with Zotero, including a recent and hopefully interesting setback. In this blog entry, I want to talk about the steps I've taken so far, as well as some obstacles I've met, including a few I've overcome. Mainly, I want to invite others who may have had similar experiences to comment on how you've worked with this tool or used it in the classroom.

So what is Zotero?

I've searched on TECHstyle and haven't found any mentions of Zotero, so maybe a brief introduction is in order. Basically, Zotero is a research tool that plugs in to your FireFox browser (Note: Zotero Everywhereis coming soon, which will put it into multiple browsers.) There's a nice video on the Zotero website introducing most of the basic uses of it, so I won't rehash those here. For my part, I find myself most often using it to 1) collect bibliographic data on items I find interesting, 2) adding notes to items when I read to prepare for class, and 3) storing PDFs of certain works that I plan to read later -- say, outside my campus network.

1. **Collecting.** Zotero automatically understands the way data is organized on several websites, like Amazon.com. Often, I'll look up a title on Amazon, see something interesting in the "Also Bought" section, then view that item and add it's details to Zotero. This takes a single click. Zotero can also communicate with most research databases and Google Scholar. Even if Zotero doesn't understand a particular type of content well enough to extract metadata, it can still save any web-accessible resource or document as a "Snapshot."
2. **Annotating.** Adding notes to Zotero is easy, and the search feature makes it makes it easy to find your notes later. I use these for class prep, mainly, since the context of a specific artifact is centered to the Zotero collection in which I store the bibliographic data and document that I will be sending my students to read.
3. **Synchronizing.** This is the main thing, without which, Zotero would be pretty much useless to me. (I say that, even though I've been using Zotero since before this was actually available.) Whatever changes I make to my library while at school -- adding items, adding notes, rearranging collections -- will also be reflected in the copy of Zotero running on my computer home, as well as the public version of my library. For example, I occasionally read journals articles that are locked behind a paywall. So if my school has access to a specific journal I want to read, I would normally have to use a VPN to access my campus network before looking at that article anywhere else. This isn't a big deal, but it's more convenient to pull up a snapshot in Zotero.

Why use Zotero for an assignment?

I've been teaching a full load of courses for going on three years now, and I feel like I'm still trying to get the hang of real course design: that is, connecting learning objectives or outcomes to specific assignments. I have to constantly remind myself that a stated objective like, "Upon completing this course, a successful student will X," imples a course structure where a grade (success) actually depends on X. This, I've learned, is often harder than it seems, and I don't think I'm very good at it yet. That said, I think Zotero can be quite useful for accomplishing, either directly or indirectly, the kinds of objectives I do manage to articulate.

In one of my current courses, World Building, for example, I include the optimistically vague objective that defines X as "gain experience using New Media tools." This could mean a lot of things, but it gives me a justification to use things like Zotero. I definitely believe that using Zotero will make my students' lives easier, but they don't always believe me when I tell them that. Moreover, my teaching area is New Media Studies, and I can point to Zotero as a simple example of a value-added outcome related to New Media technology.

Above all, Zotero is the kind of easy to use tool that gets students who are otherwise tech-phobic to use some technology that makes a clear impact on their life as a student. At least, it has that potential, and the kind of reflection it invites on both the research workflow and use of software to solve problems is definitely a good thing. Finally, Zotero is open source, so even if they're already familiar with a competitor like EndNote, students get to consider and weight the benefits of an open source alternative.

Finally, one of the things I like a lot about Zotero is its easy to use group functionality. This is actually where I've had the most success building assignments, since students can work collaboratively to produce and share annotated bibliographies. Still, this process is not without it's hiccups, which leads me to some of the challenges I've faced.

Some challenges

Zotero stores library data inside of your FireFox profile directory, which is a bit of a problem, I've learned, when working in a computer lab that uses a generic log in, like the one I teach in every day. Essentially, the risk arises that one student's library could become blended with another's, which would cause all kinds of problems both for organizational integrity and for my later evaluating who added what. Therefore, I've had to instruct students not to install or use Zotero on their lab computers.

This is a challenge, pedagogically, because it delays the "aha" moment of using Zotero until a student actually gets around to using it on her laptop, if she ever does. The majority of my students do bring their own laptops to class, which mitigates this somewhat, but the tradeoff there is often that student's computers will be sufficiently different from the process I demonstrate on the lab computer that they will abort the process before they actually complete it.

One of the coolest features of Zotero is the ease with which it allows students to work in groups. This is a slightly more advanced feature, and it turns out that students who haven't yet gotten used to the basic, individual use of the software have a harder time understanding the steps that are needed to make the group functionality work. Beyond this, I've encountered bugs or unexpected behavior in the group synchronization process, and even though my students are mostly Zotero-novices at best, I have hard time separating user-error from actual bugs. Still, the benefits typically outweigh the consequences.

Finally, the most recent assignment I've created using Zotero has actually come to a standstill, I'm sorry to say. As I mentioned earlier, Zotero is great at collecting things, but not very good at sharing them. Fortunately, CHNM has also produced Omeka, which does a very good job of building a website around a collection of items, say, in a special collection at a museum. In fact, I often say that if Zotero is your library, Omeka is your museum, so the idea that the two should talk to each other makes a lot of sense.

There is, in fact, a Zotero Importer plugin for Omeka which proposes to do just that. So when I planned my assignments this semester for my World Building class, which includes a unit on Alternate Reality Games, I thought I had found the perfect work flow for building a transmedia archive. That is, much of the content that comprises an ARG is inherently ephemeral or at best temporary, leaving many significant ARG texts practically unavailable for ARG scholars to study. So I designed an assignment to do something about that.

The idea was for students to find a currently "live" ARG, and use Zotero to collect, contextualize, and (most importantly) store copies of all available and relevant artifacts. This part worked pretty well — students worked in groups and produced pretty good repositories of data. However, when it came time to prepare the second part of the assignment (transferring these repositories into Omeka and building them into web-based exhibits or narratives of these ARGs), I discovered that the previously functional Zotero Importer plugin no longer worked. The problem, it turns out, has to do with some changes and bugs in theZotero API. So obviously, I have a problem.

Now, all this is open source software, so I did spend some time poking around under the various hoods involved, but even though I made some progress, I ultimately hit a dead end. Communicating with the key developers revealed that the depth of the problems are way out of my league as an amateur coder. Of course, this is always a risk with open source software, but it really came at the worst possible time as far as this assignment is concerned.

At this point, my assignment is pretty much on hold. I'll figure out a way to salvage credit for my students, but it's disappointing because the real power here for narrativizing an archive won't be realized.

To conclude: I like Zotero and I use it a lot. Many of my students also use Zotero and make it a regular part of their research live, especially the nifty Word Processor plugins. I've built assignments where students created annotated bibliographies in Zotero, and a recent assignment used it to collect and archive transmedia artifacts, before running into a dead-end when it came to transferring those collections out to Omeka.

So have you used Zotero for an assignment? Can you envision uses beyond what I've discussed here? How have you encountered and dealt with software problems that lead to assignments having to be revised or even aborted?

[cc-licensed image by flickr user nirak]

YouTube in the Classroom: A Frustrating Archive? - Rob LeBlanc

This semester, I have been using YouTube as a pedagogical tool while also reading about views on the worth of this site and others like it in the classroom. These experiences have given me a good sense of the ideals that we as teacher-scholars bring with us in our encounters with social networking sites, and I have also begun to imagine ways in which a limited and thoughtfully-crafted engagement with YouTube can enhance a learning experience.

In their 2009 article “Rediscovering the ‘Back-and-Forthness’ of Rhetoric in the Age of YouTube,” Brian Jackson and Jon Wallin explore the reasons that Web 2.0 applications have become increasingly relevant to those who teach writing. They argue, “Though the World Wide Web may have been designed as a tool for reading, it is now more than ever a tool for writing, thanks to new media literacy and the bottom-up, participatory, and literate cultures that use emergent technologies to form pu publics through the back and forth process of online exchange” (W375).

Students are well aware of this process, but rarely do they stop to think about the ways that it differs from other forms of writing and communication. I have registered a sense of surprise on the faces of some of my students this semester when they become aware suddenly of how these online cultures affect them as communicators.

Students begin to notice that the writing that they have been engaging in on content-rich social networking sites like YouTube challenges them in a unique way. A 500-character comment may never achieve the richness of a powerful piece of criticism in a journal, but its context richness (underneath a thought-provoking video) and its wide public address (to an audience that is constantly linking, embedding, and replying) are features worth pausing over as we consider this new communication environment.

As I strive to ensure that the writing that my students do in these environments becomes a self-reflective experience, I wonder about the ways that traditional writing instruction may need to change as literate cultures worldwide increasingly move to interactive spaces to exchange ideas professionally and express ideas creatively. Jackson and Wallin suggest that YouTube comment boards, in their emphasis on informal and broadly interactive dialectic, offer a "synthesis of critical thinking, tolerance, listening-rhetoric, answerability, and reason" that few other writing environments provide (W394). I would agree that these Web 2.0 venues for communication provide uniquely exciting places for discourse, but I am unsure about what forms of learning are occurring (or can occur) there. While I understand Jackson and Wallin's point that much is learned in moving student communicators beyond the limited playing field of stagnant essays where interactivity is not held in high regard, I wonder—as do Jackson and Wallin—what these students are moving toward as they encounter the formative discourse communities of Web 2.0.

I have also been thinking about and teaching the fascinating work of Alexandra Juhasz, who has gained fame as a media scholar who took an early interest in YouTube, and who taught perhaps the first ever college course about and on YouTube (146). Juhasz's 2009 article "Learning the Five Lessons of YouTube: After Trying to Teach There, I Don't Believe the Hype" suggests that YouTube has great potential as "our culture's most visited archive of moving images," but also that the site fails to capitalize on the democratizing promise of Web 2.0 media

(146). Her critique rests on her understanding of the intentions of Google (YouTube's corporate owner) as a purveyor of "media morsels," packaged for familiar practices of consumption even as they bear the fresh and new outer trappings of free-for-all user-creation (147). Juhasz suggests that "by reifying the distinctions between the amateur and the professional, the personal and the social, in both form and content, YouTube currently maintains (not democratizes) operating distinctions about who seriously owns culture" (148).

Juhasz's argument here features some insights into the ways that users (and, importantly, communicators) can be drawn in by the promise of broader platforms for discourse and expression, while also recognizing the shortcomings of these platforms. Juhasz argues that these platforms still accord favored status to traditional forms of expression and hide new ideas in the nooks and crannies of what she calls "NicheTube," where interactivity is at a frustrating minimum (146). The technologies exist to enable new arguments to take new shapes, and the invitation is open for writers and media makers worldwide to engage with each other, but YouTube's video sites have yet to assert themselves as wellsprings of meaningful, vigorous communication in which these online publics can find out how they communicate. In other words, Juhasz reminds us that even a seemingly infinite array of YouTube channels may provide only a frustratingly partial escape from Bruce Springsteen's 1992 lament of "57 channels and nothin' on."

Juhasz raises important points in her essay about the limits of Web 2.0 sites as forums for communication. While social networking communication acts may unfold in new ways, and with fewer limits than had previously been felt by communicators, they may fail to live up to expectations of transformativeness or broad participation, and their relevance for classroom settings may be less than was once hoped. However, I'm not ready to abandon my project of incorporating YouTube and sites like it into my teaching, and I'm not just referring to using the wealth of video resources provided by such sites to teach film or illustrate concepts in communication. I also feel that the interactivity offered by these sites has promise for those interested in emergent spaces for communication. Budding online publics may not yet have figured out *how* to communicate in ways that best utilize social networking technologies to extend conversations across media and political divides, or in ways that garner increasing numbers of readers and respondents. Yet, the plethora of little-seen and little-commented videos suggests that emergent online publics do know *what* they want to say, and are waiting for publics to show up. My experiences with using YouTube in the classroom have caused me to reconsider the ways that online communication increases the possibility for public interaction, while not necessarily eliminating shortcomings of responsiveness in communication. Those shortcomings still indicate needs for greater thoughtful participation in both old-media and new-media forums of public communication.

References

Jackson, Brian and Jon Wallin. “Rediscovering the Back-and-Forthness of Rhetoric in the Age of YouTube.” *College Composition and Communication*. 61.2 (December 2009): W374-W396. Print.

Juhasz, Alexandra. “Learning the Five Lessons of YouTube: After Trying to Teach There, I Don’t Believe the Hype.” *Cinema Journal* 48.2 (Winter 2009): 145-150. Print.

Teaching in Real Time - Diane Jakacki

On November 18, the Georgia Tech Writing and Communication Program hosted the Fall Communication Colloquium in which two Brittain Fellows presented on work their students have been doing in class this semester. The presenters did such a wonderful job generating discussion during the sessions (a link to an archive of the Twitter backchannel is here) that we asked them to share their work on TECHStyle in order to continue the conversation. Jesse Stommel's post, Feed: Texting, Twitter and the Student 2.0, discusses why and how he uses Twitter in the classroom. In this post, Diane Jakacki discusses her experience integrating a text that unfolded in real time as she and her students were studying it.

A Text and an Opportunity

Teaching a course on the rhetoric of celebrity culture, by its very nature, requires an adaptable, reflexive approach to lesson plans and assignments. While my course involves basic critical readings in mass media, gender and theories of selfhood and authenticity, supplemental texts pertaining to current events are necessary to demonstrate the speed and emphemerality of popular cultural subjects and events. In order to truly demonstrate the increasingly powerful hold popular celebrity culture has on our society, I believe a case study-approach allows the classes to examine questions of rhetorical appeal and the relative impact of real versus "pseudo-events", to use Daniel Boorstin's term.[1] In other words, we must delve into the peccadilloes of Snooki from *The Jersey Shore*, the latest philanthropic mega-gift by Bill Gates, and the increasingly celebrity-mimicking behavior of politicians as they run for and hold office. But what happens when current events that are unfolding over the course of the term are incorporated into the syllabus? Is it meaningful or distracting to focus a significant amount of class time and percentage of the course mark to analysis and interpretation of an event that does not appear to demonstrate its value as a case study until the event has actually occurred?

Watching *The Daily Show* in preparation for a lecture in mid-September, I listened as Jon Stewart announced his Rally to Restore Sanity event. While details were sketchy at best, I thought that there would be enough teachable moments in the promotion and execution of this event for students to articulate what they had been learning in class. The timing was also attractive:

The poster for Stewart's Rally to Restore Sanity (2)

the election was looming and the lines between important issues and ridiculous posturing were blurring ever more. It was also midterm season.

The Assignment

The assignment I envisioned was for students to follow the promotion for the rally and Stephen Colbert's counter-march, on *The Daily Show* and*The Colbert Report* and other television programs as well as in newspapers, and blogs. Students were to choose to focus their energies on either the rally or the march, in an effort to help them make sense out of the apparently competing events. They were to articulate a thesis about what they believed the rally might accomplish, and then engage in a close critical analysis of the event itself, examining the words, tone, body language, and imagery used by Stewart, Colbert, the rally attendees, as well as the media reporting on the event. I was interested in having the students express their observations in poster-form; however the event's root in video and electronic media called for an expansion of multimodal elements to include embedded video and links to other websites. The posters were due a week after the event occurred, and I wanted students to be able to incorporate as much post-event analysis as possible. So the poster became an "electronic poster", loosely identified as a composite of thesis, arguments, evidence and conclusion within a single frame. Students could use PowerPoint, Prezi, Glogster, AfterEffects, Photoshop, or any other application that allowed them to incorporate photographic and visual images, text and graphics in this way.

Since this represented a departure from our original midterm assignment (a textual essay), I asked the classes to vote on whether or not they wanted to undertake this project. Not surprisingly, the outspoken enthusiasm of some was almost equally matched by the confusion and concern of others. I acknowledged these concerns, and was as transparent as I could be: I, too, was a bit unnerved by the idea of teaching something that was so unstructured. Unlike a predefined event such as an election, or an Olympic games, or award season coverage, we could not identify or anticipate a narrative arc for this event. Stewart's hints at disorganization in the planning process and confession that he had no idea how many people would attend the rally, as well as his hesitation to give details – on his show and in interviews – suggested that he, too, was worried about the outcome. I might be left doing a very fast-dance with my students to figure out how to salvage a mid-term project that never really happened – especially one worth ten percent of their course mark.

Research and Preparation

In the six weeks between the rally announcement and October 30, the date on which it was to occur, I spent significant class time working with students to help them prepare. I distributed a list of questions about the event that were designed to help students articulate their theses and arguments, and assist them in identifying the evidence they would use.

This student used Photoshop to create an intuitive, richly layered argument. Project courtesy John Shinsato.

I encouraged students to focus on the presence and performance of either Stewart or Colbert, since I had made the assumption, perhaps a dangerous one, that Stewart and Colbert would appear at the rally, at least in part, in the guise of their characters, and I wanted the students to be able to recognize the tenor of these characters. Each week they watched episodes of*The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*, after which I gave them quizzes that they worked on in teams – each quiz focusing on a different rhetorical aspect of the shows as well as Stewart and Colbert's styles of communication via their onscreen characters. I wanted the students to closely examine how each man acted within the context of his show: how they interacted with guests and cast members as well as with one another, how they spoke to their audiences, who those audiences were, etc., in order to sensitize the students to Stewart and Colbert's satirical approaches toward current events, issues, and politics. This was particularly important, as it became apparent that a number of the international students in class had never even heard of *The Daily Show* or *The Colbert Report*, let alone the topics covered in both shows. By analyzing verbal and nonverbal communication, the approach was weighted equally with content.

We spent several class sessions working in teams to give and get feedback on each student's concept. They discussed the answers to their questions, reviewed the applications available to them, and helped one another in learning how to use these approaches. An overwhelming majority of the students chose to use Prezi for their posters. Prezi is a web-based presentation tool that, in the words of one of my students, acts like "PowerPoint on crack", allowing the presenter to move from argument to argument through a series of animations (this poster is courtesy of Will King).

The students mastered the application within a very short time and seemed to enjoy the experience. One of the most exciting aspects of this process was watching the students assist one another with elements of their projects –when someone needed assistance with some visual or graphical element of their presentation, one of their classmates invariably jumped in to guide them.

Learning Outcomes

My concerns about the event resulting in disaster were unfounded. Over 200,000 people attended the rally, some 500,000 viewed it online and another 2 million watched on television.[3] And while the show may not have been as funny or as polished as *The Daily Show* or *The Colbert Report* (a disappointment shared by a number of my students), the rally appears to have touched a chord with them. More to the point, it provided some very provocative elements for my students to develop into sound multimodal artifacts. Many of the students demonstrated particular insight regarding the interplay of those who attended the rally and the media pundits who observed it with discomfort and distaste. Many students responded to my encouragement that they incorporate an array of media and links to other sites into their posters, and in some cases the results were particularly striking.

This student used his poster as the basis for a more complex visual analysis. Click on the image to watch his video. Project courtesy Gabe Auyeung.

Not only did they highlight the rally in a meaningful analytical fashion, but they also examined the grassroots rhetoric of the picket sign campaign that Stewart initiated.

What would have happened if the Rally to Restore Sanity had been a dud? If the event had been cancelled, or if no one had shown up, or if Stewart hadn't been able to articulate the zeitgeist that inspired the stunt, I originally thought my students and I could not have accomplished much more than a discussion of these failures in class. I thought it would have been impossible to create an artifact out of something that did not happen. I was ready to state that my worry was a real one, and the potential for failure – failure in the sense of committing students to such an assignment – would have been significant enough to act as a cautionary tale against undertaking such a project. However, it occurred to me that I was looking at this process from the wrong vantage point. Students, especially those steeped in the sciences, are accustomed to and comfortable with experiments that succeed or fail, where both success and failure are acceptable outcomes, and the process is the point. In fact, by emphasizing the promotional and developmental aspects of the Rally to Restore Sanity in this project, I was encouraging students to do what comes naturally to them anyway, although perhaps not always in the guise of an English class. Coming from an historiographic background, used as I am to being able to identify the end result of something, I didn't give the process enough credence. In hindsight, committing to such a leap in teaching is healthy, enriches the subject matter, and encourages creativity and analytical skills with the students. I don't know how often such opportunities will come my way, but I look forward to incorporating them into future syllabi.

I would be interested to learn if and how other instructors have incorporated such unplanned and unstructured events into their syllabi. Please share your thoughts in the comments section below.

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[1] Boorstin, Daniel. The Image: *A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Atheneum, 1982.

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[2] Poster image from Rally to Restore Sanity website. (http://www.rallytorestoresanity.com/) Accessed 20 November, 2010.

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[3]Statistics are from Wikipedia entry on rally, but have been cited in various sources across media. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rally_to_Restore_Sanity_and/or_Fear") Accessed 20 November, 2010.

More Adventures in (Hyper)Real-Time Teaching - Diane Jakacki

Last fall in my English 1101 course on celebrity culture, I had my students analyze the real-time media discourse surrounding the Jon Stewart/Stephen Colbert "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear". Once again I find myself drawn to teaching current events as they unfold. This term I am teaching ENGL 2400: Introduction to Media Studies. After two weeks of teaching a theory-rich survey-oriented approach to the subject, I had yet to feel that I was connecting with the students. There are probably lots of reasons for this - the class meets during the "food coma" period (1:05 - 1:55pm) in a computer lab ... eyes cross and droop, heads dip down behind their monitors to check heaven-knows-what social networking application. Maybe it's me. Maybe it's their disinterest in things I love, like the shift from manuscript to print culture. But that all seems to be changing.

On Tuesday, in a meeting that had nothing to do with Media Studies, a group of us started talking about the situation in Egypt and what a great opportunity it would be to teach the impact of technology on volatile political and social situations such as the one that began in Tunisia and is now unfolding at hyper-speed in Egypt. We walked away from that meeting not knowing how we, as professors, could be flexible enough with our course structures and assignments to undertake such a flash-mob approach. But then, as sleep evaded me on Tuesday night (the best and worst time for idea generation) it dawned on me that I already had the forum for such an approach. My Media Studies course could benefit on several levels by establishing a case-study focusing on the situation in the Middle East. And in the process I could try to snap my students out of their stupor.

Wednesday I pitched the idea to my students: they would become media analysts examining how various media work (and don't work) to help us process events that are happening so quickly. Aside from some to-be-expected questions about course marks and due-dates, they embraced the idea with enthusiasm. By Friday I had overhauled the entire course syllabus and presented it to them for buy-in. This is the description of the case-study as I gave it to them:

Premise: the revolution in Egypt and surrounding Middle Eastern countries - offers an unprecedented opportunity to examine the roles that various media are playing in actions within the area as well as international observations about what is happening. Traditional mass media such as magazines, newspapers and even television do not appear to be capable of capturing the discourse that is happening in hyper-real time.

Opportunity: Use the forum provided by the Introduction to Media Studies course to teach students about media theory and analysis using a fluid and responsive syllabus and a variety of readings, activities, and assignments.

Challenge: without any idea of how this situation will play out in Egypt and beyond, the only way to approach this idea is by creating a "flash" case-study that evolves along with events and media coverage of these events. By using the case study approach, I will ask students to consider questions of credibility, authority, bias, and effective communication methods. They will examine ideas pertaining to mediation and remediation. We will discuss what happens when a government attempts to cut off media outlets of its citizens, and how social networking tools (such as Speak To Tweet) are creating a narrative of the unrest in Egypt. We will debate questions of ethics in terms of media coverage of such an action.

Classwork: students will read a combination of news reports, chapters from their textbook, *Media and Culture*, news reports, theoretical articles and social network feeds. They will participate in an ongoing blog and twitter stream through which they will learn to articulate and evaluate what they are observing. They will take part in a series of formal in-class debates keyed to questions of journalistic ethics and technological benefits. They will engage in Q&A sessions with a series of Brittain Fellows who are interested and expert in a variety of the aspects of the topic. The section will conclude with a multimodal midterm project (produced in Prezi) geared to synthesize the work they have done in class.

Friday's class went from snooze to ... well, whatever is the opposite of snooze. Working off the whiteboard, we addressed questions of media credibility, and identified a variety of media sources that are participant in the current situation. Hands flew up with examples and questions. Students began talking to one another and not just answering me. We will continue this discussion tomorrow by redefining McLuhan's terms "hot" and "cool" media - in this case, using the phrases to examine not sensory interaction but responsiveness and credibility. I've assigned them to read Malcolm Gladwell's two *New Yorker* articles, as well as blog posts about social media in Egypt. If you're interested in following along, they can be found at the links below:

- Gladwell, Malcolm. "Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted"
- ---. "Does Egypt Need Twitter?"
- O'Leary, Zach. "Twitter in Egypt: the Next Revolution"
- Trussell, Donna. "Mobs and Democracy: The Facebook-Twitter-YouTube Revolution"

Considering how fast information is being conveyed, the question of managing one's access to and analysis of media becomes very important. I've suggested that students set up Google or Yahoo! Alerts to create a digest(ible) means of gathering general news. We're also going to look at using Instapaper,delicious, and digg.

This case-study is evolving as the situation in the Middle East does. You can follow me on Twitter (@DrJgatech) and participate in our stream at #ENGL2400. I'll post more as the class develops. Suggestions for topics, articles to read, and participation is encouraged! If you are interested in sitting in on our class or even guest-lecturing, please let me know - all are welcome! Onward into the abyss!!

Feed: Texting, Twitter, and the Student 2.0 - Jesse Stommel

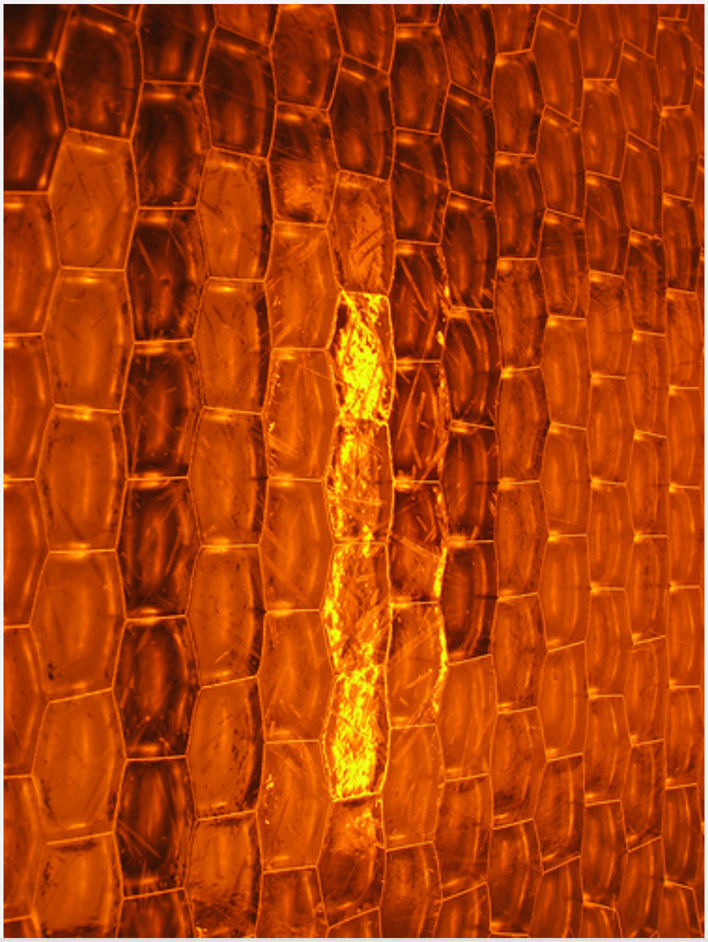
On November 18, the Georgia Tech Writing and Communication Program hosted the Fall Communication Colloquium in which two Brittain Fellows presented on work their students have been doing in class this semester. The presenters did such a wonderful job generating discussion during the sessions (a link to an archive of the Twitter backchannel is here) that we asked them to share their work on TECHStyle in order to continue the conversation. Diane Jackacki's previous post, Teaching in Real Time, offers insight on how to integrate texts that unfold as we work with them. In this post, Jesse Stommel discusses why and how he uses Twitter in the classroom.

From all the jails the Boys and Girls
Ecstatically leap—
Beloved only Afternoon
That Prison doesn't keep

They storm the Earth and stun the Air,
A Mob of solid Bliss—
Alas—that Frowns should lie in wait
For such a Foe as this—

—Emily Dickinson

Introduction



Our students . . . have become compilations, amalgams, a concatenation of web sites.

The student 2.0 is an altogether different animal than the student 1.0. And our classrooms are ecosystems, an environment all their own, where we each must decide how to engage this new species of student. We teeter at a slowly decaying threshold, one foot in a physical world and the other in a virtual one. Our students are no longer just bodies in desks; they are no longer vessels. They have become compilations, amalgams, a concatenation of web sites. They are the people in front of us, but also their avatars in Second Life and the World of Warcraft and the profiles they create on FaceBook and MySpace. They speak with mouths, but also with fingers tapping briskly at the keys of their smart phones. When they want to “reach out and touch someone,” they use VOIP, AIM, and Twitter. They have become more than just ears and eyes and brains to feed. Now, they feed us, and themselves, and each other, with an endless parade of texted and tweeted characters. Shouldn’t we, as teachers 2.0, work with not against the flow of these seemingly errant 1s and 0s?

Consider, for example, the tangible violence technology has wrought upon grammar. We rely on automated grammar and spell-check tools in our word-processing programs (so much that they're quickly becoming a crutch). E-mail shorthand fails to live up to the grammatical standards of typed and even handwritten letters. And many believe our language is being perverted by the shortcuts (and concision nearly to the point of indifference) we've become accustomed to writing and reading in text messages and IMs. Emily Dickinson is an extremely dense writer, using language as though it were a tackle box of subtle tricks, and poems like the one I've included as an epigraph already challenge and upset the conventions of grammar and punctuation. But, if she were writing today, her poem might have been stripped of punctuation altogether and reduced to something like, "frm jail bfs and gfs leap and luv l8r to prty :-(w8 ttyl E," or some such seeming nonsense.

For many teachers and writing pedagogues, this is a travesty, a torturous fact of modern life that we all must contend with and defend against in our classrooms. However, I would argue that we are at a moment in the history of the English language where the capacity for something wondrous is upon us. This isn't to say that there haven't been other wondrous moments in the evolution of human language, but there has not (and may never be again) a moment just like this one, a moment where the very fabric of how we speak and how we express ourselves through language has become so tenuous that every new textual utterance threatens to either devolve into gibberish or reinvent the very way we speak and write. The evolution of written language is speeding up at an exponential rate, and this necessitates that we, as writing teachers, reconsider the way we work with language in our classrooms. We can no longer be the staid old-school grammarians that taught so many of us to write, nor can we simply dismiss or overlook the teaching of grammar entirely. Rather, we must think consciously (and practically) about how our students' conceptions of (and contexts for) writing are changing, and we must approach the teaching of grammar in new and innovative ways.

Toward this end, my work here examines the various ways that grammar is taught, pushing upon and interrogating the different conventions and approaches frequently employed. While I would agree that technology has wrought a certain violence upon grammar, I would argue that writing instructors frequently exact an even more punishing and permanent sort of violence. Students aren't terrified to send text messages or post status updates to Twitter, but they are often terrified to write academic papers.

Text-messaging and the Poetics of Grammar

Students aren’t terrified to send text messages or post status updates to Twitter, but they are often terrified to write academic papers.

David Crystal writes, in his book *txtng: the gr8 db8*, “The popular belief is that texting has evolved as a twenty-first-century phenomenon--as a highly distinctive graphic style, full of abbreviations and deviant uses of language, used by a young generation that doesn’t care about standards. There is a widely voiced concern that the practice is fostering a decline in literacy. And some even think it is harming language as a whole” (7). His use of the word “deviant” here is telling, suggesting that, in the eyes of detractors, text-messaging as a medium threatens not just grammatical errors, but moral infractions. It isn’t just that technology, and text-messaging in particular, threatens to undermine language, but in so doing, it threatens to undermine the very culture upon which literacy is so precariously perched. Crystal goes on to refute this belief a few pages later, writing, “All the popular beliefs about texting are wrong, or at least debatable. Its graphic distinctiveness is not a totally new phenomenon. Nor is its use restricted to the young generation. There is increasing evidence that it helps rather than hinders literacy” (9). He points out that the average texter is aware when they are breaking the rules. He or she is aware of the ways that text-message-speak distorts Standard English--aware, in fact, to the point of revelry.

Certainly, one of the primary goals of abbreviations in text or Twitter-speak is to condense an utterance so that it fits the 160 character limit of a text-message or the 140 character limit of a Twitter post (or Tweet). However, there is also a certain charm, a certain playfulness, involved. There is pleasure in the act of composing with these constraints, an intentional and curious engagement with how sentences, words, and letters make meaning. Composing a text-message is most certainly a literate (and sometimes even literary) act. And, interestingly, the average text-message distorts grammar much less than the naysayers would have us believe. In fact, more often, text-messages rely on very conventional sentence structures and word order to create clear contexts for the various abridgments. However, like a poem, a text-message has the ability to condense what might otherwise be inexpressible into a very small and self-consciously constrained linguistic space. And, like a poem, a clever text-message unravels, offering layers of meaning and interpretability for the reader. For example, neologisms are quite common in the world of texting. In a recent exchange I had via text, “hiyah” came to mean both a greeting (as in “hi ya”) and the sound-effect accompanying a karate-chop, a calculated portmanteau, a "hello" that feels like an assault. Granted, this sort of inventiveness may not be rampant in the wild, but the medium certainly offers and encourages this potential.

All things considered, a poet like Emily Dickinson would have probably been delighted to have her work translated into text-message-speak. She writes, in a “A Word dropped careless on a Page” (1261), “Infection in the sentence breeds” (5). The tendency in reading this line might be to turn in disgust--to recoil from the messy juxtaposition of the words “infection” and “breeds”--to read Dickinson’s vision as a morbidly pessimistic one (as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar do in *Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship*). And yet there is something exultant here--something glorious in the sticky movement from disease to childbearing, a movement that highlights for Dickinson the shift from thinking about a thing to putting words to it. Interestingly enough, the line is itself an infected sentence, a failed sentence, one that does not come to conclusion--one that is aborted just before the expected direct object of the word “breeds.” Breeds what? I can’t help but think of Ouroborus, the snake that perpetually eats its own tail. However, Dickinson’s image seems less exhausting--less a study in futility--and more about inheritance, about a necessary mystery, about evasion, about secretion, about breathing.

Dickinson distorts language, not to hide, but to subvert--not because she is anxious as Gilbert and Gubar argue, but because she sees things around her in new and unusual ways and wants a language, a grammar, that can be brought fully to bear on the complexity of this world she sees. The perversion of language has both use value and intrinsic value for Dickinson, just as I have argued about text-messaging. There is both the end result of concision and the fun to be had in attaining it. There is both the undoing of language for the purpose of making meaning and the undoing of language for its own sake, calling attention to the fundamental oddity of its rules and structure.

Re-Approaching a Pedagogy of Grammar

A tweet could be seen, then, not as a paragon of the many potential horrors of student writing, but as a model of writerly concision.

The challenge, then, becomes how do we teach the conventions of grammar, while encouraging our students to engage with grammar in a truly second order way. Joseph M. Williams, in *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, offers a take on the subjects of grammar and style that I find useful in juggling these seemingly disparate tasks. Williams argues that “nothing is more important than choice” (9). It is one thing to make a choice to conform to a writing standard, another thing entirely to be obedient to an inflexible and uncompromising rule. The same is equally true about composition pedagogy. As teachers, our approach to the teaching of grammar should be flexible, maybe even disobedient, deviant, compromising, but certainly conscious.

Williams continues, “if you mindlessly obey all the rules all the time, you risk becoming so obsessed with the rules that you tie yourself in knots.” Always following the rules might lead to a grammatically “perfect” composition, but it doesn't necessarily lead to a good piece of writing that is pleasurable to write and engaging to read. The best writers don’t “obey” rules at all; they exploit them. They understand that rules serve a function, that they’re neither arbitrary nor imperative. The best writers know when to follow a rule and when to ignore it. They know the rules but also know when to break them in the service of good writing.

Many instructors draw a hard and fast line here, demanding that students must know the rules before they can break them. As a student myself, though, I’ve discovered that academic writing often becomes a mere exercise in proving a knowledge of the rules and conventions (rather than an opportunity to create an intrinsically sound composition), an exercise that continues through each course, with each instructor, in each new writing task. The when in which we can begin experimenting with rule-breakage keeps getting put off, again and again, *ad nauseam*. It isn’t that I would suggest foregoing an attention to grammar and convention from the outset. Instead, I argue that the best way to approach the teaching of grammar is to teach the rules and how to break them simultaneously. It certainly seems sensible to keep these two teaching moments as close to one another as possible. It’s easier to consciously break a rule if the rule is clear in your mind, and playing with and breaking rules is an excellent way to come to a fuller understanding of the purpose and function of those rules.

Ultimately, I would argue that the best way to learn grammar is not by studying a list of rules in a textbook. The best way to learn grammar is through the practice of writing—through the willful and conscious application of the specific rules that fit the specific situation, what I would call a *grammar as toolbox* approach. Here, I wander back to Twitter and the phenomenon of the text-message. As I've observed, instructors are terrified by the presumed devolving of language in the wake of e-mail and text-messaging, and students are terrified by the preemptive strikes loosed upon them by their terrified instructors. I, myself, was terrified to encounter the statistic (in the viral video, "A Vision of Students Today") that a college student produces an average of 42 pages of academic writing in a semester and over 500 pages of e-mail. In the wake of rapid transformations at work in the technological age, it seems sensible to turn facts like this to our advantage. It seems sensible to embrace the various alternate modes of communication in which students (and we) are proving so prolific.

I've recently experimented in my composition classes with an assignment I call a Twitter-essay, in which students condense an argument with evidential support into 140 characters, which they unleash upon a hashtag (or trending topic) in the Twitter-verse. Tweets often attempt to convey as much information in as few words as possible. A tweet could be seen, then, not as a paragon of the many potential horrors of student writing, but as a model of writerly concision. In composing their Twitter-essay, I have students proceed through all the steps I would have them do in writing a traditional academic essay, including brainstorming, composing, workshopping, and revising. I also have them consider and research their audience, the Twitter members engaged in discussion around a particular hashtag. Finally, I have them work dynamically with the Tweets of their peers, responding to them on Twitter and close-analyzing them at length in class. I ask the students to consider their word-choice, use of abbreviation, punctuation, etc. To model the activity for them and to give them a sense for the shape of a Twitter-essay, I compose my instructions for the assignment in exactly 140 characters and post them to Twitter.

For example, in my upper-division writing course, "Queer Rhetorics," I instructed the students to, "Write an essay about #queer in 140 characters that does real work in the world, not wasting one character. Make something happen with words." The most interesting response I got to this particular prompt was from a student that had never used Twitter previously:
"#queer #kwear #qu'eer #ckwewr #QuEeR #kwier #cawe're #cwear #q-u-e-e-r #qwere #chweir #kuere #CWEER #qawear #ckuere #qr." Without even fully understanding the function of hashtags, the student managed to disrupt (or queer) the primary organizational structure of discussions on Twitter. The essay

was about #queer in both its content and its form, while also savvily disrupting how we tag ideas within a discourse.

I assigned a similar activity to my current group of composition students working with the concept of "The Posthuman," another topic that lends itself particularly well to experiments with modality and the disruption of discourse. I asked these students, again in exactly 140 characters, "What is the posthuman? Write a Twitter essay on #posthuman in 140 characters that explores or complicates the term. Don't waste a character." More interesting than the responses I got for that particular assignment are the ways my students have taken to using Twitter since doing the activity. It has become a space for investigating and troubling language. Outside of any required class activity, one student recently tweeted, "#Rhetoric is a means by which humans imbue each other with their ideas. Through the use of ideas, authority, emotions, and logic." My students also decided to send @replies (or messages tagged for a particular Twitter user) to one of the authors we were studying in class, Steven Shaviro, asking questions about and responding to his work in an attempt to bring him into the conversation we were having in class. This particular author, though himself an avid Tweeter, didn't respond; however, for me, the success of the activity was measured by the hum in the room as the students realized they could use Twitter to communicate directly (and in real-time) with the author of the essay we were discussing that day.

Gary Small writes, in *iBrain: Surviving the Technological Alteration of the Modern Mind*, "The current explosion of digital technology not only is changing the way we live and communicate but is rapidly and profoundly altering our brains . . . Because of the current technological revolution, our brains are evolving right now -- at a speed like never before" (1). David Crystal concludes his book on texting in a similar way, "Some people dislike texting. Some are bemused by it. Some love it. I am fascinated by it, for it is the latest manifestation of the human ability to be linguistically creative and to adapt language to suit the demands of diverse settings. In texting we are seeing, in a small way, language in evolution" (175). Small and Crystal locate the evolution they each describe in different places. For Small, it is our brains themselves that are evolving, whereas for Crystal, it is language doing the evolving, as though words are somehow distinct from the people uttering them. Both identify learning and language as defiantly dynamic processes.

To conclude, I will return to the aforementioned lines from Emily Dickinson, utilizing Dickinson's approach to writing as a model for contemporary writing pedagogy. She begins, "From all the jails the Boys and Girls / Ecstatically leap—". For me, the subjects of these lines, the "Boys and Girls," are Dickinson's poems. She alludes to this almost explicitly by ending with the phrase "such a Foe as this," with the word "this" referring, reflexively, to the poem itself. For Dickinson, good writing ought to "leap" and "storm" and "stun." It is a "Mob," a "Foe." Good writing "lie[s] in wait" and "doesn't keep." The "jail," "Prison," or "keep" is grammar, or convention more generally, from which Dickinson's lines emancipate themselves. The poem describes students in school, all the more ecstatic for being also unruly…

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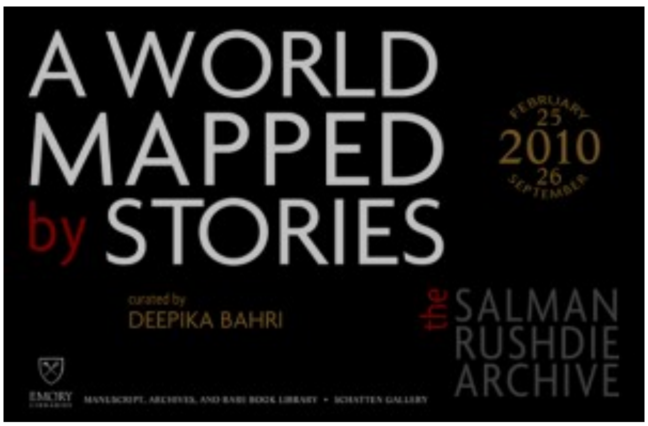
Certain sections of this work were revised from a previously published essay:

Stommel, Jesse. "'Infection in the Sentence Breeds': Grammar and the Student 2.0." The Image of Technology in Literature, the Media, and Society: Selected Papers Presented at the Conference of the Society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Social Imagery. Eds. Will Wright and Steven Kaplan. 2009.

Salman Rushdie, StoryCorps, and SMARTech: Adventures in Digital Archiving - Kathryn Crowther

My class this semester revolved around the idea of people, material artifacts, and information that are "born digital." As my class blurb explains, "for people, this means that they are born into, and have only ever known, a world that prioritizes all forms of digitization; for materials and information, it means that they only exist in digital form." After spending the first part of the semester discussing "Digital Natives" and how these "born digital" people navigate the digital world, we turned in the second unit to the concept of digital archiving. My inspiration for this class came in part from the Salman Rushdie exhibit at Emory University



this fall, which showcased highlights from the Booker-prize winning author's archive (housed at Emory), with a particular focus on the "born digital" aspects of his work. My students visited the exhibit, and I used their experience to get them thinking about and discussing the changes being wrought on institutions and people who work on processing, storing, and displaying information that only exists in digital form.

As my students discovered at the Rushdie exhibit, archiving the work of writers who have composed the majority of their drafts on a computer leads to a different type of preservation effort, one that involves retrieving and parsing through the data on the author's computer, creating visual maps of the files and organization of the writer's documents, protecting any private information, and figuring out how to give researchers and scholars access to the digital data. In the exhibit, a section entitled " Born Digital Rushdie" discussed the various challenges of creating a digital archive, and my students were interested in the ways that digital archives transform traditional notions of preservation and display. (You can read more about how Emory's MARBL handled the challenge of processing one of the first literary digital archives here and watch videos describing how the archivists worked alongside computer experts to create a new methodology for preserving Rushdie's digital materials[here](#).)

The assignment to visit Rushdie's archives laid the groundwork for a series of assignments that culminated in the students creating their own digital archives. Using the "StoryCorps" model of interviewing a friend or family member to create an "oral history," the assignment asked students to find a person at Georgia Tech or someone from the local Atlanta community who had an interesting and unique story to share (you can read the detailed assignment here). In groups, students conducted interviews with people including the current Georgia Tech Student Body President, the first woman elected sheriff in Georgia (a student's great-grandmother), a Hurricane Katrina survivor, a campus legend, a fourth-generation Tech student, several Deans and Tech alumni, and a star Georgia Tech football player. The students researched their subject, developed questions, and conducted twenty minute interviews. They then edited those interviews down to 5-7 minute excerpts to create a distinct and concise central narrative (like the StoryCorps segments that air on NPR). Finally, the students uploaded the interviews to Georgia Tech's digital archiving program SMARTech (Scholarly Materials and Research at Tech). You can go and listen to them here!

While this assignment was designed to get students thinking about the ramifications of digital archiving (and the commensurate loss of materiality), it also challenged them to use communication skills that they don't get much opportunity to practice - crafting thoughtful questions, steering and controlling the direction and pace of an interview, and editing an oral history to create a focused narrative while ethically representing the actual words and intention of the speaker. Interestingly, the students seemed divided on how they found the experience of working in a primarily oral/aural mode. Some said they found that editing and listening to the interviews forcing them to focus more intently on the words and made them realize how much they usually seek out a visual accompaniment. Others said that they felt like the interviews would have been enhanced by including a visual element, and, indeed, some groups opted to video the interview and then extract the audio track later. One student posted a blog entry about his desire to include the visual element of the interview, writing that "I viewed everything he [the interviewee] spoke to us about in my head as pictures we could flash up on a screen when he said this or that."

The project, then, had some unexpected results, pushing students to think about their tendency as digital natives to depend on visual media to communicate and receive a message. But perhaps most significantly, students were asked to reflect on the value of oral histories and the potential of digital archiving to preserve and make available the narratives of ordinary people who have extraordinary stories to tell. And, in doing so, the students have left their own permanent digital legacy at Georgia Tech.

Please go and listen to some of their stories and let me know what you think!

Universal Access to Information - Malavika Shetty

Hours of browsing the web for information or entertainment have made us savvy clickers on the Internet highways. We intuitively know the most efficient way to navigate a page using colors, images, and hyperlinks as visual cues. Stop and think for a moment though. What if you cannot see or find it difficult to process the text on a web page? What if all those brightly colored words and pictures on the screen did not make sense, and all you had before your eyes was a blank screen which contained the information you were seeking, but you did not have access to it? How does someone who is blind or print-disabled navigate the visually coded web when he or she cannot see or cannot easily process the text on a page? How does someone who cannot see those hyperlinks that enable most users to bounce across the web, moving effortlessly from one topic to another, navigate the web?

Joe Tedesco, the Outreach and Assistive Technology Manager at the Alternative Media Access Center (AMAC) http://www.amacusg.org/ was at Georgia Tech's Library East Commons Performance Space, talking about some of these issues faced by students who have print-related disabilities. His talk entitled, "Universal Access to Information: Influence of Alternative Media Production on Textbook Usability" was about, among other things, on how to make access to information universal. Tedesco talked about how the Center has been providing textbooks in Braille to students who are visually impaired (some Braille versions of textbooks can cost more than $20,000 each!). Talk attendees had a chance to look at and feel some of those carefully created Braille textbooks, complete with intricate embossed graphs and diagrams.

The Center has also been at the forefront in providing print-disabled students with access to software that enables users to navigate information that has been visually laid out. Converting a text book into an audio book is one way the information in the textbook could be made available to a print-disabled student. As Tedesco pointed out, however, converting a printed text to an audio one is not a straightforward task. How, for example, can you describe a complicated graph to someone who cannot see it and who has never seen a graph in his or her life? How does one tell someone who cannot see and who has never seen a bar diagram, the difference between a bar diagram and a pie chart? Unless a text is specifically created keeping in mind the needs of those who will not be able to access it visually, translating a printed text onto a non-print format, might leave a lot of information still inaccessible.

Tedesco talked about how progress is being made to bridge the information gap with the help of software that use voice tools to read information on electronic pages. The PDF Equalizerhttp://www.readingmadeez.com/products/PDFEqualizer.html, for example, has a built-in text-to-audio converter that converts a single page or a range of pages into MP3 files. The JAWS Screen readerhttp://www.freedomscientific.com/products/fs/jaws-product-page.asp reads aloud the contents of a PC screen. Software from ClaroRead http://www.claroread.com/ can scan and convert printed text to an on-screen PDF and read it aloud in “a human-sounding voice”. ClaroRead can also read the content of web pages. Students who have trouble reading, for example, can scan in the books that they need to read, and the software reads the books aloud for them in the dialect (American-English, for example) they choose.

Tedesco also spoke about the DAISY consortium http://www.daisy.org/about_us , an international association working towards achieving Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) standards. One of the consortium’s goals, according to its website, is that “all published information is available to people with print disabilities, at the same time and at no greater cost, in an accessible, feature-rich, navigable format.”

I found the talk fascinating and provocative. We read and hear so much about how the Internet is making us more efficient, and about how it is opening up the world to so many new possibilities. Few people, however, talk about how the great emphasis the Internet places upon textual communication is leaving a lot of people behind. We are a society that increasingly relies on the written word for communication and the exchange of information (see for example, reports about how the number of text messages sent has increased over the years, but the number of phone calls and the duration of those calls has decreasedhttp://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/07/AR2010080702848.html). There is, however, very little acknowledgement that this written word might not be universally accessible. Tedesco's talk was a reminder that there is a lot of work to be done before the digital revolution can become a part of every individual's life.

(Steam)Punking Pedagogy: -
Kathryn Crowther

Kathryn Crowther

Or: Creativity and Digital Pedagogy in the English Composition Classroom

Note: This paper evolved out of a paper I presented at the William Morris "Useful & Beautiful: The Transatlantic Arts of William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites" last November, combined with a blog post of musings on creativity in the composition classroom that I wrote in September.

All teaching inspires research on some levels – any time I spend thinking critically about texts, exploring new topics, and challenging my own assumptions in a classroom setting has positive ramifications for my own research. But how can we think of this as a two way street? How can our research inform our teaching? It seems more of a stretch to think of the ways that scholarly writing and research on often narrow topics could bring us new pedagogical strategies to use in the classroom.

What I am going to discuss here, then, is a particular course that I taught that fed into my research which, in turn, gave me new ideas about my own pedagogy -- a model, I feel for the multi-directional flow of ideas and inspiration between teaching and research. It began with a class I taught in spring 2009 on the broad topic of Literature and Technology. The course itself was entitled "Machines and Monsters: Technology in Literature from Steam Engines to Steam Punk" and it moved from 19th century literature like *Frankenstein* and *The Time Machine* to the contemporary "steampunk" novel, *The Difference Engine*by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling. I originally chose to frame the class around the literature and culture of steampunk because I thought it would provide a fruitful intersection of literature and technology that would particularly appeal to Georgia Tech students. But, as it turns out, Steampunk actually speaks to deeper cultural issues related to technology *and* opens up a model for creativity and innovation that taps into the central concerns of the contemporary college classroom.

Steampunk 101

Originally a literary genre, Steampunk has exploded in the past decades into an artistic and cultural movement, spawning conferences, clothes lines, films, music groups, and, perhaps most fascinating of all, steampunk artisans. Steampunk aficionados might argue that Steampunk is at its zenith right now –last September, the "Alternate History" track heavily devoted to Steampunk was one of the most popular sessions at Atlanta's huge Dragon*Con convention (I presented on steampunk there the year before), in October 2010) (I presented on steampunk there the year before), in October 2010, a special edition of *Neo-Victorian Studies* came out devoted entirely to steampunk and, perhaps more a barometer of cultural interest in steampunk, a recent episode of *Castle* had a Steampunk theme.

Despite its obvious popularity, it is strikingly hard to pin down a definition of what Steampunk actually is. One of the definitions that the editors of the special edition of *Neo-Victorian Studies* suggest that "In literary culture, [Steampunk] can mean a narrative set in Victorian London; one set in a futuristic world that retains or reverts to the aesthetic hallmarks of the Victorian period; a piece of speculative historical fiction that deploys Victorian subjects; or a text that incorporates anachronistic versions of nineteenth-century technologies. In material culture, the Victorian-ness of steampunk usually involves the incorporation of stylised Victorian-era objects or costumes (Bowser/Croxall 1). But, more interesting than defining steampunk is the question that Rachel Bowser and Brian Croxall seek to answer in their article:"why is steampunk in both its literary and fan-culture manifestations emerging into the mainstream *now*?" The answer to that question comes from the material culture of steampunk and taps into the very underpinnings of its ideology. It also sheds light on why the steampunk genre provides an interesting "lesson" for thinking about creativity and pedagogy.

There is an aesthetic to Steampunk, a look that taps into some of our deepest stereotypes about Victorian culture and technology. Steampunk aficionados "fetishise cogs, sprins, sprockets, wheels, and hydraulic motion" (Onion 138-9). These artifacts are not only aesthetically beautiful, they are useful too. In some cases they are modern technologies, retro-fitted to look externally Victorian but with a stress on functionality.

For example, the famous laptop by the steampunker Datamancer (Richard R. Nagy), is actually booted by turning the key (BC 7).

And here we finally get to the answer of the "why now question" – why is it in this contemporary moment that the rise of the Steampunk aesthetic in material culture is so apparent. It is in the move towards openness, toward revealing how things work which characterizes steampunk and which stands in direct opposition to the closed-off, impenetrable surfaces of contemporary technology. Richard Morgan, a steampunk writer, explains that steampunk artifacts represent "the opposite of the iPhone aesthetic; instead of being sleek, subtle and vaguely magical, steampunk is clunky, candid and obliging" (Charm and Rigor).

Unlike contemporary technology, steampunk artifacts reveal their inner workings, and in their clunky uniqueness, resist the uniformity of the mass-produced object. Sean Slattery, also known as Jake Von Slatt of The Steampunk Workshop, theorizes that "The reason we need steampunk is that everyone these days has the same stuff they've bought from Wal-Mart, Sears, Ikea, Target [...]. And... there's a sense that you can't really customize all the technology that pervades our homes. Often, you can't see the guts of it, let alone understand it. And if you try to open it and poke around, you void the warranty."

Those who try to define steampunk return again and again to the idea that the reason that Steampunk takes its inspiration from the nineteenth century is because it represents the turning point at which we lost the ability to “make” our own products or to open them up and tinker with them. In a type of protest against the minimalistic, sealed-off aesthetics of artifacts such as iPhones or Macbooks, the artistic work of steampunkers ask the question - what is lost, or, what do we as consumers of art lose, when industrialization and mass-production render the individual creator obsolete?

It is indeed the craftsman and craftswoman, the tinkerer, the builder, the artist, the designer who emerges at the center of this ideological movement. Artisans like Von Slatt and Datamancer offer DIY guidelines for others to reproduce these artifacts without needing copyright or permission. In direct contrast to the “closed-systems” of today’s technologies (DRM protected music, the proprietary nature of Microsoft and Apple), steampunk technology is accessible and individually reproducible. The brass goggles which have become almost synonymous with steampunk represent that work is taking place, real work that needs protective equipment.

Steampunking My Pedagogy

So, when I began my English 1102 course on Steampunk, I was really just hoping that the science/technology theme would serve as a hook to get the students interested in larger questions about texts and technologies which would lead them into projects that revolved around strategies for communicating. The first two assignments I had planned were a traditional literary analysis essay and a research project. But the more we engaged with the ideologies of Steampunk, with the notion of “punking” or revising in the sense of re-envisioning and recreating, and with an emphasis on building and craft, the more the class dynamic pushed in the direction of free creativity. It was an exciting feeling – the class seemed to take on a life of its own. Students talked about ways to “punk” other traditional narratives, and it led us to broader discussions of “thinking outside the box,” and “pushing the limits,” innovation, and revolution. Inspired by this energy, I redesigned the final assignment to accommodate this new paradigm and I allowed students to use the information they had learned about 19th century technology from their research project that they had completed in the first half of the semester (for which they had researched information on a piece of 19th century technology or a 19th century innovator and presented their research in a digital or traditional portfolio) and use that as the inspiration to create some kind of Steampunk artifact. The instructions for the assignment were:

For your last major assignment, you will work in a group to develop a multimedia presentation on your own interpretation of the Steampunk genre. Your project should either explore and explicate some feature of Steampunk or create a new artifact that embodies the characteristics of the genre. Examples could include:

- A website showing examples of the fiction, film, periodicals, and artifacts generated within the genre.
- A video enacting a Steampunk scenario or staging a scene from a key piece of Steampunk literature
- An artifact in the Steampunk style (ex. a Steampunk keyboard or cellphone)
- A 3-D model of a place or an artifact associated with Steampunk
- A short story following the generic conventions accompanied by a slide show

The outcomes and assessment criteria for the assignment were based on the departmental "rubric for artifacts" and, as part of the project students had to complete a detailed proposal and plan, weekly progress reports and a final 2 page reflection paper that justified why their artifact fulfilled the assignment criteria.

The students took the assignment and ran with it and the end results were

impressive. Projects included: a flying airship that produced steam, a working Gatlin gun that shot paper pellets, a steampunk-inspired episode of *The Office*, a Victorian satirical newspaper, a steampunk website with interviews of local steampunk performers , a remote controlled copy of the Zephyr – the innovative steam car in the novel the Difference Engine , several steampunk movies, and even a steampunk cake!

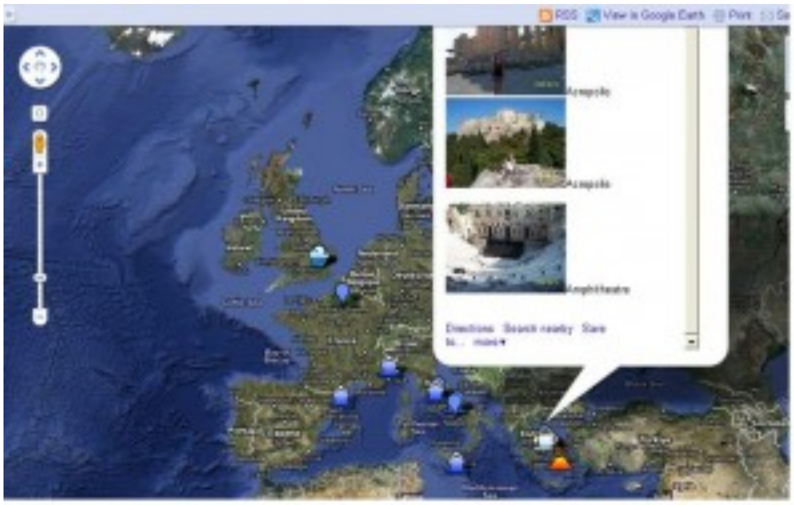
I was so inspired by how excitedly and with what hands-on innovation the students had responded to the assignment that it led me re-think a lot of my traditional assignments. I started examining the ways that more innovative pedagogy – pushing the boundaries of my own knowledge and comfort - -could inspire students to do the same in their own work. So, as I worked on the syllabus, assignments and outcomes for my next course I kept thinking about the role of creativity in the classroom and asking questions like: To what degree should we expect out students to be creative or original? Is there a place for that in the composition classroom? Our composition classrooms here at Tech already push against traditional notions of composition, expanding the limited definitions of communication to include WOVEN (Written, Oral, Visual, Electronic, and Non-Verbal) and encouraging multimodality in all aspects of our pedagogy and the students' work. The use of digital pedagogy, I feel, opens up the doors for creativity – both for us as teachers when designing assignments and thinking about innovative ways to help our students learn and for students to practice the essential skills of communication and rhetoric that they'll need as students at Georgia Tech and as citizens of the digital world.

The Challenge of the Digital Humanities

As I have developed my own sense of innovative pedagogy and digital pedagogy and thinking about how it fits with my research, I have turned to the related field of the digital humanities, to which digital pedagogy owes some of its theoretical bent. The debate over what constitutes the digital humanities is ongoing (and not always pretty). Alex Reid in a November 3 2010 blog post talks about "weak" and "strong" notions of the digital humanities – and his definition has larger ramifications for digital pedagogy I feel. His "weakest" definition of the digital humanities is "that all humanities are already digital. What kind of humanistic research or teaching takes place without computers, word processing software, email, database searches, etc? None." As Reid contends, this definition "draws some fuzzy and arbitrary line among digital technologies and says if you use these technologies to study humanistic content then you are a digital humanist. [...] Following this logic one could be a digital humanist one year and then two years later not be, even though one is doing the same work." For him, the strong definition would be one that has: "two main components." He writes, "There are makers, who build various digital tools for use in humanistic research and teaching. Then there are researchers, who study humanistic aspects of digital media and culture." But, as he adds, "Maybe the strong definition is too exclusive though. ...I could see adding a third category that would very close to the weak definition: **adapters**, who are taking emerging technologies and developing new scholarly and pedagogical methods."

Reid specifically mentions pedagogy in his 3rd definition and I find this compelling in connecting the larger notions of creativity and innovation from the humanities to what goes on in the classroom. Interestingly, When I returned to Reid's webpage to check the citation, I found that he's posted several more short pieces on the digital humanities debate in the past week, and he's still pushing for the digital humanities to tap into this stronger aspect of building and creativity. He points his reader toward theHASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory) challenge statementwhich asks us to "turn attention instead to alternative modes of creating, innovating, and critiquing that better address the interconnected, interactive global nature of knowledge today, both in the classroom and beyond."

This challenge has resonated with me and I've spent a lot of time thinking about how to transform my own pedagogy to harness the creativity and innovation of my students. But I've struggled a lot (as I think is appropriate with any new pedagogy) with the nuts-and bolts of implementing this: struggled with the idea that creativity could mean "free-reign" or "multiple submission formats," or "deviation from the formal instructions" or "harder to grade." And I've struggled with questions like: Is there a point where digital pedagogy becomes too much about the technology or too much about the coolness factor? How do we insure that the students are cognizant of how these creative approaches to teaching and assignments are meeting the course objectives and, more importantly, how they are equipping them with the skills they need to succeed in all kinds of careers. I don't think it takes too much pondering to see how creative course and assignment design (and I'm leaving out other large pedagogical categories such as assessment) can fit with the broader goals of the composition classroom, but it takes its own measure of creativity to craft assessment rubrics which allow for a large deviation in interpretations of an assignment.



To give a quick example, this past fall in my English 1101 course I asked the students to write a traditional "identity essay" and then, as a follow-up assignment, I asked them to convert this traditional essay into a digital format and present the same identity trait. I gave them free reign over how they presented it and I received a range of artifacts including google maps, dippity timelines, prezi presentations and even computer programs. In order to grade such divergent formats, I developed a grading rubric that combined the categories from the departmental rubric with my own criteria such as: Use of the Medium, Accessibility, Consistency, Conventionality, Sequencing, Audience, and Attribution.

I've also encountered other pedagogical problems with encouraging creative responses to assignments– what happens, for example, when students push back and claim they *aren't* creative, that they want to have more traditional paper assignments, that they feel it gives naturally "artistic" or "technologically savvy" people an advantage. Or what about when the students interpret creativity to mean that they can cut corners and do less than is asked for? These, and many more that I'm sure you've encountered, can make encouraging students' (and your own) creativity a little intimidating.

There's a much bigger paper in here – one which examines the theoretical and practical aspects of the digital humanities and applies them to digital pedagogy, or that asks larger questions about how the digital humanities fit into an English department or a Writing and Communication department. And indeed, as Andy

Famiglietti has pointed out in a recent blog post, until we can pin down a definition of the humanities, we'll always struggle to define the digital ones.

So, I'll be learning along with my students this semester as I'm hoping to put some of the digital humanities skills I learned at the THATCamp Southeast "unconference" in March into action for my students archival-research driven exhibition project using Omeka at the end of the semester. I also watch my fellow Brittain post-doctoral fellows pushing the boundaries of pedagogy each semester like Robin Wharton who asked students to engage in course design by asking them in groups to design and pitch an individual assignment to their classmates. Or Diane Jackaki who is teaching class in "real-time" this semester, adapting her course design to follow the events unfolding with the revolutions in Egypt and elsewhere.

And so at the end here, I challenge you as I've challenged myself, to be creative, to keep making connections between research and teaching, and ultimately, to put more punk in your pedagogy.

Credits

Bowser, Rachel and Brian Croxall. "Introduction: Industrial Evolution." *Neo-Victorian Studies*. Special Issue: Steampunk, Science, and (Neo)Victorian Technologies. 3.1 (2010): 1-45.

Emily (Nullalux). "Brass Goggles." http://www.flickr.com/photos/nullalux/2252703525/

Nagy, Richard. *Datamancer*. "Steampunk Laptop"http://www.datamancer.net/steampunklaptop/steampunklaptop.htm

Onion, Rebecca. "Reclaiming the Machine: An Introductory Look at Steampunk in Everyday Practice."*Neo-Victorian Studies* . 1.1 (2008): 138-163.

Reid, Alex. "Weak and Strong Definitions of the Digital Humanities." *Digital Digs*. November 3, 2010. http://www.alex-reid.net/2010/11/weak-and-strong-definitions-of-digital-humanities.html

The Parachut<e>: A Grading/Marking Workflow - Robin Wharton

What is the Parachut<e>?

This semester, the Director and Assistant Director of the Writing and Communication Program here at Georgia Tech approved a pilot program for a learning technology that I have been helping to design and build for the last several years. <emma> is a learning management system that was developed, designed, and built by writing instructors for the writing-intensive classroom. It is used program-wide in the First-Year Composition Program at the University of Georgia, where I completed my PhD and first became involved in the project, and <emma> has gradually been making inroads into English and humanities classrooms at UGA and into other FYC programs around the country. Motivated in part by the work I've been doing in my FYC classes at Tech, <emma> development has started to turn toward making the environment more suitable for multimodal composition pedagogy that also emphasizes some of the core principals that have motivated the <emma> project from the outset: process- and project-oriented assignment design, portfolio-based assessment, and a writing classroom centered around student-generated content. The pilot will hopefully give the development team some insight regarding whether <emma> is ready for multimodal writing and communication, and what further development might help to optimize it for that purpose.

Nine brave piloteers volunteered to take the leap with me this semester. In an effort to make the introduction of new technology as productive as possible for everyone, especially the students, I have been writing-up tips of the day that offer advice about how to deal with issues that piloteers may be confronting at a given point in the semester. The idea here is that because I am using the technology myself, I can hopefully offer support when it is relevant and before a "crisis" prompts a request for help. Since I am already doing the work, I figured that I might as well turn what I consider to be the most valuable tip of the week into a weekly TECHStyle column, a Parachut<e>, if you will, for the piloteers.

This week's tip summarizes some of the advice I've offered recently about managing one's grading or marking workflow in <emma>.

How do I control access so that students can't see marked work until I'm done marking?

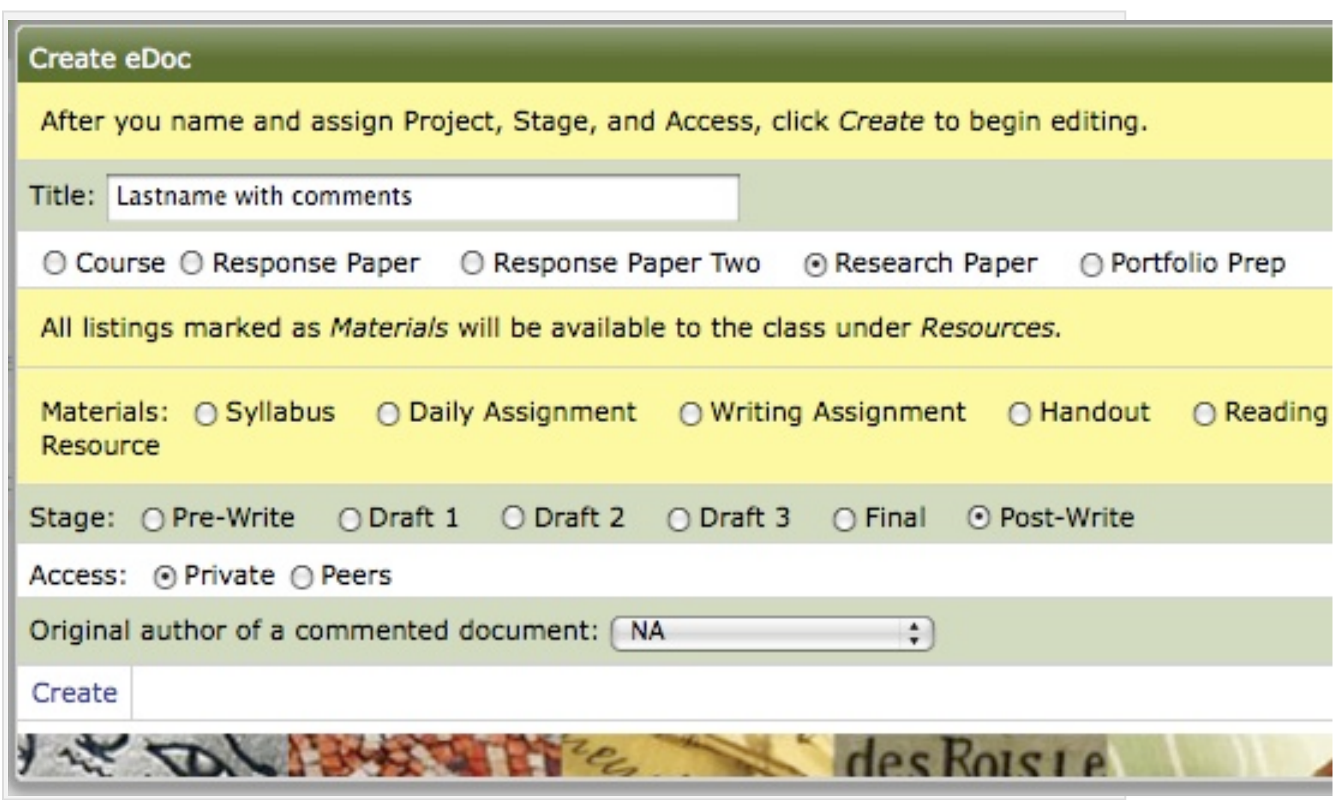
One of the newest tools that <emma> offers is an in-browser WYSIWYG editor. Students can use the in-browser editor to create eDocs, which can be traditional essays or multimodal documents that contain links to external sites, or embedded images or video. Instructors grade or mark eDocs by saving the student-generated document as a new version and offering comments, inserting a grading rubric, and marking-up text with specialized tag sets. One piloting instructor recently asked how to control access to marked eDocs until she was done with grading the entire batch.

Step One: Use SaveAs to make the copies that will be graded or marked.

First, in Manage Course, use the Set Default Project tool to set the project you'll be marking as the default. This will save you quite a few mouse-clicks in the long run.

Once you've set the default, in Projects in the relevant class on <emma> pull up a list of the student eDocs with which you will be working by selecting the appropriate Stage and Project.

Open the first eDoc by clicking on its title, then click SaveAs. Make sure to give the new eDoc a title that clearly identifies the original author, e.g., "Lastname with comments." Make sure to select NA for the original author and set the access to Private; this will ensure that the eDoc won't be available to the student until you are ready to release it:



Make sure you clearly identify the original author in the title of the new eDoc. That way, you'll be able to release it to the appropriate student when you're done.

When <emma> pulls the new document up in the editor window, you can take this opportunity to insert a rubric or other relevant content that you'll be using to provide feedback on all the documents (Next week's post will offer some advice about how to use templates to save you some time in this regard). Once you're done, click Submit.

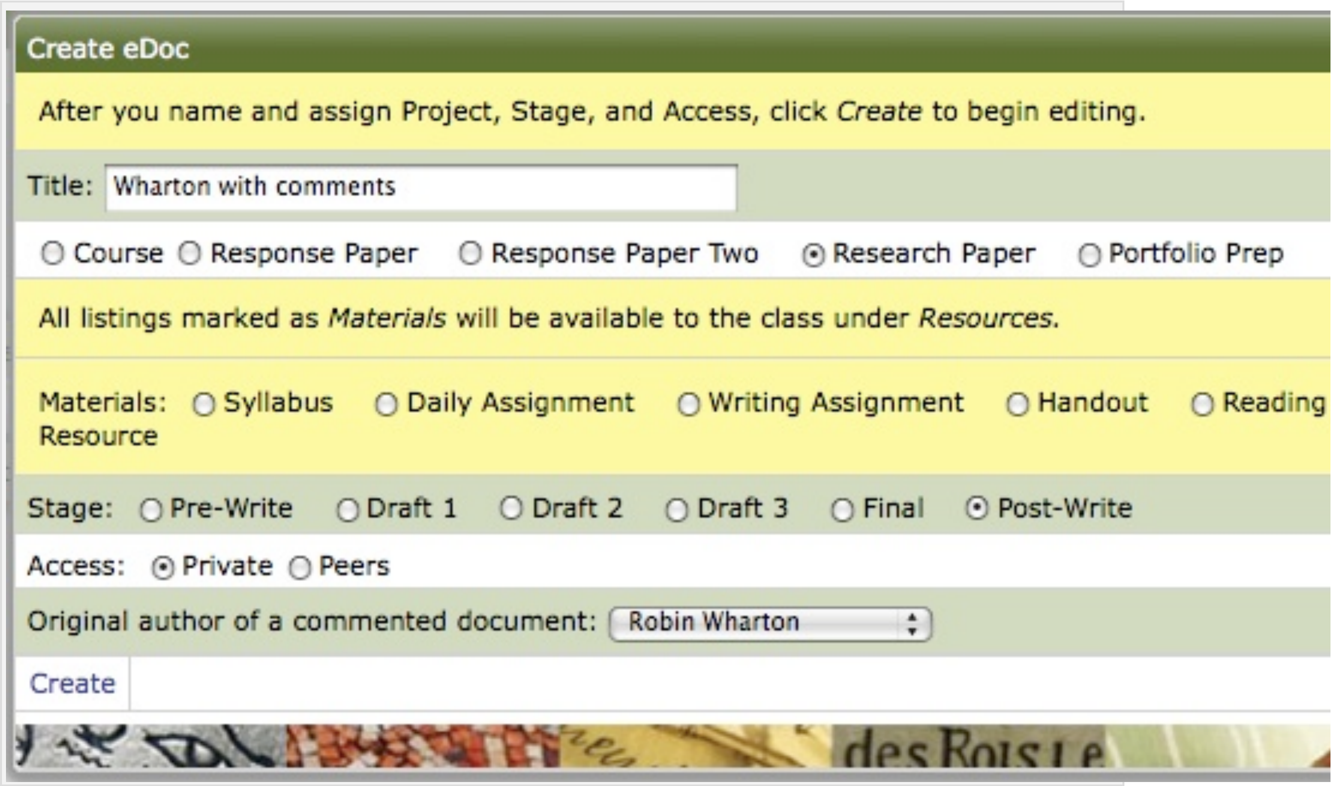
Repeat this process for each eDoc until you have a list of artifacts ready for grading or marking. Once you get going, the process goes pretty quickly and doesn't take any longer than downloading, opening, and saving copies of artifacts submitted via T-Square.

Step Two: Grade or mark away!

That's it. I have a lot of theories about how to do this most effectively, but that's the subject of another post.

Step Three: Release the graded or marked artifacts.

Once you're done, your default My Documents view in Projects will be a list of graded/marked eDocs. Starting with the first eDoc, click the "+" sign next to the title to open the Doc Tools menu. Select Update Details, and then select the original author, named in the title you gave the eDoc in Step One, as the original author of a commented document:



By selecting the student named in the title as the original author, you release the eDoc for viewing by the student.

Go down the list, repeating this process for each eDoc in the list, and you're done. Again, the process goes quickly once you get going, and in this regard, I've found <emma> is much zippier than T-Square.

Do you have any tips, tricks, or suggestions?

This is how I manage things when I'm working with eDocs. If it seems a little counter-intuitive and kludgy, it's probably because eDocs is a stable tool, but one that is still a work in progress. I'd appreciate hearing your thoughts on how to improve the functionality of eDocs, ways to work more efficiently with the tool we have now, problems that you may have encountered while grading or marking in <emma> eDocs, or anything else you can think of.

The Parachut<e>: Post-assessment Peer Review? - Robin Wharton

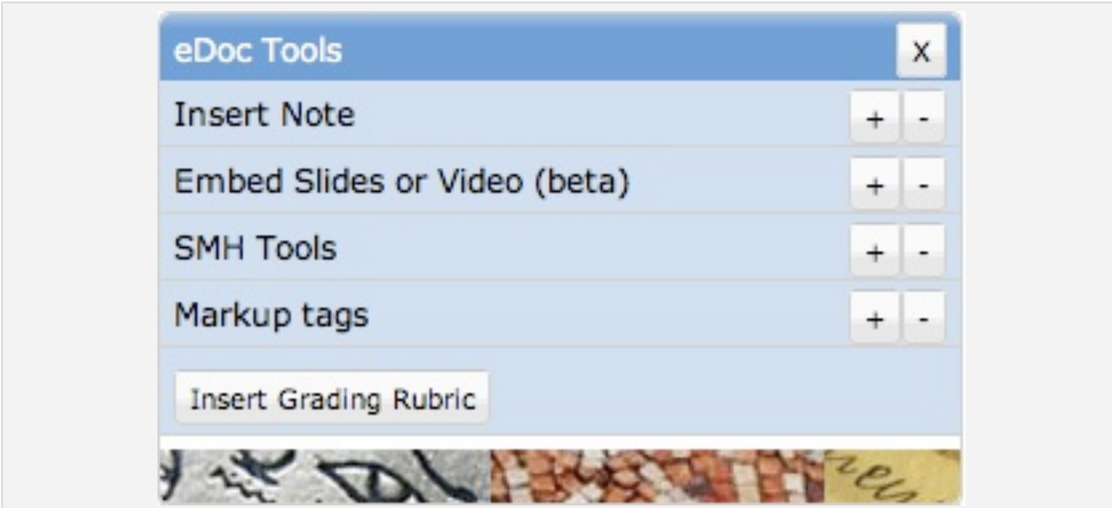
The Parachut<e> addresses broader issues of digital pedagogy in the context of an advice column for piloters of the <emma> LMS at Georgia Tech. For those of you who are new to The Parachut<e> and <emma>, you can find a more detailed discussion of both here.

This week's post evolved from a number of different sources. First, some comments I received from students suggested they might not be familiar with one of the key features of <emma> markup in graded or peer-reviewed documents. Thinking about how to teach students to use <emma>'s feedback tools got me thinking more generally about the issues of feedback and how students use it, which led me to two previous TECHStyle posts by Kathryn Crowther and Leeann Hunter. Katy's post considers the problem of how we can use tools and time efficiently to provide meaningful ansynchronous and face-to-face feedback on student writing. Leeann discusses the difficulty of getting students to think about their contributions to group projects from a qualitative as well as a quantitative perspective, and explores how lessons learned from "social commerce" might apply when we're designing collaborative projects.

<emma> has the potential, using various rather nifty bits of data collection, to make the act of marking a student composition meaningful for assessment purposes beyond the immediate moment of individual assessment on that one assignment. While individual instructors mark individual essays, for example, <emma> generates and collects data that can be mined, interpreted, and evaluated in order to help assess that individual student's progress over the course of a semester, the problems a whole class might be having with an issue such as quote integration, or the success of a program in meeting curricular goals. Drawing on the great insights offered by Katy and Leeann, I started to think about whether it might be possible to design some sort of classroom activity that provides students with additional opportunities for face to face instructor feedback, gets them thinking about their work qualitatively, helps them learn how to use <emma> feedback tools, and turns individual assessment into a learning tool for the class as a whole.

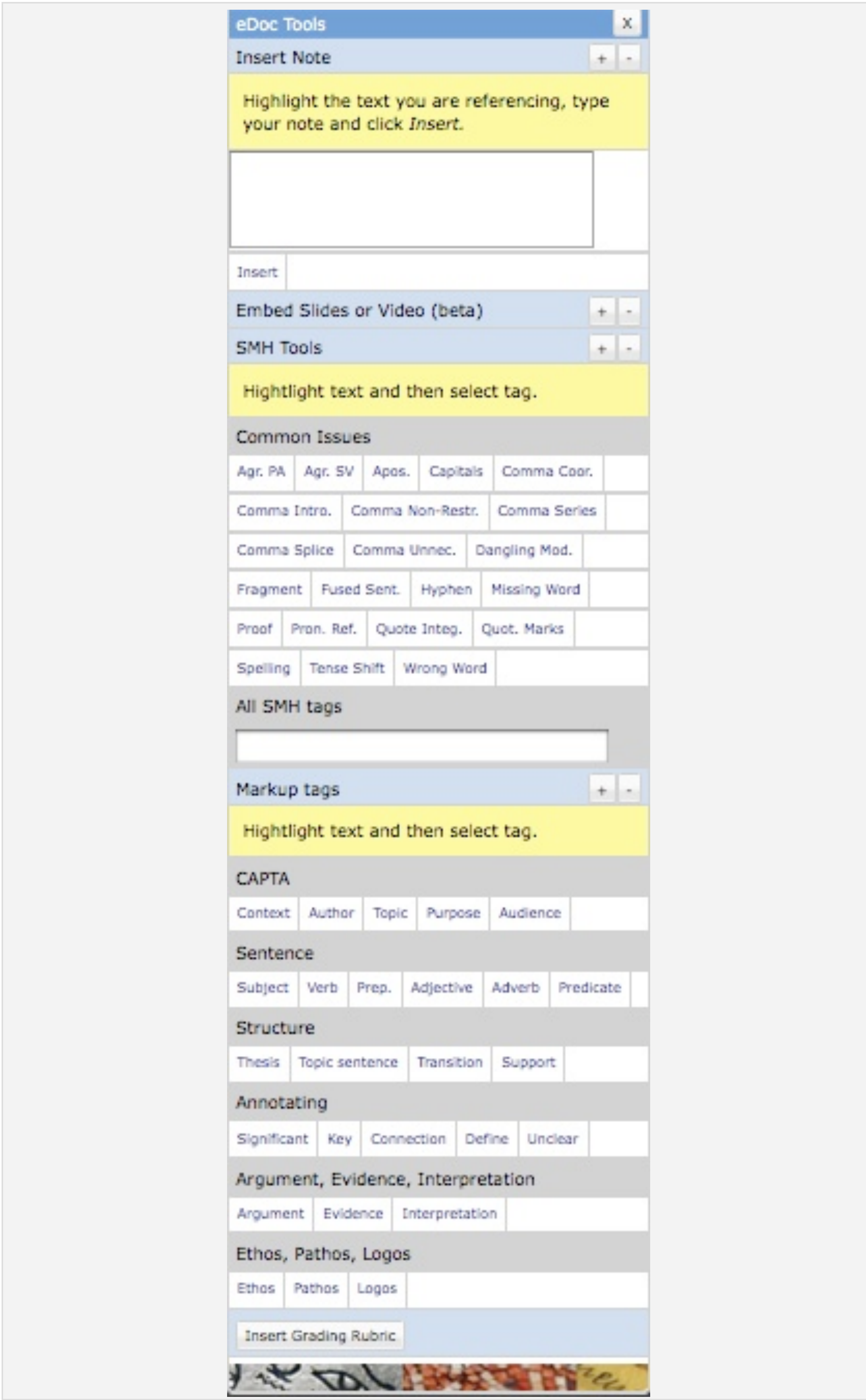
I ended up with an idea for a post-assessment peer review exercise. I haven't tried this yet, so I am really interested in hearing what you think, including whether it's even a good idea in the first place. Here are my thoughts on how it might work.

Step One: Mark Student Compositions



Markup and annotation tools are housed on the eDoc Tools palette.

<emma> offers a number of markup tools that instructors can use to mark student writing. So the idea is to use these, however you see fit, to provide feedback on student writing. For eDocs, the markup tools are housed in the eDoc toolbar:


eDoc Tools
x
Insert Note
+ -
Highlight the text you are referencing, type your note and click *Insert*.
Insert
Embed Slides or Video (beta)
+ -
SMH Tools
+ -
Hightlight text and then select tag.
Common Issues
Agr. PA
Agr. SV
Apos.
Capitals
Comma Coor.
Comma Intro.
Comma Non-Restr.
Comma Series
Comma Splice
Comma Unnec.
Dangling Mod.
Fragment
Fused Sent.
Hyphen
Missing Word
Proof
Pron. Ref.
Quote Integ.
Quot. Marks
Spelling
Tense Shift
Wrong Word
All SMH tags
Markup tags
+ -
Hightlight text and then select tag.
CAPTA
Context
Author
Topic
Purpose
Audience
Sentence
Subject
Verb
Prep.
Adjective
Adverb
Predicate
Structure
Thesis
Topic sentence
Transition
Support
Annotating
Significant
Key
Connection
Define
Unclear
Argument, Evidence, Interpretation
Argument
Evidence
Interpretation
Ethos, Pathos, Logos
Ethos
Pathos
Logos
Insert Grading Rubric

This image shows the eDoc Tools palette with all of the tool menus expanded.

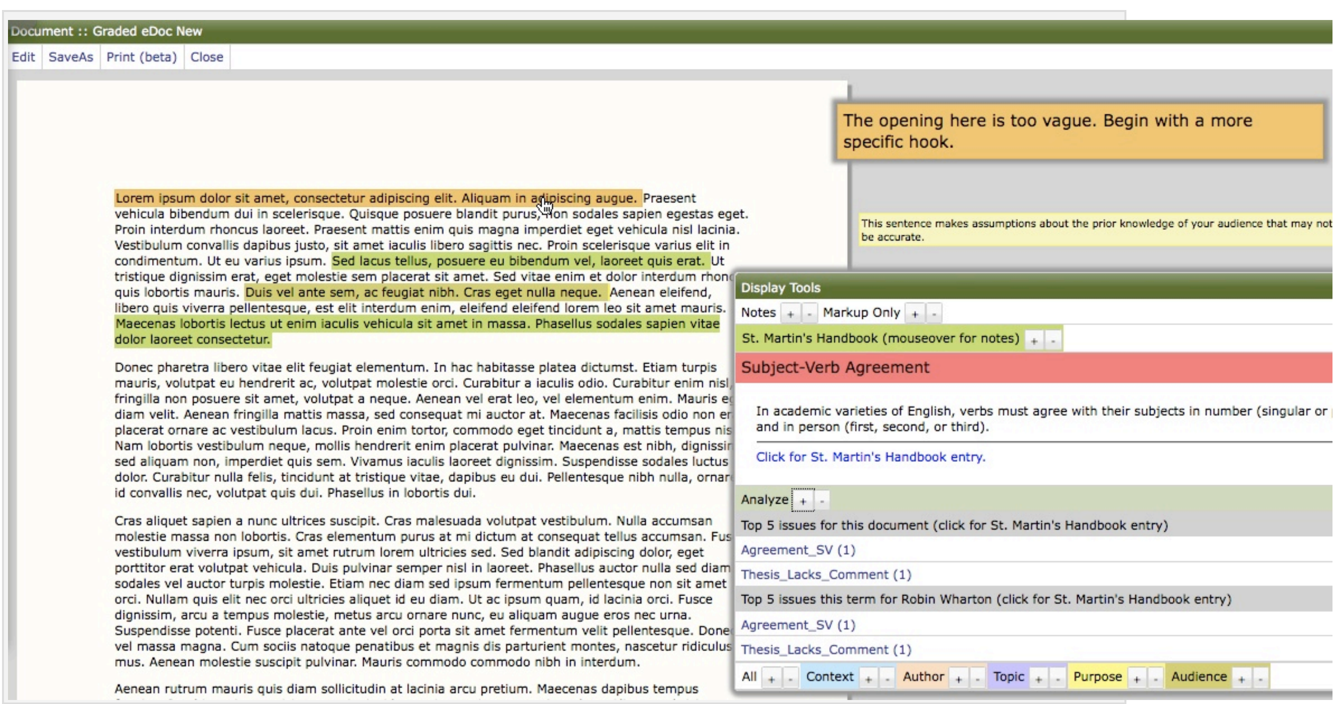
Step Two: Conduct a Brief In-class Workshop

During the first class period after you have released marked essays to the students, ask for a volunteer to have her marked essay "workshopped" by the class. You can take this opportunity to show students how things work, ask students for questions about the feedback they received on their own papers, and perhaps offer a debrief on what you saw as the most common strengths and weaknesses, and maybe even areas of improvement in this set of papers. The exercise doesn't have to take a whole class period, but it should familiarize students with both the tools and the concepts with which they'll be working in the peer review exercise.

Step 3: Assign An Asynchronous Peer Review Exercise

Ask students to work in groups of three or four and complete an out-of-class, asynchronous peer review of one another's marked essays. The exercise could be structured and focused on a single aspect of the rubric, for example asking students to give their peers specific suggestions about how to improve organization. Or it could be loosely structured, asking students to pose questions about the feedback they have received that their peers then attempt to answer.

Step 4: Set Aside Some Class Time for Discussion or Schedule Group Conferences



Using the eDoc Tools, peers and instructors can offer comments and use markup tools to identify errors, and highlight formal or structural features. In the display, mousing over marked elements can call up additional explanation that in turn provides a link to an eText or external web resource.

Once students have completed the out-of-class peer review, you could set aside some class time when they can get together in their small groups and talk to you and their peers. In the alternative, you could suggest that they schedule group conferences if they have additional questions. The idea behind small groups is that maybe you can start a conversation, guided by the feedback students have received and given, in which you are hopefully not the dominant participant.

Your Thoughts?

Obviously, this whole exercise presumes that students probably have an incentive to revise, either for a portfolio or for extra credit. Drawing upon Leeann's ideas regarding student collaboration, I'm wondering if it might even help to give peer review partners extra credit if their reviews lead to a higher portfolio grade or extra credit based on the revised essay. In addition, even if you don't include letter grades along with your feedback, if you use a rubric, students will have a pretty good idea of the grades their peer review partners received. It takes up class time, so including a post-assessment peer review on a project might mean dropping a pre-assessment peer review along the way.

What do you think? Do you know of any studies that look at the effectiveness of similar kinds of activities? Have you tried anything like this in your own classroom? Please, let us know.

5 Things Everyone Should Know About Copyright and Open Access -
Robin Wharton

To mark Open Access week, on Thursday, October 21, Georgia Tech's Library and Information Center sponsored a panel, "Expanding the Reach of Your Research: An Open Forum on Authorship and Your Intellectual Property." Evans Harrell (School of Sciences, Mathematics) facilitated, and TyAnna Herrington (Literature, Communication and Culture), Steve Harvey (School of Biology), and Aaron Bobick(School of Interactive Computing) from the faculty spoke, with Joe Beck of Kilpatrick Stockton LLP as a guest presenter. Even though I am a staunch advocate of Open Access, I might not have gone except for the fact that I used to work with Joe Beck and thought it might be a good chance to catch up with him. It's not that I didn't think the panel would provide useful information. It's just that staying on campus until 6:00 pm means that I miss my youngest daughter's bedtime, and I didn't really expect to hear much I hadn't heard before. I am an intellectual property lawyer, and I consider myself pretty well-versed in copyright, trademark, and patent law, as well as the theory and practice behind the Open Access movement. I ended up being very glad I went. I not only learned a few things that I didn't know already, I also got a better sense for which of the arguments I've heard before in favor of Open Access might resonate most strongly with academics from a diverse array of disciplines. What follows is a redux of the session, organized around what I consider to be five of the most important points made by the presenters.

1. Copyright owners cannot "preempt" the fair use market, or even though someone else paid for a license doesn't necessarily mean you have to pay for one, too.

Joe Beck, who is currently working as lead counsel for Google in The Author's Guild, et al. v. Google, Inc.litigation, started off with a presentation that provided a good overview of the history of transformative use in cases where a party raises fair use as a defense to copyright infringement. Significantly, Mr. Beck reminded the audience of the line of cases following Kelly v. Arriba Soft, Corp. in which courts have found that a defendant's use of the copyrighted work was transformative, even though the work was copied in its entirety. One of the most important principles to come out of that thread of case law was stated most clearly in Bill Graham Archives v. Dorling Kindersley, Ltd.: "[A] copyright holder cannot prevent others from entering fair use markets merely 'by developing or licensing a market for parody, news reporting, educational or other transformative uses of its own creative work.'" That means that, even where a copyright owner has created a "fair use" market for the copyrighted work by, for example, granting licenses to derivative authors who create parodies or commentaries that use the copyrighted work, the copyright owner cannot use evidence that "fair use" market would be harmed in order to prevent someone from making actual fair use of the copyrighted work.

2. For academics, speech interests are often just as, if not more important than economic incentives in motivating the creation of new intellectual property.

TyAnna Herrington, a professor in the Department of Literature, Communication, and Culture and herself an intellectual property attorney, spoke next. Dr. Herrington has published a number of books on the subject, including Controlling Voices: Intellectual Property, Humanistic Studies, and The Internet and Intellectual Property on Campus: Students' Rights and Responsibilities. She offered a lucid explanation of the balance U.S. copyright law strikes between authors' right and users' rights. In the Intellectual Property Clause, the U.S. Constitution gives Congress the right to make laws granting to authors a limited monopoly—e.g., a copyright or patent—for a limited time over their intellectual property in order "to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts." The public interest in creating and maintaining a vibrant and thriving community of innovators is what provides the justification for copyright law in the first instance. The economic incentives created by copyright law benefit the copyright owner in the short term, but the public are supposed to be the ultimate beneficiaries in the long term.

After summarizing how copyright law is supposed to work, Dr. Herrington then turned to questioning whether the economic incentives created by copyright are the only or even the most important factor motivating academic authors. The economic benefits academics receive for producing intellectual property are in the overwhelming majority of cases indirect benefits in the form of promotion, raises, and tenure. These indirect incentives would arguably continue to operate even if we all decided tomorrow to get rid of copyright law. She went on to suggest we consider as well the extent to which academic authors have a personal, as well as financial, interest in the intellectual property we create. This way of thinking about the relationship between authors and their work underlies what intellectual property attorneys call moral rights. Unlike copyright, which is a financial interest that can be alienated, an author's moral rights arise from the fact her work is like an extension of her person. Moral rights may therefore persist and might be asserted by an author, and in some cases her heirs, even when she has sold or given away the copyright to her work. In addition to pointing out how this personal or reputational interest might play a role in academics' production of intellectual property, Dr. Herrington also noted that academics often write simply because we see the need to speak, regardless of whether we will receive direct or indirect economic benefit from our speech acts. Consequently, within the academy, a variety of professional and personal interests work in conjunction with, and perhaps even in spite of the economic incentives provided by copyright law to keep the “progress of Science and the useful Arts” humming along.

3. In the wake of the NIH's implementation of its Public Access Policy, the tide within the publishing industry for scientific journals is turning in favor of Open Access.

Photo courtesy of jon smith 'una nos lucror' via Flickr

Steve Harvey, Professor and Georgia Research Alliance Eminent Scholar in Structural Biology, was up next after Dr. Herrington. Although I had heard about the Public Access Policy adopted by the National Institutes of Health in 2008 and the Public Library of Science, I was not familiar with the specific details of how these and other Open Access initiatives have been playing out in the scientific community. Under the NIH's Public Access Policy, scientists who receive funding for their work from the NIH must ensure that any papers resulting from their funded research are made available on NIH's PubMed Central no later than 12 months after their initial publication. A number of private funding agencies have implemented similar policies, some of them requiring public accessibility within six months of or even concurrent with journal publication. The Public Library of Science "is a nonprofit organization of scientists and physicians committed to making the world's scientific and medical literature a freely available public resource" that sponsors seven online, Open Access journals.

In the sciences, Open Access publication is increasingly supported by publication fees. For example, such fees, ranging from $1,350.00 to $2,900, fund publication of the PloS journals. According to Dr. Harvey, traditional journals have adopted a similar strategy. A number of prominent journals now agree to provide Open Access to all papers within 12 months of their initial publication so that publishing authors will be in compliance with their obligations under the NIH policy. For those authors who receive funding from agencies that require Open Access even sooner, these journals charge publication fees. In some cases, the funding agency requiring Open Access will pick up the tab; in others, the publishing authors are responsible for the cost.

In STEM disciplines, where funded research and co-authorship are the norm, this seems to be an acceptable way to share the costs of Open Access. The cost of publication can be folded into the budget for a grant or shared among co-authors. For those of us doing traditional humanities research, however, even a modest publication fee might seem cost-prohibitive. Single-author publication means fewer people to share the expense, and increasing the cost of self-funded research means even less access for graduate students, adjuncts, and postdocs who are already working and living on shoestring budgets. That is why I was particularly intrigued and inspired by the talk Aaron Bobick gave when he took over from Dr. Harvey.

4. Publishers need you more than you need them, or just because something is free, that doesn't mean it is without value.

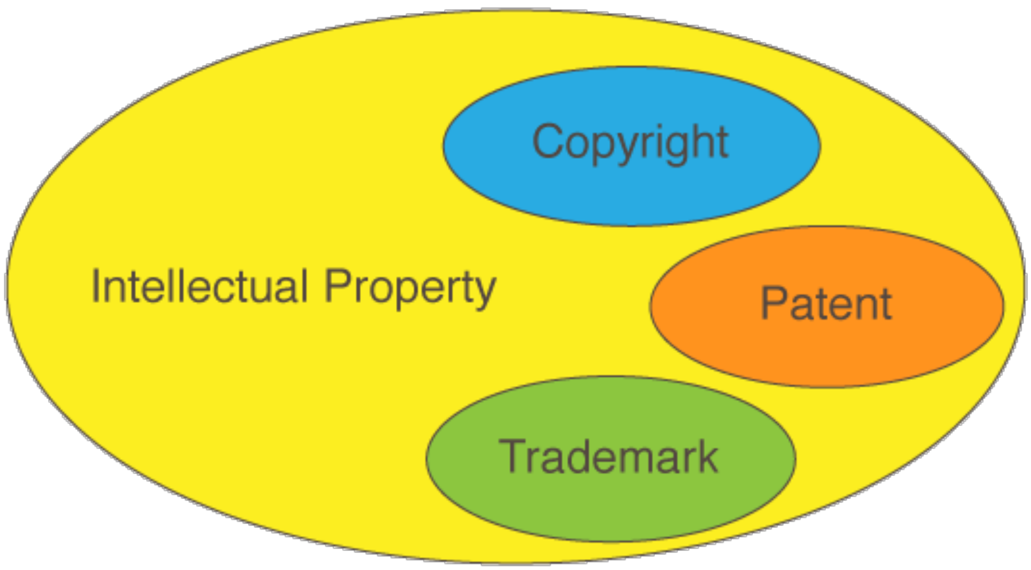
Aaron Bobick—Professor and Chair, School of Interactive Computing—led with the observation that quality and rigorous peer review are not inextricably bound up with the traditional academic model of print publication, or even strong copyright controls. He described how computer science has evolved a robust model of peer-reviewed, online publication in the academic conferences. He went on to suggest that review prior to publication is not the only way to control for quality. In support, he cited the recent example of Vinay Deolalikar, a mathematician working at HP Labs, who posted to his personal website a draft of a paper in which he claimed to have proved that P != NP. Within hours of its posting, mathematicians working in the blogosphere began tearing the working proof apart, and the emerging consensus seems to be that, even though Deolalikar may have made some important contributions to thinking about the problem, the proof is flawed. In response to Dr. Bobick's discussion of Deolalikar's case, Dr. Harvey and Dr. Harrell noted the Open Access, open publication forum arXiv.org has developed mechanisms of self-correction, similar to those that keep Wikipedia trolls in check, whereby potentially dodgy work is quickly superseded or counterbalanced by the publication of work that calls it into question.

It seems that Milton was right in the Aeropagitica when he argued that post-publication controls can be a perfectly sufficient means of regulating the quality of public discourse. Of course, I do not think moving beyond the traditional model of academic publication requires that we levy fines against or jail "blasphemers" and "charlatans." What I take away from Milton in light of Bobick's talk, however, is a reminder that gatekeeping is just one alternative out of many. Rethinking the role copyright should play in academic publishing does not necessarily involve leaving peer review behind as well. While we are at it, though, should we not at least take a second look at the other controls we place on the flow of information? Members of a disciplinary community might work together to create an Open Access framework in which free or relatively inexpensive, peer-reviewed, online journals, and self-publication on blogs and personal webpages both play vital roles in knowledge generation and curation within the discipline. Dr. Harrell observed that a number of Fields Medalists already maintain high-profile blogs (A quick search found What's New, maintained by 2006 Fields Medalist and UCLA mathematician, Terence Tao), and the panelists seemed to be in agreement that all the alternative model of academic publishing needs is the publication of one Nobel Prize-winning contribution to take it from avant-garde to thoroughly respectable.

Which leads me to Dr. Bobick's closing point, publishers need us more than we need them. If academics collectively take a stand against draconian enforcement of copyright at all costs, we have leverage because we create and, in many cases, give away for free the content on which the academic publishing industry relies. In addition to supporting Open Access initiatives on our campuses and within our fields of study, we should be more willing to mark up contracts rather than signing them without question, and in some cases, without even reading them. As Mr. Beck noted, all most academic publishers really need is the right of first publication and a non-exclusive license to re-publish in existing and new media.

They do not need the whole copyright, which is a bundle of rights that can be parceled out as an author sees fit. At Georgia Tech, the library's Scholarly Communication and Digital Services staff can provide alternative copyright documents that authors can use in lieu of the standard contracts offered by publishers.

5. "Intellectual Property" is bigger than copyright, patent, and trademark, and it's not just a legal concept.



I will close with an issue that came up during the Q&A session. A researcher posed a question that required the panel to think about the relationship between how intellectual property is defined as a disciplinary concept, and how it is defined within the law. That question was followed by one from a faculty member concerned with the misappropriation or misrepresentation of his lectures in the notes students post to course-help sites. I subscribe to what some people might call a "copyleft" position. I also have a better understanding than most people about what exactly copyright does and does not cover. You cannot use copyright law to prevent someone from plagiarizing your ideas, and you are going to have a very difficult time using copyright law to stop a student from disseminating her independently-authored account of what took place in your lecture, i.e., her notes. That does not mean, though, that we do not have ethical obligations to respect what scholars in a given field of study have determined is the intellectual property of our colleagues by complying with the discursive conventions that govern attribution and acknowledgment of their work. Similarly, that does not mean we cannot ask our students to respect our intellectual property and the time and effort we put into course design and lectures.

What we definitely should do is consider how we can use disciplinary ethics to promote the responsible creation and use of intellectual property within our disciplines, rather than relying on lawyers and legislators to do that for us. We should also think creatively about how we can use models based on free and open access, rather than enclosure and restriction, to make sure our intellectual work in the classroom is represented fairly and accurately. For example, Dr. Harvey suggested that instructors can appoint a note-taker whom they can trust to represent the material fairly and accurately to keep records for the class. Mr. Beck and Dr. Bobick recommended simply making one's own notes available to get students to pay attention and stay engaged in class, and to set the record straight as to what was and was not covered. Instructors might also consider using a badge system, similar in principle to the one prototyped at the recent Mozilla Drumbeat Festival, to encourage students to contribute to an official course website or wiki, rather than an unofficial for-profit course-help site, that can become a dedicated and evolving resource for use in other classes.

Who Knows What Evil Lurks: Shadow Scholar, Paper Mills, and the (Alleged) Demise of Higher Education - Candice Welhausen

By now most of us have probably read the 11/12/10 *Chronicle* article entitled "The Shadow Scholar." Part exposé, part blame-game—" Say what you want about me, but I am not the reason your students cheat"— 'Ed Dante' details his experiences working for an essay-writing company. He's built a career producing custom papers for a wide range of clientele on a wide range of topics—business, literature, nursing, architecture. In the past year alone, he claims to have written over 5,000 pages. He's been doing this for quite some time, and there are many more like him.

As I read Shadow's account, I experienced a Kübler-Ross-esque trajectory of emotions—shock, dismay, disbelief (really? there are students who would/could!? pay $2000 for a paper? he wrote a 75-page proposal in a weekend? How is that even possible?..), and, of course, anger. Many of these reactions are well articulated in the 441 comments posted thus far. #2 observes: "I understand that the author wants educators to shoulder the blame…. But we're not mind readers, nor…do we have the time to become detectives…" Yep. And #10 offers: "Educators at every level have the opportunity to either ignore or help address this problem…." Agreed. Finally #71 proposes: "It's funny that so many of you…ignore the responsibility of the student. " Definitely. Shadow would have us believe that everyone in the system is culpable except the person who actually makes the decision to cheat: the student.

I, of course, and apparently naively, would like to think that producing a custom paper for my class would be exceedingly difficult, if not, in fact, prohibitive. I require students to research and write about campus-based 'problems' for which they then need to propose solutions. Each assignment builds on the previous, and students have to actually use the documents that their peers create. Many students also receive information and input from a 'client'—someone who works for the on-campus department of interest. If student work is inaccurate or plagiarized, it becomes apparent pretty quickly. That said, to echo the sentiment of #2 above, I'm no detective. I don't doubt I've been fooled. But I've been more concerned with things like trying to teach students about creating technical communication artifacts. I haven't really been thinking about paper mills.

But I still feel left with what to do, if anything. Shadow is certainly gloating; he's proud to have subverted the system that failed him so miserably ("the tremendous disappointment that awaited me in college"). But at the same time, he knows that "Say what you want about me…" doesn't cut it. It's what he tells himself so he can sleep at night. Why else write this piece?

So in response from my small corner of the world, I suggest not a radical departure from what many of us already do:

- reinforce process by requiring students to turn in drafts—multiple drafts, if possible;
- have students compose and complete assignments in class (upload to T-Square; CR/NC only), again, if possible; and
- engage with our students about their work—ask questions, discuss options, make content-level suggestions, but also be willing (if possible) to let students make their own composing decisions.

These are the things I CAN do. And by doing these things, I'm attempting to create an environment that not only promotes student interest, ownership, and investment in their own work, but also shows students that I'm interested in what they're doing.

As this semester ends, my students have begun final presentations, and so far I'm pretty impressed. Today I learned about creating an on-campus bike rental system, and a plan for renovating the John J. Harper Wind Tunnel in Aerospace Engineering. Later this week I'll know about designs for insulin injection devices for vision impaired diabetics, and the feasibility of creating a GT cyber café. These are exciting projects, and I feel accomplished to have mentored these efforts. I look forward to more of the same in the spring.

What Does It Mean to do the Humanities? - Andy Famiglietti

I'm a digital humanities scholar, but I have a bit of a quandary. I think I know what "the digital" is (mostly) but I'm having a harder and harder time finding a definition for the humanities that I'm comfortable with. This discomfort sometimes manifests itself in unfortunate and anti-social ways, as when a colleague mentions doing something "in a humanistic way," and I blurt out, "yeah, but what the (expletive) does that mean?"

This is not a way to make, or keep, friends among a group of humanities scholars.

So, to try to relieve my frustration and anxiety, I'd like to bring this question up openly and honestly, and try to discuss it. Techstyle seemed like a good place to do this. For you, what does it mean to do the humanities? I'd love to hear your answers in the comments. To get us started, let me throw a few possible answers to this question out there and explain why I don't find them completely satisfying.

The humanities are defined by a canon

Certainly this is a traditional, stable definition, one embraced by many humanities departments (implicitly, in their course offerings and hiring decisions, if not explicitly). The humanities are the traditions that read and critique "literature." The problem with this, of course, is that most of the methods for defining such a canon seem, to me at least, difficult to justify, even using our own body of theory. The canon as defined implicitly, by the offerings of English dept. survey courses, seems to be fading further and further into the past, and its composition seems more and more arbitrary in the face of the flood of information faced by our students every day. The canonical approach seems to exclude humanities scholars like me, who study new and evolving texts like Wikipedia, and often seems to ignore analysis of much of the culture of the 20th century. Alex Reid does a good job of arguing against this sort of canonical definition of the humanities in his discussion of what he calls the "strong definition of the digital humanities." Furthermore, as tools like Google Books ngrams show, the literary canon is unlikely to be a stable preserve for any one set of disciplines' study much longer.

The humanities are concerned with the reading of texts

Perhaps instead of using a canon to define the humanities, we might instead use a methodology: the critical reading. The humanities are the traditions that read texts, and everything can be a text! The problem here, for me, is that reading, as a method, seems ill defined at best. More practically, in my study of Wikipedia, I quickly discovered practical limitations to the technique of "reading" when dealing with large and constantly moving texts! In practical terms, Wikipedia cannot be read, and yet texts like Wikipedia are likely to make up an increasingly important part of our cultural landscape going forward. If the humanities is tied to methods that struggle to make sense of these texts, where does that leave us? I have, of course, found methods that I find mostly effective for studying Wikipedia, but I've had to borrow these from the social sciences. This sometimes makes me feel like a second-rate anthropologist (and I know I'm not the only digital humanist with this anxiety).

The humanities are the disciplines concerned with values

On the other hand, maybe the humanities aren't defined by a canon or a method, but instead a larger area of concern. Maybe the humanities are the disciplines concerned with social values and cultural meaning. As one friend quipped about the president's call for STEM focused charter schools, "will they learn about freedom and justice in math class?" This is an attractive definition of the humanities, and one I often use myself. I often pitch my class to my students as an opportunity to learn the skills that will make them citizens, rather than simply workers. Jim Noles makes the same case in a recent post to the Huffington Post in which he asks, as I have, "what are the humanities?"

Yet, as much as I like this definition, I don't always sleep comfortably with it. It seems to imply that, without the organized study of the humanities, cultures would lapse into collections of mechanistic drones, unable to consider questions of truth or beauty. This simply isn't true. I've seen the inside of technical cultures, geek enclaves and hacker freeholds and they are full of wonder and poetry. Algorithms for decrypting DVDs transformed into epic poems. Romantic jokes about the Fibonacci sequence. Furthermore, again, ask any anthropologist and cultural value is what *they* do. What's our niche?

So, that's my little provocation. I hope it opens up a dialog, since I don't want to dismiss the humanities (my career is bound up with them, after all), but rather to find a definition for them I can rest a little easier with. Can anyone help me?

Unease in the Digital Humanities - Regina Martin

This post continues the discussion begun by Andy Famiglietti in, “What does it mean to do the humanities?” I think the suggestive wording of Famiglietti’s question offers a useful means of approaching its answer. Instead of asking what we study—What are the humanities?—Famiglietti asks what we do as humanities scholars and teachers. The humanities are not a particular object of study—a cannon, texts, values, culture, and so on—but a particular endeavor. This isn’t, however, to suggest that the humanities be defined by its methodology either. Different humanities disciplines, after all, use very different methodologies.

To speak of “disciplines” is to invoke the specter of the institution, and I think looking at the place of the humanities within the academic institution might be a good place to start as we try to figure out what it is we actually do. In recent years, “the decline of the humanities” has become a familiar refrain. But as a 2010 article in *Inside Higher Ed* reports, student interest and enrollment in the humanities has remained steady since the 1970s, even, the article’s author is surprised to learn, during economic downturns like the one we’re experiencing now. The humanities are not declining so much as experiencing an intensification of the uneasiness that has always characterized its place in the American university.

As Gerald Graff explains in *Professing Literature*, the humanities have always had a vexed relationship with the American university, which grew up during the age of specialization and professionalization and educated the professional middle classes (including university professors) into existence. American universities, Graff writes, “gravitated toward a scientific model of knowledge” in which publication became the empirical evidence of a faculty member’s productivity (65). Within such a model, the humanities, whose relationship to conventional measures of productivity is naturally problematic, were left to "adapt themselves as best they could" (65). It seems that over a century later we're still adapting, and I think the digital humanities is yet another manifestation of or attempt to create a more peaceful existence within a university structure that emphasizes applicability. The "digital" in digital humanities promises to open up avenues of communication (and funding opportunities?) between the humanities and the commercial world where the mission of the American university finds its application and, by extension, its justification . . . so the reasoning goes, anyway.

But the question remains, if the "digital" in digital humanities promises to bridge the gap between what is often perceived to be the cloistered and esoteric world of the humanities and the commercial world of productivity and precise value that is the humanities' proverbial antithesis, where does that leave the "humanities" in this equation? Hopefully, they stay put as a source of tension and contention within the university. The ill-defined nature and value of the humanities is, I think, the very source of their definition and value. To invoke Jameson's dialectic of form and content, the humanities are a kind of content that by its very nature resists form, and the process of trying to shape that content into a form (whether it be departments, areas of study, mission statements, articles, monographs, or some yet undiscovered form) is perhaps the endeavor that marks out the humanities as what they are . . . or rather, what they do. Such a "definition" of the humanities perhaps condemns the humanities to a perpetual state of unease, but this unease is our momentum. The "digital" in digital humanities may make us slightly more at ease with the form of the university, but the "humanities" guarantees our engagement with that form will be fraught with tension, a tension that some of us might even admit to enjoying.

Watson + Capitalism = ??? - Andy Famiglietti

This week, I'd like to continue my series of provocations by posting another short piece about a topic that raises questions I can't easily answer.

Earlier this week, a piece of natural language processing software, dubbed Watson, developed by IBM, successfully and decisively defeated two human opponents on the game show Jeopardy. The potential implications of this technology seem immense. *Wired* reports IBM, "sees a future in which fields like medical diagnosis, business analytics, and tech support are automated by question-answering software like Watson." One of the humans Watson trounced, former Jeopardy champion Ken Jennings, mused in in the same article, "'Quiz show contestant' may be the first job made redundant by Watson, but I'm sure it won't be the last."

The question, for me, is what are the larger implications of this emerging automation of intellectual work for our political economy? What happens when we automate vast numbers of service sector jobs? The same jobs that had absorbed (some) of the manufacturing jobs automation had eliminated from the manufacturing sector? Are we on the cusp of a moment, predicted long ago by cybernetics pioneer Norbert Wiener, when "the average human being [...] has nothing to sell that's worth anyone's money to buy?"

I find the notion all too plausible. Blame my time spent reading Peter Watts. Emerging media scholar David Parry, always a bigger optimist than me, suggested a skill that may remain the unique domain of human beings during a discussion of Watson's victory on twitter. In response to a half-joking tweet in which a fellow academic questioned her own employability a in post-Watson world, Dave wrote, "well yeah, that's why we need academics who can do critical thinking, computers aren't so good at that yet."

Critical thinking is a good thing, and indeed something computers still struggle with. However, under capitalism, meaningful critical thinking, the ability to evaluate arguments, reflect on the big picture situation, enact alternatives to the status quo, is exactly what has been denied the working class. Critical thinking is for capital, the cognitive resources of the working class have been employed in quite a different mode, and one that machines like Watson will likely find all too easy to replicate. This is not to say, of course, that working class people are incapable of critical thought, or that they don't employ critical thinking in their daily lives, only that this thought has not been granted economic value under capitalism.

The question we must ask, then, is what sort of shifts could be made in our political economy to accommodate technologies like Watson, and what sort of shifts are we likely to actually make? Could we shift our productive mode to value critical thinking by ordinary people? Will we devalue the labor of a vast cross-section of humanity, further destroying the middle class? What tactics or moves might make one shift more likely than the other?

Clearly, I don't know. What do you think?

Your Students Care More Than You Think - Candice Welhausen

Responding to Students' Texts

How much does our written feedback on our students' work matter to them? Do our students even read our comments? And if so, do they understand them? Why do students seem to find some comments useful and ignore others? The short answer according Nancy Sommers (Harvard) and Chris Anson (NC State): err…., it's complicated.

These kinds of research questions have long been an area of scholarly inquiry in writing studies. In a Friday afternoon panel presentation, Sommers and Anson offered insight in their 4Cs panel presentation on two pilot projects they are currently conducting ("Mysteries in the Margins: Teachers' Comments Through Students' Eyes"; K.06, 3:30-4:45).

Sommers' project involves 50 first-year writing students at a community college who share their experiences responding to their writing teacher's comments. Her major findings thus far indicate that, yes, our written feedback matters—it matters a lot actually—and yes, students (usually!) do read our comments. They read our comments to understand how they can improve their writing as well as for encouragement . That is, they try to read our comments, but, no, they often don't understand them. And hence, they're often don't incorporate them into future drafts because they're unsure about what to do next. Thus, what (to us) often looks like our students ignoring our comments on their papers is actually a demonstration of uncertainty. They don't know what to do, so they do nothing.

Anson's research, on the other hand, focuses on the perceived value of written comments to student texts (either hand written or electronic) versus using a screen capture software to give students recorded oral comments as the teacher reads through the paper. Using the software, the teacher can also highlight particular areas and give targeted feedback. Many students in Anson's project reported perceiving the screen capture comments as more personal because they can hear the teacher's voice and thus can glean additional contextual information from the teacher's voice inflections. Many also felt that the oral response demonstrated a higher level of teacher engagement with the paper. One student remarked that after reviewing the screen capture he felt that his teacher had really read the paper and thought more about her comments to him. (Teachers reported spending about the same amount of time responding to student work whether they were giving written comments or using screen capture technology. Regardless of the approach, Anson also found that teacher response is essential to student learning).

So what kinds of things can we do to give more effective and useful comments that help our students improve their writing?

- As one student in Sommers' study puts it, "Give the sweet before the sour." In other words, give students some kind of positive feedback before negative feedback. Tell them what they did well before suggesting areas for improvement.
- Anson found that students are largely unable to separate their 'cognitive' and 'affective' responses. In other words, they can't separate their feelings about the teacher's comments from the instructive value of the comments. Further both Sommers and Anson found that students are easily discouraged. Receiving what they perceive as too many negative comments may cause some students to give up.
- Another student in Sommers study also suggested that "Less is more." When students see too many comments—"that sea of red ink"—they get overwhelmed. (Previous research in the field of composition also confirms that students can only deal with 2-3 writing issues in a particular artifact. Pick your battles).
- Avoid teaching new lessons in the margin. Students need what Sommers refers to as 'background'—references to material or instruction given in class. For example, it's confusing to students if we remark on the 'coherence' of a paper, but we've never used that term in class.
- Don't fix surface-level errors in student papers. (Previous research in the field of composition confirms this as well). Connect students with resources and offer your assistance, but hold students accountable for surface-level correctness.

News and Notes from the DevLab - Andy Famiglietti

In addition to my other responsibilities as a Brittain Fellow, I have also been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to serve as coordinator of DevLab, the Georgia Tech Writing and Communication Program's Research and Development Lab. Over the course of the next few weeks, I will be bringing you some short updates on DevLab's progress.

In many ways, I see the mission of DevLab is closely aligned with what Alex Reid has called, "the strong definition" of the "Digital Humanities." In a post to his blog earlier this week (a post, I should mention, previously discussed by fellow TECHStyle blogger Roger Whitson, here), Reid explained that he believed we could offer both a "weak" and a "strong" answer to the question "what are the digital humanities?" The weak answer is, "one that draws some fuzzy and arbitrary line among digital technologies and says if you use these technologies to study humanistic content then you are a digital humanist." The use of the word "weak" here should not be taken as a pejorative. There has been plenty of excellent work done using digital techniques to analyze subject matter within the traditional canon of the humanities. However, I find Reid's "strong" definition of the digital humanities enticing for the opportunities it opens up for expanding the subject matter of the humanities beyond the traditional canon and the skill set of the humanist beyond textual analysis. For Reid, the "strong" definition of the digital humanities, "has two main components. There are *makers,* who build various digital tools for use in humanistic research and teaching. Then there are *researchers*, who study humanistic aspects of digital media and culture."

These twin drives, building unique tools and expanding the scope of humanistic research to encompass the digital heart of our contemporary media and culture, are what DevLab seeks to move forward. We're just getting started, but possible future projects for the lab include:

- Contributing to the <emma> project, which is building a unique form of courseware designed for the writing classroom
- Building smartphone applications for humanities teaching and research
- Working to build flexible tools for visualizing texts that could be of use both in classroom and research settings
- Researching and teaching communication practices in immersive worlds like Second Life

Stay tuned for further developments!

End of Semester Wrap Up: Fall 2010 Edition - Roger Whitson

For the end of the Fall semester, I challenged six Brittain Fellows to give me a reflection on the difficulties and the triumphs experienced in their courses. What follows is a series of meditations on a wide variety of pedagogical subjects: from presentations of student projects to theories of student feedback, collaboration, time management, and undergraduate mentoring. We hope that you enjoy the first of what we envision will be many editions of semester wrap-ups. Happy holidays from the Writing and Communication program!

- **"Science and Pseudoscience"** Bob Blaskiewicz demonstrates the power of visiting actual campus laboratories when discussing the difference between real experimental science and the pseudosciences of ghost hunting, astrology, and intelligent design. A series of student projects from Blaskiewicz's class provide insight into a powerful course combining scientific and humanistic inquiry.
- **"Thinking About Feedback"** Kathryn Crowther considers her methods of providing feedback to students during the semester, covering strategies like the trackback feature on Microsoft Word, face-to-face conferences with students, and recording podcasts. Crowther's pedagogy combines multimodal responses that improve communication between herself and her students.
- **"Collaboration in the Classroom"** Leeann Hunter examines her challenges grading collaborative projects and develops an innovative new strategy to both recognize individual participation and encourage group cohesion. If, she argues, we want students to learn that they can do more together than individually, why not reflect that value in our grading?
- **"Looking Backward...A Little"** Diane Jakacki manages time between research, digital research projects, and her pedagogical expectations as a first-year Brittain Fellow. She emphasizes, particularly, how important task management software like *Things* and note-taking software like *Evernote* are for keeping one's sanity as a postdoctoral fellow.

- **"Poetry, Art, and Science in the Age of Wonder"** Crystal Lake introduces the online collections completed by students in her course covering science and poetry during the Romantic period. Lake's inventive course gives students the ability to use digital media while making useful contributions to professional academic research.
- **"Bridges over Jordan"** Paulette Richards recounts her Fall 2010 experiences helping students prepare to interview for the Rhodes Scholarship. What, she asks, happens to new generations of African-American students who haven't grown up in the shadow of Jim Crow but who nevertheless must apply for scholarships whose namesakes reference the legacy of African colonialism and racial segregation?

End of Semester Wrap-Up: Science and Pseudo Science - Robert Blaskiewicz

In my "Science and Pseudoscience" class this fall, my students and I looked at a lot of crazy stuff masquerading as science, including ghost hunting, cryptozoology, chiropractic, homeopathy, dowsing, astrology, and intelligent design. While I find these beliefs and their assorted practices fascinating and could happily spend an entire semester discussing their source, I felt that it was important that my students put pseudosciences into a larger context, namely, to compare the practices of pseudoscientists to the practices of scientists.

One of the important things that I have picked up over the last few years when researching and teaching about this topic is that pseudoscholarship of all types thrives in the presence of incomplete information, and as a sort of counterpoint to the type of woo that I drew on for most of my examples, I decided to try to expose my students to real science as it is practiced on campus. I suspected that the reasons why cereology (the study of crop circles) fails to qualify as a genuine science and why running around in the dark with an EMF detector is unlikely to yield any useful information about the paranormal would pop into sharp relief as they were compared to how science is practiced by researchers at Georgia Tech. The result was Laboratories and Research at TECH (LabRAT), an assignment that brought two sections of my English 1101 student into laboratories in the basic, social, and applied sciences at Georgia Tech.

My hopes for this project were many. I wanted my first-year students to see and write about how science really happens, from grant application to publication or implementation, as it were. I wanted them to meet members of research groups, tour labs and see how research was performed on a day-to-day basis. I wanted them to write singly and in groups about difficult technical and abstract topics for general audiences. In the end, ten research groups generously offered to let my students into their labs.

Barbara Henry, Director of the Office of Research Compliance, opened her office to help illuminate how the process of governance and the controls imposed by the Institute and the law protect research subjects and safeguard the school's mission. The student group assigned at random to cover the bureaucratic and procedural aspects of scientific research devised a clever and engaging introduction to the ORC in the form of a boardroom dialog between Georgina Technopolis and the ubiquitous George P Burdell in anXtranormal animation:

This group also submitted the original protocol of Stanley Milgram's infamous "obedience" test to a member of Georgia's Institutional Review Boards (IRB) to see how a modern oversight board would respond to it. According to Georgia Tech's website, the IRB "facilitates ethical conduct of research through advance and continuing protocol review; monitoring and reporting; convening regular meetings for review of proposed and continuing research; and providing educational programs for faculty, staff, and students." You will be happy to hear that the IRB member would have rejected the experiment out of hand for a number of reasons.

One group of students visited the Duffy Lab, where researchers study the biochemistry and ecology of host/parasite interactions. One of the first things that the students realized in the Duffy Lab was that setting up a scientific study--in this case, a study of a tiny crustacean called Daphnia--requires careful planning and organization. Indeed, the students adopted the system of color coded stickers that the lab uses to track variables in its experiments as the visual motif for their website. (In the video on the students' webpage, you can see that the dots are ubiquitous.)

Another group visited Dr. Paul Verhaeghen's Cognition in Adulthood and Late Life Lab, where researchers are exploring changes in cognitive functions with an eye to improving the process of aging. The students focused on studies of depression, cognitive control and memory. One student participated in a cognitive control study and wrote about what it was like to participate in a psychology experiment. The group also used what they learned in Dr. Verhaeghen's lab to produce an original and humorous instructive multimedia feature about strategies for remaining cognitively fit.

Dr. Steve Potter, who runs the Potter Group in the Laboratory for Neuroengineering, introduced my students to the engineering sciences. Neurolab is a cross-disciplinary, inter-university laboratory that is housed on the Emory and Georgia Tech campuses. Neurolab lies at the intersection of psychology, biology and computer science. Some of the most intriguing research is on in vitro neurological networks, which culminated in the scientific-artistic project Silent Barrage, which took mammalian neurons and grew them on an array of electrodes, signals form the electrodes stimulated the cells, which then formed new neural connections in reaction to the stimuli.

The original signals that stimulate these neurons, however, come from an audience on the other side of the planet, and the audience is reacting to robotic motions generated by the mammalian cells, creating a feedback loop that models learning and opens up questions not only about how cells work together to generate personality, but also about the nature of art and consciousness.

Over the break, I will be collecting student websites into a single permanent LabRAT website. I was extremely pleased to see how often students responded positively to what they were encountering in these labs. Students who went to these labs encountered fields of knowledge that they did not know existed. In order to understand what what happening in these labs, the students had to perform background research to familiarize themselves with the concepts and terminologies in the field. Then they had to integrate that knowledge with what they learned in the labs themselves and communicate that to outside audiences. At the same time, these students came away from the project with an understanding of the dimensions of chasm that separates cutting edge science from the pseudosciences.

Of course, next year we are totally making crop circles.

End of Semester Wrap-Up: Poetry, Art, and Science in the Age of Wonder - Crystal Lake

This semester, students in my English 1102 course, "Poetry, Art, and Science in the Age of Wonder," worked in groups to develop interactive online exhibits that mapped Romantic literary texts by drawing out their relationships to the scientific developments of the period. I love assigning these projects as part of my courses. My students, most of whom are freshman, almost always create amazing sites. Their websites are intellectually rigorous and creative; they feature student-authored, research-based analysis of literary works. These websites also allow students to draw on sources -- including literary works, visual materials, and expert scholarship -- that are newly available online. Additionally, hyperlinked mediums mean that students can make new connections between texts, disciplines, and historical periods. In undertaking these websites, many students realize that there is much yet to discover about the Romantics and that there is also a contemporary audience eager to read and think more about literature, be that audience one of academics who are browsing the web looking for more information or enthusiasts who are pursuing their favorite writer, artist, or topic.

These assignments get students excited about their work in the course. At the end of the semester, each class always asks to see the projects the other classes completed, and I can tell by looking at my web statistics that many go home for the holidays and share their websites with their families.

In many cases, the students actually carve out unique research niches with these websites. For example,one project this semester on Humphry Davy's poetry and his experiments on Nitrous Oxide appears to be the most comprehensive and reliable website on that topic of its kind. Likewise, another group decided to create a digital book about representations of sex in scientific discourses, complete with an index. Another project collected poems about astronomy from the period that might be useful for further study, and yetanother collated data from literature as well as history and created charts that try to make sense of the material effects of developments in Romantic science. All of the projects can be accessed here. In short, I've found that using new media and project-based learning can provide students in literature courses with not only a versatile toolkit they can use in whatever discipline they choose to pursue, but also an exciting opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to literary studies.

End of Semester Wrap-Up: Thinking about Feedback - Kathryn Crowther

At the end of the semester I like to take some time to look back at the classes I just taught and evaluate how they actually turned out. It always feels like a leap of faith to me, trusting that the syllabus I created in the quiet summer months and the carefully crafted assignments I designed to move students through learning to praxis will actually work in real life, in real time, with real students.

Looking back at my English 1101 class this semester, I feel pretty good about the way that things turned out: the students performed well across all three sections, the assignments seemed to do a good job of connecting the targeted outcomes with the content of the course, and the students rehearsed all the elements of WOVEN (Written, Oral, Visual, Electronic, Non-verbal) communication in individual and group projects (you can read about one of those projects, a "Digital Archiving" project here). But if there's one thing that stands out as "the thing I want to work on next semester" it's *giving feedback*. With my current class load – three sections of 25 students – I always feel like I don't have time during the semester to give enough individual feedback, either on the assignment itself via comments or face-to-face with students in conferences. Ideally, I would meet with each student when I return each assignment and talk them through my comments and assessment. Realistically, I would like to optimize the way that I give students written feedback directly on the assignment (i.e. with comments on a rubric or line-notes on a paper) and also build in time for individual meetings at least twice a semester.

Written feedback on papers/assignments

Currently, I read and grade students' papers in a word-processing document and then use the "track changes" and "comment" feature to guide the student through my experience and assessment of their papers.

The result looks something like this:

English 1101

Date

My Work Ethic

I have had an amazing work ethic instilled in me from the many experiences I have had in my life ranging from chores around the house to working on jobsites at mission trips. My work ethic is a trait of my identity that will play a major role in my future here at Georgia Tech.

My parents began instilling an amazing work ethic in me at a young age through doing chores around the house. ~~These~~ Over the past couple of weeks, I would walk to class and see many groundskeepers working in the flower beds of the school either weeding or spreading straw. When I see them, I feel compelled to tell them I feel so bad for them, because I have been there. I have weeded flower beds and have spread straw in those same beds that I weeded. Every other weekend over every summer that I can remember, my parents would make my brothers and I weed all of their flower beds. During the winter, my parents would either buy straw bales or use straw that my brothers and I had raked between the pine trees near our house and then make us spread the straw in every single flower bed that we had. These were the worst chores to have to do compared to the inside chores. Every single weekend of the year, we had to clean our rooms, dust our rooms, and then vacuum our rooms. We did not stop there either; my parents would make us clean the rest of the house ~~plus~~ as well ~~such as~~ including picking up, dusting, and then vacuuming. Then, the most dreaded inside chore

One of the problems with this method is the overwhelming effect that a paper full of highlights and comment bubbles can have on a student. This semester I tried two things: first, I changed the default colors of my highlighting to less “harsh” colors, to make the effect less visually stressful – a paper covered in red strike-throughs does not invite a student to read the comments and process the feedback, no matter how positively it is phrased. An even better idea recommended to me by a colleague which I will implement next semester is to color-code the highlighting to fit with the category of assessment from the grading rubric: yellow for “Conventions,” green for “Stance and Support,” blue for “Organization,” etc. That way, students can immediately evaluate what kind of errors they are making and prioritize their revisions accordingly. This prioritization of feedback leads me to the second idea I implemented this semester: scaling back the number of corrections and comments and focusing on two to three main issues thus giving the students specific guidelines on what to do with this feedback and how to work on it for the next assignment.

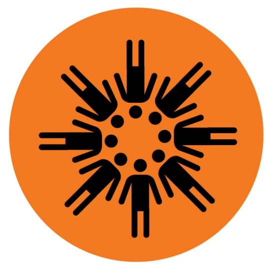
Again, ideally I would have a course management software (CMS) that would integrate all of these steps, but, for now, I plan to keep grading online but increase my use of macros to insert comments that directly correlate with a specific assessment rubric. I use this method for papers and multimedia projects alike (although I modify my rubric for each one) but it is still incredibly time-consuming and still not as effective, I feel, as giving face-to-face feedback to the student.

Face-to-face Feedback

My preferred way to give feedback is to schedule a 10-15 minute conference with each student after every assignment to guide them through my comments and recommendations. I find I can be much more focused and much clearer in my advice to students in a situation where I can point to specifics in a paper or project and then discuss strategies for revision collaboratively with them. But, logistically, I can't fit in three or four conferences per student per semester with 75 students – I wouldn't have time for class! I have used the strategy of assigning work on a group project for a class session and then pulling students out of class for individual meetings, but even that spreads into two weeks of class for a Tuesday/Thursday class. One idea I've considered is to record my feedback as a sort of pod-cast that would be available for the student to download within their CMS (T-Square here at Georgia Tech) which would at least allow me to talk directly to the student and narrate my immediate reactions to an assignment along with my assessment. I'm not sure how I'd go about doing this, but it might serve as a balance between written-only feedback and face-to-face meetings. Another suggestion I got this semester was to give feedback to small groups and to target one or two problems that appeared class-wide during the discussion. Students can then apply the fundamentals of our discussion to the specifics of their own papers individually. I really like this idea and will definitely be trying it out next semester.

So, how do you fit in and organize face-to-face feedback during a busy semester? I'd love to hear any of your experiences/innovations with giving feedback to students – written or face-to-face. Please leave your ideas in the comments!

End of Semester Wrap-Up: Collaboration in the Classroom - Leeann Hunter



This semester I taught a course on collaborative consumption. According to Rachel Botsman, who coined the phrase in What's Mine is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption, collaborative consumption has emerged from "digital interactions" that have enabled consumers to "experience the concept that cooperation does not need to come at the expense of our individualism, opening us up to innate behaviors that make it fun and second nature to share" (xx). Social media and technology facilitate collaboration in the marketplace.

If technology can enable consumers to collaborate, surely it could help students too. In this course, not only did we study the theory of collaboration in consumer studies, but we also practiced collaboration, both as consumers and as student researchers. From the first day of class, I emphasized that students would receive 60% of their grade as part of collaborative work:

Photo Essay (2 members): 20%
Group Blog (4-5 members): 10%
Final Project (4 members): 30%

Over the course of the semester, I found that the larger the groups became, the more challenging the collaboration became. Students became so worried about their individual grades and their individual successes that they were very ready to throw group members under the bus, accusing them of inactivity. They, not surprisingly, preferred me to mediate whatever confrontations erupted during groupwork. Since one of the major outcomes for this course is for students to master writing and communication skills, I declined to act as mediator and instead offered suggestions for how to communicate with unproductive group members.

On AcademHack, David Parry writes on the challenges of group assignments in "Designing Group Projects," and remarks that: "I struggle with this, because I want to encourage and evaluate students for who they are, but on the other hand I see as part of my job to teach students how to work in groups. I think most of the kinds of work environments they are likely to end up in will require working in groups." This dilemma is one all professors face when we assess group projects: how do we separate the individual from the group? My question is: why must we separate the individual from the group? Are there other alternatives?

David Parry proposes the two following guidelines in his group project experiment:

1. Everybody in the group gets the same project grade (which is 50% of the final grade).
2. If you are unhappy with a member of your group, i.e. feel that they are not sufficiently contributing, you can fire them from your team.

In the workplace, we rarely have the option of firing coworkers if they don't fully contribute to a project. We do have power over communication and negotiation with our co-workers. It is the promotion of these communication skills that I seek to develop in my own design and assessment of group projects.

What follows is my narration of issues that arose during each of the major group projects, my assessment of these issues as teachable moments, and my partial solution to evaluating collaborative work. I realize in retrospect that the systems at the heart of the rise of collaborative consumption could also be adapted to collaborative writing and communication projects. I'll conclude with some thoughts on how these systems might be adapted.

Group Blog - Mostly Quantitative Issues

As the group blog was a semester-long project, I frequently overheard conversations consisting of some variation on "dude, who was supposed to write for today?" or "hey, did you get your post up for Friday?" Working in groups meant that each person was being held responsible by 3-4 other people to write every week. This peer pressure, however, did not always promote productivity. Students often skipped their turn, despite these constant reminders.

When the deadline was nearing for the blogs to be wrapped up, I started receiving e-mails and office visits from students who professed that they had been blogging frequently and consistently, while their group-mates had not been, and that it was unfair they should be penalized for the failures of others.

While it was still early in the semester, I told students that they needed to work out these group issues on their own, but gave them the option of dismissing the unproductive member from their group, thus following Parry's suggestion. By the end of the semester, a very small number of groups had taken this route. The students who were ousted ultimately produced very substandard work or no work at all. While some may consider this result the most just one, it is not the most educational result. Moreover, I suspect that if the blogs had been an individual assignment, many more than the 2-3 students who went this route would have failed. I don't think the best solution to weak partners is to cut them off.

One class section in particular struggled with the consistency of writing that blogging demands, and many of those groups received merely "adequate" grades. Anticipating the great disappointment of the stronger students, I approached the class with a grading alternative. By default, I had assigned each member of the group the same grade, for example, a C or 7/10. However, placing power in the students' hands, I gave each group the option of reallocating their points, taking points away from the weaker members and redistributing them to the stronger members. Each group had to decide these terms on their own, and the decision had to be unanimous.

What followed were some very interesting and often productive conversations. Students who found themselves at fault for the group's low grade, if confronted by the other members, readily admitted to their shortcomings and were willing to negotiate points. I listened as they revisited the grading rubric and considered what exactly caused the low grade and how each person contributed positively or negatively to the final result. While I would like to say that their discussions were qualitative, they were for the most part quantitative. Nevertheless, they were assessing their performance and owning up to their failures.

After negotiations, the final results would look something like this for a group blog that was assigned a 7:

Student A: 7.5
Student B: 6.5
Student C: 7.2
Student D: 6.8

Some students became frustrated with this approach, because it required that they confront their classmates. But of course, this was the point.

Yet, this exercise also left me wondering whether the group blog assignment was qualitatively different from students simply writing individual blogs. While I originally envisioned the blogs as active social networks reaching out to the blogging community, the reality was that the members of a single group simply wrote in cooperation with one another, each taking their turn, writing toward a common theme. Collaboration, except for a couple rare exceptions, was grossly absent. The finest groups, it turns out, were those who created Facebook groups where they shared articles on current topics and peer reviewed each other's entries. What was missing from my group blog assignment was a platform outside of the blog itself for students to collaborate on materials and writing. What was missing was a system for collaboration.

Final Project - Something for Everyone?

Before the final projects were underway, I decided, in response to concerns expressed by a couple students, to offer the same option of reallocating points in their final project grades. I suspected that weaker students, at risk of losing additional points on top of an already weak grade, would be encouraged to work harder. Strong students might work equally harder in hopes of gaining a few extra points from their peers. Yet I don't believe that these factors ultimately motivated the best projects. Why, for example, would a student spend hours upon hours teaching herself Google Sketchup if it's not required?

The final project asked students to bring collaborative consumption to Georgia Tech's campus in an end-of-semester symposium. They needed to produce a website, 3-minute video, poster, and project statement. The project was immense and demanded that everyone contribute, but it also opened up the possibility for different kinds of contributions. Students could be web designers, video editors, graphic designers, public relations personnel, actors, spokespersons, concept drivers, and, of course, writers. There was something for everyone. But not everyone had the confidence or received the encouragement from their peers to perform well at what they do best.

My theory, grade differentials aside, is that students will work hard to produce something remarkable when the mode of work is satisfying. I believe that the student working with Google Sketchup did so because she enjoys tinkering with technology and found the process and trials of executing her design to be self-satisfying more than anything else. It's what she's good at. Some students just don't know what makes themselves tick yet, or they're nervous about articulating it. My advice to group leaders, then, was to talk and listen to those members who were not yet contributing anything of seemingly great value. Some students like to talk to strangers or to administrators. Other students like to draw and design. Some like to write and edit. Some are just good listeners and critics.

The purpose of collaborative projects is to teach students how to work together, communicate when problems arise, and execute tasks as democratically and professionally as possible. Every student has a talent, and it is primarily through collaboration that these talents can be unleashed. Nevertheless, there will always be students who just don't care as much as other students. For those groups, grade differentials are the best solution when students administer the differentials themselves.

Concluding Thoughts

Rachel Botsman identifies four principles that make social commerce work: "critical mass, idling capacity, belief in the commons, and trust between strangers" (xvi). If strangers have been enabled to share, swap, buy, and sell from one another over the internet, surely four highly intelligent Georgia Tech students could learn to work together toward a common goal. What principles are necessary to implement in order to make collaborative projects work in the classroom? Here are a few ideas to get us started:

1. Safe houses for writing. Students need an online collaborative writing platform that facilitates idea-making and development, but I'm unaware of any that are particularly successful. While GoogleDocs and Wikis facilitate group composition, they are not the best platforms for deliberation. Something that adopts the structure of the Facebook wall combined with GoogleDocs would be most successful. (Google Wave, now defunct, was on the right track.)

2. Common beliefs. If the group members don't believe in the same thing or possess the same values, they are not likely to be motivated to perform their best work together. While I usually prefer to have students choose their own groups, I think that a well-designed questionnaire could better unite students with common goals.

3. Group empowerment. Students need to feel control over the success of their projects and the future of their grades. Giving students the option of reallocating points based on individual contributions is one way of approaching this issue. However, students also need to learn to communicate with one another, whether it is to strengthen a project or reallocate points. In any case, the students should be making these decisions and conducting these talks, not the professor.

End of Semester Wrap-Up: Looking Backward…a Little - Diane Jakacki

'Write a reflection piece on this last term.' That sounded like a reasonable task and one I would be able to knock out quickly - in the midst of trying to finish marking and prepare to fly home for the holidays (if anyone has any suggestions what I can get my nieces and nephew for Christmas, please *comment* below! My nephew wants Sonic Colors, but his sisters are making shopping impossible!) As I continue to click the backspace button, I realize this is anything but an easy task. The past four months have been by turns: exhausting, exasperating, exhilarating, and mind-expanding. To say that my new cohort of Fellows hit the ground running, not always sure in which direction we should run, is an understatement. Orientation was a whirlwind of seminars, sign-ups, and syllabus-writing and just when we thought we knew one another's names we were thrown into the teaching pool.

Don't misunderstand me - it's been a remarkable term, full of accomplishment as well as confusion. A few of us were even able to sneak away and defend our dissertations in the middle of it all. There were D-Ped seminars to attend, articles and research proposals to draft, committees to form ... social connections to make and networks to develop. I come from a graduate experience where I was, in effect, a cohort of one; it has therefore been remarkable to find myself in the midst of such an energetic, intelligent and enthusiastic instant peer group. I'm grateful for this experience, and even though I am SO looking forward to a holiday I feel excited for the next term and all that will come with it.

A year ago I was in Canada, waiting for my supervisor's comments on chapter three, marking final exams, realizing that my trip to the MLA would most likely be fruitless. I felt nervous and panicky about the future, wondering where I would be in 2011. The twelve intervening months have been challenging on all levels, but I am grateful for all of the experiences that have made up the time.

Highlights of the term:

- The support I felt from everyone in the program when I submitted my dissertation
- Working with my first peer-based research group (a.k.a. "The Mappers")
- Realizing that establishing a discourse on celebrity culture (and video games, and comic books) can be very fulfilling.
- When the temperature finally dropped below 80. Honestly.

Lessons learned:

- It's impossible to accomplish everything in the short term.

- Life hacks are crucial. I don't know what I would do without Things and Evernote.
- As much as I heart the digital, I still love my Waterman pens and my Moleskine notebooks.

Well, there is a stack of portfolios that aren't marking themselves, so I'd better stop here. I look forward to more posting in the new year. Maybe by the end of spring term I'll have all sorts of exciting new things to share. In the meantime, here's wishing all you of you - Britts and readers alike - the happiest and safest of holidays, and best wishes for a productive and exciting 2011.

And remember: if you have ANY ideas what the heck I should get my nieces and nephew for Christmas, I am all ears!!!

End of Semester Wrap-Up: Bridges Over Jordan - Paulette Richards

On the eve of his return to Canaan, your biblical namesake, Jacob, wrestled with an angel until daybreak. What force is your greatest challenge on your journey to "The Promised Land?"

You walk into the room and take a seat before a firing squad of six interviewers. For an arduous half hour they grill you about current events, moral philosophy, arcane literary allusions, and hypothetical scenarios for saving the world. If you ace this and win a Rhodes scholarship, all doors will be open to you for the rest of your career. You will probably never face another interview where so much is on the line…

This past November I had the opportunity to participate in a special kind of mentoring project by serving on mock interview committees for students who had been invited to Rhodes scholarship interviews. I dreamed up the nasty question that opens this essay for Jacob Tzegaebe, a Civil Engineering major who hopes to develop infrastructure projects in Nigeria, his father's homeland.

One African American interpretation of the 40-year period that the Hebrews wandered in the desert is that they were not ready to take possession of Canaan until most of the older people who had been born and raised under slavery in Egypt had died. Only after the slave mentality had died out could the Hebrews meet the challenge of building a nation. The morning of Jacob's first mock interview, as I read through his credentials, I felt like I was standing on the mountain top looking over into the land of milk and honey because he represents the best of a new generation of African Americans who are not limited by the psychic scars inflicted under the Jim Crow system. In six semesters at Georgia Tech, Jacob received only one "B" in an otherwise straight "A" academic record. His commitment to showing his peers that they too can achieve at this level led him to launch Scholarship Sundays, a weekly program that encourages students to use the weekend to "start their week ahead." Thus mentoring is at the core of his extensive leadership activities, which include serving as Senior Class President and President of the Nu Mu Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.

What do you think your candidacy rates on the Rhodo-meter (that is, the number of times Cecil Rhodes is rolling over in his grave at the thought of you receiving a Rhodes scholarship to study at Oxford University)?

In December of 1982, one of the first women to receive a Rhodes scholarship asked me that question. Evaluation of candidates started the night before the interviews over drinks and dinner at a swanky gentleman's club in Richmond, Virginia. An Act of Parliament had altered the terms of Rhodes' will in 1977 so that women could become members of one of the most prestigious and exclusive clubs in the world (7,000 Rhodes Scholarships have been awarded since 1902). Yet we were standing in a club that still restricted membership to whites only. At the close of the evening, silent black hands offered me a dish of vanilla ice cream that I could not eat because, like many African Americans, I am lactose intolerant. As I passed my dessert to a Naval cadet who was ultimately selected as one of the winners, I struggled with doubts about whether I would ever feel entitled to enter the club in a capacity that didn't entail cooking, cleaning, or serving.

But doubts about whether I wanted to enter the club also plagued me. As I dutifully plowed through a biography of the "great man" in the summer of 1982, I became aware of the increasingly vocal movement pressuring universities to disavow the apartheid government and divest from South African companies. I learned that Cecil Rhodes was one of the architects of what ultimately became the heinous pass law system in South Africa. I learned that his ambition to establish a "Cape to Cairo" railway launched a land grab of almost a million square miles in areas now known as Zambia, Malawi, and Botswana. And I learned that he originally wanted to use the blood money he extracted from the De Beers diamond mines to found an Aryan secret society. Despite his plans to travel to Nigeria, Jacob had never read Chinua Achebe's account of how British colonial incursions made *Things Fall Apart* and when asked "Do you admire Cecil Rhodes?" he hesitantly answered, "Yes." So I skewered him:

Manumission of slaves was severely restricted in the United States, but in Latin America it was easier for enslaved Africans to purchase their freedom. A sizeable population of Yoruba people enslaved in Brazil earned their freedom and returned to Lagos, but they held themselves apart from the local population and their business interests led them to collaborate with the British, ultimately helping extend colonial rule over Nigeria. If you were awarded a Rhodes scholarship (funded by profits from Africans' forced labor) and began to work with the governments of emerging nations to develop infrastructure, what would keep you from becoming a similar tool of neo-colonialism?

Jacob later admitted that was the most difficult question he had faced in two weeks of mock interviews, but I believe a person who has supported Katrina evacuees' "road home" by leading three groups of over thirty Tech students on community service trips to New Orleans can wade in the waters and "won't let nobody turn him around."

What force is your greatest challenge on your journey to "The Promised Land?"

"Doubt" he said, "There will always be people who will doubt what you are trying to do, who won't believe it can be done." But Jacob exudes a cool confidence that inspires faith in his vision. He did not win a Rhodes scholarship this time, but we can all be proud that he was one of the few selected in the first round of competition and Jacob will never have to fear an interview again. I have no doubt that he will build many bridges over Jordan.

The Rear-View Mirror -
Diane Jakacki

We asked Brittain Fellows who will be moving on from the program to reflect upon their experiences. Four Britts rose to the challenge; as you'll see, the perspectives of Jo Anne Harris, Crystal Lake, Melissa Meeks and Paulette Richards are varied but share an enthusiasm for the time they have spent at Georgia Tech :

Jo Anne Harris

"Confessions of an Academic Creole": As May 9 –and the end of my Brittain Fellowship –rapidly approach, I am tempted to state the usual "I've learned so much", "My teaching has been forever changed", "I didn't know it was going to be so much work ", to "My, God, I hope this gets me a job". However, in the spirit of Brittain camaraderie, I must confess that I arrived at Georgia Tech as an academic Creole, and am leaving as an academic Creole; albeit, a very changed one.

When I arrived at Georgia Tech, I was returning to live in the USA for the first time since 1975 and despite my newly printed PhD, discovered that I did not speak "Academic " English, nor did I understand Georgia Tech acronyms, or the American fetish for being "on time". In short, my PhD experience in "mañana-land" had left me with the impression that leisurely postcolonial musings with a rag-tag bunch of expat academics (undergrads, tenured, non-tenured, and even the non-degreed, but well-read) in Old San Juan bars, or on island beaches – always with a piña colada or rum punch in hand –were the norm. After all, one of my doctoral linguistics courses had been a three-week field trip to St. Croix to interview creole speakers. And part of my archival research transpired in the basement of a Dutch windmill. Alas, after the first day of orientation in Skiles 343, I discovered that, not only did I not understand the lofty rhetoric of US academia, but I was no longer Southern–somehow life in the islands had made me that which I had studied –a Creole. I was born in Atlanta, but years of island life and a Caribbean PhD had totally, absolutely, left me a stranger in my hometown – I had an identity crisis.

Now, after three years of intense Georgia 'Techiness' and a gaggle of Brittain seminars, I am somewhat pleased to say that while not fully fluent in "Academic English", I can understand the gist of most conversations. I feel comfortable when I email HR, OIT, or walk to the CRC; my bus stops at the GLC, and when my students tell me they are BE's, ME', or IE's, I fully understand the nuances. I now realize that my former propensity for variety in teaching, has become "multimodality", and that what I naïvely thought was computer assisted writing has blossomed into full-blown "digital pedagogy". Thanks to the Brittain

Fellowship, I am poised and ready to join some [? undetermined] Hall of Academia.

Unfortunately, I must confess that this little reflection is now 400 words (not the 200 suggested), that I am starting it late on the afternoon of May2, and . . . that in 11 days I will be sitting on a beach in Puerto Rico with my fiancé, sipping a rum punch, speaking “Island English” with a rag-tag bunch of expats eager to learn about multimodality and digital pedagogy . Yep, I am still an academic creole.

Crystal Lake

In his Essay on the *Origin and Importance of Small Tracts and Fugitive Pieces*, Samuel Johnson observed that “the mind once let loose to inquiry, and suffered to operate without restraint, necessarily deviates into peculiar opinions, and wanders in new tracks, where she is indeed sometimes lost in a labyrinth from which though she cannot return, and scarce knows how to proceed, yet…makes useful discoveries, or finds out nearer paths to knowledge.” Having spent three years as a Brittain fellow, I leave for Wright State University grateful for the opportunity to wander “without restraint” in the “labyrinth” of Georgia Tech’s Writing and Communication Program. At times, combining digital humanities, multimodal communication, and eighteenth-century British literature has made me appear to “deviate into peculiar opinions,” but these “new tracks” have been, without a doubt, “useful discoveries.” Indeed, I “scarce know how to proceed” to leave Tech. I will miss the other Britts’ contagious enthusiasm, creativity, and commitment to innovative, multimodal teaching; I will miss learning about the exciting research being undertaken by the Britts and other faculty; I will miss my students’ seemingly endless capacity for thinking about historical literatures in radically new ways. In many ways, I suppose won’t leave; my scholarship and teaching have been dramatically changed by my experiences as a Britt.

Melissa Meeks

For me, the Brittain fellowship represented opportunity. The supportive climate for innovation enabled me to do my very best teaching. I expanded not only my use of technology but also my range of courses. My work with wikis led to two poster presentations and a publication. Teaching UROP's LCC 4701 course has been a highlight of my professional career.

Although teaching was a clear priority in the program, being a Brittain fellow opened opportunities outside the classroom as well. I worked with others to brainstorm the WOVEN portfolio and to think about its long-term policy implications in lieu of Regents' requirements. I also worked as a consultant on two publications for OIT and made connections with the GT1000 program—both experiences led me to other projects.

Because of Rebecca and Andrew's hard work, an abundance of opportunities in, near, and beyond the classroom exist for Brittain fellows. Those opportunities taught me that I have a versatile skill set at a time when I struggled to know if I was skillful at all. I will sincerely miss being part of the Brittain's energetic, collegial scholarly community. And I will certainly miss having such a strong administrative team actively seeking more opportunities to make multimodal literacy matter.

Paulette Richards

"The Revolution Will Not Be Televised, We're Uploading it to YouTube": Three years ago I was excited to come to a school where enough cutting edge technology was available for students to produce digital video as technical discourse. The logistics of reserving cameras, scheduling training sessions for editing in iMovie, and resolving issues with incompatible file formats were daunting, but by the end of my first semester, my 75 Tech Comm students had each produced a 60 second video resume.

I have been incorporating video projects into my courses since 1995, but in three short years, the technology has advanced enough to put the power to produce video literally in students' pockets. In one class period this spring, many of my students shot instructional videos about folding paper airplanes with their smartphones, uploaded the clips to You Tube, and then edited them with You Tube's editing tools. The next class period we did usability testing by exchanging the instruction sets and launching the planes on test flights in Skiles courtyard.

In the midst of this exercise, one of my students remarked on the odd impression that casual observers might have formed if they had passed by and seen paper airplanes whizzing back and forth across the classroom. On other days they might have wondered what all the heavy breathing was about as I introduced the students to breath and relaxation techniques they could use to project their voices more effectively during oral presentations. Or they would have seen students standing around in "wife beater" tank shirts in between wardrobe changes as we tested how 24 different colored t-shirts affected the quality of images captured with low resolution cameras under poor lighting conditions – the typical mise on scene for video web conferencing.

What I have appreciated most about teaching in the Writing and Communication program at Tech is the encouragement to pursue innovation in multi-modal pedagogy. It has been wonderfully refreshing to work in an environment with colleagues who understand that the most revolutionary advances in teaching writing and communication will not be televised. The revolution is streaming live.

Thanks to Jo Anne, Crystal, Melissa and Paulette for contributing their reflections. We wish all departing Brittain Fellows the very best in everything you do - we'll miss you!

Looking Forward -
Nirmal Trivedi, Regina Martin, and Doris Bremm

As we prepare for the new semester, we asked two Brittain Fellows to reflect on their teaching experiences during the last semester.

Regina Martin
Teaching Modernism at Tech

Modernism lends itself really well to teaching multimodal communication at Tech because much of modernist art is heavily influenced by technological advancements at the turn of the 20th century. In teaching my class, "Modernism and Technology" this past semester (Spring 2011), my purpose was not so much to teach students about modernism but about how technology has cultural impacts beyond its immediate functions.

I introduced the topic by assigning chapters from Stephen Kern's *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*, a scholarly text that looks at how technological advancements like wireless communication, film, and the automobile as well as scientific theories like Einstein's Theory of Relativity and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle created new ways of experiencing and time and space, which become apparent in modernist art and literature. Thus, students first considered the historical nature of space and time. Different cultures and different historical periods experience space and time differently. We further investigated this problem by reading Jane Austen's *Emma* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*simultaneously and considering how the dramatically different forms of those novels represent space and time differently and how that might be influenced by different technologies available during the two periods.

Because the purpose of the class was not to teach students modernism *per se* but to get them to think about the relationship between technology and cultural experience and production, **I framed the focus on modernism as a springboard for thinking about how current technology has created new experiences of space and time and how that might be manifested in contemporary art and literature.** For this reason, I gave students a choice for their final multimodal project, which consisted of an annotated bibliography, an oral presentation, and a visual argument: students could choose a modernist art movement and investigate its relationship to turn-of-the-twentieth-century technologies, or they could choose a recently developed technology—social networking, smartphones, MMORPGs, etc—and investigate its relationship to art and literature. In the end, by studying modernism through the lens of technology, students gained a broad historical perspective on the cultural impacts of technology.

Doris Bremm
"A New Way to Look at English Class": Creating a Special Section for Architecture and Civil Engineering Majors

Having the option to create a special section for a particular major, it was an easy decision for me to design a course about **"Mapping London: Britain's Capital in Literature, Art, and Film**" aimed at architecture and civil engineering majors for my ENGL 1102 this spring. It was my goal to incorporate my research interests such as twentieth-century British fiction, art and architecture, as well as theories of space and place, while at the same time creating a second-semester writing course that would be interesting and challenging for architecture majors and that would draw upon their special skills. Students in my special section soon started making connections between our class and their first year studio class in Architecture. I was pleased to find my students not only interested in the subject matter, but more importantly, aware of the goals of this special section. In reflection documents throughout the semester and in their final portfolio, students voiced their understanding of the importance of the skills they learned for their major and the applicability of those skills in their future work places.

Indeed, the class blog became a forum for students to discuss more than the literary representations of London the course focused on. Several posts reflected on the multi-modal assignments students worked on throughout the semester. One student in the special section for Architecture and Civil Engineering majors commented:

Although English at Georgia Tech has been different from my past English classes, I actually feel that they are more career-oriented. Instead of just reading a book or writing a paper, I am able to apply my talents and skills to a variety of subject areas. The concept of WOVEN... is an important idea to focus on since all of us will [have] to present our architectural designs to clients.

Links to selected blog posts:

https://mappinglondon2011.wordpress.com/2011/04/06/a-new-way-to-look-at-english-class/

https://mappinglondon2011.wordpress.com/2011/03/31/mapping-a-characters-development/

https://mappinglondon2011.wordpress.com/2011/04/18/character-analysis-via-map/

https://mappinglondon2011.wordpress.com/2011/04/17/the-development-of-group-and-map-procedure/

In designing the assignments for the semester, including elements from Georgia Tech's W.O.V.E.N. spectrum was my most important goal, and thus maps of London, as a visual representation of the space we were about to enter, seemed the obvious place for us to get us started. Working in small groups, students first created a "digital poster" using Prezi or Power Point in which they analyzed a historical or contemporary map of London that they had chosen according to their interests. One group analyzed the "London View Management Framework" which depicts where in the city building height restrictions are strictly enforced to retain the sightlines of historically significant buildings from scenic areas of London

For the second assignment, I modified Dr. Roger Whitson's map assignment to fit our class topic. Students used google maps to create an analysis of a character in Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's graphic novel *From Hell* or Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. Guido Moretti's *Maps, Graphs, Trees*became an important tool for the to understand that

[maps] are a good way to prepare a text for analysis" (*Maps, Graphs, Trees* 53).

Once again, many of my architecture students excelled at incorporating their understanding of space in their analysis. Juxtaposing the daily routines of inhabitants of London's east and west end in *From Hell*, or taking into account the importance of Elizabeth Dalloway's bus ride to the City, they came to understand how place can be an important factor in characterization. My students were easily able to see the graphic representations of characters such as Queen Victoria as a way to represent emotions and create a particular atmosphere. (See link for an example:http://www.lcc.gatech.edu/~dbremm3/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/MapVictoria.jpg)

In their final group projects, students were asked to take a less literal approach to mapping in their analyses of Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth*. They created posters, websites, podcasts, videos, etc. to present the multi-cultural world of the novel to an audience of their peers and professors at the library's performance space. One group used Google SketchUp to include architectural renditions of typical living spaces in Bangladesh, Jamaica, and London to illustrate the characters' world:http://wtcultureandhistory.weebly.com/influences-in-architecture.html

Creating this special section for Architecture and Civil Engineering Majors allowed me to pursue my own research interests in my teaching. I was continuously impressed with the ideas my students were able to incorporate into their assignments, and even more so, with their ability to reflect on the skills they honed in this class that they will draw upon throughout their college career and in their future jobs.

A Time of Transition - Diane Jakacki

The temperature is hovering around 95 and we are hurrying to put the finishing touches on our course syllabi. Yes, it's that time again: a new school year at Georgia Tech. And with it comes a new cohort of Brittain Fellows. They may not yet realize it, but they are about to learn all the lessons we learned - where can you get decent coffee on campus, what happens when your podium locks and you can't access your Prezi for class, what can you REALLY assign during the period formerly known as Dead Week - oh, and to always keep a spare umbrella in your office, just in case a monsoon rolls through. And so, we'd like to give the warmest welcome (and are happy to offer our insights regarding the above profound questions) to our new colleagues: Rachel Dean-Ruzicka, Michelle DiMeo, Kathleen Hanggi, John Harkey, Christine Hoffman, Jennifer Holley, Aaron Kashtan, Sipai Klein, Amanda Madden, Julia Munro, Jennifer Orth-Veillon, Aron Pease, Sarah Schiff, Britta Spann, Katherine Tanski, Michael Tondre, and Christopher Weedman. As these new Britts get their feet wet in our social media, hopefully more will post their reflections and experiences to TECHStyle.

We would not be able to welcome our new colleagues if other Britts who came before them did not move on to other life experiences. And so we take this opportunity to wish fair winds and following seas to King Adkins, Andy Famiglietti, Jo Anne Harris, Jared Johnson, Crystal Lake, Rob LeBlanc, Melissa Meeks, Irene Middleton, Jen Parrott, Pete Rorabugh, Rebekah Sheldon, Candice Wellhausen, and Roger Whitson. We are grateful for the time we got to spend together as fellows and friends, and hope that you will post to TECHStyle when the mood strikes you.