CMS.998/CMS.600: New Media Literacies
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Lecture Notes

Session 2, 2/12/07

- Discussion – anything that anyone wants to bring up? Concrete examples in relation to the concepts from the white paper we read
    o Example of collective intelligence
        ▪ Kids debating math on a video game forum
    o Facebook's Valentine's Day gifts
        ▪ The first gift is free – this encourages more people to buy them, so that they can return them
        ▪ There's a certain reciprocity of relationships. It's a really dissociative act to refuse a friend request or fail to return a gift
        ▪ People don't like to feel like their friendships aren't equal
        ▪ Facebook is capitalizing on that interest
        ▪ The gift isn't an object, it's data. The whole point of Valentine's day gifts is that everybody else sees that somebody loves you
    o Definition of *data*
    o YouTube video: "Noah takes a photo of himself every day for 6 years"
        ▪ Consistency and inconsistency of identity
        ▪ What is worthy and unworthy of our attention? It's hard to sort through
        ▪ Dunkin Donuts commercial – a direct response to this web culture idea of changing photos and identity
            • The commercial version doesn't seem as authentic
    o YouTube clip where someone collected evidence from the media to try to prove that Daniel Radcliffe and Emma Watson are dating
        ▪ It was an extensive research project, but for a YouTube video

- Digital Media and Learning project: sponsored by the MacArthur foundation
    o We can talk more about this if you're interested

- Introductions
    o Graduate and undergraduate students, staff, and visitors from MIT, Harvard, and elsewhere

- Time person of the year article
    o The cover
    o What were your general first impressions? (Discussion)
        ▪ It seems like user-generated content is already here, and Time is only branding it for themselves
        ▪ Time is kind of jumping on the bandwagon – it's a big name magazin
        ▪ All of this seems way bigger than Time

- What kind of design process allows these literacies to grow?
- The aesthetic that develops in MySpace and YouTube is really very similar to the aesthetic of the Geocities and Angelfire personal homepages that were so popular in the mid 90's. Is Web 2.0 really anything new?
  - The flaw in Time magazine's claim is that it's not about just "you." We aren't all equal participants in this process.

- The white paper
  - The context: The MacArthur asked the New Media Literacies group to write a paper to explain what we're referring to when we talk about new media culture, how that relates to digital learning
  - Studies on people's use of the web – these studies can help to explain why we're doing research on this
  - Participatory culture: technology vs. culture. Interactivity is a property of technology, while participation is a property of culture.
  - New media users (particularly children) might have a very good intuitive understanding of the use of these new media, but just because they're using it doesn't mean that they know how to reflect on it in a critical way.
  - They might not be able to develop the related ethical understandings on their own
  - Discussion: Old generation vs. new generation approaches to the web, strangers, internet predators
    - Is this addressed in this white paper?
    - Facebook vs. MySpace: one is location/community-based, and the other is more open conceptually
    - Privacy issue: people assume no one will see their stuff because they're so insignificant in the larger world
  - Play: the capacity to experiment with one's surroundings
    - Play itself is a valuable skill, rather than just a means to other skills and knowledge
    - Let's reflect on this concept: (discussion)
      - How would most teachers and parents react to this idea?
      - Many educators understand the value of play, while many others don't
      - Many administrators and teachers think there's just no time for games
      - Play as experiential learning – it can motivate learning
      - Teachers need to learn this skill themselves – the generation gap puts them at a disadvantage. How can they learn to make this material interesting for their students?
      - Play is a more self-motivated process, and there's less of a sense that you're just jumping through the necessary hoops
      - It gives children the opportunity to create valuable skills for themselves – this is very important to their self-esteem and sense of themselves.

- One school actually banned teachers from ever using MySpace, because they were afraid it would create inappropriate interactions between teachers and students. Some students were actually suspended for placing photos on the internet that had alcohol in them
- The newer and older generations have very different notions of privacy on the internet. Younger people, for example, are much more willing to place their phone numbers on Facebook. They understand that their friends, parents, and teachers are all likely to see their profiles.
- Blogs and profiles get read by potential employers
  - Play vs. Simulation
    - What's real and what's not real? To the people experiencing it, it's real, but what qualifies as a simulation or as a fun experience?
    - Student discussion:
      - There are a lot of different definitions of simulation out there
      - Visualization literacy seems related to simulation
      - Maybe simulation is a little bit buzz-wordy as a term.
    - We should distinguish simulation from game and from play
  - Performance
  - Meaningful
    - Student discussion:
      - Copyright law – how does it relate to the posed ethics challenge to these new media
      - What are the standards for what appropriations are and are not reasonable
  - Think about how we're going to continue to go into more depth on these issues