

Sample Conference Proposals

Two of David Parry's proposals from graduate school.

Wikipedia: The University and the Open Archive David Parry

Following the publicity of the Seigenthaler incident, what was once marginal concern and commentary about Wikis and, more precisely, Wikipedia, quickly evolved into an embattled discourse about the role of Wikis as sources of knowledge and, perhaps more importantly, as an archival site. Not surprisingly, given the University's historically close connection to archiving knowledge, this discussion became important to academics whose analysis unfortunately often reduced to either hyperbolic claims of the anarchic effects of open source archives (often conflating questions of the digital archive with those of open source), or the equally reductive response that the academy was simply practicing informational elitism.

While traditionally the University's connection to the archive has relied on its ability to preserve the connection between authority and authorship to produce truth (the academy as both site of production and archivization), open source archives which allow anonymous editing realign these connections (illustrated by the growth of open educational projects such as Wikiversity). However, this re-alignment, informed by but not reducible to a move from analog to digital, does not, as Wikipedia defenders often claim, open up knowledge production, creating an egalitarian field of play. Instead, while this move begins to cause fissures in the University's influence on knowledge legitimation, it simultaneously draws other borders around what counts as knowledge and can be contained within the archive. Far from being open and free, these spaces contain other artifices which guarantee authority and reproduce, albeit in a changed way, "truth." In this paper I seek to expand on these changing borders, with specific reference to the University's role as a guarantor of the authority of the archive.

Media Commons Proposal: "Simulation Fever" and the Ethics of the Replayable Archive David Parry, University at Albany

Because the form of any given archive structures in part the effect and content of said archive, as methods of knowledge preservation and dissemination change it is important to pay particular attention to these transitions. In October of 2006, the MacArthur foundation announced a \$240,000 grant given to the University of Indiana to create a massively multiplayer online game, *Arden: The World of Shakespeare*. Given that the MacArthur foundation's purpose is to "investigate the role and impact of digital media and technology, and to seek out the implications on our schools, institutions, families, and democracy," one has to wonder how creating an immersive Shakespeare world fosters this goal. On the one hand this project would appear to be nothing specifically new, historical re-enactments and recreations have long been a part of how public memory is created and preserved; but on the other, the digitalization of this type of historical re-presentation points to a differently framed set of concerns: What do we preserve? How much agency should "players" have? and perhaps most importantly given the sought after ubiquity of such a projected world, what role do these simulations have in the construction of a public memory? For, if one can re-create the literary world of Shakespeare, are we really that far from *Surviving in Auschwitz* the online game? And perhaps more importantly, for these types of games seem almost inevitable, what are the broader effects of such simulation representations on how we archive knowledge?

Proposal for Individually Authored Paper (not yet written)

Abstract Proposal for the 22nd Annual Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies Conference
“Up-to-Date with a Vengeance”: Nineteenth-Century Science, Technology, and Media
April 19-21, 2007, University of Missouri-Kansas City

Looking Over One's Shoulder: Nineteenth-Century Specters in Twentieth-Century Contexts

by: Kimberly Knight, PhD Student
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Traditionally, the spectral has been invoked to describe characteristics of the Gothic: otherworldly apparitions or the mere feeling or suggestion of haunting. However, spectral may also mean related to a spectrum, in this case the electromagnetic spectrum. For the purposes of my project, the spectral is a multivalent term: referring to the ability of electric technologies to leave traces, evoke the strange or odd, to awe or unsettle the subject. The technologies may be present as “realist” depictions or they may occupy the space of metaphor. In *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*, Jeffrey Sconce argues that electric technologies have a long history of association with the paranormal. Sconce argues for a tradition of an unsettling “electronic presence” that leads to uncanny encounters with new technological apparatuses and to representations of fantastic fears in works of literature, film, and television. Beyond this, however, I believe it is possible to be more specific about the anxieties that cause the spectral. Most of the media or technologies addressed are in some sense technologies of reproduction. Communications technologies take the sender's message and reproduce it for the receiver. Technologies of memory reproduce the databank of human memory. The spectral is the effect of slippage somewhere between the reproductive machinery and the reproductive process. This would explain why the human body often acts as the register of that slippage. In particular, the female body, permeable through the processes of human reproduction, is vulnerable to possession, corruption, or other spectral effects. To refine my hypothesis further: the spectral refers to the ability of electric technologies, through slippages in the process of reproduction, to leave traces, evoke the strange or odd, to awe or unsettle, using the (often female) body as the locus of those effects.

In “Looking Over One's Shoulder: Nineteenth-Century Specters in Twentieth-Century Contexts” I propose to analyze Christopher Priest's *The Prestige* and Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age* in terms of the ways both represent twentieth century attitudes toward the nineteenth century and both use history to code contemporary anxieties. Additionally, I would like to explore any differences between representing the nineteenth century as historical setting versus future environment. Of particular interest are the ways in which *The Prestige* draws certain parallels between electricity and magic and *The Diamond Age* utilizes the nineteenth-century convention of the primer, amplified and electrified, to unsettle Neo-Victorian society. *The Prestige* also invokes the spectral as a by-product of the reproductive excess of Tesla's electrical apparatus. In addition, *The Diamond Age*, with its setting in the far future, constructs a recursive view of history in which the future uncannily repeats the past. It is my hope that this exploration will reveal not only the spectral at work, but also strategies of resistance or exit.

Working Bibliography

Clayton, Jay. *Charles Dickens in Cyberspace: The Afterlife of the Nineteenth Century in Postmodern Culture*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003.

Priest, Christopher. *The Prestige*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1995.

Sconce, Jeffrey. *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*. Durham: Duke UP: 2000.

Stephenson, Neal. *The Diamond Age: Or, A Young Lady's Illustrated Primer*. New York: Bantam, 1995.

Proposal for a Co-Authored Paper (This had a cover sheet – I can't remember why)

Proposal for “What the Digital Does to Reading”

MLA 2011

Social Book Catalogs and Reading: Shifting Paradigms, Humanizing Databases

By

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Social Book Catalogs and Reading: Shifting Paradigms, Humanizing Databases

Our paper addresses paradigms of reading that arise out of practices of online social book cataloging. Social book catalogs, like LibraryThing and Goodreads, mark a fundamental transition in the nature of the catalog from a mere finding list to a marker of experience. That is, practices of online social book cataloging emphasize the role of cataloging as part of constructing one's online identity such that reading becomes a public index of the self rather than an activity that occurs in isolation. While one could argue that reading has always been an index of the self, we argue that with the rise of online environments, reading as part of one's subjectivity becomes explicitly articulated through the cataloging interface and in terms of how users on these sites relate to one another. User relationships in these digital social environments work as either the dominant modality on dedicated websites like LibraryThing, or as part of a larger socially networked environment, like Facebook, depending on the extent to which reading is emphasized.

We read the work of assembling a digital archive that encompasses the texts one has read, as well as those one would like to read, as a performative act through which a user articulates subjectivity as a reader. For instance, a user who lists several books on pregnancy or child-raising highlights his or her role as a parent while a user who adds books on Henry James and Marcel Proust marks his or her identity as a reader of high-brow literature. The catalog is formed, however, as more than a list of books: readers add to the archive paratextual discourse in the form of reviews, comments, and discussion groups. Thus the offline experiences of reading (often analog and individual) are transferred online where they are incorporated into the book catalog and the larger reading community. This shifts the nature of a catalog from items collected in one location to a collection of reader experiences. As such, individual catalogs can be read as "databases of the self" (Vesna). Strategies of reading these databases might include the browsing of book lists or cover images, reading ancillary material such as

reviews, or data visualizations of user-info, including tag clouds, graphs, etc. Additionally, these individual databases may be aggregated and read as the expression of an entire reading network. Our paper, in addressing the relationship between the reader and the catalog, analyzes the ways in which the acts of catalog-creation and reading are framed by the databases that underlie social book cataloging utilities as well as the impact of the catalog's "online" status on the discourses that surround acts of reading.

We argue that practices of social book cataloging, as performative acts of identity, serve to humanize data and make databases legible, at the scale of the individual and the community. Thus practices of social book cataloging act as "the join" between analog and digital strategies of reading by bringing together print reading, distance or database reading, and visualization. This "join" maps a topography of online reading practices in which experience traverses the typical boundaries between our offline and online experiences such that social book catalogs, as well as the networks in which they are embedded, re-figure the linearity, temporality, and geography of social reading networks.

Working Bibliography

Bhabha, Homi. "Unpacking my Library Again." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 28 (1995): 5-18.

Benjamin, Walter. "Unpacking my Library." *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Castells, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

[The rest of the working bibliography was excluded to reduce the number of pages in this document]

Panel Proposal

Panel Proposal for SLSA 2008: Reiteration

Salman Bakht (redacted)

Tassie Gniady (redacted)

Kim Knight (redacted) *point of contact

Literature+ : A Digital Approach to Reiteration

This panel seeks to highlight both the process and result of textual analysis via a cross-disciplinary approach to scholarly methods, with participants studying the early modern period, digital media, and media arts. We are approaching the iterative from three different models: the visual, the aural, and the epidemiological. We each track iterations of figures and texts across time, genre, and space.

Kim Knight: Mutating Media: Transmissions of the Ringu Virus

In 1991 Kadokawa Shoten published the novel *Ringu* by Koji Suzuki. In epidemiological terms, this novel was "Text 0," the index case from which an entire media phenomenon spread. The Ringu virus then mutated into many different forms: print sequels, television movies; feature films; manga; video games; television mini-series. Through the 1990s, outbreaks of the virus were contained in Japan and functioned as part of the J-horror subculture. In the first years of the new millenium, the virus began to spread internationally through a decentralized network onto which we can impose a narrative of word-

of-mouth and subcultural dissemination. However, once the U.S. studio system enters the picture, the media ecology of the virus shifts dramatically. "Mutating Media" uses an interactive timeline to examine these patterns and the media ecologies which they reflect.

Salman Bakht: New Media Nonsense: Experiments in Collage Adaptation of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

An Alice adaptation is an multimedia collage work combining segments from several film adaptations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, including Walt Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* and Jan Svankmajer's *Alice*. This piece explores the nature of literary nonsense and the process of cross-media transformation through the use of both systematic and interpretive methods of analysis and composition. Examining how these processes relate to the new media art techniques described by Lev Manovich in *The Language of New Media*, this paper reveals the interaction between narratives and databases as a nonsense occurrence.

Tassie Gniady: The Structure of a Hog-Faced Woman

In 1639, a hog-faced woman named Tannakin Skinker crossed the channel to England from "Wirkham a neuter towne betweene the Emperour and the Hollander." She became an instant sensation, as there were five ballads registered about her (only one from the time of her initial appearance survives), a pamphlet was written about her, and she is mentioned in several tracts and an epigram. In this project extant narrative tellings of the hog-faced woman from the seventeenth century will be approached and broken into constituent parts, or mythemes, according to Claude's Lévi-Strauss's paradigm as outlined in "The Structural Study of Myth." I will also examine John Gower's version of the medieval tale of "The Loathely Lady" because it is presented in the pamphlet as a corollary to the tale of Skinker. Each variant will be mapped against the others in order to interrogate the elements of this story that cause it to be told over and over. Each of these iterations has a slightly different emphasis and it is my goal to use a structuralist tool (mythemes) to deconstruct the hog-faced woman's story in a century that spanned the reign of Queen Elizabeth, civil war, regicide, and the reinstatement of the crown. SIMILE will also be used to give the audience a sense of all the iterations of the hog-faced woman, as instance of this incredible creature continued to proliferate, even until the present day.