Traverser les domaines scolaires et culturels : Les médias numériques, l’apprentissage, et les études d’écrire

Partant du principe que, dans le cadre des recherches sur l’écriture, il nous faut « [prêter] une attention particulière aux défis méthodologiques auxquels nous sommes confrontés à mesure que nous nous penchons sur des questions mondiales » (Hesford, 2007), cette présentation s’appuie sur des vidéos d’apprentischercheurs dans le cadre de relations transnationales qui racontent leurs activités de lecture/écriture (voir Prior, 1998). Créées par les auteurs d’Oslo et de Chicago, ces vidéos mettent en lumière des liens étroits entre le vécu culturel et scolaire des élèves et leurs constructions identitaires dans les environnements numériques (voir Bruner, par exemple). Ces récits nous donnent aussi une idée de la façon dont l’écriture est appréhendée aux travers différents contextes culturels et disciplinaires.

Finalement, cette présentation tend à expliquer comment les vidéos peuvent contribuer aux apprentissages des élèves transnationaux tout en offrant un aperçu des expériences de littéracie qui traversent différents contextes culturels.

As some of you know, Cynthia Selfe and I have long been involved in studying how people take up digital tools as students, as writers, as professionals, and increasingly simply as human beings, going about their everyday activities in a world richly saturated with digital communication technologies (Appadurai). We have focused this work on literacy narratives from within the United States but have also—since the publication of our book, Literate Lives in the Information Age—paid a great deal of attention to transnational contexts and to those who claim transnational identities. In fact, joined by Patrick Berry, we have just submitted a prospectus to Computers and Composition Digital Press (CCDP) proposing a book-length text entitled Transnational Literate Lives. The book features videotaped life history interviews that we conducted with undergraduates in Sydney, Australia; literacy narratives with undergraduates from Nigeria and China; as well as writing process videos from transnationally-connected graduate students in Urbana, Illinois.

With this term transnational, we intend to signal those of us who are at home in more than one culture and whose identities, as Wan Shun Eva Lam (2004) notes, are “spread over multiple geographic territories” (p. 79). Often those who claim a transnational identity speak multiple languages, including variations of World Englishes; and maintain rich active networks of friends, family members, and contacts around the globe.

For my conference paper, I attempt to trace how—and also why—the research methodologies we’ve deployed in carrying out these studies have evolved in the ways that they have and to show you videos that have emerged from the study. In making these strategic research moves, we’ve become evermore aware, as Wendy Hesford points out, (Slide) of “the methodological challenges we face as we turn toward the global” (p. 788) and how, as Hesford also suggests, the global turn demands critical literacies that connect up with responsibilities of a global citizenship. My coauthors for the conference paper are Cynthia Selfe, Patrick W. Berry, Hannah Kyung Lee, and Synne Skjulstad.

I begin with Synne Skjulstad, now a postdoctoral researcher in the Institute of Media and Communication at the University of Oslo, who was very influential in helping us see the benefits that might accrue from using digital media not only as research tools but also as providing sites through which to present research. As a researcher as well as graduate student Synne not only suggested the Web as a research venue but implied that we really couldn’t present our research adequately in print; that our current research in Literate Lives at the time lacked the richness that video clips might provide; and, finally, that if we were going to study digital contexts in the 21st century how could we possibly not use digital tools for the research.

And, frankly, we discovered that her arguments held a great deal of weight in our experience of publishing recently in print venues. A good example is a chapter we did for Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis’s new book on Ubiquitous Learning, which we couldn’t have been more pleased to be a part of but worried about our now print-
rendered videos. In this effort to represent the videos in print, coauthors Patrick Berry and Janine Solberg crafted film strips of the video clips, creating beautifully rendered illustrations to try to address the problems but that, in the end, were less than satisfactory compared with the digital versions.

Here’s what we wrote in attempting to explain why our contribution, “Ubiquitous Writing and Learning”, wasn’t able to convey the full meaning we intended despite our being delighted with the chapter and the book:

Digital video representation easily foregrounds what print seems to easily elide, that writing is embodied-activity-in-the-world, that it is consciousness in action, that it is saturated with affect and identity, that it is social as writers interact with others... Hawisher, et al.

That’s not to say that print doesn’t provide affordances that video clips and other media seem themselves to elide. In preparing the Computers and Composition Digital Press manuscript and prospectus I mentioned at the start, we learned that some of what we regarded as our best theoretical arguments seemed to get short shrift in the digital multimodal environment. Extended text on the screen doesn’t always attract the close reading that academe often prizes. The point here, I believe, is that we need to examine with care the genres and the circumstances that each multimodal genre or each mode of presentation makes possible (Prior, Porter) and how new digital genres can contribute to our particular discipline, in this case, writing studies.

In the body of my paper, I turn to the literacy narratives and videos of Synne Skjulstad from Oslo, Norway, and Hannah Kyung Lee from Chicago, USA, to illustrate some of the findings that have emerged from our larger study of students who claim transnational connections.

Several tentative observations grow out of this work with students from the United States and from around the world. The students presented here

- share the trait of having a perceptive and personal sense of events in both localized contexts and a transnational world.
- possess a rich set of linguistic resources—including variations of English—that help define and situate their multiple identifications both locally and globally.
- do a great deal of their learning, reading, composing, and communicating in various print, digital, and online contexts. Through these practices, they have, in part, created their own transnational identities.
- have acquired a set of digital literacy practices that extend across national, cultural, and linguistic borders that, in turn, help sustain and extend these multiple cultural and social identifications locally and globally.
- possess a personal sense of their responsibilities as citizens who dwell on the blurred borders of nation-states that helps inform their ways of being in the world and contributes to their academic work.

In my summary, I do justice neither to Synne nor Hannah and their literate lives, nor to their aesthetic presentation of their literacy practices. That’s for the more expanded conference paper and for another chapter in Transnational Literate Lives. But I hope to show that Synne’s and Hannah’s literacy narratives and writing process videos begin to speak to how we constitute literate identities and perhaps to how as teacher-scholars in writing studies—or digital writing studies—we might go about our research and teaching. At the very least, I hope I have begun to illustrate a research and teaching approach that can help us better understand how personal and cultural histories shape people’s literate practices and how digital tools can assist us in that effort. This paper attempts, then, to demonstrate how some of us within the field of digital writing studies balance our understanding of global trends—the increasing reach and scope of expanded digital networks—with students’ own local sense of place, identifying the specific historical, political, and social factors that influence the use and availability of digital technologies in various places and at various times and how these practices might contribute to extending the disciplinary genres in which we and our students participate.
References


Cultural landscape studies emphasized the connection of natural environments and built interventions. Yet cultural landscape methods for studying places, and people's shaping of them, tended to stress the physical and not the political dimensions of places, leaning to the study of rural, pre-industrial landscapes, vernacular house types, and patterns of cultivation, considering ecology but avoiding issues of political contestation. Cultural landscapes are so intimately intertwined with the human societies inhabiting them as to have attracted increasingly interdisciplinary attention. At the same time, broader scope of management reflected in the inter-disciplinary studies and increasing number of specializations offer wider opportunities to adequately explore and integrate the most modern practices of management in different areas of knowledge. However, these opportunities demand more of diverse skills and dynamic practices, which highlight the importance of an internal audit of resources to match the external opportunities, eventually deriving means to enrich the human capital potential. Utilising digital technologies to overcome physical distances and cultural divides, the program challenged students to envision future ideas for wearable technologies that enriched connections between citizens in the Asia-Pacific region. Using emergent technologies as a channel for information exchange in a multitude of ways, rather than a trickle down approach to knowledge dissemination, Cloud Workshop was based on active engagement in knowledge generation through practice based experimentation and ongoing problem solving. The Cloud Workshop project is an example of pedagogy that transcends disciplinary, cultural and national boundaries. There are other reasons to validate this approach: 1.