TECH3022-18 Social Media Practice

Lecture Eleven: Spreadable Media

1   Introduction:
"The media industries understand that culture is becoming more participatory, that the rules are being rewritten and relationships between producers and their audiences are in flux" (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013, p. 35).

 "It's crucial to always be cognisant that not everyone has equal access to the technologies and to the skills needed to deploy them" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 40).

The DNO Story - Homeless News Agency
http://youtu.be/vZfkLlQDCjo

"We see participatory culture as a relative term- culture is more participatory now than it was under older regimes of media power in many places. Yet we are a long way away from anything approaching full participation" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 36).

"We will return throughout the book to debates about the terms of our participation, about how policies and practices, and about which participants are welcomed, marginalised, and excluded" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 37).

1.1   Media Circulation Models:
1.2   Traditional Media Content Distribution Models:
Content Producer (print, radio, television, web 1.0)
Static content one-to-many 'push' distribution.
1st Degree Distribution - Authority generated and moderated content.
2nd Degree Distribution - Limited top-down relay.
3rd Degree Distribution – Limited top-down relay.

1.3   Social Media Content Distribution Models:
Web 2.0 Content Producer (blog/microblog, multimedia, collaboration).
Dynamic content, instant many-to-many 'pull' distribution.
User generated content, raw authoring (mass amateurisation).
1st Degree Distribution - Syndicated bottom-up interaction.
2nd Degree Distribution – Syndicated bottom-up interaction.
http://www.designdamage.com/the-evolution-of-media-content-distribution-circulation-1-0-to-2-0/#axzz3Hce6jwLi

"Rather than seeing circulation as the empty exchange of information stripped of context and meaning, we see these acts of circulation as constituting bids for meaning and value" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 44).

"Acts of circulation shape both the cultural and political landscape in significant ways" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 44).

2   Henry Jenkins: Spreadable content makes the consumer king
With the rise of fan fiction, remixed videos and curation, USC Professor Henry Jenkins believes if it doesn't spread, it's dead. Look no further than YouTube creation Susan Boyle or Twitter's capability to drive an opening weekend box office. More than ever we are living in a participatory culture where most everyone has the capability to shoot, share and create media. Jenkins warns that if you want your content to spread you must allow others to share it and participate in it. Traditional ideas about copyright, ownership and creating cultural value are being completely transformed in the process https://youtu.be/ZCKoLB1kUsY

2.1   Henry Jenkins: Spreadable Content Makes the Consumer King
https://youtu.be/ZCKoLB1kUsY

2.2   Meaningful Participation
"This book is unhesitatingly in support of expanding and diversifying opportunities for meaningful participation in the decisions impacting our culture and society" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. xii).

"This book is about the multiple ways that content circulates today, from the top down to the bottom up, from grassroots to commercial… we see the way value and meaning are created in the multiple economies that constitute the emerging media landscape" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 1).

2.3   Corporate vs Grassroots Media
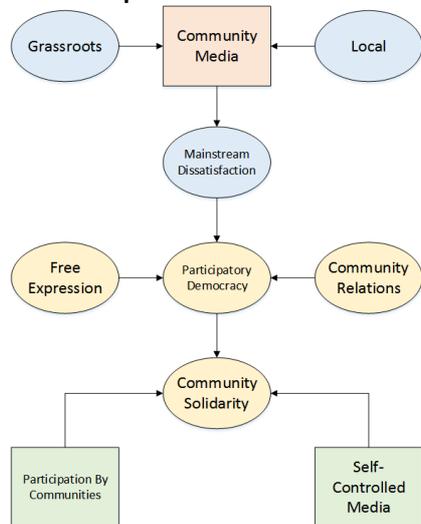
"Howley (Howley, 2005, p. 2) defines 'community media' as 'grassroots or locally oriented media access initiatives predicated on a profound sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content, dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy, and committed to enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity.' This definition associates alternative/community media with a wider set of notions and practices, such as participation by communities in their self-controlled media, and producing content for the communities they serve" (Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpenter, 2008, p. 54).

2.4   Spreadable Media

"Spreadable Media examines an emerging hybrid model of circulation, where a mix of top-down and bottom-up forces determine how material is shared across and among cultures in far more participatory (and messier) ways" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 1).

2.5   Participatory Culture
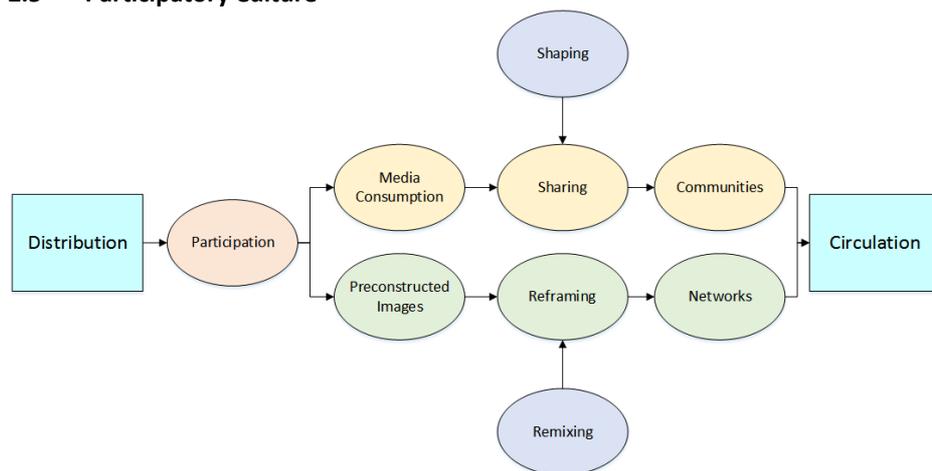
"The shift from distribution to circulation signals a movement towards a more participatory model of culture, one which sees the public not as simply consumers of preconstructed messages but as people who are shaping, sharing, reframing, and remixing media content in ways which might not have been previously imagined. And they are doing so not as isolated individuals but within larger communities and networks, which allow them to spread content well beyond their immediate geographic proximity" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 2).

2.6   Social Media Consumers
"Spreadable Media focusses on the social logics and cultural practices that have enabled and popularised these new platforms, logics that explain why sharing has become such common practice, not just how" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 3).

2.7   Spreadability:
"'Spreadability' refers to the potential – both technical and cultural – for audiences to share content for their own purposes, sometimes with the permission of rights holders, sometimes against their wishes" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 3).

2.8   Social Media Landscape:
"Our goal is not to create a new buzzword. Instead, we want to challenge readers to think through the metaphors we all use when talking about how content moves across the cultural landscape" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 3).


3   Metaphors of Media Transmission:
"When English speakers talk about some kind of failure of communication, they might say:
- Communication broke down.
- He didn't come across as well.
- Her thoughts were locked in cryptic verse.
- The message got lost in the process.
- You just don't understand.
- It didn't compute.
- She was screaming against a brick wall.
- There was no chemistry.

All of these expressions rely on metaphors and it seems one can hardly think about communication without them" (Krippendorff, 1993).

3.1   Common Metaphors:
Transmission, Broadcasting, Inculcation, Narrowcast, Information Super Highway, Hypermedia, Conduits, Viral Media, Hypodermic Syringe, Destination Viewing, Stickiness, Spreadability.
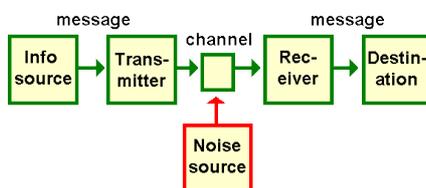
3.2   Media Metaphors:
"Language functions like a conduit, transferring thoughts bodily from one person to another; in writing and speaking, people insert their thoughts or feelings into the words; words accomplish the transfer by containing the thoughts or feelings and conveying them to others; in listening or reading, people extract the thoughts and feelings once again from the words (Reddy, 1979, p. 290).

"Michael Reddy (1979) has noted our extensive use in English of 'the conduit metaphor' in describing communicative acts. In this metaphor, 'The speaker puts ideas (objects) into words (containers) and sends them (along a conduit) to a hearer who takes the idea/objects out of the word/containers'(Lakof & johnson, 1980, p. 10)
http://www.fflch.usp.br/df/opessoa/Lakoff-Johnson-Metaphorical-Structure.pdf
 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conduit_metaphor

As Reddy notes, if this view of language were correct, learning would be effortless and accurate. The problem with this view of language is that learning is seen as passive, with the learner simply 'taking in' information (Bowers, 1988, p. 42).

I prefer to suggest that there is no information in language, in books or in any medium per se. If language and books do 'contain' something, this is only words rather than information. Information and meaning arises only in the process of listeners, readers or viewers actively making sense of what they hear or see. Meaning is not 'extracted', but constructed." (Chandler, 1994).

4 Stickiness

"Applied to the design of a website, companies hope to achieve stickiness by placing material in an easily measured location and assessing how many people view it, how many times it is viewed, and how long visitors view it" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 4).
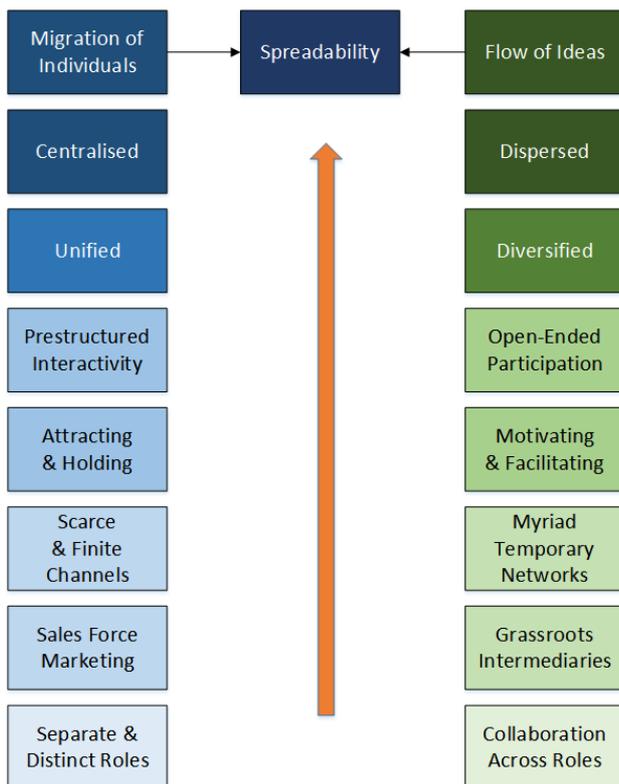
"Stickiness capitalises on the easiest way companies have found to conduct business online – rather than the ways audiences want to and do experience material online. It privileges putting content in one place and making audiences come to it so they can be counted" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 5).

"Such 'destination viewing' often conflicts with both the dynamic browsing experiences of individual Internet users, and more importantly, with the circulation of content through the social connections of audience members" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 5).

"In a stickiness [media] model, it's clear who the 'producer' and the 'marketeer', and the 'audience' is. Each performs a separate and distinct purpose. In a spreadable model, there is not only an increased collaboration across these roles but, in some cases, a blurring of the distinctions between these roles" (Jenkins et al., 2013).

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5 Spreadability

Migration of Individuals	→ Spreadability ←	Flow of Ideas
Centralised		Dispersed
Unified		Diversified
Prestructured Interactivity		Open-Ended Participation
Attracting & Holding		Motivating & Facilitating
Scarce & Finite Channels		Myriad Temporary Networks
Sales Force Marketing		Grassroots Intermediaries
Separate & Distinct Roles		Collaboration Across Roles

- The Migration of Individuals versus the Flow of Ideas
- Centralised versus Dispersed Material
- Unified versus Diversified Experiences
- Prestructured Interactivity versus Open-Ended Participation
- Attracting and Holding versus Motivating and Facilitating Sharing
- Scarce and Finite Channels versus Myriad Temporary (and Localised) Networks
- Sales Force Marketing versus Grassroots Intermediaries Advocating and Evangelising
- Separate and Distinct Roles versus Collaboration across Roles

5.1   The Migration of Individuals versus the Flow of Ideas:
"Stickiness models focus on counting isolated audience members. Spreadability recognises the importance of social connections among individuals, connections increasingly made visible (and amplified) by social media platforms" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 6).

"Spreadability emphasises producing content in easy-to-share formats, such as the embed codes that You Tube provides, which make it easier to spread videos across the Internet, and encourage access points to that content in a variety of places" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 6).

5.2   Centralised versus Dispersed Material:
"The key to stickiness is putting material in a centralised location, drawing people to it, and keeping them there indefinitely in ways that best benefit the site's analytics" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 6).

5.3   Unified versus Diversified Experiences:
"A sticky mentality requires brands to create a centralised experience which can best serve the purposes of multiple audiences simultaneously, offering limited and controlled ways for individuals to 'personalised' content within a site's format.

"A spreadable mentality focuses on creating media texts that various audiences may circulate for different purposes, inviting people to shape the context of the material as they share it within their social circles" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 6). https://www.facebook.com/groups/leicsphotogroup/

5.4   Prestructured Interactivity versus Open-Ended Participation:
Sticky sites often incorporate games, quizzes, and polls to attract and hold the interests of individuals. The participatory logic of Spreadability leads to audiences using content in unanticipated ways as they retrofit material to the contours to control and even more difficult to quantify" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 6).

5.5   Attracting and Holding versus Motivating and Facilitating Sharing:
Since sticky business models are built on demographic data, audiences are often constructed as a collection of passive individuals. Spreadability, by contrast, values the activities of audience members to help generate interest in particular brands or franchises" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 7).

5.6   Scarce and Finite Channels versus Myriad Temporary (and Localised) Networks
Stickiness retains the broadcast mentality of one-to-many communication, with authorised official channels competing against one another for the audience's attention" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 7).

5.7   Sales Force Marketing versus Grassroots Intermediaries Advocating and Evangelising
"By 'grassroots intermediaries' we mean unofficial parties who shape the flow of messages through their community and who may become strong advocates for brands or franchises" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 7).

5.8   Separate and Distinct Roles versus Collaboration across Roles:
"In a stickiness model, it's clear who the 'producer' and the 'marketeer', and the 'audience' is. Each performs a separate and distinct purpose. In a spreadable model, there is not only an increased collaboration across these roles but, in some cases, a blurring of the distinctions between these roles" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 7).

6   Networked Culture:
"In this networked culture, we cannot identify a single cause for why people spread material. People make a series of socially embedded decisions when they choose to spread any media text:
*   Is the content worth engaging with?
*   Is it worth sharing with others?
*   Might it be of interest to specific people?
*   What is the best platform to spread it through?
*   Should it be circulated with a particular message attached?
Even if no additional commentary is appended, however, just receiving a story or a vide from someone else imbues a range of new potential meanings in the text" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 13).

6.1   The Viral Metaphor
"Viral metaphors do capture the speed with which new ideas circulate through the Internet. The top-down hierarchies of the broadcast era now coexist with the integrated system of participatory channels… which have increased access to tools for communication and publishing" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 17).

6.2   The Meme
"Douglas Rushkoff's 1994 book Media Virus argues that media material can act as a Trojan horse, spreading without the user's conscious consent; people are duped into passing a hidden agenda while circulating compelling content" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 17).

"Simplified versions of these discussions of 'memes' and 'media viruses' have given the media industries a false sense of security at a time when the old attention economy has been in flux" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 19).

"Ironically, this rhetoric of passive audiences becoming infected by a media virus gained widespread traction at the same time as a shift towards greater acknowledgement that audience members are active participants in making meaning within networked media" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 20).

"Richard Dawkins introduced the 'meme,' which was to become both an incredibly important and incredibly overused idea, just like its viral companion. The meme is a cultural equivalent to the gene – the smallest evolutionary unit" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 18).

"In this emerging model, audiences play an active role in 'spreading' content rather than serving as passive carriers of viral media: their choices, investments, agendas, and actions determine what gets valued" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 21).

6.3   Active Audiences
"Spreadability assumes a world where mass content is continually repositioned as it enters different niche communities" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 27).

"The circulation of media content within participatory culture can serve a range of interests:
- Some Cultural (such as promoting a particular genre or performer),
- Some Personal (such as strengthening bonds between friends),
- Some Political (such as critiquing the construction of gender and sexuality within mass media),
- Some Economic (such as those which serve the immediate needs of everyday individuals, as well as those which serve the needs of media companies" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 35).

6.4   Value & Meaning
"Value and meaning get created as grassroots communities tap into creative products as resources for their own conversations and spread them to others who share their interests" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 292).

Content… does not remain in fixed borders but rather circulates in unpredicted and often unpredictable directions, not the product of top-down design but rather the result of a multitude of local decisions made by autonomous agents negotiating their way through diverse cultural spaces" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 294).

"Spreadable media expands the power of people to help shape their everyday media environment, but it does not guarantee any particular outcomes" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 294).

"Contemporary culture is becoming more participatory, especially compared with earlier media ecologies, primarily reliant on traditional mass media. However, not everyone is allowed to participate, not everyone is able to participate, not everyone wants to participate and not everyone who participates does so on equal terms" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 298).

"Digital media are… breaking down barriers that used to divide literacy practices themselves. Because they facilitate new ways of distributing our attention, they allow us to participate in many practices simultaneously" (Jones & Hafner, 2012).
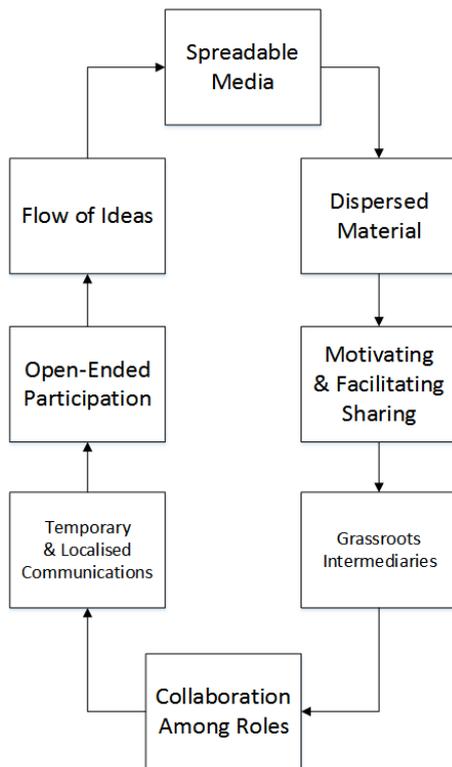
- "Flow of ideas
- Dispersed material
- Open-ended participation
- Motivating and facilitating sharing
- Temporary and localised communication
- Grassroots intermediaries who advocate and evangelise collaborating among roles" (Jenkins et al., 2013, pp. 295-300).

7 Summary

"The spreading of media texts helps us articulate who we are, bolster our personal and professional relationships, strengthen our relationships with one another, and build community and awareness around the subjects we care about. And the sharing of media across cultural boundaries increases the opportunity to listen to other perspectives and to develop empathy for perspectives outside our own" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 304).

7.1 Critical Questions
- What is our experience of the spreading of media texts?
- What makes the media that we spread easier and more natural?
- What does a media that doesn't spread look and feel like?
- How does the bottom-up model of spreadability challenge the top-down model of stikiness?
- Is this real participation or another form of processed media?

8 References:

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