TECH1002-18 Social Media Innovation

Lecture Fourteen: Media Technology Convergence

Queen - Radio Ga Ga (Official Video)
https://youtu.be/azdwsXLmrHE

1   Media Literacies – Digital Tools
According to Jones and Hafner "the process of mediation and the tension between what tools allow us to do and what we do with them is fundamentally the same whether you are using pencil and paper or a word processing programme. What is different… are the kinds of affordances and constraints digital tools offer and the opportunities they make available for creative action. In many ways, digital media are breaking down boundaries that have traditionally defined our literacy practices" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 13).

Jones and Hafner point out that digital tools now allow us to work in different ways than we might have worked in the past. They have accelerated and enhanced our ability to work in the following ways:

1.1   Across time and space
We are no longer as dependent on being situated at a specific place of work in order to achieve many knowledge based tasks, and contributors to that work may be scattered across time-zones and geographic boundaries.

1.2   Use of language
The manner in which we symbolise and interact is shifting, especially as it becomes possible to produce and distribute multimedia content in visual or audio forms so much more easily. This gives us the ability to manipulate images and sounds as easily as we can manipulate text. We therefore need to embed an appreciation for the skills of manipulating these forms of communication into our routines and practices.

1.3   Expert and amateur
With the rise of collaborative and collective forms of knowledge management and distribution we are no longer subject to the controlling influence of a small number of people who are regarded as experts. As the internet has been designed to bypass blockages and bottlenecks, this means that information is distributed more widely in a rhizome or web rather than as a system or pathway. This means that non-experts can contribute to the discussions and can find and use alternative sources if they are not satisfied with the traditional expert view.

1.4   Participation and consumption
To use the web effectively means that individuals have to have a level of competence to be able to produce and share content. Participating in small-scale or large-scale social networks is only effective when the participant is actively producing content and is engaged in the production process. This means that the literacy skills we require are not simply those of passive interpretation, but are geared towards being an active producer of content.

1.5   Authority of texts and remixes and mashups
If more people are able to engage and co-produce media material online then the role of the text as a complete and homogenised entity is undermined, and instead users engage with one another by sharing their remixes and the products of their cultural jammings. This may involve taking an established cultural form and reworking it, regardless of the copyright restrictions, and sharing it within networks of similar remixers and co-producers.

1.6   Weakening of work based hierarchies
As the collaborative potential of the internet is practiced it becomes necessary to adopt different working practices that are less defined by systemic placement and are more clearly the product of contribution and the willingness of individuals to participate in a project. The formation of social networks, such as the open source movement, allows for the de-centring of tasks, with a management process that is based on contributions to the common good as opposed to instructions from an executive form of management.

Madonna - Material Girl
https://youtu.be/Iu_nlPaI_0E

2   Hacking

Jones & Hafner point out that there is a "tension between what technology wants us to do and what we want to do with it, between the limitations it imposes on us and our ability to get around these limitations by 'hacking' it" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 101).

The Rotten Apple project exercises creativity agency by finding clever and simple ways to alter his surroundings to introduce new facets of function and fun into the urban environment. It features 23 urban hacks thus far that focus on making minor changes to commonplace components of cities that allow them to be utilized in more than one way.
http://popupcity.net/hacking-through-cities-with-creative-sustainability/

2.1   Taking Control

According to Jones & Hafner "hacking is simply taking control of media and appropriating, adapting, modifying or mixing it in creative ways rather than simply going along with the agendas of those who manufacture or control the use or distribution of the media we are using." If our use of media has been naturalised and made transparent, then hacking is a process that resists this naturalisation and draws attention to the role of the technologies and ideologies involved in media use.

Hacking, therefore, is part of a process of resistance, according to Jones & Hafner, as people use hacking to draw attention to the otherwise transparent or invisible ideological forms of control and use. Hacking suggests that the process of media production, distribution, sharing and so on, can be more opaque and available to view, and can be transformed as we use them more frequently.

Jones and Hafner suggest that we often forget that we are working with a medium, and instead we presume that we are talking or interacting directly with other people through these mediums, whether this is with a pen and paper, or through an app or on a chatroom. The more transparent this process of communication becomes, so it is argued, the more comfortable people are with using it, and are able to integrate it within their daily routines of communication.

Public Service Broadcasting – Night Mail
https://youtu.be/WFJPYi3JXw4

3   Media Convergence

According to Henry Jenkins *et al*, the introduction of digital media has altered people's relationships with "residual" media, "through the collecting and recycling of the 'stuff' of past eras" (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013, p. 97).

How has the internet has opened-up people's interest in collecting pre-digital media, such as records?

Kids use Walkman for the First Time
https://youtu.be/6kJV-BdsUWs

Jenkins *et al* cite Will Straw in suggesting that the internet, with its ability to incorporate "residual forms of media" has fostered "new forms of historical consciousness and collective memory." This is achieved through a process of "total recall" in which the items of the past are always available to people in the present for recycling and remediating. Jenkins *et al* cite Simon Reynolds' concern that this means that it becomes difficult for people living in the present to move on from a past that they are not allowed to forget.

If audiences can always gain access to the media artefacts of the past, then they will use those symbolic resources to frame and reframe their existing social options, rather than pushing them forward and generating or inventing new forms and new uses for different types of media.

Collectors are regarded by Jenkins et al as an example of media fans who are able to remove artefacts from their 'natural' lifecycle, and instead to offer new meanings that go beyond the utility value of the artefacts, and focus more, instead on the cultural value of the artefacts, such as their completeness, their authenticity or their quirkiness.

4   Residual Media

"At first glance, it's baffling that millennial music lovers are embracing the cassette tape, as new indie cassette labels are popping up all over the country. Over the last decade, the retro format has gotten so hip that an annual event called Cassette Store Day launched in 2013 and big-name artists like the Flaming Lips, They Might Be Giants, Animal Collective, Madvillain, and Karen O have put out limited-edition tape-only releases for the celebration."
http://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/cassette-revolution/

The Cassette Forum eGroup has been created to allow classic audio gear enthusiasts to interact and share information regarding the use of audio cassette tape. https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/CassetteForum/info

Tapes are due for a midlife crisis. Invented in 1963 by Lou Ottens and later introduced at the Funkausstellung radio exhibition in Berlin, compact cassettes would go on to become the most prevalent form of prerecorded music from 1983, when they began outselling records, until 1991, when the CD became the most popular medium. Tapes were undeniably an iconic part of music culture for several decades during the height of physical musical sales and distribution. And as the technology turns 50 this month, is anyone paying attention? When it comes to romance, music critic Rob Sheffield writes in Love Is A Mixtape, cassettes "wipe the floor with MP3s." This is about neither superstition nor nostalgia, he adds. http://motherboard.vice.com/blog/cassette-tapes-are-almost-cool-again

4.1   Reclaiming Artefacts

Often collectors reclaim artefacts that where once marginalised or regarded as trivial on their initial distribution. As time goes by, and the objects lose their initial set of meanings, they can be 'ironically' manipulated by collectors as a set of 'unfashionable' objects that are being reclaimed in the name of "camp and pastiche," or the desire to have a complete collection that other people don't have, and which "find value in 'cast-offs,' 'disposable, outmoded, disregarded, unfashionable' objects, mapping their own fantasies and desires onto things others have left behind."

4.2   Retro Collecting

Vinyl records have always been collectable items, but their cultural importance has shifted in recent years as debates about the quality of digital music and analogue music flare-up between fashion or technology conscious groups. To some extent the emphasis on pre-digital media is an attempt to refashion the unique 'moment' that can't be reproduced endlessly in the way that digital media can.

Why should I buy vinyl? There are two basic answers for this: You are an audiophile, and fetishize the sound of analogue recordings, or you simply like the aesthetics of vinyl records, packaging, and turntables. It can absolutely be both! But the aesthetics, the physical aspect of it, is pretty key to its appeal. These records are more beautiful and substantial than CDs, which mostly have the look of office supplies, and they're the best way to make purchasing music feel like something. Vinyl allows you to have a sentimentality about albums — there's a tactile quality, a ritual to pulling a record out of a sleeve and putting it on and focusing your attention on the act of listening for a side at a time. Even if you still mainly listen to music on your computer or iPod, it gives you the option of having a more special experience with your favourite albums, and an object you can display in your home.
http://www.buzzfeed.com/perpetua/things-you-should-know-before-starting-a-vinyl-collection#.ch5nERdaP

Before even buying that Animal Collective re-issue on vinyl, make sure you have a place to store it. Connoisseurs recommend storing all vinyl records vertically, not flat like so many pancakes. May I suggest the four-shelf IKEA Kallax ($35) as a good place to start. It replaced the popular IKEA Expidat series and measures just the right size for those LPs from the dollar bin (hey, somebody's got to buy all these dusty Dan Fogelberg albums).
http://www.popularmechanics.com/culture/movies/a11277/how-to-do-your-vinyl-record-collection-right-17197768/

Music lovers and vinyl enthusiasts are gathering for the UK's seventh annual Record Store Day on Saturday. Despite many predictions of the demise of vinyl, it has never looked like disappearing. But who's still buying? Here are eight groups that are still shopping for vinyl:
1.   The nostalgic collector
2.   The new buyer
3.   The audiophile and label boss
4.   The young enthusiast
5.   The romantic musician
6.   The digger-turned-DJ
7.   The digger-turned-dealer

8. The sighing sceptic
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-26990263

British Sea Power - From The Sea To The Land Beyond
https://youtu.be/J9fDQxt9A70

5   Remediation

"The human race will begin solving it's problems on the day that it ceases taking itself so seriously" (Younger, 2012, p. 78).

"Culture jamming is a form of disruption that plays on the emotions of viewers and bystanders. Jammers want to disrupt the unconscious thought process that takes place when most consumers view a popular advertising and bring about a détournement" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_jamming

"Détournement is similar to satirical parody, but employs more direct reuse or faithful mimicry of the original works rather than constructing a new work which merely alludes strongly to the original. It may be contrasted with recuperation, in which originally subversive works and ideas are themselves appropriated by mainstream media" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A9tournement

5.1   Media Incorporation

Bolter & Grusin suggest that "our culture conceives of each medium or constellation of media as it responds to, redeploys, competes with, and reforms other media" (Bolter & Grusin, 2001, p. 55).

Describe how the Music Video redeploys and responds to ideas of visual media, such as film, photography or television?

Mediation and remediation, according to Bolter and Grusin are linked processes, in that the process of mediation as it exists in the electronic media age in which "all current media function as remediators and that remediation offers us a means of interpreting the work of earlier media" as well as understanding contemporary media."

According to Bolter & Grusin, we might think about how earlier forms of media relate to later forms of media as a progression in which the essential characteristics of the earlier media are incorporated into the later media.

According to Bolter & Grusin this is a significant characteristic of digital media, because digital media is a more open and plastic medium that can more easily incorporate other forms of media.

So, for example, film making incorporates photography, the Web incorporates television, and computer graphics incorporate film, and so on.

As Bolter and Grusin note, "no medium, it seems can now function independently and establish its own separate and purified space of cultural meaning." This means, according to Bolter & Grusin, that our culture is one of both mediation and remediation, and that these processes act and depend on other acts of mediation, in a series of links that reproduce and replace each other. In this sense, "media need each other in order to function as media at all."

This approach touches on the postmodernism of Baudrillard, in which signs refer simply to other signs, in an endless loop of signification.

However, according to Bolter & Grusin, real life is measured as the part of obdurate reality that the process of mediation can't abandon, because "just as there is no getting rid of mediation, there is no getting rid of the real."

The goal of remediation, as Bolter and Grusin point out, is to "refashion or rehabilitate other media," and in the process to rehabilitate, to refashion and to reform "reality as well."

The music video can therefore be seen as a vehicle of remediation in which ideas that are drawn from other media, such as film, photography, television, computer games, graphic design, and so on, are remediated in a constant process of mediation, both in terms of the function and the form of the videos.

So music videos might often take on a cinematic form, with glossy images that are presented in wide-screen aspect ratio formats.

Or, they utilise the artfulness and inventiveness of the tradition of graphic design. As digital imaging has become more sophisticated what was once impossible to achieve in the camera has now opened-up the possibility that music videos are as malleable as drawing or painting.

Indeed, many music videos have used clips and samples from existing footage libraries to bring together classic elements of film and combine them with contemporary editing techniques suited to the cut-up and repeated montage techniques of music videos.

Music videos have thus been at the forefront of visual experimentation, as films that accompanied songs in a creative and inventive way, gave way to more self-referential forms of representation.

6   Culture Hacking

The function of hacking, therefore, is to draw attention to the process of mediation by making the tools visible in the minds of the users, and therefore giving us a greater sense of understanding of its use. In a commercial culture in which technologies and production tools are designed to "prevent users from learning how to re-programme them," then the culture of hacking challenges the limitations of the forms of media and technology that we have access to, and questions the relationships that we have with technology and the practices that are associated with its different uses.

All of the objects around us have affordances, some more obvious than others. Affordance is the possibility of an action with an object; it is not a property of the object itself. In other words, a button can be pushed; the possibility of pushing a button is its affordance. http://www.webdesignerdepot.com/2015/04/6-types-of-digital-affordance-that-impact-your-ux/

7   Critical Questions

- As people become more familiar with the tools of representation, are we more likely to see people incorporating different technologies, different styles and different approaches to media?
- Are we more likely to see people Hacking media?
- Are we more likely to see people engaging in Culture Jamming?

Pet Shop Boys ... "Odessa" ("Battleship Potemkin")
https://youtu.be/LQtbEv13R1I

8   References

Bolter, J. D., & Grusin, R. (2001). *Remediation*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
Jenkins, H., Ford, S., & Green, J. (2013). *Spreadable Media*. New York: New York University Press.
Jones, R. H., & Hafner, C. A. (2012). *Understanding Digital Literacies*. London: Routledge.
Younger, M. t. (2012). *Principia Discordia*. Seattle, Washington: Pacific Publishing Studio.