CHAPTER	6
TITLE	Across Disciplines: Establishing a New Media Program
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OVERVIEW	Arguing that new media requires scholars to collaborate with each other across disciplinary boundaries and, to some degree, against disciplinary expectations, this chapter critiques the valorization of disciplinary structures and traditional models of scholarship that promote individualism as the best way to produce knowledge. Drawing on their own efforts to establish a center for new media studies, the authors demonstrate how traditional structures and models restrict the opportunities that scholars have for pursuing new approaches to producing knowledge and suggest strategies for addressing such challenges.
TAGS	center, collaboration, computers, curriculum, disciplines, interdisciplinary, new media, programs, university
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Across Disciplines: Establishing a New Media Program

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New media is an inherently interdisciplinary subject. A complex mode of production that, as Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (2000) have argued, produces ostensibly "new" forms of media by remediating traditional forms of expression (p. 65), it is one of the principle manifestations of a culture in which once rigid and carefully policed boundaries between genres, disciplines, and forms of production and participation are becoming increasingly blurred. New media is, in this sense, the product of what Henry Jenkins (2006) has characterized as an ongoing and pervasive process of media convergence—a process that is manifested not only in the multimedia capability of technologies like cell phones, personal computers, and video game consoles, but also in the underlying political and socioeconomic relationships that define the communities that embrace these technologies. As Jenkins explains, "Media convergence is more than simply a technological shift. Convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres, and audiences. Convergence alters the logic by which media industries operate and by which media consumers process news and entertainment" (pp. 15-16).

The interdisciplinary nature of new media, however, can pose significant challenges to the university, requiring scholars to collaborate with each other across disciplinary boundaries and, to some degree, against disciplinary expectations—to study texts that, as works of popular culture, often challenge traditional notions of what should and should not be studied. Take computer games for example. One of the most popular and recognizable forms of new media, computer games epitomize media convergence and participatory culture, often incorporating visual, audio, narrative, and cinematic elements in ways that are designed to inspire and reward complex interactions. Although it is possible to study computer games by focusing solely on any one of these elements, such approaches are problematic in that they tend to devalue the complex artistic, social, political, and cultural interactions through which computer games produce meaning. Computer games instead require the sort of multiperspectival approach that Ken McAllister (2001) advocated in *Game Work: Language, Power and Computer Game Culture.* Citing the work of David Kellner, McAllister has argued that scholars who wish to study computer games "must take into account the variety of agents who exert meaning making power on [computer games], including developers, marketers, pundits, players, and politicians, and must accommodate the different ways that ideologies intervene in all these relationships" (p. 42).

Yet given the degree to which the university is segregated into decentralized confederations of colleges, departments, and disciplines, it is difficult to imagine how a multiperspectival, interdisciplinary program designed to study computer games or any other form of new media might be established. Indeed, faculty who are interested in collaborating on such projects oftentimes face the challenge of working together in an academic climate that is invested in maintaining strict separations, often through competition, between various disciplines and communities of scholars. Although many of these divisions are ideological in nature, they are manifested through material practices that determine how resources such as funding, technology, classroom space, and course-release time are allocated. Thus, while scholars who wish to collaborate with colleagues in different disciplines face the difficulties inherent in integrating often disparate approaches and methodologies, scholars who wish to cross disciplinary boundaries in order to produce works of new media face larger, more systemic challenges. Since much of the hardware and software required to produce a work of new media such as a computer game can be relatively expensive, these scholars must not only negotiate the purchase of this equipment within and between their departments but also work out time-sharing agreements and secure the physical space to house the equipment and the requisite personnel to maintain it. In an academic climate that is characterized by interlocking economies of scarcity, the financial and logistical challenges of establishing a new media project that exists between rather than within academic disciplines are oftentimes enough to guarantee the failure of the project in its planning phase.

Despite these challenges, interdisciplinary programs designed to undertake such projects have much to offer the university. They can help students make sense of what, to Jenkins (2006), is one of the central contradictions of the contemporary media landscape: the fact that while control of the mass media has become increasingly concentrated in a relatively small number of media conglomerates, the proliferation of inexpensive media technologies has radically expanded the ability of nonspecialists to produce and disseminate works of media to equally large audiences (pp. 18-19). Positioned between these poles, interdisciplinary new media programs can teach students a variety of interpretive strategies through which to approach and understand the complex textual, audio, visual, and spatial rhetoric that characterizes many works of mass culture. These programs also have the potential to teach students to respond to these productions in kind. By showing students how to take advantage of the proliferation of inexpensive media technologies that Jenkins references, programs that focus on producing new media can teach students a number of authorial and creative strategies through which they can confront and respond to the mass media in venues over which mass media outlets once enjoyed exclusive control and with materials that these outlets originally produced. New media programs can thus help remedy the digital

divide between those who have the ability and the knowledge to produce media and those who do not.

This chapter is an outgrowth of our experiences while attempting to establish a collaborative new media program at St. Cloud State University (SCSU). A medium-sized university of approximately 16,000 students, SCSU was founded in 1866 as a "Normal" school tasked with producing teachers for the State of Minnesota. Although the mission of SCSU has expanded considerably since then, the university nevertheless retains many of the disciplinary structures that marked eighteenth- and nineteenth-century approaches to education. In detailing the lessons we learned while working with a group of SCSU new media faculty to accommodate and overcome these structures, this chapter will address what is perhaps one of the central questions that all such collaborative, interdisciplinary endeavors raise: not how to dismantle the traditional disciplinary structures that constrain scholarship in the American university, but how to remediate these structures in a way that makes new approaches and new modes of knowledge possible.

THE CELL THAT CONTAINS YOU

Many scholars who study the history of American higher education mark the decision to adopt the German university model as one of the pivotal moments in the formation of the university. In *American Higher Education*: *A History*, Christopher J. Lucas (2006) has argued that the distinction between American colleges and universities did not become concrete until scholars like Daniel Gilman, who had studied at German institutions, adopted the model. Noting the exponential increase in Ph.D.-granting institutions from 1860 (when Yale offered the first doctorate) to 1918, Lucas wrote,

> What had changed was the rise to administrative power of men . . . who had first-hand experience with German universities. Most who returned after studying or visiting Heidelburg, Berlin, Tübingen, or Liepzig had come back with glowing reports of great academic institutions in Germany where specialized graduate seminars and lectures were offered in abundance to advanced students, and in an astonishing variety of specialized disciplines. (pp. 177-178)

What impressed Gilman and others about the German institutions they visited was that their curricula did not emphasize the type of practical knowledge or teaching that defined American institutions of higher learning in the first half of the nineteenth century. Instead, these institutions advocated advanced study and pure learning and knowledge, which they defined at the intersection of two principles: *lernfreiheit*, or the freedom of

students to learn (Lucas, 2006, p. 178), and *lehrfreiheit*, or the freedom of scholars to teach what they wanted: "to pursue his investigations wherever they might lead, to draw from his research whatever conclusions were warranted, and to disseminate the results through teaching or publication without hindrance or interference from external authorities" (Lucas, 2006, p. 178).

Prussian educational reformer Wilhelm von Humboldt first articulated these complementary principles. Inspired by the philosophy of the French Revolution, Humboldt saw the individual as an antidote to the totalitarian state structures and sought to establish a national Prussian educational system that was designed to produce individuals as sovereign subjects who had the ability to critique and therefore reform the state. As he wrote, "Education of the individual must everywhere be as free as possible, taking the least possible account of civic circumstances. Man educated in that way must then join state and, as it were, test the constitution of the state against his individuality" (qtd. in Hohendorf, 1993, p. 617). Humboldt's notion of how *bildungs,* or the development of the individual, takes place was central to his vision of how such a state-sponsored, though otherwise unconstrained, system of education should function. As Christopher Wulf (2003) has explained, Humboldt conceived of *bildungs* as an essentially mimetic process through which the individual discovers the fundamental nature of his or her internal being by attempting to come to terms with the outer world:

> *Bildung* is mimetic in so far as it strives not to control, but to form individual strengths in a control-free encounter with outer worlds. In taking on outer worlds mimesis leads to assimilation of the foreign. . . Outer world thus becomes inner world. This transformation, which constitutes the education process, is accomplished through transmitting the outer world in pictures and in adopting it into the inner, image world of the individual . . . In this mimetic association, the world is disclosed to the individual, and vice versa. (p. 246)

To Humboldt, the role that the university played in this process was unique. As the last tier of the educational system, its purpose was to continue the regimen of general education imparted by the elementary and secondary schools, but to do so in a way that inspired students to continue the process of *bildungs* independent of teachers or any other structures, state-mandated or otherwise, that might color or constrain the development of the individual. Humboldt thus conceived of the university as an institution in which the "university teacher is therefore no longer a teacher and the student no longer someone merely engaged in the learning process but a person who undertakes his own research, while the professor directs his research and supports him in it" (qtd. in Hohendorf, 2003, p. 621).

Although Humboldt's insistence on the freedom of both teachers and advanced students to determine their own courses of study is often cited as the foundation of the concept of academic freedom, these principles are also implicated in the disciplinary structures that characterize many institutions of higher learning. This apparent contradiction is rooted in what, to Michel Foucault (1970), is one of the central paradoxes of the disciplinary model of individuality that arose during the Enlightenment—the fact that it is impossible to define what constitutes the individual as a unique and sovereign entity without first defining the larger societal structures without which notions of uniqueness or individually cannot be defined. As Foucault (1979) has explained,

> In organizing "cells," "places" and "ranks," the disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical. It is spaces that provide fixed positions and permit circulations; they carve out individual segments and establish operational links; they mark places and indicate values; they guarantee the obedience of individuals, but also a better economy of time and gesture. (p.148)

This is the case with the process of *bildungs* that Humboldt championed. In order for individuals to discover the characteristics that make them unique, they must first discover the universal structures of which the outer world is composed. It is only by doing so that they are able to position themselves as sovereign entities in relationship to the external world. What Humboldt advocated, in this sense, is not that individuals should be free to do as they want at advanced levels of study, but free to determine where they fit within a larger societal schema demarcated by classes, disciplines, specialties, and sub-specialties—individuals should be free, in other words, to chose the cell that best contains them.

Thus, while Humboldt's educational reforms encouraged the autonomy and specialization that he and other Enlightenment thinkers regarded as "natural" for the production of knowledge, they are predicated on a disciplinary model of individuality that empowers its subjects only to the degree that they agree to reproduce, through their behavior, the social, political, and economic structures through which their status as an individual is guaranteed. The result is an inverse, coercive relationship in which academic freedom is secured through a disciplinary framework that ultimately functions to impose boundaries—and therefore limits—on scholarship. As Foucault (1979) has written about Enlightenment attempts to reform the military,

> Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In

> short, it disassociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an "aptitude," a capacity it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. (p. 138)

In valorizing a model of scholarship that promotes individualism as the best way to produce knowledge, the American university simultaneously valorizes disciplinary structures that encourage scholars to differentiate and segregate themselves from one another. The disciplinary boundaries that result from this invariably competitive, compartmentalized activity not only function to constrain and police the academic conversations that take place in the university, but also function to restrict the opportunities that scholars have for pursuing new conversations and thereby new approaches to producing knowledge.

THE DISCIPLINARY TRADITION OF EDUCATION

Walking among the buildings that comprise the St. Cloud State University campus, it is tempting to argue that such disciplinarity is a thing of the past. For better or worse, the picturesque Victorian buildings that stood along the river like regimented soldiers have been torn down or otherwise displaced as the campus has pushed its boundaries outward from Second to Fourth Avenue. As with many university campuses, the buildings that fill this space are not uniform and do not seem to follow a formal design plan. In fact, the newest buildings on campus seem constructed specifically to contradict such notions. The James W. Miller Learning Resources Center, for instance, presents an eclectic, postmodern mixture of architectural styles that is reminiscent of Frank Gehry's work. Its architectural rhetoric underscores the fact that the label "library," with its enlightenment and modernist connotations, is no longer sufficient to contain the mixed and often blurred purposes that define the library. Much of the same can be said for the Atwood Memorial Student Union, the newly remodeled Centennial Hall, or the Robert H. Wick Science Building—structures that, in their illogical, often contradictory architecture, seem to embody a distrust of rigid structures and careful mappings.

Yet for all of this, the disciplinary tradition of education is still very much in evidence at St. Cloud State. A historical exhibit that testifies to the continuing influence of this tradition, for example, dominates the upper floor of the Atwood Memorial Student Union. Constructed around a Wooton desk decorated with memorabilia from various eras of the university's history (Figure 1), the exhibit suggests that if there is a continuum that unites the past, present, and future of the university (as embodied by the memorabilia), it is the carefully regimented, measured, and divided compartments of the desk.

Figure 1. St. Cloud State historical exhibit constructed around a Wooton desk.

A video history of the university posted on its alumni Web page conveys a similar message. Entitled *St. Cloud State University: A History of Excellence*, the six-part documentary begins with the establishment of the university as the third state Normal school in 1869. Illustrated by scores of black and white photographs that show students, faculty, and buildings neatly arranged in careful rows and ranks, the documentary presents the growth of the university as a manifestation of the disciplinary model of education articulated by the school's first principal, Ira Moore. Described by the documentary as an "exacting and demanding administrator," Moore characterized this vision as follows: "It is hoped at no distant day, that the work of the school may be mainly limited to the history and methods of instruction. For the present, however, a thorough disciplinary course of instruction must be given in addition to this. The subject taught and the method of teaching, it must be given together" (qtd. in *St. Cloud State*, 2007). As with the Wooton desk prominently displayed in the student union, this video history positions St. Cloud State University's "History of Excellence" as the natural and inevitable consequence of its underlying disciplinary structure.

This disciplinary structure is perhaps most present in the process required to add new programs and curricula to the university's catalog. As outlined through a series of documents published on the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) system's "Academic and Student Affairs" Web site, this process requires faculty who wish to establish a new program to complete an essentially double-tiered process of evaluation. The first step of this process involves seeking approval from the university that will host the program. In the case of St. Cloud State, interested faculty must justify the need for a new program by submitting a number of forms that ask them to identify, among other things, the new program's potential clientele, how the program will be

assessed, and the effect that the program will have on existing courses and programs. The completed proposal is then evaluated by the university's curriculum committee based on the criteria outlined in Figure 2. If the university curriculum committee accepts the proposal, the faculty involved must then initiate the second phase of evaluation, which involves seeking approval for the program at the state level. As at the university level, faculty must justify the new program based on an analysis of many different factors, including the need for the program in the region in which the university is located, overlap with similar programs offered by other universities in the region, and the resources required to implement the program.

This is, of course, a disciplinary process. Quantified by numerous charts, forms, and formulas, it is designed to ensure that changes or additions to the university's curricula are implemented in a manner that not only maintains the integrity of the curricular structure, but also reinforces the status of the individuals who are subject to the curricular structure, requiring them to describe and quantify their production in a manner that both demonstrates their familiarity with the disciplinary structure and their acquiescence to it. The process for proposing new programs is, in this sense, very similar to how Foucault (1979) has described the examination in *Discipline and Punish* in that it employs an essentially hierarchical process of evaluation to ensure that the production of the individuals within the curricular structure is always expressed as a discipline. Properly structured and channeled, the work they do in producing a new discipline functions to validate existing disciplines and therefore to reproduce the larger disciplinary apparatus. As Foucault (1979) has written,

> It is the examination which, by combining hierarchical surveillance and normalizing judgment, assures the great disciplinary functions of distribution and classification, maximum extraction of forces and time, optimum combinations of aptitudes, and thereby, the fabrication of cellular, genetic, organic, and combinatory individuality. With it are ritualized those disciplines which may be characterized in a word by saying that they are a modality of power for which individual difference is relevant. (p. 192)

Understood in this sense, it is no surprise that faculty who teach new media approach the curricular process with dismay. It is not simply that to teach the subject effectively they must collaborate across disciplinary boundaries and draw on the resources of a number of ordinarily disparate approaches, but that when spelled out as a potential new program in the careful boxes and blanks required by the curricular paperwork, this interdisciplinary mode of production—this desire—looks blasphemous: a direct challenge to the rituals of how "normal" faculty should go about the social, economic, and political business of producing knowledge. Indeed, if the criteria for evaluating new

programs listed in Figure 2 are any indication, the desire for interdisciplinarity is, in the order of things, only relatively more important than "gut feel."

Criteria	3
Fits with Distinctive Competencies	Clearly fits with and enhances the Distinctive Competencies of SCSU
Impact on students	Clearly measureable, significant positive impact on student outcomes (retention, graduation, learning, satisfaction)
Addresses a Weakness or an External Threat	Clearly impacts or addresses a weakness of SCSU
Urgency	Needs to be implemented immediately because of external requirement or small window of opportunity
Impact on revenue/expense "ROI" and/or external funding potential	Initiative will clearly generate positive revenue to expense or will lead to efficiencies resulting in substantial cost savings OR External funds identified/available
Best practice	Clearly a proven best practice. Documented best practice that peers have already adopted
Impact on the community	Clearly measureable, significant positive impact on the community
Within institutional capability and processes	Process exists and staff currently have necessary skills
Impact on diversity	Clearly measureable positive impact on diversity of campus community
Impact on employees	Clearly measureable, significant positive impact on employees (recruitment, retention, development, satisfaction)
Collaboration or interdisciplinary work	Initiative involves clear interdisciplinary or external partnerships or collaborations
"Gut feel"	Just seems like a great idea (very innovative or creative)

Figure 2. Criteria for evaluating new programs or initiatives at St. Cloud State University.

REMEDIATING NORMALITY

Yet for all of this, it is impractical to imagine attempting a wholesale dismantling of the disciplinary structure of the university. Inscribed into the structure of the university and

perpetuated through innumerable rituals, the rigid distinctions between colleges, departments, majors, and minors defines the production of the university. There is hope, however, that these structures can be addressed through what Bolter and Grusin (2000) have described as the process of remediation. As they have argued, contemporary forms of new media are the products of a "double logic of remediation" (p. 5) that is manifested in two conflicting, but ultimately interdependent desires: immediacy and hypermediacy. Equating immediacy with "transparency" and hypermediacy with "opacity" (p. 19), they state that immediacy is manifested in "a style of representation whose goal is to make the viewer forget the presence of the medium" (p. 272), while hypermediacy is expressed in "a style of visual representation whose goal is to remind viewers of the medium" (p. 272). Constructed in opposition, these desires function to counterbalance each other and thus define the boundaries within which the freeplay of media production takes place. As Bolter and Grusin (2000) have written,

> If the logic of immediacy leads one either to erase or to render automatic the act of representation, the logic of hypermediacy acknowledges multiple acts of representation and makes them visible. Where immediacy suggests a unified visual space, contemporary hypermediacy offers a heterogeneous space, in which representation is conceived of not as a window onto the world, but rather as "windowed" itself—with windows that open onto other representations of media. (pp. 34-35)

To Bolter and Grusin, then, media reflects an ongoing process of aesthetic struggle through which culture seeks to negotiate not only what, at any given moment, should be privileged as a real or an authentic experience, but how this real or authentic experience should be represented and disseminated—that is, the recursive strategies by which new forms of media appropriate, refashion, and thereby remediate older forms of media.

A good example of this process of remediation at work can be found in Sierra Entertainment's 1989 computer game, *Space Quest III: The Pirates of Pestulan.* A parody of *Star Wars, Terminator,* and many of the other popular science fiction movies of the time, the game included many allusions to mass culture. Players, for example, encountered an interstellar chain of fast-food restaurants named Monolith Burger modeled on present-day McDonald's. As they visited these restaurants and similar locations in the game, they also discovered a number of *AstroChicken* arcade games. Clicking on these arcade games launched a mini-game in which players attempted to land a chicken on a trampoline gently enough to keep the chicken from bouncing into the air again. Contained within the larger structure of *Space Quest III*, *AstroChicken's* nonsensical game play implicitly critiqued many of the arcade games of the previous generation, such as Atari's 1979 title, *Lunar Lander*. *AstroChicken* was also positioned

within *Space Quest III* as a critique of the labor practices of the computer game industry—a fact that became clear when players discovered that the *AstroChicken* games were produced by two software developers being held prisoner by the appropriately named software company, ScumSoft. *Space Quest III* thus remediated the arcade game, incorporating it into its structure in a way that was designed to call attention (via hypermediation) to the shortcomings of the arcade game both as a medium and as the product of problematic industrial practices.

As this example makes clear, remediation is a political strategy. Indeed, if one recognizes that technology and media are not material things, but, in the Marxist view, discourses through which knowledge is converted into power, then it becomes clear that remediation is ultimately a discursive strategy through which new discourses are created by appropriating and repackaging older ones. Understood in this light, remediation is a useful strategy for faculty who wish to establish an interdisciplinary new media program. Informed by the notion that appropriation is, to some degree, always a form of critique, faculty who consciously remediate existing curricular elements can critique the disciplinary structure of the university at the same time that they maintain a facade of disciplinarity. That is, instead of explicitly working to attack and dismantle the disciplinary structures of the university, they can repurpose courses, technology, labs, and other curricular elements that are "normally" allocated through departments and colleges. In doing so, they can appear to work within (rather than against) the discursive traditions of the university, yet simultaneously construct the elements they repurpose in a manner that, as in the example of *Space Quest III* and *AstroChicken*, serves to foreground underlying systems of power and control that might otherwise appear natural or normal.

Faculty, for instance, who teach introductory courses such as first-year composition can integrate new media into their pedagogies in a manner that requires students to recognize that rhetoric and composition does not simply involve writing and is therefore not simply the providence of English departments. Much of the same pedagogy can be implemented in upper-level courses. Instead of reading and producing traditional or discipline-sanctioned materials, faculty can ask students to use new media to read, respond to, and produce works of popular culture in a way that demonstrates the inherently multimodal imperatives of all textual production. Faculty can also require students to use new media to repurpose or repackage the modes of production or performance that the discipline constructs as normal—to present an academic argument not through an essay or a presentation, but by "modding" an existing computer game such as *Neverwinter Nights,* or through YouTube, Twitter, a podcast, or a similar medium. Such exercises can be extremely useful in that they require students to come to terms with modes of academic and cultural production that are

interconnected but are oftentimes constructed as outside of the boundaries of the modes of inquiry that the discipline privileges as "proper" or "normal."

Faculty can also appropriate existing interdisciplinary structures to facilitate collaboration. St. Cloud State, for example, has established a First-Year Experience Program that emphasizes learning communities as a means to improve retention among new students. This program is not, of course, truly interdisciplinary. Insisting on recognizing and maintaining existing disciplinary boundaries, it trains students to approach the acquisition of knowledge as an essentially compartmentalized activity that, when done properly (or normally), is as much a matter of categorization as it is cooperation or community. Yet even so, this program provides a ready-made space for establishing university-sanctioned collaboration among faculty in different departments who are interested in teaching with or studying new media. Because students who enroll in this program are required to take a series of courses offered by instructors in different departments, the pedagogy of the courses that are yoked together through the program can be structured in a manner that helps students recognize that the disciplinary boundaries are artificial and that learning is a fundamentally interdisciplinary endeavor. These courses can therefore demonstrate the potential effectiveness of larger, interdisciplinary programs. This goal is especially easy to accomplish when such programs are themed around forms of new media, such as computer games. Popular with students, they can provide shared electronic spaces, virtual environments, through which the faculty can illustrate connections among the approaches to the production of knowledge that their ordinarily disparate disciplines privilege.

RHIZOMATIC APPROACHES

The goal of such strategies, however, should not be to produce new media as a discipline in and of itself. As discussed above, much of the productive activity of the university is structured and organized by disciplines. These disciplinary structures compartmentalize and constrain scholars, granting them a large degree of academic freedom, but only if they consent to work within the recognized boundaries of their disciplines. The success of collaborative new media programs, by contrast, depends on facilitating the interdisciplinary branching and blurring that gives new media its transformative potential. Indeed, the rhizome is one of the more useful metaphors that has been used to describe new media. Borrowed from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987, pp. 7-13), the rhizome metaphor illustrates the nonhierarchical, interconnected, and dynamic structures inherent in new media. The rhizomatic structure of new media also clarifies the difficulties inherent in and the paradox of establishing a "new media canon" or even a stable set of criteria for evaluating new media works. New media is not a collection of projects, theories, and practices, but rather a meta-discourse

for which such things serve as nodes of rhizomes. Like any worthwhile academic pursuit, new media is not unified or simply defined; it is, rather, an ongoing discourse whose participants vary in their technical training and interests, to say nothing of their ideological commitments.

Understood in this sense, efforts to impose a simplistic definition on new media betray a misunderstanding of the project; indeed, new media is, if anything, an inherently political movement that works to oppose or at least contrast other understandings of media. In much the same way that most rhetoric scholars wish to complicate their subject beyond the "art of persuasion," and literary theorists wish to move beyond mere contemplations of "the canon," new media scholars work to deconstruct, disorient, and even derail common assertions about how media works and the communities, cultures, and identities it supports and constructs. For instance, one of the most common misconceptions about new media is the assumption that it is primarily concerned with digital technology (computers, iPods, game consoles, etc.). The result of this myopic view is that discussions of new media quickly become mired in technical issues or questions about popular software programs such as Adobe Photoshop, Flash, Final Cut, and ProTools—How will we afford them? How will we learn to use them? Who will teach these programs to our students? While these are important questions to ask, they can detract from more substantive discussions, and that time could be better spent on more traditional and profound critical modes of inquiry.

Yet as concerns about the cost of buying and maintaining software shows, teaching new media studies in a responsible way poses substantial practical as well as theoretical problems. As discussed earlier, the disciplinary structure of American universities is itself an obstacle; this is particularly true when dealing with matters of hiring, tenure, and promotion. One problem faced by any new media scholar is where studies of Second Life, Wikipedia, or the procedural rhetoric of "serious games" fit into conventional criteria for professional development. It can also be challenging to inform English majors about and recruit them into such programs, since they are often more concerned with Shakespeare, vowel shifts, or The Great American Novel than exploring virtual worlds, interactive narratives, or digital rhetoric. Yet despite these practical challenges, individuals hoping to learn more about new media should begin by studying the conversations of its scholarly community rather than the programs on their computers. It is less important, for instance, for someone to know the ins and outs of Dreamweaver than for that person to be aware of the role of navigable space, identity formation, play, and virtual economies that intrigue so many new media scholars. Lacking a sufficient understanding of such theory, "new media" becomes mere pixels in a void.

Fortunately, not all new media enthusiasts pursue the same agenda, employ the same pedagogies, or share the same ideologies. Not all faculty committed to teaching new media are interested in its production; rather, these faculty spend time applying, focusing, or grinding existing critical lenses to accommodate new kinds of texts. Many are quite comfortable teaching "new media" classes in "dumb" classrooms, relying on printed books and articles as the foundation if not the sole content of their course. On the other hand, some faculty aspire to work entirely in non-traditional forms of media. They want to produce new media projects themselves or guide their students in such complex and ambitious endeavors. As a result, students who sign up for "new media" courses might find anything from a seminar based entirely on printed readings, a "studio" class culminating in a video or Web site, or some conglomeration of production, analysis, criticism, and, hopefully, reflection.

The challenge, therefore, is how to construct an interdisciplinary new media program that accommodates all of these rhizomatic approaches, presenting them to students in a manner that allows them to draw connections and synthesize knowledge from the disconnections and disparities as well as the overlaps. One of the key means of answering this challenge is recognizing that new media scholars and practitioners must remain flexible in their praxis and theory, adapting both routinely and regularly, and that these scholars must communicate with each other. Indeed, faculty who were interested in establishing a Center for New Media Studies at St. Cloud quickly realized that all of the participants brought different definitions of what constituted new media. Faculty in the Art and Music Departments, for instance, approached new media primarily as a site of artistic production and performance and therefore argued that the New Media center should be a primarily studio-oriented space. While faculty in the Communication department also primarily approached new media as a productive activity, their definition of production was more pragmatic than creative. They saw the Center for New Media studies as a shared space in which students could gain experience in new media and journalism. By contrast, faculty in the English department approached new media primarily as an area of critical inquiry. While they recognized and were interested in producing new media, they argued for a shared space that included technologies that would afford their students opportunities to study current manifestations of new media. Faced with these differences in perspective, the working group decided to approach new media as a discourse community rather than as a collection of technological practices. As such, they decided that it was best not to begin by establishing a definition of new media, but by imagining a physical space in which faculty and students from the different disciplines could converge and discuss new media—where, working with each other, they could explore the differences in these definitions and approaches. And while the working group did discuss the technology the center would need, they ultimately decided that technology was secondary to establishing a communal space where

interested faculty and students could meet. As such, they decided that the essential elements required to start the center were not computers, video or sound equipment, or software, but a couch, a few tables and chairs, and perhaps if the funding could be secured, a coffee maker.

A CAUTIONARY TALE

It is also important to recognize that the process of remediation can be a two-way street, especially where technological resources such as computer labs are concerned. A case in point that illustrates some of the challenges facing scholars who wish to establish interdisciplinary new media programs can be seen in the small scale example of the New Media Studio that the St. Cloud State English department constructed in 2006. Looking to new media as a way to enrich its course offerings and attract more students and funding, the English department made two new hires—the authors of this chapter, Matt Barton and Kevin Moberly—both of whom had studied and worked extensively with new media and who were eager to develop and teach such courses. Along with the new hires came a proposed "new media lab," a special teaching space designed to accommodate what Barton, Moberly, and the established new media faculty needed to succeed in their endeavors.

Naturally, there were many questions about what this lab would look like. Perhaps the most progressive and least conventional idea laid on the table was a "new media studio," a sort of open-ended environment that would function more like a workshop than a classroom. Emphasizing creativity, exploration, and play rather than skill-and-drill pedagogy, computers and desks would be arranged in pods, and all manner of tools and resources would be available to help students and faculty create, design, or study whatever they wished. One key idea was to purchase different types of computers and accessories, including Linux platforms, so that students could study software and other digital productions through a number of different interfaces. However, this proposal was deemed unrealistic and the majority of the faculty involved in the planning moved toward a more homogeneous space. All of the computers, they decided, would be Apple Macintoshes, which would be arranged in rows, all facing a central projection screen and teacher's workstation. At this point, it became clear that the key impetus for the project (at least for the administrators) was not creating a new media lab, but using the label "new media" as a justification for placing as many stations as possible into the room, so it could ideally accommodate a full first-year composition class—which has swelled to twenty-five students at St. Cloud State.

Fortunately, we were able to resist at least some of these dicta, and the end result was a "hybrid" space consisting of some twenty computers arranged in a horseshoe. A large

table (equipped for laptops) was located in the center of this horseshoe, with a projection screen and an instructor's workstation positioned at its base. Yet the various conflicts that arose over the design of the studio highlight some of the competing interests at stake—not just over the layout of a lab, but the larger disciplinary issues discussed above. Indeed, many of the chief arguments that were made in favor of a traditional lab layout constructed around rows of uniform computers were inherently disciplinary in nature in that these layouts were described as somehow more "natural" or "intuitive" to the type of classes the English department taught. Since this view dovetailed nicely with the administration's interest in accommodating the largest possible number of faculty and students, it was very difficult to resist.

The administrators, of course, were not the only ones with stakes in the design of the lab, and it is worthwhile to consider the other perspectives. One might assume that the new media faculty should have priority in teaching in the space (it is called the "new media studio," after all), but the department seemed hesitant to identify or designate individual faculty members as "new media people." Thus, when the New Media Studio was finally built, it became apparent that other faculty would have as much if not more priority for its use than the new media faculty. On several occasions, courses that were specifically designated new media were shuffled around or even relocated to other labs or classrooms on campus. No priority or exceptions were in place to privilege new media courses; faculty who were expressly hired to teach new media were placed on a level playing field with faculty who simply wanted to teach the occasional business or technical writing course in the studio.

Yet another conflict arose over how the lab would be used by students. The studio design lent itself to a more open, less classroom-centered approach; students could drop by whenever the studio was open and work on whatever projects they wished. However, the majority opinion was that the space should be limited to teaching, and the doors should be closed and locked whenever it was not in use. This policy was justified, of course, by the threat of theft and vandalism. However, it was also justified by concerns about the behavior of students. Instructors who had taught in many of the campus's open computer labs worried that students who wanted to use the studio's resources might disrupt classes by barging into them while in session, demanding technical support, or even attempting to access the printers. While these were valid concerns, the result was that students were prohibited from using the studio unless taking a class in the studio, and even then, only during that class's scheduled meeting times.

In short, the New Media Studio was something of a failure, eventually becoming little more than a computer classroom whose connection to new media was tangential at

best. What our experience suggests is that new media faculty might be better off looking to outside funding for studios; or they might at least find ways to ensure their special needs are given priority in the design of such spaces. While appealing to the general faculty of a single department might be an easy way to build support for a new facility, the resulting "one-size-fits-all" approach is as inevitable as it is undesirable. In the case of the English department's New Media Studio, what this solution led to was the construction of a computer lab whose funding was justified through the extensive use of the term new media, but which was constructed, in reality, because the English department lacked a computer lab in which courses could be offered. Rather than empowering or motivating the new media faculty and students interested in working with new media, the studio has had the opposite effect. With its careful rows of gleaming white computers, it stands as a cautionary tale about one of the greatest challenges that scholars who wish to establish new media programs both within and between programs must overcome: the power of disciplinarity to normalize and regiment even the most promising approaches.

CONCLUSION

New media is a site of ongoing struggle. An inherently political subject, it embodies a multitude of desires, approaches, and interests, some of which are invariably more traditional and conventional than others. The challenge facing scholars, however, is not this multiplicity. As our experience with the St. Cloud English department's New Media Studio demonstrates, the challenge is how to resist approaches that attempt to co-opt or otherwise contain new media, producing it as a unified or somehow carefully demarcated discipline. The challenge facing scholars, in this sense, is not to define, describe, or otherwise quantify new media. Doing so jeopardizes the very characteristic in which its potential is located: the rhizomatic possibilities that are produced at the intersections of new media's inherent contradictions and conflicts. Scholars must instead recognize that, given the interdisciplinary nature of new media, struggle is both inevitable and important; struggle is the means through which new knowledge, new approaches, and ultimately, new struggles are generated. The challenge facing new media scholars is thus fundamentally rhetorical: how to encourage conversation, interaction, and productive collaboration despite the discursive and financial barriers created by the disciplinary structure of the university. Scholars, in short, must work together to discuss and practice new media in ways that foreground and thereby deconstruct the disciplinary struggles that appear natural, inevitable, and incontrovertible and that lead, invariably, to rows of gleaming white computers.

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