Afterword: Communities of Readers, Clusters of Practices

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This book is at once a "How to" guide to various emerging cultural practices and a "Why to" guide to the reasons you should bring them into your classroom. Throughout, you've learned from expert practitioners what to do if you want to become more adept at music sampling, podcasting, vidding, photoshopping, flash animation, or machinima and you've learned why these practices matter to those already participating in them and how they might enhance formalized education. This is urgent work, especially at a time when so many schools have cut themselves off from participatory culture. Too many educators are determined to protect youth from exposure to Facebook and MySpace, Twitter, Wikipedia, and YouTube, as if these were threats rather than resources. Those who want to lock them out argue that they constitute dangerous distractions from formal education; many who favor them still talk of making learning more "fun" or "entertaining" for students who grab their iPods the minute the school bell rings.

These approaches are two sides of the same coin and largely miss the point: for the generation which has come of age alongside networked computing, these practices do not simply represent "entertainment" or "distraction." These practices are important gateways into larger learning cultures that help support young people as they construct their identities and navigate their social surroundings. Bringing some of these meaningful practices into the classroom

allows young people to deploy more effective learning strategies and to take greater control over their education. Educational reformers have long argued that schools need to break down the walls that isolate classroom teaching from the larger learning ecology surrounding schools, incorporate outside perspectives, connect textbook knowledge with real world contexts through authentic inquiries, and link emerging expertise to the meaningful performance of social roles. Incorporating DIY practices into your teaching is a huge step toward such a more integrated approach.

Carol Jago of the National Council of Teachers of English told *New York Times* reporter Motoko Rich (2008, no page), "Nobody has taught a single kid to text message . . . When they want to do something, schools don't have to get involved." I'm not sure what this implies about the content we *do* need to teach through schools, but I reject this laissez faire approach to the new media literacies. Even if some children learned the needed skills on their own, these practices, and the skills and mental habits associated with them, are unevenly distributed across youth culture: some young people amass diverse "portfolios" of experiences (Gee, 2004), moving across a range of different communities and practices, both acquiring mentors and mentoring others. They have had rich and meaningful online experiences and they have found ways to connect these experiences to knowledge they are acquiring through school. Incorporating these practices lets them strut their stuff, allowing them to tap into the power and status they've acquired online, and it also helps them to articulate more fully what they have learned and why it matters.

But, many other young people have little or no opportunities for such empowering experiences outside of school, lacking access not only to the core technologies but also to what Ellen Seiter (2008) has identified as the economic, social, and cultural capital required for full participation. We might characterize the limits on technological access as "the digital divide" and the limits on social and cultural experiences as "the participation gap." Schools have sought to address the digital divide by insuring that every school and library provides access to networked computing; the best way to address the participation gap may be for schools to assume a similar responsibility for integrating many of these DIY practices into our pedagogies.

From do it yourself to do it ourselves

The book makes a second important assumption that you cannot fully understand the value and significance of these practices without participating. Teachers need to get their hands dirty (at least figuratively) by working with the tools, platforms, and processes fundamental to these new forms of cultur-

al production and circulation. Through doing these things, you learn what it is like to tap a larger community of expertise around your activities. Do It Yourself rarely means Do It Alone. For example, much of what youth learn through game playing emerges from "meta-gaming," the conversations about the game play. Trading advice often forces participants to spell out their core assumptions as more experienced players pass along what they've learned to newcomers. This "meta-gaming" has many of the dimensions of peer-to-peer teaching or "social learning." As John Seeley Brown and Richard P. Adler (2008, p. 18) explain, "social learning is based on the premise that our *understanding* of content is socially constructed through conversations about that content and through grounded interactions, especially with others, around problems or actions" (original emphasis). To call this "learning by doing" is too simple, as we will not learn as much if we separate what we are doing— making a podcast, modding a game, mastering a level—from the social context in which we are doing it.

I have always felt uncomfortable with the phrase "Do It Yourself" as a label for the practices described in this book. "Do It Yourself" is too easy to assimilate into some vague and comfortable notion of "personal expression" or "individual voice" that Americans can incorporate into long-standing beliefs in "rugged individualism" and "self-reliance." Yet, what may be radical about the DIY ethos is that learning relies on these mutual support networks, creativity is understood as a trait of communities, and expression occurs through collaboration. Given these circumstances, phrases like "Do It Ourselves" or "Do It Together" better capture collective enterprises within networked publics. This is why I am drawn towards concepts such as "participatory culture," (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009) "affinity spaces," (Gee, 2007) "genres of participation," (Ito et al., 2009) "networked publics," (Varnelis, 2008) "collective intelligence," (Levy, 1999) or "communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Although each reflects a somewhat different pedagogical model, each captures the sense of shared space or collective enterprise which shapes the experience of individual participants/learners. Each offers us a model of peer-to-peer education: we learn *from each other* in the process of *working together* to achieve shared goals. Many of these models emphasize the diverse roles played by various participants in this process. It is not that all participants *know* the same things (as has been the expectation in school); success rests on multiple forms of expertise the group can deploy "just in time" by responding to shifting circumstances and emerging problems. It is not that all participants *do* the same things; rather, these practices depend on the ad hoc coordination of diverse skills and actions towards shared interests.

We need to understand the specific practices discussed here as informed by norms and values that emerge from their community of participants. We see different things if we focus on the practices or on the communities that deploy them, and in my remarks here, I hope to shift the lens onto the communities. Focusing on practices first, the editors write in this book's introduction, "Podcasting, for example, involves using particular kinds of tools, techniques and technologies to achieve the goals and purposes that podcasters aim to achieve and to use them in the ways that people known as podcasters recognize as appropriate to their endeavor in terms of their goals and values." While saying something important about the nature of these practices, this description assumes that the operative identity here is that of the podcaster and that podcasters enjoy a shared identity as parts of a community of practice regardless of the content and functions of their podcasts. And this may be true for some, especially at the moment they are first learning how to podcast or are passing those skills and practices along to others, but for many, podcasting is a means to an end.

Otaku, fans, hip hoppers and gamers

On the ground, these practices get embedded in a range of different interest-driven networks and what motivates these activities may be less a desire to make a podcast than an urge to create a shared space where, for example, fans can discuss their mutual interests in Severus Snape, or where church members can hold prayer circles, or where comic book buffs can interview writers and artists. The Digital Youth Project (Ito et al., 2009) drew a useful distinction between "messing around," tinkering with new tools and techniques to see what they can do, and "geeking out," going deep into a particular interest that may, in turn, lead you to engage with a range of social networks and production practices. There is some risk that as educators organize class projects around the production of podcasts, they risk divorcing these practices from the larger cultural contexts in which they operate.

We might think about different interest-driven networks as mobilizing somewhat different clusters of interlocking and mutually reinforcing practices. Consider, for example, Mimi Ito's (2005, no page) description of the literacy skills within otaku culture, the fan community around anime and manga:

> Anime otaku are media connoisseurs, activist prosumers who seek out esoteric content from a far away land and organize their social lives around viewing, interpreting, and remixing these media works. Otaku translate and subtitle all major anime works, they create web sites with hundreds and thousands of members, stay in touch 24/7 on hun-

dreds of IRC channels, and create fan fiction, fan art, and anime music videos that rework the original works into sometimes brilliantly creative and often subversive alternative frames of reference. . . . To support their media obsessions otaku acquire challenging language skills and media production crafts of scripting, editing, animating, drawing, and writing. And they mobilize socially to create their own communities of interest and working groups to engage in collaborative media production and distribution. Otaku use visual media as their source material for crafting their own identities, and as the coin of the realm for their social networks. Engaging with and reinterpreting professionally produced media is one stepping stone towards critical media analysis and alternative media production.

Certainly, within otaku culture, one can gain an identity as a fan-subber, a vidder, a fan fiction author, a community organizer, or an illustrator, but these practice-based identities do not supersede one's larger identity as an otaku.

What Ito observes about otaku culture is consistent with what researchers have observed in a range of other subcultures. Consider this description from my fieldwork on female-centered science fiction fandom in the early 1990s (Jenkins, 1992, pp. 152–3):

Four *Quantum Leap* fans gather every few weeks in a Madison, Wisconsin, apartment to write. The women spread out across the living room, each with their own typewriter or laptop, each working diligently on their own stories about Al and Sam. Two sit at the dining room table, a third sprawls on the floor, a fourth balances her computer on the coffee table. The clatter of the keyboards and the sounds of a filktape are interrupted periodically by conversation. Linda wants to insure that nothing in the program contradicts her speculations about Sam's past. Mary has introduced a southern character and consults Georgia-born Signe for advice about her background. Kate reviews her notes on *Riptide*, having spent the week rewatching favorite scenes so she can create a "crossover" story which speculates that Sam may have known Murray during his years at MIT. Mary scrutinizes her collection of "telepics"(photographs shot from the television image), trying to find the right words to capture the suggestion of a smile that flits across his face. . . . Kate passes around a letter she has received commenting on her recently published fanzine. . . . Each of the group members offers supportive comments on a scene Linda has just finished, all independently expressing glee over a particularly telling line. As the day wears on, writing gives way to conversation, dinner, and the viewing of fan videos (including the one that Mary made a few weeks before). . . . For the fan observer, there would be nothing particularly remarkable about this encounter. I have spent similar afternoons with other groups of fans, collating and binding zines, telling stories, and debating the backgrounds of favorite characters. . . . For the "mundane" observer, what is perhaps most striking about this scene is the ease and fluidity with which these fans move from watching a television program to engaging in alternative forms of cultural production: the women are all writing their own stories; Kate edits and publishes her own zines she prints on a photocopy machine she keeps in a spare bedroom and the group helps to assemble them for distribution. Linda and Kate are also fan artists who exhibit and sell their work at conventions; Mary is venturing into fan video making and gives other fans tips on how to shoot better telepics. Almost as

striking is how writing becomes a social activity for these fans, functioning simultane-
ously as a form of personal expression and as a source of collective identity (part of what
it means to be a fan). Each of them has something potentially interesting to contribute;
the group encourages them to develop their talents fully, taking pride in their accom-
plishments, be they long-time fan writers and editors like Kate or relative novices like
Signe.

At the time, I was interested in what this scene told us about how fans read tel-
evision and how they deployed its contents as raw materials for their own
expressive activities. Rereading the passage today, I am struck by how fully the
description captures the strengths of a DIY culture as a site for informal learn-
ing. Sometimes the women are working on individual, self-defined projects and
sometimes they are working together on mutual projects but always they are
drawing moral support from their membership in an interest-driven network.
Each plays multiple roles: sometimes the author, sometimes the reader, some-
times the teacher, sometimes the student, sometimes the editor, sometimes the
researcher, sometimes the illustrator. They move fluidly from role to role as
needed, interrupting their own creative activity to lend skills and knowledge
to someone else. Their creative interests straddle multiple media practices: they
write stories; they take telepics; they edit videos; they publish zines. Each
activity constitutes a complex cultural practice combining technical skills and
cultural expertise. Leadership, as Gee (2004) tells us, is "porous": the space is
Signe's apartment; Kate is editing the zine to which they are each contribut-
ing; and Mary has the expertise in fan video production which she shares with
her circle in hopes of getting more of them vidding. And we see here a con-
ception of culture as a series of "processes" rather than a set of "products." Fan
work is always open to revision, expansion, and elaboration, rather than locked
down and closed off from others' contributions. As a more recent account of
fan cultural practices (Busse & Hellekson, 2006, p. 6) explains:

> *Work in progress* is a term used in the fan fiction world to describe a piece of fiction still
> in the process of being written but not yet completed . . . The appeal of works in
> progress lies in part in the ways . . . it invites responses, permits shared authorship, and
> enjoins a sense of community . . . In most cases, the resulting story is part collabora-
> tion and part response to not only the source text, but also the cultural context with-
> in and outside the fannish community in which it is produced . . . When the story is
> finally complete and published, likely online but perhaps in print, the work in progress
> among the creators shifts to the work in progress among the readers. [original italics]

Similarly, Kevin Driscoll (2009) has discussed how Hip Hop's diverse
practices around music, dance, the graphic arts, video production, and entre-
preneurship associated with Hip Hop encourage participants to master a range
of cultural and technological skills. He describes, for example, the different par-

ticipatory practices that got mobilized around the circulation of a single song:

> As the figurehead of 2007's "Crank Dat" phenomenon, Atlanta teenager Soulja Boy exploited social-networking and media-sharing websites to encourage a widespread dance craze that afforded him a level of visibility typically only available to artists working within the pop industry. "Crank Dat" . . . began as a single commodity but grew into a multi-faceted cultural phenomenon . . . Within just a few months of the first "Crank Dat" music video, fans had posted countless custom revisions of "Crank Dat" to media-sharing sites like YouTube, SoundClick, imeem, and MySpace. In each case, the participants altered the original video in a different manner. They changed the dance steps, altered the lyrics, created new instrumental beats, wore costumes, and performed in groups. Some created remix videos that borrowed footage from popular TV programs and movies . . ."Crank Dat" welcomed diverse modes of participation but every production required considerable technical expertise. Even a cursory exploration of the various "Crank Dat" iterations available on YouTube provides evidence of many different media production tools and techniques. The most basic homemade dance videos required operation of a video camera, post-production preparation of compressed digital video, and a successful upload to YouTube. For some of the participants in "Crank Dat," the dance craze provided an impetus for their first media projects. This lively media culture is representative of a spirit of innovation that traverses hip-hop history. (Driscoll, 2009, p. 61)

As a former classroom teacher who worked with inner city and minority youth, Driscoll directs attention towards the technical proficiency of these Hip Hop fans to challenge assumptions that often position African-American males on the wrong side of the digital divide, assuming that they have limited capacity and interest for entering STEM subjects. Rather, he argues that educators need to better understand the ways that their cultural attachments to Hip Hop often motivate them to embrace new technologies and adopt new cultural practices, many of which could provide gateways into technical expertise.

Or consider what James Paul Gee (2007, p.100) tells us about the "affinity spaces" around on-line gaming:

> A portal like AoM [Age of Mythologies] Heaven, and the AoM space as a whole, allows people to achieve status, if they want it (and they may not), in many different ways. Different people can be good at different things or gain repute in a number of different ways. Of course, playing the game well can gain one status, but so can organizing forum parties, putting out guides, working to stop hackers from cheating in the multiplayer game, posting to any of a number of different forums, or a great many other things.

Indeed, for Gee, the idea of multiple forms of participation and status are part of what makes these affinity spaces such rich environments for informal learning. Unlike schools, where everyone is expected to do (and be good at) the same things, these participatory cultures allow each person to set their own

goals, learn at their own pace, come and go as they please, and yet they are also motivated by the responses of others, often spending more time engaged with the activities because of a sense of responsibility to their guild or fandom. They enable a balance between self-expression and collaborative learning which may be the sweet spot for DIY learning.

These examples represent four very different communities, each with their own governing assumptions about what it means to participate and about what kinds of cultural practices and identities are meaningful. Yet, all of them embody the pedagogical principles I have identified within participatory culture: "A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another" (Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 3).

Challenging the "Learning 2.0" formulation

There has been a growing tendency to describe the application of these participatory culture principles to the classroom as "education 2.0" and as we do so, to take the highly visible corporate "web 2.0" portals not simply as our ideal model but also as the source for these new participatory practices. Look at the way Brown and Adler's (2008, p. 18) influential formulation of "Learning 2.0" ascribes agency to corporate platforms and technologies rather than to communities of participants:

> The latest evolution of the Internet, the so-called *Web 2.0, has blurred* the line between producers and consumers of content and *has shifted* attention from access to information toward access to other people. New kinds of online resources—such as social networking sites, blogs, wikis, and virtual communities—have allowed people with common interests to meet, share ideas, and collaborate in innovative ways. Indeed, the *Web 2.0 is creating a new kind of participatory medium* that is ideal for supporting multiple modes of learning [italics my emphasis].

The DIY ethos, which emerged as a critique of consumer culture and a celebration of making things ourselves, is being transformed into a new form of consumer culture, a product or service that is sold to us by media companies rather than something that emerged from grassroots practices.

For this reason, I want to hold onto a distinction between participatory cultures, which may or may not be engaged with commercial portals, and web 2.0, which refers specifically to a set of commercial practices that seek to capture and harness the creative energies and collective intelligences of their users. "Web

2.0" is not a theory of pedagogy; it is a business model. Unlike projects like Wikipedia that have emerged from nonprofit organizations, the Open Courseware movement from educational institutions, and the Free Software movement from voluntary and unpaid affiliations, the web 2.0 companies follow a commercial imperative, however much they may also wish to facilitate the needs and interests of their consumer base. The more time we spend interacting with Facebook, YouTube, or LiveJournal, the clearer it becomes that there are real gaps between the interests of management and consumers. Academic theorists (Terranova, 2004; Green & Jenkins, 2009) have offered cogent critiques of what they describe as the "free labor" provided by those who choose to contribute their time and effort to creating content which can be shared through such sites, while consumers and fans have offered their own blistering responses to shifts in the terms of service which devalue their contributions or claim ownership over the content they produced. Many web 2.0 sites provide far less scaffolding and mentorship than offered by more grassroots forms of participatory culture. Despite a rhetoric of collaboration and community, they often still conceive of their users as autonomous individuals whose primary relationship is to the company that provides them services and not to each other. There is a real danger in mapping the web 2.0 business model onto educational practices, thus seeing students as "consumers" rather than "participants" within the educational process.

Participatory culture has a history—indeed, multiple histories—which is much larger than the history of specific technologies or commercial platforms. This book's introduction offers one such trajectory, starting with a consideration of how the DIY ideals took root through the countercultures of the 1950s and 1960s, which, as Fred Turner (2008) has suggested, exerted powerful influences on the development of cyberculture in the 1980s and 1990s. We might imagine another history that goes back to the emergence of the Amateur Press Association in the middle of the nineteenth century as young people began to hand set type and print their own publications, commenting on culture, politics, and everyday life (Petrik, 1992). These publications were mailed through elaborate circuits that resembled what we would now call social networks. This same community was among the early adapters of amateur radio in the early part of the twentieth century at a time when it was assumed that there would be almost as many transmitters as receivers (Douglas, 1989). Or we might consider, as Patricia Zimmerman (1995) does, the emergence of amateur camera clubs in the nineteenth century or the growth of home movie production in the twentieth century. Amateur media production got labeled as "home movies" (and locked from public view) within a culture based less on grassroots production than on the professionalization associated with mass media. Rather

than participants, mass culture turned fans into spectators.

We might pay attention along the way to the emergence of science fiction fandom in the 1920s and 1930s. Hugo Gernsbeck, the father of modern science fiction, was a major advocate of ham radio. Gernsbeck saw fandom very much as an extension of his pedagogical mission to use his publications—whether focused on real world science or on the imaginings of what he called "scientifiction"—to create a space for expanding popular access to information and insights about the scientific and technological revolutions taking place around them. He saw the fan community as a space where people could debate ideas found in his pulp magazines and thus explore the limits of current scientific understandings (Ross, 1991). Fans quickly adopted the amateur publication and circulation practices of the early Amateur Press Association to connect with each other across geographic distances around shared affinities and to support each other's creative growth and intellectual development. Over the course of the twentieth century, almost every major science fiction writer and artist got their start through producing and publishing amateur work through fanzines or participating in other kinds of fan practices. Forrest K. Ackerman, editor of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, inherited many of the values of the science fiction fan culture, focusing them on the horror genre and using his publication to encourage his readers to construct models, apply monster makeup, or produce their own horror films, again providing a training ground for many future professionals as well as providing the basis for an autonomous fan culture (Yockey, 2009). Television fandom in turn provided a supportive context through which many women, excluded from the male-only club that science fiction fandom had largely become, could develop their skills and hone their talents, not to mention build a following for their output. By the 1970s, these women (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Coppa, 2008) were remixing television footage to create their own fanvids, writing and editing their own zines, creating elaborate costumes, singing original folk songs, and painting images, all inspired by their favorite television series. With the rise of networked computing, these fan communities did important work in providing their female participants with access to the skills and technologies as these women took their first steps into cyberspace, reversing early conceptions about the gendering of digital culture as a space of masculine mastery. These female fans were early adopters of social network technologies such as Live Journal and Facebook. In short, this female-led fandom adopted the practices of early male science fiction fans and the resources offered by new media technologies to create their own distinctive forms of participatory culture. Fans were quick to embrace the value of podcasting, given how much their history was linked to earlier forms of amateur radio produc-

tion. The return to this earlier moment of fan engagement with radio is especially suggested by recent fan projects to resurrect the traditions of radio drama as an extension of fan fiction.

These participatory cultures embraced each new technology as it emerged whenever it offered them new affordances which could support their ongoing social and cultural interactions. The practices associated with specific forms of cultural production, similarly, got taken up by a community which could trace its core identity back to the middle of the nineteenth century. The availability of new media has allowed this community to dramatically expand the scope of its membership, allowing much quicker interactions between members, creating greater cultural visibility for its productions and enabling more opportunities to participate, yet the core logic of participatory culture remains surprisingly unchanged despite the constant churn of tools and platforms. And interestingly, at each step along the way, there were educators who sought to harness the community's practices—amateur printing, radio production, or home movies, among them—as a means of motivating learning, as well as those who resisted such moves as distracting from formal education. All of this points to the need for us to explore continuities within participatory culture and commonalities across creative communities alongside our current preoccupations with technological and cultural innovations. It is an open question as to how many of the "new media literacies" are in fact new and how many of them have simply gained new visibility and urgency as digital culture has enabled diverse communities of practice to intersect and interact with each other in new ways.

In their earlier book, *New Literacies: Everyday Practice and Classroom Learning*, Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel (2006) draw a productive distinction between new literacies as responsive to a set of new technologies and new literacies as responsive to this larger "ethos" of participatory culture. In my own work, I have placed much greater emphasis on bringing that "ethos" into the classroom than on integrating specific tools and practices, though the ideal is to do both. Otherwise, we may bring podcasting into the classroom and do nothing to alter the cultural context that surrounds contemporary formal education. Without that ethos, podcasts become one more thing we grade, one more way of measuring whether everyone in the class has learned the same material and mastered the same skills. Having students make videos rather than write book reports may shift the mechanisms of learning but may not alter the hierarchical and pre-structured relationship between teachers and learners.

Project New Media Literacies: Bringing participatory culture into the classroom

Over the past few years, Project New Media Literacies (NML), first at MIT and now at the University of Southern California, has taken what we know about participatory culture and applied it to the development of curricular resources for use in both in-school and after-school based programs. Our work has included the development of the Learning Library, a robust set of tools and media-focused activities, which are designed to get learners (teachers and students alike) exploring and experimenting with the new media literacies and in the process, producing and sharing media-related activities ("challenges") with each other; The Ethics Casebook, developed in collaboration with Harvard's GoodPlay Project, which encourages young people to reflect more deeply on the choices they make as media producers and members of online communities; and a series of Teachers' Strategy Guides intended to encourage teachers to rethink how they would teach traditional school content differently in a world which embraced a more participatory model of learning. Our work has been informed both by my own scholarship on participatory culture and by the applied expertise of Erin Reilly, who had previously helped to create Zoey's Room, a widely acclaimed on-line learning community that employed participatory practices to get young women more engaged with science and technology. Our team brought together educational researchers, such as Katherine Clinton, who studied under James Paul Gee, with people like Anna Van Someren, who had done community-based media education through the YWCA and had worked as a professional videomaker, Flourish Klink, who helped to organize the influential Fan Fiction Alley website which provides beta reading for amateur writers to hone their skills, or Lana Swartz who had been a classroom teacher working with special needs children. The work of Project New Media Literacies, thus, emerged from multiple expertises and many different practices, much like the informal learning cultures we drew upon as our model. Much of our work took shape through collaborative authoring tools, such as GoogleDocs and Ning, as we sought ways to embed these technologies and their affiliated practices into our day-to-day operations. And our development and deploying of these curricular resources involved us in collaborating both with other groups of academic researchers, such as the GoodPlay Project at Harvard or Dan Hickey, an expert on participatory assessment, at Indiana University, with youth-focused organizations such as Global Kids and Zoey's Room, and with classroom teachers in New England and the Midwest who were rethinking and reworking our materials for their instructional purposes.

Here, I want to use the Teachers' Strategy Guide we developed around "Reading in a Participatory Culture" to explore what it might mean to bring the "ethos" of a participatory culture into the English/Language Arts classroom. The Learning Library introduces a range of different participatory practices—from Djing to Podcasting, from Graphiti to Cosplay—and encourages young people to go out and explore the web, "messing around" with new tools and platforms, even as they are developing a conceptual vocabulary for linking what they learn at a particular location to their larger acquisition of core social skills and cultural competencies. The Teachers' Strategy Guides adopt a more conservative approach on the level of content, reflecting the current constraints on what can be incorporated into formal education, but propose a radical reconceptualization of what it means to engage with literary texts.

Jenna McWilliams (2008, p. 1), a researcher on the Project NML team, captures many of our goals in this statement from the Teachers' Strategy Guide:

> This model embraces the traditional model—which conceives of a literary text as a living presence imbued with deep cultural meanings—and works to enhance active engagement with the text through integration of participatory practices and skills. The participatory model of reading harnesses the activities that many kids already engage in when participating in online and offline communities. The unit also emphasizes that **reading can be a generative process**, one in which the work of understanding a text can serve as a launching point for creative work and a cultural conversation, one in which they may take on the role of authors who help keep the book alive through appropriation and remixing it for a contemporary audience.

> This unit highlights **the concept of purpose-driven reading**: that depending on the role different readers play, they will be driven to engage with a text with different purposes. In other words, purpose is both individual and social: Each student engages with the text in a slightly different way, and these different modes of engagement can enhance a collective understanding of the work.

> The goal of this unit is to help students **identify individual motives** for approaching a creative text and to use those motives for **collaborative problem-solving**—working in cooperation with a community of readers to develop an enhanced understanding of the text. [original emphases in bold]

You can already see from this description how we sought to embed what we know about "affinity spaces" and "participatory culture" into a reconfiguration of what it means to study literature in schools. One key way we have done this is to call attention to what we describe as "motives for reading," recognizing that when we read a text for different reasons in the service of different goals and interests, we read it in different ways, asking different questions, noticing different things, and generating different responses.

In school, there has too often been a tendency to reify one kind of read-ing—one that can easily be reduced to SparkNotes—as if that was the natural or logical way of responding to particular texts. Students aren't asked to think about why they, personally, individually or as members of a larger learning com-munity, might be reading *Moby-Dick*; they have simply been assigned a book, and they are reading it because the teacher, the school board, or the national standards dictate that they should do so. This cuts reading in the literature class off from the other reasons young people might choose to read outside of the classroom and thus diminishes the relevance of the skills we are teaching for the rest of their lives. It has been suggested that if we taught sex education in schools the same way we taught reading, the human race might die out in a generation. Literature professor Wyn Kelley (2008), a key collaborator on this project, describes two very different modes of reading, one Romantic ("we are drawn irresistibly into the text, seduced, horrified, or intoxicated by something greater than ourselves") and one critical ("a left-brain navigation of the text, complete with charts, guides, and lists"). She argues:

> Students, in my experience, approach reading with both approaches in mind. They love the experience of losing themselves in a text, and they also savor the joy of discover-ing themselves and mastering their world. We do them a disservice if we try to sepa-rate those two modes of reading or prioritize them, suggesting that one exists only for private pleasure, the other for public instruction and assessment. One is for enjoyment, we seem to be telling them, the other learning. One is emotional, the other rational. One has no particular meaning; anything you think is fine. The other has a meaning assigned by teachers, critics, and other authorities; whatever you think, you must eventually adopt this authoritative interpretation. (Kelley, 2008, p.12)

The challenge was how to create a context in the literature classroom which supported readers with very different goals and interests, much as Gee (2007) describes the forums around Age of Mythologies as enabling many different forms of status, participation, and leadership. What if young people were asked to identify their own goals for reading this text, to take responsibility for sharing what they learned with each other, and to translate their critical engage-ment with the text into a springboard for other creative and expressive activi-ties?

You Don't Know Dick!

Our interest in *Moby-Dick* as a specific case study for this participatory model of reading emerged from our interactions with Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, the creative director of the Mixed Magic Theater in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Pitts-Wiley

had gone into an institution for incarcerated youth and helped them to learn to read *Moby-Dick* by encouraging them to identify closely with a single character and to try to imagine what kind of person that character would be if they were living today. In the process, he encouraged them to re-imagine *Moby-Dick* not as a novel about the whaling trade in the nineteenth century but rather as a story about the drug trade in the twenty-first century—both dangerous professions involving men who were on the outside of their society and who formed enormous loyalty to each other and to their leaders in their ruthless pursuit of their economic interests. We might describe this approach as learning through remixing. Pitts-Wiley (2008, p.28) described some of the ways that these young men reconceptualized Melville's characters:

> One of the young men chose Ahab—it was a great story, too! Ahab was at home. He had just come back from a very successful voyage of drug dealing for WhiteThing, his boss. It was so successful that he worried that he was now a threat to the great omnipotent WhiteThing. He was making some decisions that it was time for him to either challenge the boss for control or to get out of the business. He's home, he's got this young wife, she's pregnant, and the drug lord sends agents looking for him. In looking for him, they kill his wife and unborn child. They don't get him. His revenge is based on what they did to him. Another one chose Elijah, the prophet, and the awful dilemma of being able to see the future and no one believing or understanding what you're trying to tell them. "I'm going to warn you about this, but if you don't heed my warning this is what's going to happen," and the awful dilemma that you face. His story was about 9/11. "I'm trying to tell you this is going to happen," and then nobody listened, and how awful he felt that he knew and couldn't stop it . . . Another one chose Queequeg and he made him a pimp. Wow, why a pimp? He says, "Well, when we meet Queequeg he's selling human heads, shrunken heads," so he's a peddler in human flesh. He's exotic. He's tall. He's good looking, and fiercely loyal and dangerous. That's a pimp.

Pitts-Wiley, in turn, took inspiration from the stories these young men created for his own new stage production, *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*. In the process, Pitts-Wiley has become a passionate advocate for getting communities to read and discuss classic novels together as they seek to better understand how these books inform their own contemporary lives and identities. Although Pitts-Wiley saw remixing as an important strategy for constructing a productive dialogue with young people around literary works, he was also emphatic that remixing should emerge from a meaningful engagement with the original and not simply the careless appropriation of someone else's words and ideas for one's own purpose. As an African American, he was very aware of how his culture was often "ripped off" by white artists without any acknowledgment of its original meanings and contexts. He asserted his right to draw on the literary canon but he also insisted that his students pay respect to those who came

before. Creative reading worked hand in hand with critical reading; remixing literary texts started with and enhanced what literature teachers have traditionally talked about as "close reading."

We wanted to bring key aspects of Pitts-Wiley's visions and pedagogical practices into our Teachers' Strategy Guide. One way we did this was to offer students multiple models of what it might mean to read *Moby-Dick*. A video (see: http://techtv.mit.edu/collections/newmedialiteracies/videos/410-four-readers), produced by project member Deb Lui and filmed by Talieh Rohani, introduced "Four Readers"—Pitts-Wiley, Rudy Cabrera (a young actor in his troupe), Kelley, and myself, each embodying a very different relationship to the text. Indeed, the video shows that not only do we each read Melville in different ways and for different reasons but that we each may read the same book in different ways on different occasions. Kelley, for example, describes how she reads the novel as a scholar and as a teacher and how these different goals shape what she pays attention to. I discuss what it means to engage with a book as a fan (in this case, using the Harry Potter novels) and as a media scholar. Pitts-Wiley discusses what he looks for in translating a literary text for the stage, while Cabrera discusses how engaging with a text as an actor helped him develop a deeper understanding of Melville's words through the eyes of a particular character. Another resource called attention to the range of different goals and interests reflected in fan websites around popular television shows: a medical student's website on *House* that "nitpicks" its representation of medicine; a *Survivor* fansite that explores why particular contestants lost the competition; a Patrick O'Brian site that draws together information about nineteenth century ships and their procedures, and so forth. Through these examples, students were encouraged to reflect on reading as a process and a practice, identifying the goals and strategies different readers applied to texts.

Students were also asked to take an inventory of their own reading practices, inside and outside the classroom. Jenna McWilliams, Katherine Clinton, and Deb Lui developed an activity where young people charted various aspects of their lives and then identified the different kinds of texts they tapped in their daily activities. As McWilliams (2008, p. 9) tells teachers:

> Though traditionally, reading has generally "counted" if it's a book that you read cover to cover, over the next several weeks the class will be encouraged to expand its concept of what counts as "reading a text"—you can read a website, for example, or read text messages, or even read a movie or a TV show or a song. The class will be . . . reading lots of different things, including but not limited to the main text. The teacher should model these ideas by drafting his or her own Identity Map and engaging in a discussion about what else might be considered within each identity the teacher identifies.

One Somerville-based teacher, Judi, brought a box of materials from her everyday life and asked students to guess what they had in common. Our team member Hillary Kolos (in Clinton, McWilliams, & Kolos, 2009, no page) observed Judi's activity:

> At first, they group the items together in categories like "maps," "menus," and "bills." Judi then led a group discussion about what all the items had in common. With a little help, one student guessed that you read all of the items. Judi explained that she reads items like these constantly throughout the day, in addition to reading books.

Judi described how this one activity started to change her students' understanding of reading. One student, for example, had been told for most of her life that she was not a good reader, but through filling out the activity, she came to realize that "I read all the time." This expanded conception of literacy, thus allows students to understand the reading they do in the classroom as a particular reading practice with its own rules and goals rather than creating a hierarchy where they were taught to devalue their own relationship to texts simply because it "falls short" of their teacher's exacting standards.

Learning is messy business

Teachers and students alike were encouraged to think of the classroom as a "community of readers," a metaphor running through Pitts-Wiley's descriptions of his theater practice. He had launched a campaign to get adults to read Melville's novel so that they might engage in meaningful conversations with younger readers in their community. This is very similar to what the Digital Youth Project (Ito et al., 2009, p. 39) found in interest-driven networks more generally:

> In contexts of peer-based learning, adults can still have an important role to play, though it is not a conventionally authoritative one . . . Unlike instructors in formal educational settings, however, these adults are passionate hobbyists and creators, and youth see them as experienced peers, not as people who have authority over them. These adults exert tremendous influence in setting communal norms and what educators might call "learning goals," though they do not have direct authority over newcomers.

A "community of readers," like the fan communities described above, offers a supportive environment through which individual students might develop their own expertise and share what they discover about the book and themselves with the group as a whole.

One way that students came to share their emerging expertise was through the annotation and illumination of Melville's text. Kelley introduced our team

to the recently recovered marginalia which Melville produced as he read some of the books—fiction and nonfiction—and which informed his writing of *Moby-Dick*. Literary scholars are now exploring how these clues into Melville's reading process might shed light on his creative process. As she did so, we were struck by how rarely we encourage students to think about "great authors" as themselves readers of other cultural texts. Our approach, on the other hand, saw Melville as a master remixer who took ideas from many sources and mashed them up to create a work which captures the multicultural community that had grown up around whaling.

Having considered Melville's own model, students were then asked to select a page from the novel, blow it up to poster size, and create their own marginalia. Sometimes they might write words, other times draw pictures, but they were encouraged to engage as fully and diversely as possible with what they saw on the page. Because each student brought different motives to his or her reading, each annotation and ornamentation stressed different aspects, and thus as they presented the posters to their classmates, many different possible routes of interpretation emerged. In an exchange at one of our professional development conferences, Wyn Kelley talked with Paula, a teacher who had been using the Teachers' Strategy Guide, about how the classroom dynamic changed under this more participatory model (Clinton, McWilliams, & Kolos, 2009, no page):

Wyn: In our writing of the guide we started with what we spoke of as a traditional model of literacy which you might summarize as mastery of the text. I wondered how you would define the kinds of literacy you are seeing in your students now? I gather not all of them read the whole book or were able to spout facts afterwards as we might expect in some mastery based model but clearly you saw something that looked like literacy to you. How would you describe that? What is that literacy?

Paula: I want to talk about one student's response to the annotation of Moby-Dick he did. Afterwards he came to me and he said, "You know what I figured out from that exercise," and I'm saying to myself, "Not what the text means, that's for sure." It was really messy and I didn't come off of it really thinking that they understood all of the text, you know what I mean. They probably couldn't even tell me the plot line. But what he said to me was, "I think what I learned is that I really should read the classics because there's something in there I don't understand." And I thought, Ahh! When you do the traditional way we teach literature to students, somehow the teacher becomes a conduit of all information, no matter how you do it, whether it's a study guide or this and that. Eventually the teacher tells you how to think about this particular kind of text. What was driving me a little crazy was that I wasn't telling them how to think about anything. The thing I liked was that they came out of it thinking that they better think some more because they really didn't think it through. Eventually, if you are going to be literate, they have to come to the place where they say that "I had to struggle with this text a little bit to find out what it is saying to me."

Read in such ways, the push towards dealing with meaningful chunks from the novel is not about "lowering expectations" but, rather, about "raising expectations;" asking students to engage closely and creatively with specific passages from the text rather than developing a superficial understanding of the work as a whole, asking students to take ownership over what they are learning rather than relying on the teacher to hand them the answers for the exam. It is about intensive rather than extensive reading. As Pitts-Wiley (2008) explains, "Don't make it a test. Make it a lifetime experience. . . . Then the question becomes, 'How do I support you all the way through?' If you start reading *Moby-Dick* in the ninth grade where are you being supported in the tenth grade? Where are you being further supported in the eleventh grade and the twelfth grade?" For Pitts-Wiley, the key comes through constructing a "community" with a shared investment in literary works the student can draw upon for scaffolding and support. Such a "community of readers" has emerged spontaneously around the discussion of popular texts online, but Pitts-Wiley hopes to use his theater work to help foster a similar kind of community around Melville so young people remain connected to the books they read in school throughout the rest of their lives.

Some of our Strategy Guide activities (McWilliams, 2008, p. 25) pushed the idea of a "community of readers" even further, applying models of collective intelligence to think about how young people might pool their different interpretations and reading interests in the book:

> "How to Ace *Moby-Dick*" wall: Students work together to come up with guidelines for how other students can begin to engage in *Moby-Dick*. The class collectively identifies important themes, concepts, symbols, images, and so on from the text; as these are acknowledged, they're posted on a wall for all students to have access to. The purpose of this activity is to show that knowledge-building can be a collective practice and that this built knowledge can live in a shared social space (much as it does online). Because students don't have to worry about memorizing key ideas, they're freed to engage in the text and work with the key ideas in other ways. By asking students to articulate the ways that they've begun to engage with the novel, they can become more self-reflective of the process of studying the text within the framework of participatory culture. Ultimately, this knowledge can be pooled online (perhaps using social networking sites such as ning.com, or a free wiki through such hosting sites as pbwiki.com) with other classes who are working with the same text, with the end result being a fuller set of tools, instructions, definitions, and terms for future students' use.

One Indiana school encouraged students to make their own contributions to the Wikipedia page on *Moby-Dick*. Over the course of the term, their additions faced challenges from others invested in Melville's novels, as is often the case when additions get made to Wikipedia, and the students entered into the discussion forum to defend their claims, and in the end, they were successful in

getting many of their contributions to become an accepted part of the shared knowledge Wikipedia provides. Significantly, the school's computers had previously been blocked from adding content to Wikipedia because some user had vandalized the site. Now, the students became valued members of the Wikipedia community and in the process, they saw themselves as having developed a degree of expertise over *Moby-Dick.*

As they worked with the Teachers' Strategy Guides, different teachers deployed a range of different expressive practices to help their students engage more fully with the novels they were reading. (In many cases, the teachers were appropriating the techniques we had developed and applying them to other books they felt were more appropriate to their students' lives and reading levels.). Some had students develop comic strips using tools like Bitstrips; some staged and recorded plays much like Pitts-Wiley's own *Moby-Dick: Then and Now* which emerged from their reinterpretations and appropriations from the novel; some created music videos inspired by M.C. Lars's "Ahab," an example which was often incorporated into their teaching of the book; and some wrote fan fiction which explored the perspective of secondary characters on board the *Pequod*. The choices of these practices emerged organically from the shifts that were taking place in the classroom culture, shaped by a changed understanding of the nature of literacy and expertise, informed by the reconceptualization of the class as a "community of readers" and their recognition that reading is a springboard for many other kinds of cultural expression.

Writing in her blog about the experience, McWilliams (2009, no page) described how "reading with a mouse in your hand" encouraged young people to move from consumption to production and to move outward from the core text to many other cultural expressions:

> "Reading-with-mouse-in-hand" is fundamentally different from the act of "reading-with-pencil-in-hand," a common practice among professional writers and voracious readers. The difference is in what happens to the generative activity linked to reading. When you are reading-with-mouse-in-hand, your writing is "going public" instantly in a way that marginalia never could. Reading-with-mouse-in-hand, therefore, is a practice that requires a deep sense of an intended public, which is much broader than the public generally identified by the school context.

Students and teachers were encouraged to treat even canonical texts as "works in progress," to go back to our earlier discussion of fan fiction, which have informed subsequent generations of writers and artists.

Learning to read in this context is, as Paula and Professor Kelley suggest, "messier" than learning to read in a traditional classroom, much as the mixing and matching of production practice within any given creative communi-

ty is much messier than trying to deal with the practices individually. Teachers reported struggling with their own entrenched assumptions about what forms of culture or what types of reading were valuable and often got caught off guard by materials students wanted to bring into the discussion that had not yet been vetted for their appropriateness or directions that students wanted to take the conversation that were far removed from the instructor's own expertise and training. Often, our field observations found that students were most engaged when our practices felt least like normal schooling and least engaged when the bureaucratic structures reasserted themselves. And this is a problem we will need to explore more fully if we are going to be able to bring a participatory model of reading and learning more fully into our teaching.

Yet, this approach is also highly generative in the sense that it sparks a range of different critical and creative responses to what is being read and it encourages students to take a much greater pride in what they were able to contribute to the class's joint efforts to make sense of this complex nineteenth century novel. Some of what is valuable here emerges from a "Do It Yourself" ethos where students are encouraged to take greater ownership over their own learning, but it is also shaped by the fact that they are doing it together as part of a larger community of people with diverse interests and multiple opportunities for participation.

We are, however, pushing up against the boundaries of formal education. We are pushing against the time limits of the class period which restricts the ability of students to "geek out" around subjects of passionate interest to them. We are pushing against the hierarchical structure which places obligations of teachers to be "in control" over what happens in their classroom and which thus generates fear and anxiety when discussions move in directions that reflect the intrinsic interests of their students. We are pushing against the requirements of standardized testing which adopt a model radically at odds with our notion of a diversified and distributed expertise, insisting that every student know and do the same things. We are pushing against administrative practices which isolate schools from the larger flow of the culture, and we are pushing against the division of learning into grade levels which rejects the notions of "lifelong learning" that underlie Pitts-Wiley's idea of continuing to scaffold students' relations to literature after course assignments are completed. Project NML has done its best to identify ways that at least some of what we see as valuable about participatory culture can be inserted into current pedagogical practices, but all of us need to continue to struggle with the challenges of how we might more fully align our schooling practices with what we know to be socially, culturally, and pedagogically productive within the field studies that have been done around DIY subcultures.

At the end of the day, the idea of "do-it-ourselves" remains a radical concept—at least where formal education is concerned. Enter at your own risk.

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