



What did we learn?
What have we accomplished?
Where do we go from here?

“One code to rule them all...”

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When all that has been solid melts into code, how do we rethink and re-make scholarly praxis--- theory, research and pedagogy---built from and for a literate universe? Quality becomes quantity, arts and sciences are re-fused, media fluidly converge, and even the ontology of the body, this “too too solid flesh” of Hamlet’s of distracted imaginings, becomes molten, as virtuality, especially for those who have never known the literate world from which their elders have come, becomes more tangibly and affectively--and even materially-- more substantial than what we have fondly imagined as ‘the real’.

This rich and densely textured conference has illustrated, in theoretical, methodological and pedagogical terms, the multitude of ways we have moved beyond text as our primary mode of representation, creation and expression, ever more fully engaging with and making astonishingly inventive uses of emerging digital systems, codes and tools, without relinquishing the deep and rich fields and forms of mastery thus far evolved from the cultural logics of print. For someone working in the field of education, this has been an exhilarating conference, which has delivered one after another challenges to what the first panel wonderfully termed the “Gutenberg tendencies” and textual preferences that have driven and still drive most of what goes on in schools to this day.

At that first panel, Benjamin Franklin made a guest appearance, I want to recall him for a moment here as a way of pulling on just one slender thread of the rich tapestry of these past few days:

It was about this time I met with an odd volume of the “Spectator”.... I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers, and making short hints of the sentiment in each

sentence laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand.... By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discovered many faults and amended them; but I sometimes had the pleasure of fancying that, in certain particulars of small import, I had been lucky enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious. (1)

Is this plagiarism? Appropriation? Or is it remediation, remix, the workings of collective intelligence.

The thread I want to tug at is how, particularly for educators, we can most productively think of remix.

At last night's plenary, and indeed throughout these meetings, we've heard about and seen demonstrated an extensive and variegated set of conceptions, all of which we've seen characterized as 'remix'. So I want to draw attention to this variety and to pose a question about it. Remix is not a unitary concept, I want to suggest, but references a **continuum**--- between adults setting up systems, essentially template systems, that kids can seem to use to produce what seem to be their own new creations, when really they are in effect pressing buttons, they aren't doing the kind of assimilated, deeply interiorized creative work that Franklin is talking about. To have educational value, we need to work far above and beyond cut and paste --that just isn't good enough thinking. We've seen examples along that continuum, where you wouldn't need much more than the intelligence of a monkey to generate music, images and various forms of written expression, and then we've seen examples where people have to delve deeply into media forms and themselves are transformed by their studious engagement---which is, after all, what education is supposed to do: help us form better, more intelligent, more humane selves. Among the profoundly moving and extremely stimulating examples were Ricardo Pitts-Wiley's and Juan's Devis' work with youth, presented at Saturday night's plenary on learning through remixing.

I do just want to say something here, though, about continuities and discontinuities ---even as we do our best to hold on to the past and through these remixed practices, enrich our lives in the present, we need to pay particular attention to what is being held on to and what is being left behind. All the examples have tended to privilege mainstream,

canonical works by men, and, largely, for and about men. And it isn't that this isn't remarkable, wonderful work--- but there are also other things that we need to connect with, to keep continuity with. That is why for me some of the most valuable learnings at this conference have come from the work by and with indigenous and first nations colleagues and collaborators, for example, who have reminded us of the abstract and detached concepts that we have of intellectual property and copyright by contrast with the grounded, community driven forms of consultation and respectful accountability which shape digitally remediated practices of repatriating and archiving traditional cultural forms. For instance, Kimberley Christen's presentation on the archiving of aboriginal art and culture gave us very different conceptions of data base architecture and indeed the very (un-googleish) conception of what a 'search' is, when organization and access protocols are driven by respect for and accountability to one's elders, rather than the assumption that all knowledge is public knowledge, and one need be accountable only to those individuals (after all, mainly white males of a certain class and culture) who are said to have 'created' a work. There are far higher creators being recognized in these locations... Katerina's Teaiwa presentation on the physical removal of aboriginal islander land rich in phosphate which was "appropriated", in the most profound example of remixing I have ever encountered: where a two and a half mile island was stripped, the very grounds of a peoples' existence removed and relocated, to fertilize the grasslands of both new Zealand and Australia, to grow its lush, green pastures for other peoples' animal and food production. What I think we learn here is that we have to be very careful not to unthinkingly import to our attempts to rethink these new foundational ideas, assumptions, ideologies, conceptualizations, ways that continue to privilege world views and practices which have devastated other people in other places. And the concept of remix has gained itself some very valuable remixing from the work of these aboriginal scholars who help us see the contours and limitations of our own ways of thinking and working. Where we go from here, it seems to me, if we don't want a literal and superficial and enduringly oppressive epistemology of remix and remediation, is to the borders, limits and edges, to ideas whose deep roots challenge us to hold firm to our contexts and communities – we need these challenges from the borders and the margins, so an agenda of radical inclusion is in my view the most generative agenda for the future.

The road ahead? Well, for education certainly, we are called upon now to more fully understand how knowledge that had been temporarily stabilized by print, can now be re-seen, as Ong's concept of secondary orality promised, under today's new, digitally remediated conditions,

reminding us in powerful ways that knowledge is always situated, always accountable to its communities, and ongoingly under construction. It is THIS kind of construction, a deep and informed and studious remixing, that can take us all, teachers and learners alike, into a better, more intelligent and more ethical educational future. I would like to thank those many many colleagues for their marvelous work. We leave here greatly in your debt.

(1) FRANKLIN, B. (1771) The autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, online at <http://www.ushistory.org/franklin/autobiography/> (last accessed 6 May 2007) quoted p. 312 in Jenson, J. and de Castell, S. (2005) "Turn It In: Technological Challenges to Academic Ethics" *Education, Communication & Information*, Vol. 4, No. 2/3, July/Nov. 2004 pp. 311-330