BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF (NEW MEDIA) PRACTICE:
SHARING LEARNING STORIES FROM A VIDEOBLOGGING COLLECTIVE

by

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ABSTRACT

We live in a participatory culture, an environment characterized by the proliferation of production and sharing via computer-mediated communication. However, in my department, situated in a faculty of education at a Western Canadian university, there was a documented disconnect between consuming new media and participating in new media. To address this disconnect, following the participatory action research tradition, I initiated a videoblogging collective, which was modeled after Node101, a grass-roots endeavor dedicated to community-based new media capacity building. This study examined how individuals experienced participation in this new media collective.

Sessions were conducted twice-weekly for a period of six weeks, and I documented my observations and interpretations by journaling. Through interviews, eight group members shared their stories of new media and technology support, experienced both prior to and as a consequence of their participation in the collective. Predominant themes were developed through data condensation and categorization, and formed the basis of a chronological narrative that expressed the findings as a collection of ten stories interleaved with related stories from group members.

I used a situated learning perspective to interpret experiences of videoblogging and technology support within our community of practice through the dimensions of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. With respect to mutual engagement, participants experienced tensions in belonging. Full participants appreciated a closeness among members, but questioned their own roles within the group. Peripheral members experienced a benefit to witnessing the potentials represented in the group's

work, but were disappointed by the inaccessibility of group relationships or capacities. With respect to joint enterprise, participants explored their understandings of videoblogging. Video production was experienced as a process critical to understanding video as a form of multiliteracy. Despite promising technological capacities, blogs were experienced as problematic spaces lacking privacy and prone to superficiality. With respect to shared repertoire, participants described how relationships and domain cultivated resources and routines. Participants had experienced group learning of technology skills as challenging, and our repertoire consequently evolved toward formats such as individual help or email. Our group sessions provided needed space for discussion and inspiration, space in which members could listen and share.

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PREFACE

At a group meeting, several weeks after member interviews had been conducted, one member, Alex, noted that I had not been made to answer my own interview questions. She felt that it would be valuable for me to share my thoughts about initiation and development of the group, as I occupied a unique position as an instigator, and to reciprocate the generosity of the members in sharing their stories of learning and participating, as I had been privileged with documenting their experiences. I found the possibility of the other members "interviewing" me with my own questions intriguing, but due to our group's busy schedule of video and writing activities, this possibility was never actualized. Thus, when it came time to summarize and interpret our experiences in this thesis, I returned to Alex's request and thought about how I could employ the interview as a source of structure. Using my own pre- and post-collective experiences as organizational bookends, the thesis is organized as follows:

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the research, represented as an interview that shares my pre-collective experiences, motivations, and participations, as members had shared with me. This interview text is a bricolage of my responses to members' questions during our interviews, and conversations that I had with myself and others throughout the work. It is a conversation that took place over an extended period of time, with numerous individuals, and in different places. Through this re/constructed interview, I discuss the motivation for the research, and articulate the research questions.

Chapter 2 is a literature review, which focuses on major themes in the research to recapitulate and reformulate the contributions of prior work. Here, I organize the

literature into three sections: (1) new media, which includes video and blogging, (2) technology support for educators, and (3) communities of practice.

Chapter 3 defines the methodology, and I describe how the work was conducted following an action research framework. I detail the cycles of planning/acting-observing/reflecting and describe my approaches to data analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 4 presents the findings, offered as a collection of ten stories about the Node. The stories are chronologically-arranged excerpts from our group's interactions, interleaved with related stories from group members, both of their experiences before and through the collective.

Chapter 5 provides analysis and conclusions, by way of completing the interview initiated in Chapter 1. Here, I attempt to draw on ideas from the previous chapters, my and members' interview texts, and other discussions. I discuss what was learned about videoblogging and technology support through the lens of communities of practice, and reflect on what remains to be learned and what was (or was not) achieved.

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To Jill, Kelly, and Alex
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CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

Interviewer: Let's start by talking about your technology background. Can you tell me about your initial experiences with computers and other digital technologies?

Karen: My sister and I were really lucky—I guess that I should more accurately say spoiled—as kids because our parents were always getting us cool tech things to play with. My father worked in sales for 3M and, although he wasn't necessarily a technophile himself, in terms of messing around with equipment, he was around a lot of tech people. He was exposed to really cutting edge stuff that he thought was very cool and important, or valuable, for us to be exposed to. The memories of my very first computer experience are actually quite fuzzy, but I remember a computer being hooked up to our home television in the early 80s. It was called NABU, and I looked up some information about it online a few years ago. NABU was quite advanced, too advanced, I guess, to be sustainable. It had a ton of programs, mostly games, I think—I remember my father and I being addicted to the checkers game.

I have much clearer memories of my next computer. My parents bought an IBM 286 clone and it was totally amazing. I remember spending hours and hours downstairs in our basement playing on the computer. It had a great paint program that I would use to make abstract drawings and then I would print them out on our horrible dot matrix

printer. We got The Print Shop later, and my sister and I would make posters and banners, whatever, we were addicted to clip art. I loved playing games—I still remember this great game with nightmarishly bad graphics called Snarfs. It was a maze game where you had to find keys and open doors, without being attacked by the Snarfs. I also loved Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?, although, in retrospect, you'd think that my geography skills would be better after having spent so much time playing that game! My favourite game, I think, was SimCity. I'd make everyone play SimCity, if I could, because I learned so much from it. There were lots of great games though, and there was this store where you could rent games.

Interviewer: You used the computer mostly for games?

Karen: There was much game playing, but my sister and I also had a Nintendo game console for some of that. I also used the computer for word processing school reports. I spent a lot of time breaking the 286, which seriously frustrated my parents.

Interviewer: Breaking?

Karen: The computer had a command-line interface because it was MS-DOS. I loved reading the manuals and trying out the commands—it felt oddly powerful. Yet all too often it ended in disaster, as I was a bit too liberal with the delete command and star-dot-star, consequently deleting the hard disk. My parents would then have to bring it back to the store to have it restored to a usable state. I can't even remember how many times that

happened, but I remember being kind of unrepentant about it. A small price to pay for the fun of experimenting.

Later, probably in the early 90s, I got hooked on Freenet, the National Capital Freenet, ran by Carleton University. That was the first time I really thought of computers as not being entirely autonomous. My friends and I used email quite devotedly and I remember poring over Usenet forums. I was definitely more of a lurker than a contributor, but I loved reading all of these contributions from strangers, on such a huge array of topics. It really changed the way I thought about acquiring and sharing knowledge.

Interviewer: What about other technologies?

Karen: In high school, my parents bought us a VHS-C video camera. My sister, my friends, and I were total hams, constantly planning and staging plays, and the video camera represented a way for these productions to be saved, for what we imagined at the time to be forever, which somehow seemed really important then. We would sometimes do live-action with people, but our favourite video productions were Barbie movies. My sister was a total Barbie addict and had scores of those dolls. We collaborated on everything, but had our specialties. My friend James would create outfits for the videos—last I heard he was doing theatre costume design—my friend Adam would be in charge of the script, and I would shoot the video. It was insanely time consuming and required a significant amount of planning—we had to do in-camera editing because we didn't have access

to video editing equipment. It was amazingly fun and we loved sharing our work with our family members and friends.

Interviewer: Did you learn about these things, like computers and video production, in school?

Karen: No. I was a big math and physics geek, more oriented towards the so-called traditional subject areas. I wouldn't even be able to tell you if those types of courses were available at my high school in Ottawa. I remember that we had computers, because I used them in my accounting class.

At the end of high school, I received a Pentium-class computer as a graduation present. This was a total revolution for me; the graphics were so sophisticated in comparison and I finally had a real web browser – no more Lynx with its text-based Web browsing! When I entered university in Vancouver with my new computer, I was living in residence and had access to the Web via dialup through IT services. I got a bit of a weird reputation as the "girl who was downloading the Internet". I was a very big fan of U2, the band, and loved that I could get all of their music online, for free. Of course, this was before peer-to-peer became such a big problem, legally, and I didn't even stop to think of my actions as problematic. I was constantly downloading random U2 tracks from various performances around the world. But, in my defense, I used the computer for other things. I still played games; I was introduced to Risk. Another girl on my floor and I made a dorm website – we got pictures from everyone and scanned them, collected biographies and listed current

events. We posted it on one of those free hosting sites, like Angelfire. I still remember the color scheme; it was hot pink, lime and black. We thought that it looked so cool.

Interviewer: How did you learn to make a website? What, if any, education had you received for using computers or video cameras?

Karen: I think that I was self-taught up until 1999. There were always help manuals or, later on, Web pages, available to read, or I would just haphazardly experiment with things. But in 1999, I left the piano performance program and went into computer science and mathematics. A friend, who was studying computer engineering at a university in Western Canada, had introduced me to C++ programming, as a way to convince me to consider a double major instead of mathematics on its own. I was at l'Université de Montréal at the time and he was visiting from Vancouver; he brought me one of those "Learn Programming in 21 Days" books and set me up with an Integrated Development Environment (IDE), Microsoft Visual Studio.

It was a total crisis point for me—not in a negative way, but rather in terms of its significance. While I had written crude batch scripts with the 286, this was programming on a completely different level. I don't think I really had an understanding of "programming", even with scripting and HTML and Flash. I fell in love and headed back to university for the double major.

Interviewer: What did you do in computer science?

Karen: Predominantly programming and numerical methods, given my interest in

mathematics. I was also interested in databases and hardware, and got to

work on some very interesting problems that intersected with math in

those domains during my final years in the program. While I was lucky to

have many interesting experiences as an undergrad, one of my favourites

was as a teaching assistant. In my second year, I was hired for curriculum

development for a new course that I had just taken. It was called Software

Practices Laboratory, and it was designed to give computer science

students practical skills, like debugging and make files and scripting. It

was also a crash course to user interface development and the Java

programming language. It really was an amazing course. By a total fluke, I

was hired to teach after one summer of curriculum development. The

instructor was desperate for teaching assistants because the course topics

were too varied to have a grad student come in and teach. I think he was

worried. One, about my ability to teach, and two, about an undergrad

teaching undergrads. But he was desperate, so I got the job. He must have

thought it worked out alright, because I did it for seven semesters.

I think that experience was another crisis, or critical point for me. I

loved teaching and working in the lab. There were twenty to thirty

students and I would lecture for an hour, we would have discussions, and

the remaining three hours would be lab time where they would work on

their weekly assignments. I learned so much about computer science and

about teaching from the experience. I wouldn't trade it for anything. Not

even a better GPA—mine suffered a bit from the amount of time I was spending with students in the lab. I run into students from that course on campus or randomly around Vancouver—one former student actually lives in my apartment building; they are still so positive about their experiences in the course.

Interviewer: And then you left for MIT?

Karen: Yep. Both schools are amazing environments, but it was great to have a change. I think you can take a place for granted if you are there for too long. So, I started the doctoral program in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at MIT. I was there for a year and it was totally amazing – I could talk and talk about all of the cool and interesting things I got to do. But after a semester, I felt a bit dissatisfied, like something was missing. I realized I missed the teaching component, although I really enjoyed all of this additional time I had for research and coursework.

When it came time to decide what to do over the summer semester, I had the option of interning at IBM or teaching in the Women's Technology Program, a summer program at MIT for female rising seniors in high school. I chose the teaching opportunity. Working with high school students was substantially different than working with university students – I was totally fascinated by how these high school students really seemed to still be learning to learn, if that makes any sense.

It was that experience that prompted me to take a year off from MIT, or at least what I thought would be a year off, to learn more about

teaching high school students. To be honest, I didn't even know that it was something that could be studied, per se. Oh my goodness – that sounds so ignorant! I had never really thought about how teachers become teachers.

Interviewer: How did you go about learning more about teaching?

Karen: At the very last minute, like in August, I came back to Vancouver and applied for the one-year secondary program, starting in September. I was really lucky because my math and computer science background was underrepresented in the program and there was space available.

Interviewer: What did you do in the program related to technology?

Karen: The Bachelor of Education gave me the opportunity to explore a different side of computing. I'm reluctant to say more creative or artistic, because I feel that math and computer science are very much those things, but maybe artistic in the conventional sense.

Interviewer: For example?

Karen: My practicum school predominantly used Macs. I had never used a Mac before, as I was a pretty devoted Unix/Linux and Windows user, so I bought a Mac. I was going to be teaching Flash and Dreamweaver and Photoshop and iMovie, and although I had played around with some of these applications, it wasn't in any sustained or methodical way – I never really had the time to explore them extensively in my limited leisure time. So, suddenly I had time, and I was expected to make movies, create pictures and compose music.

Interviewer: How did you learn to use these new media technologies?

Karen: Again, I was mostly self-taught. Since my time was somewhat constrained

by the program, I looked for materials online. I actually also bought books

for the major applications, like, *The Complete Guide to Photoshop* or

whatever. I hate buying those types of books because the information

presented is so transient, but they served two purposes. One, they gave me

ideas about how to structure my unit plans for practicum and two, they

were great to have in the classroom as additional resources for the students

to access. I still have them and lend them out to pre-service teachers, so I

feel less hostile about the purchase.

Unsurprisingly, I also learned a significant amount through

teaching, and not exclusively with the high school students. I was hired as

a tech coach for my cohort, so I was able to talk with my colleagues about

different ways of imagining these technologies in action. Working with

pre-service teachers was a bit of culture shock. Going from an

environment like computer science where computers are omnipresent to

an environment like education where computers were neither universally

accessible nor enthusiastically received challenged my beliefs about the

role and significance of computers. This was exacerbated during the

summer at the end of the B.Ed., when I volunteered as a tech coach for a

Master's course. The participants in the course were mostly teachers with

many years of experience, but who had very little knowledge of computer

use. Up until that point, I don't think that I had ever seen someone who

was not comfortable with using a mouse! I loved working with that group

because, although their frustration level was understandably high, they were eager to learn and become more independent computer users, not relying on their spouses, children, or students.

I felt that my experiences in the B.Ed. program were only scratching the surface of my understandings about education, so I extended my leave and entered a Master's program in Education.

Interviewer: What new media experiences have you had in the Master's program?

Karen: There have been many experiences, like making videos for courses, setting up course management systems, teaching a course about open source and blogs. But a standout moment for me—that actually led to this work— came in a class that I took with Dr. Mary Bryson, called *Media and the Possibilities for Democratic Public Pedagogies*. Part of the course requirement was contributing to a class wiki, where we would record our reflections on the weekly readings. As a momentary aside, that was actually a very strange experience for me—it made me acutely cognizant of how shy I am, how reluctant I was to commit and expose my ideas in such a public way. But back to the wiki, it was also a space where Mary was regularly posting links to the most fascinating things online. I tried to look at all of them, at least cursorily, and one day a fairly innocuous looking link appeared: *Node101 Project—gotta go look at this*. I watched a video of one of the project's founders describing the work and—it's hard to describe what I was feeling. Although I thoroughly enjoyed teaching in a high school, I felt frustrated by the institutionalization of learning, by the

way that so many of the students (and sometimes teachers) seemed reluctant, trapped. I was really inspired by Node101 as an informal learning environment.

Interviewer: What is Node101?

Karen: It's a grass-roots endeavor dedicated to community-based capacity-building in new media. Node101 provides conceptual infrastructure to teach video web logging (a.k.a. *videoblogging*), which is a way of publishing video content on the Internet that allows viewers to be notified when a new video is posted. The first node was created in March 2005 by Ryanne Hodson and Michael Verdi. The vision for Node101 is to produce equitable outcomes in new media instruction by organizing the learning infrastructure as networked clusters, or *nodes*, of people collaboratively exploring the potential of videoblogging. The Node101 pedagogical model consists of five steps: (1) teach others how to videoblog, (2) provide ongoing support, (3) network with other videobloggers to create a support infrastructure, (4) publish the video work, and (5) promote the node.

On the course wiki, I made a comment on wanting to start a node in Vancouver. It turns out that Mary had already been thinking about that possibility, and had been in contact with Ryanne. Mary also had a video/filmmaker friend, who she thought might be interested, and we talked about how we might get a node started. Unfortunately, the timing didn't work out and it never really came together in the way that we discussed.

Interviewer: But you did eventually – what factors or experiences prompted you to form the Node?

Karen: Yes, but let me backtrack for a moment. At the same time as I was taking the course, I was employed by the Department Head to assist with documenting the state of technology in the Department. Here I was, a new member of the Department trying to figure out what people—graduate students, more specifically—had access to, were using, and wanted in terms of technology.

It wasn't intended to be a formal research project by any means. I held informal conversation sessions for graduate students to attend. It's actually pretty funny, now that I think back on it – no one attended! It was a shock, having come from MIT with a really proactive and involved student population, where events were very well attended, particularly when the welfare of the students was concerned. I had tea and lots of snacks and treats and only a handful of people showed up. It makes sense to me now, almost two years later, having a greater familiarity with the population. There are a lot of part-time students, students who also work full-time, students who just aren't around that much, which is partly an issue of structural conditions. There isn't enough office and desk space for everyone. So why would you come to campus if there isn't any space for you?

But that's somewhat of a tangent. I learned valuable things from the conversations with grad students, and met with greater success by

creating an online survey. We took this data, along with the conversations the Department Head had with faculty, sessionals, and staff, and wrote a report.[1] What we interpreted was that there is strong desire for technology support for faculty, sessionals, staff, and graduate students within our department. While we are fortunate to have significant "technical access" to hardware and software through Department technicians and the New Media Support Group (NMSG), we lack a sustainable support network, where individuals can exchange and acquire technology knowledge and assistance to encourage lasting "impact of access".[2] It's really too bad, because there are many people in the Department who have interesting and innovative ideas about technology implementation but have no means to share their ideas. Conversely, there are many people who are seeking this knowledge but have no means for access. Without a space to share, video and web technologies remain inaccessible, which is unfortunate considering their potential for research dissemination, teaching, and personal expression.

To make matters worse, the inaccessibility of new media technology was having a negative trickle-down effect to the undergraduate population, exacerbating the disconnect between student teachers' expectations and instructors' self-perceived capabilities. A Faculty-wide report discussed how student teachers expect technology-savvy

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[1] Peterat & Brennan (2005).
[2] Liff & Shepherd (2004, p. 3).

instructors, yet many instructors do not feel confident about technology.[3] Although self-perceived confidence and competence do not translate directly to actual abilities, poor self-perception can negatively impact performance.[4]

Based on this and my work as a teaching assistant, I became increasingly preoccupied with the idea of helping teacher educators be more technologically self-sufficient. The intersection of this idea, the ideas of Node101, and ideas about action research that I was wrestling with in a methodology course led to this thesis work and the formation of a node.

Interviewer: So it was about addressing local technology issues?

Karen: Yes, but it was also broader than that. Henry Jenkins[5] talks about how we—and this is an admittedly narrow definition of *we* but one that I think at least includes teacher educators in North America—live in a participatory culture, an environment that is characterized by the proliferation of production and sharing via computer-mediated communication, as evidenced by phenomena such as YouTube and Blogger. The potentials that this participatory culture could afford encouraged me to think about two questions. One, what do we need to learn to be involved in this participatory environment? and two, which places or contexts might contribute to this learning? I think one way to answer both questions is videoblogging. Videoblogging makes us think

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[3] Bartosh et al. (2005).
[4] Bahr, Shaha, Farnsworth, Lewis, & Benson (2004).
[5] Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robinson, & Weigel (2006).

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about literacy in different ways, such as media literacy and multiliteracies, how video and text intersect and are interpreted, and Node101 can act as an entry-point to the practice of videoblogging.

Interviewer: What goals did you hope to achieve by establishing the Node?

Karen: I hoped to positively contribute to our department by forming a sustainable community of new media practice. But more than forming and acting in the Node itself, I wanted to understand the Node in a systematic way, and thus it became my Master's research topic.

Node101, action research and communities of practice conceptualize learning as developed through practice, and from these practical, methodological, and theoretical starting points, I developed an overarching research question that focused on videoblogging experiences in the community context: **How do individuals experience participation in a videoblogging collective?**

This question is elaborated with several sub-questions, focusing on experiences with technology prior to and through the Node: What are experiences of establishing and belonging to a node? What are experiences of technology support? What are experiences of technology use in research, teaching, or personal practices? What are experiences of video use in research, teaching, or personal practices? What are experiences of blog use in research, teaching, or personal practices?

Interviewer: What were your experiences of participating in this videoblogging collective?

Karen: My thesis is a representation of my experiences and others' experiences as

filtered through and interpreted by me. There are many different stories

told in this work, stories about struggling, beginning, creating, sharing,

confronting, pressuring, listening, supporting, questioning, and belonging.

Fundamentally, however, in many ways, I think my story is a story of

failing.

CHAPTER 2   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the previous chapter, I shared stories about technology experiences and my perceptions of technology both locally, in the context of our department, and more broadly, in the context of participatory culture. These culminated in the articulation of a research question that is concerned with individuals' participation in a videoblogging collective, and is extended by two particular thematic concerns: new media, such as blogs and video, and technology support. I will now present the literature that informed these thematic concerns, as well as a theoretical framework, communities of practice, that positions these concerns in a framework of learning as participation.

New Media

McLuhan, Hutchon, and McLuhan (1977) observed that "when any device invades a society to the point of creating a *ground*, it affects everyone's way of life, whether or not a particular individual makes use of it" (p. 121). The personal computer is one such device, with its interconnection having inalterably shifted the way we communicate. This shift in conceptualization of communication is fueled by increased Internet bandwidth, which permits communication of more data in less time, and improved user interface design, which has significantly lowered the barrier to entry since the days of terminal interfaces (Herring, 2004). Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has forced us to reconsider our understanding of *who* (both in number and kind) communicates, from *where* they communicate, *when* they communicate, and *how* they communicate (Herring, 2004; Monberg, 2005). As Jankowski (1991) noted, "communication ... can be seen as one of the conditions for community" (p. 163) and

when our ideas about communication change, our ideas about community change as a consequence. This is significant on a personal level as people find themselves as members of new communities that may exist in a physical space, a virtual space, or more likely, a blurred hybrid space (Feenberg & Bakardjieva, 2004; Jenkins, 2004; Wakeford, 2004). For individuals, these new communities make new forms of mobilization and participation possible, both from creation and consumption perspectives (Jenkins, 2004; Lievrouw, 2004). The potential for increased individual participation presents new opportunities for researchers and teachers. As Willinsky (2002) observed, advances in CMC offer the opportunity to further disseminate research and teaching, which could result in the work of researchers and educators having expanded influence.

Blogging is a powerful example of the trend toward CMC. As Martindale and Wiley (2005) described, a blog, or web log, is a web page that is significantly easier to construct and maintain, relying on a transparent backend that conveniently provides services such as posting, interactivity, searching, and archiving. The automation of the backend complexity not only makes the technology accessible to more users, but, as Oravec (2002) observed, permits users to focus on content, rather than being mired down by issues of presentation or infrastructure. The power of blogging is amplified by its pairing with RSS (an acronym whose disputed definitions include *Rich Site Summary* and *Really Simple Syndication*), which permits content to be delivered automatically to users. Together, these technologies present an enormous opportunity to increase the efficiency of information acquisition.

Given the diversity of blog content, several authors have proposed typologies. One of the first typologies was proposed by Blood (2000), who identified filter-type

blogs, which focus on aggregating links to existing pages, personal journal blogs, which are an ongoing representation of an individual's state, and notebook blogs, which are sites for disparate, accumulated thoughts and links. Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, and Wright (2004) extended this analysis by adding knowledge logs (or k-logs) to the typology and by integrating these four types into the framework proposed by Krishnamurthy, which consists of a quadrant with one dimension representing the *scope* continuum of individual and community blogs and one dimension representing the *content* continuum of personal and topical blogs.

The tension in blogging between individual and group blogs was expressed by several authors. As a form of CMC that distributes information and permits feedback, blogs represent a community-building strategy (Chaney, 2005; Herring et al., 2004). Nardi (2005) investigated the connection of community using social presence theory via the dimensions of affinity through conversation, commitment through presence and attention through availability. Blogging provides not only the conditions for community building, but also provides protection for the individual. Blogs have a more private orientation than journalism, while still permitting sharing (Jenkins, 2002), and emotional rebuttals are mitigated by the directionless, asynchronous environment (Gumbrecht, 2004; Nardi, Schiano, & Gumbrecht, 2004).

Given the space that exists between personal and topical blogs and between community and individual blogs, a wide variety of blogs for personal, educational, and research use have emerged. For personal blogs, Herring et al. (2004) found that despite the wide range of blogs, clustering emerged with respect to sex and age, where females and adolescents tend toward the individual and personal, while adult males dominate the

other three quadrants. Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz (2004) identified

motivating factors for maintaining personal blogs, which included autobiography,

analysis, affect, articulation, and connection. For teachers, much research has focused on

how or why blogs are or could be important in a teaching environment. Blogging can be

used to make student work public, promote student reflection, and create space for

feedback from a larger community (Ferdig & Trammell, 2004; Gumbrecht, 2004; Oravec,

2003; Stiler & Philleo, 2003; Wang, Fix, & Bock, 2005). Blogs can also provide an

indication of progress and act as an artifact of how learning works (Lankshear & Knobel,

2003). An additional benefit for the educational context is the availability of open-source

blogging packages such as WordPress (Kajder & Bull, 2003). While significantly less

extensive than the available writing about blogs and education, some publications have

focused on blogs and research. In particular, Mortensen and Walker (2002) described

how blogs could change the flow of academic knowledge and suggested how blogs might

change the task of research as "blogging influences the way you think about thinking" (p.

254). Given its newness and limited amount of scholarly research, numerous authors have

made calls for future work in studying blogging (Nardi, Schiano, & Gumbrecht, 2004),

including an examination of uses and contexts (Efimova, 2003) and blogging as culture

(Mortensen & Walker, 2002).

Just as low-cost blogging software has revolutionized text media, as Braden

(1999) observed, "the arrival of low-cost light-weight camcorders is a revolution which

offers *another* reading and writing and removes dependence on the mechanics of

alphabetisation in order to record and transmit voices, images, and text" (p. 118).

Coupled with low-cost editing applications distributed on popular consumer operating

systems, creating digital cinema is now open to new segments of the population (Jones, 2003). Video is a dense transmission format, not only due to its multi-modal quality, but also, as Goldman (2004) and Kurz, Llama, and Savenye (2005) suggested, due to its transparency of perspective. This transparency of perspective encourages the viewer to ask "whose perspective is being represented" (Goldman, 2004, p. 159), while sharing control of the represented perspective, in turn encourages understanding and change. This is beneficial in the context of personal video, as the individual is able to view her or his own scene selection and interrogate the perspective that s/he presents. For educators, attending to video as a site of inquiry is important as a form of literacy. Being literate in video is an example of multiliteracies or functional literacies—skills necessary for meaningful interaction with one's social environment through decoding and interpretation (Braden, 1999; New London Group, 1996). These media negotiation skills become even more important as students now spend more time consuming media than time spent at school (Adams, 2005).

But how can video, a form of media preferred by students (Ellis & Childs, 1999), be used by educators? Fisherkeller, Butler, and Zaslow (2001) worked with youth to analyze other youth-constructed video, which provided opportunities for reflection and debate, thus enhancing, as Kukulska–Hulma, Foster–Jones, Jelfs, Mallett and Holland (2004) claimed, "students' critical thinking, creativity, language skills, and collaborative learning" (p. 125). For researchers, the increasing accessibility and miniaturization of digital video presents new opportunities for qualitative research (Pink, 2001). Compact equipment subtly alters the relationship between researcher and subject by mitigating the disruption of intimacy in interviewing or observation (MacDougall, 2001). Future work is

suggested to determine how video can be constructed meaningfully by individuals (Fisherkeller et al., 2001) and how such video can be widely accessed (Nugent, 2005).

Concerns about production and distribution are at least in part solved by the union of blogging and video, in videoblogging, about which there presently exists little academic writing. A videoblog is, in essence, video in a blog. However, members of the videoblogging community negotiate beyond this definition, epitomized by Miles' (2000) videoblogging manifesto, which includes the following statements: videoblogging "respects bandwidth", "is not streaming video (this is not the reinvention of television)", "uses performative video and/or audio", "is personal", "uses available technology", "experiments with writerly video and audio", "lies between writing and the televisual", "explores the proximate distance of words and moving media", and "is a video blog where video in a blog must be more than video in a blog". These pronouncements and those found on the Yahoo! videoblogging message group, reveal the newness of the medium, leaving "openness for negotiation, debate and inclusive decision-making" (Feenberg & Bakardjieva, p. 41). Despite the lack of simple tools for incorporating video in a blog (Hoem, 2004), Miles (2005) observed that the lack of facile integration of blogs and video does not dissuade their pairing, as the benefit of this "immanent medium of record, argument, and representation" (p. 69) is too great to remain unutilized. The actual utilization in education remains to be investigated (Chen, 2005; Meng, 2005), as it presently lies in the domain of media researchers (Parker & Pfeiffer, 2005).

Technology Support

Many educators are not using (or are limitedly using) technology in their teaching and research, which is a consequence, in part, of educators' lack of access to professional

development opportunities situated in an ongoing community of practice where the complexity of their pedagogical efforts might be matched with ongoing dialogue, focused technology instruction, and multiple opportunities for experimentation and reflection (de Castell, Bryson, & Jenson, 2002; Sandholtz & Reilly, 2004). Numerous challenges face teachers, which can be broadly grouped together as time-related challenges and resource-related challenges (de Castell et al., 2002). Teachers' time is significantly occupied, yet technology implementation necessitates learning time (Dexter, Anderson, & Ronnkvist, 2002; Glenn, 1997; Moody & Kindel, 2004). Glenn (1997) outlined numerous resource-related challenges, from physical resources to support resources to organizational resources. The need for support was echoed by Moody and Kindel (2004), who noted that many teachers attribute their lack of technology proficiency to a lack of support. This is exacerbated by the presence of some students who increasingly demonstrate "technological savvy" (p. 45), while some teachers are left "to enact what they understand to be their prescribed parts" (Cook–Sather, 2001, p. 123) as the ones *who know.*

While there exists the sentiment that teachers can act as *guides on the side* while their technology-proficient students self-manage with respect to technology, literature suggests that this approach is not sufficient and that training should begin with the teacher (Fuller, 2000; Ouzts & Palombo, 2004). Fuller (2000) demonstrated that additional technology support and training directed to teachers resulted in greater technology integration in the classroom, as opposed to student-centered training. Cook–Sather (2001) provided an explanation, emphasizing that teachers have the pedagogical experience necessary for meaningful integration, which may be lacking in students or

technology specialists. Bahr, Shaha, Farnsworth, Lewis, and Benson (2004) demonstrated that a favorable teacher attitude toward technology increases the likelihood of technology uptake by students, which further emphasizes the need for initiatives to make teachers comfortable with technology.

If one accepts that technology support must begin with teachers, the issue becomes one of what might be needed to provide support. The pre-conditions described in the literature can be broadly and provisionally categorized as internal and external. Internal conditions are those immanent in the teacher, including attitudinal factors such as non-negative outlook regarding technology (Bahr et al., 2004) and risk-taking (Cook–Sather, 2001), reflective factors such as understanding the obstacles associated with technology and prior experiences with technology (Gopalakrishnan, 2006), and practical factors such as the time the individual is willing to devote. External conditions are those in the teacher's environment, which are clustered into infrastructure and experiences. External infrastructure conditions describe the desirable qualities that technical and instructional support should embody, including information density (Fuller, 2000), scalability and accessibility (de Castell et al., 2002), knowledgeable support personnel (Dexter, Anderson, & Ronnkvist, 2002), personal interaction (Gopalakrishnan, 2006), and a perspective of education-first as opposed to technology-first (de Castell et al., 2002). External experiential conditions include having opportunities to work through developmental stages of technology integration (Sandholtz & Reilly, 2004) and that these opportunities are authentic and transformative (de Castell et al., 2002).

While many models of technology support have been proposed, such as workshops, individual interaction, small groups, and centralization through specialists or

mentors (Glenn, 1997; Gopalakrishnan, 2006; Vail, 2003), our task is to assess which models optimally capture the conditions described above. Essentially, a mixture of teacher and technology specialist (not necessarily mutually exclusive) collaboration and individual interaction is most effective at satisfying these conditions (Cook–Sather, 2001; Dexter, Anderson, & Ronnkvist, 2002; Dexter, Seashore, & Anderson, 2002; Fuller, 2000; Glenn, 1997; Gopalakrishnan, 2006). While the need for individual support is somewhat evident, the significance of group interaction may be less so. Dexter, Seashore, and Anderson (2002) observed that the relationship between group interaction and successful technology support is one that is self-reinforcing, without obvious causation.

Communities of Practice

Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1996) demonstrated, by drawing on examples from language, that knowledge is not merely acquisition, that knowledge is action that transforms, changing the learner and what is learned. In one example, they encouraged the reader to consider the definition of *meticulous* to mean *very careful*, and then to read the following sentence:

I was meticulous about falling off the cliff (p. 21).

The problem, they argued, was that it is insufficient to know the dictionary meaning of words, as meaning is influenced by use and context, and that this challenge extended beyond language to all knowledge. The implication for learning is the central tenet of situated learning: learning is participation, not absorption (Barab & Duffy, 1998; Engeström, 1991; Hammersley, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Schlager, Poirier, & Means, 1996). Learning necessitates having access to practice, its individuals, activities, and artifacts. This does not imply access to instruction nor does it imply execution of

activity, neither of which will necessarily alter an individual's capacity for participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This alteration or change in the individual, and consequently the context to which the individual belongs, is essential to learning. Learning is becoming; it is a process of identity construction, the forming of relations between individuals, contexts, and participation (Lave, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Identity is a function of our relations, as much as it is a function of relations we have not formed or will not form, and identity empowers and constrains (Wenger, 1998). To change our identities through learning, we need to have access to engaging, practical, collaborative tasks in different contexts. As learning is a function of context, different contexts, particularly those that encourage intellectual risk taking, provoke new ways in which to think, unleashing imagination as an active, rather than passive, agent (Putnam & Borko, 2000; Wenger, 1998).

Lave and Wenger (1991) named these contexts of participation *communities of practice*, which they defined as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (p. 98). In communities of practice, individuals are involved in the processes of negotiating trajectories of identity, engaging in practices, and developing resources for these practices (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). The first of these processes, which Wenger characterized as *mutual engagement* (or *community*), involves identifying who we are by acknowledging the sociohistorical contexts that have contributed to our individual intersection with the community of practice, as well as the ways in and degree to (described as engagement, imagination, and alignment) which we participate or not, and how these support conditions for making the practice possible. The

26

second of these processes for learning in community, which Wenger designated as *joint enterprise* (or *domain*), involves negotiating what we do, negotiating the practice and the activities that help us achieve our community and individual aspirations. Finally, beyond the capacities and experiences that are embodied by the individuals in the community, learning involves, as Wenger described, generating a *shared repertoire* (or *practice*), cultivating resources for the practice that contribute to how we do it.

The concept of a community of practice does not designate a particular structure, but rather a particular approach of learning through participation (Wenger, 1998). Thus, communities of practice are manifested along a spectrum of dimensions, as they vary in size, duration, location, composition, insularity, motivation, and recognition (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Despite this variability, however, several authors have argued that communities of practice have shared attributes and needs. Wenger (1998) listed fourteen indicators of a community of practice, evidence of mutual engagement (such as knowing each other's capacities), joint enterprise (such as lack of goal reiteration), and shared repertoire (such as inside jokes). Other required or recommended shared attributes can be similarly classified into these three dimensions (Barab, Barnett, & Squire, 2002; Barab & Duffy, 1998). Wenger argued that the needs of a community of practice are frequently minimal in terms of resources, in that they need some space, both physical space to assemble and conceptual space to experiment within their interacting and larger contexts, and time. Although communities of practice cannot be forced or commanded into existence, these perceived shared attributes and needs provide guidance for how communities of practice may be cultivated through design (Wenger, 1998). Design elements include creating structures that encourage communication, practice, and

varying participation and interaction, while not over-specifying the community (Barab, Barnett, & Squire, 2002; Barab & Duffy, 1998; Green, 2005; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). By creating a still-to-be-determined space, participants are able to shape the community of practice, and the process of community development also acts as a process of individual investment, thus encouraging collective, rather than facilitator or organizer, ownership.

People come to communities of practice with different motivations, which can be conceptualized in terms of the dimensions of mutual engagement/community (are they primarily motivated by a desire for relationships and community?), joint enterprise/domain (are they primarily motivated by a desire for promoting the subject or area of interest?), and shared repertoire/practice (are they primarily motivated by a desire for learning skills?) (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Individual motivation and initial capacities influence what occurs within a community of practice, as not all people participate in the same way or to the same extent. Lave and Wenger (1991) referred to this varying participation, which is a characteristic learning process in communities of practice, as *legitimate peripheral participation:*

> "Legitimate peripheral participation" provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice. A person's intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice. This social process includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills. (p. 29)

Legitimate peripheral participation provides access for newcomers, or apprentices, to a practice through interactions, activities, and resources (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1996; Schlager, Poirier, & Means, 1996; Wenger, 1998). Through practice, members move through trajectories of participation, moving, although not necessarily unidirectionally, from outside positions to positions of fuller participation (Barab, Barnett, & Squire, 2002). Increased participation and increased practice are facilitated by sharing stories, as stories are a means by which to circulate knowledge about the practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Beyond building a larger narrative of the community itself, stories inform choices about the practice, as well as enable relations within the community (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1996; McLellan, 1996; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

Despite the positive connotation of community and participation, communities of practice are not unproblematic. Dysfunction in the community can emerge as a consequence of power differences as the community strives to ensure its continuity by reproducing itself (Scott, 2001; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). The peripherality of newcomers can be empowering, if they are encouraged to a state of fuller participation (Wenger, 1998). It can be disempowering if old-timers prevent fuller participation by acting as autocrats of the practice, and the emphasis on the learning of the overall community must be maintained (Brown & Duguid, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991). The disempowerment, however, may not be so overt. Newcomers enter with an inherently subjugated status, and are tasked with enculturation; the process of learning the culture and its practice (Brown & Duguid, 1996; Hay, 1996; Wenger, 1998). The process of enculturation, of belonging, of sharing an enterprise is constraining, in that once the investment has been made into the practice, members are incentivized to protect their

acquisition through reproduction, rather than innovation. These problems have the potential to affect any interactions between people, and should not be used to unreservedly dismiss communities of practice. Communities of practice have been shown to be valuable sources of professional development for teachers, although additional understandings of operationalization of the community of practice framework are needed (Arbaugh, 2003; Garrety, Robertson, & Badham, 2004; McGraw, Arbaugh, Lynch, & Brown, 2003; Schlager & Fusco, 2003; Viskovic, 2005; Webb, Robertson, & Fluck, 2005; Zieger & Pulichino, 2004). These additional understandings of communities of practice can be studied through systematic documentation of stories, narratives, and interviews (Barab, Barnett, & Squire, 2002; Hammersley, 2005; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

By reviewing current literature regarding new media and technology support, we have set the stage for our community of practice. In group-oriented approaches to technology support, we find a focus on relationships that provides a basis for mutual engagement, while new media and videoblogging assume the dimension of joint enterprise. In the next chapters, I will describe how an action research approach was employed to cultivate a community of practice through the development of a shared repertoire that reinforced the development of group relationships and enabled the practice of our domain.

CHAPTER 3   METHODOLOGY

Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice is "not itself an educational form", not something easily or obviously used for "'implementing' or 'operationalizing'" (p. 40). As we saw in the previous chapter, a community of practice cannot be commanded into existence, and so a methodological question looms. In this chapter, I will describe my understandings of action research, and how these understandings were used to initiate and develop the Node, by outlining the cycles of planning/acting-observing/reflecting. Toward the end of the chapter, I will share my approaches to data collection and data analysis.

Action Research

This work is fundamentally concerned with actions of community of practice: *establishing* a node, *participating* in a group, *communicating* with others, *producing* new media. Consequently, I found that action research provided a compelling framework for methodological considerations. When studying communities of practice, several authors have argued that action research is an obvious approach, as both are disinclined to decontextualize knowledge (Altricher, 2005; Hammersley, 2005; Scott, 2001). As Altricher (2005) argued,

> Lave & Wenger's ideas do not bring thoroughly novel and revolutionary
>
> challenges for action research: however, they help to elaborate concepts and
>
> practices that are definitely indigenous to existing action research, such as:

- Processes of knowledge development and competence development go hand in hand with processes of practice development and benefit from each other; ...

- These processes take place in the medium of a community of practice, which is characterised by the fact that its members—often informally, but mutually engaged—participate in the development of knowledge, practice and identity (p. 20).

Action research is a broad term that refers to a "family of approaches" to research (Reason & Bradbury, 2006a, p. xxii). It is similar to other research orientations in that it produces data-supported knowledge and exposes the process of producing this knowledge (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 1996). It is distinguished from other approaches by its intentionally and reflexively transformational nature and focus on situated collective knowledge production (Sumara & Carson, 1997). I found participatory action research (PAR) the most appealing of the action research family members, as I was drawn into what Herr and Anderson (2005) citing McIntyre described as the pillars of PAR: the significance of individuals and their experiences, the centrality of activity, and the need for an actively involved, rather than detachedly objective, researcher.

Greenwood and Levin (1998) emphasized that PAR is defined by the simultaneous presence of its constituent elements: participation, action, and research. To simplify matters, *research* is the generation of new knowledge; this knowledge is contextually bound and may, among other things, be used to inform action. *Action*, in PAR, should be undertaken to address real-world challenges, aiming "to alter the initial situation of the group ... in the direction of a more self-managing liberated state", where

liberated, subjectively, could designate individual self-awareness or collective r/evolution (p. 7). This epistemological orientation on action is attributed to Dewey, and an understanding that for Dewey, "everything is forged in action" (p. 73). *Participation*, which is by no means an unproblematic construct, adopts a variety of meanings. A recurrent theme, however, is an emphasis on democratic participation, in which participants are increasingly empowered to have authority over their actions and share in responsibilities (Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Zuber–Skerritt, 1996).

Voice is a significant component of the individual's capacity for and responsibility in participation. As Maguire (2006) observed, the notion of voice is shared by feminist and action research, as both are concerned with making spaces for speaking and being heard. This emphasis on communication is central to PAR, and several participatory action researchers rely on the Habermasian notion of communicative action as an orienting theoretical construct (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Communicative action is "communication in which people consciously and deliberately aim to reach *intersubjective agreement* as a basis for *mutual understanding* so as to reach an *unforced consensus about what to do* in the particular practical situation in which they find themselves" (Kemmis & McTaggart paraphrasing Habermas, 2005, p. 575). The emphasis is on rational negotiation or "the force of better argument" rather than coercion or "appeal to authority" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 578). This Habermasian focus on rationality is seen as naïve by some, such as Gadamer, as it does not account for the complexity, power, emotionality, and historicity of communication (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). Regardless, PAR's focus on collective communication is

grounded in the belief that large-scale change is not possible without cultivating desire

and capacities for change on a smaller-scale:

> While we do not naively misunderstand the power of systems as coterminous with
>
> that of aggregates of individuals, we do believe in the power of conscious and
>
> intentional change which can result from the action research work of individual
>
> and committed groups. Indeed, to paraphrase Margaret Mead and Jürgen
>
> Habermas, perhaps the only way that systemic change does occur is through the
>
> committed action of small groups of people. (Reason & Bradbury, 2006a, p.
>
> xxvii)

Having considered what it might mean to do action research, one might then ask

what it means to do *good* action research. How might notions of validity and quality be

reconciled in an action research framework? While several different frameworks for

evaluating validity have been proposed, the frameworks share a common quality of

pragmatically linking PAR goals to PAR validity. Herr and Anderson (2005) formalized

this link between action and evaluation through five quality/validity criteria: dialogic,

outcome, catalytic, democratic, and process. *Dialogic validity* is concerned with the

production, and subsequent monitoring, of knowledge. Some questions that might be

asked include: Has the work been peer reviewed? Is there a critical friend? Has the

analysis been done collaboratively? *Outcome validity* is concerned with the actions of the

work. Some questions that might be asked include: Did action occur? Did the actions

contribute to addressing an issue in the context that inspired the action? *Catalytic validity*

is concerned with the effects on participants. As articulated by Lather (1986, p. 67), it is

"the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses, and energizes participants

in what Freire (1973) terms 'conscientization,' knowing reality in order to transform it".

Some questions that might be asked include: Were there changes in individuals? Were

there changes in the collective? *Democratic validity* is concerned with the impact of

action on the context. Some question that might be asked include: Was the work

collaborative? To what extent were individuals permitted to contribute? Who were

insiders? Who were outsiders? *Process validity* is concerned with the implementation and

analysis of the action. Some questions that might be asked include: Was the process

documented? Were the problems/issues reexamined or reformulated through processes of

reflection? Were multiple perspectives maintained through practices such as

triangulation? Holding all of these considerations in balance while engaged in action is a

distressingly daunting process. Bradbury and Reason (2006, p. 346) provided some

reassurance, by noting that these measures of quality "are quite demanding on action

researchers. Before paralysis or emotional overload strikes, it is important to remember

that action research is emergent and along the way is probably concerned with one broad

issue more than another."

What other challenges or limitations might PAR present? Reliability is a

problematic construct, as action research is not easily generalized, abstracted, or repeated.

Thus, the determination of credibility of knowledge production as applicable to other

contexts must be undertaken carefully "through a conscious reflection on similarities and

differences between contextual features and historical factors" (Greenwood & Levin,

1998, p. 84). The challenge of difference exists also within each action research project.

Action researchers struggle with fitting into the academic mainstream, given that PAR

begins from a necessarily different set of assumptions, such as participation versus

authoritarianism and action versus observation (Winter, 1996). This tension between

PAR and the academic community is exacerbated by structural conditions; requirements

such as proposals and ethics reviews need to be completed prior to engaging with

participants (Moore, 2004). Concerns regarding "fitting in" extend to the research

context, as there are serious implications in acting for change within an existing social

frame (Winter, 1996). How might the actions serve to promote inclusion or exacerbate

exclusion? How might the actions support or undermine participation? As mentioned

earlier, the notion of participation is already problematic, as any collective is influenced

by the arrival of participants "with different power, status, influence, and facility with

language" (McTaggart, 1997, p. 28).

Reason and Bradbury (2006b) maintained that action research was not a

methodology, but rather that a methodology for action research would manifest as

collections of actions. So what might a methodology for action research entail? The

research can begin by first collecting some initial data (McTaggart, 1997), which

becomes the focus for change as a thematic concern (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). In

this case, conversations about technology with members of the Department culminated in

a discussion paper documenting a desire for additional technology support (Peterat &

Brennan, 2005). In order to negotiate understandings of how individuals experience

participation in a support collective, I elected to initiate a collective. Following the

conventionally accepted PAR model for change (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Zuber–

Skerritt, 1996), the Node was gradually developed through three macroscopic cycles of

planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

Cycle 1: Designing

Initial thinking about the intersection of a node and the Department began in late 2005 and early 2006, and planning was formalized as I wrote my thesis proposal in June 2006. Having recently attended Vloggercon, the second annual videoblogging conference, and having recently completed a course on action research, I had developed a naively idealistic vision of people regularly and enthusiastically congregating to collaborate on the research, over a four month period, from August 2006 until November 2006. I had imagined Node sessions that would be modeled after the format of Node101 San Antonio, which offers four types of sessions, and that would exemplify the cycles of action research (Fig. 3.1).
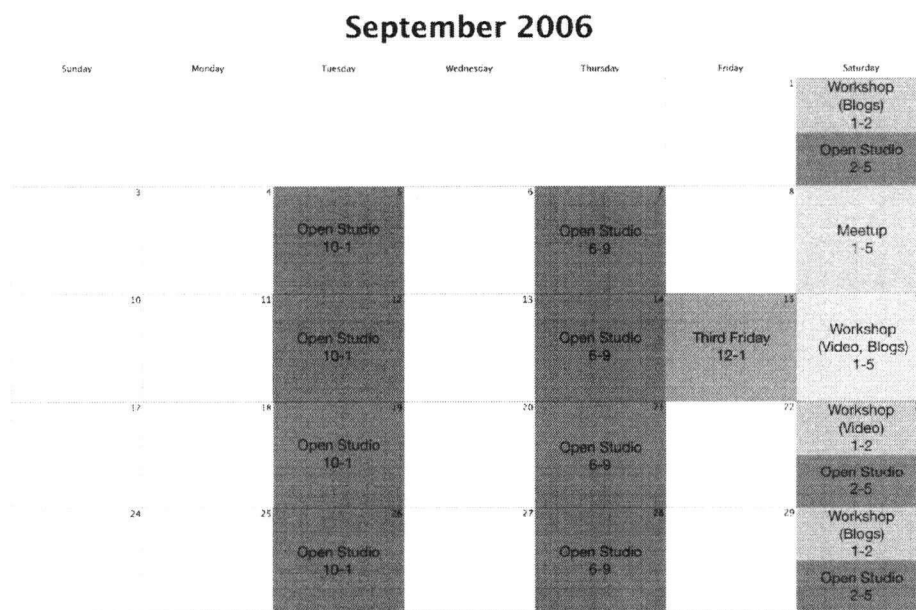
September 2006

Figure 3.1 A sample from the original planned schedule for the Node.

First, we would begin with a planning session, which would take place on the third Friday of every month. At these *Third Friday* sessions, the month's agenda would be reviewed and the philosophy of the project would be made public, highlighting the work of group members. Next, we would have two types of acting and observing

sessions, the *Open Studio* session and the *Workshop* session. Six to nine hours of *Open Studio* sessions would be offered each week. This would be an opportunity for members to drop in for informal and individual assistance with their technology endeavors. I would offer two types of *Workshop* sessions: breadth-first and depth-first. The breadth-first Workshop session would be an intensive four-hour session that would comprehensively introduce all of the technologies involved in establishing and maintaining a videoblog. The depth-first Workshop session would be an hour-long session that would introduce a subset of the technologies involved in establishing and maintaining a videoblog, which would then be followed by an *Open Studio* session for extended experimenting. Finally, the cycle would end with a reflecting *Meetup* session, which would give us an opportunity to explicitly review our progress and research findings, as well as to adjust the schedule as desired.

Unfortunately, soon after I started along the path of implementing the plan, I learned that romantic idealizing is no match for the protracted deliberations of a research ethics board. It was not until the end of October that approval was granted, which jeopardized my plan, as it would be a nontrivial endeavor to shift the schedule. Starting in November was not feasible; not only were people's schedules increasingly busy as the term progressed, but a large, almost six week break for winter holidays would completely disrupt any sense of continuity for the Node.

The delay was advantageous, however, as it gave me an opportunity to informally discuss my plans with a variety of people, including faculty, sessionals, staff, and students. In our conversations, we discussed potential concerns, both from my perspective and from participants' perspectives. Although a central motivating factor of

the work was to contribute positively to the community in which I am situated, the work was also being used to complete my Master's thesis. A pragmatic concern of graduating in a timely fashion encouraged me to rethink the four month period. From the members' perspective, not only was the duration of the plan intimidating, but the scheduling within the plan was also intimidating. The variety and frequency of sessions was daunting to many, despite the optional framework. Saturdays were seen as a poor choice, as were evening sessions. The shift to January was problematic, as some sessionals and graduate students would not be on campus or available in the winter. The loss of the August lead-in time was also problematic, militating against planning ahead for using videoblogging concepts in practices, such as in teaching or course work. Moreover, the interest in the *participatory* component of PAR, or the knowledge co-production of investigating our practices, seemed fairly low, compared with the desire to, as one person expressed, "just get together and learn stuff".

Cycle 2: Recruiting

Based on this feedback, I modified the timeline for the research. Instead of a four month research duration, it would be a six week period, beginning in the second week of January. Although I suspected that this duration would not be sufficient for the actions with the group to extend meaningfully into individuals' practices, I hoped that it would be long enough for the actions in the group to establish meaningful connections for the members. I also chose to prune the variety, frequency, and duration of the session types, opting for two two-hour sessions per week, one on Tuesdays from 12:30–2:30 and the other on Thursdays from 4:30–6:30. I did not want to explicitly, or excessively, specify

what would happen in the sessions, as I believed that the agenda for the group should be negotiated and determined by those who attended.

With the scheduling now revised, I began planning for recruitment. Although I had letters of invitation prepared from the ethics review, given that members' participation in the videoblogging collective would not be contingent upon their participation in the interviews, I needed to prepare promotional material. With the editing assistance of several faculty members, I designed a postcard for hard-copy distribution via departmental mailboxes and generated a message for email distribution via departmental listservs (Appendix I).

Both the email and postcard promotional material referred to the collective's website. I felt that a website for the group was important, not only as a resource about and for the group, but also as an active demonstration of the possibilities afforded by a blog infrastructure (Fig. 3.2). Although I knew that subdomains were available in theory from the organizers of Node101, I knew from the videoblogging conference that, in practice, these requests were discouraged, and that node autonomy was advised. Having administrator-level access to one of the Department servers allowed me to set up a blog, to which I redirected visitors from a purchased domain name.
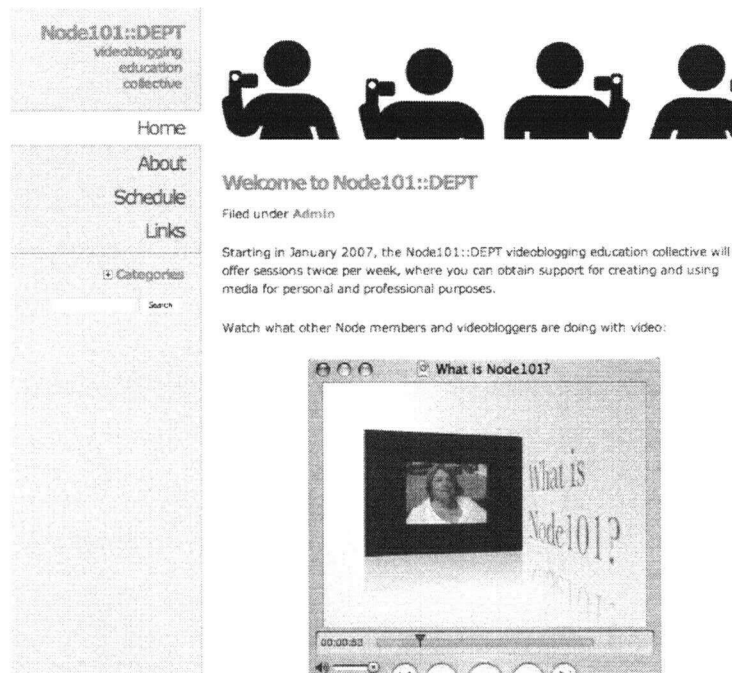
Figure 3.2 The Node101::DEPT website.

The front page of the site was a traditional blog, with reverse-chronologically

ordered posts, the first (and only) post being a welcome and introduction to Node101. I

created a short introductory video about Node101, containing material from Ryanne

Hodson discussing how Node101 emerged, as well as from members of Node101::Ojai

talking about the importance of their node and making media. There were several

excerpts from a variety of videoblogs: personal stories, activist sites, online news, arts
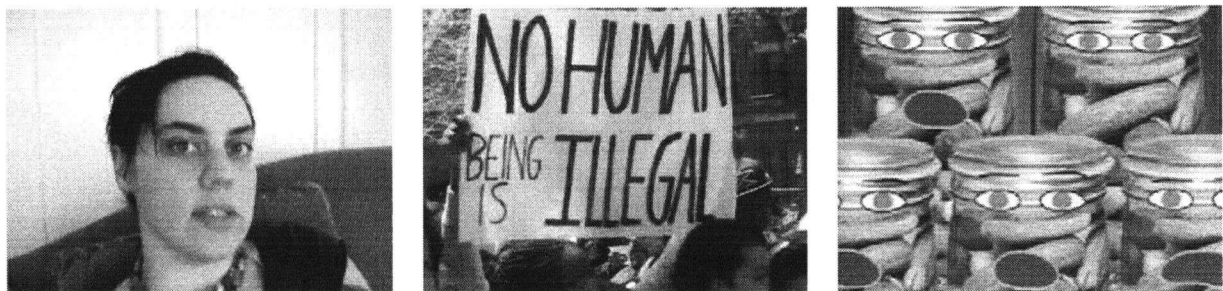
networks (Fig. 3.3).

Figure 3.3 Stills from the Node101::DEPT introductory video.

The site contained additional pages for scheduling, as well as a page that elaborated on the research component and possible motivations for videoblogging. What became the most valued part of the site, however, was the links page, which contained more than 100 links to resources, projects, and tutorials, organized into 12 categories: videoblogs and media projects, nodes, media research, tutorials, video hosting and beyond, web browsers, web 2.0 and social networking, open source, blog-based projects, podcasts, blog resources, and web design. While there were several online guides for creating videoblogs linked from the group site, I felt that none were entirely suitable for our group, as I wanted a tutorial that (1) was accessible in print, to complement the existing great video tutorials, and (2) was customized to the resources accessible in our department. To this end, I wrote a twelve page introduction to videoblogging, which was composed of an introduction to finding and watching videoblogs, creating and customizing blogs, capturing and editing video, and assembling the product as video within a blog (see Appendix V).

The initial round of recruitment occurred in mid-December, with emails sent to Department faculty, sessional, staff, and graduate student listservs, and some postcards distributed in Department mailboxes and to friends and colleagues within and beyond the University. In January, during the week before the sessions were scheduled to commence, I distributed the remainder of the postcards and sent emails to the graduate student listservs of closely related departments. With little response from these mass approaches to recruitment and concern regarding participant attrition due to scheduling conflicts, I sent 62 personalized emails, inviting people to participate in the group.

Cycle 3: Meeting

This third cycle of planning/acting-observing/reflecting was composed of six micro-cycles as we negotiated our practice on a session-by-session basis. (This was true, at least, for the Tuesday sessions. Presumably as a consequence of low attendance, Thursday sessions were more individualistic, focusing on one-on-one, hands-on development and troubleshooting, and were plagued by a lack of continuity.) Despite the overall impromptu nature of the Tuesday group, we quickly adopted routines both within sessions and across sessions. Our sessions were characterized by a pattern of eating, socializing, sharing, and planning, and were highly group-oriented, focusing on discussions and demonstrating work (for a week-by-week listing of our discussion topics and examined resources, please refer to Appendix II). As many of the members were graduate students who felt somewhat comfortable with technology, generally, and with video, more specifically, there was minimal step-by-step instruction; thus, we shared blogs, videos, or interesting online projects that had been found or created by members.

Across the sessions, our actions were oriented by the development of a project. After the first session, I proposed, given the preponderance of graduate students in the group, that we could perhaps undertake a collaborative video and writing project for a journal or conference, and we agreed to write a proposal for a conference. There were numerous suggestions in the conference call for proposals, but the one that resonated most strongly with our group was:

> Identity, community, and global communications: how will processes of identity
>
> play and development continue, and/or change as the role and place of the Internet

in peoples lives shift in new ways – including the expansion of mobile access to internet/s?

Based on this suggestion, our collective interests, our conversations, and our participation in the group, I drafted an initial proposal, which was subsequently reviewed and edited by the other members.

I perceived three advantages to generating a proposal within the group. First, I felt that it was critical for every member to feel that they were deriving some benefit from the group. While there are numerous forms of benefit that I would be unable to influence, having the group engage in acts of tangible production seemed like an obvious outcome that I could affect. Also, the development of the proposal was a process, not an instantaneous act, involving discussions, negotiations, writing, rewriting. This cultivated continuity in the group, which promoted a sustained, rather than incidental, atmosphere. Finally, given that the substance of the proposal was concerned in part with our situatedness in the videoblogging collective, the proposal acted as entry-point for reflection and understanding about, both individually and collectively, who we might be and what we might do together.

In the proposal[6], we described how we would undertake a project using open source resources to construct videoblog entries on the theme of identity. The motivation for this project emerged from two conversations with members of the collective: (1) concerns about the depthless tedium of casual videoblogging and (2) questions about the possibility for originality when using open source resources to construct aesthetic

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[6] I have included here, with permission from the group members who were involved in the co-construction, an adaptation of our proposal as it was collaboratively written by our group. This shared writing extends until the beginning of the next section, entitled *Documenting the experiences*.

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experiences. In the first conversation, we questioned what factors contributed to the assembly of a video that was meaningful, in that it was personally significant and yet simultaneously socially approachable. In the second conversation, we explored video production possibilities using the vast resources distributed under Creative Commons licenses, such as music through ccMixter, pictures through Flickr, and video through Internet Archive. Inspired by the work of Bryson and de Castell (1995) with undergraduate students in using technology to construct artifacts of representation and identity, we sought to similarly explore the potential of postmodern practices of reuse and recycling. To explore and challenge these ideas, we developed an activity in which each member of our collective would edit a video using a collection of video and still imagery contributed by another member of the collective, as well as materials taken from sites offering Creative Commons licensed material. The aim was to investigate our experiences of identity construction as formed through interpretations of collective members, as well as through interpretations of Creative Commons contributors.

We further described how we would address phenomenological concerns that relate to notions of identity as manifested through our activity, by addressing overarching concerns about the ways in which we experience identity via reconstructions of others' voices, images, music, video, and sentiment. This question would be articulated by exploring the stages of constructing artifacts of identity from recycled materials: (1) What are our experiences of identity, as we select resources for representation? (2) What are our experiences of identity in relationship to a local collective, as we are re/constructed by familiar others? (3) What are our experiences of identity in relationship to a larger, amorphous collective, such as online resource sharing sites, as we are re/constructed by

unfamiliar others? Throughout the investigation of these questions, we would be oriented by values that we place on unique representation, and values that we associate with re/conceptualizing others' resources. We would rely on Hall's (1996) formulations of identity as necessarily fragmented and contextualized by discursive practices, and Bakhtin's (Holquist, 2004) concepts of heteroglossia (multiplicity of voices), ventriloquation (speaking using the voices of others), and dialogism (connections between a product and its predecessors) to theorize these values, and to simultaneously mediate and problematize the space between individualism and collectivism. Using these interpretive units of analysis, we would question whether our mash-ups can then be interpreted as unique representations of identity, whether as imposed projection, as self-derived construction, or as something intermediary.

Documenting the experiences

Our group was composed of twelve members, including myself, who participated to varying extents (Table 3.1). Four members regularly attended the weekly Tuesday sessions, while the other eight members participated more peripherally, such as attending drop-in Thursday sessions or communicating via email.

Table 3.1 Attendance at group meetings.

	Tue 9–Jan 07	Thu 11–Jan 07	Tue 16–Jan 07	Thu 18–Jan 07	Tue 23–Jan 07	Thu 25–Jan 07	Tue 30–Jan 07	Thu 1–Feb 07	Tue 6–Feb 07	Thu 8–Feb 07	Tue 13–Feb 07	Thu 15–Feb 07
Karen	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Jill	x		x		x		x		x		x	
Kelly			x		x		x		x		x	
Alex					x		x		x		x	
Tracey	x		x					x		x		
Angela			x						x		x	
Dale		x		x				x				
Veronica			x		x							
Marshall	x											
Julie	x											
Sonia		x										
Tim												

Note: 25 January session cancelled due to illness. Sonia and Tim participated predominantly via email and blog.

The individuals composing this collective were self-described technology enthusiasts (or, perhaps more appropriately, technology inquirers), and we arrived with a range of technology education backgrounds. Some had been exposed to computers since an early age; others had a more recent introduction. Some had completed entire technology-related degrees, while others an occasional course. We ranged in age from early twenties to mid-forties, were 75% women, and represented an array of nationalities and sexualities. We were three PhD students in Education, five Master's students in Education, one sessional, one recently certified teacher, one pre-service teacher, and one software engineer. I have known some for as long as ten years and others for as briefly as ten weeks. My relationship with each person was different, having occupied the various roles of being their student, employee, colleague, friend, roommate, teaching assistant,

and instructor. The member interrelationships were as varied, occupying a continuum from strangers to friends.

To gain understandings of how this diverse group of participants experienced our aspiring community of practice, I used a qualitative approach: ethnographic methods of observation and interviewing. A challenge presented by the action research approach to observation is one of coordination (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Winter, 1996). As a member and active participant of the group, I was unable (and, moreover, unwilling, as I did not want note-taking to interfere with my attention to and participation in our activities), to write extensive field notes while the group was in session. Alternatively, I opted to maintain a journal, in the form of a videoblog, throughout the duration of the research. While the majority of the entries were text-oriented, to facilitate data analysis, the blog also included the videos that I created during the research, either for myself or to share with the group. To document the sessions, I recorded the events that transpired and my interpretations thereof as soon as possible after each session. The journaling acted as a systematic record of our group's development and my experiences of initiating and belonging to the group (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Winter, 1996). The journal also acted as a frame of reference for the interviews, so that I would be able to ask the members things about which I was curious or questioning.

In formulating an action research project, it is critical to ask: to what extent will individuals be permitted and encouraged to participate (Herr & Anderson, 2005)? My position, explicitly communicated to Node members throughout the project, was that I was eager to have individuals participate in the research process, following the participatory action research tradition. However, in practice, group meetings and the

research were presented as separate components to participants, so as not to exclude anyone who might be interested in the technology learning, but not necessarily the research about technology learning. Despite my concerns about unduly pressuring participants beyond their interests and inclinations, all of the group members were willing to meet for interviews, and I provided members with a copy of the interview questions (see Appendix IV) in advance, so that they would have an opportunity to examine them before agreeing to participate. In the interview questions, members were invited to share: (1) their previous experiences with technology, with a focus on consuming and creating new media such as video and blogs, and (2) their experiences of learning and participation within the Node.

I conducted interviews with the three other regular attending members and with five peripherally participating members. Unfortunately, due to conflicting schedules and commitments, three members were unavailable for interviews. Each member was interviewed once at the end of the six week time frame and the interviews ranged in duration, from fifty minutes to three hours. The interviews were audio recorded, professionally transcribed, reviewed by me, and then sent to participants, so that they would have an opportunity to change, modify, or delete anything in the transcriptions. I used interviews to provide rich descriptions of members' experiences in the group, to provide understanding beyond my observations of our interactions (am I understanding their experiences or are they helping me to understand my experiences?). I make no claims about a comprehensive quality to these interviews, as they are partial and conditional. As Kvale (1996) noted, "the qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge. An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter-change of views

between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (p. 14). Each interview was non-negligibly dissimilar, despite the formulaic question template, as both I and the interviewee brought an agenda and our situatedness differed. We are each bound by our time, place, context, beliefs, attitudes, feelings (Fontana & Frey, 2005). This holds both in a longitudinal sense and in a more immediate sense, as what was discussed or explored on Tuesday at noon might differ from Saturday at six. Considering these factors, the collected data should be understood as aggregated snapshots of experiences, rather than a totalizing representation.

Interpreting the experiences

From my perspective, this work was about stories of action/s, stories of past, present, and future as we came together with individual prior experiences to negotiate our current actions and plan for subsequent activities. I wanted to convey the stories of the Node, distinguishing perceived essence while representing the multiplicity of member perspectives, and yet I knew that the expression of the experience of belonging to the Node would ultimately be limited to my interpretation of it, given the solitary nature of crafting a thesis.

As discussed earlier, action research literature presents the notion of a critical friend, an individual who is an non-participant acquainted with the work and able to provide structured feedback. While I had access to "outsider" individuals who provided feedback, this access was neither structured nor sustained. I propose, however, that my critical friend was reconceptualized as critical friends *within* the group, and that this position is supported by PAR, given its emphasis on participation with/in research. There were several participants with whom I had extensive reflective conversations about the

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group, not merely analysis of a particular week's activities, but a form of critical meta-analysis. Many of my understandings, for example about video as literacy or group as belonging, emerged from the conversations presented in this work and additional peer review was conducted through conference proposals articulating our experiences in the group.

I chose to organize my analysis in a chronological narrative thematic fashion, through ten short stories, offering my accounts of the group sessions, with each story oriented around a theme, and integrating material from the interviews that I perceived to be thematically related. To reduce the size of the transcripts and make accessible the daunting prospect of identifying themes, I opted for reduction of data via categorization (Kvale, 1996). Given the semi-structured nature of the interviews, much of the interview text was already thematically organized. With these questions as orienting themes, I proceeded with initial paragraph-by-paragraph coding using NVivo 7. I continued with several subsequent iterations of code refinement, by introducing new codes to the tree and recoding. To connect these sixty-one codes to stories from the Node, I returned to my journal entries. After I recorded my post-session journal entries in the blog, I applied a title to the post, which usually consisted of a one word summary of the element that I found most interesting, troubling or striking. I selected ten of the twelve sessions and then looked for overlap between the ten themes from the sessions and the sixty-one codes from the interviews. The complete list of interview codes, their frequency, and their connection to the journal entries can be found in Appendix III.

Several traditions influenced my interpretive and representational approach, and I drew on thinking from ethnographers, narrative inquirers, and phenomenologists. From

ethnography, I appreciate the emphasis on developing a text about the culture of the Node, with all of its interactions and activities. Van Maanen (1988) described several ways of crafting this text: as a realist tale with the fieldworker as detached observer, as a confessional tale with the fieldworker as (self-)absorbed reporter, and as a hybrid impressionist tale that strives for a balance between observer and observed:

> The form of an impressionist tale is dramatic recall. Events are recounted roughly in the order in which they are said to have occurred and carry with them all the odds and ends that are associated with the remembered events. The idea is to draw an audience into an unfamiliar story world and allow it, as far as possible, to see, hear, and feel as the fieldworker saw, heard, and felt. (p. 103)

From narrative inquiry, I appreciate the tendency "to begin with experience as lived and told in stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 128). The interviews between participants and I were not necessarily framed as histories or structured as stories, although many chose to share in that fashion, both for experiences of participation prior to and within the Node, which resulted in an autobiographical quality. From phenomenology, I appreciate the shift from facts regarding what happened towards meaning regarding what happened. van Manen (2003) described the process of developing themes from situations, and how these themes form an entry point to essence of lived experience.

We have now seen how the theoretical framework, as described in the previous chapter, and the methodological framework, as described in this chapter, centralize participation, where participation catalyses learning for individuals and groups. In this chapter, I described how an action research approach provided structure for the

development of our videoblogging collective, how interviews and journaling were used as data collection techniques, and how particular analytical approaches were used to interpret and represent the data. In the next chapter, I will present the findings of my data collection and interpretation activities.

CHAPTER 4   FINDINGS

The notion of stories is pervasive in communities of practice and action research literature, and stories, both the sharing of and listening to, were a central resource for our group; it was through stories that we learned about each other and refined our experimentation with new media. Accordingly, I elected to structure this chapter, which shares my insights regarding the question of how individuals experienced participation in our videoblogging collective, as a collection of ten stories—one for each group session. The stories begin with the recruitment of the group, progressing through the challenges and celebrations shared by the collective, interleaving members' stories of experiences before and through the Node, and connecting the journal entries and interviews to dominant themes. In this way, I hope to communicate the awkwardness and the exhilaration of be(com)ing in our group.

Story 1: "I have no idea what that means"

I never imagined that the task of assembling a group to talk about and make media would be without challenges, but I was surprised by the initial barriers that I faced as I prepared to commence in January: accessing hardware and preparing recruitment and promotional materials.

I did not know exactly how the sessions would be structured, as I was hoping for a member-organized space. Would people want to work individually at computer terminals, pausing occasionally to ask a question of a neighbour, focusing on production? Would people want to focus on discussion, analysis, and collaboration, with computers occupying a more peripheral role? I hoped for an in-between space, one in which we

could support and share, but where each member would be able to achieve individual development. A lab environment did not seem conducive to the collaborative approach. I wanted to bring a light lunch (on Tuesdays) or dinner (on Thursdays) for the members, and the labs, with their uncompromising *No Food or Drink* policy, were not particularly accommodating for meal-time socializing. I decided that a classroom space would be more appropriate and one room in particular, which had a set of 12 desktop computers and a collection of chairs and large tables, seemed optimal. I was worried, however, that 12 computers would be insufficient, based on the interest expressed by potential participants in casual conversation. Additionally, I was concerned that all of the computers in the room were loaded with the Windows operating system because diversity, even Mac OS as an alternative, would be welcome. Accordingly, at the beginning of December, I went to the user-support room for the faculty-level New Media Support Group (NMSG) in search of hardware. I made a booking for a cart of iBooks and a handful of video cameras every Tuesday from 12:30 pm until 2:30 pm and every Thursday from 4:30 pm until 6:30 pm for a six week period, from the first week of January until Reading Week in mid-February.

The next day I received an email from an NMSG representative, stating flatly that my booking was denied because the use of the equipment was not for a course, but that I was invited to either (1) use the computer labs, or (2) supply additional information about how I would be using the equipment, which could influence the outcome. I responded, explaining how the lab was unsuitable for the group and that the project, while not a *course* in the strictest sense, seemed compatible, in terms of the support provided, with the NMSG philosophy that *the priority for use of the equipment is instruction*. The

representative responded again and said that the booking might be made, subject to the following conditions: (1) I would not be able to book the equipment all at once and the bookings would have to be done on a session-by-session basis, (2) I would require a faculty member to make the bookings on my behalf, (3) I would not be able to book the equipment for the Tuesday session, because a booking for midday is actually twice the duration booked due to battery recharging, and (4) I would not be permitted to connect the video cameras to the laptops due to hard disk limitations. I was left feeling totally astonished by this barrage of restrictions, which seemed to range from the inane (for $100 I could solve their battery recharging problem with a handful of extension cords) to the authoritarian (my requests had never previously necessitated a faculty member as guarantor). Feeling somewhat resigned and totally unsupported, I decided I would make do with the classroom resources and encourage people to bring their own laptops, if available.

My two forms of written invitation for participation were emails sent to departmental listservs and postcards (Fig. 4.1) left in departmental mailboxes. There were some technical difficulties with the emails, as the message was being blocked by an aggressive spam filtering mechanism at the university level. More disturbing, perhaps, was the potential that individuals were being actively discouraged or deterred by the circulated materials. I had consulted faculty members, sessionals, graduate and undergraduate students, and beyond about the content and appearance of the card, which underwent several incarnations.
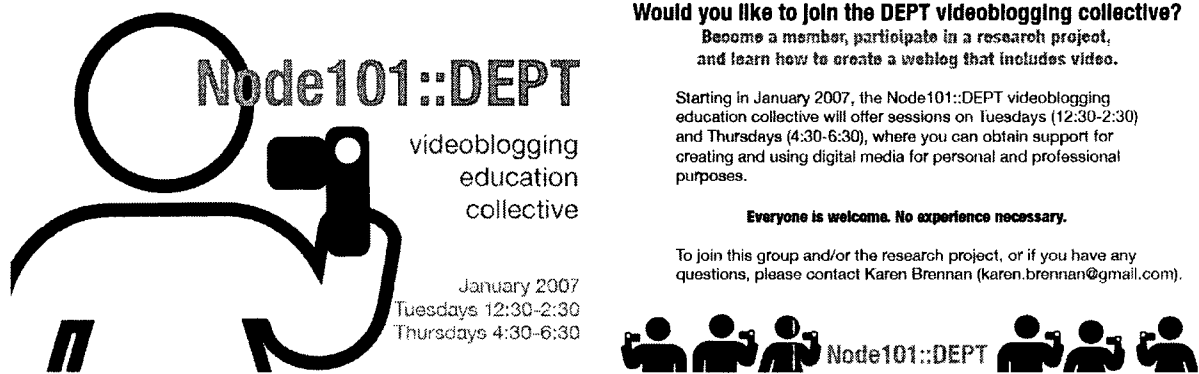
Figure 4.1 The postcard invitation for participation.

A friend was repelled by the original pinkish font colour, remarking that it was too "feminine". An instructor was concerned about the lack of language indicating that experience was not required, remarking that it was too exclusive. A faculty member was dismayed by the quantity of toner used for the printing of the card, remarking that it was too environmentally unfriendly. As I proceeded through the iterations of revision, I could not help but imagine the ways in which people might be alienated by my postcard, which was created with the intention of maximal inclusion. What if they disdain acronyms and tech jargon, or automatically filter research recruitment? What if they are afraid of stick figure drawings, or hate Helvetica fonts? I was certain that this process would be much easier if I were able talk to each person individually and explain the group's premise.

Related Stories from Group Members

When I first began talking with group members individually, they shared their stories of learning with digital technologies and computers. Through our conversations, I found that my experiences of struggling, of encountering barriers were in no way exceptional. The group members identified themselves as coming from a variety of backgrounds, characterizing themselves as teachers, as students, as technologists, or as some hybrid. Some self-described as having no technology background; others described

their technology background as an unconscious, omnipresent knowing. Despite the differences in their learning experiences and current capacities, every group member was quick to identify personal interest as a catalyst for participation. As Angela described:

Angela: I think that [participation] comes from like an interest, like it comes from a personal interest. If you don't have that interest, then you're not likely to research and do stuff unless you have to do it. So with me it's more out of interest.

Karen: What factors contribute to that interest? Did you have someone you knew who was really interested in it?

Angela: No. I've been struggling to find out like how this, you know, technology side of me comes out. Or, like, you know, how even I have it because both of my parents are not very tech savvy. Neither is my sister, I mean she can use a computer and a word processor and stuff like that. But this whole interest of, you know, about taking things apart and putting them back together and just discovering things. I don't know. It's just curious. It's just, I think, primitive curiosity. Wanting to learn all the time.

To find an abundance of this quality is somewhat unsurprising, given the self-selection that would have prompted a person to join the Node. These people were also highly self-motivated to seek out or create opportunities for having experiences with technology, based on their perception of need. As noted by Veronica, keeping up with increasing student expertise provided strong motivation:

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Veronica: Students were becoming far more sophisticated. And at this point now we've got students at home with better computers than we have at the schools. And we also have students that have Internet access, which really just blew everything open in terms of access to knowledge and that kind of thing.

Keeping up with professional responsibilities provided additional motivation:

Veronica: Having been someone that didn't use computers, suddenly had to with my courses, and learn new courses, that's not a big deal to me either. It's like you know what? If you suddenly have to teach Digital Media and it's not your thing, you've got to learn.

However, in their previous experiences with digital technologies, personal interest and willingness were not always sufficient for the group members to achieve participation to its desired extent, as factors both internal and external to participants acted as barriers. Psychological influences, such as perception of age, contributed to a sense of inaccessibility:

Veronica: So how have I used new media technologies—new media technology in my practice? So I don't, I think that there really is sort of a gap between—and I read this, too, that in terms of age, 'cause I'm in my mid forties, in terms of what people in their forties and fifties and sixties look at, versus people in their twenties and thirties and teens.

The rapidity and extent of technological development and change further contributed to this sense of inaccessibility:

Veronica: Yeah! So I've always been, like I've always been interested. But I feel like with the Internet and all this type of stuff it's gone way beyond, you know, my scope in terms of what I do.

Karen: Like in volume or in—it's not technical difficulty, because clearly you have—?

Veronica: I have, like I feel pretty comfortable like, saying if I don't know something, or that kind of stuff. I'm not afraid to do that because I mean I don't need to know everything about technology, I mean that's—that's impossible. It's like saying I know everything about science or something.

Structural conditions also contributed to inhibiting participation. The group members who self-identified as teachers were particularly frustrated by the lack of time and funding available to fulfill their desired learning, and described how they coped with the lack of financial support by relying on students to assist with technology components, at the expense of their own learning and, as Marshall described when discussing sessionals, eventually at the expense of their students' learning:

Marshall: They need time, incentive, compensation. And to say that a sessional is supposed to be up to speed with anything other than a reified field, and they're supposed to teach four courses and get paid just for that. It's not going to really bode well for education. Education is changing, more in the next ten years than we can possibly see now, but certainly more than it has in hundreds of years.

Other members described how even structured support could act as a barrier, if the entry-point for participation is unreachable. Jill described electronic support via a course forum that was counterproductive because the level of technology literacy required was excluding:

Jill: We had no support like, except for if somebody in some odd forum like, "Oh, I can't get this to work," and then somebody would write back with an absolutely obscure e-mail. Like I remember that, where I didn't even know the language that they were using to tell me how to do something. It was like, "Well, if I don't even know the language, how can I do what you're asking?" Like what it was, I even remember, it was somebody or it was—I was having trouble getting my images to link on my web page.

Karen: And okay, so they weren't appearing?

Jill: Right. And so somebody says, "Oh, yeah, you have to make the images point to blah-blah-blah." And I'm like, "I have no idea what that means," you know?

Story 2: "Maybe I will find a place where I can fit"

As I sat alone in the classroom with my printed guides to videoblogging, an array of example videos and blogs, and several platters of sushi, I could not help but wonder if anyone would be attending this first session. Only a few days prior, as the starting date loomed and people realized that their terms would be particularly busy or that scheduling conflicts were emerging, I had experienced significant group attrition, which prompted an all-out recruitment blitz. I sent scores of personalized emails to anyone I could think of –

people who had expressed interest, people who said that they would be coming, people who I suspected might be interested, people who might not want to participate at all – in the hopes that I would not end up being the only person in the Node. The accepting responses I received were qualified, which left me unknowing and nervous about whom, if anyone, might be available to attend the first session. (Yet, as someone who regularly over-commits her time, I can only admire individuals who are cautious about allocating space in their schedules for yet another project!)

Just as I was pondering potential answers to the question, *Can one person be a group?*, my thoughts were preempted by the arrival of Tracey. As she looked around the room and realized that she was the first to arrive, she looked concerned. I invited her to come sit down and have something to eat, which seemed to make both of us less uncomfortable. Shortly thereafter, Julie arrived, followed by Jill. We sat together, eating sushi and sharing our stories about the holiday break. Jill spotted the videoblogging guides that I had spread across the front table, picked one up, and started to flip through it. This prompted her to ask about what exactly Node101 was and what we would be doing together. I described the larger project that is Node101, and then described my motivation for establishing a node in our faculty. Since it was intended to be a participant-centric group, I suggested that we introduce ourselves, sharing our experiences with and aspirations for video and blogs. Everyone present had some experience with blogs and video, through coursework or research, but minimal or no experience with video in blogs.

Related Stories from Group Members

For those who were able to attend, I was curious about their motivation for participating in the group. In our conversations, I asked them to describe: (1) what they expected the meetings to be like, and (2) what they hoped to achieve. The expectations for meeting structure varied across two dimensions: unit of focus (Is the focus on the individual or group?) and content of focus (Is the focus on the practice of videoblogging or theory?). While members' responses were concentrated in the group-practice quadrant, the entire spectrum of expectation was represented. Jill described individually-focused practice:

Jill: Oh, do you know what my impression was before? Actually it wasn't even that—I didn't even think that it would be an actual group thing. I thought it would be—like the way we have it, right? I thought it would be people sitting around in kind of like the drop-in support lab that you described [earlier in the interview], you know?

Karen: Yeah, yeah.

Jill: And if you have trouble, you just—you sit there and you're—okay, this is hilarious, okay? Here was my vision. You sit there in your own little world and you work on your stuff. And then if something comes up where you need help, then you can rely on other people or technical support, or whatever, right?

Karen: [laughs] Yeah, yeah, no, I understand completely.

Jill: So anyway I have a far more like, you know, individual working,

focus, no talking.

Marshall likened group-centered theorizing to a salon:

Marshall: Well, when I saw your e-mail I thought this is a very cool idea

because of the informality of it. You know, let's get together and

just hang out and talk about it and kind of check it out. That

seemed like a really good idea. It seemed like a salon. You know,

that's the culture that I associated with it or interpreted it to have.

And, you know, videoblogging and hanging out with some

Education students just seemed like a good idea because it was

going to be an emergent learning situation. We would all bring

various perspectives with no big agenda.

Group members almost uniformly described their primary motivation for joining as an

opportunity to have access to an environment focused on technology learning. The

benefits desired of the environment or of the learning, however, varied from person to

person along a continuum of individual to collective betterment. Kelly described her

participation in the group as a form of coping with intellectual alienation:

Kelly: Since learning about videos in Lisa's course, I just really love

making videos. So, I wanted to develop my knowledge, so I

decided to join the Node.

Karen: So, was that sort of the major factor for joining, wanting to learn

more about the technical?

Kelly: Well, that, too, but also this meeting is really—I really like this meeting because it's really nice to meet other people who are interested in doing similar works, using technology. Because it's kind of hard to find people in my department, somehow.

Karen: Oh. That's very interesting because everyone—the rest of us are in another department, right, so I think we take it for granted a bit. Because I guess your department doesn't necessarily mean—

Kelly: Some people don't really know how to use PowerPoint and stuff. And then whenever I say, "Oh, in this class I made a video," and then I told some people and they said, "Oh, that's cool," and then that's the end of the conversation. They're not really interested in maybe technology stuff.

Alex similarly searched for self-identification, but wanted to simultaneously contribute to a larger endeavor:

Alex: I'm looking for my research topic and I'm really looking for a group of people where I can develop it because I don't really know what I'm going to develop, so I'm—that's what clubs are for, right?

Karen: Yeah, to talk to people.

Alex: Yeah, talk to people and try to identify yourself in a group and then this Department collective, knowledge collective, maybe I will find a place where I can fit into or where I can be useful and valuable and stuff like that.

Dale conceptualized his work with videoblogging as potentially contributing to a larger social benefit:

> Dale: In terms of the technological aspect of it, well, I'm interested in videoblogging. I think it's got a lot of potential to allow people to express themselves. I suppose I'm not so much interested in learning about it so that I can do it, but I suppose I'm interested in it more as a movement. And I think it might be interesting to learn enough about it that I could teach other people to do it just as a, you know, something good to do for the world.

Story 3: "I thought that was for professionals"

Whereas for the Tuesday session of this first week I was anticipating that no one would attend and yet there were five people, for the Thursday session, four people who had committed to attending did not show and one person left to attend a class shortly after we started. Despite the low attendance, we were still productive. Tuesday's session had been oriented toward demonstration and discussion, as I showed videos on the front projection screen and we then conversed about the videos. The initial tone for Thursday was markedly different, as Sonia set up her computer when she came in, and, in doing so, established a precedent for when Dale arrived. He proceeded to sit at the back of the room and started to pull out his computer. I encouraged him to join us, to come sit at the same table as Sonia and I. As Sonia had let me know by email that she had specific questions that she wanted answered about her blog, and I knew that she would have to leave early for class, I prompted Dale to look at Sonia's blog so that he would have something to do while we worked through her questions, which were very specific, code-

oriented about the blog's appearance. We were able to address a few of the issues about which she was concerned, but then Sonia needed to depart to get to her class on time.

After she left, Dale and I discussed what he might want to do with videoblogging. He enjoys cooking, but is frustrated by the lack of visuals in recipes. Thus, he was inspired to create his own videoblog of vegan food creations. Since he is not a student, Dale was reluctant to use the Department server to host his blog, and I was eager to experiment with the latest release of Google's blogging platform, which was reputed to have substantial upgrades, so we decided to set up the blog using Blogger. Blogger has a very user-friendly, accessible interface, and the biggest challenge became selecting a name for the blog. As Dale's first choice was unavailable, he spent a non-negligible amount of time trying to find a satisfactorily similar derivative.

Once the blog was set up, Dale wanted to experiment with capturing, editing, and posting video. I had brought both of my video cameras, one MiniDV and one Flash. He opted for the MiniDV camera and interviewed me, which was a very strange experience for me as I usually go to great lengths to avoid being captured on tape, let alone on tape for the Web. Once he had finished recording, we were ready to transfer the video to his computer, but we faced our first challenge. My Mac has a six-pin FireWire input port and the camera has a four-pin port, so I had purchased a four-pin to six-pin cable. But this four-pin to six-pin was of no use, as Dale's computer is four-pin to four-pin. Momentarily hindered, I recalled that NMSG has a wide variety of adapters and connectors. Dale would not be able to borrow equipment, so I headed down to NMSG with my student card in hand to borrow a cable.

The woman at the NMSG request desk was decidedly unfriendly. There are many pleasant, generous people who work in NMSG, but I couldn't help momentarily dwelling on this particular interaction. How might I feel about going to this person and asking a question, if I did not have any technology experience? What would the interaction be like if I was unable to articulate a request for a specific cable and could only say that I could not connect my camera to my computer? Pleasantness (or lack thereof) aside, I eventually received the cable and returned to Dale. In my absence, he had been investigating the features of Windows Movie Maker, and felt frustrated by its limited capacities for editing. We connected the camera and it was detected by his computer without problem, but Dale's frustration increased when confronted by the reality of data transfer rates between camera and computer. As we waited for the video transfer to be completed, we started playing with Garage Band on my computer to work on the theme music for his cooking vlog. By the time the transfer was complete, we had run out of time in the sessions, so we agreed to continue the work next week.

Related Stories from Group Members

Many of the group members had experienced introductions to video production in formal, course-based environments. In these environments, they produced a wide range of videos (identity pieces, theatrical pieces, instructional pieces, theoretical pieces) and were well supported to accomplish their tasks, in that they had access to video recording and editing equipment. However, these people, once left to their own resources, and other members, who necessarily relied on the self-referential nature of video to substitute for formal introduction, encountered both practical and ideological barriers to creating videos.

Similar to the technical challenge shared by Dale and I of finding an appropriate cable, people had experienced challenges with resources. Alex was not able to make video as frequently as she desired, because the prices on video cameras are still prohibitively high and it is not possible to borrow video equipment for extended periods of time from the Faculty. Angela, who had purchased two video cameras and had accumulated a significant amount of recorded material, was unable to edit any video, as her copy of Windows Movie Maker had been corrupted, she had been unable to repair it, and it remained in an unusable state. At home in China, Tracey was not able to share her videos with students, as access to YouTube was restricted at her university:

Tracey: And if you want to open YouTube on campus, it will not allow you.

Karen: But at home you can?

Tracey: At home it really depends, because I live—I live in a community like for the University teachers. And movies like in public space, so the Internet is really special.

Karen: So, it has the same filters and restrictions.

Tracey: Right, exactly, so we can't open as many pages as we want. So, that was one problem, a very big problem for me to go everywhere, like in the Internet, as I like.

Beyond resources, the beliefs that group members held about video detracted from their desire to participate in production. Kelly described how she viewed video production as a privileged space:

Kelly: Yeah. I'm always interested in films and videos, but it was really impossible for me to create a video. Somehow I felt that it was for those who are professionally – professional artists, not for normal people.

Karen: So, the limitation was not technical, but you thought it was more like an artistic – like a limitation of artistry?

Kelly: Probably I've never encountered those videos made by the regular—

Karen: Amateurs?

Kelly: Yeah, amateurs. So, yeah, I always watched movies, like Hollywood movies and things like that. So, I thought that was for professionals.

Others commented on how the discouragement to participate came not from the lack of amateurs, but rather the presence of amateurs cultivating a negative space, a space in which passive consumption of mindless contributions is encouraged. Marshall provided an example of this using a popular video phenomenon, that of recording fights:

Marshall: The use of video postings within some formats is a really cool thing and video uploading everything—I got a problem with the amount of fights and violence, etcetera, and etcetera is yesterday's news, and I do mean, you know, March 6, 2007. Etcetera, what gets recorded on a cell phone and uploaded somewhere for laughs and what gets those hits. So it becomes a bit of an ideological issue, and I'm politically not that keen on thinking that a fight, if

it's going to get videotaped and it becomes that much more of a spectacle for that much wider audience.

Story 4: "I think I should have come on Tuesdays"

The second session started ten minutes early, marked by the arrival of Jill. I asked her if she would be willing to show the video work that she had submitted to an online journal sponsored by a cross-faculty inquiry group at the University, but she remarked that she would prefer to show the project that she had been working on since our session last week. Although two people from the previous week had not returned, we had three new people joining us this week. Once everyone had had an opportunity to have lunch and to socialize, I shared excerpts from a videoblog that was created as promotional material for a shopping mall, which contained videos that I had found particularly technically and stylistically engaging.

Following this, I invited Jill to show her recent work to the group. She had made a music video (Fig. 4.2) for a song composed and performed by a friend of hers, called *People of the World*. Before showing the video, she asked members of the group if anyone would be offended by Nazi symbolism or video footage, not wanting to induce disproportionate discomfort in anyone.

Figure 4.2 Stills from Jill's music video. Used by permission.

The group was very quiet following the showing and I broke the silence by asking Jill how she had put the video together. She described how she had relied on Creative Commons resources that I had introduced during the previous session for the video content. Tracey was very curious about this, having never investigated Creative Commons before, and asked Jill to explain which parts were video effects generated by Movie Maker and which were Creative Commons videos. At this point, I invited Jill to do a demonstration, to show the group where she had found her materials. She and I physically switched places, so she was sitting at the front of the room with the laptop. Jill provided a tour of the Creative Commons site, as well as other open source video repositories such as Internet Archive and CandyJar. I was thrilled because Jill had found numerous excellent resources that I had never noticed or accessed on Creative Commons, having limited my use of the site to their search engine.

Following Jill's demonstration, I invited other participants to share anything that they had been working on. Of course, the new participants, being unfamiliar with the structure, had not brought anything, and I encouraged them to bring something that they had watched or made. Knowing and discussing the expertise levels of the people at the previous session, I realized that it might be productive to have a group goal, as randomly watching and discussing video might not be sufficiently gratifying. Given the high proportion of graduate students in the group, I investigated some possible venues for publishing or presenting, either using video or writing about video, and created a handout with information about four different sites. This seemed to resonate with the group and we spent time reviewing and discussing the focus of each site. Given the broad scope across (and even within) each proposal, Veronica encouraged everyone to share their

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research interests to help us determine overlap. Our interest overlap eventually converged to three keywords: technology, culture, and identity.

Related Stories from Group Members

Sharing was described by many members as a central practice of the group. The collaborative sharing of ideas, videos, interests, and even food, all contributed to cultivating a sense of possibility and understanding. From the perspective of one who shows, Jill, who was the first member to show her work, described how the act of showing inspired possibilities for others, encouraging future contributions:

Jill: I guess I, in the beginning, I made videos. And so those you

showed. So that was—I think that contributed because other people

could see that somebody from the group was actually doing it and

that it was real. It was something that could be done. And also we

needed examples, too.

This observation was confirmed, from the perspective of one who watches, by Alex, who explained how sharing in the group, made the act of posting online video concrete:

Alex: We learn from each other and also learn from you some new stuff

and then I got interested in this YouTube and technologies with—I

never even knew those people go and videotape some particular

moments of their life and post it on the web. It was kind of,

"Wow."

But the sharing of video served not only as a gateway to increased technology skill or awareness for the individual, but as a means to provide a connection between individuals in the group. Sharing video led to conversations about *how* things were produced, and

provided clues as to *why* things were produced, allowing members to reveal their interests and passions. While there were many opportunities for collaboration and sharing during the Tuesday sessions, the Thursday sessions were not well attended, which offered no opportunities for sharing with a variety of individuals. Dale, a Thursday attendee, described that, although he was able to get his videoblog set up, the sessions were lacking sharing, and, consequently, meaningful connections:

Dale: Well, I do wish that there had been more people there because I was hoping to learn more about things from people or, you know. It would have been nice to have some sort of connection one way or the other, either helping or being helped. It was really interesting to talk to Sonia. She seems like a really interesting person and has probably got a lot of very different perspectives on things than I do. I took a look at her blog and some of her videos, and she seems very creative. So it would have been wonderful to have had more of a chance to talk to her. Tracey, she was an interesting character. She had a lot of really fascinating stories about China. Again, you know, we didn't have enough of an opportunity to interact. We sort of got to know each other, and there was definitely some interesting exchange of ideas. But, yeah, I guess she wasn't there and I wasn't there at the same times, so it was, you know—

Karen: No continuity?

Dale: Yeah, yeah. It never really—for me, the social connection part of it

never really took off. I think I should have come on Tuesdays.

Story 5: "I don't want people to see my diatribe about whatever"

Much of the third Tuesday session was spent talking about the problems with new

media. At the beginning of the session, we were discussing the video that Jill had shown

the group the previous week, when Alex, who was a new member this week,

acknowledged that she was unfamiliar with Creative Commons. I described what it

represented in terms of copyright and Jill described it in terms of resources for her music

video. From there, we had a more general conversation as a group about open source

resources, which led us to the issue of cultural dominance of the English language in

shared materials. There are language equivalents of Wikipedia and some media, for

example, photos, transcend language, but we questioned what equivalents exist for video.

This led us to discuss what consequences this will have for those who are not native

English speakers. How can something uniquely non-North American be constructed out

of North American-generated material? Do we experience the Web as an inherently racist

space?

To further problematize online sharing, Jill mentioned an article she had read

about online sites devoted to exposing unethical behaviour (such as a site for

whistleblowers), and what effect this form of surveillance might have with respect to

possible rebuttals. She was concerned that the anonymous quality of these sites would

lead to spiraling poor behaviour, creating inerasable pits of, possibly false, accusation.

This led to a broader discussion of what means were available to deal with predatory or

bullying behaviour. Alex was unconvinced that this was a concern in a civil environment

such as the University, but I provided a Faculty-level report as evidence for the prevalence of aggressive, predatory-like behaviour, as the report devotes a section to the problem of bullying in the Faculty. We discussed other examples of predators, and Jill mentioned Tom Ellison as an example of predators in roles of power, specifically teachers. Veronica provided another perspective, as someone who was a student at that time, and described the more permissive environment and the code of silence that existed when teachers and students were involved in sexual relationships. I felt that there was some tension between Jill and Veronica on this point, as they could not reach consensus regarding the acceptability of this behaviour.

Coincidentally, the notions of online mobs, predators, and bullies fit perfectly with a videoblog debate that I had been following for a day or two. Ryanne Hodson, one of the original founders of Node101 (http://ryanedit.blogspot.com), had been sexually harassed on the street and had returned to her four harassers with her video camera, challenging them to reconsider their behaviour (Fig. 4.3).

Figure 4.3 Stills from Ryanne's confrontation video. Creative Commons License CC-BY-NC by Ryanne Hodson, http://ryanedit.com/

I described the premise and showed the video, as an example to unite our discussion about new media, videoblogs, predators, and exposing the predator. Once shown, I mentioned the backlash that had occurred online, and, as a group, we discussed our own concerns regarding gender, race, and class, such as the unequal access to

technology between harasser and harassed. Veronica commented that the force of the reaction was perhaps an artifact of Ryanne's pent-up frustration of feeling unattractive. This unproblematic treatment clearly frustrated Jill, who tried, with some difficulty, to engage Veronica on this point.

Related Stories from Group Members

Several members recalled explicit introductions to blogs, either through course work or through a colleague or friend. Others, however, could not remember a moment when they were made aware of blogs; their familiarity with blogs emerged as a form of creeping consciousness, as blogs became an everyday part of their experience of the Internet landscape. Notwithstanding their introduction, all of the group members had some experience with blogs, either as consumers or as producers. They used blogs in a variety of ways: (1) oriented by technology, such as using blogs as content management systems, as feedback infrastructure, or as electronic portfolio organizer, (2) oriented by content, such as using blogs to record thoughts, to share research, to connect with friends and family, or to access expertise about particular places or skills.

The problems with blogs expressed in the meeting were personalized and elaborated in our conversations, as members shared their concerns regarding participating in the blogosphere. A desire for privacy was seen as essentially incompatible with the assumed purpose for public publishing of blogs. Some group members, such as Veronica, felt a strong personal motivation for privacy:

> Veronica: I guess, personally, I don't really—I personally wouldn't want to have my own blog. I don't want people to—I'm very private. I don't want people to see my diatribe about whatever, right.

Other group members, such as Angela, described a desire to avoid punishment:

Angela: I'm not really comfortable with putting all that stuff about myself online, where you know, you know, if you do a search on someone else you find all these things. It's like, oh, I don't think I want to, you know, expose myself like that. A lot of, you know, details and stuff. And some things you just put up, and you don't realize it, sort of, it could affect your career or your reputation or whatever it is. So I'm a bit cautious about that.

Marshall argued for the benefits of blogging:

Marshall: There are important democratic conversations that are significant in the structure of politics and information exchange that have long been filtered through corporate media.

However, he acknowledged that blogs were problematic, privileged spaces:

Marshall: And I'm not saying that I understand the impact of blogging realistically because not so many people who didn't see corporate media are going to be reading blogs. And knowing how to RSS or have a dynamic keyword tag, flag for stories that interest you about you know, the election or whatever important issues, I don't think those grab that many people who are, you know, just struggling to make a living, kind of thing, right. That's most of the people in the world. So there are issues to do with class and politics that a lot of these computer technologies—they're an entertainment for the middle class. They're an entertainment for people who have a lot

of leisure time and/or who are involved in it professionally enough that it connects to them. So there's questions or things to be taking into account as to how valuable and how much effort, time, money and resources they really warrant in terms of how valorized we, you know, how much excitement we have about them.

This notion of questioning the value of blogs emerged across the interviews, as several members bemoaned the lack of meaningful content in blogs, with critiques ranging from somewhat apologetic (Kelly describing her experience of reading blogs in English as dissatisfying as she just "didn't get it") to scathing (Dale describing a work blog orchestrated by management as "hollow corporate nonsense"). As Alex summarized her experience of blogs as entertainment, she mocked the lack of depth or purpose:

Alex: I don't remember how did I get to that blog but it was a very funny blog about one girl, she was high school student, and she was describing how she'd come home, do her homework and there was some problem with her boyfriend, and teacher was not good. And I was reading and reading and reading and I said, "Why am I doing this?" [laughs] "I'm wasting my time on someone's experience when I have, like, my own, basically."

Problems with blogs perhaps transcend the technology per se, and rather are a reflection of greater problems with public communication. Whether online or offline, finding meaningful, sustainable, inclusive communication is a challenging proposition. Online, Kelly described the awkwardness of contacting a stranger whose blog she had been reading:

Karen:	Does she know you're reading it? Like, do you ever write comments? Like, do you interact with her? Did you ever try and contact her?
Kelly:	I thought about that, but I just felt kind of—because I don't know her and she doesn't know me, so I felt it was kind of weird.

Marshall described how, after receiving a recommendation for readings in response to a video that he had posted, further communication was unnecessary:

Karen:	Did you reciprocate, after you received this, like how did you, if at all—?
Marshall:	I just said, "Thanks." Something like that.
Karen:	So there was no negotiation of the particular text or—?
Marshall:	I haven't looked at it any more than just going, "Oh, oh, yeah. Okay, I got to read this more." Right.
Karen:	It's related and cool. Interesting.
Marshall:	Yeah, but that was at a point in time where I knew that I could find it again. Interesting part of social software, this kind of thing, right, or the web in general. I think I can find that again, and I'll either link it, download it, or you know, put it into my reference database or something like that.

Offline, some members' establishment of communication was unproblematic, as Angela describes, attributing the comfort to a shared quality she perceived:

Angela:	I've had really positive experiences during the meetings. I think just because of the people around here and it's all females, so I

think that's one factor that you are just so comfortable. You can

talk about anything.

Others, as evidenced by this week's meeting, experienced that merely being present was

no guarantee of being heard or of reaching understanding. As Jill described, the process

of establishing group communication involved confronting challenges:

Jill: This was not just open up the can and you've got your intimate

            group situation. It was—there were interactions that led to that

            kind of intimacy and working through differences and so on. Well,

            at least for me anyway.

Story 6: "It's like a little lab for situated learning"

In the previous session, I had followed up on the idea of submitting work to a

conference by proposing that we prepare a paper about experiences of constructing video

from open source materials. I offered to write an initial draft that we could revise as a

group. Once we had taken some time to eat and exchange stories from the past week, we

agreed that we would take time to review the proposal that would be due in a couple of

days. After a moment of awkward silence, in which we contemplated how to accomplish

this task as a collective, Alex proposed that we individually read the proposal and then

collectively attempt editing. After ten minutes or so of silent reading, note-taking, and

snacking, we started a round-robin process of suggestions. Alex indicated that the third

paragraph needed restructuring. Jill agreed, as did Kelly. I suggested that we consider

restructuring the third paragraph in terms of framing questions, based on levels of

abstraction or process in the activity described in the paper.

This prompted questions about what exactly we would be doing, as we were writing the proposal in the past tense, while the project had yet to be negotiated. I described an idea for making our own videos from Creative Commons material that we wrestled with for a while, thinking about what it might look like. Alex left for a moment and Kelly suggested a permutation of the activity. Instead of collecting our own materials and making our own video, she proposed that we collect our own materials but let someone else construct a video for us. I was excited by this proposal, but sensed Jill's trepidation, which she articulated as a concern that the activity was dangerous. We talked about different possibilities for it, and decided that there was simply a lack of malicious intent within the group. Once Alex returned, Kelly presented the idea and Alex acceded.

Once we had articulated a potential outline for the activity, we returned to the third paragraph and to the issue of theoretical approach. Given that three of us knew nothing about Bakhtin, we discussed the possibility of exploring an alternative approach and I proposed a round-robin discussion of theoretical orientation. Alex started, but stated that we needed no theory, as it was just a proposal. Jill rejected this idea, given the nature of this particular conference. She then went on to elaborate on the Bakhtin concepts described in the proposal (She also had brought a Bakhtin text for reference). This led into Kelly's proposal for theory, and she mentioned Hall and Butler. Hall led to a great deal of enthusiasm, and we agreed to figure out some way to incorporate this. I finished with postmodernism, Baudrillard, and Jameson, which were already incorporated into the proposal. At this point, we had conceived of a few ways to restructure the work, and, given that the group typing (with one person, me, at the front of the room) was not

particularly effective, we decided to return to individual writing mode, with Jill offering to take responsibility for the next round of editing.

Related Stories from Group Members

When I initially proposed that we, as a group, might submit work to conferences, it was motivated by a desire to offer some concrete benefit to the group members. After all, I had originally imagined that the overall technological capacities of the group would be less advanced, and I felt that this potential buy-in or joint enterprise was now less attractive. Given my own inclinations for publishing, I believed that conferences were an obvious common denominator for a group composed of graduate students. I was simultaneously quite conscientious of my own tendency to assume organizational control and strove to communicate that this was merely a suggestion, not anything that needed to be done if people were not really interested in the quality or quantity of the work.

Consequently, it came as somewhat of a traumatizing shock in my second interview, where Jill revealed that she had felt pressured, both to do the project and by inherent pressure of group dynamics:

Jill:	It's like I watched several stages of transformation into that culture and into getting incorporated into a commitment that was like being almost like a pressure that wasn't—how can I put this— because I'm going to be totally honest about it.
Karen:	That's the point! [laughs]
Jill:	It was like—that I'm starting to think, because I don't think there's such a thing as not being part of a pressure system. And so the whole idea that you can actually—like I mean I suppose maybe

can you make structures or some kind of concession somehow, so that people know, "Okay, well, you know this could lead into a pressure situation and you're really free to go at any point," because when you're enculturating, there's no freedom there, yeah. So this has been an extremely interesting—it's like a little lab for situated learning that you created.

And so—okay, so we got the first phase of the illusionary like, "Yeah, I'm engaged and it'll always stay like that," right? "And so I'm safe. I won't have any time pressures and commitments." And then there's a second phase of, "Sure, yeah, sounds great, yeah." And then the third phase of, "Okay, this does look serious and I'm engaged enough that I'll participate," but still in that illusionary phase where I think, "Well, somehow this won't take any time," or so on.

Then there's the next phase where, "Okay, we really are doing this. This is Karen. She is serious about getting us this conference." [laughs] "Damn her!", but like at the same time going, "Hey, that's really neat that you're doing that and that you're pressuring us that way because you were the ringleader."

Karen: Yeah.

Jill: Yeah, and so—and then there's like the next phase of looking around, me going, "Okay, everybody here is kind of looking nervous, too." [laughs] And then—and then the next phase I'm

going, "Okay, well, I can't bail from this because I'm committed for,"—like I'm a pretty committed person and so—I've got that naturally but then on top of that, there was the pressure of the group, right? Like imagine if I said all of a sudden, "You know what? I ain't doing this." [laughs] Anyway, "I'm just not going to do this and I don't want to be part of this. It's just—I didn't realize it was going to get so serious and time consuming and so on. I'm not doing this. I'm not doing the conference or the paper," or the whatever. So like there was—there were those two things. So no matter how pressured I would have felt at any point, I would not have bailed because I would not have bailed from you.

What I had experienced as collaborative negotiation, was lived by Jill as a pressure situation without choice. What was even worse was that I had not sensed this. I went to the next interview, now with Alex, a few days later with a mild sense of dread. What new horrors that I had perpetrated against the group would I learn about? As Alex and I talked, I listened to her express appreciation and enthusiasm for the group. And then it happened. Alex asked:

Alex:　　　　　Oh it was a lot of fun. Like, it was definitely a lot of fun. I really enjoyed it. And I look forward to each meeting. How many do we have left?

I was sent into a nervous state, completely losing any interviewing composure I might have had, and I babblingly explained that there was no set end exactly, that I was collecting data over a six week period which had ended, that everyone could come and go

as they please, that I didn't want anyone to feel pressure. With the disclaimers stated and realizing that I had no real answer for her question, I turned it back to Alex, asking her how she thought the group might end:

Karen: So how do you—how would it end? Do you know what I mean? Like, okay, does it end on Tuesday after we show each other our videos? Does it end—like people are busy and I don't know. I don't know. So if you have any thoughts about that—yeah, that's what sort of—I forget how I got on to that but—

Alex: You know, when I'm listening to you, you're very cautious about people not feeling pressed or like you don't want, like, to coerce.

Karen: To coerce, yeah.

Alex: And I'm not sure about what that word means—but I'm kind of getting the idea, but at the same time what I feel that if you, in the group, if you're given this feeling that you're totally free, you can come and leave any time, it gives the feeling nobody cares I am there. So a little bit of pressure is nice because in this way you feel that you're welcome here and you're needed and, like, you're valuable. But when you say—you can come and go anytime I just feel—

Karen: Like—

Alex: Does anyone care—[laughs]—about my presence?

Once again, I was surprised. I felt that I was alienating Jill by exerting too much pressure and I was alienating Alex by not exerting enough pressure. I was also confused. How was

each able to express affection and appreciation for the group with these (now no longer) latent frustrations? Just as the challenges of confrontation in conversation were productive for the group, perhaps the challenges of pressure were also productive for the group, acting as signals for membership and commitment. The pressures may also be exerted from beyond the scope of the group per se, extending into our other understandings (what is research and what is not), relationships (the reciprocal research participation between Jill and I), and communities (many members belonging to the same departmental research group).

Story 7: "We are kind of listening to people expressing themselves"

In our fifth session together, after each person had an opportunity to share their weekly report, we returned to the preparation of the proposal, to capitalize on a week-long extension that had been granted. We decided that this would be an ideal opportunity to include more of a discussion about identity from a theoretical perspective. Following Kelly's lead from last week, we decided that we should look at the work of Stuart Hall and identity representation.

We discussed several approaches to learning more about Hall. First, we thought about doing a communal web search, projected on the front screen. This was rejected, given the different paces of reading and diversity of interest. Next, given the collection of computers, it was proposed that we each take ten minutes to learn as much as possible. This was also rejected, given the lack of depth in this approach. Finally, we decided to project the Wikipedia entry for Stuart Hall and then negotiate the next page to visit. Upon reading the entry, Kelly was reminded of a text that she had read previously and we were

collectively dissatisfied with the lack of original text, so I used Google Scholar to search for Hall's writing.

Finding more references than original texts, we turned to Amazon.com, finding a book about identity edited by Hall that offered the *Search Inside* service. Fortunately, the Hall essay was the first chapter in the book, and was included as an excerpt. Our next challenge was how to collectively read the essay and I suggested that we take turns reading paragraph-by-paragraph. We proceeded in this fashion, listening to each other reading, pausing to discuss in between each paragraph, negotiating our understandings of what we were reading and how it tied into the work that we were proposing.

Partway through this process, Angela arrived. As she had not been very involved in the process and was only vaguely familiar with the project, we brought her up to speed about the project and included her in the round-robin reading. On the third page, we found a section that eloquently expressed what we were attempting to accomplish in our project. We decided that we had read enough to make some meaning of the theory and to incorporate it into the proposal.

Angela had brought videos to show the group and I turned the computer over to her. As she prepared the videos that she had found online by bringing them up in a web browser, Kelly, Alex, Jill and I talked about television, after Jill and I mentioned our current fixation with Charlie's Angels. Alex talked about her enthusiasm for Desperate Housewives and Grey's Anatomy. We discussed other popular shows and the ways in which we find them interesting or not, problematic or not. There was not too much overlap in the shows that we all watch, given the range of not owning a TV, to having one channel, to having a wide range of channels. After the group had perceived that

Angela was ready to show her videos, we quieted down and listened as she described the two videos.

Related Stories from Group Members

In numerous venues, I had witnessed what Marshall described as the experience of listening and being listened to as a graduate student:

Marshall: I think the one thing that I assumed is that everybody has got something to contribute, but not everybody assumes that, you know, especially when we show up to the seminar room and there's some heavy hitters coming in from out of town to tell us what it is and of course they want a conversation. But, you know, the question period is highly stylized, you know, only the most articulate, philosophically advanced questions are allowed. Nothing, usually—

Karen: Nothing tentative or partial or—?

Marshall: Well, it might be tentative and partial, but it's definitely qualified with like the people who are asking questions. Like if you ask a silly question or start a conversation, it's not really happening there. That may be okay, but I don't think it's that great, and I don't think it's certainly the sort of thing that shapes or helps to form growing learning, especially among grad students.

Something that I hoped might be achieved with this work was the establishment of a different space, one in which it would be possible to act and be heard in atypical, and perhaps unfamiliar, ways. While I appreciate the value of being inculcated into this part

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of the practice of becoming an academic, I wondered what alternatives existed to the posturing articulated by Marshall.

Kelly talked about how the group provided a new space for being listened to, allowing her to express her passions in a manner that was not reciprocated elsewhere:

> Kelly: It's really nice to have people who listen to—to what I think about films and videos. I just love videos, making, watching videos. And then when I talk about that stuff, well, some people in my department they won't listen, they're not interested in those technology stuff. But in this project people like it and I like it, so it's really good for me to be able to talk about that stuff, my favorite stuff. It makes my school life richer.

There was no expectation of expertise acting as a excluding factor:

> Kelly: I really love discussion we always have, because I—well, my knowledge of technology is very limited. But in that discussion, other people try to listen to me and then pay attention to what I'm saying.

Alex described how listening was an embedded part of our group communication:

> Alex: The group is very supportive and understanding. Everyone tries to understand what you say and kind of respond to it and when you have a discussion, listening to each other and get each other's views and share information, videos and experience. So this is positive experience sharing.

Alex went on to describe how our watching of video was bonding:

Alex: But I think the videoblogging and the videos, the purpose of it is to express yourself in some ways, right. So when we engage in that activity we are kind of listening to people expressing themselves. So I'm just listening on what people are trying to say.

Being listened to and listening not only served to reinforce the positive sense of contribution of each person, but also strengthened the connections between members of the group, reinforcing the group itself. The group was also strengthened through listening as it encouraged members to feel safe, which made them feel comfortable to contribute. As Kelly described:

Karen: What was it like to show your work to the group?

Kelly: I wasn't nervous or worried at all, because somehow I noticed that people were listening to me, so I thought, yeah, like no problem with showing my work.

Story 8: "If I had to be helping every person, it would be a lot of work"

Thursdays had suffered from low to no attendance, thanks to freak weather systems and illness. Earlier in the day, Tracey emailed me to confirm that the evening session would be taking place and that she would be attending. When she arrived, she announced that she had a new goal. She would be presenting at a conference and was expected to work with another person from a group of presenters. Their visions of how and what they should present were not harmonious, and she wanted to present to her partner a mock-up of her ideas for the presentation in an attempt to persuade him of the merits of her approach. In particular, she had seen a video on YouTube that she wanted to include in the presentation. So, our task was to figure out how to get a video off of

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YouTube and embed it into a PowerPoint presentation slide. The latter was a known quantity; I had assisted her during a previous course together, demonstrating how to put movies onto a slide. I had never done the former, as I've usually been able to find QuickTime movies.

We began with a division of labour: Tracey was dedicated to finding the video that she wanted and I did a quick web search to find out how other people were grabbing YouTube videos. I found numerous pages and resources for the task of identifying YouTube flash files and subsequently downloading them. I opted for two web-based tools and tested them on the address provided by Tracey. The first website determined the source file address from the YouTube page address and then offered the option of downloading the Flash file. The second website offered server-side Flash conversion to a variety of file formats. Given that Tracey is a PC user, we opted for an AVI format. However, after numerous attempts, it was apparent that this online converter was not generating PowerPoint-compatible movies. What would have been a simple task with a Mac, due to the integration of QuickTime across the tool chain, was proving to be surprising difficult with Windows-based tools.

I abandoned the web-based system in favour of a client-based application. I found a promising-looking application that was built for Windows and Tracey tried installing it on the lab machine, but the administrative restrictions prohibited a student user from installing new applications. Given my previous experiences in the lab, I had access to the instructor password in the lab for the instructor machine located at the front of the room. I moved to that machine and tried to work through the process. The web-based Flash downloading application worked smoothly. I was then able to download and install the

Windows-based converter application. It had an unconventional and consequently unintuitive, user interface, which I tinkered with while Tracey looked for additional videos to download and covert. Once I learned how to use it, I converted one video into AVI format and then transferred it to Tracey to incorporated into her slides. It finally worked, so the next step was to articulate the procedure to Tracey. First, I explained it verbally. Next, I demonstrated it, while Tracey wrote down the steps. Finally, I watched while she executed the steps and we discussed possible pitfalls. We ran over the allotted time, but we had accomplished the goal that she had outlined. The next day, she told me that she had been able to download and convert all of her videos, as well as incorporate those videos into her slide show.

Related Stories from Group Members

Of all twelve sessions over the six weeks, this session was most strongly focused on technology skills. This is unsurprising however, as I found that technology skills were most frequently explored in one-on-one settings. I answered numerous questions by email, both from regularly attending group members and individuals who had only seen the advertising and wanted some technology assistance. I also met with some group members outside of the Tuesday and Thursday sessions to provide additional help.

As I talked to members in the interviews, a recurring theme emerged from their stories and experiences of prior technology skills instruction: *there is no great way to teach technology skills in a group setting*. Although we were able to sustain an individual-oriented instruction approach in the Node, I was fascinated by the tensions that emerged in their tales of group technology instruction.

Many members asserted that guidance or direct instruction, followed by experimentation, was necessary when being introduced to a new technology, as Alex described:

Alex: I think the main idea with technologies when you are introduced to a new technology is someone shows you how to start, so how to open the application, how to connect the camera, and how it looks like, and what you can do. So when you see what other people can do with it, because sometimes you just have no ideas what you can do with that, so you need to see example and someone goes through steps and show how they did particular effects or, like, the repeating stuff or, like, how to zoom in and stuff like that and just give you tools.

This first step of introduction I think is very important. And then you need a lot of time to do it yourself and to go through your ideas and see how it looks like. But that first step of showing someone what is possible to do with that technology I think is very important. Because sometimes you look at someone's movie and you say, "Oh, this is awesome," but you have no idea how it was done and you don't get knowledge for yourself that you can do some similar stuff or other stuff using the same tricks and some technology and features. So I think that formal introduction is important.

The problem with this approach, based on their experiences, is that it is not scalable to larger groups. With a large group of people, frustration emerges as there is great variation in skills. It is frustrating for those who are able to work at the leading edge, who end up bored, and simultaneously frustrating for those who are unable to reach the level of instruction, who end up alienated by their dependency on additional support. As Marshall described of the lab environment:

> Marshall: Group learning of technology, I believe, is a hugely problematic area and most people just have torture of trying to learn any technology in a group. Because there's a computer lab, somebody who's supposed to know everything and supposed to have administrative control over every problem on every computer. And 60 percent of the students are doing okay. 20 to 30 percent are having some kind of problem, taking up 95 percent of instructional time. And five percent of people don't need any help.

While members acknowledged the benefit that a shift from an instructor-oriented approach to a peer-support model provides, some felt that it had not been implemented in a way that was particularly beneficial. In fact, providing support to or seeking support from peers was viewed as detrimental. Jill described how peer-support deprived self or others of time:

> Jill: I just tried to figure stuff out and then not bother people, like tried to be very minimal about asking for help and partly, I guess, because it was hard—like I didn't want to bug people because I knew they were really busy doing their assignments and stuff and

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even though it was made clear that we should ask for help, you know, if we needed it. But I knew very well that if I had to be helping every person who needed help, which was almost the whole class probably every time, it'd be a lot of work.

Angela related how peer-support deprived self or others of first-hand experience:

Angela: Well, I think there are good and bad things about that. I mean, the good thing is that you get to share ideas. And a lot of the times if you get stuck, there is someone else that may know it, or you can work together to get through it. But then the bad part, I guess, it's like "oh, but I want to do this" and it's like "okay, you're there, and I can't really try it out". So you don't really get to experience, like hands-on experience, as much, compared to when you do it all by yourself.

Story 9: "Before, I always just accepted everything"

I had been enthusiastically watching Jill's videoblog and wanted to share it with Alex and Kelly. With Jill's permission, I showed The Brown Project; Alex and Kelly had similar reactions to mine, admiring, as the work was visually entrancing, like being hypnotized. We peppered Jill with questions about motivation, as well as technical components. Why brown? Why those pictures? What was the music? Was the timing intentional? After the questions and discussions subsided, I then showed her most recent video, entitled Silence. Without preamble, we watched this video, which was also very well received. I showed one of my own videos, entitled Negate, which connected to our

project, as the video used some of the same Creative Commons footage that Jill and I had co-selected (Fig. 4.4).

Figure 4.4 Stills from The Brown Project, Silence, and Negate. Used by permission.

After we discussed the videos, Kelly asked how we should plan for our identity project. We agreed that we should make lists of resources (audio, video, still images) and send them to each other. Alex brought up the issue of not knowing where and how to find these resources, and she proposed that I demonstrate or highlight some sites on the projected screen. I referenced the group website and then focused on a few sites in particular: Creative Commons, Internet Archive, and Flickr. Showing this in any great depth was quite challenging, as my search process was nonlinear. I would think of a keyword and then another, finding something, finding nothing. At that point, I announced that I was defeated by this approach and offered to send direct links to everyone. This seemed to be an agreeable outcome and we talked about some deadlines. We were taking the next week off, as Jill and I were attending a conference, so we had two weeks in which to prepare our work. We decomposed our task into two parts. First, each person would make a list of links and send it to every other member of the group, by the following week. Second, each person would make a movie for every other member of the group using their chosen materials.

Related Stories from Group Members

In this session, we spent a considerable amount of time questioning how our videos had been and might be made, which was followed up in our conversations during the interviews. Jill, Kelly, Alex, and Tracey all discussed how being acquainted with processes of producing video incites them to question video. For Kelly, the questioning of video began with an acknowledgement that video is a unique form, embedded with its own facilities for meaning making:

> Kelly: Just from the possibility of videos, they have a possibility different from writings. You know, the visual, like sound stuff, you know, could have different roles than writings, language. Writing is good as well, I really love literature and stuff, but videos have different meanings.

Alex also acknowledged the different quality of video, but cautioned against the danger of its superficial truthfulness, potentially masking deceit through editing:

> Alex: I think video is not—you know, it is a little bit different than just verbal expression because it makes people believe more in it and it feels like more the truthful stuff, right.
>
> Karen: Because you see it with your own eyes?
>
> Alex: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. And nobody thinks that it can be edited. Usually people don't think about that.

We discussed ways of negotiating the intent of video, to avoid being duped or manipulated. Tracey described how being able to discuss the content of videos enabled her to comprehend video:

Tracey: So, it's really about content, right, and what those pictures, or like music that you make, make meanings for you, but sometimes it doesn't make any meaning to me. So, if you can explain and in that way we can share the ways that we design the content and the music.

Kelly extended this by describing how the act of producing video made her conscientious of viewer manipulation:

Kelly: After I made a video, I noticed how a producer's viewpoint affects the entire work. You know, like people who are in the video, also producer's view, is all in there. So, whenever I watch videos, I somehow look at them differently. Before I didn't think about those things. I just, probably just—I always just accepted everything. I didn't see them critically. I just, yeah, I was really passive.

Not only did making video affect the ways in which Jill watched video, but it affected her practices of listening and writing:

Jill: But then working with the video has such an incredible effect on the way I do other things, the way I listen to music.

Karen: Cool!

Jill: The way I write, the way I hear writing or hear text. Like I—it's like I'm training a visual perception that is bleeding over into other activities that I do.

Story 10: "You can see the relationship between people"

After our two week break, Alex, Kelly, Jill and I regrouped, refreshed and ready to show our identity pieces to each other. It had been a busy couple of weeks, with emails firing back and forth between the members about accessing particular resources, questions about downloading and converting, and problems with audio degradation. I normally provided the *what's new and exciting* prompt for everyone, but this week was quite remarkable as Alex jokingly started the round table discussion. I thought that this was great, as it was an indication of some social bonding, of routine.

After our updates, which included Angela and Tracey, who had been able to join us this week, we made a transition to showing our movies. We decided that we would show all of the movies about, rather than by, a particular person at once. As I transferred the videos to the computer, Alex, Jill, and Kelly described the work to Angela and Tracey. At this moment, Tracey excused herself from the group, indicating that she would be back soon, but to continue without her.

We started with videos for Kelly, who before seeing the videos requested that she be able to use them in her final project in a course about identity (Fig. 4.5). We all agreed, and I was very excited about the possibility of these videos having a life beyond this group, and our identity project. Alex, Jill, and I had focused on a theme of freedom, which was inspired by previous video work that Kelly had shared with us. We also discussed the challenges of wanting to avoid cultural stereotypes, while simultaneously honoring cultural background, which can perhaps be reduced to one of my favourite questions: *Does it take one to know one?*
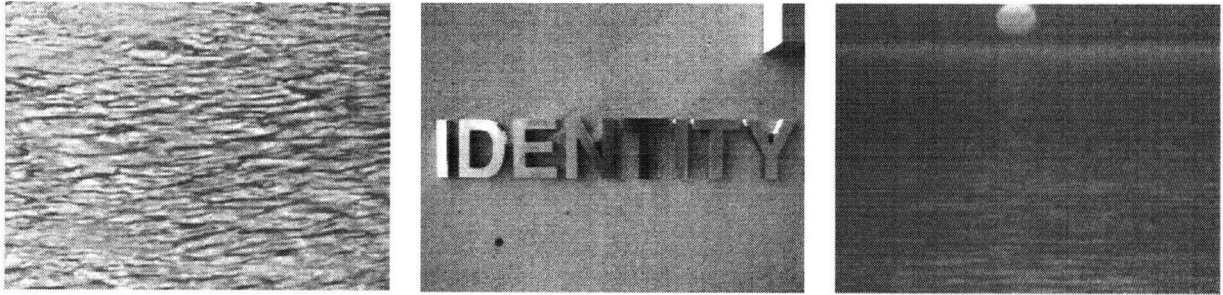
Figure 4.5 Stills from the videos for Kelly. Used by permission.

Next, we watched the videos for Alex (Fig. 4.6). Jill, Kelly, and I had all been surprised, granted to varying extents, by the intensely romantic quality to Alex's selections, particularly the focus on Latin dancing. Although Alex professed to being thrilled with our videos, she expressed surprise and frustration that we were not familiar with and had not recognized these romantic elements in her, which she felt were core elements that she displayed in a reasonably transparent fashion.
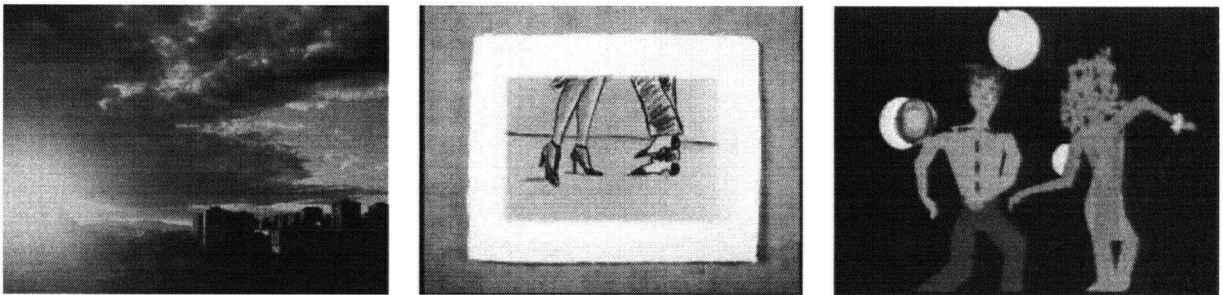
Figure 4.6 Stills from the videos for Alex. Used by permission.

At some point during our discussion about Alex and the videos, Tracey returned with two colleagues in tow. She explained that she thought they would enjoy seeing the work, so when we were transitioning to the videos for Jill, Kelly provided the visitors with a recapitulation of the project. I felt suddenly awkward having strangers watching us, but there was something gratifying about having an audience for all of our work.

The materials Jill had selected for her video focused on Expo 67, an event that had transpired before she was born, but with which she felt a significant connection (Fig.

4.7). Personally, it was with the creation of this video that I had struggled the most. The meaning of the images was not obvious to me, and I felt that I could not form a cohesive narrative. This provoked me into taking a slightly more radical approach with the images, which I felt was safe, given the connection I felt with Jill, Alex, and Kelly.

Figure 4.7 Stills from the videos for Jill. Used by permission.

Finally, it was my turn as the subject of the videos (Fig. 4.8). As with the others, it was amazing to see what materials had been selected or discarded, and how those materials were used to construct a representation of identity. Alex commented on how weird she found my selections, that she did not see the mechanical sounds and images to be at all like me. One of our visitors objected, saying that he understood those selections as my appreciation for industrial things.
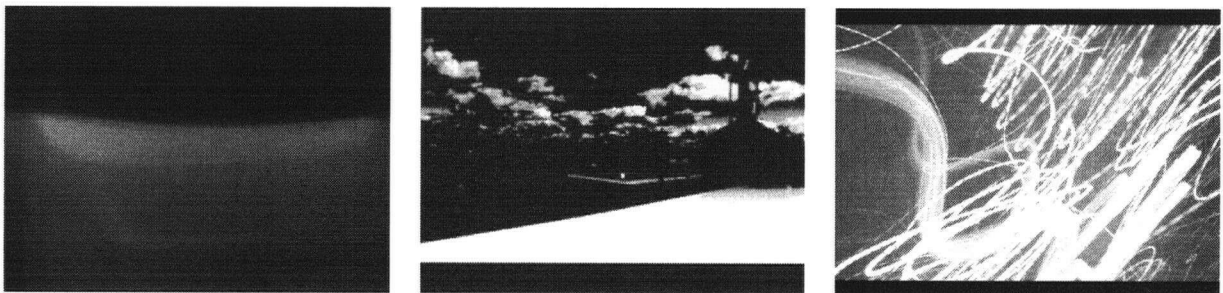
Figure 4.8 Stills from the videos for me. Used by permission.

Once all of the videos had been watched, we immediately wanted to watch them again, but decided to defer the rewatching until next week, where we could take the time to discuss each in more detail.

Related Stories from Group Members

I felt that this session represented the convergence of several things. Not only was it a significant stage in the development our project, it also seemed to be a significant moment in the development of our group. The importance of the project and the relationships of the group were issues that members and I discussed during the interviews. The project provided new understandings about technology:

> Kelly: I really enjoyed working together for this, the conference and the video project because it really inspires me. It's like—it's hard to explain, but this coming together for this project creates a new space for me, the new space that I've never lived in terms of technology and computer stuff. The new world stuff like that.

The project also provided new understandings about people:

> Alex: Creating video definitely gave me some new ideas of how to do stuff and it gave me more understanding about people, like our peers in the club. So it made me to know what people are interested in and what their lives are about. So I think it's very interesting and I appreciate the opportunity.

Alex went on to describe how that understanding about people acted as a catalyst for group connection:

> Alex: I think at, at first we came as separate entities, but at the end became more integral and we learned more about each other, even to the point to be so brave to make video about our identities, about which we have no idea! [laughs] But we can try because we can

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	see from those links probably gives us more idea how to see the person, because when I looked at your picture, I thought, "Interesting. This is Karen."
Karen:	I felt the same way. I felt—mine were pretty abstract but you had some very concrete instances of things and I was like, "Wow," I had no idea. You know, I had no idea, "Oh, that's so interesting." So it gave me a lot of interesting things to work with as I've been working on your video. So…
Alex:	So we're kind of learning about each other more.
Karen:	In a weird indirect way, right?
Alex:	Yeah, through technology and multimedia artifacts.

All of the regularly attending members sensed a connection that was characterized as "close", "intimate", "safe". This connection was also appreciated as a rare phenomenon we had achieved, as Jill described:

Jill:	Like I mean it's not that often that you can get a group of people to be harmonious, like to really be grooving, flowing, you know?
Karen:	Where do you think we're at now as a group?
Jill:	Totally flowing, yeah.

This closeness was also perceived by members who had not been able to participate in the project. Tracey saw the liberties that I had taken with Jill's selections:

Tracey:	So, each person from different perspectives to design the content. Like you designed Jill, it was like—
Karen:	Crazy.

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Tracey:	Crazy lady with the six legs picture, you know, and I thought oh, my god. Then you explained that.
Karen:	[laughs]
Tracey:	And, yeah, and also you can see like the relationship between people. If you were not that familiar, you can't design like that, right?
Karen:	Yeah, no.
Tracey:	Right? So, it's like, okay, I design somebody I'm not quite familiar. I will not design something like that. So, really, from the content or the way that you design you can see the relationship between the people. So, that's amazing.

But the closeness of the group was not entirely unproblematic. Jill struggled with the tension between the group's connection and the group as a research site:

Jill:	It's funny because we have like all of them, a multiple perception going on, "Well, this is research." So, there, you know, when we think of research, we think of beginnings and ends. But at the same time, we've developed a—well, the intimate group relationship. So those are just totally in conflict with each other.

While I felt that this discomfort was important to acknowledge, I was also concerned about the impact of the group's closeness on others. By its very nature, closeness creates insiders, a sense of belonging, which, in turn, implies outsiders. Our project became an important task for the group, and consequently shaped members' views of what it meant to belong or participate. Members who were less (or not at all) involved in the project

articulated a sense of peripherality, of divide between insiders and outsiders. Peripherality led to a sense of disempowerment and disappointment for Angela, who described how she felt about a scheduling conflict that impeded her regular attendance:

Angela: Obviously, not good, because I feel like I'm not—I'm not being part of the team. I'm letting my team down because I'm not here and that, no, like I'm inconsistent with all my participation and the work that I do. And also on my part, I just feel like I want to do more, but I can't because of other commitments.

For Tracey, although she also experienced a sense of disappointment, she simultaneously experienced fulfillment. Due to scheduling conflicts, she had sporadic attendance and was unable to fully participate in the group's project, which she experienced as distancing, but was able to attend this session that involved presenting and discussing project video excerpts, which she experienced as inspiring:

Tracey: You guys are here almost every session, then I join in for some time, then I left due to some other reason, and I miss so many sessions and suddenly I came back. And then it seems like, okay, you three or you four guys working together to do something, and Angela and I like an outsider for me, in that session, is like an outsider. So, we just listen to, but I felt amazing, okay? But because I didn't design anything then I really can't be real involved in the discussion and everything. So, that gives me a sense of, in that session I'm a little bit, stand back.

These stories traversed our group's shared history from our tentative beginnings through to the actualization of our identity project. In the final chapter, presented as the conclusion to the interview from the first chapter, I will analyze these group experiences through a framework of community of practice along the dimensions of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire, and conclude by suggesting areas for future work and addressing my experiences of the group as a researcher.

CHAPTER 5   ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Interviewer: When I read these stories from the Node, I don't see stories of failure. In what ways did you experience it as a failure? What can be learned from these stories?

Karen: I hoped, with this particular presentation of the stories, that a reader would be able to construct some sense of what it might have been like to participate with/in the Node. Now we need to think through how the stories connect to the literature review and methodology, and if/how this connection ultimately informs the research questions.

Two key themes in this work are experiences of: (1) videoblogging as new media practice, and (2) technology support as group learning. The interconnections between these two themes are articulated by placing them within a community of practice framework, elaborated through the dimensions of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Mutual engagement is correlated with the theme of group learning; it is who we are and how our community and relationships enable or disable participation. Joint enterprise is correlated with the theme of new media practice; it is what we do and how we define and negotiate our domain of interest, videoblogging. Shared repertoire is the means by which mutual engagement and joint enterprise are operationalized; it is how we, as a community, practice our domain, and, in the particular case of the Node, how we, as a collective, practice videoblogging. By connecting the ideas

regarding mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire as interpreted from the stories, I hope to articulate how our experiences of participation in a community of practice inform videoblogging and technology support.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's start with mutual engagement. What did you learn about the group or community?

Karen: In considering mutual engagement, we are interested not only in the relationships among members as an end point, but how we came together as individuals and participated in processes of becoming. In the interviews, more formally, and in group conversations, more casually, we talked about who we perceived ourselves as having been as technology users. In the first story, I shared the ways in which members had been participating (or not) in technology use, design, and instruction. Many members characterized their motivation for participation in technology use as interest or curiosity, which supported claims from the literature regarding the importance of teacher willingness.[7] This self-described internal motivation was sometimes supplemented by external motivation, such as professional responsibilities in teaching. Participation was hindered, as similarly described in the literature,[8] by both psychological conditions, such as feelings of being too old or intimidated by the rapidity

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[7] Bahr et al. (2004); Cook-Sather (2001).

[8] Cook-Sather (2001); de Castell et al. (2002); Dexter, Anderson, & Ronnkvist (2002); Glenn, (1997); Moody & Kindel (2004); Sandholtz & Reilly (2004).

of technological development, and structural conditions, such as inaccessible resources or levels of technological literacy.

We developed relationships with one another; we were becoming, as a group and as individuals. Our changing relationships and identities represented a complex negotiation, which was simultaneously empowering and disempowering, as Lave and Wenger argued.[9] For full participants of the group, the negotiation of belonging to the group required balancing a pressure environment. In the sixth story, I described how Jill's experiences of group pressure were unsettling and tension-inducing, given that she desired to participate fully, but questioned the extent of her agency in relation to the collective. Alex's experiences of group pressure expressed a reciprocal tension, in that too little pressure led her to question the significance of her contributions to the group. I found the influence of pressure on those who were effectively *old-timers*[10] in the group (e.g. Alex and Jill) unexpected. While I had read several arguments[11] regarding the marginalized status of newcomers to a practice, I had imagined old-timers' experiences of their role to be fairly unproblematic, and yet these interactions aptly demonstrated that their role was not all-powerful or all-controlling.

Despite the tensions regarding group pressure experienced by some of the full participants, there remained a sense of closeness among us,

[9] Lave & Wenger (1991, p. 36).
[10] Lave & Wenger (1991, p. 29).
[11] Brown & Duguid (1996); Hay (1996); Wenger (1998).

which was evident to both full and peripheral participants. Participation

was a process of not only becoming, but belonging, and those who were

not participating as fully were seen, not just by themselves, as possessing

status of peripheral belonging. I think the notions of belonging and

peripherality culminated in and are best exemplified by the tenth story. On

one side, we had regularly attending members who felt safe, close,

connected, and harmonious; on the other side, we had members who

witnessed and identified the closeness, but were not able to attain it due to,

as it happened, structural conditions such as timetable conflicts. This

otherness was empowering, when viewed as an ancillary role, in that

peripheral members described the benefit of seeing the group's

productions and the possibilities represented therein, but disempowering,

when viewed as a subaltern role, in that they were disappointed by the

inaccessibility of group relationships or videoblogging capacities. So, I

think this demonstrated the mutually reciprocal relationship between

belonging and participation that Wenger described when he wrote that

"being included in what matters is a requirement for being engaged in a

community's practice, just as engagement is what defines belonging".[12]

Interviewer: So, what mattered to the group? What did you learn about the domain or

joint enterprise?

Karen: Although we had an overall shared vision of our domain, videoblogging,

each person arrived with different expectations for the purposes and nature

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[12] Wenger (1998, p. 74).

of our joint enterprise. In the second story, I described how people had a common motivation for joining, that of learning more about technology. Underlying reasons for this common motivation, however, varied along a spectrum from individual to societal benefit and I think that these differences, in turn, influenced what people expected from the group. Expectations varied along two dimensions: (1) the unit of focus continuum (individual-coordinated to collective-coordinated action) and (2) the content of focus continuum (new media practice to new media theory). While the majority of members were oriented towards *collective-coordinated* new media *practice*, the practical limitations of learning technology in a group, both as experienced by members and as documented in the literature,[13] shifted our focus from a skills-oriented to a discussion-oriented approach.

These challenges, in turn, encouraged us to adopt mutually familiar entry-points to our studies of new media, and we focused much of our attention on video, as it was a shared interest and existing capacity for most members. Returning to McLuhan's notion of ground,[14] we can see that video, although omnipresent, did not imply a lack of challenge. As noted in the third story, the members had experienced challenges in their prior efforts to participate in video production; there were structural challenges, such as the inaccessibility of hardware or software, and psychological challenges, such as feeling a lack of authority in video

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[13] Dexter, Anderson, & Ronnkvist (2002); Gopalakrishnan (2006).
[14] McLuhan, Hutchon, and McLuhan (1977).

production. Aside from challenges to participation, members argued that video itself was somewhat problematic, either for contributing to a degraded culture or for contributing to facile manipulation of unaware viewers (further underscoring the necessity of multiliteracy),[15] as related in the third and ninth stories. Despite the challenges, members described how video production was a significant act of learning. An individual does not exclusively learn the details of a particular video editing package; engaging in video production is a practice of multiliteracies. Members described their experiences of multiliteracies, how new faculties for questioning video were cultivated, and existing facilities, such as reading and writing, were extended.

Blogs, however, were seen as thoroughly problematic spaces, when discussed in interviews. Although we did not devote a significant amount of time to blogs in the sessions, almost all members had experiences looking at or using blogs, with the types of blogs consumed or created being predominantly, returning to Krishnamurthy's typology,[16] individual-personal. Problems with these blogs were numerous, as I described in the fifth story. Members shared their concerns regarding insufficient privacy, which is dangerous in that while rebuttals to blogs may be diffused by the nature of online communication,[17] blogging may nonetheless result in professional sanctions. Members also argued that

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[15] Adams (2005); Braden (1999); Kukulska-Hulma et al. (2004); New London Group (1996).

[16] Herring et al. (2004).

[17] Gumbrecht (2004); Nardi, Schiano, & Gumbrecht (2004).

many blogs suffer from excessive superficiality, which is frustrating in that boring content[18] may result in time wasted. Although blogs have an inherent technological capacity for recording and maintaining communication,[19] this capacity was experienced as insufficient for community building, as communication is more than mere broadcasting and necessitates the cultivation of capacities and practices in individuals and/or their groups.

Interviewer: You've described the relationships and interests of the group, but how did those relationships and interests lead to the development of routines and resources, to the development of a shared repertoire?

Karen: As I mentioned earlier, members came with different expectations and experiences of learning technology with a group. In the eighth story, I related members' stories of the tensions between instruction and practice, instructor-support and peer-support, in-person and online environments. There were very few success stories of group technology learning, which consequently influenced the development of our repertoire. Rather than focusing on the minutiae of technology use in Tuesday sessions, we deferred those concerns to Thursday drop-in sessions, printed and online resource guides, email, phone, and one-on-one meetings. Tuesdays were used for broad discussion and analysis, and we relied on individually-created videos and group lunches as concrete resources. In addition to these, our video identity project acted not only as an instantiation of our

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[18] Cohen (2006).
[19] Chaney (2005); Herring et al. (2004).

joint enterprise, but as a resource. As I described in the tenth story, our project gave those who participated practice and skills, those who did not participate in production the possibilities of the practice and skills, and gave both groups the opportunity to learn more about each other and establish connections or relationships. Thus, for all members, the project reinforced both mutual engagement and joint enterprise.

These concrete practices were augmented by more nuanced, intangible practices. Returning to notions of participation as voice[20], communication[21] and communicative action[22], and the centrality of telling stories in both communities of practice and action research, members' frequently emphasized the importance of sharing and listening as fundamental resources for the group. In the fourth story, I described how our acts of sharing video, as with the project, served as identity introduction and negotiation points. It is through this sharing that we formed our initial and tentative understandings of each other as interrelated entities within the group. As I detailed in the seventh story, it was in this space of sharing that we were increasingly enabled to listen and be listened to, not only reinforcing the connections within the group, but simultaneously articulating our group as an alternative, differentiated space from those to which we normally have access.

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[20] Maguire (2006).

[21] Greenwood & Levin (1998); Herr & Anderson (2005).

[22] Kemmis & McTaggart (2005).

As you may have inferred at this point, mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire aren't necessarily mutually exclusive. Wenger presented a diagram[23] of these three dimensions: each dimension was represented by a discrete oval and there was a line between each pair of ovals. As I worked through these dimensions and how they are interrelated, I became increasingly dissatisfied with this depiction, as I felt that the dimensions' interdependence was not sufficiently represented. I might tentatively reconceptualize the diagram for the interactions in our group as:

[Sketches a diagram on the whiteboard (Fig. 5.1)]
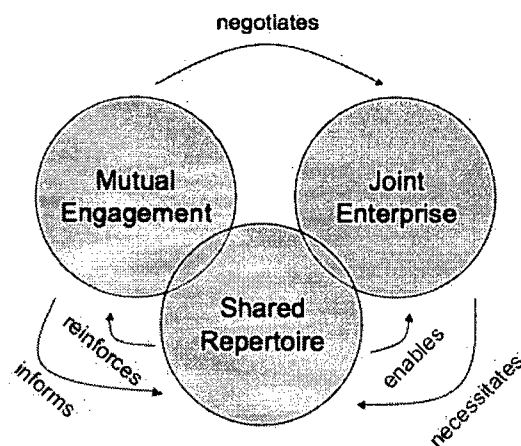
Figure 5.1 The whiteboard sketch.

Karen: I wanted a way to demonstrate how the elements are mutually reinforcing, leading to amplification or attenuation of the community of practice. Acting with and through our shared repertoire reinforced experiences of mutual engagement, which reciprocally informed the repertoire that enabled our joint enterprise. I found that changes reported by members

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[23] Wenger (1998, p. 73).

were frequently expressed across the dimensions, rather than being restricted to any single dimension.

Interviewer: What specifically did the members describe as change?

Karen: Tracey talked about enabling skills she acquired, now knowing how to download, convert, and edit existing videos, in order to more succinctly convey meaning through video in research and teaching presentations. Others mentioned new resources to which they had been introduced and were subsequently using, such as Jill to Creative Commons, and Alex and Kelly to YouTube. But it was more than just introduction to new skills and resources as change. It's about living new spaces—

Kelly: It's like—it's hard to explain, but this coming together for this project creates a new space for me, the new space that I've never lived in terms of technology and computer stuff. The new world stuff like that.

Karen: —and thinking about video differently—

Alex: I did not start creating our identity movies yet, but I think that those examples, which you have shown, for example, Jill's one where it's just a flow of pictures and sounds and stuff was really creative. [laughs] So it gives me some ideas that movie does not always have to be verbal like, giving some story ... it just can be expressive movie where you just express emotions or some feelings. It's just like art where you don't have to say with words or something. So this is maybe—changing stuff, right, creating video definitely gave me some new ideas of how to do stuff—

Karen: —and becoming a full participant in the enterprise or domain of videoblogging.

Jill: Okay, well, okay because this is what it has been all about, I mean for me. Like this is where—this is the central thing of it all. Like, yeah, my god, okay, my whole world has changed. It's true! Okay, oh, where do I start? Okay, so let's make this clear. I don't blog as in text blog … I'm a videoblogger … and so that's a huge change because the whole blogging thing was just—it didn't work for me. But then when I realized, "Wait, I can say something." Like I am really—like I'm saying things in those videos.

Interviewer: So the members experienced change through participation in the community, but what will happen to the community now that the research is over?

Karen: The original duration of the research was scheduled for six weeks. Of course, I hoped that it would extend past that, and it did, for a total of eighteen weeks. We decided to end the weekly meetings because one member was going away for a month, and the others required uninterrupted work time, so it seemed like an ideal opportunity to break. We are working on a conference paper and the conference is in October, but I imagine that we won't be congregating on a regular basis again because I will be leaving the University. All communities meet an end, either naturally or abruptly, but in some ways I feel that this community's end is somewhat premature. I would love to continue this work and look at

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the group longitudinally. Would we use video and blogs in different ways? Would we get more involved in blogs? Would we make a movie? Would we recruit new people to join the group?

Interviewer: What about changes and future directions beyond the group?

Karen: Locally, in the context of our department and faculty, I believe that we can respond to the disconnect between new media expectations and new media experiences. Given current budget shortfalls, I think that grassroots, volunteer-based, participant-driven structures like the Node are ideal. Communities of practice, with their enthusiasm-powered ethos and minimal resource requirements, represent a sustainable alternative to institutionalized support. I found that although we readily developed internal resources (such as stories and routines), external resources (such as hardware) were challenging to access. Future work could investigate how communities can be sustained locally, how interconnections between communities can be cultivated, and how institutional technology gate-keeping can be mitigated.

But more than a need for *technology* support, I believe that this work has demonstrated a need for *graduate student* support. Although I was initially surprised by the significant number of graduate students who either participated in the group or expressed interest in the group, this eventually made sense, given their unique status with respect to both technology and belonging. Unlike faculty and sessionals, who are able to employ undergrads or grads for technology support, and unlike

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undergraduates, who have access to peer technology coaches and course resources for technology support, graduate students in our department occupy an in-between space, not necessarily capable of self-support and not explicitly supported. But beyond technology support, graduate students also occupy a unique space in terms of collaboration and community. While it is unusual for other members of the Department to have extended periods of autonomous isolation, this is not unusual for graduate students after course work is completed. Given these conditions, I believe that graduate students should be encouraged to assemble and cultivate their capacities for expression and communication.

Interviewer: What about beyond the Department or Faculty?

Karen: Group support as seen through the lens of communities of practice revealed the marginalized status of peripheral members. I think we need to imagine alternative forms of peripheral status, structures and modes in communities of practice, so that enculturation can be transfigured from disempowerment and inculcation. A reconceptualization of peripherality might also address tensions that exist between the desire to maintain a practice as it is and the desire to expand and evolve a community through recruitment.[24]

As for videoblogging, I think that there are many questions that remain to be addressed in future work. In what other ways can video/blogs be made accessible? While in-person group support, such as our work

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[24] Hay (1996).

here, has demonstrated a capacity to help with technology learning, it would be interesting to learn how other modes, such as online tutorials, support entry to video/blogging. To what extent and in what ways do video and blogging influence people's lives as a ground? I would argue that video and blogging have invaded North American society (and beyond) and I would be curious to compare CMC with other technologies (such as television and radio), in terms of their perceived impact on daily life. To what extent are individuals experiencing meaningful community building via video/blogs? The presence of community building technology does not imply community, as our group members described their reticence about communicating or engaging with strangers online, and it would be interesting to ask what conditions might allay this reluctance with respect to video/blogs. Finally, how do we cultivate multiliteracy? My previous experiences with critical media literacy have focused on analyzing existing artifacts. For example, on practicum, I saw students watch commercials and then analyze the ways in which the commercials were manipulative. Several members commented on the effectiveness of video practice in heightening video/media awareness, and I wonder how a production-oriented approach of constructing video might compare to a consumption-oriented approach of deconstructing existing video.

Interviewer: Clearly, there's more work to be done in these areas. But I feel that you still haven't really explained why you experienced the Node as a failure.

Karen: It wasn't that the Node was a failure—I felt that we accomplished a lot and I love our group. It's more that I felt I failed the group, maybe that my research, or my action research methodology, failed the group.

When I think back to the way I initially conceptualized the work, I was really focused on helping—and I use that word somewhat liberally here—teacher educators with their reported lack of technology support. When that particular demographic in the Department didn't respond to the invitations to join the Node, I was very disappointed and confused. These emotions of disappointment and confusion distorted my perspective when the group was initially starting up, and I genuinely felt as though I had failed. I had failed to attract what I had imagined as the *right* or *critical* group for the work.

But what I actually failed to notice was that I was effectively an outsider to the teacher educator group of faculty members and sessionals. Practically speaking, I was not the ideal person to be creating a collective for these people, despite the appeal of working with sessionals and faculty, where my roles as person-who-provides-technology-support and person-who-collects-data would be crisply defined. Moreover, under those circumstances, I am not sure that the Node could have ever become what it did.

I also failed to notice the issues in my *own* group—the graduate students—a group to which I belonged as an insider. I was extremely focused on the technology support and skills development component, and

I hadn't considered that to be a sufficient catalyst for graduate student participation. Graduate students were, after all, some of the most technology-savvy members of the Department—what would I have to offer them as buy-in for participating in the research? Consequently, at some point in the preparations, I think that I had stopped imagining it as a genuinely alternative, collaborative space, where we could congregate and discuss new media. So, I think that I was my own victim, a victim of my own unconsciously cultivated presuppositions about the different groups in the Department.

Interviewer: But wasn't the participatory action research component part of the buy-in?

Karen: This was another site for me to question failure: was it or was it not PAR? The work emerged from a documented thematic concern within the Department, so I felt that this respected PAR traditions. But there was also work that was done autonomously, without the collective, as it did not yet exist: I wrote the proposal, I submitted the ethics review, I chose the times, dates, and rooms, and I even selected the catering.

When it came time to work with the group members, I was unduly preoccupied with concerns about excessively burdening the participants. Again, I think I was a victim of my presuppositions—I assumed that graduate students wouldn't necessarily be interested in more research work and that I should focus on the new media practices themselves, rather than on research of new media practices. This became a confusing point for the members, I think, and this came out in the interviews. They

were trying to determine what the research *actually was*. I felt that the interviews were really productive sites for clarifying some of the questions regarding the research, although I should have addressed them much earlier than six weeks into our time together.

But as I read and reread the communities of practice and participatory action research literature, I started to reconceptualize my ideas about participation. It became less of an issue of how participants were necessarily excluded from the analysis of interview data, and I focused instead on gauging the extent to which individuals felt that they had a voice and could influence the outcomes of the group. After all, I began this process aware that there were practical constraints on the participation of Node members in the research. I would be writing the thesis on my own, after all. But we found other ways to collaborate on research, such as our work on the conference paper and presentation, something over which we had equal ownership. I also wrote a short paper for another conference and invited the core group members to have their names listed as co-authors and to co-present at the conference. I felt that this was an important acknowledgement of our co-construction, as there would be no work about which to write without all of our contributions. Although this action research might not have achieved all of the quality criteria for good action research, I know that some had been achieved, when one group member remarked after a session that she "didn't know

research could be something like this, something that we create together and that is enjoyable".

Interviewer: Is there anything else you think I should know to understand this better?

Karen: You were asking me earlier about my goals for establishing the Node. When I was re-reading my thesis proposal, at the very end of the proposal, I wrote about how the central project of education should be the elimination of intimidation, the elimination of a feeling that Jameson[25] articulated as:

> You see them doing it, and it doesn't look very complicated, but even with the best will in the world you don't quite get it, you don't see why people would want to do things like that, let alone trust yourself to form an idea of what it is they actually do.

When I re-read this passage and my optimistic projections that Node101 could redress this sentiment, I couldn't help but cringe at the romanticism, the hopeless idealism, of videoblogging somehow saving the world. Once the momentary embarrassment subsided, I realized that I am sincerely committed to this idea. Maybe it's less about new media, and more about participating. So I'll end here in a similar way. You see them participating, and it doesn't look very complicated, and with the best support and encouragement in the world you just get it, you see why people would want to express themselves, and you trust yourself to form an idea of what great collective participation and you as a member might actually do.

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[25] Jameson (1991, p. 315).

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APPENDIX II WEEKLY RESOURCES

Week 1   Discussions
      Introductions
      What is videoblogging?
      What is copyright?
   Videos, Blogs, Videoblogs, & Beyond
      The Jetset Show – What is videoblogging?
      Michael Verdi – Vlog anarchy
      Pouring Down – theory.practice
      Ebb and Flow – The great turning
      Sustainable Route – BRING Recycling
      Ryanne Hodson – Tech conferences: Where are the women?
      BShoot – Every day of my life
      Ze Frank – Place
      Mefeedia
      Node101::DEPT blog

Week 2   Discussions
      What is Creative Commons?
      What could we do collectively for a conference or journal?
   Videos, Blogs, Videoblogs, & Beyond
      5points – Free Generica
      Jill – People of this world
      Creative Commons

Week 3   Discussions
      What could we submit to a conference?
      How are offline/online interactions dangerous?
   Videos, Blogs, Videoblogs, & Beyond
      Creative Commons
      Google Images
      Flickr
      Wikipedia
      MySpace
      CyWorld
      Second Life
      First Life
      Ryanne Hodson, I Holla'ed Back
      Kelly – Identity

Week 4   Discussions

        What project could we undertake to document for the conference?

    Videos, Blogs, Videoblogs, & Beyond

        YouTube

        Modern Feminist – Take anything you want

        Kiri Davis – A girl like me

Week 5   Discussions

        What is identity?

    Videos, Blogs, Videoblogs, & Beyond

        Wikipedia

        Google Scholar

        Amazon.com

        Blunty3000 – Circle circle dot dot

        Global – Making of Genesis

Week 6   Discussions

        How will we create the videos for our project?

    Videos, Blogs, Videoblogs, & Beyond

        100 second film festival

        Lives in focus: A lens on life in the margins

        Rocketboom – A New York fairy tale

        Jill – The brown project

        Jill – Silence

        Karen – Negate

        Creative Commons

        Internet Archive

        Flickr

        ccMixter

APPENDIX III CODES

Code	# of Resp.	# of Items	In Story
technology	0	0	-
digital technologies	0	0	-
factors influencing participation	0	0	1,3
barriers to participation	6	24	1, 3
feelings	3	3	1,3
groups	5	5	1,3
catalysts for participation	7	22	1
feelings	2	2	1
groups	4	11	1
learning experiences	0	0	1
formal learning environments	0	0	1
as learner	8	26	1
as teacher	6	9	1
informal learning environments	0	0	1
as learner	6	18	1
new media	0	0	-
blogs	0	0	5
factors influencing participation	0	0	5
barriers to participation	4	7	5
qualities	6	11	5
catalysts for participation	4	5	5
qualities	6	12	5
stories	0	0	5
creating blogs	6	14	5
learning blogs	0	0	5
formal learning environments	5	5	5
informal learning environments	5	8	5
online communications	3	7	5
visiting blogs	7	13	5
video	0	0	3,8
factors influencing participation	0	0	3,8
barriers to participation	8	14	3,8
qualities	3	5	3,8
catalysts for participation	6	15	3,8
media literacy	4	6	3,6,8
qualities	6	14	3,6,8
stories	0	0	3,8
creating video	8	25	3,8
learning video	0	0	3,8
formal learning environments	5	9	3,8
informal learning environments	3	3	3,8
watching video	6	11	3,8

node	0	0	-
before joining	0	0	2
expectations before joining	8	12	2
factors influencing participation	0	0	2
barriers to participation	2	5	2
catalysts for participation	0	0	2
learning	0	0	2
individual's expertise	2	3	2
particular purpose	4	4	2
technical	7	14	2
location, scheduling	6	6	2
social	8	14	2
after joining	0	0	-
changes	0	0	11
changes in individual	2	5	11
changes in other learning	2	2	11
changes in using technology	1	1	11
changes in using video	5	8	11
changes in using videoblogs	2	2	11
future work	0	0	11
desired tech abilities	4	4	11
node repertoires	6	9	11
participation	0	0	-
participation, drop-in	2	5	4
participation, email	2	2	-
participation, meetings	0	0	-
feelings	0	0	-
comfort	4	9	9
commitment	1	5	6
connection	5	17	10
enjoyment	3	5	10
gender	1	2	5
groups	2	2	10
listening	2	3	7
outsider	4	6	10
pressure	2	7	6
research	1	2	6
schedule conflict	2	9	10
shared interests	3	4	4
support	5	7	8
modes of participating	0	0	-
discussions	5	17	4,7,9
eating	4	4	2,4
project	5	13	6,7
sharing video	6	8	4
socializing	3	5	2

APPENDIX IV INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. Prior Experiences

1. How would you describe your technology background?
   a. When did you start using computers and other digital technologies?
   b. What, if any, education have you received for using and creating digital technologies?

2. How have you used new media technologies in your practices?
   a. What, if any, blogs do you visit? For what purpose(s) (personal/teaching/research) do you visit them?
   b. What, if any, online videos or video sites do you watch or visit? For what purpose(s) (personal/teaching/research) do you watch or visit them?

3. How have you created new media content in your practices?
   a. What, if any, blogs have you created or contributed to? For what purpose(s) (personal/teaching/research) did you contribute?
   b. What, if any, online videos or video sites have you created or contributed to? For what purpose(s) (personal/teaching/research) did you contribute?

4. How were you introduced to the new media technologies that you use?
   a. What formal or informal introductions to blogs have you experienced?
   b. What formal or informal introductions to video have you experienced?

5. How have you learned to use these new media technologies?
   a. What experiences have you had with group learning of video or blogs?
   b. Have you ever wanted to create video or blog content, but were unable to? Could you tell me about such an occasion?

B. Node Experiences

1. What factors or experiences prompted you to join the Node?
   a. What, if anything, about the technical/videoblogging aspect prompted you to join?
   b. What, if anything, about the social/collective aspect prompted you to join?
   c. What, if anything, about the context/location prompted you to join?

2. What goals do/did you hope to achieve by participating with the Node?
   a. What personal goals do you hope to achieve?
   b. What professional goals do you hope to achieve?

3. How have you participated with the Node?
    a. How have you participated in meetings?
    b. How have you participated in open lab time?
    c. How have you participated by electronic means (e.g. via personal or list e-mail)?

4. What experiences have you had related to video for research/teaching/personal use through your participation with the Node?
    a. In what ways, if any, have you experienced a change in your practices related to video?
    b. What practices are you engaged in related to watching video?
    c. What practices are you engaged in related to creating video?
    d. What other practices are you engaged in related to video?

5. What experiences have you had related to blogs for research/teaching/personal use through your participation with the Node?
    a. In what ways, if any, have you experienced a change in your practices related to blogs?
    b. What practices are you engaged in related to visiting blogs?
    c. What practices are you engaged in related to creating blogs and/or blog content?
    d. What other practices are you engaged in related to blogs?

6. Can you tell me about ways in which you've experienced the Node? (Where applicable)
    a. How have you experienced meetings?
    b. How have you experienced open lab time?
    c. How have you experienced electronics means (e.g. e-mail, blogs, video)?
    d. How have you experienced group members?
    e. How else have you experienced the Node?
    f. How have you experienced a lack of support or discouraging influences?
    g. How have your experiences (either positive, negative, or neutral) significantly differed from your expectations?

7. Concluding questions
    a. Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?
    b. Is there anything else you think I should know to understand this better?
    c. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

APPENDIX V VIDEOBLOGGING GUIDE

node101::dept videoblogging resources

The purpose of this document is to quickly make you familiar with many of the activities that are associated with videoblogging and resources to support learning the activities. Let's start with an overview of the process and then delve into the details.

The Big Picture

Plan
> Step 1: Watching videoblogs
> Step 2: Subscribing to feeds

Other videoblogs are amazing resources for inspiration and for video footage, so find videoblogs that you're interested in and see what people are doing. By subscribing to feeds using a news reader, you can have your favourite blog posts delivered to you instead of going to each site to see if it has been updated.

Blog
> Step 3: Getting a blog
> Step 4: Customizing your blog
> Step 5: Adding content to your blog

Blogs make web publishing really painless and beautiful. Not only is it easy for you to add content to the web, it's easy for other people to interact with your site through searching and commenting features.

Video
> Step 6: Getting material
> Step 7: Editing video
> Step 8: Exporting the final product

Whether you want to capture your own video or mash-up existing footage, Macs and PCs come with video editing software packages that help you create your video vision.

Video + Blog = Videoblog
> Step 9: Capturing a screenshot
> Step 10: Uploading video
> Step 1 1: Posting video to your blog

Finally, you take your video and post it to your blog. Et voilà! It's that easy to create your very own videoblog. Now let's look at each of the steps a bit more closely...

The Details

In this section, we'll take a look at each of the steps in a bit more detail, with particular attention to resources for step-by-step instruction.

Plan

Step 1: Watching videoblogs

Before we can watch videoblogs, we need to be able to find them. There are several programs and directories that make it easy to find videoblogs suited to your interests.

FireAnt (http://fireant.tv/) is a free program that you can download for Windows or Mac OS X. This multi-talented application allows you to access a huge directory of videoblogs, from which you can add channels and watch content.

Mefeedia (http://mefeedia.com/) is a web-based videoblog directory that allows you to find videoblogs based on a particular place, topic, language, event, or person/group.

Technorati (http://technorati.com/) is another web-based directory, but includes all blogs, not just videoblogs. It keeps up-to-the-second information about the blogosphere and you have access to this information through tag-driven searches, as well as regularly compiled popular-item lists.

Step 2: Subscribing to feeds

Danger: blogs are addictive! You start reading and watching one, then another, and so on. Before you know it, you're checking an enormous collection of sites online, trying to figure out if there's any new content available. Fortunately, two technologies come to the rescue, saving you time and frustration: RSS feeds and aggregators. A feed packages the content of a website in a machine-readable format and aggregators (also known as news readers) collect (or aggregate) feeds. The net result is that instead of you manually checking all of the sites, the aggregator automatically checks the sites via their feeds and lets you know what new content is available.

Bloglines (http://www.bloglines.com/) is a free, web-based aggregator that allows you to keep track of your favourite sites. In the example below, my aggregator is tracking three sites: 23 unread items from Bloglines news, 200 unread items from CBC Canada news, and 11 unread items from a TSED class.
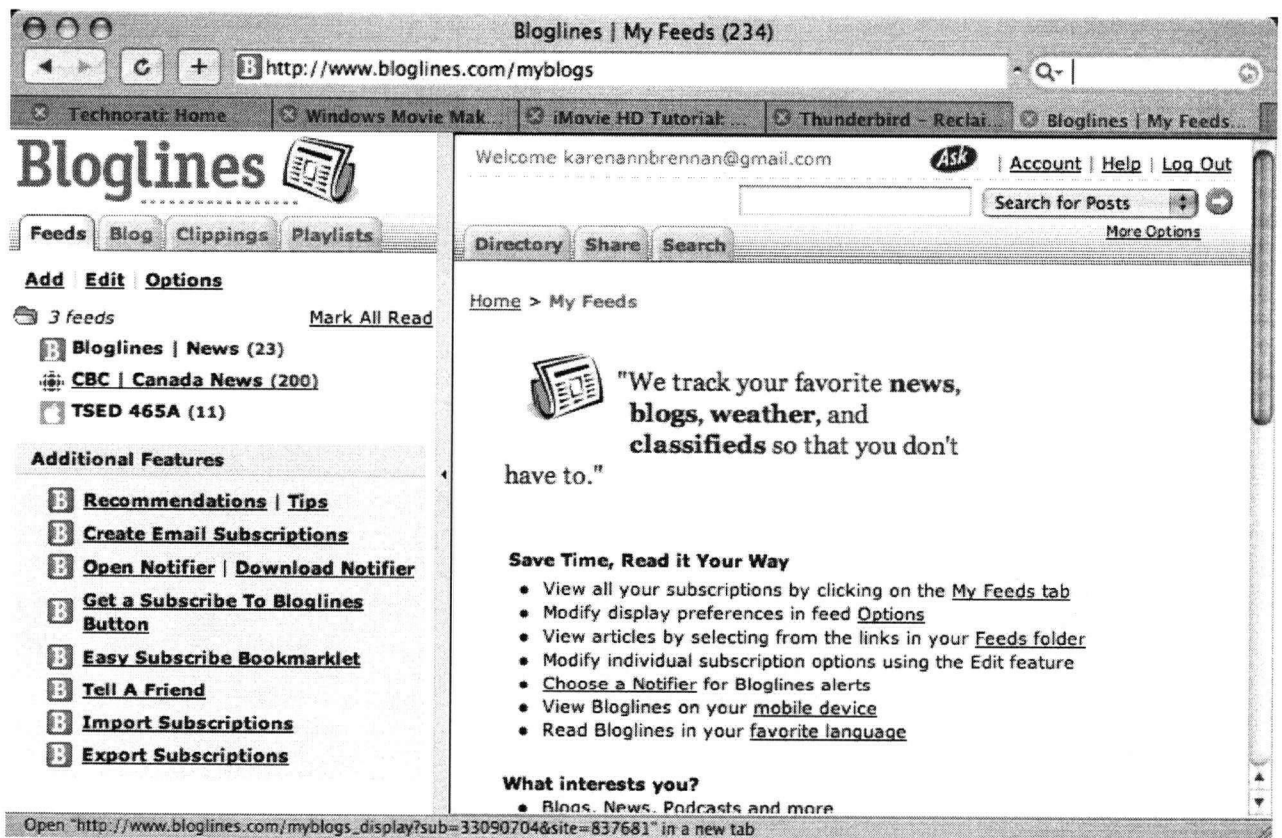
Thunderbird (http://www.mozilla.com/thunderbird/) is a free news reader program for Mac and PC, which gives you a lot of control over how your news is displayed and organized.

Blog

Step 3: Getting a blog

The word blog has been thrown around a lot, without being defined! From the Wikipedia blog entry, we find that "a blog is a user-generated website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order". But it's so much more! Blogging packages allow you to identify or code your content using tags, search your site, and interact with users via comments.

WordPress (http://wordpress.org/) is an open source blogging package that we have access to on the Department servers. If you want a blog set up, let Karen know. All Node101 members have access to the server for blog storage. Your fledgling DEPT blog will look like:

Blogger (http://www.blogger.com/) is another great, free, blog service, if you don't want your material on the DEPT servers. Although slightly less powerful and feature-rich than WordPress, Blogger is a great way to start blogging for those unfamiliar with the process.

The rest of the examples in this document will focus on WordPress, but the behaviour is reasonably similar.

Step 4: Customizing your blog

You don't want your blog to look like everyone else's blog, do you? Once you have created your blog, you have several ways of changing the appearance of your blog. Since blogs separate content from appearance, you can change the design of your blog without worrying about losing any content.

Themes are an easy and quick way to change the design of your blog. About thirty different themes are included in the DEPT-based WordPress blogs, and can be switched under the *Presentation* tab.

If you don't find anything in the collection of themes that you like, more themes are available through the WordPress Theme Viewer (http://themes.wordpress.net/). If you find something close, the themes can be modified by editing the PHP and CSS code.

Step 5: Adding content to your blog

Once you're satisfied with the way your blog looks, it's time to add some content! Most blogs consist mainly of posts, which are usually displayed chronologically on the main page. WordPress also makes use of pages, which are different from posts. While posts are usually listed chronologically on the main page of the blog, pages are usually listed hierarchically and are accessed via links. Pages are most commonly used to include supplementary material that relates to the blog.

Pages and posts can contain links to additional content, such as documents, images, sounds, or videos. In order to link to content files, the content must be available on the Internet. If the content is not already available on another website, then you will need to upload the content yourself.

For step-by-step instruction, check out:

How to write a page
How to write a post
How to upload content

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Video

Step 6: Getting material

Putting the blog aside for a moment, let's think about making video. How are we going to get our moving images? We can build videos from digital video clips or sequences of digital still images.

If you don't have access to your own video equipment, the **New Media Support Group** has equipment available to borrow, including digital video and digital still cameras.

Alternatively, if you don't want to shoot your own material, you can borrow flexibly-copyrighted material and remix the material to create your very own masterpiece from recycled parts. **Creative Commons** (http://search.creativecommons.org/) allows you to search for video, images, and audio that are available for remixing.

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Step 7: Editing video

Once you have your video material on a computer, you're ready to edit. Macs and Windows machines come with video editing tools built-in: iMovie for Macs and Movie Maker for Windows. Both programs operate in a similar fashion. First, you trim your captured video clips to get rid of unnecessary material. Then, you build up a preliminary movie from these edited clips by arranging them temporally. Finally, you add polish to the movie by adding video effects (what does your movie look like in black and white?), transitions between clips (how dramatic is a fade out?), audio (what mood music can you add to augment the scene?), and titles (what's a video without credits?).
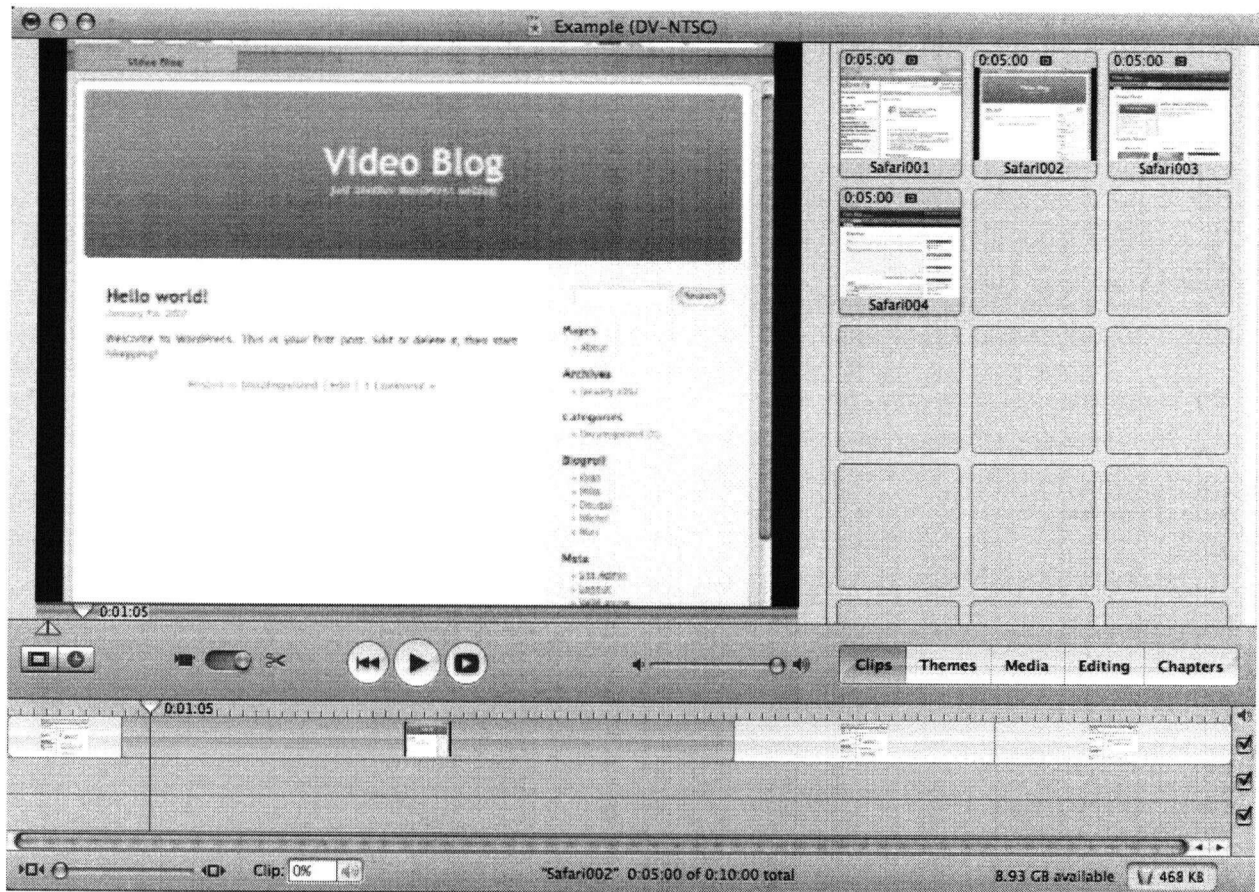
For step-by-step instruction, check out:

iMovie (http://www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/imovie/)

**Movie Maker** (http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/moviemaker/)

Step 8: Exporting the final product

The file that contains your editing is not the file that you'll put online. There's an additional step of *exporting* your movie that is required.

In **iMovie**, you'll generate a final movie by exporting your work to QuickTime format.
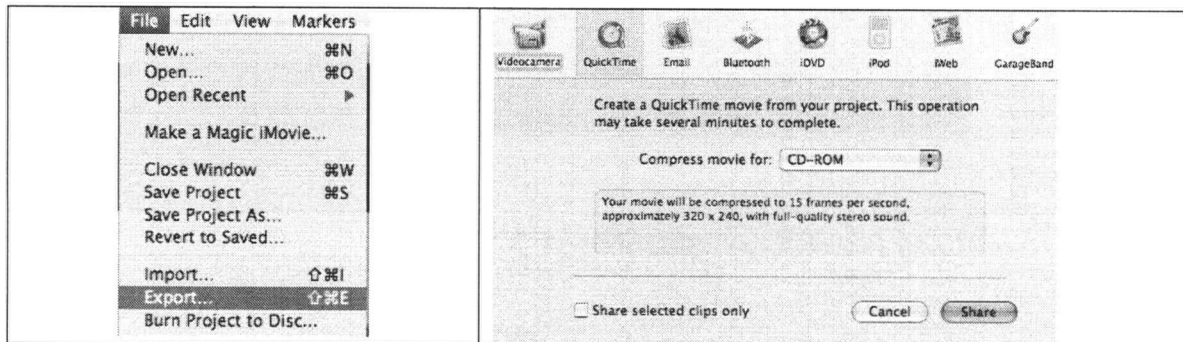
In **Movie Maker**, you'll finish the movie by saving your work as a *movie file*.
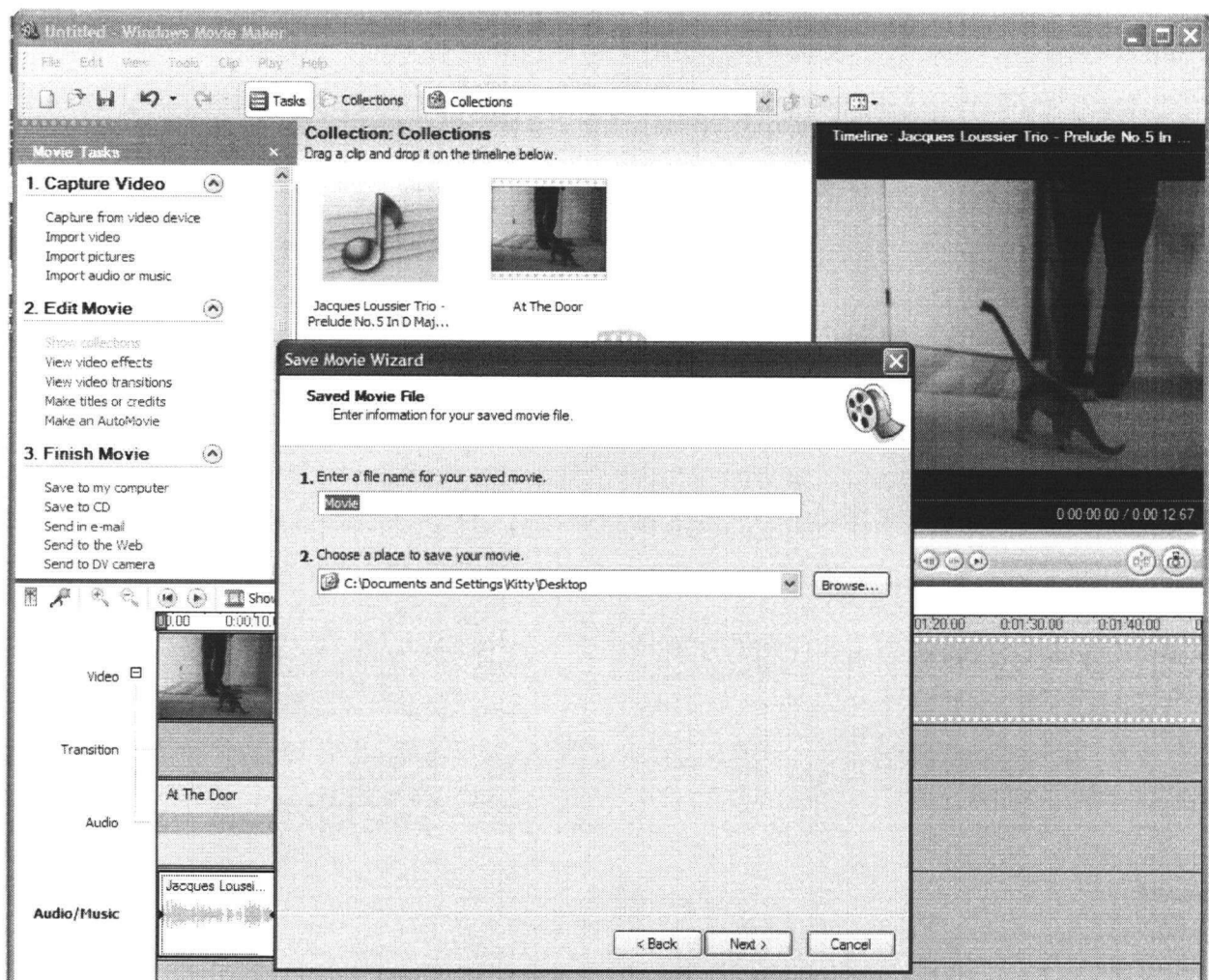
Video + Blog = Videoblog

Step 9: Capturing a screenshot

Now that your video is prepared, you're going to capture a single frame from the movie that will be used on your blog. (This will be explained further in Step 11!) Whether you're using a Mac or Windows machine, you'll first need to open your movie.

On a **Mac**, you can use a program called **Grab**, which can be found under *Applications* and then *Utilities*, to capture a frame from the movie.
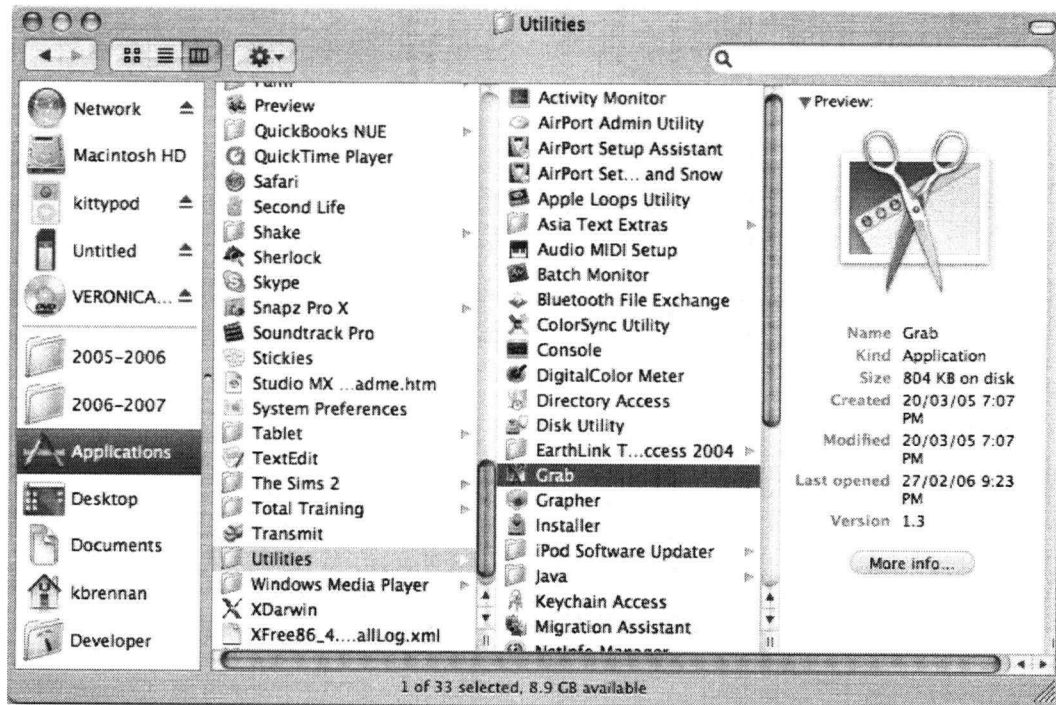
On a **Windows** machine, you can use the *Alt-PrintScreen* keystroke pair to capture a frame, which puts the capture in a copy buffer. You can then use a program like *Paint* to access the copied frame. On either platform, you'll end up with an image like:

Step 10: Uploading video

Your video is currently available on your computer, but not on the Web for anyone else to see. Uploading your video involves transferring it from your computer to another computer that acts as a host on the Internet. There are numerous sites that offer free video hosting, such as Google Video (http://video.google.ca/) and YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/), but here we'll look at how to use the DEPT server, which is easily accessible through your blog, and the blip.tv service, which offers nice integration with blog packages.

With your **WordPress** blog, adding video is as easy as adding any other content, which is described in Step 5. You create a new post (or page) and click the *Choose file* button, which will present you with a file-chooser. Select your file, add a title, and click the *Upload* button. Your video will be transferred to the DEPT server. The transfer time will be proportional to the file size, so check the size of the file generated in Step 8.


Blip.tv (http://blip.tv/) is another free video hosting service that is very popular with the videoblogging community. It offers numerous features including supporting multiple video formats and cross-service promotion.

Step 11: Posting video to your blog

The end is here! You have your blog and you've uploaded your video. It's time to publish your video in a blog post. The key ingredients are having a screen capture and knowing the Internet address of your video.

First, upload your screen capture from Step 9, just as you uploaded your video in Step 10. If you click on the *Browse* tab underneath the post editing area, you should see your video and your screen capture.
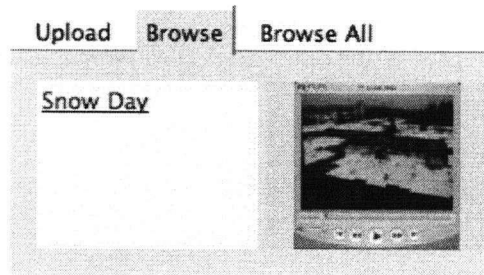
Transfer the screen capture to the editing area and then create a link from the image to the video using the Internet address of the video.
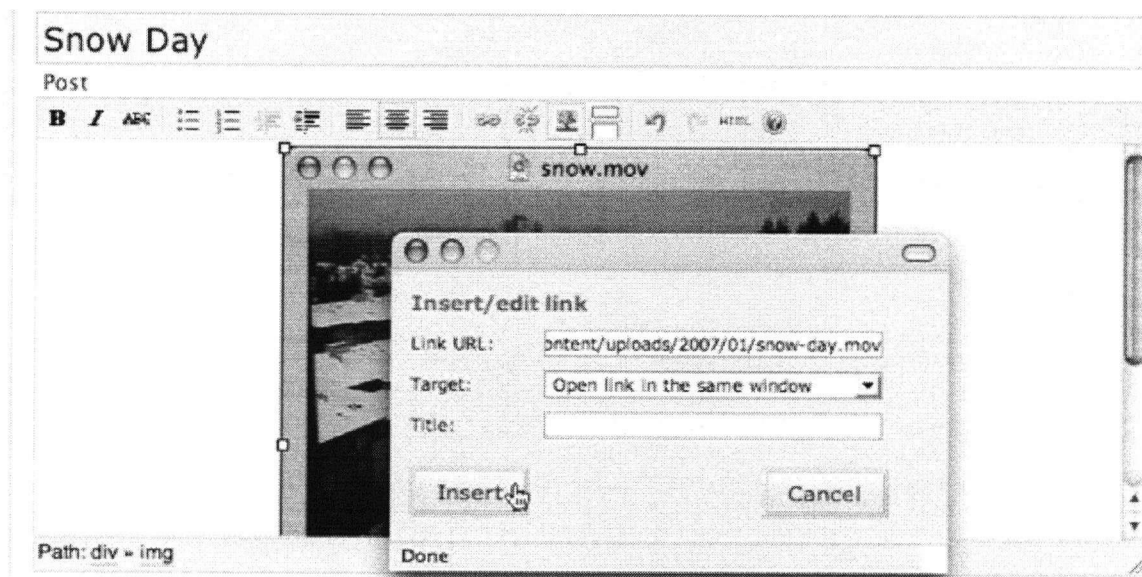
References

For more information or different approaches to this information, check out:

http://teaching.jensimmons.com/videoblogging/
http://www.freevlog.org/tutorial/