

Student Agency in Fostering Social Media Relationships

**How Students Choose to Promote
Their Creative Writing Online**

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Presentation Focus

Student Choices and Implementation of social media usage.

Observed Correlations between writing, habits of interpersonal relationships, and social media.

Lessons and Questions regarding the incorporation of technology as a pedagogical tool for enhancing community engagement.

Teaching Internship

IRB Research – ENG 247.02

Examining how student cultivation of online writing identity affects writing choices.

- Classroom / Individual Meetings
 - Assignments / Online Interactions
- } **The Data**

Millennials / “Digital Natives”

- Grew up with technology
 - “Excel at Facebook, fail at e-mail.”
- } **The Cultural Assumptions**

Limitations of Study

Not a Quantitative Study

Limited Number of Study Participants

(12 out of class of 18 students)

Examples Restricted to Protect Identities

A small, intimate class – students could recognize each other by the examples...

Coursework

Coursework centered of preparing and sharing creative writing inside and outside the course.

Readings: Mix of literary, “pop” readings, and descriptions of social media usage.

Final Project Groups: Students chose their focus based on writing and media habits.

Types of Community

	In-Course	Beyond Course
Required	Workshops (GD) Group Quizzes (GD) Facebook	Scribophile
Optional	Pre-Quiz Comm	Social Media for Final Projects

The Big Question

Four Groups (Self-Selected)

NaNoWriMo – National Novel Writing

Human Interest – Mix
and Collaborative

Outside Reading –
choice.

Social Media – Focus on promoting the public

**Students Ask:
What Counts for
Social Media
Credit?**

Social Media Platforms

Digital (semi-private)

Google Docs, ReggieNet, E-mail

Online (semi-public)

Facebook, Twitter, Scribophile, Tumblr

Non-Digital

Books, The Telephone, Letters Home

Media Habits vs. Writing Goals

Media Habits

Many students skipped the distraction of technology.

Intense Writing

- **15,000+ words**
- **sci fi / fantasy**
- **overcoming self-critique**

Writing Goals

Outside Reading – No public sharing, but highly effective sharing of very personal stories using Google Docs.

NaNoWriMo – No public sharing, but initiated a Facebook “support group” in order to encourage word counts.

Media Habits vs. Writing Goals (cont.)

Media Habits

Using technology to seek out feedback and

Tumblr

- **Students Teaching Each Other New Technology**
- **Mono-Directional Connection**

Writing Goals

Human Interest – Mix of fiction and personal memoir, variety of digital social media approaches.

Social Media – Specifically to use social media...so the technology was not secondary to the writing goal.

Media Habits vs. Writing Goals (cont.)

Media Habits

(example of two students)

Writing Goals

**Personal Student Views on
Revision and Dissemination**

participant
...ing as a
found
... a revolutionary
gain feedback for revision.

**Specific Uses of
Technology**

Internal Community

A Presumed Model for Outreach to Outside Community

Google Docs Preparation Helps In-Class Discussions

Pre-class Google Docs preparation helps in-class discussion and online community.

External Communities Don't Always Respond...

the in-class classmate

Digital Commenting Reflected Group Dynamics

Participation in the group.

Disengaged Community

Google Docs commenting in-classroom group (community of Google Docs)

Disengaged Students

group.

Optional Outside Community

For community engagement,
Student Goals
are more important than
Instructor Priorities.

How Am I Doing on Time??

Sometimes I present fast, sometimes I present slow...

In case you've forgotten:

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Next, we'll talk technology...or I'll take questions!

Tale of Two Technologies...

Google Docs Worked

Integral to In-Class Interactions

Platform Encourages Flexibility

Grading Tied to Successful Use

Scribophile Didn't

“Independent” Learning Expected

Platform Purposefully Limits User *Activity* to Encourage *Interactivity*. (And to encourage monthly subscription fees...)

Grading Tied to *Attempted* Use

Google Docs – Internal Community

Frequent Internal

- Tie
- E
- S

**Variables of
Unknown Effect:
Student Age and Maturity
Classroom Synergy
Grading Policies**

Internal

- Syllabus
- Group Assignments

Google Docs

Scribophile – External Community

Platform
int

ent

**Working Theory:
Student interest is directly
tied to personal and tangible
social reciprocity.**

Tumblr: From Left Field

Two Variables for Success
Social Media Platform
Individual Engagement with Audience

rior Tumblr
use it in
icipants with
ence chose
successful

Limited in
experien

Limited Social Reciprocity
Tumblr has likes...but few user comments.

Quick Takeaways

Can't Legislate “Community Engagement”
Technology Success Depends on Purpose
“Purpose” must match *Student* Goals

The Technology Lessons

The Lessons

Student influence is crucial.

Students adopt technology in conjunction with their peers.

Rewards should be tied to success rather than the attempt.

Each Technology Is Independently Learned.

The Questions

What if my students hate technology?

Can I fail a student for being hated by imaginary online people?

So if I view technology as a form of literacy...does each platform constitute a separate language?

Questions?

Might I Also Suggest:

Aspects of technological pedagogy we can control...
...and those aspects we *can't* control.

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Lessons We Control...

Observations

Students can't be expected to learn technologies in a vacuum of tacit expectation.

Grading needs to be adapted to the individual experiences and progress of each student.

Questions

But can't you just Google up some YouTube how-to's? I mean, what's so hard about that?

Well, duh. Don't we already do that for grading writing? (I mean, for the kids who already know their grammar...)

...and Those We Don't

Observations

There's no uniform instruction of social outreach technologies.

Most students do not see social media as a means of non-social productive outreach. (Dude...you know this isn't, like, real writing, right?)

Questions

Wait...are you implying that schools should be *teaching* children to use Facebook?

But if I tell them the internet can help them, like, reach out to audiences, they'll believe me, right? I mean, right??

Media Habits vs. Writing Goals (cont.)

Media Habits

Independent of student
“buy-in”

Independent of Teaching

Writing Goals

18 Students,
12 Participants — Some of the most successful social-media users chose not to participate in the study.

Tumblr was not taught or introduced in the coursework — students introduced it for their work, and many used it very

Internal Community

A Presumed Model for Outreach to Outside Community

Google Docs Preparation Helps In-Class Discussions

Pre-class Google Docs comments on student work enlivened the in-class discussions. Students directly referenced both instructor and classmate online comments during in-class discussions.

Digital Commenting Reflected Group Dynamics

Motivation and participation in pre-class Google Docs commenting varied by workshop group. The more successful and “energetic” the group (based on in-class observations), the greater the number and quality of Google Docs comments

Community Engagement

Successful community engagement depends upon