COM487: Internet & Society
Critical Making Workshop
Date: 03.15.2016 & 03.17.2016
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A SPATIAL HISTORY OF THE INTERNET

The Challenge:

We studied the history of the Internet from its precursors (memex) to more current trends (Web 2.0) in this first part of the semester. Now, you will have the chance to re-approach this content by spatially representing the internet's development over time. Thus, our entire group will experiment with Google Maps' constraints and possibilities (adding pins, attaching videos, images, and text to a pin, using diverse map layers, etc.). It is crucial that you decide which events you are including and which ones you are leaving out. You have an entire class period (~75 to 85 minutes) to develop this project and have the freedom to organize your collective work.

After this workshop you will be able to:

- Critically evaluate the credibility of online digital information.

- Collectively solve problems.

- Develop strategies for working in big groups synergistically.

- Create and present knowledge in a spatial and multi-modal fashion.

- Remix and re-appropriate Internet content.

- Analyze how form and content both play an important role in how knowledge is produced and displayed.

Please, notice that your final product will be available on Google Maps gallery for other people to learn from it. Here are some examples of maps already available online:

Interactive Map of Lewis and Clark's Expedition – 1804 through 1805

America's Highway: Oral Histories of Route 66

The Plan:

DAY ONE:

10 minutes: Explain the activity to students.

10 minutes: Explain how Google Maps work.

55 minutes: Students create their map.

DAY TWO:

~ 30 minutes: Students finish their map.

10 minutes: Three students present the map to the rest of the group.

35 minutes: The group debriefs the exercise.

Here are some things you need to consider when creating your map:

1. Framing the history of internet:
1.1. Which events and processes are you including in your history of the Internet?
1.2. How are you spatially representing not only punctual events (e.g.: the first Arpanet connection), but also processes (e.g.: ARPA's open doors policy)?

Tips: You can rely on the timeline I shared in our Google Docs. In addition, think about the affordances and constraints of Google Maps – you can add layers to your map, add pins to specific locations, customize them, attach images, texts, sounds, and links to each pin, etc.

2. Selecting your content:
2.1. Which materials are you using to illustrate diverse events and processes (TED talks, written text, pictures)?
2.2. Which materials are you creating from scratch (texts, videos, etc)?
2.3. How are you assessing the credibility of these materials?
2.4. How are you evaluating the copyright license for the materials you are using and properly citing sources?

Tips: Evaluate where the information is displayed (who owns the website, blog, etc?) and who wrote it. Use the triangulation technique to assess the quality of your sources. Finally, use search filters to look for the copyright of images.

3. Presenting the map (10 minutes)

Three students will present the final product. You will have to include in your presentation:

3.1. An overall tour of the map.
3.2. The rationale behind how you organized your information (Why did you include specific events? How did you organize it? E.g.: By decades? By actors?).
3.3. An explanation of how you evaluated copyrights and credibility of your sources.

4. Assigning tasks:
4.1. Who will be responsible for selecting which events are included in your history?
4.2. Who will select the materials to illustrate your history?
4.3. Who will assess the quality of your materials?
4.4. Who will evaluate the copyright licenses?
4.5. Who will assemble the map?
4.6. Who will present the maps for the entire class on Thursday (o3.17.2016)?
4.7. Etc.

The Rationale:

Why a workshop week?

Henry Jenkins, alongside other scholars (2009), advocate that new skills need to be added to schools' traditional curriculum so students can thrive in a networked era. Thus, they highlight abilities that should be nurtured in the 21st century:

"**Play** — the capacity to experiment with one's surroundings as a form of problem-solving
Appropriation — the ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content
Multitasking — the ability to scan one's environment and shift focus as needed to salient details.
Distributed Cognition — the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities
Collective Intelligence — the ability to gather knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal
Judgment — the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources
Transmedia Navigation — the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities
Networking — the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information
Negotiation — the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives as well as grasping and following alternative norms." (Jenkins et al., 2009, p. 4)

It is possible that you are already developing these abilities through your own participation in digital cultures. Nevertheless, this workshop opens space for experimenting with the aforementioned forms of engagement and to also reflect on your actions afterward.

Why a location-based platform?

Scholars like Eric Gordon and Adriana de Souza e Silva (2011) identified a trend that positions 'location' as an increasingly important aspect of how we interact with digital networks on a daily basis. Think about all apps that use location as an important element - Uber, Instagram, Google Search, Tinder, etc - and you will start to understand how embodied spaces shape our engagement with digital networks. In this workshop, you will be able to not only play with the affordances/constraints of Google Maps, but also to share your final product with an audience beyond this classroom that can benefit from your production.

References:

Gordon, E., & e Silva, A. D. S. (2011). *Net locality: Why location matters in a networked world*. John Wiley & Sons.

Jenkins, H., Purushotma, R., Weigel, M., Clinton, K., & Robison, A. J. (2009). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century*. MIT Press.

The debriefing session:

1. Describe the process for organizing your collective work.
2. How did you deal with conflicting points of view?
3. Describe a problem you faced when creating your map. How did you solve it?

4. What were the main affordances of Google Maps? What were the main constraints?

5. What did you notice by organizing the history of the internet spatially in opposition to a time-based and linear fashion?

6. How is this exercise different from writing a midterm exam in terms of learning outcomes?

7. How would you describe you learning in relation to the role you took in creating this map?