

## Artmob SSHRC ITST Grant Meeting 4 – Nov 29, 2007

Centre for Social Innovation, 215 Spadina Road

<b>In attendance:</b>	
Artmob	Darren Wershler-Henry, Principal Investigator Christopher Innes, Principal Investigator
Artmob Research Staff	Bill Kennedy, Project Director David Meurer, RA Hilary Chan, GA
[murmur]	Gabe Sahwney Shawn Micallef
York University	Barbara Crow, Communication and Culture Michael Longford, Mobile Media Lab Marcus Boon, English
Ryerson University	Deborah Fels

### 1. Introductions

Barbara Crow- working with Michael for three years:

- Developing mobile experiences
- Mobile commons network
- Looking at infrastructure - spectrum policy, delivery mechanisms
- Journal called Wi – journal of mobile media
  - o Hoping to move away from HTML site

Marcus Boon

- Journalist and writer
  - o Cultural studies and literature
  - o Working on / completing a book on the subject of ‘copying’
  - o Deals with how cultures have historically thought about and been founded on notions of copying
- Teaching a class on plagiarism, another on digital copying

Christopher Innes

- Researching street theatre and carnival
- Hosting a conference on street theatre at York
- Interested in the way that arts formations influence cityscape around them

Hilary Chan

- Graduate Assistant for Artmob

David Meurer

- Research Assistant for Artmob

- Researching literary production in the context of emerging technologies and technological practices

#### Bill Kennedy

- Project Director for Artmob
- Principal of Stop 14 Media, a new media development studio
- Artistic director of Scream literary festival
- Co-compiled Apostrophe with Darren W-H

#### Michael Longford

- Recently at York
- Was at Concordia
  - o Worked with colleagues at Hexagram
  - o Worked on Mobile Digital commons network
  - o Moving on to new things:
    - Setting up a mobile media lab at York
    - Looking for new Bluetooth interactions

#### Gabe Sawhney

- Community technologist
- No institutional affiliations
- Working on wireless Toronto
- Working on various projects, building stuff:
  - o [murmur]
  - o Video installation
  - o Mobile projects
  - o Web-based projects
- January starting to teach at OCAD

#### Darren Wershler-Henry:

- Hoping to generate research on [murmur]
- Interested in the distinctions between locative media vs ambient media
- Hoping to generate consideration of murmur as case study, but also as topic for colloquia, conference panels, etc.
  - o Policy issues
  - o Technological issues
  - o Etc.

## **2. Software Development – Bill Kennedy**

- Overview of Artmob presentation
  - o General lack of cultural archives online due to:
    - Lack of technical expertise
    - Lack of physical infrastructure
    - Oppressive legal climate

- E.g. CTR (Canadian Theatre Record) – difficulties with copyright clearance
- <http://canadiantheatrerecord.torontopubliclibrary.ca>
- Concept of copyright has been turned around:
  - o Instead of assuming you can put things up and have those who oppose demonstrate the illegality of the action, the legal climate has resulted in a standard in which actors must demonstrate clearance in advance of putting things online
- How do you mitigate the effects of a chilling copyright climate for cultural archives initiatives?

MB:

- When we discuss archiving, do we mean the preservation of materials, or the dissemination of them?
- Making digital copies for materials prone to decay is different from securing permission to make them available.
- [I.e. distinction needed between digital archives and digital or online collections – aims may be different, projects may be distinct for some institutions]

DWH

- Artmob focused on “large accessible online archives of cultural material.”

MB

- There is a cultural urgency to preserving things like 60s zines that were produced on poor paper and are already crumbling
- Need good digital copies of cultural artifacts

What constitutes a good digital copy?

- Issues of best practices, foregrounding of digital materiality in researching existing online collections
- Artmob interested in cataloguing practices, best practices of materiality
- Funding is really concentrated on infrastructure:
  - o Servers
  - o Lab computers
  - o Software development:
    - Programmers
    - Designers
    - Interface developers
  - o All software produced will be open source and available to other organizations, institutions, archives
- Artmob also designed as an engine for policy reform
- Attempt to direct attention back in the direction of ‘right to use’

What is Artmob trying to accomplish?

- Developing tools for organizations: a template for institutions and researchers interested in the intersections of digital archives, Canadian culture, and copyright

Drupal a main player in the CMS market:

- <http://drupal.org/>
- A robust development platform
- Large active development community
- Low risk of falling into disuse
- Artmob is building modules for Drupal – tools designed for specific purposes, e.g.:
  - o Curatorial tools:
    - Aggregate:
      - Build collections
      - Curate exhibitions
    - Annotate
    - Cataloguing issues:
      - E.g. Johanna Drucker's work at:
        - o [www.artistsbooksonline.org](http://www.artistsbooksonline.org)
  - o Fair dealing, licensing, copyright extensions:
    - Develop ability to log copyright claims through the presentation interface rather than isolate the copyright process to proactive legal paperwork
    - Develop functionality to enable a rights holder to choose among licensing provisions

MB

- Has Artmob discussed the fair dealing interface ideas with copyright lawyers?

DWH

- Critical question is How can you build a tool that negotiates both owners rights and users rights?

MB

- Whole industries have arisen out of policing YouTube and putting filing cease and desist notices out
  - o Does putting materials online with fair dealing and copyright modules merely invite negative corporate legal attention?
  - o Would it result in litigation by resource-rich corporations against resource-poor individuals and cultural organizations?

### 3. Policy Centre – David Meurer

- Public resource for research on the intersections of Canadian culture, digital archives, and copyright
- Organized around three channels and various subsections and keywords
- Each channel to incorporate:

- Annotated links
- Annotated bibliographies
- Information about research network
- General features:
  - Whiteboard
  - Project blog

#### **4. UBUweb Overview – David Meurer**

- <http://www.ubu.com/>
- Collection of over 15,000 images, texts, videos, and sound files of avant garde and experimental art
- Site has grown over 10 years to a point where the loss of no single area of the collection would fundamentally compromise it
- Plans are to convert existing flat html site into Drupal/Artnob CMS site

#### **5. bpNichol.ca Overview – Bill Kennedy**

- Developing bpNichol site as the initial Artnob CMS archive
- Other online archives and digital collections will be built as variants/instances of this archive, with modifications, additional features, customizations as needed
- Initial information architecture is complete
- Design work is nearing completion
- Some materials already digitized
- Slated for January/February alpha launch
  - To be coordinated with launch of bpNichol Reader
- Lori Emerson to curate portions of the collection

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COFFEE

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#### **Barbara Crow and Michael Longford**

Standalone projects each designed to develop mobile experiences in the context of locative technology:

- Wi:
  - One area of concern is the status of IP when discussing social networking, the upload of IP to networked databases
- Have found that for participatory authoring projects, university immediately concerned with intellectual property implications
- Gathered a range of sound/multimedia files relating to the city to create hybrid artifacts e.g. image or sound collages, animations
- Questions:

- Who is going to manage all the content for a publicly accessible archive where they have to get through screens and screens of information?
- Who does artmob seek to address with its technology tools?
- Where will arts organizations get the resources to input or upload all of this information?
  - Can apply for grants, private interests
- Need to differentiate between content that is already digitized, content that needs to be digitized, content that has been digitized but needs some modification or production process
- Possibility of using your audience to do some of the input work
  - E.g. post first, then work with it later – Facebook – upload a photo then someone else tags the people in the picture?
- Could scale the level of input as needed/dictated by other external factors

#### Previous / Existing Projects:

- Tracklines – mobile phones enabled people to experience the Hoodoo trail in Banff:
  - GPS tool to grow an animal from infancy via a mobile phone, GPS tech
  - Expanded into Tracklines – a virtual naturalist that took you along the trail
  - Began to use the phone to beep and trigger information from a virtual guide, also films and animations
- The Haunting – Montreal
  - Used cell phone to augment the experience of space, set of forested trails
  - GPS triggered content for the phone – Ghost Stories
  - Also used Bluetooth
- For Tracklines, The Haunting, all content stayed local, on the phones
- Project could not be networked successfully
  - Attempted to develop a mobile generator to input an experience
  - Used XML to generate an application to run the story, etc.
- Mobile Cartographic Command Centre:
  - Spectrum use, surveillance, accessibility

#### Some of the challenges of working with mobile technologies:

- Involves proprietary technologies
- Need to work with engineers in high level languages
- Weather causes problem
- GPS drift
- Battery power
- User interface issues – how to handle devices in inclement weather, with gloves, etc.
- Policy context:
  - Critical in shaping our experiences

- Conservatives want to further deregulate cell phone market
- Regulatory context needs to be addressed:
  - Media conglomerates, convergence
  - These have implications for mobile projects
- Data:
  - Trying to develop experiences around public authoring
  - How can a website interact with mobile devices?
  - How can you use what people know about something but also get them to engage with it in new and different ways?
  - How do you manage the experience of data? E.g. if you have thousands of uploaded photos, how do users negotiate with it? How do project developers manage it?
- Specificity of mobile devices:
  - There are preferential experiences for laptops, cell phones
  - People like to keep their experiences in discreet chunks
  - E.g. cell phone screens will not get much bigger than a Blackberry
  - How does this impact what you do and how you do it?
  - External factors have an impact e.g. sunlight on a screen
    - Bad experience in bright daylight triggered idea of working at night instead - The Haunting
- Involved in the development and growth of ISF (Iles Sans Fils) – like Wireless Toronto
  - Now 150 hotspots (from 8)
  - In turn, had hoped to use the network for data collection e.g. sound and image and environmental data for secondary artistic projects
  - Weren't able to bring the whole project together:
    - University and Volunteer group bureaucracies
    - Tech is not always able to do what it is supposed to:
    - Experiences had to be highly managed – couldn't just hand people a phone
    - There was very little individual proactive creative uptake e.g. commitment to contribution, participatory actions
- Important to address what people *do* want to say to each other and how they want to use devices (not to just dismiss the type of Hi Mom! messages that sometimes emerge out of such public projects)
- Have funding to build a small Mobile Media Lab
- Want to take some of the early phase infrastructure and advance it
  - E.g. Bluetooth beacons
  - Using Bluetooth to track and capture physical movements
    - Generate artwork out of the captured data
  - Ways to attach sensors for very short interaction scenarios
  - E.g. someone poking you to whisper something
  - Want to work with different CMS technologies
  - Used TikiWiki

- Difficulty establishing a culture where people collaborate online
    - Also use WordPress to introduce media
- Interested to see how the sound and video modules for Drupal work
- In Toronto, Portage is working with Bluetooth

Marcus interested in transmitting sound experiences across geographical distances e.g. Niagara Falls soundscape to a gallery far away

- Can Bluetooth manage a sound data transfer of that nature?

What about live, on the fly archival material? How would you manage live recording of oral history e.g. [murmur] and immediately upload to a server as a searchable, browsable, acoustic artifact?

How to deal with legacy technologies, file formats?

- Commitment to protocols, formats, procedures consistent with best practices
- Use of established platforms e.g. MySQL, Linux

Can Artmob host and support data for the mobile projects?

## **Marcus Boon**

- Interested in picking up where his book leaves off: with appropriation
- Lessig et al construct arguments that defend fair dealing
- At the same time there are activities that go on regardless of the legal issues – legal is a second-level perspective, people want to deal with them as definitions, contracts, pacts
- Culture, identity, individuality could not exist without copying:
  - Genetics
  - Language
  - Etc.
  - These activities and practices are *precursors* to legal frameworks for contextualizing copying
- Philosophical underpinnings are perhaps western, Platonic – ideals and essences and their degraded copies
- By appropriation, MB means the act of taking something, an identity, and claiming it as your own in the name of some right – individual, or public sphere
- There is also the question of ‘proper’ in property – the issue of where something belongs – who names something, where it belongs
- The idea of requiring cataloguing and metadata for things to exist is interesting – the necessity of tagging, naming – these are perhaps already pseudo-legal acts

- What would a rejection of the imperative of naming and tagging constitute?
- How would the consideration of this angle alter, or impact or provide critical perspective on the acts of archiving?
- DWH – perhaps related critical subject is thinking about the difference between found art and findable art
  - o What would the archive of the unfindable be?

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## LUNCH

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### [murmur]

#### Shawn Micallef

- [murmur] wasn't intended as a documentary project
- Originally driven by scripts read by Shawn Micallef
- Found that the format wasn't compelling, moved to individuals telling their own stories
- Stories became shorter
- Began in Kensington Market
- Didn't have permission to put up [murmur] signs, Kensington was a less conspicuous place to do so
- The "visual clutter" of Kensington made it perfect to test how noticeable the signs were
- Received a grant through terminus 1525
- Expanded throughout Toronto
- Recording in situ:
  - o Puts people in context, where they point to things, feel comfortable (as opposed to a studio)
- Delivering in situ:
  - o Use cell phones to deliver audio recordings
  - o Facilitates a direct connection – technology is somewhat transparent – people use cell phones all the time
  - o Some editing required to ensure that the listener is "addressed"
  - o Stories always told from a personal point of view
  - o Still unofficial or impromptu – full permission for placing signs exposed bureaucratic hurdles that required navigating layers of administration
    - This despite being funded by City Hall for Spadina project
  - o Once you have heard a story, it can permanently alter your relationship with that space
  - o Can create a sense of déjà vu / écouté

#### Gabe Sawhney

- All audio for all projects are managed with a G4 server

- No staging/live environment differentiation, so one opportunity for collaboration on a technological level would be to update the [murmur] CMS with staging and live environments, and have the process of promoting material from staging to live involve a network transfer from local server to York
  - o This would also mean the data is being backed up daily
  - o Would mean that certain protocols may have to be enabled or ports opened up on Artmob server to allow for the VOIP traffic
  - o Would also lend institutional weight to the project on an infrastructure level
- All stories tied to a waiver with a Creative Commons license
- Have received requests for the stories, e.g. RTA students wanted to convert or re-enact as video but mishandled permission requests
- Gabe working on a mobile game called Echelon:
  - o Proximity-based game – Bluetooth phone scans for other players
  - o Each player gets half a riddle, to be solved together, gets input back
  - o “A game where you get points for talking to strangers.”
- Important to have a variety of contexts in mind for projects as you enter into them
- Started a media lab:
  - o [www.medialabtoronto.ca](http://www.medialabtoronto.ca)
- Urban screens Toronto:
  - o Artistic content for urban projection surfaces
  - o Influenced by newmindspace and graffiti projection lab
- Torontopia project:
  - o A kind of geo-annotation system of using content from the Internet
  - o A way of connecting content to space

Action items:

- [murmur] involvement in book project?
- [murmur] visit to Artmob and possibly Augmented Reality Lab and Future Cinemas lab?
- Possible synergies between Artmob, AR Lab, Future Cinemas lab, Mobile Media Lab?
- [murmur] York project? E.g. for 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary (some contact with facilities manager already)?
- Collaboration between Deborah Fels and [murmur] to produce in situ narratives in ASL (sign language)?

3PM ADJOURNED