Putting Knowledge to Work & Letting Information Play

Second Edition

Timothy W. Luke and
Jeremy Hunsinger (Eds.)

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TRANSDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
Volume 04

Scope
Transdisciplinary Studies is an internationally oriented book series created to generate new theories and practices to extricate transdisciplinary learning and research from the confining discourses of traditional disciplinarities. Within transdisciplinary domains, this series publishes empirically grounded, theoretically sound work that seeks to identify and solve global problems that conventional disciplinary perspectives cannot capture. Transdisciplinary Studies seeks to accentuate those aspects of scholarly research which cut across today's learned disciplines in an effort to define the new axiologies and forms of praxis that are transforming contemporary learning. This series intends to promote a new appreciation for transdisciplinary research to audiences that are seeking ways of understanding complex, global problems that many now realize disciplinary perspectives cannot fully address. Teachers, scholars, policy makers, educators and researchers working to address issues in technology studies, education, public finance, discourse studies, professional ethics, political analysis, learning, ecological systems, modern medicine, and other fields clearly are ready to begin investing in transdisciplinary models of research. It is for those many different audiences in these diverse fields that we hope to reach, not merely with topical research, but also through considering new epistemic and ontological foundations for of transdisciplinary research. We hope this series will exemplify the global transformations of education and learning across the disciplines for years to come.
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PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK AND LETTING INFORMATION PLAY

Second Edition

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Printed on acid-free paper

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INTRODUCTION

This group of critical, historical, and technical assessments of digital discourse and culture is assembled to commemorate the creation of Virginia Tech's Center for Digital Discourse and Culture (CDDC) a decade ago. Organized in the College of Arts and Sciences, two college faculty members-Len Hatfield in the Department of English and Timothy W. Luke in the Department of Political Science-began operating the CDDC with Jeremy Hunsinger, who later pursued and completed his Doctorate in the Science and Technology Studies (STS) program. Hatfield was a co-founder of the Department of English's Center for Applied Technology in the Humanities (CATH), and Luke was the author of a 1994 white paper for the College of Arts and Sciences calling for the creation of a new entity, namely, "Cyberschool," at Virginia Tech to design, manage, organize, and then teach wholly online undergraduate and graduate courses by 1995.

During 1996, a handful of such courses were being offered, and the practical difficulties raised by presenting such classes over the Internet within an educational institution entirely grounded upon print-based, tradition-bound, and engineering-biased modes of daily operation soon became very problematic. In 1996, a student in California or Greece could take a Cyberschool class, but they had to first travel to Blacksburg, fill out paper forms, and then write a personal check for tuition and fees. In response, and with the support of Instructional Technologies and the College of Arts and Sciences, Cyberschool divided into two smaller groups-Cyberschool I, coordinated by Luke to push for institutional innovation and reform, and Cyberschool II, coordinated by Hatfield to develop new technical responses for the challenges of online teaching (Couples & Luke, 1998; Luke, 2001). Ed Fox in the College's Department of Computer Science also had been working separately with the Graduate School and University Libraries to implement an electronic thesis and dissertation (ETD) requirement for several years. Once he joined the Cyberschool group, faculty members' discussions occasionally turned to the challenges of scholarly communication and archiving knowledge online.

Working from the intersection of these and other groups on campus, University President Paul Torgersen approved Virginia Tech's pioneering implementation of a mandatory electronic thesis and dissertation (ETD) requirement in 1997 (Torgersen, 1998). Caught on the cusp of conflict between existing codex books and print quarterly journals produced on paper versus untested e-books and pixel-borne online publications, many academics at Virginia Tech wavered. In this context, the ETD experiment was quite a radical experiment (see Appendix A). Changing the media used in the production, consumption, accumulation, and circulation of

scholarship created many anxieties about the academy's existing cultural practices for valorizing scholarly activity as well as the organizational logistics of maintaining its traditional disciplinary norms, frameworks, and archives. As a university without a traditional book publishing press, and lacking much experience with producing academic journals on campus, the stage-skipping potentialities of creating a "digital press" for Virginia Tech seemed quite promising in 1996 and 1997 (Hatfield & Luke, 1997) for the Cyberschool (Luke 2007, p. 653–671)

Like the Cyberschool group itself, which pushed from within the College of Arts and Sciences for teaching totally online classes and granting entirely online degrees (Luke, 2004, p. 75–77), the idea of a wholly online digital press was a bit radical, especially in the mid-1990s when daily web browsing was neither common nor easy (see Appendix B). An opportunity to serve as a game-changing standard-setter was put before the University administration, which was then basically ignored due to very pedestrian concerns (Luke, 2002, p. 249–281). At root, the University's administrators expressed many insecurities about really being first at anything, even though it was an institution that prided itself in the 1990s for being all about "Putting Knowledge to Work." Anxieties, which were tied to fearing financial success, doubting any "technological initiatives" not rooted in the College of Engineering, and questioning the real staying-power of digital discourse over print media, ruled the day. At the same time, the University Libraries' own Scholarly Publications Project, and then later its Digital Library and Archives Division, was backing the ETD project along with its own limited efforts to digitize a few important small, unprofitable scholarly publications and older, out-of-print serials. With all of these different players on the field, each often ended up playing their own game, but in accordance with the restrictive rules set by the University's administration. Ironically, these rules, once again, related to its fears of profit, success, or even being first.

The business model for a Virginia Tech Digital Press, for example, proposed creating digital versions of print books and journals for sale. Yet, the University's administration worried at the time, "What if they sold?" Should they sell, then pressure would build to bring out more titles. More titles, more sales, more growth could lead to new sources of income, but that development would require greater investments in staff, space, and support to ramp up production to a break-even point. Once the break-even point was crossed, steady profits could be generated. For better or worse, the University was, and still is, a public entity not organized to make a profit; hence, some closely allied 501(c)3 corporation would also then need to be established to handle such commerce as operational gains and/or losses under its auspices as a not-for-profit enterprise. Nonetheless, sales taxes, general merchandise inventory taxes, local taxes, and other transaction costs would need to be faced, and then paid. Hence, the University's embedded institutional practices, existing mercantile structures, and established bureaucratic agencies all kept the implementation of a fully-articulated digital press very much at arm's length. Tax phobia, however, was the leading explanation used by the administration to justify not "Putting Knowledge to Work" in this way as well as avoiding a chance to "Invent the Future."

Ironically, however, the University's "land grant mission" did permit publishing to be conducted, and indeed even encouraged it, as long as its products were distributed openly as a public good for the advantage of the Commonwealth's citizens or the benefit of those seeking sound science. Rather than investing in a comprehensive strategy to design and build one of the first, if not the first, digital academic presses, like—the later-created High Wire at Stanford, Project Muse at Johns Hopkins, or Informa World at Routledge, the College put a predictable constant maintenance budget down to maintain an experimental effort. These resources enabled the Cyberschool to construct a digital point-of-publication that had to make its services available essentially like an agricultural extension station. That is, it would be like disbursing pamphlets, guides, or brochures freely to all those seeking its services without charge. Caught within these legal constraints, then, the would-be Virginia Tech Digital Press began operations a decade ago within Cyberschool as a public service, also known as the Center for Digital Discourse and Culture (Luke, 2004, p. 75–77). After the creation of the Institute of Distributed and Distance Learning in 1998–1999, this office generously has continued funding CDDC's operations as part of its research mission.

KNOWLEDGE AT WORK

During this past decade in public service as a digital point-of-publication, the CDDC has worked to find, create, or sustain multiple reading publics with an array of services. Yet, at the same time, its "for-free" activities ironically have tracked closely the tremendous expansion in the open source supply of informational, scientific, or technical documents as well as the radical disarticulation of their production from potentially profit-generating forms (Luke, 2006, p. 197–210). On the one hand, such "for-free" developments clearly add to the world's creative commons, but on the other hand, they also arguably contribute to a radical devaluation of many academic, artistic, intellectual scholarly, and scientific works. Once such goods are produced and circulated for free, or are disconnected from profit-generation forms via digital piracy, counterfeiting, public service, or expropriation, the P2P pressures of file-sharing lead to an uncommon economy of superabundance in which the material rewards for doing such labor increasingly are becoming scant (Lessig, 2004).

Working in its public service role, the CDDC has concentrated on issuing calls to publish experimental, innovative artistic and academic works, and it has been successful at acquiring, assessing, and then archiving them after various types of peer review. A few contacts on Virginia Tech's campus, in turn, brought the production to three fully online journals under its wing, namely, the new media literary journal, *The New River,* which once circulated on material machine-readable media; *Public Knowledge Journal,* a student-run public affairs annual featuring articles, interviews, and reviews on questions of public policy; and SPECTRA*,* an online refereed journal about social, political, ethical, and cultural thought that publishes material from a variety of academic lectures, conferences, and symposia. At the same time, the CDDC provided hosting space and mirroring services to emerging networks for use

in developing online civil society, digital education, academic archives, and scholarly communications. Consequently, there are thousands of users per day around the world who frequent its diverse collection of archives, listservs, mirrors, and publications. During the 2008–2009 academic year, the CDDC responded to an average level for page requests of 50,000 a day. Over 2 million unique users visited its collections, and over one gigabyte of data per day was transferred from its servers.

At the close of the Cold War, sophisticated computing use was changing rapidly. With this shift in the early 1990s, the central administration of Virginia Tech saw itself making the transition for the campus from centralized information processing on major mainframe systems to a more decentralized information-processing environment relying upon thousands of individual desktop and laptop computers, first using wired and then later more wireless access (Luke, 2001, p. 153–174). As the computing and communication networks at Virginia Tech became more accessible, inexpensive, and ubiquitous, on-campus experiments like Cyberschool were encouraged to try something different (Couples & Luke, 1998, p. 136–143; Luke, 1994; and Luke, 1998).

Caught within this institutional transformation, the CDDC, as a digital point-of-publication, operates openly and continuously through the pull of its pooled digital resources and the densely clustered points of interest centered at this node of/for interactivity. Its domains are, as Crang and Thrift (2000) observe, about spaces best apprehended as being a *"process* and in process" (p. 3). All of its content cascades out of informational processing, but its root machinic network practices are flexible spatial formations whose "process in process" enables innumerable networks of unknown, unacknowledged, and perhaps even unknowable people to share expertise and insights round the clock and all around the world. No digital discourse is truly just dematerialized digits, but its hollowed out, accelerated, compressed dematerialization as pixilated images, digitized sounds, or hypertext totally changes the economics of knowledge production and consumption (Luke, 2006, p. 197–210).

Digital points-of-publication, like CDDC in 1998–1999, often began as sites for maintaining, capturing, and accumulating digital versions of print documents long out of copyright as well as experimental efforts at producing born-digital documents for the use of many communities. Yet, the explosion of weblogs, social media, virtual communities, and mobile wireless device writings (text messages, Twitter, and podcasts) over the past five, ten, or fifteen years have so transformed the field of objects to be possibly assessed and archived that any center of digital discourse and culture soon realizes it could potentially be responsible for serving as the repository for almost all forms of human and machine communication. Moreover, its archival function kicks into gear as communicative interactions occur rather than after they are first experienced and then maybe, in part, forgotten, neglected, misinterpreted, hidden or destroyed. Forestalling those ravages of time historically was once what libraries, archives, presses, and collections tried to prevent. In the polymorphic material exchanges of digital culture, the friction, signal loss, or forgetting of nondigital communication could diminish to near nothing since

everything possibly can be traced, stored, and recirculated from its born-digital origins and operations.

The proliferation of enterprise software applications over the past decade, at the same time, has led rapidly to the digitalization of not only scholarly discourse and learned culture on campus, but also the day-in/day-out administration of university institutions themselves. For the most part, alumni, academic, administrative, staff, and student interactions on and off campus with each other and their larger economic and social contexts are now embedded in multiple streams of digital discourse and culture. Fewer and fewer entirely print-and-paper interactions occupy individuals and groups, working together or apart, on campus as the university's institutional administrative practices go digital, while the intrusion of wireless environments also bring more and more teaching engagements via web-based social media sites and podcast content sharing.

Just as operations like the Center for Digital Discourse and Culture are established to remediate scholarly communication, academic publication, and knowledge archiving, these fundamentally decentering practices of discursive and cultural digitalization are reshaping most, if not all, university procedures. From supply purchases, alumni association, student application, class registration, accreditation review, personnel administration, records management, institutional publicity, course content, faculty assessment, stakeholder engagement, outreach work, or even parking services, many everyday moments in the academic life world are now like an e-commerce or e-governance transaction. Hence, the CDDC is now only one of many nodes for being digital in an institution that largely engages with itself, its own, and all others elsewhere as digital beings (Luke, 2003).

The open source ethos of the Center for Digital Discourse and Culture has been, and continues to be, one of diversity and perhaps even disruption. This ethos is centered more on participation, accessibility, and sharing in a fashion that the closed copyright standards of print were meant to find disturbing (Lessig, 2004). Yet, more and more intellectual production circulates within huge corporate-controlled publication machines intent upon integrating even more titles into their vast and varied suites of titles. Perched within the conventional credo of bourgeois liberalism, their standards of value draw from the imperatives of the twentieth century culture industry in which viewing, reading, and listening publics are largely left only with a "freedom to choose what is always the same" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1998, p.266).

Comfortable conformity, basic banality, and methodological monotony, then, plague many of the print products afforded by major corporate-controlled publication. While purchased, it is never clear that many journal articles circulating under these conditions are read all that often or perhaps even ever. Once accepted, edited, and circulated, their main use comes in service as stepping-stones in which personal research agendas, professional promotions, or institutional assessments are satisfied. Frequently written more to be concentrated and counted than read and relished, the symbolic economies of most scientific, technical, and professional articles in this publishing industry sit at their ideal equilibrium (Baudrillard, 2004).

Discomforting disruption, intriguing inventiveness, or aggravating analysis, on the other hand, can be found more readily in open source publishing where the production of predictability is not valued over the heightening of heterorthodoxy. Likewise, the open source archives in which such digital creations rest are usually accessible, and the hits, downloads, and links to their materials are always identifiable. The participatory, inventive, and disruptive spirit of their creation stress the free collective quality of their production, circulation, accumulation, and consumption. And, even better, traffic statistics per item, per day, per project allow one to see they are being scanned, linked, and reprocessed into other networks of utilization (Luke, 2007). Once digitized, they are mobilized to be used, and utilized they are in frequently mobilizations on multiple lines of flight in many digital discourses and cultures.

AT PLAY WITH INFORMATION

These collected papers are critical reflections about the digitalization of discourse and culture. Certainly, the influence of this transformational change in communicative interaction has swept rapidly and widely through major universities, nation states, learned disciplines, important businesses, and government agencies during the past decade. As new information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been created, and then communities of users became interested in, enrolled by, and engaged with their communicative possibilities, informational content, or technical forms, only a few voices asked clearly and critically what it will mean. Many of the most important voices that have asked articulate, critical, and telling questions of the rapid changes brought on by the spread of ICTs are gathered here in this volume. Each author in his or her own way considers what accepting digital discourse and informational culture now means for contemporary economies, governments, and societies.

Yet, these changes are only the beginning. With desktop and laptop computers still serving as the main access portals and/or personal accumulation points of many e-texts, the reading and writing economies of digital discourse and culture are caught at a historical conjuncture for such modes of literacy. It is not unlike the last days of manuscript text production when precious, heavy, expensive tomes, scrolls, and documents rarely could leave special sites, like the manuscriptoria of courts, monasteries, or a few great universities. Embedded intelligence, smart objects, ubiquitous computing, and the so-called "m-revolution" that these systems pull together in new ICT assemblages, however, are also coming on quickly. The more fixed material links of e-texts to relatively costly, hard to move, and expensive office-proposed computers are being broken by many smaller, cheaper, multipurpose mobile wireless devices-from cell phones to e-readers to tablet computers-that can, in a fashion, approach modes of versatility, simplicity, and movability for texts comparable to the paper codex book. They are expected to number 1 billion by 2010.

In addition, these devices' integration into effective systems of monetary payment, electronic structures of personal identification, and efficient streams of

everyday life management are ramping up new streams of digital discourse and culture for densely embedded intelligence relaying information from GPS grids, RFID tags, web-enabled appliances, smart power grids, or telematic traffic controls. Once again, these clustered technical transitions underscore how thoroughly common digital discourse and culture are becoming almost invisible, but in plain sight, even though many lay and expert communities continue to regard them as exceptional rarities.

Ben Agger's contribution, "The Book Unbound," is a critical reassessment of the Internet, mobile personal digital assistants, mobile phones, and social media. His appreciation of the materiality of different media ecologies leads to incisive remarks about how the practices of reading and writing are changing rapidly as writers and readers adapt to these new communications media. Echoing classic Marxian worries from the Frankfurt School, Agger sees all that once was solid and separate disappearing, as well as merging, into wireless bits spinning in the air.

Mark Poster addresses parallel concerns in his "Culture, Media, and Globalization" as he explores how different communicative devices and their articulated networks of communication alter the nature of individual subjectivity and collective identity. Looking at the linguistic turn in philosophy, the spreading impact of cultural, economic, and technological globalization, and the new media that advance these globalist shifts in politics with their coincident linguistic turns, he concludes that it is now time for all critics to bring "the information machines" (or ICTs) of modern life under very close critical scrutiny.

Doug Kellner's "Barack Obama and Celebrity Spectacle" brings Agger and Poster's critical apprehensions together. With his rereading of how Barack Obama-the 2008 Democratic Party presidential nominee and national electoral victor for the President-was, and continues to be, caught up in a now endless tabloidized, televisualized, and twitterized 24x7 media spectacle, Kellner worries about the digital bits and sound bites that bridge the worlds of popular culture and electoral politics. Arguably, this (con)fusion of worlds creates considerable electoral sizzle on the campaign trail, but then also sparks endless snooping for any sitting presidential administration that degrades effective governance via scandal mongering, gossip generation, and disinformation drives. The degree to which Poster's information machines now power contemporary politics, and the limits that Agger sees flowing from a public that increasingly reads and writes tweets, e-mails, and weblogs as their political discourse are disturbing developments for a truly democratic society that Kellner's essay affirms. Such a world arguably emboldens politicians who loosely delight in "going rogue" rather than those who deliberate carefully in close ties of advise-and-consent.

The impact of the Internet on literature is a major zone of inventive activity for digital discourse development as the papers by Falco, Opie, Hall, and Swiss all attest. Falco's *"The New River:* Collected Editor's Notes" is a project in "e-literature" that antedated CDDC by a few years, and it has been a signature publication for the Center since its inception. As a site for wholly born-digital literary work with hypertextual and multimedia applications, *The New River* is an excellent example of this aesthetic practice made possible in the world of digital discourse on culture.

Brian Opie's "Textscapes and Landscapes" is a fascinating study on postcolonial analyses of literature. It looks at the writings of British poet William Golder and his writings in and on New Zealand after his arrival in Wellington during 1840. A writer whose work otherwise would be hard to access, Opie's analysis of his poetry is an example of how electronic publishing makes possible a wider reception of writers like Golder. In addition, Opie explores how electronic text centers, like the one he recently helped launch in New Zealand, spark new research about "the text" itself, the audience it addresses, and the context in which it is received. Swiss's brief meditation, "The Unexpected Pleasures of Collaboration," on electronic collaborative writing; Wittkower's study of "cuteness" in the aesthetics of online design, websites, and traffic; and Thomas's reflections about the evolution of hyperlinks in code, "From Gunny Sacks to Mattress Vine," as textual devices, and for writing online in general, are also significant interventions on how different aspects of digital discourse and culture "get done" as coded assemblages of objects and elements.

Hall's exploration of "Fluid Notes on Liquid Books" as flexible, open networks of scholarship is an excellent example of the scholarship that CDDC has sought to promote as it was launched in the mid-1990s with the Virginia Tech Cyberschool. In reaction to the turbulence being experienced by traditional publishers, Hall is one of the key leaders working with the *Culture Machine* series of The Open Humanities Press to rethink and then remake the print codex book into a more complex instance of digital discourse for a global culture.

In turn, Guédon's "Text as Technology" is a focused analysis of how reading and writing on electronic reading and writing technologies can alter the text as the genres of "liquid books," "e-literature," or "digital art" become more common cultural artifacts. The proprietary struggle over the design, sale, and use of dedicated e-book readers is a struggle between major corporate enterprises rather than big ideas as Sony, Google, Amazon.com, Adobe, Barnes and Noble, Apple, and Microsoft all duke it out over who will be left standing to build the best black box for accumulating, accessing, and authoring electronic texts. Yet, the media ecology in which that ultimate ethical success might occur, as Guedon notes, is yet to emerge and stabilize itself. Until it does, and then even more so after, sites like CDDC will be essential for digital discourse and culture to thrive.

Fox, Srinivasan, and McMillan recount the development of what they see as "open scholarship and open systems" in their "Electronic Thesis and Dissertations: Progress, Issues, and Prospects." As pioneering leaders in the transition from traditional bound paper dissertations to contemporary electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs), the authors expertly reassess the progress these types of scholarly communication represent. Yet, at the same time, they are attentive to the problematic issues caused for individual scholars, specific universities, and the academic world in general, first, by opening and, then, accelerating new packets of knowledge for a more rapid and widespread movement of such digitized research results.

Peters very thoroughly examines the merits of "openness" per se as a value in academic life as well as commercial enterprise in his "Open Works, Open Cultures,

and Open Learning Systems." Returning to Umberto Eco and Ludwig Wittgenstein, Peters sees a continuing struggle in modern history between free open culture and proprietary closed culture that pitches the merits of a more equitable open education system against the less liberatory closed control of information favored traditionally by many companies, the nation state, and major universities.

Hunsinger parallels some of the history in this introduction, but goes beyond it. He describes the engagements that the Center for Digital Discourse and Culture has had in the world, our efforts to build systems, and provide services to the broader community. He highlights the importance of our engagement with academic processes of legitimation of digital work and promotion. This chapter provides insights into the past and future of academic work as digital works.

One of the most tangible expressions of closed guild privileges in the educational system is, of course, the institution of academic tenure for professorial faculty. Schatzki in "Digital Research and Tenure & Promotion in Colleges of Arts and Sciences: A Thought Piece" examines how the infiltration of online, electronic, or digital discourse into scholarly communication creates a valorization problem, if not a legitimacy crisis, for many disciplines that have not already made a transition to open access archives, like physics, mathematics, or computing sciences. While there are no definitive solutions, Schatzki encourages the liberal arts to emulate some practices begun by early entrants into digital discourse among the natural sciences.

The chapter that Timothy Luke and Jeremy Hunsinger produced exhibits some of the central problems that institutions face in the digital age. Ostensibly it is about citizenship, research institutions, research funding, and the transformations of assumptions in the European Union, but each of those issues occurs in parallel fashion in many of our institutions today. Higher education is continually challenged with neo-liberal agendas such as privatization, the transformations of ownerships and rights, and the construction of consumption as its dominant narrative. Bringing these issues to light, through this chapter is a necessary addition to recontextualize many of the arguments we have in higher education today.

Timothy Luke's chapter, "Reweaving the World: The Web as Digital Discourse and Culture," expresses some summary thoughts by returning to Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* Part prophecy, part pathos, and part philosophy, Lyotard's quirky 1979 report on "the knowledge society" anticipates many aspects of digital discourse and culture. Today, as various scholars call for the creation of "Web science," it is important to recall that the opening of the electronic frontier as well as the freeing of information always occurs within the containments of cybernetic command, control, and communication. As the Web has rewoven the world, its nexus of power is such that one always finds that knowledge is continuously on report, being relentlessly put to work, and supposedly inventing the future. And, its goal is not to discern truth, because its truths are already disclosed in the practices and processes of performativity (Luke, 2003, p. 272–283).

In some sense, Birkerts's (1994) anxieties about the proliferation of ICTs as well as the intensification of computer-mediated communication that this

technological change brings have come to pass as "the primary human relations-to space, time, nature, and other people—have been subjected to a warping pressure that something new under the sun. . . we have created the technology that now only enables us to change our basic nature, but that is making such change all but inevitable" (p. 15). Of course, many other new information (and noninformation) as well as communication (or noncommunication) technologies also cause certain concrete changes that could exert warping pressures, but it is fair for Birkerts to wonder if those changes are truly inevitable distorting and fundamental. Without the same sense of nostalgic loss, these papers take us on a parallel course to Birkerts's elegies. Although it is the case for these authors that some see much less inevitability, some deeply doubt the distortion, and some roundly dispute the fundamentalist assumptions Birkerts expresses, all note how our immediate interactions in space and time as well as with nature and people are changed. Most, then, of these examinations of digital discourse and culture are careful reflections about the radical and fundamental changes in what Turkle (1997, p. 17) labels the "interface values" of different media. Whatever interface values Birkerts experienced with print are at the heart of his anxious polemics; but, so too, all must realize that the interface values of digital discourses and cultures mediated by ICTs are what each of these authors ask us carefully to reconsider. While not all of them accept the changes with unfettered enthusiasm, each sees there is much to be learned on its own terms in these new digital environments.

APPENDIX A

http://etd.vt.edu/index.html
Virginia Tech has had an international leadership role in ETD initiatives since the 1980s, leading to its January 1, 1997, mandate that graduate students submit their theses and dissertations online. A collaboration between the Graduate School and the University Libraries, VT ETDs are available through the ETD database and Addison, the library's online catalog. VT's ETDs and others are also linked from the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations and other resources.

A primary goal of ETD initiatives is to make the research and scholarship conducted by graduate students freely and openly accessible. Another goal is to give future academics opportunities to prepare electronic works such as book chapters, journal articles, and conference presentations, assuming that they will be publishing electronically in the future also. Yet another goal is to expand the medium of expression for graduate research and scholarship to more than words and figures that can be reproduced on paper, to other media, including audio and video. There are awards available for outstanding ETDs.

In addition to the information on this Web site, consult the Graduate School's deadlines. There are also FAQs (frequently asked questions) about the submission process and copyright.

For more background on the ETD initiative, see this letter to students and the definition of an ETD.

For additional information or assistance, contact

VT Graduate School ETD Coaches: gradappl@vt.edu or (540) 231–8636 Gail McMillan, Director. Digital Library and Archives: gailmac@vt.edu

APPENDIX B

http://www.cddc.vt.edu/cyber/docs/whitepapers /digitalpress.html
Policy Recommendations IV
Virginia Tech Cyberschool
"Developing a VT Digital Press for the University"
Len Hatfield and Timothy W. Luke, Coordinators, Cyberschool
August 6, 1997

During the Spring 1997 semester, the Cyberschool faculty discussed the issues surrounding the mandatory requirement in the Graduate School of submitting theses and dissertations electronically for digital archiving and distribution. In addition, the Cyberschool I and II Coordinators—Tim Luke and Len Hatfield—participated in the campus forum on electronics theses and dissertations (ETD), which was staged by the Center for Science and Technology Studies on April 5, 1997. As a result of these discussions, we want to recommend the University establish a new kind of academic publishing operation, a peer-reviewed, web-based digital press, to support Information Age scholarship.

At this juncture, most master's and doctoral candidates are anxious about the ETD process because many print publishers now regard any electronic publishing of graduate research projects as a prior publication. Therefore, they will not accept ETDs for professional review at their print journals, monograph series or book publishing houses. This response adversely affects Virginia Tech's graduate students as academic professionals who want to begin accumulating refereed publications, and as scholarly researchers who wish to circulate their research findings as quickly and widely as possible among their peers. While the decision to impose this mandatory requirement was necessary from the perspective of the Graduate School, this necessity is proving harmful to graduate students in several of the University's master's and doctoral programs. Adoption of new, flexible rules for releasing ETDs to the larger world at staggered times and with greater or less scope have helped, but these policies only respond to the dictates of print publishing practices, and don't begin building the foundation for the new forms of publishing that are emerging in the digital domain.

Consequently, the Cyberschool faculty believe that the University should leverage its innovative ETD practices in another set of creative moves, namely, establishing a completely digital, web-based press. Eventually encompassing the existing Scholarly Publications Project, this operation could provide fully refereed, rigorously edited, and professionally legitimated publishing outlets for Virginia Tech graduate students as well as the graduates of other institutions in the larger ETD consortium around the nation. This would require a series of periodical publications in several disciplines as well as a sample of book-length studies in any

discipline the press chooses to highlight. Existing on-line journals now published at Virginia Tech could be brought under the wing of the digital press, and the University also could begin contracting with various print publications to issue digital web-based versions of their journals.

Implementing these recommendations as soon as possible requires some definite decisions to be made soon. The editorial focus, staffing, and policies of the digital press would need to be resolved in fairly short order. In turn, the technical support capabilities, financial basis, and physical location of the digital press staff also would need to be determined. Once these questions were answered, however, this move should produce many useful benefits for the University. These would include:

– *Scholarly and Scientific Prestige*: Creating the first all digital web-based university press in the nation, if not the world, will once again demonstrate the University's leading place in the Information Age. While some university presses are making a few journals and archives available on-line, none have resolved to offer their material entirely in web-based or machine-readable forms. Virginia Tech could set the standards for future forms of scholarly publishing by creating this digital press.

– *Transforming Publication Practices*: Providing digital publication outlets on a permanent basis with internationally respected editors and high production values could help change the academic publishing industry and scholarly career paths. Unless and until some well-known university makes this move, things will remain stuck where they are. Here Virginia Tech could use its leading position in computer-mediated instruction to change how on-line publication is viewed and, in turn, thereby alter how academics publish their work, how society stores scientific information, and how publishers vend their products.

– *Transforming Publication Possibilities*: Not only would digital publication help to change faculty assessment practices, but it also offers faculty new genres (such as hypertext) and new media (multi-media combinations of graphics, audio, and sound materials) in which to present their scholarly work. These changes have the potential to fundamentally change the practices of scholarly communication itself across the disciplines. If we hope to affect the general quality of material being published digitally, we must take the lead in this vital area.

– *Economic Development*: Building a digital press could be a tremendously productive new industrial initiative for the local University community. Editors, production staff, computer support technicians as well as designers, marketing personnel, and software application experts all will be needed to make a VT Digital Press a working reality. This operation could be located at first in the ACITC (now Torgerson or later at the CRC (Corporate Research Center) as its operations grow in scope and number. These products also could provide a considerable source of revenue to the University or some new closely held corporation responsible for the VT digital press.

– *Recruiting Benefits*: Positioning a digital press at the heart of the University's new strategic planning for becoming an international leader in the use of information technology for university instruction, research and administration

should greatly assist graduate student and faculty recruitment. As digital web-based publishing comes to dominate many scientific, humanistic, and professional disciplines, Virginia Tech's faculty and students will be the most conversant and familiar with these modes of academic communication. Anyone who wants to be a leader in these forms of academic publishing and scholarly communication, therefore, would want to begin at Virginia Tech.

These are, of course, only some of the potential benefits of establishing a VT Digital Press. We recognize that this initiative is a major undertaking; still, with the ETD policies of the Graduate School, the University already is taking bold steps in this direction. This move would add to the University's prestige, assist our graduate students in their professional development, change existing markets for academic publication, provide a potential for economic growth, and boost our graduate and faculty recruitment capabilities. We would be happy to discuss this proposal further with anyone, and we hope that the University could begin planning and preparation for a VT Digital Press to be fully up and running by the time the ACITC opens in 1999.

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BEN AGGER

THE BOOK UNBOUND

Reconsidering One-Dimensionality in the Internet Age

The printing press helped end the Middle Ages. The Internet is on the verge of ending books, as we have come to know them. By "book" I mean considered reflection on the world that is produced as a readable object. To be sure, computer downloads may count as books, even if they remain only on the screen. But books, to earn that name, must be considered slowly and at a certain distance from everyday life. They must have a spine, which holds them and their arguments together. For a book to have a spine promises distance from the everyday world required to consider its writing carefully and to formulate a rejoinder, the essence of dialogical democracy and community.

The decline of books is paralleled and reinforced by the ascendance of the mobile phone, which "sublates" (negates, preserves, transcends) the laptop computer and traditional telephones. BlackBerries and iPhones allow for, indeed, they compel, compulsive connectivity, combining talking, texting, blogging, and surfing in a portable unit even smaller than a paperback book. People author their lives using phones, which allow typing, but this writing for the most part immerses them in everyday life and does not allow them to gain distance from it. Users do not compose; they chat, spewing forth what Adorno (1973a) called the "jargon of authenticity," his early critique of subject-centered philosophies such as existentialism. The unbinding of texts, replaced by multitasking phones, represents the triumph of connection over thought, perhaps a natural outcome of postmodern alienation.

The shift from reading bound books while sitting or slouching to reading books on the computer screen—or not reading at all—constitutes an important moment of the shift from modern to postmodern, from Fordism to post-Fordism, from reason to its eclipse. I want to avoid ontological condemnation here; one can stare at the screen, even at the risk of postural pain and problems, and treat pixilated argument in the same way one considers pulp. But in staring at the screen one is tethered to the technology. And one loses the sense of the book as a totality of sense and sentience—held in one's hand, thumbed through, dog-eared, annotated, read and re-read endlessly. I shudder to think of reading Adorno's (1973b) *Negative Dialectics* on the screen.

But those are not the only problems involved in the unbinding of books. Not only does reading change, but writing changes. Given the attentional and postural challenges of reading off the screen, whether the iPhone, laptop or desktop, writing simplifies itself, both in form and content. Text messaging is an example here, as keystrokes are restricted to around 150. Try composing a text containing the word

"epistemology" more than once! Younger writers resort to emoticons and the quickspeak of acronyms in order to compress their arguments. This is strange because a literary political economy would seem to promise almost unlimited text in an electronic public sphere. At issue is not just the restriction of keystrokes but the restriction of attention, which attenuates in a post-textual age.

The history of the book has been well-discussed and continues to be of great interest as we enter a post-textual age. Of particular concern has been the impact of printing, publishing and librarianship on readers and writers, a central feature of modernization as we know it. Scholars, including historians, students of library science, and even social and cultural theorists have written voluminously on these issues. There is even an academic journal, *Book History,* devoted to these matters. Dahl (1958) offers a history of books, while later, more theoretically-inflected treatments, such as Hall's (1996), examine the book as a vital component of culture.

The advent of the Internet seems to change everything, or does it? Turkle (1995) examines identity as people acquire their worlds and meanings from the computer screen, while Luke (1989) and Poster (2001) examine power and domination as these are increasingly screened, pixilated. I (Agger, 1990) have written about literary political economies, tying writing and other cultural issues to Marxist theory. The Frankfurt School first opened these questions when they (e.g., Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972) introduced the concept of the culture industry, a Marxist opening to what later came to be called cultural studies.

The rise and decline of the book contains a fateful dialectic. As global cultural dissemination has been attained in our post-Fordist moment, we can get out the message but we have lost the distance of books from the realities they describe and discuss. Overcoming physical distance seems to have reduced critical distance required to appraise the world rigorously. It is fundamentally different to read a Wikipedia entry than an old-fashioned encyclopedia entry, to read an electronic book than the real thing, to read email or text messages than letters from yesteryear. Near-instantaneity has reduced the time it takes to compose and then read and interpret writing. This fateful foreshortening tracks the rise and decline of the book, which originally liberated Europe from myth and misery. Perhaps it is enough to say that the Enlightenment has gone too far, or, better, that it was short-circuited and diverted—the original argument made by Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) in *Dialectic of Enlightenment.*

My analysis is awash in nostalgia, even for my own earlier literary career, when I read and wrote books that inserted themselves in the ongoing conversations about social and cultural theory. To be sure, I still read and write, but one has the nagging sense that we are writing for a very few and not for thousands and even millions. Doug Kellner asked me recently whether I thought the Internet was the way to go as far as publishing, of books and journals, was concerned.

Part of me values the Internet as nearly frictionless and accessible, a vehicle of cyberdemocracy. But the Nietzchean/Adornoian worrywart in me frets that this will only deepen one-dimensionality, an ability to rise out of the muck and ooze and think the world otherwise. It is easy to conceptualize the Internet as a surrounding, deboundarying ether in which critique harmlessly gets absorbed, or,

alternatively, to view the Internet as edgy and indie, a perfect vehicle for the long march through the institutions.

My neurotic Adornoian temperament is probably justified, given the trajectories of capitalism since the 19th century. An iPodified, laptop capitalism is "totally administering," to borrow the Frankfurt phrase. That is, it contains the tendency of total administration. Weirdos—"difference," in Derridean—slip through the cracks and even occasionally flourish. Non-one-dimensional thought abounds here and there— sometimes in Europe, occasionally in Eugene, Ann Arbor, or Austin.

But the exceptions prove the rule: capitalism unleashes "domination," Marcuse's (1964) one-dimensionality, in order to keep people in line politically and in line at the malls— now, of course, both in line literally and also online, a post-Fordist vehicle of commodity consumption.

Even before the Internet became an ether, in 1989 to be exact, I wrote along these lines in *Fast Capitalism* (Agger, 1989), which tracked the decline of discourse as the end of the book. In a sense, things have gotten worse—my Adornoian phrasings, above. In a sense, they may also have gotten slightly better—my answer to Kellner, who probably shares my ambivalence. Indeed, Kellner and I dislike aspects of the traditional pulp/publishing world, already named the culture industry by Horkheimer and Adorno. Part of one-dimensionality is banality, but banality driven by the relentless logic of the market, which both reflects and reproduces a moronic culture. Although that might sound pejorative and even mandarin (a consistent critique of Adorno's aesthetic theory), by "moronic culture" I am using a technical term to describe the reduction of thought and hence culture to clichés, tropes, simple sentences—exactly what we observe as we track the decline of a public intellectual life (see Jacoby, 1987).

Who were the first morons, publishers and writers or readers? In a sense, it is does not matter; these agents are arrayed dialectically. Publishers claim that the market (readership) made them do it, publishing banal, uncritical works. Authors contend that their challenging prose has been domesticated needlessly. Curmudgeonly readers lament that they can find very little worth reading.

Transitions:

- People read via the Internet, downloading information and entertainment.
- Bookstores are in decline, and independent booksellers and publishers are failing.
- People write—blogging, texting, messaging, posting—but many epistles and screeds float off into cyberspace, not matched by accompanying readings.
- Writing in pulp formats is increasingly formulaic and scripted, parodying the prevailing norms of the market.
- In academia, people write in order to get published, not to get read. Technical language abounds.
- The decline of public intellectuals is matched, and hastened, by the decline of public readers curious about the state of the world and passionate about changing it.

- The Internet affords access and enhances accessibility, where it is not commodified.
- The post-textual replaces dense and closely argued prose with images that summarize, simplify and stimulate. Much Internet traffic involves the imaging of bodies and sexuality.
- Publishers, both trade and academic, feel compelled to publish what will sell. Niche books lose their footing.
- Marketing replaces editorial development as an activity of publishers and journalists who feel the pinch of the Internet and printing on demand.

These transitions cause the rate of intelligence (Jacoby, 1976) to fall, and discourse to decline. This is not to draw a firm boundary around the post-Gutenberg, pre-lnternet era, when books prevailed. There was always the tendency, within that era, for culture industries to commodify writing and banalize writing. And the spread of the Internet, since the late 1980s, did not instantly cause publishing houses to shut down and library budgets to shrink. These are boundary crossings, tendencies. Diligent scribes still compose for pulp publication and use the Internet for the dissemination of considered writing, writing at a distance.

But these transitions represent powerful tendencies for the book to come unbound, for publishing to become entertainment, and for the very acts of writing to change—composition becoming twittering, posting, texting. Even the blog, perhaps the more traditional postmodern form of literary craftsmanship, is designed more to be written than to be read. After all, few care about your cat in Topeka or your tumultuous dating life or your views of Obama and Palin.

Celebrants of the Internet (e.g., Negroponte, 1996) talk about digital democracy. To be sure, connectivity could expand the New England town meeting to a global polity. It could also break through the walls of the local library and even the Library of Congress. Everything would be available, and every voice could be heard. And the opportunity to blog, text, and twitter makes each of us an author.

Although these tendencies exist—I co-edit an electronic journal and rely on the Internet for communication and as a research tool—there are powerful countertendencies, such as *commodification* and *conformity,* identified by Marx and the Frankfurt School as the tendencies of the "logic of capital." Lukacs (1971) and the Frankfurt School amplified Marx's 19th century argument in explaining why the socialist revolution that he reasonably expected got side-tracked. Their answers lay within Marx (1970) himself, notably his argument about false consciousness—a systematic belief system that fundamentally misrepresents the world and foreshortens the person's freedom, unnecessarily.

First Lukacs in his concept of reification and then the Frankfurters in their writings about domination and the culture industry argued that false consciousness has been deepened, especially in a post-WWII consumer culture. The sale of commodities necessary for survival are not sufficient to sustain capitalism. Now, capitalism must inculcate "false needs," encouraging people to spend beyond their means using credit on indulgences and entertainments. These false needs are re-defined as necessary, both because one must keep up with the neighbors and

because technological prostheses (think of television, the Internet, cell phones, automobiles) are portrayed as inevitable concomitants of "modernity"—what people must have and use in order to be modern or, perhaps, postmodern.

One might define postmodernity as the eclipsing of books, basic needs, Fordist factories, boundaried nation states. The postmodern can be celebrated as 'globalization,' in which the Internet plays a major role, but a Marxist notices that globality is simply the continuation of class struggle by other means. Marx and Lenin already understood international imperialism and colonialism as essential for European and American capitalism. The outsourcing of jobs, commodities, and culture to the Third World perpetuates uneven development, on which capitalism rests.

What is genuinely different about this scenario from when Marx and Lenin were writing is that countries such as China combine economic development with political authoritarianism. Marx thought that industrialization would bring democracy, although a spurious representative kind that would collapse under the weight of inevitable economic crisis and lead to real democracy of the communes and the Soviets. China and Russia demonstrate that Marx and Lenin's developmental scenarios were not exhaustive of historical possibilities. These countries combine economic development—consumer capitalism, the Internet, culture industries—with political illiberalism, suggesting that there are alternative models of modernist development, some of which might be termed postmodern. China and Russia might be 'post' in the sense that they outlive Marx's and the Frankfurt School's essentially Hegelian optimism about world-historical Reason as materialized in communism. Habermas (1987) extends this Utopian tradition by urging the completion of the project of modernity, not its abandonment. But capitalist connectivity is not necessarily accompanied by democracy, justice, a universal regime of Reason.

Indeed, what we are seeing, and not only in modernist/authoritarian regimes but also in the parliamentary west, is an admixture of consumer and entertainment capitalism, based on highly portable connectivity, and massive de-politicization and anti-intellectualism. People chatter and stay connected, but about ephemera—precisely the concern of the Frankfurt School in their culture-industry and one-dimensionality arguments, and as amplified by Jacoby, myself, and others who discuss the decline of discourse in a fast, perhaps arguably postmodern capitalism. Habermas (1989) addresses these issues as he discusses the structural transformations of the public sphere in late capitalism.

The tea leaves are difficult to read. The thesis of the eclipse of reason founders on the evidence that this is among the most literary of ages, at least if one simply tallies keystrokes per day per person. People of all generations, such as the young using MySpace and Facebook, produce thousands of words a day as they get and stay connected. Are these words ideas? There is no reason they cannot be. To be sure, they don't usually achieve Adornoian distance in the quickspeak and code of instant messaging and texting. Adorno would not have sanctioned "ticket thinking" such as LMAO or LOL. He wouldn't have endorsed the use of emoticons. Perhaps this is a stodgy point of view in today's fast world, in which the text message replaces the paragraph.

Both things could be true at once: there is a monumental and global dumbing down; but there is also frenetic literary activity as people write—both their 'selves' and in connecting to others. How ought we to read the compulsion to write and reach out? A technological determinist might simply note that the technology is there to be used, and we use it, much as supposedly labor-saving vacuum cleaners after WWII actually increased women's labor. But I think there is something deeper, especially among the young. This busy writing constitutes *prison code,* a tapping on the walls of their cells as young people create a world below the adult radar screen, both in protest and in the building of community (see Agger forthcoming).

To use the pre-post-Fordist Marxist language, these busy scribes—bloggers, texters, twitterers, posters—are alienated and they are responding by writing their alienation. They communicate in code because they don't want parents and their teachers to have access. These are the language games of rebellion, even if Marx and Adorno could have scarcely imagined a proletariat comprising generation X,Y, Zers who constitute a pre-labor force, kept busy by a long school day, homework, and extracurricular activities positioning them to succeed in the adult credentialed world.

The adolescent lumpenproletariat (Agger & Shelton, 2007) is matched by alienated adults who spend much of their waking time online. A postmodern deboundarying also affects the thinning boundary between work and home/family/leisure. Phones that double as computers allow the sort of fast literary craftsmanship I am talking about. Adults sit side by side in waiting rooms working with their computer/phones. Paid work and unpaid activities bleed into each other as people open multiple windows and bounce back and forth between what, in an earlier modernity, were physically and temporally separate spheres.

I just purchased my first cell phone—a $20 "go" phone that I fill with purchased minutes. My kids urged me into postmodernity, and I taught a course on fast capitalism when I made the buy. I told my children and my students that I'd give it a month in order to see whether my life changed in significant ways!

Perhaps predictably, the phone is already an alienation: I have to keep track of it, and it compels me to answer it and to check messages. It creates work and sucks up time, even as, one must concede, there are certain efficiencies and utilities, such as keeping track of my kids and communicating with my wife. But I waited until I was 56 to do this. I remained pre-postmodern, and I don't think I was missing out on much.

Americans are said to watch four hours of television a day. Perhaps this number will remain constant, but I suspect it could decline, now that people can, in effect, write their lives using rapid information and communication technologies. These tools suck up time, perhaps borrowed from paid work, television, parenting, sleep. Books were never this compelling, except when we found a good read that we couldn't put down. We could always dog-ear the page and come back to it. Indeed, not reading straight through heightened our anticipation of plot development and denouement.

Adorno wanted writing to be dialectical, mirroring the contradictions of the world. Music (Adorno 1973c) of a certain kind (for him, Arnold Schoenberg's compositions) could do the same thing, allowing us to approach 'truth' by remaining distant. His own sentences were models of allusion and indirection. One has to work at them in order to understand the ways in which they track the world.

The unbinding of books is itself a dialectical phenomenon. It cheapens the production of books, and yet it also attenuates writing and attention. Literary life on the screen is thin, even one-dimensional, unless we download, staple and even bind. And even if we do that, we are assuming that writing remains distant, not sausaged into a few hundred keystrokes and littered with computer code and emoticons. Literary life is impoverished in comparison to writing before the Internet, even if "publication" in the broad sense of getting your wares out there is less expensive.

Must books have spines? Must authors have spines? A tentative yes to the first question and an emphatic yes to the second. The globalizing, instantaneizing technologies of cultural production and transmission need to be historicized, viewed in the contexts of the pre- and post-Gutenberg worlds. Setting type changed the world, and now hitting 'send' and 'save' may have even greater impact.

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GARY HALL

FLUID NOTES ON LIQUID BOOKS

The following speculations on the future of digital scholarship and open media, and the potential they hold for transforming the geopolitics of knowledge, arise out of my work on a series of performative media projects I am tentatively describing as "media gifts." These projects, which operate at the intersections of art, theory and new media, are *gifts* in the sense they function as part of what has come to be known as the academic gift economy, whereby research is circulated *for free* rather than as intellectual property or market commodities that are bought and sold. They are *performative* in that they are concerned not so much with representing or providing a picture *of* the world as acting *in the world* (Austin, 1962). In other words, my primary focus with these projects is *not* on *studying* the world and categorizing what I have found in order to arrive at an answer to the question "What exists?" and then, say, proclaiming that we have moved from the closed spaces of disciplinary societies to the more spirit or gas-like forces of the societies of control, as Gilles Deleuze (1997) would have it; or from a modernity characterized by fixed and solid structures to the uncertain, liquid modernity Zygmunt Bauman describes (see Bauman, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006). Of course, ontological studies of this kind can be extremely important. Nevertheless, different forms of communication have different effectivities and I often wonder about the effectivity of such analyses.

I regard these media gifts more as instances of media and mediation that endeavor to produce the effects they name or things of which they speak, and which are engaged primarily through their enactment or performance.[1] They are a way of practicing an *affirmative* media theory or media philosophy, in which analysis and critique are not abandoned but perhaps take more creative, inventive forms. (Just as I cannot entirely avoid offering a picture of the world with these projects, and nor do I wish to, so many of them contain substantial amounts of analysis and critique.) The different gifts in the series thus each in their own way experiment with the potential new media technologies hold for making affective, singular interventions in the "here" and "now."

Currently, the series contains at least ten media gifts. They include an open access archive[2]; a project exploring new ways of organizing cultures, communities, and even countries[3]; a series of internet television programmes[4]; and an experiment investigating some of the implications of internet piracy through the creation of an actual "pirate' text (see Hall, 2009a). The notes presented here concentrate on one of these gifts: the "liquid book" I am currently writing, editing, and curating with Clare Birchall. Part of the *Culture Machine* Liquid Books series we are editing for Open Humanities Press, this project explores some of the forms and shapes the

book can take when it is produced by open, collaborative communities of scholars, researchers and librarians.[5]

The idea for Liquid Books initially came about as a response to a request Clare Birchall and I received from a publisher to produce a follow-up to our print-on-paper edited collection, *New Cultural Studies: Adventures in Theory* (Hall & Birchall, 2006). This follow-up was to consist of a reader gathering together and making easily accessible a number of important texts by some of the theorists discussed in that earlier volume: Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Friedrich Kittler, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Slavoj Žižek, and so forth. While we could understand that such a reader might have a certain usefulness, it seemed to us that to turn the idea of "new cultural studies" into a fixed and stable concept or brand would be to rather miss the point of what we and our fellow contributors were trying to achieve with that 2006 book: particularly its commitment to a performative cultural studies, and emphasis on the need for cultural studies to experiment with creating events and new forms of practice, action, and organization.

That is why we have decided to put together what we are calling a liquid book instead.[6] What we are doing is collecting texts by some of the theorists discussed in *New Cultural Studies,* along with others we would include if we *were* to produce a second print-on-paper volume, by writers such as Maurizio Lazzarato, N. Katherine Hayles, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Isabelle Stengers. Rather than publish this new collection as a conventional print-on-paper book, however, we are publishing it online as *New cultural studies: The liquid theory reader.*[7]

There are at least five additional reasons why we wanted to experiment with publishing a book in this way. First, doing so allows us to challenge the physical and conceptual limitations of the traditional edited codex book, not least by including more (and less) than just book chapters and journal articles, as is normally the case with readers. We also have the freedom to include whole books within our liquid book. (The Bible is an illustrious predecessor in this respect.)[8] There is also the possibility of including shorts extracts and samples from books, along with pages, snippets, references, quotations, annotations, tags, links to related material, even podcasts and You Tube clips, as well different versions and drafts of our Liquid Reader.

Second, this experiment in publishing a book online enables us to elude many of the problems scholars are likely to encounter when trying to publish a research-led book with a conventional print-on-paper press. For economic reasons, relatively few academic publishers are particularly interested in research monographs or even edited collections these days, let alone work that appears to be "difficult" or "experimental." For the most part it is accessible textbooks, introductions, course readers, and reference works that academic publishers now want to see in print. Producing a book electronically in this fashion also has the advantage of allowing us to creatively explore some of the limits and possibilities of the general move toward publishing and disseminating academic work online. It is an issue that has become particularly relevant in the light of recent developments that include the introduction of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in the United Kingdom,[9]

bibliometrics, open access, Google Book Search,[10] and the increasing popularity of hand-held electronic book readers such as Amazon's Kindle and Sony's Reader.

Interestingly, with regard to the latter, electronic book readers are often perceived as being more environmentally friendly than buying lots of different books made out of dead trees that have often had to be physically transported huge distances, because a single item can be (re)used to read a library's worth of titles, all of them moved digitally. Things are not quite as simple as they may initially seem in this respect, however. For instance, it was recently reported in the UK press (Johnson, 2009) that with "more than 1.5 billion people online around the world...the energy footprint of the net is growing by more than 10% each year." It was also claimed that "while the demand for electricity is a primary concern, a secondary result of the explosion of internet use is that the computer industry's carbon debt is increasing drastically... leapfrogging other sectors like the airline industry that are more widely known for their negative environmental impact," One study even went so far as to suggest that "U.S. data centres used 61bn kilowatt hours of energy in 2006... enough to supply the whole of the United Kingdom for two months..." (p. 13). So it remains to be seen just what, if any, green credentials can be claimed for liquid books.

Be that as it may, it looks like the standard print-on-paper reader may be more or less redundant soon, as it is being progressively supplemented (if not entirely replaced) by the more fluid texts online publishing makes possible. Indeed, is something akin to what the music, television, and film industries have been going through for quite some time now likely to happen to scholarly publishing—if it is not doing so already, with academics increasingly making their research available for others to access and read online in a variety of forms and formats, and not just in the print-on-paper codex book or journal? Without doubt, it is going to be interesting to see how long the print-on-paper reader-come-doorstop volume remains with us. As California State Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has posited with regard to school-age students in America, "Today our kids get their information from the internet downloaded onto their iPods, and in Twitter feeds to their cell phones." All of which has led him to ask: "So why are California's public school students still forced to lug around antiquated, heavy, expensive textbooks?" (cited in Pidd, 2009, p. 7). Certainly, university students are already disinclined to purchase such texts. This is partly due to issues of cost brought on by rising student debt, and partly due to the fact that they are used to getting whatever aspects of culture and information they need for free online, and so do not understand why they should have to pay for heavy hardware objects such as academic textbooks. But this reluctance also has to do with the way in which, as the student population becomes increasingly diverse and drawn from all over the world, devising a fixed and finished print-on-paper book that meets the needs of all its potential readers is extremely difficult. As a consequence, many academics are becoming loath to recommend such readers to their students, or to ask their students to bear the cost of purchasing them, often preferring to put their own cheap, customized collections together instead in the form of course packs that are then reproduced and distributed internally within their institutions. At the same time, academics are having to think twice about the wisdom of writing and editing such readers for

publication themselves, not least because they would be unlikely to count as the kind of original research that could go toward their RAE/REF submissions and research ratings, certainly in the United Kingdom.

Making our liquid book available open access[11] is another way this project is creatively experimenting with new forms of practice and organization. This means *New Cultural Studies: The Liquid Theory Reader* is freely available on the internet, on a worldwide basis, to anyone who wants to read it, including not just other researchers, but also teachers, students, investigative journalists, policy makers, union organizers, NGOs, political activists, protest groups, and the general public. It is thus hopefully playing a role, however small, in breaking down some of the barriers between countries in the so-called developed, developing and undeveloped worlds, and so helping to overcome the Westernization of the research literature. Indeed, at the time of writing the Liquid Books project has over 70 'users' from Brazil, South Africa, Hong Kong, Lebanon, the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, among other places.

More importantly, publishing a book in this manner allows us to make it available not just as open access but under open editing and gratis, libre content conditions, too.[12] So, like the *Culture Machine* series of books to which it belongs, *The New Cultural Studies Reader* is "liquid" in the sense that not only is it open and free for anyone, *anywhere,* to read; its initial iteration is also open to users on a read/write basis. This means users can continually help compose, add to, annotate, tag, edit, translate, remix, reformat, reinvent, and reuse it, or produce alternative parallel versions of it, however they wish. In this way, the book, along with any subsequent versions, can be produced in an open, collaborative, decentralised, multi-user-generated fashion: not just by its initial "authors," "editors," "creators," or "curators," but by a multiplicity of often anonymous collaborators distributed around the world. In the process, it is hoped that a variety of interesting and challenging questions will be raised: for ideas of the book, academic authorship, the proper name, attribution, publication, citation, accreditation, fair use, quality control, peer-review, copyright, intellectual property, and content creation; and, in the case of *The New Cultural Studies Reader,* for the intellectual formation of cultural studies, too.[13]

Of course, for some this idea of books being authored and edited in a decentralized, distributed fashion may still appear to be too much of an avant-garde fantasy. Yet there has already been a dramatic decentralization of authorship of a kind - to the extent one set of recently published figures claims that, while from 1400 onwards book authorship generally increased by "nearly tenfold in each *century,*" nowadays "authorship, including books and new media, is growing nearly tenfold each *year*" (Pel Ii & Bigelow, 2009, para. 2). By the same token, a publication as mainstream as *The New York Times* has already experimented with decentralized editing - although admittedly to a more limited degree (philosophically, if not technically) than both *The Liquid Theory Reader* and the *Culture Machine* Liquid Book series is attempting to do. As the chief technology officer for digital operations at *The New York Times*, Marc Frons, wrote in 2008, they were at that point in the process of developing a 'personalization platform called MyTimes that allows you to select headlines from almost any *New York Times* section and many external sources as

well, and then arrange them on the page any way you like'. According to Frons, *The New York Times* was even planning to offer "a way to personalize a small part of the home page... so that you can see headlines from sections that would not ordinarily appear there while leaving the rest of the page intact."[14]

The latter experiment in particular has led the software and audiovisual performance artist Amy Alexander to consider the "parallel evolutions of the web and celebrity," and to speculate on some of the possible long term effects of such open, decentralized and distributed editing on the importance and value of "famous" publications such as *The New York Times.* Alexander (2008) asks:

> As the balance of power continually shifts from the mainstream media to bloggers, will online publications like *The New York Times* cease to exist - or at least diminish in importance - *as units?* Will they instead become primarily producers of individual articles, to be assembled like components into a myriad of online publications? Will we all assemble our own *New York Times* home pages - or perhaps pages comprised of articles from a number of sources? Or, more likely, will we select customized home pages assembled by our favorite lay-celeb editors -much like we read blogs by our favorite bloggers today? In other words, will today's decentralization of content production become tomorrow's decentralization of editing? TimesPeople, *The New York Times*' own social networking application, is moving toward that scenario already. Other sites, such as Newsvine,[15] allow the user community to vote their favourite story onto the front page, further decentralizing the editing process. (p. 3)

For Alexander, such a scenario would lead to a dramatic "downsizing of celebrity" - to the point where "in the future, no one will be famous." Interestingly, she includes in this process of downsizing the superstar status of an organ that is often considered to be the U.S. newspaper of record. *The New York Times* is a celebrity publication and "to be featured in the *Times* is still seen by many as an anointment of 'importance,'" Alexander (2008) writes:

> Will that same level of importance be perceived if a *New York Times* story resembles a cross between an Associated Press wire story and an RSS feed... ? By the same token, what value will [be] awarded to the appearance of an article on the front page of a site like Newsvine, where the placement decision is made by an anonymous group of readers with unknown qualifications? The public may not be ready to give up on editors completely. The shift, then, could be away from the most famous content and toward the most famous compilations - those compiled by the most famous compilers, for want of a better term. (p.3)

Alexander is careful to acknowledge that these "compilers may not commend the celebrity of a Matt Drudge" of The Drudge Report fame (p. 3).[16] But then for her we are dealing with a "downsized fame anyway," (p.3) since the unlimited spectrum space of the internet has made it easy for celebrities to proliferate - to the point where, "with so many web celebrities dividing up the public attention span, their level of celebrity must at some point drop below the threshold of 'fame'" (p.2).

An interesting question arises at this point: Could the dramatic downsizing Alexander predicts for celebrity in the future, and for the importance of famous publications such as *The New York Times,* also have implications for that of academic "stars" such as Agamben, Badiou, Kittler, Rancière, and Žižek? And, more than that, for the academic author in general? Is one of the possible long-term effects of the rapid growth in predicted authorship,[17] coupled to such open, decentralized and distributed editing, going to be a shift in power and authority here, too: not just from the academic monograph to the collection or reader, as we have seen, but from the academic author to the academic editor, curator, or compiler? And with that, will the importance and value of the famous academic publisher of known and recognized quality be similarly downsized - to the point where publishing with Harvard or Cambridge University Press, or in journals such as *Nature* or *Diacritics,* will become no more a sign of importance than appearing in *The New York Times* does in Alexander's account?

Or is there perhaps the potential for a change even more profound than that?

It is interesting that the shift in power and authority, for Alexander, is only taking place from author to editor, blogger to compiler. This is because she believes the public may not be ready to give up on editors entirely just yet. So, "instead of favorite bloggers we may have favorite compilers... for both mainstream and independent content" (p. 4). In fact, as far as she is concerned, it may become increasingly difficult to tell mainstream and independent media apart. Her reasoning is that, if all this change does take place, then "mainstream online media will likely need to produce more content to meet the demands of increasingly narrowcast compilations - making each piece of content less important. Independent compilers and compilations, on the other hand, will become more important" (p.4).

I wonder whether the recent launch in the United Kingdom of what the Daily Mail and General Trust media group's digital division, Associated Northcliffe Digital, is calling its Local People digital news network, indicate that things are indeed moving in the direction Alexander anticipates. The plan is for this network to eventually consist of "50 local websites in areas where the Daily Mail General Trust does not have a dedicated regional paper website, [in order to] provide local communities with an online platform to discuss local issues and news, and network with other people in the same area" (Ramsey, 2009, para. 1, 2). In contrast to the websites of most mainstream local newspapers, all the content on this network will be generated by its users and monitored by a community publisher. Intriguingly, Google has also started a site aimed at promoting amateur journalism: The YouTube Reporter's Centre is being billed as "a new resource to help" YouTube's enormous community of citizen journalists "learn more about how to report the news. It features some of the nation's top journalists and news organizations sharing instructional videos with tips and advice for better reporting." [18]

Certainly, it would be a relatively simple matter to argue that Alexander's point about mainstream and independent media becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish from each other is borne out by what has come to be known as the "Twitter revolution" in Iran. The narrative generally constructed is that the Iranian government's move to prevent the country's own journalists from reporting on the

protests that took place following the disputed 2009 Presidential election, coupled with the fact that the foreign news agencies had few reporters of their own on the ground, meant that the mainstream Western news media were forced to build up a picture of events using whatever information was available to them, without always being able to check it for accuracy first. Much of this information came from citizen journalists among the Iranian population. They were able to provide eyewitness reports from the front line of the demonstrations using Twitter and videos shot with mobile phone cameras and then posted on YouTube and Facebook. The most well-known of these was that capturing the death of Nedā Āghā-Soltān.[19] At the same time, independent online media such as *The Huffington Post* were able to respond rapidly to what was happening in Iran by using such citizen journalists to run live blogs, reporting events "during the riots... within minutes of them happening" (Huffington, cited in Bell, 2009, p. 81). Arianna Huffington, founder of *The Huffington Post*, has gone so far as to describe the Twitter revolution as a "defining moment for new media...You know that journalism's tectonic plates have shifted when the [U.S.] State Department is asking Twitter to postpone shutting down for scheduled repairs so that the on-the-ground citizen reporting coming out of Iran could continue uninterrupted" (Huffington, 2009, para. l). While all this has generated concern that the likes of Huffington's site are "lending credibility to potentially false information," with one tweet apparently reporting a massacre that did not actually take place," (Bell, 2009, p. 81) Huffington herself unsurprisingly denies this. In fact she goes to great pains to point out that *The Huffington Post* "employs a news editor who 'curates' reports as they come in, 'adding value' by filtering and weaving them with wire copy" (see Bell, 2009, p. 81). Yet this only serves to complicate further any attempt to distinguish between mainstream and independent online media, with independent compilers such as *The Huffington Post* - which recently overtook *The Washington Post* in terms of their respective numbers of online readers - appearing to become more important, in line with Alexander's argument.

Still, while I would to a certain degree be in favor of overturning the hierarchy that currently structures the relationship between mainstream and independent media, especially as far as academic publishing is concerned (see Hall, 2009c), it seems to me that any shift such as that anticipated by Alexander would simply replace one locus of power and authority (the author) with another (the editor or compiler). It would therefore not do much to bring the authority associated with the author into question at all; for the most part it would merely transfer that authority to a different location. Far more interesting, it seems to me, is the potential liquid texts have to raise questions for these alternative sources or rival locations of power and authority, too, so that we can rely on *neither* simply the author *nor* the editor, the blogger *nor* the compiler to provide texts with authority and validity. Rather, we have to take more rigorous and responsible decisions regarding such texts, their meaning, importance, value and quality: not least because the actors that perform these functions as either authors *or* editors are no longer always *clearly identifiable, or even always human.* Instead, when it comes to liquid texts both the

author *and* the editor functions are decentred and distributed across a multiplicity of often anonymous actors with unknown qualifications and credentials.

Even more profoundly still, it is not just the identity and authority of the author and editor that such open, decentralized and distributed editing has the potential to bring into question: it is also that of the work itself. For instance, with its use of open editing and gratis, libre content, the *Culture Machine* Liquid Books series - which recently published a second volume, *The Post-Corporate University,* written and curated by Davin Heckman (2009) - can be said to be decentering the author and editor functions by making everyone potential authors/editors. In this respect the Liquid Books project can be positioned as addressing a question raised recently by Geert Lovink (2008): Why are wikis and other online platforms not utilized more to create, develop, and change theory and theoretical concepts, instead of theory - for all its radical interrogation of concepts such as writing, the author, the subject, the human and the text, I might add - continuing to be considered, as it is now, primarily the "terrain of the sole author who contemplates the world, preferably offline, surrounded by a pile of books, a fountain pen, and a notebook" (p. 185)?[20]

Yet in his essay "What Is an Author?" Michel Foucault (1984) warns that any attempt to avoid using the concept of the individualized author to close and fix the meaning of the text risks leading to a limit and a unity being imposed on it in another way: by means of the concept of the "work" (or the personalized edition, in the case of *The New York Times,* I would suggest):

When undertaking the publication of Nietzsche's works, for example, where should one stop? Surely everything must be published, but what is 'everything'? Everything that Nietzsche published, certainly. And what about the rough drafts for his works? Obviously. The plans for his aphorisms? Yes. The deleted passages and the notes at the bottom of the page? Yes. What if, within a workbook filled with aphorisms, one finds a reference, the notation of a meeting or of an address, or a laundry list: Is it a work, or not? Why not? And so on, ad infinitum. How can one define a work amid the million traces left by someone after his death? A theory of the work does not exist, and the empirical task of those who naively undertake the editing of works often suffers in the absence of such a theory. (p. 103–4)

It is a task that has become all the more difficult as far as authors who are still alive and working today are concerned. In that case, in addition to the points Foucault makes regarding books, drafts, notes and so on, prospective editors may also have to make decisions as to whether a writer's emails, web pages, blogs, contributions to social networking sites, SMS messages, RSS feeds, and personal metrics - to cite just a few of the more obvious and cliched instances that come to mind - are to be included among their works, too. Are future editors of Žižek going to have to publish his tweets? And if not, why not? Such problems are only compounded by the fact that, as I have argued elsewhere (Hall, 2008, p. 66), the very web-like structure of the internet often makes it difficult to determine where online works begin or end. All the cutting and pasting, grafting and transplanting, internal and external linking that takes place blurs the boundaries between the text and its surroundings, its material support, but also between other media and

cultural texts, techniques, forms and genres, making such boundaries frequently impossible to determine.

We can see here how, if texts in the Liquid Books series are made available under open editing and gratis, libre content conditions, a number of rather substantial questions are opened up for conventional notions of the author. One issue that still remains to be addressed, however, concerns the extent to which the ability of users to annotate, link, tag, remix, reversion, and reinvent such liquid books actually renders untenable any attempt to impose a limit and a unity on them as "works." And what in turn are the potential consequences of such 'liquidity' for those of our ideas that depend on the concept of the 'work' for their effectivity: those concerning individualized attribution, citation, copyright, intellectual property, fair use, academic success, promotion, and so on ?[21]

Arguably, wikis provide a promising space for raising and discussing such questions, by harnessing collective intelligence and "the power of the crowd" - what in an academic context is sometimes labeled "social scholarship." The wiki medium thus has the *potential* to develop different models of cultural, political, and social organization, certainly different than that of neo-liberal global market capitalism; models that offer ways of thinking individuality *and* collectivity, singularity *and* commonality, together.

In another media gifts project, WikiNation, I argue that we can experiment with wikis to work collaboratively on inventing ways of organizing cultures, communities, and even countries—in all their complexity, uncertainty, and multiplicity; ways that do not merely repeat the anti-political reductionism, lack of criticality, and Western liberal humanism that, for me, are a feature of many other accounts of the relation between self and other (see Hall, 2009b). The idea behind such affirmative, collaborative projects is to devise not just what Jacques Derrida refers to as a "counter-institution" (Derrida, 1995, p. 346). but also a counter-community or counter-country as a way of creating an actual, affective point of potentiality and transformation, with a view to countering, in however minor a fashion, the hyper-power of Western liberal democracy.

What is more, the networked, distributed structure of wikis means that anyone, anywhere, can potentially join in, publish, and participate in them, so long as they are able to access the internet. Projects such as the Liquid Theory Reader, the Liquid Books series, and WikiNation, which all make use of wikis, therefore have the capacity to be extremely pluralistic. We could even enact a multi-locational, multi-polar, multi-medium, multiple-identity book, series, or country.

This last point is especially important with regard to the centre/periphery model of the geopolitics of knowledge. In this model there are just a few nations at the centre of the global academic and publishing networks who are exporting, and in effect "universalizing," their knowledge. And interestingly enough, this is the case with even the most radical of theoretical works - works which, in their content, explicitly try to undermine such centre/periphery models. Let's take those of Michel Foucault as an example. Foucault wrote his books of philosophy in Paris in the 1960s and 1970s, they were subsequently picked up by the U.S. and U.K. academic publishing networks and translated into English. Foucault's theories of

power, governmentally, biopolitics, care of the self, and so forth have then been exported around the world.[22]

Meanwhile, there are a whole host of other nations outside of the centre of the global academic and publishing networks who, while being capable of importing universalized knowledge, don't have enough opportunities to publish, export, or even develop their own "universal" knowledge to rival that of Foucault - or Derrida, Deleuze, Agamben, Butler, Badiou, Rancière, and so on. There are various reasons for this: their language may be a minority one;[23] scholars and students working in those countries often don't have the kind of access to the amount and quality of research literature that's taken for granted by those closer to the centre of the geopolitics of knowledge—literature that needs to be cited and referenced for research to be accepted by international journals and publishers and their peer-reviewers. Nor do they have the kind of local academic or publishing networks - the peer-reviewed journals and presses and so on - that can help them get read and cited and so produce, develop, support, and disseminate their work in the first place. They also often work in institutional settings that don't allow sufficient time for research, and where there's little incentive for undertaking research in both intellectual and material terms, with teaching and administration being the priority. At most, these scholars may get to "export empirical data" that provides local detail that can be used to flesh out the "universal" knowledge of those closer to the centre of the geopolitical knowledge networks (see Zeleza, 1998, p. 17; Willinsky, 2006, p.104).

The wiki medium of communication can be of assistance when it comes to avoiding the reproduction of this state of affairs, it seems to me; not simply by enabling us to place more emphasis on the so-called periphery - say, by privileging contributions from outside the centre. Such an approach would risk repeating and maintaining the kind of centre/periphery, self/other relationality of power I have attempted to raise questions for here. Rather, wiki-communication can enable us to produce a multiplicitous academic and publishing network, one with a far more complex, fluid, antagonistic, distributed, and decentred structure, with a variety of singular and plural, human and non-human actants and agents. The *Culture Machine* series of liquid books, of which *New Cultural Studies: The Liquid Theory Reader* is only the first volume, constitutes an attempt to explore the potential for the constitution and emergence of just such a network.

NOTES

1 Here "performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act,' but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Judith Butler, 1993, p. 2).

2 CSeARCH (the cultural studies e-archive). Available at http://www.culturemachine.net/csearch.

3 WikiNation: or, Hyper-Cyprus. Available at http://hyper-cyprus.pbwiki.com/Hyper-Cyprus. See also Hall (2009b).

4. Liquid Theory TV. Available at http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual& videoid=46728901.

5 *Culture Machine* is a series of experiments in culture and theory. At the time of writing, these experiments include the Liquid Books series (http://liquidbooks.pbworks.com/), the open access archive mentioned above (see note 2), and an open access online journal, established in 1996. (More

details are available at http://www.culturemachine.net.) Open Humanities Press was established in 2006 as the first open-access publishing 'house' explicitly dedicated to critical and cultural theory. (More details are available at http://www.openhumanitiespress.org.)

6 We derived our initial use of the term 'liquid' from Kevin Kelly. He writes about how:

> Once digitized, books can be unravelled into single pages or be reduced further, into snippets of a page. These snippets will be remixed into reordered books and virtual bookshelves. Just as the music audience now juggles and reorders songs into new albums (or "playlists," as they are called in iTunes), the universal library will encourage the creation of virtual "bookshelves" — a collection of texts, some as short as a paragraph, others as long as entire books, that form a library shelf's worth of specialized information. And as with music playlists, once created, these "bookshelves" will be published and swapped in the public commons... (Kevin Kelly, 2006)

Since embarking on *New Cultural Studies: The Liquid Theory Reader,* we have also become aware of Jonas Andersson's Liquid Culture blog (http://liquidculture.wordpress.com/); Networked: A (networked_book) about (networked_art) (http://networkedbook.org/) and Liquid publications: Scientific publications meet the Web (http://liquidpub.org/).

7 The first volume in the *Culture Machine* Liquid Books series, *The liquid theory reader* (Hall & Birchall, 2009) can be found at http://liquidbooks.pbworks.com/New+Cultural+Studies:+ The+Liquid+Theory+Reader. A slightly different, somewhat briefer version of this description of *The Liquid Theory Reader* was published in Hall (2009a).

8 As Ted Striphas (2009) notes:

> For all practical purposes people today tend to treat books - with the exception of anthologies - as if they were discrete, closed entities. This hasn't always been the case. In the first century of printing in the West, it wasn't uncommon for a single bound volume to contain multiple works. One could hardly consider these books to be closed, much less objective in the sense of being contained, given how the practice of their assembly... provided for a range of textual juxtapositions. (The Bible is perhaps the most famous and enduring example of this mode of presentation.) (p. 11)

9 The REF (Research Excellence Framework) is the forthcoming means of assessing and distributing quality-related (QR) funding for research in the United Kingdom. It is thought that in at least in some fields the REF will make more use of quantitative indicators - including bibliometric indicators of research quality - than the system it is due to replace: the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise). For more on REF, see http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Research/ref/.

10 Most of *New cultural studies: Adventures in theory* is already available to read online for free via Google Books: http://books.google.com/books?id=XvuOAzxhTrwC&printsec=frontcover&dq= new+cultural+studies.

11 A definition of open access taken from Peter Suber's Open Access News blog runs as follows: "Putting peer-reviewed scientific and scholarly literature on the internet. Making it available free of charge and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions. Removing the barriers to serious research" (see sidebar, "The open access movement"). Retrieved from http://www.earlham.edu/~ peters/fos/fosblog.html.

> It is worth noting in this context the distinction Suber has elsewhere drawn between *gratis* open access and *libre* open access. Gratis open access is where the obstacle of cost, but only the obstacle of cost, has been taken out of the equation, so that access to research published gratis open access is *freely* available (as in 'free beer'). In libre open access, meanwhile, not only has the obstacle of cost been removed, one or more of the barriers concerning the permissions that need to be sought to copy, reproduce or distribute a given text have been removed too. (Peter Suber, 2008.)

12 See Note [11] above.

13 This is one of the reasons we wanted a tool for constructing the Liquid Books series wiki that is easy to use and freely available: to encourage the raising of such questions, both as part of the Liquid

Books series, and elsewhere; and to provide a means of doing so. The tool we are currently using for the Liquid Books series wiki is PBworks, which is available at http://pbworks.com/. Although PB works is proprietary and is not open source, it has been chosen over other possible alternatives such as MediaWiki for strategic reasons due to its ease of use for non-technically minded or experienced academic authors. For more, see Paul Miers, 2009.

14 Interestingly, Frons (2008) goes to great pains to stress that:

> A completely personalized version of the home page isn't something we have seriously contemplated, at least not yet. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, such a page would probably be daunting for most readers to set up and maintain. Second, and more important, I think most readers who visit the NYTimes.com home page go there because they are interested in what the editors of *The New York Times* think is newsworthy. There's great value in that. (para. 10)

15 Newsvine is available at http://www.newsvine.com.

16 See http://www.drudgereport.com.

17 It should be noted that the figures provided by Pelli and Bigelow (2009) refer to authorship in general, rather than academic authorship specifically. Nevertheless, they predict that at the current rate of increase "everyone will publish in 2013" (para. 6).

18 http://www.youtube.com/user/reporterscenter.

19. See http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=Neda+Agha-Soltan&hl=en-GB&sourceid=gd&rls=DLUK, DLUK:2008-34,DLUK:en-GB&um=l&ie=UTF-8&ei=drJRSrzsEZbUjAfqlPiuBQ&sa=X&oi=video_ result_group&ct=title&resnum=4#. For one of the subtler versions of this "Twitter revolution" narrative, certainly as far as the way these demonstrations are organised, see Hamid Tehrani (2009).

20 What is more, I would suggest that this description of how theory and theoretical concepts are created is as applicable to the latest generation of theorists and philosophers to emerge-Agamben, Latour, Stiegler, including many of the so-called "children of the 68ers" such as Quentin Meillassoux - as it is the golden generation of Althusser, Barthes, Lacan, Derrida, Deleuze, Kristeva and Irigaray. For all that some of these theorists may nowadays be more inclined to write using a computer keyboard and screen than fountain pen or typewriter, their way of creating, developing and disseminating theory and theoretical concepts remains much the same. And this is the case not just with respect to the initial production of their texts and their materiality - the focus on book and print-on-paper articles, or at the very least papercentric texts - but also in their attribution of their texts to sole, individualized authors.

21 In raising such questions, Clare Birchall and I want to perhaps go a little further than many of those who have also experimented with online platforms have done so far. For example, McKenzie Wark experimented with open peer-commentary when writing his *GAM3R 7H30RY* (Version 1.1, 2006. Available at http://www.futureofthebook.org/gamertheory). Similarly, Ted Striphas's Differences and Repetitions Wiki site for Rhizomatic Writing (http://striphas.wikidot.com/) contains drafts of work in progress he invites others to edit, amend or comment on, with the promise that their contributions will be duly acknowledged. But in both cases these authors - Wark and Striphas respectively - retain authorial control. They very much remain the clearly identifiable authors of these identifiable works, and it is to them that these works are clearly to be attributed. Although this is still the case with the first iteration of the Liquid Theory Reader, *New Cultural Studies: The Liquid Theory Reader (Version 1.0),* it need not necessarily be so with any of its subsequent iterations. Indeed, that it is not necessarily so is part of the very idea behind this project. This is not to deny our involvement as authors, editors, curators or creators of this Liquid Book. It is rather to put our role and identities in doubt, as it were; and in so doing provoke the raising of responsible ethical and political questions about the potential consequences of such liquidity for our ideas of the author, editor, curator, creator, and so on...

22 So much so that Foucault recently came top of a list published in the *Times Higher Education* of the most cited authors of books in the humanities. Pierre Bourdieu came second, with Jacques Derrida third. See "Most cited authors..." (2009).

23 In a talk entitled "Publishing for a Global Culture" Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009) described the way in which some languages - usually those closer to the centres of power in modernity, such as English, French, Spanish, and German - are considered to be of a higher value and order than others, as a form of linguistic feudalism or linguistic Darwinism.

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