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Come on in! Stepping into DMAC to become a Digital Media Dweller

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Abstract

This essay describes the Digital Media and Composition (DMAC) institute as a welcoming "technology gateway" with a "cultural ecology" that deeply influenced my digital literacy in lasting ways (Selfe et al., 2007, p. 208). DMAC created a professional development environment conducive to acquiring digital media savvy, rather than mere technological training. DMAC's theories, practices, rituals, language, workshops, and literacy project promoted cultural equity and inclusion, and disruptions of power structures. In recounting the evolution of my collaborative 2006 DMAC literacy documentary project and the subsequent repurposing of experiential classroom writing assignments, I explore how DMAC's pedagogical influence not only fostered an authentic acquisition of digital literacy, but also how its "cultural ecology" created a sense of place and belonging to the field of digital media and composition. Participating in DMAC, like walking a neighborhood or reading an essay or navigating new technologies, was an embodied and affective professional development experience of dwelling within digital literacies.
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"'Welcome!' I said—the most dangerous word in the world."
–Eudora Welty, The Collected Stories

The two-week Digital Media and Composition (DMAC) institute at Ohio State University (OSU) shaped my digital literacy knowledge, practices, and pedagogy more than any professional development experience in my career. In 2006, I was one member of a six-person team from a technology-rich, southeastern university to attend DMAC. However, as Cynthia Selfe et al. (2007) observed, "Simple physical access to computers is necessary but insufficient for the acquisition and development of digital literacies" (p. 209). From my restricted access to the rich pedagogies and practices of digital media, constrained by time since I was teaching a 5/4 course load, I survived on a skills-based approach to technology. However, at DMAC, I was immersed in a two week, theory-based "technology gateway" that welcomed attendees to play and practice with new media in order to develop the digital literacies described by Selfe et al. (2007) in their chapter, "Women and the Global Ecology of Digital Literacies."

This article explores and exposes some of the factors contributing to the "cultural ecology" of the DMAC technology gateway—the values, beliefs, and practices—that transformed mere technology training into the "development of digital literacies" (Selfe et al., 2007, pp. 208–9). My story, from the limitations of memory and perspective, describes

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how DMAC's welcoming theory-to-practice approaches had a long-lasting and wide-ranging direct impact on my learning and teaching with digital media and indirectly on my students. Furthermore, DMAC's rituals, language, theories, workshops, and literacy project promoted cultural equity and inclusion, disruptions of power structures, and an attitude of humility. Using the DMAC 2006 literacy project and the repurposing of an experiential classroom writing assignment as examples, I recount not only how DMAC's pedagogical influence advanced my digital literacy, but also how its "cultural ecology" created a sense of place and belonging to the field of digital media and composition. The design and delivery of DMAC 2006 created a space in which to dwell as I encountered and acquired digital media literacies.

1. Transformation and disruption

In Denny Hall on the second day at DMAC 2006, during a video workshop about framing and shot making, "DMAC-ers" were encouraged to look for metonymy emerging from the larger story of DMAC. We played with cameras and video equipment, trying to capture the "say cheese" moment that would represent individual attendees. Years later, two metonymic moments come to mind that represent not only Cindy Selfe and Scott DeWitt as the leaders of our band, but also the welcoming learning atmosphere they created for the next two weeks' exploration of digital media and composition.

My first memory-image of Scott is when he raised a fist and slowly uncurled his fingers into an open hand. This motion and his comment, "when I can get people to unclench their fists" was his answer to a question my video project partner and I posed during a brief interview (personal communication, May 2006). Our collaborative literacy project included asking a series of questions Bernard Pivot, a French journalist, established for conducting interviews; the questions have since been put to use by James Lipton for "Inside the Actor's Studio," and reformulated for our DMAC purposes. The seventh question on Pivot's list is "what turns you on creatively, spiritually, and emotionally?" (mac-er, 2007), and we posed this question to Scott. His answer: to transform attitudes toward digital media and literacies. In essence, Scott focused on eliminating unspoken anxieties or perceived threats around learning digital media.

Days later, my partner and I had captured audio and video raw materials for our collaborative project and were ready to edit. Cindy was standing nearby. As we positioned ourselves at our computer, Cindy spoke to the class: "Be sure to give the mouse to the person with the least experience." I cringed, since my knowledge of Apple computers, the Mac interface, and digital editing was slim at best. Her comment, however, was crucial and timely because it gave me the freedom to practice learning (and eventually teaching) new forms of digital media. Maneuvering the mouse as we made editing decisions was empowering; I began to gain confidence and skill. As painful as my process must have been for my patient and tech-savvy partner, and as inclined as I was to relinquish control of the mouse, Cindy's intervention was timely and welcome. It gave me *permission* to play and practice without feeling guilty about my skill level with new technologies.

Scott's desire to transform attitudes and Cindy's intervention to disrupt common practices surrounding digital media and its intersection with composition evoke Anthony Giddens's (1979) assertion that "every social actor knows a great deal about the conditions of reproduction of the society of which he or she is a member" (p. 5). I arrived as a "social actor" versed in the "conditions of reproduction" in past technology-based training experiences. Experts demonstrated the correct ways to use technology. I stumbled along, attempting to repeat their results. In retrospect, it became apparent to me that the design and delivery of DMAC was intended to reverse or disrupt fixed social structures that perpetuate conditions for those who have power over technology. In those memory-moments that so succinctly captured their attitudes toward professional development, Cindy and Scott were creating an environment for learning about teaching with technologies. This environment allowed us to wrestle with questions about how to wield power through knowledge and skills related to digital media and technology, simultaneously revealing and addressing "the struggles and inequalities hidden under the established order [and] how they may be perceived" (de Certeau, 1984, p.18). Thus, to participate in DMAC was not only a time to gain professional skills and knowledge about digital media and composition, but also an opportunity to ascertain and act upon the generous nature of a pedagogy that challenged the often unacknowledged "inequalities hidden under the established order" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 18). This two-week immersion into digital media boosted my professionalism through DMAC's artful construct of activities and media offerings delivered with generosity and acceptance, best navigated with a no-fear attitude and healthy enthusiasm.

Figure 1. DMAC schedule with Selfe's opening words.

2. Gateways, not gatekeepers

A brief phrase, "Come on in!" was a student café worker's response to another Bernard Pivot question that my collaborator and I posed to her during our literacy documentary interviews. We asked her, "If there is a God, what would you want him/her to say when you entered the pearly gates"? Her short answer, "Come on in!" implied so much—a hope for feeling welcome, wanting to belong, finding a sense of place (personal communication, May 2006). DMAC invited us to come on in and set the same welcoming tone that summer of 2006 by avoiding a gatekeeper stance. Instead, DMAC created a *we're-all-in-this-together* approach. The welcoming environment was established well before we arrived at OSU. From the lively description of the Literacy Documentary Project; maps and directions to each site on campus; invitations to dinner at Cindy's or Scott's home; "hey, DMAC-ers" salutations; morning coffees; daily agendas; wide-ranging topics, speakers, and activities; and even the new media-based vocabulary we were immersed in, DMAC created a sense of place and belonging to digital novices and natives alike. Participants were asked to "Come on in!" and join the directors, consultants, and guest speakers in exploring new theories and practices related to digital media and composition. I was, however, resistant at first. I was that student with the clenched hand Scott described.

After reading the articles provided before arriving at DMAC, I expected to experience the "conditions of reproduction" (Giddens, 1979, p. 5) so typical to academic professional development opportunities about technology—director-led discussions, question-and-answer sessions, packaged lesson plans, technology manuals, computer training—hierarchical patterns that mark those who know what needs to be taught and those who are there to obtain that knowledge. Oh, no. Not at DMAC. At the top of my May 29 agenda about "Touchstone Texts: Multimodality and Literacy," I captured Cindy's opening words: "If you feel dumb, it's because we aren't helping you enough" (see Figure 1). Conditioned from previous technology training experiences, her comments were puzzling at first. But as Scott and Cindy modeled how teachers of digital media and composition might practice humility, I gradually shed some unexamined assumptions and anxieties about teaching and learning technology and became more at home with risks, reversals, experimentation, and play.

3. Fields of play, a place of belonging

In his "Retrospective Postscript" to *Textual Politics: Discourse and Social Dynamics*, Jay Lemke (1995) stated, "Play happens wherever the system of disjunctions fails to get us to police ourselves, wherever Chaos is a welcome friend, embraced in laughter and not shut out in terror of no-meaning" (p. 184). In that spirit, DMAC created a field of play within a structured agenda that included workshops on feminist representation in mapping; readings about gender, film, and audio stories across difference; and audio or visual storytelling activities. DMAC offered a pastiche of opportunities available for each participant to rearrange as they constructed their literacy documentary projects. The many activities, viewings, readings, and discussions offered new possibilities for the selection, arrangement, and repurposing of our projects-in-process, expanding my understanding of digital literacy, including the discourses surrounding it.

Elizabeth Daley (2003) stated, “The very vocabulary of multimedia encourages approaches different from those used to write text. One ‘creates’ and ‘constructs’ media rather than writing it, and one ‘navigates’ and ‘explores’ media rather than reading it” (p. 36). DMAC participants were encouraged to play with new words that advanced ways of thinking about digital technologies as agency and action: multimodality, design, distribution, affordances, arrangement, mash-up, capturing, sampling, and remixing. Integrating this language into my professional idiolect connected me with a digitally literate community, creating a sense of place and belonging necessary for lasting professional improvement.

In her article about age bias and digital literacy, Lauren Marshall Bowen (2011) observed that there is “mounting evidence in the last several decades that literacy must be understood as a situated, social practice” (p. 587). Learning digital technologies takes place *in* place. The sense of belonging, not only to the DMAC summer institute group but also to a field that was and is radically evolving, had a long-term impact on my teaching and learning composition with digital media. Technologies disappear. Feelings don’t. The affective and material nature of a professional development institute matters. Bowen (2011) explored the role of “affective forces that support literacy (or not) over time” (p. 590). She built upon “Kristie Fleckenstein’s contention that literacy depends upon ‘feeling sufficiently at home in a place that we will speak and write’” (as cited in Bowen, 2011, p. 590). Bowen continued that case study is, in part, an attempt to discover “the sociocultural, historical, and material arrangements that grant new literacies a home-like familiarity” (2011, p. 590). The direction of her research is invaluable; however, I think of the acquisition of new literacies from the individual experience of individual belonging. The concept of home is fraught, particularly to feminist cultural geographers and critics. Tim Cresswell (2004) described Gillian Rose’s and bell hook’s resistance to home as a benign and nurturing space, stating, “Communities can be stifling and homes can be and often are places of drudgery, abuse and neglect” (p. 25). In my experience, the environment at DMAC created a sense of belonging not to home, but to practices and ideas through the institute’s design and delivery: its friendly tone, morning coffee, thoughtful directions, welcoming events, pacing of activities, diverse participants, and range of guest speakers and topics. The disruption of traditional modes of professional development was invigorating and inspiring and, in truth, exhausting on occasion. But, as Bowen (2011) acutely observed, to understand the *cultural ecology* that enhances digital literacy, “we must look to the stories individuals tell about literacy and how those stories are embedded within evolving social, technological, and cultural histories over time” (p. 590). Those individual stories can reveal the complexities and qualities necessary to a cultural ecology that enhances digital literacy for all.

DMAC created a sense of belonging that could be experienced when encountering a place, a text, or even technologies. Nedra Reynolds (2007) compared place and texts:

> Like sense of place, encounters with texts are about *feeling*—structures of feeling or felt senses that are deeply emotional, visceral, embodied. Just as some walkers experience fear of certain neighborhoods, some readers are going to experience aversion to certain prose styles. (p. 164)

Like places and texts, encounters with new technologies are also about feeling, often experienced with anxiety and aversion by faculty and students alike. Participating in DMAC, like walking a neighborhood or reading an essay or navigating new technologies, was an embodied and affective professional development experience. To paraphrase what Michel de Certeau (1984) described as “well-being under-expressed in the language it appears in like a fleeting glimmer is a spatial practice” (p. 108), I felt *good* at DMAC. For me, learning to teach with digital media became a set of spatial practices.

Nedra Reynolds’s (2007) discussion of spatial metaphors is helpful in thinking about the structure of DMAC as a place of dwelling or inhabiting digital media. She asked, “How do we read the signs about places that tell us to come on in or to keep out?” (2007, p. 12). Of course, it depends on the “reader.” As an older women with relatively little exposure to theories and practices involved in teaching digital media, I found the “signs” that said “come on in” were the inclusive and enthusiastic attitudes expressed by the diverse participants in DMAC, invitations to the directors’ homes for dinner, the reminder to adopt an “attitude of humility” toward teaching with technology, and the themes of difference, power relations, and social action. For instance, we took a feminist approach to mapping an urban center during a workshop, and then we had studio time to practice mapping and representation. The participants hailed from different geographies, status, rank, age, experience, and cultural experience. Scott and Cindy encouraged *all* participants to experiment with a range of digital media that would best fit the unique narratives emerging in their literacy documentary projects. They reiterated that their priorities were people, pedagogy, and *then* technology. The welcome sign to Denny Hall, where the DMAC sessions were held, should have those words—people, pedagogy, technology—carved in wood above the door.

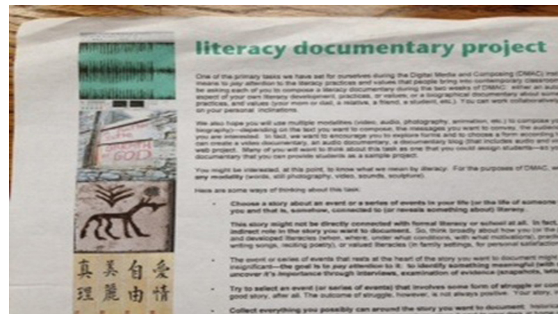
literacy documentary project

Figure 2. Literacy documentary project.

4. Walking, collaborating, and composing

Although we were often inside in classrooms or labs, we also found ourselves outdoors walking the campus in teams, practicing videotaping or audiotaping skills. I found walking the campus alone and with my colleagues and DMAC team members was the most powerful activity that contributed to my sense of belonging in this digital professional development adventure. I have always believed in what Ferris Jabr (2014) described in his *New Yorker* article as the "curious link between mind and feet" (para. 2). He stated, "Walking organizes the world around us; writing organizes our thoughts" (2014, para. 10). In this sense, the campus itself became a site of inquiry, play, spatial practices and performances preliminary to our literacy project.

During one collaborative walking activity, my future documentary partner and I realized our mutual interests in language, art, performance of the everyday, and power relations. We had paused to sit on a bench in the shade, and we watched a hot dog vendor who was performing his job with great enthusiasm and good will. His expertise and artistry in performing his work captured our interest. He twirled the bottles of catsup and mustard. He listened carefully to all of his customers and looked them in the eye, never asking them to repeat their orders. He never missed a beat. He took his work seriously, but he was clearly enjoying his interactions with the hungry lunch crowd. As we watched, we talked about how his work was both literacy and performance. He was a social actor who moved his audience in complex negotiations of power and production. That conversation sparked our decision to work together on a collaborative literacy documentary project.

5. Waiting for the word: Collaborating on a literacy documentary project

The literacy documentary project description for DMAC 2006 set out tasks to accomplish a description of multi-modalities, encouragement to "choose a form according to your rhetorical sense of the task," a brief definition of literacy, and specific suggestions for completing the tasks. The design and tone of our project assignment invited creativity and mitigated anxiety about following a particular formula. Framed by images of street art, hieroglyphics, Chinese characters, cave paintings, sound waves, and a handwritten letter, the assignment handout (see Figure 2) invited us to think historically and imaginatively about our documentary projects. The language of the project description used the inclusive, plural pronoun: "One of the primary tasks we have set for *ourselves*" (see Figure 2), rather than the ubiquitous language of "you will" so prevalent in writing assignments and professional development activities. Participants were encouraged to be creative within the parameters of the documentary assignment, but two suggestions stood out to me: First, we were urged to choose modalities for the documentary project that were rhetorically meaningful in relation to the narrative. Second, we were encouraged to think of our documentary as "a sample project" for our future students. Notably, we were also asked to "*pay attention* to the literacy practices and values that people bring into contemporary classrooms" (see Figure 2).

While my project partner and I were "paying attention" to Ben, the hot dog vendor, we began talking about our backgrounds and interests. She was younger, from a different region in the U.S., and much more experienced with digital media. I had an amateur background in photography and an interest in spatial practices and cultural landscape study. As we began discussing the possibilities for a collaborative literacy documentary, it became clear my collaborator was interested in the Bernard Pivot list as a structuring device for interviews. Pivot's full list of questions reads:

1. What is your favorite word?
2. What is your least favorite word?
3. What turns you on creatively, spiritually or emotionally?
4. What turns you off?
5. What is your favorite curse word?
6. What sound or noise do you love?
7. What sound or noise do you hate?
8. What profession other than your own would you like to attempt?
9. What profession would you not like to do?
10. If Heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates? (mac-er, 2007).

My questions were somewhat different. Because I was interested in cultural landscapes, narrative, and performance, I wanted to ask transient campus residents:

1. How do you see your role on this campus?
2. Do you have a story to illustrate it?
3. Do you think of yourself as a performer or actor?
4. Who do you find the most difficult (or easiest) to work with (customer/spectator)?
5. What is the most powerful response you have received from your 'audience' as a result of your actions?

At first, we were unsure how to blend our two approaches. We decided to propose our initial project ideas to Cindy. She listened and heartily endorsed our collaboration. She offered us her copy of *The Practice of Everyday Life* by Michel de Certeau (1984) and emailed us citations for two theorists—Jay Lemke (1995) and Anthony Giddens (1979)—whose work might support our joint efforts. What I did not realize then, but I do now, is that we were given time to play—to practice with new technologies, to discuss narrative possibilities, and to bring our separate interests to bear on our evolving ideas for our documentary. But we were also provided resources that would anchor our praxis in theory.

My partner and I took turns reading selections from de Certeau and previewing the readings Cindy recommended. Our two viewpoints intersected when we conceptualized our digital project through de Certeau's theories of everyday practices. We selected key passages that seemed relevant to both of our interests and helped our ideas intersect. Prior to arriving at DMAC, I was interested in place-based studies and "spatial practices like walking, [which] are a form of resistance to faster and more mechanical means of transportation but also are a way of exercising agency" (Reynolds, 2007, p. 69). However, de Certeau's (1984) discussion of the four characteristics of the "speech act" as a place-based discourse (p. xiii)—explicitly drawing the analogy with his phrase "pedestrian speech acts" in which "the act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language" (p. 97)—elided the seemingly disparate ideas of walking, speaking, and writing. Furthermore, he revealed both walking and language as spatial practices worthy of investigation and analysis to expose "the struggles and inequalities hidden under the established order" (p. 18). Spatial practices as a way of "making do," de Certeau (1984) argued, are also "a certain art" (p. 18). With these shared, foundational concepts in mind, we began capturing material for our documentary. During our collaboration, Cindy was paying attention to our literary practices and values, and she extended our thinking and helped us graft our dual approaches onto de Certeau's theories by offering relevant resources at the right time. This unique and individualized professional support is time intensive and perhaps serendipitous. Some may not ask for help. However, when directors are approachable and available, like teachers for their students, then learners of any age, ability, or background are more willing to seek support.

After previewing several theorists, my collaborator and I began our interviews armed with both sets of questions. We were similar to the "photographer and ex-geography student" Tim Cresswell (2004) described, who "decided to explore Crawley armed.. . with a 'camera, memories, and French theory"' (as cited in Cresswell, p. 97). We decided to ask the Bernard Pivot questions first, and, time permitting, we would follow up with additional questions about art and performance. We divided roles—my partner was the videographer and I was the interviewer. We began by listing possible sites and walking around campus, looking for campus residents who might be willing to talk to us. We began with the hot dog vendor, Ben. We also interviewed the museum art store employees, several café workers, and graduate students on campus.

Figure 3. “Making words” cartoon (Powell, 1882).

The interview process took place over two days during which we learned a number of skills in video and audio capture. I learned how to ask questions and listen carefully to the respondent’s answers without audible comments or laughter. Gesturing and nodding became my tactics to capture a clean interview. My partner was skilled in framing, but we had to work together to position ourselves to get the best shots of our respondents. During the interview processes and when playing back our tapes, we noticed a pattern that emerged: the care and thought that each person put into describing their favorite and least favorite word. Our hot dog vender said “cellar door” was his favorite word because of the pleasing sound. A graduate student surprisingly had the same answer to both questions about favorite and least favorite sound: the sound a tire makes when it’s going flat! Another theme that became a narrative thread in our project was the destabilizing relationship of knowledge and power. During three separate interviews, the idea of specialized or expert knowledge emerged. A graduate student in charge of DMAC’s tech lab, two museum store employees, and the hot dog vendor all discussed the art of their work in recognizing their customer’s needs and anxieties. The interviewees described the concerns of faculty and students seeking tech support, customers purchasing museum art or reproductions, or campus residents grabbing a quick lunch. Each interviewee demonstrated an awareness of the power dynamics in their work transactions and how their choice of words affected each interaction.

During the editing process, my partner and I decided not to include the questions we asked in our literacy documentary. Instead, we arranged the piece according to the emergent themes in our respondents’ answers. The video was edited so that several individuals answer the same question, e.g., “What is your favorite word?” These answers were interrupted by slides with quotations from de Certeau (1984) and images taken from my grandmother’s 1882 primer *How to Write* by William Bramwell Powell. One image featured two children: a girl sitting on the floor and a boy sitting nearby on a wooden box (see Figure 3). Both are about to put a block on top of two blocks that read “A” and “T.” The girl has a “C” in her hand and the boy holds an “R.” The caption reads, “Making Words.” This image of playing with a word that may become “Cat” or “Rat” aptly represents the play and serendipity of language and meaning that emerged during our editing processes. One small decision makes a powerful difference in meaning: cat or rat? In one sequence, we included an ellipsis on a blank screen, following by a series of images of interviewees who were thinking hard about an answer, but took a long time to respond. So much happens in the ellipsis—the in-between pauses between places or discourse—that might indicate silence, resistance, imaginings, or spaces in which to dwell.

One theme, among many, that clearly emerges in the answers and the pauses is how much every person cared about and struggled to find the right word for the time and place.

Many themes became apparent after the interview capture ended and we began reviewing our material to edit. The editing process with digital media convinced me that the art of the story is in the editing. My partner showed me the importance of wit and timing in the editing process. She found over 100 tire sounds on a site offering copyright-free audio files. We listened to several, chose one and inserted it as background for one segment of the video. Following Cindy's advice—after we had worked out the arrangement of the interview responses, the timing, and the quotations from de Certeau we wanted to include—I took the mouse. The actual editing process was tedious, because I was so slow, but my partner helped me solve any difficulties until I felt confident enough to work on my own. We then divided tasks and set to work. We completed two rounds of editing, and although our project could have used additional editing, we had run out of time. And that was okay. During the editing, from this rough-cut postmodern narrative documentary, multiple story lines emerged about literacy, art, performance, words, dreams, work, identity, and power relations. In our interviewees' responses, I saw how everyday language became the means of resistance that reveals "the struggles and inequalities hidden under the established order" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 18). And I began to think that an unfinished project could become a powerful heuristic about the processes involved in integrating digital media.

Experiencing the evolution of an idea, learning collaborative skills, and accepting the incomplete nature of my final project were essential to me when I returned home to anticipate my students' unique needs and the changing nature of my role as advisor or consultant while students developed their projects. The experiential, first-hand, and playful nature that DMAC encouraged as a means to learn about digital media and composition expanded my attitude, knowledge, and skills in ways I would not fully realize until well into the future. And I returned to my home institution with a sample project—street cred—to share with my students.

6. From one place to another

Eudora Welty's (2015a) truism that "one place understood helps us understand all places better" is relevant to translating the DMAC experience from the Ohio campus to my home campus in the U.S. Southeast. The experiential, immersive, and inclusive structure of DMAC expanded my pedagogy of place by allowing me to embody the practices and principles of teaching with digital media. The design of DMAC offered a framework for creating a "cultural ecology" of teaching and learning with new media:

1. create a welcoming and inclusive environment through rituals and language;
2. offer a range of readings, viewings, theories and topics via different forms of media;
3. model inclusiveness, inquiry, and collaboration;
4. offer skill-building workshops;
5. allow time for play and practice to foster new skills and apply theory-based knowledge;
6. consider implications;
7. debrief.

Furthermore, both Cindy and Scott modeled innovative ways to be directors by offering individualized support and assistance to meet the unique needs of each participant. Over time, many of these elements have worked their way into the design and structure of the syllabi for all of my courses.

7. Applying DMAC's principles and practices

At my home institution, I teach a range of courses in different programs: General Education, English Education, Distance Learning, and American Studies. Prior to attending DMAC, a popular assignment in my composition classes was a campus marathon modeled on the National Writing Project's New Orleans Writing Marathon. The original marathon was a conference during which participants were set out, in small groups, on the streets of New Orleans: "where Faulkner wrote his first novel, Tennessee Williams set A Streetcar Names Desire, and Andrei Codrescu insist[ed] "The Muse is Always Half-Dressed" (Louth, 2002). In my classes, this activity was originally a pen and paper collaborative assignment in which groups of students walked the campus, agreed on several different spaces to pause, wrote short journal entries and shared them, and finally returned to the classroom. Together we discussed the writing that took place

in place and how it took shape. In part, the assignment was intended to build community, discover different modes of writing, and identify strategies for developing topics.

In 2007, upon my return from DMAC, students used cameras checked out from the English Department and took photos of significant places on campus. These photos were usually developed into slideshow presentations to share their findings. We had a paper map of the campus and students marked the places they visited with icons or symbols and sometimes annotations. Over time, as new technologies became more flexible and accessible, the assignment was repurposed because students were able to capture images and sounds on their phones and work together on laptops to create presentations for the course. These new technologies have transformed the way we acquire and share stories about our research inquiries.

Nedra Reynolds (2007) said her “Mapping URI” project “got [her] thinking about other geographies of exclusion in familiar or assumedly ‘democratic’ or public spaces, especially those constructed by language” (p. 162). Reynolds continued, “Universities are centers for learning but are also organized to keep many outsiders from feeling welcome” (2007, p. 141). Because students should be aware of the social construction of universities and the “geographies of exclusion” (Reynolds, 2007, p. 162), one campus research-writing marathon assignment asks students to look critically at their surroundings and to pay attention to spaces on campus they find welcoming or unfamiliar. Before they embark on their marathon, we review the university mission and vision statements as well as department and program websites. After students analyze the visual and textual rhetoric of online representations of their institution, I ask students to look for evidence of the narratives represented online that appeared in the campus landscape. Their collaborative campus marathon allows them opportunity to discover intersections between the formal discourse in our university’s stated mission and department website descriptions with the actual campus structures and design.

8. The DMAC project as heuristic

No matter how the campus marathon assignment is repurposed, I usually introduce it by showing my students my collaborative DMAC project video, “Waiting for the Word” (Hayenga & Stewart, 2006). This documentary was an assemblage of campus interviews my collaborator, Molly Hayenga, and I took over the course of two days at DMAC. The video works as well in 2014 as it did in 2006 to illustrate several research and composition elements to my students before they embark on their own projects. I share my documentary with my classes to invite critique and editing suggestions and to explain the challenges involved in collaborating with technology. Describing the collaborative processes during the DMAC literacy documentary sparks discussion about how students will structure their own work. The unfinished nature of the video illustrates that sometimes our work is only “good enough” within certain time constraints, and we are not looking for perfection in the product but learning throughout the process. Viewing the video provokes conversation about digital media practices and processes: research-based inquiry, observation, video and audio capture, editing and arrangement, collaboration, and ethical conduct.

When students view the video, I offer little context beforehand, only asking them what they noticed after the viewing. Invariably, someone says, “I like the guy in the green shirt.” That “guy in the green shirt” was a graduate student and DMAC consultant featured in our video because his answers to the Pivot questions were creative and thoughtful, particularly when he described the interplay and power dynamics related to the use of digital media. He noted that faculty members who were experts in their fields often did not know as much about technology as he did. They were often uncomfortable asking for help or revealing their lack of expertise. His comment, “If you don’t know how a program works, be honest about not knowing,” prompts class discussion about differing levels of technology expertise and attitudes toward integrating technologies. With my students, I share Cindy’s comment about the least experienced person taking the mouse to illustrate my own learning curve with digital media that continues to this day, and Scott DeWitt’s explanation during our interview with him that he was most pleased “when someone else discovers something” (personal communication, May 2006). My students and I talk about the notion of humility and the attitude of generosity that creates an inclusive and accepting attitude toward integrating digital media into our research and writing processes. These discussions provide the groundwork for students to begin their own projects.

As students gain skills in the art of collaboration, a field project with digital media allows them to take different roles and contribute in multiple ways. Prior to selecting any form of technology for their campus marathon, students have completed readings and viewings or listening activities that help them become “everyday theorists who bring their own ideas of place to bear on the place they live in” (Cresswell, 2004, p. 79). Depending on the goals or themes of each course, students are asked to develop a set of research questions prior to their campus marathon. They have

digital maps of campus to begin to plan their routes, and they are given a set of roles to distribute to each team member. While there is much freedom in their collaborative activity, there is structure—guided play—as well. Depending upon the technology they are using, we discuss ways for the group to communicate with one another and to be accountable for different tasks.

9. Developing an ethic of seeing and acting with digital media

In preparation for their campus marathon, like the evolution of the documentary project at DMAC, we talk about how to conduct ourselves as researchers and observers of our campus. Just as my collaborator and I had to secure permissions from our interviewees, we discuss privacy rights and strategies for photographing individuals, groups of people, or places. We practice, as we did at DMAC, visual rhetorical analysis. For example, in some classes we view Sheila Pree Bright's (2006) photographic exhibit "Suburbia" that "depicts the black middle class" and engage in visual response and analysis techniques. We also consider Susan Sontag's (1977) description of the "middle-class flaneur" (p. 55) and Nedra Reynolds's (2004) comments about "streetwork" which "comes from firsthand experiences in unfamiliar landscapes and the opportunity to reflect on sociospatial logic and the cultural codes that shape experiences in landscapes, neighborhoods, or cities" (p. 115). Students are asked to observe the campus with empathy and critical consciousness. In thinking about place as a "way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 11), students should begin to acknowledge "the constraints on people's performances" in campus places and spaces and "the fine balancing of constraint and freedom [that] became the subject of geographers influenced by structuration theory—particularly the work of Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 34). The DMAC documentary video demonstrates how campus inhabitants perform their work and exhibit an awareness of the "constraints and freedoms" associated with their actions (Cresswell, 2004, p. 34).

I also share the story about an interview gone wrong during the DMAC process. Asking people if they were willing to be interviewed and then listening carefully to their answers was challenging. At one point, my partner and I noticed a custodian who was leaving work. He looked tired. I was hesitant about asking him for an interview when he was so obviously getting ready to leave campus for the day. However, we decided to ask him if he was willing to be interviewed. Not only was he unwilling, he was insulted. He was looking at two women who were carrying technology equipment that clearly cost money, and we also had free time to be walking around campus talking to people. Two clear signs of privilege. My question had put him in an awkward position. I asked if we could sit down on the nearby bench so I could apologize and explain the project more fully. He was kind enough to take the time to talk about his resistance to our presence and our project. In the very act of conducting our project, my actions could be seen as an "interrogatory apparatus, like a hunter's trap" that was a form of experimentation and control (de Certeau, 1984, p. 61) that was unintended, but very real. Telling this story prompts students to reflect upon their own privilege or perceptions, encouraging them to develop an ethical way of seeing and being in place, particularly when using media capture of images and sounds.

10. Remixing stories, transforming places, inhabiting technologies

Leaving DMAC in 2006, I had several questions as I returned to my home institution. In my notes I had written: "How can we invite students to integrate technology from their daily lives into an academic setting? What issues of access and power emerge?" To some extent, the answers became apparent over time. All forms of digital media are commonplace in my classroom these days, and my students and I are constantly discovering innovative ways to use them.

Most recently, I asked my first-year honors students in our "American Identities" course to be sure to bring their phones to class. To prepare for class, I brought extra phone chargers instead of stuffing magic markers into my pocket. Prior to the class, students reviewed what they had learned about *American* identity from our readings, research, writing, and discussions. During class, students were assigned a solitary walking tour of campus as a brainstorming activity for a multimedia and multigenre research project. Using their smart phones, they were asked to meander around campus and take five photographs. They were to choose five metonymic images that represented their emerging views of American identity. After their walking tours, students returned to class for informal presentations of their photographic campus essay, in which they were expected to share their rationale for the selection and style of each image about American identity. This technology-enhanced spatial approach to developing an assignment was intended to reveal

the histories, power dynamics, and values and beliefs embedded in their campus landscape. To "make trouble" in a playfully serious way, students experimented with commonplace technologies to expose hidden narratives that shaped our present campus configuration (Lemke, 1995, p. 184).

When students returned to the classroom, we set one phone at a time on the document camera to project photos on the screen, while each student described the results of his or her walking tour. These informal presentations led to discussions about emerging themes and critical examinations of the word "American" as we discussed the array and juxtaposition of their photos, suggesting possible themes. Unexpectedly, one student focused on animal life on our campus. Some of her photos included a goose walking next to a student, a chipmunk hiding in a sewer, a rabbit barely visible on the campus green. These images called to mind the contested space of a campus environment as the built environment expands and affects all manner of local inhabitants, human or not. Certainly, her metonymic photographs represented one story of the tensions of landscape development throughout the United States. Another student became "fired up" (her words) about changing the culture of rape on college campuses after reading bulletin board postings on the topic. Students began with a question and a smart phone and theories from a French theorist about the reciprocal and transformative power of stories that "organize the play of changing relationships between places and spaces" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 118). From those simple, everyday practices, an entire semester of inquiry, discovery, development and active dissemination begins.

The experience of developing the DMAC literacy documentary project was fundamental to remixing my existing classroom pedagogy and practices. Employing digital technologies to create our collaborative literacy documentary and grounding the work in de Certeau's theories of everyday practices offered new directions for course design and activities. Examining everyday landscapes and human interaction using digital media to select and frame a moment, consider boundary crossing, and recognize signs and symbols of power relations evolved into an activist curriculum. Students' multimodal presentations became tactics for possible community action, often using social media, to achieve "victories of the weak over the strong" (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix).

This trajectory from integrating digital media and composition to research-based, multigenre, multimedia projects evolved from my DMAC experiences in developing a collaborative, multimodal literacy project. However, far beyond the many skills I developed using a range of digital movie-making, audio-editing, and image-production tools, I learned to embody DMAC's philosophy toward digital literacy. DMAC's mantra of people/pedagogy/technology has become a way of teaching and living—inhabiting technology, in a sense. Instead of approaching new technologies with fear and dread, DMAC experiences fostered a tolerance for risk and successful failures, time for play and practice, and disrupting notions of literacy. From 2006 to the present, technologies have changed exponentially, but the willingness to be open-minded about integrating digital media into my courses has endured as a direct result of the *cultural ecology* created by DMAC. Like teaching composition, an atmosphere of crime (error) and punishment (grades) is not a likely environment for learning in a professional development setting. Recently, my favorite word has become "dwelling" in the same sense Nedra Reynolds describes as "learning one's way around a computer interface.. . neighborhood or campus" through spatial practices (2004, p. 167). Dwelling at DMAC. Scott's excitement about seeing someone else discover something and Cindy's reminders about taking a humble approach to learning digital technologies are enduring values—democratic and relevant—that work well for digital media dwellers in every place.

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