

New Media, Teaching and Learning, Seminar #683
Chair: Ryan Kelsey, Professor Frank Moretti

May 8, 2008
Rapporteur: Veena Vasudevan

Open Libraries, Active Learning, and the Public Good: New Paths

Ryan Kelsey, CCNMTL Associate Director of Education and Research, and Mark Phillipson, CCNMTL Senior Program Specialist, took a retrospective look at the University Seminar on New Media Teaching and Learning's two-year exploration of emerging possibilities for teaching, learning, and study in the digital age with a special focus on the relationships between large digital repositories, structured learning environments, and the open Web. James Neal, Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian, also responded to the presentations and discussed Columbia Libraries' evolution as digital media and resources have become more commonplace.

Mark Phillipson began by defining the three major areas of focus of the University Seminar on New Media Teaching and Learning. He explained that large repositories are recognizable collections of digitized resources defined by a content source, subject, or function that is vetted or managed. Phillipson also discussed the components of a structured learning environment, defining it as a place where students tag, annotate, clip and connect digital assets for their own analysis and learning or as part of a larger assignment. Finally, he described the open Web as a relatively unstructured nonhierarchical environment that fosters felicitous discovery, unauthorized expression, open participation, and discussion.

Phillipson and Kelsey then reviewed past seminars in 2007-2008 where scholars from other universities have shared their work within one of these three topical areas. Detailed summaries of these seminars are published on the University Seminar on New Media Teaching and Learning Web site (<http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/seminars/>).

Jim Neal then spoke about the digital movement in education and its role at Columbia University. Neal explained how the three principles of active learning, public good, and openness apply to Columbia Libraries' approach to information dissemination. He explained that the Libraries are not only focused on access to information, but also on the use of information. He noted that the public good is an extraordinary mandate for a university community. Neal also discussed some changes in education and technology. He found that, in the late 1990s, everyone was worried about building infrastructure to support new technology. Now, Neal argued, there is a focus on the knowledge divide. Neal added that North America has made inadequate investments in infrastructure and is unable to support the rich content that is available.

Focusing on Columbia Libraries' experience, Neal commented that the University is marrying expertise and capability by working with faculty and scholars to facilitate scholarly publishing activities. He explained that the Libraries are essential in the production and dissemination of content, and have the ability of implementing significant and diverse collections of digital assets. Neal proclaimed that Columbia is an intersection of historical periods and disciplines, supported by an array of documentation, images, publications, and many other resources that make up the Libraries. He noted that Columbia now has one of the largest electronic collections including

licenses to 120,000 electronic journals and 3 million electronic books and explained that in addition to the rich, deep repositories, there are also powerful analytical tools and searching techniques available to sift through these materials.

Neal ended his talk with goals for the future, explaining that Columbia Libraries must continue to foster partnerships both internally and externally. Assessment, collaboration, and research and development, he stressed, are critical in moving Columbia Libraries forward to best utilize existing information and resources.