

# Shannon Mattern, UMS Guest Lecture, 9/21/09

## 3 PARTS: EXPLORING, MAPPING, PLANNING

Study by several graduate students regarding what “insider” information – what “trade secrets” they weren’t being taught that they wish they were

**[SLIDE2]** Crisco et al.: Grad students called for an introductory grad course that would “survey the **historical development of the field**”; (2) “critically examine some of the **key terms** presently at the center of debates concerning the **defining goals and purposes** of the work” in the field; (3) “create a collaborative, explicitly intradisciplinary space within the department to explore the often **competing commitments of our discipline** and to articulate the **stakes** (individual, field-wide, institutional, cultural) of the various approaches to reforming” the field; and (4) “**provide students with opportunities to locate themselves** and their professional commitments in relationship to the field” (ibid. 369)

1. Historical Development: some history of field last week in UMS; address the foundational theoretical frameworks in your “Ideas” class
2. Key Terms: addressed in “Ideas” class; represented by faculty presenters in UMS
3. Competing Commitments: “Ideas”; represented by UMS presenters
4. We’ll get to #4 in a little bit

## FIELD’S DEFINING GOALS, PURPOSES, COMMITMENTS, STAKES

**[SLIDE3]** What are the pieces of a field?

“would perform a professionalizing function,” Crisco et al. suggested, by “familiariz[ing students] with the **rules, conventions, folkways, and habits of mind that inform the profession and the discipline**” (363).

**Standards & protocols** – rights clearance, abstracting – for your own benefit, and for submission to conferences and festivals; literature reviews

**Social obligations** of commitment to a field – need to know rules, conventions, habits of mind, etc.

**Field is defined through work of its practitioners**

Over the next few weeks, you’ll see how various practitioners put the field into practice, define the field by *doing* it

### Faculty Presentations

**[SLIDE4]** C. Wright Mills: “A **widespread, informal interchange** of such reviews of ‘the state of my problems’ among working social scientists is, I suggest, the only basis for an adequate statement of ‘the leading problems of social science.’ . . . **Three kinds of interludes – on problems, methods,**

**theory** – ought to come out of the work of social scientists, and lead into it again; they should **be shaped by work-in-progress** and to some extent guide that work. It is for such interludes that a professional association finds its intellectual reason for being (Mills).

Hempel, *Chronicle*, December 2008: If graduate students cannot see how senior scholars generate and manage their ideas, then their induction is incomplete. Our students dutifully take research-methods courses, but **every graduate seminar should discuss the wide range of sources of creative work**. Otherwise our students will think in terms of the assignments we give them, when they should really be thinking about the assignments they can give themselves: interesting topics for future study.

**[SLIDE5]** Questions to ask of faculty presenters:

- Traditions w/in which they're working
- How they develop project ideas and hone them into feasible tasks?
- Methods?
- Grants, fellowships, prizes?
- Professional organizations?
- Professional resources?
- Courses they teach?
- Theses they've advised?

Now we get to #4: OPPORTUNITIES TO SITUATE YOURSELF WITHIN THE FIELD – as a scholar, as a media producer, as an artist, as an activist, etc.

**[SLIDE6]: Piecing Things Together**

Material you've read for today – and that you'll encounter throughout this class – is applicable to whatever work you do in this program. Your challenge is to *extrapolate*, when necessary.

Sources of research/project ideas – **take cues from faculty presenters**

- **[SLIDE7]:** **Calvino:** Starting “from where you are”

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) say that "we problematize experience by noticing **gaps and dislocations in our own explanations**" of particular things or happenings (p. 74). "We might sense an **incongruity, an irony, a contradiction, an ambiguity**, or a mystery in a situation."

"Or we find ourselves in a **new situation**, one that defies our ability to explain it. Or **we imaginatively put ourselves in the place of others** who are confused or mystified."

"Or we experience moments that **prick at our moral conscience.**"  
(Lindlof & Taylor)

**[SLIDE8]: Thumbprint: IDENTITY**

Colin Robson: "[r]emember that who you are has a central place in the research process because you bring your own thoughts, aspirations and feelings, and your own ethnicity, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, occupation, family background, schooling, etc., to your research"... While this **personal "baggage"** is commonly regarded as "bias" that we must shed in order to achieve objectivity, Maxwell argues that "what you bring to the research from your background and identity" can be conceived as a **"valuable component of research"; we should consider how to capitalize on our experiential knowledge** (qtd in Robson, p. 50).

Sociologist C. Wright Mills regards one's personal life as an invaluable resource for the "sociological imagination":

...the most admirable thinkers within the scholarly community...**do not split their work from their lives**....[T]hey want to use each for the enrichment of the other....

What this means is that you must **learn to use your life experience in your intellectual work**: continually to examine and interpret it. In this sense craftsmanship is the center of yourself and you are personally involved in every intellectual product upon which you may work. To say that you can "have experience," means, for one thing, that your past plays into and affects your present, and that it defines your capacity for future experience.

Yet we do not uncritically translate our autobiography into our scholarly or creative work. Mills continues: "To be able to **trust *yet to be SKEPTICAL of your own experience***, I have come to believe, is one mark of the mature worker" (italics mine).

Many authors reveal the personal motivations for their projects in their **introductions**

**[SLIDE9]: Giuliana Bruno's Self-Revelation**

*Atlas of Emotion* (2002): cultural history of film and the arts; draws connections between seeing and traveling, connecting *site* and *sight*, *motion* and *emotion*

**[SLIDE10]:** Madeline de Scudéry's *Carte du pays de Tendre* – map of the land of tenderness – "This map of tenderness has accompanied me for years and, as an *emotional* journey, has done more than just propel the writing of this book. As a manifestation of my own sense of geography, it has come to embody the multiple trajectories of my cultural life, punctuating my inner voyage....

...[T]he complex levels on which Scudéry's map engaged the exterior as an interior even include a specific figurative level: in a way, this map pictures a woman's interiors and, from one perspective, resembles a womb....

...This point was made more 'pregnant' by the fact that I, as I proceeded in my scholarly observation of the terrain of a corporeal map, my own womb took center stage by growing tumors... In an uncanny turn of events, like the return of the repressed, the completion of this *Atlas* was delayed as I devoted myself to investigating alternative medical procedures to treat tumors... It was a quest that, on the surface, took me away from this book but in fact wrote 'atlas' all over me and contributed to a shift in orientation of my research. What began as a cultural history of art, travel, and film became a search for their intimate geography (Bruno 3)

- **Inspiration from others' research** – scholarly or popular
  - **[SLIDE11]: Promiscuous Ideas** – Ways to use this....
- **Publications**

**[SLIDE12]: My Own Case:** Inspiration from Annoyance w/ Others' Research – not any particular person, but, rather, an overabundance of a particular kind of research

- 1927: Siegfried Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*
- 1936: Walter Benjamin's "Work of Art" essay
- 1977: Venturi, Scott Brown & Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas*
- 1993: Anne Friedberg's *Window Shopping: Cinema & the Postmodern*
- 1997: Deitrich Neumann's *Film Architecture: Set Designs from Metropolis to Blade Runner*
- 1999: James Donald's *Imagining the Modern City*
- 2000: Anthony Vidler's *Warped Space*
- 2000: Bob Fear's *Architecture & Film II*
- 2000: Mark Lamster's *Architecture & Film*
- 2001: Mark Shiel & Tony Fitzmaurice's *Cinema and the City*
- 2003: Same authors' *Screening the City*
- 2004: Mitchell Schwartz's *Zoomscape*
- 2006: Stephen Barber's *Projected Cities*
- 2006: Nezar AlSayyad, *Cinematic Urbanism*
- 2007: Ranjani Mazumdar, *Bombay Cinema*
- 2007: John David Rhodes, *Stupendous Miserable City: Pasolini's Rome*
- 2008: Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Architecture of Image*
- 2008: Barbara Menel, *Cities and Cinema*
- 2008: Scott Mcquire's *Media City*
- Conferences: 2006: Cinema at the City's Edge (U of Washington)
- 2008: SCMS, Architectures of the Moving Image
- 2010: Mapping the City in Film, Liverpool
- 2010: Emerging Landscapes, Westminster

**[SLIDE13] Cities Before Cinema (1862)**

**Reworking Others' Work**

**[SLIDE14]: Fletcher on Avoiding Cliches:**

- “I take a cliché and try to organize its forms to make it monumental. The difference is often not great, but it is crucial.” – Roy Lichtenstein
- “Everything has been said before but because no one listens you always have to say it again” – Andre Gide, winner of Nobel Prize in literature

**[SLIDE15] Man Ray on Improv: Art from Accident**

- cobbling things together; meeting the right people; jury-rigged equipment & happy accidents
- “Invention is sometimes more like falling off a log than like sawing one in two.”

**[SLIDE16] Conferences indicate current agenda**

**[SLIDES 17-18] Calls for proposals set the field's agenda**

- Listservs, newsletters; websites

**[SLIDE19] Perceived “holes in the literature”** – requires a comprehensive literature review, which you'll practice this semester

**Human resources** – advisors, colleagues, fellow students

**[SLIDE20] Blank** Pragmatic Concerns: the **relevance of your interests to the field**, accessibility of the scene, **availability of qualified and interested supervisors** in your program, availability of **funding**

## MAPPING

Self-reflective questions:

- **[SLIDE21]:** Ways of Thinking

**[SLIDE22]: Brain Map**

**"Is this idea congruent with my personal and researcher identities?"**  
(Lindlof & Laylor 77) Am I **post-positivist, a social constructionist, a pragmatist, an advocacy/participatory researcher?** What is my purpose as a researcher: am I **an explorer, a describer, an explainer, or an emancipator?**

- **How strong is your interest?** “Can I sustain my interest in this project over

the long haul?" (Lindlof & Taylor, p. 77).

- Do I want to frame myself as an expert on this subject?
- Do I have the **necessary methodological expertise** to do what I plan to do?
- How likely is it that I can complete this project with the **time and resources** I have available?

**INTELLECTUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY** helps you catalogue or map your “ways of thinking” – find your current position w/in the field – helps you make **reasoned choices about theory and method**

Last semester’s students found the intellectual autobio a difficult – yet valuable – exercise. One student who works as a film exec developed a modified version and **used it w/ her clients.**

**Not naval-gazing. Take a critical distance.**

Once You’ve Identified Your Interests....

**Keeping good records is imperative!**

**Research Diary**

**[SLIDE23]** “As a social scientist” -- or, more generally, as a researcher, as a media-maker, as an artist, etc. -- “you have to control this rather elaborate interplay [between your past, present, and future], to capture what you experience and sort it out; only in this way can you hope to use it to guide and test your reflection, and in the process shape yourself as an intellectual craftsman. But how can you do this? One answer is: you must set up a file, which is, I suppose, a sociologist’s way of saying: - keep a journal” (Mills).

**[SLIDE24]** In such a file as I am going to describe, there is joined personal experience and professional activities, **studies under way and studies planned.** In this file, you, as an intellectual craftsman, will try to get together **what you are doing intellectually and what you are experiencing as a person.** Here you will not be afraid to use your experience and relate it directly to various works in progress. By serving as a check on repetitious work, your file also enables you to conserve your energy. It also encouraged you to **capture ‘fringe-thoughts’:** various ideas which may be **by-products of everyday life, snatched of conversations overheard on the street, or, for that matter, dreams.** Once noted, these may lead to more systematic thinking, as well as lend intellectual relevance to more directed experience.” (Mills)

“By keeping an adequate file and thus developing self-reflective habits, you learn how to **keep your inner world awake.** Whether you feel strongly about events or ideas you must

try not to let them pass from your mind, but instead to formulate them for your files and in so doing **draw out their implications, show yourself either how foolish these feelings or ideas are, or how they might be articulated into productive shape.** The file also **helps you build up the habit of writing.** You cannot ‘keep your hand in’ if you do not write something at least every week. In developing the file, you can experiment as a writer and thus, as they say, **develop your powers of expression.** To maintain a file is to engage in the controlled experience.” (Mills)

**[SLIDE25]** “Under various topics in your file there are **ideas, personal notes, excerpts from books, bibliographic items and outlines of projects....** [S]ort all these items into a master file of ‘projects,’ with many subdivisions. The topics, of course, change, sometimes quite frequently.” (Mills)

“...the use of the file encouraged **expansion of the categories which you use in your thinking.** And the way in which these categories change, some being dropped and others being added is an index of your intellectual progress and breadth.” (Mills)

“You will have to acquire the habit of taking a large volume of notes from any worth-while book you read... The first step in translating experience, either of other people’s writing, or of your own life, into the intellectual sphere, is to give it form....

Your notes may turn out, as mine do, to be of two sorts: in reading certain very important books you try to grasp the structure of the writer’s argument, and take notes accordingly; but more frequently, and **after a few years of independent work, rather than read entire books, you will very often read parts of many books from the point of view of some particular theme or topic** in which you are interested and concerning which you have plans in your file. Therefore, you will take notes which do not fairly represent the books you read. You are using this particular idea, this particular fact, for the realization of your own projects.” (Mills)

**Outline a project: “the idea and the plan came out of my files... After making my crude outline I examined my entire file, not only those parts of it that obviously bore on my topic, but also those which seemed to have no relevance whatsoever. Imagination is often successfully invited by putting together hitherto isolated items, by finding unsuspected connections....** It is a sort of logic of combination, and ‘chance’ sometimes plays a curiously large part in it. In a relaxed way, you try to engage your intellectual resources, as exemplified in the file, with the new theme.” (Mills)

**[SLIDE26]** Reflective Journal for Artists & Designers (Carole Gray & Julian Malins)

- **‘off-loading’ device:** “allow[s] the learner to take stock, evaluate and ‘deposit’ ideas and feelings about the learning experience” (58)
- **dynamic** – “a depository for a range of information in a range of media, which is added to and consulted on a regular basis” (59)
- different types of info: **activity and development log, diary, documentation of work in progress, contextual references, information about the pace and progress of work, key points from evaluation and analysis**
- Content
  - Bibliographic database
  - Project Glossary

- Contacts
- Correspondence
- Contextual references: e.g., visual examples of other practitioners' work, w/ discussion of what it is and why it's significant
- activity log: detailed records to allow for repeatability; may include visuals, photos, material samples, diagrams, data;
- Video Diary
- Website

#### [SLIDE27]

- Document the failures – “Asking why a failure has occurred is liable to reveal much more useful information in research terms than contemplating ‘successful’ final outcomes” (60)
- Evaluate the pace and progress of your work – e.g., key incidents, events, decisions, realizations
- Brainstorm, think aloud, have insights, make decisions, make changes, what if's?, plans for improvement

#### PRECEDENTS FOR THIS REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

#### [SLIDE28] **Commonplace Book**

- Commonplace books are broadly defined as **compendiums of adages, sententia, and examples**. In the Renaissance, these **collections of textual fragments culled by readers from a myriad of sources** were embraced as **memory aids** and as **rich storehouses of materials that might eventually be incorporated into composition of one's own making**.
- The commonplace book participated in the **transformation of readers into writers**, laying the foundations for the author-centered genres that took shape in the early modern era.
- Commonplace books generally took the form of collections of textual fragments gathered by readers and rearranged under **common topics, including rhetorical topics** (i.e. metaphors and similes), **and moral topics** (i.e., drunkenness and swearing).
- **Erasmus**, a major proponent of commonplace books in the sixteenth century, explains: “One should collect a vast supply of words from all sides out of good authors... **have a wealth of words on hand**, [but]...It will not be sufficient to prepare an abundant store of such words unless you have them not only at the ready but also in full view.”
- Like blogs?: “...blogs are sometimes described as digital diaries, like commonplace books, **their contents are often primarily or entirely comprised of images and texts culled from other sources**. ... **commonplace books and blogs are both products of collecting and ordering** (archival practices) and **reflect common understandings of authorship, intellectual property and subjectivity**. In

addition, both forms or forums are ambiguously situated between the public and private spheres.<sup>1</sup>

<http://mycommonplace.com/>

**[SLIDE29]** Leonardo da Vinci's Sketchbooks

- Visual studies or anatomy, flora, other natural subjects; some function as “**lab notes**”
- 1630s: attempt to **organize notebooks by subject – resulted in destruction of original order**
- Lettering is quick, sloppy, often uses shorthand, sometimes written *backward*

**[SLIDE30]** Galileo's sketches

**[SLIDE31]** Buckminster Fuller's (architect, inventor, futurist) *Chronofile* (Stanford University)

- Large scrapbook in which Fuller **documented his life every 15 minutes from 1915 to 1983**
- Contains copies of correspondence, bills, notes, sketches, news clippings
- Total # of papers: 140,000

**[SLIDE32]** *"Most children like to collect things. At four I started to collect documents of my own development as correlated with world patterns of developing technology. Beginning in 1917, I determined to employ my already rich case history, as objectively as possible, in documenting the life of a suburban New Englander, born in the Gay Nineties (1895)-- the year automobiles were introduced, the wireless telegraph and the automatic screw machine were invented, and X-rays were discovered; having his boyhood in the turn of the century; and maturing during humanity's epochal graduation from the inert, materialistic 19th into the dynamic 20th century. I named my documentation the Chronofile. —From Synergetics Dictionary citing Citizen of 21st. Century, (U, or O, Chap. 1), 1 Apr'67 (<http://www.bfi.org/node/105>)*

*"If somebody kept a very accurate record of a human being, going through the era from the Gay'90's, from a very different kind of world through the turn of the century--as far into the twentieth century as you might live. I **decided to make myself a good case history of such a human being** and it meant that I could not be judge of what was valid to put in or not. I must put everything in, so I started a very rigorous record. —From Synergetics Dictionary citing Oregon Lecture #9, p.324., 12 Ju1'62*

- **Fuller used it as a “working tool”:** *He would proceed in the following manner: finding that he needs, for example, to recall a person's name (or a place, date, historical fact, etc.), he can easily*

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<sup>1</sup> Kate Eichhorn, “Archival Genres: Gathering Texts and Reading Spaces” *Invisible Culture* 12 The Archive of the Future / The Future of the Archive (May 2008): [www.rochester.edu/in\\_visible\\_culture/Issue\\_12/eichhorn/eichhorn.pdf](http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_12/eichhorn/eichhorn.pdf)

*proceed to retrieve a particular volume from the Chronofile which he intuitively may reveal the needed information. This opens up that historical period like a time machine/ window which then allows him to rapidly proceed to the correct volume and letter(s) that clarify the issue at hand.*

(<http://www.bfi.org/node/105>)

- Personal archive; organization not intuitive to others

## Connecting the *personal* to a *public* responsibility...

**[SLIDE33]** Brian Eno chiding artists for not explaining themselves

**[SLIDE34]** Brian Eno's *A Year With Swollen Appendices* (Faber & Faber, 1996)

- Diary of 1995: producing albums by David Bowie and JAMES, working with U2, organizing a record/concert and a fashion show as charity work for Bosnia, directing art installations
- Appendices, on orange paper, w/ "pet theories, obsessions" and 'germs' of projects

**[SLIDE35]** *"Do very hard things, just for the sake of it.*

*Try to make things that can become better in other people's minds than they were in yours.*

*A few years ago I came up with a new word. I was fed up with the old art-history idea of genius--the notion that gifted individuals turn up out of nowhere and light the way for all the rest of us dummies to follow. I became (and still am) more and more convinced that the important changes in cultural history were actually the product of very large numbers of people and circumstances conspiring to make something new. I call this "scenius"--it means "the intelligence and intuition of a whole cultural scene." It is the communal form of the concept of genius.*

## We can keep our own files, and perhaps explain ourselves to our publics, on PERSONAL WEB PAGES

**[SLIDE36]** Making History Podcast: <http://makinghistorypodcast.com/>

- Book Collector, Endnote, RSS, Blog as Research Journal Cameras in Archives

**[SLIDE37]** Reflection on use of technologies – not only in media production, but also in research. Equal consideration in choice of production and research **TECHNIQUES, or METHODS.**

## [SLIDE38] PLANNING

[SLIDE39] Fletcher: Different Fields' Methods – “Tricks of the Trade”

[SLIDE40] Ditto

**In Research, or Research-based Production, Your “Researcher Identity,” The Nature of Your Research Topic, Your Ontological Approach Inform Your Theoretical Framework and Appropriate Methods**

Use grad coursework and advising to **explore theoretical frameworks and methodologies**

[SLIDE41] Methods course offerings

[SLIDE42]: Avoid Methodolatry

Mary Daly's (philosopher/theologian) *Webster's First Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language*.

**Methodolatry** (n): common form of academic idolatry; glorification of the god Method; boxing knowledge into prefabricated fields, thereby hiding threads of connectedness, hindering New Discoveries, preventing the raising of New Questions, erasing ideas that do not fit into Respectable Categories of Questions and Answers (Daly 1987).

Sandra Bicknell, a researcher in museum studies, espouses methodological "pluralism":

I have a feeling that there is a lot of this (methodolatry) about. There have been a number of **attempts to categorize...methodology. This 'boxing' of methods is, in my view, isolationist. It suggests either/or scenarios.** One is either a supporter of the naturalist approach, or one is a supporter of the scientific approach; the study is either goal-oriented or goal-free; I am labeled a behaviorist if I watch what [people] are doing, or a follower of the school of cognitive psychology if I try to find out what visitors have learnt...; I use the tools of either the anthropologist, or the ethnographer, or the sociologist, or the psychologist, or the media critic; you either do quantitative work, or you do qualitative work; you do it either before the event or after; you either observe or you ask.

[SLIDE43]: I use **multiple methods to give greater rigor, reliability and depth** to the work I do. **Each element is designed both to test and to complement the findings of other elements. The different methods add layers of information but also provide a means of identifying inconsistencies and weaknesses.**

(Sarah Bicknell, “Here to Help: Evaluation and Effectiveness” In Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Ed., *Museum, Media, Message* (Museum Meanings) (Routledge, 1999): 283-4).

[SLIDE44]: **Collage:** So, in short: **you needn't be a methodological purist.** The challenge is to find a **complementary combination of methods** -- all appropriate for your research problem or project -- that, together, provide for greater "rigor, reliability,

and depth."

**How can we regard media technologies as *tools* for research, and how can we use those same tools as new means of disseminating our research findings to wider audiences?** How can we make sure these new tools for expression and argumentation are held to the same rigorous standards to which we hold more traditional forms of presentation, like scholarly writing? How can we **make sure our making is inherently analytical, and our analysis is generative?**

[SLIDE45] Vectors

[SLIDE46] Amir Husak's Dayton Express

Multimodal Scholarship

[SLIDE47] McPherson

[SLIDE48] “

Not about highlighting the tools or the method...

[SLIDE49]: “The end of all method is to seem to have no method.”

In the end, it's about...

[SLIDE50]: **Info** → **Knowledge**: going beyond data, footage, quotations to some larger meaning

[SLIDE51]: Fletcher: Knowing How to Ask Questions  
Must be able to answer the *So What?* question