

Call for Abstracts

The MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning

The New Media Consortium and the Monterey Institute for Technology and Education, supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, are soliciting abstracts for chapters to appear in a series of volumes entitled *The MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning*. The *MacArthur Foundation Series* will explore the intersection of digital media and learning from the perspectives of experts, visionaries, and thought leaders chosen from across the globe. Authors whose chapters are selected for inclusion in these volumes will receive an honorarium for their contribution.

The working hypothesis of the effort is that digital media tools have advanced significantly in recent years, enabling new forms of knowledge production, social networking, communication, and play. People who have grown up with access to these new digital tools are engaged in an unprecedented exploration of language, games, social interaction, and self-directed education that can be used to support learning. They are different as a result of this exposure to and use of digital media and these differences are reflected in their sense of self, and how they express their independence and creativity, and in their ability to learn, exercise judgment, and think systemically.

Six volumes of such work will be published in the first year of the *MacArthur Foundation Series*, each with a unifying theme that addresses a critical aspect of this emerging field of study. The themes are *Identity and Digital Media*, *Credibility*, *Digital Media and Civic Engagement*, *the Ecology of Games*, *Incidental Learning and Unexpected Outcomes*, and *Race and Ethnicity*. These volumes are intended for an informed but wide audience. Each volume will include an introductory chapter by the editor, and 7-10 additional chapters that will explore the topics from a variety of perspectives. A summary of each topic is attached.

Authors for the volumes will be chosen in a competitive process, with selections based on a peer review of an abstract of their proposed chapter. Submissions of abstracts are due April 28, 2006. Abstracts will be reviewed by a panel of scholars who will base their selections on the relevance of the content to the planned volume on the topic, the conceptual underpinnings and quality of the ideas represented in the abstract, the publication record or relevant expertise of the author in this area, and other related factors.

Submitting an Abstract

Interested authors should prepare an abstract of their proposed chapter for review by the selection committee. Successful chapter abstracts will describe "thought pieces" that seek to illuminate a subset of issues involved in the topic, and will provide the reader a clear sense of the conceptual framework suggested for the chapter. Provocative, socially relevant chapters with a broad appeal will be favored over more traditional research-focused articles that present original data but do not draw out the larger social implications of that data.

Abstracts should be prepared in an electronic format, preferably MS Word, limited to 1500 words, written in English, and in a style accessible to a broad but informed audience. A cover page should clearly indicate which of the six topics the suggested chapter would be part of, the proposed chapter title, a 50-word synopsis of the proposed chapter, and complete contact information for all authors.

To receive full consideration from the selection committee, abstracts should be submitted via email to MacArthur_Series@nmc.org no later than April 28, 2006. All submissions will be acknowledged upon receipt.

Selection and Authoring Timeline

The selection of the authors who will be invited to submit chapters will begin April 29, 2006 and continue until the process is complete, when all those who have submitted abstracts will be notified of the results. Authors will be expected to participate in online discussions based on accepted abstracts. First drafts will be due August 15, 2006. Authors will be encouraged to attend an expense-paid gathering of project participants in September. Finished chapters of approximately 10,000 words will be due by December 1, 2006.

Author Agreement and Honorarium

Authors of abstracts selected as contributors to one of the *MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning* volumes will be asked to sign an author's agreement and will receive an honorarium upon submission of the completed chapter as detailed in that agreement. Contributing authors will retain ownership of intellectual property related to and copyright of their works.

For additional information, please contact:

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Online Dialogs

A centerpiece of the MacArthur Foundation Series will be a series of online dialogs focusing on the six topics described below. These conversations, which will be open to everyone submitting an Abstract, as well as the interested public, will take place over the summer of 2006. Authors whose abstracts are selected for inclusion in one of the six volumes will have special roles in these online events, which are intended to help inform their chapters by surfacing perspectives and points of view that may not be well represented in the current literature.

Topics

Credibility

Editors: Andrew Flanagin & Miriam Metzger, University of California, Santa Barbara

The impetus for this volume is the observation that digital technologies such as the internet and the web have provided people easy access to a greater diversity of information resources than at any time in human history. Indeed, in spite of the nearly inconceivable amount of information now available through digital media, search engines and other tools have made information easy to access, with results available virtually instantaneously. In this environment, how do individuals, particularly young people, identify “experts” and come to trust the veracity of what they read, see, or hear via the internet? In some cases, individuals are honing new skills, and invoking novel tools, for assessing information credibility. In other instances, the voice of the community is emerging as the coin of credibility, and self-regulating sites such as Wikipedia are evidence that the locus of knowledge ownership is moving to communities of users. In still other cases, institutional or corporate entities are emerging as arbiters of credibility. This volume will explore these and related issues in order to understand how people assess the quality of information to which they have access via digital media.

Topics may include, but are by no means limited to:

- credibility concerns and information assessment strategies across communication channels and information venues, such as email, wikis, search engines, virtual worlds, recommender/reputation systems, social networking sites, and blogs
- how individuals, particularly young people who have matured in the contemporary media environment, learn to assess the credibility of the information and individuals they encounter online
- credibility concerns as implicated by different types of information (e.g., medical, news, consumer, or political information), perhaps across different user groups
- the various skills, tools, or institutions invoked to aid users in credibility assessment
- digital/media literacy, including formal or informal mechanisms for training and learning
- how youth come to understand credibility and the ways in which it is consequential for them, now and in the future
- cognitive mechanisms for information processing, evaluation, and assessment
- new or emerging issues in digital media credibility

Authors will be encouraged to consider the implications of their topic for young people where appropriate.

Digital Media and Civic Engagement

Editor: Lance Bennett, University of Washington

This volume explores the idea that digital media enable new forms of participation, collaboration, distribution and social relationships. This volume explores applications and effects of information technologies in the following areas of civic engagement as they apply to contemporary youth.

- *Citizenship, identity and civic education:* How are digital media applications addressing shifts in citizen identity, attitudes toward government and authority, and participation that is less driven by sense of obligation? How are young people redefining politics and participation, both online and off, and what are the implications for democratic life? What approaches to civic education incorporating ICTs can supplement textbook instruction to instill more lasting effects on future participation?

- *Relationships between online and offline experiences:* What kinds of online participation count as political, and who says they do? How do various forms of online engagement affect offline participation – is there evidence that they encourage, replace or merely serve as pale substitutes for more conventional forms of participation?
- *Elections and campaigns:* Many believe that websites such as Moveon.org significantly influenced involvement in the last presidential election and continue to influence youth involvement in political activities. These claims need to be assessed. Other applications in electoral politics also need to be examined, from interactive campaign sites, and youth engagement networks, to targeted e-mail appeals.
- *Political activism and organization:* It has been theorized that digital media may serve to “level” hierarchical or authoritarian relations within or across economic, social, or political institutions and organizations. To what extent is such a “leveling” phenomenon experienced and understood by young people and how might it shape their understanding of civic, national, or global engagement, values and goals? Have new network and affiliation models changed conventional interest organizations that have experienced graying and declining memberships? Is there a loss of goal setting capacity compared to hierarchical organizations?
- *Information and participation:* What is the future of news, given its growing abandonment by younger audiences? Is there evidence that digital media can inform and engage new generations?

Ecology of Games

Editor: Katie Salen, Parsons School of Design

Although there has been a considerable amount written on games and young people’s use of them, there has been little work done to establish an overall "ecology" of gaming, game design, and play – in the sense of how all of the various elements, from code to social practices to aesthetics, cohabit and populate the game world. In this volume, we seek to explore the design and behavior of games as systems in which young people participate, as gamers, producers, and learners. Games and game modification are currently key entry points for many young people into digital literacies and tech-savvy identities. How do such practices relate to social and educational domains? What needs to be known, for example, to develop games that enable learning? What modes of agency do games produce and what grammars of interaction (social, physical, cultural) are forged through their play? While many credit game play with fostering new forms of social organization and new ways of thinking and interacting (e.g., systems-based thinking; iterative critical problem solving), more work needs to be done to situate these forms of learning within a dynamic media ecology that has the participatory nature of gaming at its core. It is expected that this volume will begin to build an ecological understanding of games, identify its boundaries and relevance to a generation of youth seeking alternative modes of engagement, as well as make connections between domains affecting its impact and practice.

Identity and Digital Media

Editor: David Buckingham, London University

What does it mean to grow up as a young person in a world saturated with digital media? How are youth identities currently being defined, and redefined, through young people’s engagements with technology? What are the implications of these media for their experiences as learners, citizens and consumers, and as members of broader social groupings and communities? This volume will address the consequences of digital media for young people’s sense of self and others, and for their involvement in familial, educational, recreational and civic activities. It will explore how young people use these media to interact with each other and with unknown (and potentially global) audiences; and the implications of these interactions for the development of individual, social and national identities. It will consider how young people are using digital media to share their ideas and creative productions, and to participate in networks that are small and large, local and global, intimate and anonymous. It will look at the emergence of new genres and forms of communication and self-expression, from SMS and instant messaging to blogs and home-pages. To what extent do these media offer genuinely new forms of engagement, interaction and communication for young people? What are the obstacles to full participation, and how might they be overcome?

Incidental Learning and Unexpected Outcomes

Editor: Tara McPherson, University of Southern California

This series of papers will identify core issues for further study concerning how young people's use of digital media may lead to various unexpected outcomes, including a range of unintended learning experiences and unanticipated social encounters. While such outcomes might typically be seen as 'positive' or 'negative,' this volume aims to push beyond simple accounts of digital media and learning as either utopian or dystopian in order to explore the complex variety of emergent practices and developments of digital users. A broad range of topics might be taken up, including but not limited to social consequences such as (un)equal access across economic, racial and ethnic categories; generational conflicts and connections; issues of policy and IP; convergence media; citizenship vs. consumption; creativity and collaboration; digital media and gender equity; and shifting notions of temporality or of the public/private divide, as well as perceptual ones such as how different forms of digital media reward different modalities of intelligence (including synchronicity of mental and motor abilities which may or may not align with social factors including gender, class, or race), how collaborative digital interactions do or do not support individual achievement as measured by conventional educational testing, or other unintended learning styles that are not yet appreciated or accepted as "learning." The purpose of this collection is to invite individuals to identify and examine possible consequences of digital media use that might be unanticipated or unexpected and that are worthy of in-depth investigation.

Race and Ethnicity

Editor: Anna Everett, University of California at Santa Barbara

In the early years of the internet, a cartoon depicting a dog typing on a personal computer with a caption reading "Nobody knows you're a dog on the Internet" became extremely popular. Around this same time, in the early to mid 1990s, the telecom giant MCI produced a compelling TV commercial claiming there is no race, no genders, and no infirmities in the new world of the internet because here "people can communicate mind to mind." These popular examples are symptomatic of the nation's desire to imagine and construct colorblind or hyper-tolerant virtual communities and digital public spheres through the internet's text-driven digital environments during the late 1980s and early 1990s. By the 1994 arrival of the graphical user interface (GUI) and the web-cam technologies to the internet and especially to the World Wide Web, this utopic future vision came to a near standstill. This volume asks questions about race and racism, whether racialized forms (of one type or another) have been present from the beginning (despite the utopic cartoon and ad rhetoric) and whether there racial consciousness has increased as a result of the movement, in recent years, from text-dominant communications structures and protocols to more image-based media content. This volume also is concerned with how race and ethnicity have factored in the movement, in recent years, to reinstate the human body at the center of academic and popular debates about posthumanism, cyberculture, technoculture, and gaming culture? How does gender map onto race and ethnicity in digital media? How are race and ethnicity experienced and represented on the internet and in other digital media, including in social interactions such as in game play, friendship networks or blogs? Similarly, issues such as how race or ethnicity may influence online interpersonal relations, social networks and identity have been rarely considered. How does race and ethnicity play into the politics high-tech surveillance, post 9-11, and online hate-speech? What is the significance of race and ethnicity in digital youth and music cultures? Where do we stand on matters of universal access and the racial and ethnic digital divide in the 21st century, especially in terms of digital media and learning?

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