The Stream of All Human Consciousness: Using Social Media in a History Seminar Collaboratory to Chart the Tributaries of Collective Cultural memories in the Digital Age

W. Mick Charney
Kansas State University, charney@ksu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://newprairiepress.org/digitalhumanities

Part of the Communication Technology and New Media Commons, Digital Humanities Commons, and the Social Media Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License.

Recommended Citation

This Event is brought to you under a Creative Commons Non-Commercial Non-Derivative License (CC BY-NC-ND) by the Conferences and New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digital Humanities Symposium by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.
Internet surfing and social networking are much maligned as activities that divert the attention of our digital native students away from the serious, sustained pursuit of knowledge and encourage, instead, mind-numbing, superficial quests for personal relationships. This paper challenges the time-honored seminar class paradigm by demonstrating that social media do, in fact, possess tremendous latent scholarly and pedagogical credibility, legitimacy, and power if utilized in a carefully charted manner for a semester-long research project.

When enrollments in a traditional history seminar dwindled in the face of stiff competition from other technologically-driven electives, the instructor surmised that redesigning his class to appeal to tech-savvy digital natives could renew student interest in more humanistic investigations. Flying in the face of the status quo in art historiography, typical research paper assignments were reconceived to leverage the technology literacies and digital dexterities of NetGeners, including their infatuation with social media.

This paper describes a collaborative class project in a seminar dedicated to the life and times of a singularly renowned and catalytic historic figure in architecture. Upper-level architecture students were asked to create individual Facebook pages clustered around that architect's fan page (created by the instructor) and then to “friend” all other students' pages in a closed-network. Each student assumed the identity, or avatar, of one of that architect's family members, friends, clients, or apprentices.

The overarching objective of this class project asked students to discover the true character of one of the most enigmatic architectural personalities and enormously complicated design geniuses of all time not through the traditional channels of art historical scholarship – studies of the architect himself or his corpus of designs by themselves – but through the virtual recreation of the complex web of personal and professional relationships he had forged over a nine-decade-long lifetime.

By plumbing the depths of cultural data bases on the Internet, by digitizing products of traditional scholarship, and by creating their own born-digital materials, students immersed themselves in a new sort of historical scholarship that transcended the mere consultation of typical textual sources. By inventing new approaches to documenting their investigations, by altering the means of scholarly communication, by increasing the visibility of their work to one another, students acquired a more profound understanding of the personal character and motivations behind the public persona of a celebrated icon in the art world.

The end result of this digital humanities experiment was a vibrant, endlessly interconnected repository of useful information – simultaneously engaging and revelatory – that everyone within this harbored network could share.

And in the final analysis, this social media collaboratory was perfectly attuned to coming to terms with the intricate, nuanced findings that multifaceted, historical problems often demand. Envisioned by Mark Zuckerberg as “the stream of all human consciousness,” Facebook does indeed redeem itself as a valuable didactic tool in the humanities when focused particularly on matters of the human condition throughout time.

**Disciplines**

Communication Technology and New Media | Digital Humanities | Social Media

This event is available at New Prairie Press: [https://newprairiepress.org/digitalhumanities/2015/LinguisticsPanel/4](https://newprairiepress.org/digitalhumanities/2015/LinguisticsPanel/4)
The Stream of All Human Consciousness

Using Social Media in a History Seminar Collaboratory to Chart the Tributaries of Collective Cultural Memories in the Digital Age

W. Mick Charney, PhD · Associate Professor · Department of Architecture 2014-2015 Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars Kansas State University
Facebook is a powerful social phenomenon. It was a viral FB campaign that got Betty White a gig as host on TV’s “Saturday Night Live.”
“You know, I have so many people to thank for being here, but I really have to thank Facebook. When I first heard about the campaign to get me to host “Saturday Night Live,” I didn’t know what Facebook was; and now that I do know what it is, I have to say, it sounds like a huge waste of time.”

Frank Lloyd Wright

Facebooking the Future of Higher Education

Social Media Awareness Somewhere around 98% or 99% of faculty are generally aware of the various types of social media.

Professional Social Media Usage About 90% of faculty use social media either in their classes or in their non-class professional activities.

Personal Social Media Usage Facebook is the most visited social media site [57% in the past month] with the highest rate of postings [43% in the past month]. YouTube is second in visits [49% in the past month] with very low postings [8%].

Facebook Usage in Class Very, very few higher education faculty [4%] are using Facebook in class; online videos are the most used social media in class [61%].

Negative Perceptions Of all types of social media, Facebook is judged by faculty to have the highest negative classroom value [53%] followed by Twitter [46%].

Social Media Concerns Class work submitted via social media is judged by faculty to lack integrity [78%] and social media generally raise privacy concerns [72%].

Mark Zuckerberg

The facebook is an online directory that connects people through social networks at colleges. We have opened up Thefacebook for popular consumption at Harvard University. • 11 years ago (February 2004)
While instructors bemoan Net Geners’ digitally inculcated bad habits, Tapscott’s writings urge us to tap into their digital strengths.
Customization These are kids in their twenties, and they have changed every category they have touched so far ... personalized online space is now almost obligatory.

Collaboration Educators should take note. The current model of pedagogy is teacher focused. One way, one size fits all ... it isolates the student in the learning process.

Scrutiny Today's youth have the ability to distinguish between fact and fiction. The Net Generation knows to be skeptical whenever they're online.

Speed Having grown up digital, they expect speed ... Google answers their inquiries in nanoseconds. So they assume everyone else in the world will ... too.

Freedom They have access to most of the world’s knowledge. Learning ... for them ... should take place where and when they want it.

Innovation Net Geners live to stay current ... innovation means rejecting the traditional command-and-control hierarchy and devising work processes that encourage ... creativity.

Integrity They want their universities, schools, governments, and politicians to be honest, considerate of their interests, accountable, and open ... yet they are downloading music for free.

Entertainment The Internet gives them plenty of opportunity to amuse themselves online. Net Geners become easily bored, so playing with ... tech devices keeps them interested.
**Frank Lloyd Wright**

**Description of the Class Project** Rather than merely accumulate a static and finite body of data, this seminar “e-term paper” project seeks to mine the infinite riches of the Internet and explore its endless hyperlinking capabilities by harnessing the digital dexterity of Net Geners.

How can I manipulate it and get it to work for me? It’s good, I want to use it, besides who’s going to stop me? More so than older adults, Net Geners are particularly adept at quickly deciphering and sorting through images, thumbnail icons, images, and various other color and font (style/size) cues as they maneuver through vast amounts of information on the Internet.

**Course** Upper-level, professional elective seminar with 16 to 22 architecture students.

**Subject** Frank Lloyd Wright – one of the most enigmatic, elusive, and complex design geniuses of all time.

**Objective** Work collaboratively to “find” – humanize and demystify – the full, robust nature of an otherwise distant historical figure not directly through the architect himself or through any of his designs by themselves but through a closed, “virtual” social network that recreates many professional/personal relationships he had forged over a 70-year-long career/92-year-long life.

**Research Tools** The Internet and the Facebook social networking site.
Frank Lloyd Wright

How can anyone really “know” one of the most enigmatic, elusive, and complex design geniuses of all time?
Frank Lloyd Wright

Each student creates an avatar and FB page for one of Wright’s friends, family members, or associates.

Olgivanna Milanoff Wright
Maude Miriam Noel
Mamah Borthwick Cheney
Solomon Guggenheim
Walter Burley Griffin
Marion Lucy Mahony
They all “friend” the instructor’s FB page for the architect Frank Lloyd Wright.
Frank Lloyd Wright

They “friend” other avatars in a closed virtual network mimicking FLW’s real-life network.

92 People Like This

- Olgivanna Milanoff Wright
- Maude Miriam Noel
- Mamah Borthwick Cheney
- Solomon Guggenheim
- Walter Burley Griffin
- Marion Lucy Mahony
Frank Lloyd Wright

By removing links to FLW, relationships among his friends are all that much more apparent.

92 People Like This

Olgivanna Milanoff Wright
Maude Miriam Noel
Mamah Borthwick Cheney
Solomon Guggenheim
Walter Burley Griffin
Marion Lucy Mahony
Frank Lloyd Wright

Singling out an avatar – such as FLW’s third wife – provides a different perspective on her pivotal role.

92 People Like This

Olgivanna Milanoff Wright
Maude Miriam Noel
Mamah Borthwick Cheney
Solomon Guggenheim
Walter Burley Griffin
Marion Lucy Mahony
Frank Lloyd Wright

Mark Zuckerberg
However people see fit to use the site, that’s cool.

Therefore, why not use Facebook in class as a powerful pedagogical tool? Many of our students are already intimately familiar with its capabilities.
Frank Lloyd Wright

Mark Zuckerberg
However people see fit to use the site, that’s cool.

Mark Zuckerberg
It’s almost the stream of all human consciousness and communication ... The concept of the social graph has been a very useful construct, but I think increasingly this concept of the social stream – the aggregate stream for everyone – will be as important.

Facebook – no longer just a “social graph” but now also “the stream of all human consciousness” – holds tremendous potential as a more-than-suitable interactive tool to chronicle human history, both individual and collective.
Mark Zuckerberg
However people see fit to use the site, that’s cool.

Mark Zuckerberg
It’s almost the stream of all human consciousness and communication ... The concept of the social graph has been a very useful construct, but I think increasingly this concept of the social stream – the aggregate stream for everyone – will be as important.

Why Facebook?

Search Engine 48% of young Americans say they find out about NEWS events through Facebook. • 4 years ago (January 2011)

Usage 48% of 18- to 34-year-olds say they check Facebook right away when they wake up each morning. • 4 years ago (January 2011)

Social Network The 35+ age group demographic now represents more than 30% of the entire Facebook userbase. • 4 years ago (January 2011)

Popularity The 18 to 24 college age group demographic grew the fastest at 74% in just one year. • 4 years ago (January 2011)
Students find amusement in assigning FB descriptors to avatars such as FLW’s mistress.

Frank Lloyd Wright

Information

Relationship Status: It's Complicated

Children:

John

Martha

Birthday:

June 19
Frank Lloyd Wright

92 People Like This

Olgivanna Milanoff Wright
Maude Miriam Noel
Mamah Borthwick Cheney
Solomon Guggenheim
Walter Burley Griffin
Marion Lucy Mahony

The Women: A Review
by Alyssa DeBrie

An American architect who designed more than 1,000 projects that resulted in over 500 completed works, Frank Lloyd Wright, a well-known visionary in his lifetime, once claimed to be the greatest architect of all time. Wright's concerns with organic architecture permeated to even the smallest detail. From skyscrapers, hotels, and museums to offices, churches and schools, he even designed most interior details such as furniture, stained glass, and lighting elements. Wright also possessed concerns for the cultural and economic welfare of Americans as reflected in his Prairie School Houses and his textile block designs as well as his concept of the Usonian Home.

Vight was always on a restless adventure and never failed to get lucky. "No rest for the weary," he exclaimed (129). He ignored his clients' wishes and rewarded them with wethigh-cost designs that suited their needs. He positioned buildings over waterfalls and on steep slopes, and he designed a hotel that withstood a major earthquake. Art was his devotion, and nothing stood in the way of his success. He was passionate and manipulative, affectionate and degrading. A believer in himself and his endeavors yet, by every account, Wright both lived and hated the public spotlight.
Frank Lloyd Wright

www.wordle.net

“Word clouds” – cut-and-pasted from all students’ writings – highlight common course objectives.
Frank Lloyd Wright

On FB, students can share hyperlinks to important and frequently used online resources.

Wright Studies

PHOTOGRAPHIC CHRONOLOGY OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT PORTRAITS

The purpose of this page is to document, clarify and date photographs and portraits of Frank Lloyd Wright. Please feel free to send us any information that will clarify any of these images. We also welcome new images that we do not have.


Books Related to Women in Wright’s Life

Catherine Tobin Wright  Mamah Borthwick Cheney  Miriam Noel Wright  Olgivanna Lloyd Wright  Mrs. John Lloyd Wright  Anne Baxter

Frank Lloyd Wright (June 8, 1867 - April 9, 1959)
Frank Lloyd Wright

FB photo albums provide ready access to related images—like Guggenheim’s complete modern art collection.
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

It was Solomon Guggenheim who commissioned the design for an iconic NYC art museum from FLW.

FB can archive interesting facts – like the death of Guggenheim’s brother, Benjamin, on the Titanic.
Frank Lloyd Wright

FLW’s second wife – Miriam Noel – had addictions enabled by new medical technologies.

FB facilitates the exploration of the human condition far beyond any one avatar’s immediate life events.
Frank Lloyd Wright

Students create photo albums that visually document their avatar’s life story and adventures.

But sometimes images of actual events do not exist. Images of FLW with his estranged second wife are rare.
Frank Lloyd Wright

Students create photo albums that visually document their avatar’s life story and adventures.

So, when images are rare, students demonstrate a playful creativity by “photoshopping” “new” images.
Students create photo albums that visually document their avatar’s life story and adventures.

So, when images are rare, students demonstrate a playful creativity by “photoshopping” “new” images.
Net Generals know to be skeptical whenever they work online; they can distinguish between fact and fiction.

And Net Generals' playful employment of their digital skills helps the rest of us to discern fact from fiction, too.
Frank Lloyd Wright

Sometimes images simply do not exist. FLW sired no children with his estranged second wife . . .

... but online image morphing tools help students create “what if” portraits of FLW’s “children” with Miriam.

Maude was Noel’s real first name
Frank Lloyd Wright

... but online image morphing tools help students create “what if” portraits of FLW’s “children” with Miriam.

Sometimes images simply do not exist. FLW sired no children with his estranged second wife . . .

Lincoln was FLW’s real middle name

a “what if” little Lincoln Wright
Frank Lloyd Wright

As an end-of-semester project, some students produce a YouTube music video of their avatar's life.

Students' self-produced YouTube music videos can be hyperlinked from their FB pages.
Frank Lloyd Wright

As an end-of-semester project, some students produce a YouTube music video of their avatar’s life.

Olgivanna Milanoff Wright
Maude Miriam Noel
Mamah Borthwick Cheney
Solomon Guggenheim
Walter Burley Griffin
Marion Lucy Mahony
Students digitally mock up analogue tabloid newspaper front pages or movie posters about their avatars.
Frank Lloyd Wright

Architect calls town ugliest in US
Lambasts higher education

by Rick Charney
editor-in-chief

Editor’s Note: Portions of this article have been excerpted from the Kansas State Collegian and the Manhattan Mercury.

People must learn to “avoid the rut,” Frank Lloyd Wright told an audience of 1,000 students and townpeople in the Auditorium last night.

Three out of four Americans are conformists who will not say what they believe, he argued.

It is through self-criticism that the individual learns to recognize the beautiful, Wright said. When a person knows what is beautiful, he will not like his “ugly, ungainly athletic environment.”

“Cats are vandals,” Wright observed, and Manhattan is one of the ugliest towns in the United States. “Kansas is pretty much like the rest of the country, though, only perhaps a little less.”

The first thing the individual must do to educate himself is to get rid of habitation—“habitation is the death of imagination,” Wright said.

“That’s what ugly about this town—the habit it started and you can’t get rid of it.”

Wright hit at “the way we’re educated, or rather the way we’re not educated.”

The famous man declared he didn’t think anyone of the Kansas State College architecture was “all that” bad, what is true of the Manhattan college is also true of Harvard and the rest of the educational institutions in the U.S., he added. Stating firmly, “They are demoralizing.”

“You’ve got a bunch of fine young men who are here to learn architecture, but ‘how are they going to learn in an atmosphere like this?’ he said, gesturing to indicate the campus.

College presidents, said Wright, are nothing more than politicians. “A board of regents is just a committee to prevent anything from happening.”

Wright’s lecture was the second of the school year for the architecture department. Richard Neutra spoke on campus last November.

see ARCHITECT | pg 3

F L Wright has personal tie to Manhattan
The “other woman” in his life

by Ann Namie Muis
society columnist

From a town girl Lucille Allman knows Frank Lloyd Wright personally. Her husband, New York City architect Edgar Tafel, once worked as Wright’s apprentice at Taliesin in Wisconsin. Allman is the owner of a high-fashion dress-buying company. Allen’s father is the former owner-manage of the old Gillette Hotel in town, formerly the chief retreat of the Wainwright Hotel.
EXCLUSIVE PHOTO
Wright rents a secret hideaway in the other Manhattan

Prairie architect spoiled by city life
by Jane King Hession

Wright often says in a swanky suite at the world-famous Plaza Hotel whenever his work takes him to Manhattan, New York. The contradiction is evident to all who have heard Wright's oft-voiced disdain of large cities. Yet this master architect seems to take much pleasure and pride in living in one of New York's best-known landmarks.

Indeed, the suite has come to be called "Tahiti on the Third" From this suite, Wright is supervising the pouring of the first stones of the Guggenheim Museum.

He has been known to receive famous visitors in this suite such as the poet Robert Frost. Wright's own granddaughter, Anne Burton, the young Hollywood actress who is expected to play the role of the Egyptian queen in the upcoming film "The Ten Commandements," opposes this idea.

Reliable sources report that the architect is seriously considering renting the suite on a long-term basis.

SAN RAFAEL | A letter penned by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1957 has resurfaced. Addressed to a member of the Marin County board of supervisors, it defends Wright against accusations of being a Communist sympathizer. Wright had been put in the awkward position after accusations were made by members of a local chapter of the American Legion, following the architect's winning the commission to build the famous Marin County Civic Center. Walter Caso, the board member to whom Wright sent his defense, reports that it is a good, angry letter, written by a man well known for having a bit of a temper. The two-page letter responds to a public accusation that Wright had given "active and extensive support of Communist activities prior to WWII." Wright's current wife—his third—Olgivanna Isadora Lazovich, whom he married in 1930, was previously named a Russian agent.

EXCERPT: Some sources, that whose position is the last decade, has only the source of fact from which it is used, been from my own autobiography written when I returned from Russia in 1939 and ignored myself. My own feeling is that it was not sympathetic to the Russian people having the same of the American government at that time. Now, the other three times were vitally false. I even one more known an American Communist nor did in any one of my meetings—nor did it now any more.

FLW smokes the "weed"

by Roland A. Roach

During his lecture, it was obvious that Wright was annoyed with "architecture of habit." "It takes great strength of character not to be an bureaucrats," he opined. He drew laughs from the audience when he said that getting people to change their thinking is as difficult as taking the end out of a dog's tail.

In calm tones, he restated the audience. "Don't be a slave to anything including the Weed!"

Apparently, Wright does not always follow his own advice. The Manhattan Messenger has uncovered an old photo of the architect smoking a cigarette.

It's been suggested that the "death stick" is just a prop.

Wright praises mascot's cage as good design

by Willie D. Kuhl

Students accompanied Wright on an orientation stroll of the campus yesterday afternoon prior to his lecture. As they passed the cage of the college mascot, Touchdown, near Nichols Hall, the architect couldn't help but stop. He thought the wildcat had "better accommodations than anyone else on campus."
Frank Lloyd Wright

The background for these PowerPoint slides mocks up a much simplified version of FB's old “profile page” format. In late 2011, FB began phasing out “profile pages” in favor of “timeline pages.” That FB design was, in turn, redesigned from a two-column to a one-column “timeline page” in early 2013.
Frank Lloyd Wright

- Studied at University of Wisconsin (1886-1887)
- Works at The Taliesin Fellowship (master architect)
- Lives in Spring Green, Wisconsin
- Traveled to Japan, Italy

What’s on your mind?

- Olgivanna Milanoff Wright: 10 mutual friends
- Solomon Guggenheim: 2 mutual friends
- Walter Burley Griffin: 1 mutual friend
- Maude Miriam Noel: 2 mutual friends
- Mamah Borthwick Cheney: 3 mutual friends
- Marion Lucy Mahony: 4 mutual friends
But... whether “personal page” or “timeline page”... all the same elements are found in both FB formats; they have been merely rearranged.

Frank Lloyd Wright

- Studied at **University of Wisconsin** (1886-1887)
- Works at **The Taliesin Fellowship** (master architect)
- Lives in **Spring Green, Wisconsin**
- Traveled to **Japan, Italy**

- **Olgivanna Milanoff Wright**
  - 10 mutual friends
- **Maude Miriam Noel**
  - 2 mutual friends
- **Solomon Guggenheim**
  - 2 mutual friends
- **Mamah Borthwick Cheney**
  - 3 mutual friends
- **Walter Burley Griffin**
  - 1 mutual friend
- **Marion Lucy Mahony**
  - 4 mutual friends

What’s on your mind?
Frank Lloyd Wright

A screenshot of one student's “timeline page” on FB for FLW’s apprentice, Edgar Tafel.
Frank Lloyd Wright

Facebook Project Strengths
Permits self-paced work with “virtually” unlimited resources available 24/7
Encourages instructor-student interactivity inside and outside of class
Fosters observing and learning from peers such that comparisons fuel productivity
Links diverse resources in robust, versatile, fluid, dynamic, and maneuverable ways
Proliferates the number of perspectives on or representations of the subject of study
Provides multi-faceted, nuanced answers to complex questions
Magnifies research results by leveraging collective group effort
Satisfies desires for individualized tasks that nonetheless add to a common goal
Engenders enthusiasm and prompts creative responses
Reflects and preserves the limitless ways of knowing at different scales

Facebook Project Downsides
Time-consuming and demanding pedagogy
Protracted start-up period
Disinterested students lacking Facebook experience
Difficult assessment and evaluation
Tedious protocols needed to set up accounts and to establish “friending” guidelines
Additional imperatives to manage “privacy” and guard against “trollers”
Looking for Mr. Wright and Finding Him on Facebook 2.0

- Need for more digital technology tutorials • “tech angels”
- Need for more deliberate acknowledgement of sources, citations, and disclaimers
- Need for more reflection and commentary along with justifications of relevance
- Need for more cross-posting on other avatars’ Facebook pages
- Need for more interim reports • “pecha kucha” reports
- Need for continued explorations of ways by which to display digitally-based creativity
Frank Lloyd Wright

Collective student internet search skills uncover resources that one person alone might never find.

What a “find”!
The collective energies of students, willingly sharing URLs, can uncover rare, old videos like this one of FLW on TV.
Frank Lloyd Wright

Imagine being able to see FLW come to life, walking and talking on the 1950s TV game show “What’s My Line?”

Integrated video-viewing, directly within a FB page, makes this social medium also a dynamically engaging one.
100 Ways You Should Be Using Facebook in Your Classroom
www.onlinecollege.org/2009/10/20/
100-ways-you-should-be-using-facebook-in-your-classroom

100 Inspiring Ways to Use Social Media In the Classroom
www.onlineuniversities.com/blog/2010/05/100