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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

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Description

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
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
Frank Lloyd Wright

...or...

Looking for Mr. Wright and Finding Him on...

92 People Like This

Olgivanna Milanoff Wright
Maude Miriam Noel
Mamah Borthwick Cheney

Solomon Guggenheim
Walter Burley Griffin
Marion Lucy Mahony
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.”
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%].

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**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)
Frank Lloyd Wright

While instructors bemoan Net Generals’ digitally inculcated bad habits, Tapscott’s writings urge us to tap into their digital strengths.

**Frank Lloyd Wright**

**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.
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?
Each student creates an avatar and FB page for one of Wright’s friends, family members, or associates.
They all “friend” the instructor’s FB page for the architect Frank Lloyd Wright.
They “friend” other avatars in a closed virtual network mimicking FLW’s real-life network.
By removing links to FLW, relationships among his friends are all that much more apparent.
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.
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.

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.

Information

Relationship Status: It's Complicated

Children:
John
Martha

Birthday:
June 19

Olgivanna Milanoff Wright
Maude Miriam Noel
Mamah Borthwick Cheney
Solomon Guggenheim
Walter Burley Griffin
Marion Lucy Mahony
FB readily supports uploads of more traditional sorts of assignments such as book reviews.

The Women: A Review
by Miriam N. Wright on Monday, December 27, 2010 at 16:30am

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 flexible block designs as well as his concept of the Usonian home.

Wright was always on a restless adventure and never failed to get lucky. "No rest for the weary," he exclaimed (128). He ignored his clients' wishes and rewarded them with with high-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 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.

Kandinsky Works in My Collection

Updated over a year ago

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

Solomon N. Guggenheim

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Net Gener know to be skeptical whenever they work online; they can distinguish between fact and fiction.

And Net Gener’s 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 . . .

Maude was Noel’s real first name

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

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

92 People Like This
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.
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.
As an end-of-semester project, some students produce a YouTube music video of their avatar's life.
Frank Lloyd Wright

92 People Like This

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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.
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 Kansas State last night. Three out of four Americans are cowardly who will not say what they believe, he stated.

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 its “ugly, unsightly aspect” environment.

“Cats are vamps,” Wright observes, “... 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 colder.”

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

“That’s what ugly about this town—the habit Repeat 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 administration did what he disliked about the city. But 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 demonizing.”

“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 slogans. “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.

F L Wright has personal tie to Manhattan

The “other woman” in his life

by Ann Nannie Muns
society columnist

From a town gal Lucille Allison knows Frank Lloyd Wright personally. Her husband, New York City architect Edgar Tafel, once worked as Wright’s apprentice at Taliesin in Wisconsin. Allison is the owner of a high-fashion dress-buying company.

Allan’s father is the former owner-manage of the old Gillette Hotel in town, formerly the chief hotel of the Warren Hotel.
Wright rents a secret hideaway in the other Manhattan

Prairie architect spoiled by city life

by Jane King Hession

contributing writer

Wright often stays 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 often-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 "Taliesin the Third." From this suite, Wright supervises the pouring, slow progress on the Guggenheim Museum.

He has been known to receive famous visitors in this suite such as the actress Marilyn Monroe.

Wright's own granddaughter, Annabelle, the young Hollywood actress who is expected to play the role of the Egyptian queen in the upcoming film "The Ten Commandments," opposite Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner.

Reliable sources report that the architect is seriously considering renting the suite on a permanent basis.

92 People Like This

Olgivanna Milanoff

Maude Miriam Noel

Mamah Borthwick Cheney

Solomon Guggenheim

Walter Burley Griffin

Marion Lucy Mahony

FLW smokes the "weed"

by Roland A. Roach

arts & entertainment editor

During his lecture, it was obvious that Wright was annoyed with "architecture of habit.

"It takes great strength of character not to be an automaton," he opined. He drew laughs from the audience when he said that getting people to change their thinking is "as difficult as pulling the tail of a dog's tail."

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Mutual Friends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olgivanna Milanoff Wright</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maude Miriam Noel</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Guggenheim</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mamah Borthwick Cheney</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Burley Griffin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion Lucy Mahony</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frank Lloyd Wright

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

But... whether “personal page” or “timeline page”... all the same elements are found in both FB formats; they have been merely rearranged.

What’s on your mind?

Olivia Milanoff Wright
10 mutual friends

Solomon Guggenheim
2 mutual friends

Mamah Borthwick Cheney
3 mutual friends

Walter Burley Griffin
1 mutual friend

Maude Miriam Noel
2 mutual friends

Marion Lucy Mahony
4 mutual friends
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
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.
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