

USC Symposium on Digital Media

December 7 & 8, 2012

Summary of Discussions

Panel on “Looking Out”:

How can technology improve education?

- If USC is known for its digital media, piracy and copyrights need to be considered.

Why are some places more successful than others?

- Policy makers are constantly figuring patterns in cities and economically. The digital world is a compliment and not a substitute because people can be at the same place without having to physically be there.

Discussing the impacts of the Internet’s mobility

- Handheld devices now have the capability to view videos and movies. These are some of real life issues major companies are now facing. Higher security level and catching up is needed because of the fast advancement of technology.

Digital media has the ability to connect all things.

Digital media has been used as a tool in creating events and connecting communities together with the use of social networking sites.

- Many entrepreneurs have used these tools to their advantage.
- The Internet is a compliment to society because it is not just a physical location but also a mental one.

Panel on “Digital Tensions”:

What are some of the risks for USC as they move forward?

- Digital media is an engine that is used to move and connect.
- Funding by the public for the public is being privatized.
- The cost is important, but so are the environmental issues.
- Legal issues with data usages.
- Not just making a list but capturing on a fundamental level.
- The startup is making the stakes more clear. The need of connecting the library to other schools on campus is a must.
- There is really no way to protect the digital work and its information.
- Getting individuals to influence the mass and not just a selected crowd.

Open Discussion:

How can we make the world a better place?

- Studying the trend and what is happening out in the world today.
- Creating a place more suitable to attract the intended crowds.
- The stronger Los Angeles becomes, the stronger USC would be.

- Aside from controlling the digital world, serendipity is also extremely important to life, which depends on physical proximity. Maintaining a physical university is just as important as strengthening the digital side.

Ideas:

- Find a better method for connecting faculty and students.
- Leaner, faster, quicker start-up. Possibly restrict the top-down approach with more risk taking.
- More incentives for research and not just presenting it as another responsibility.
- Technology is a tool; ideas should be the major focal point.
- Rethink education.
- Allow individual units to explore new directions.
- Create meet-ups and places to connect physically and digitally.
- Create new methods versus working around problems and issues.
- More support from the University by shedding light on other research happening at USC.

Breakout Group Recommendations:

Group 1:

- A repository of research tools developed by Engineering faculty that others across USC can use.
- Each tool should have Meta information listed such as: quality, application domains etc.
- Promotion of cross-departmental appointments.
- Public communication techniques and platforms to amplify faculty expertise. E.g. Digital Media Blog
- A digital media center (physical space) where related faculty students can collaborate and work together.
- A central resource of digital tools, storage similar to HPCC available to USC faculty and the neighboring community
- A formal way/program to use students as consultants on projects
- Foster more collaboration with the local community
- DIY degrees - at the graduate level. Degrees where students can pick and choose their own classes and craft their own majors.
- Co-location: long term sharing of faculty offices to foster collaboration.

Group 2

- Develop a website that would understand the user and provide better information
- Need for physical space – collaboration rooms. They can be set up across campus to promote collaboration
- Incentives for collaboration (budgeting, promotion, etc.). Create a group that would look into this and help make collaboration easier.
- Floating positions at the university level.

Group 3

- Task force to examine how to align organizational & economic & professional values of digital, trans-disciplinary efforts.
- Horizontal layer of digital activity news at USC. Everyone feeling somewhat unrecognized. University is entrepreneurial - external and internal view of our digital efforts
- Storing and preserving digitally - it isn't in the budget and we need it - you can't share what you haven't properly stored - internally model how to do that. Enable opportunistic bottoms up - mechanisms to create internal collaborations over time - so that we are in a position to respond collaboratively - coffee shops, etc.
- Interdisciplinary degree program? Interdisciplinary classes.
- How do we know what we are doing is working? Measure success and digital learning; evaluate digital scholarship and prove impact - we should have a center for this.
- Integrate research and technology - foster entrepreneurship. Pre-incubator space with a mentor to help kids make better decisions. Doesn't replicate incubator. Find the right incubator for our students.
- We need faculty - truly transformational hires - a roadmap- multimedia scholarship advisory committee exists - actual cross-disciplinary hires. Three faculty in cyber information, games & learning across discipline - but the incentive structure including tenure has to be aligned. Put real significant money into using transformational hires to bridge significant schools like engineering and health, education and film, etc.
- Set of grand challenges to create trans disciplinary groups that involve some release time or infrastructure (or not - there was some discussion on this). This is a very different model than, for instance, Zumberge. Also a web net where people can post their activity on this grand challenge. Internal kick start?

Group 4

- Student communication
- Some sort of insurance for interdisciplinary courses so that students can attend without worry.
- If we're a close campus, from outside we should at least be open internally without students. Students should have fewer restrictions.
- Social media to share the information among the campus.

Group 5

Person appointed by VP of Research to enact within 1 month

- Digital Councils/Meet-ups/Social networking
- Inform Deans of priority
- Tell USC Digital story better in media

General resolutions:

- Students must graduate with digital media literacy
- Launch a Digital Learning Center
- Possible Grand Challenge – re-imagine LAUSD
- Cross Disciplinary interns
- Use innovative technique to match researchers

Moving Forward:

- Do not duplicate history but create a new system.
- Memo/summary of all discussed matter sent to all deans.
- Some sort of follow-up of the groups for ideas.
- Start small meet-up groups
- More digital feed on meet-ups.
- Is there a different message we can send?

Back Channel Comments:

Here is a grand challenge: true interdisciplinary collaboration and digital/social runs counter to current university structures. Is the university willing and able to create and embrace fundamental change and make a new model for education?

Working to figure out appropriate uses of technology

Set up a project to transform LAUSD.

Perhaps we could create an ok cupid-style site for USC researcher to find each other

Compose and tell the digital media at USC story for multiple audiences (internal and external)

Identify roles and responsibilities and provide resources to accomplish

Follow through - is this yet another group grope to come up with ideas then go away

Fostering informal discussions - virtual water coolers

Top-down vs. bottom-up- Actually need the "third leg" organizing/forcing functions to help focus and coalesce both angles

How do we harness/hijack digital media to promote connected health? We can and we must – it isn't going away and it offers previously unimagined opportunities!

What about the negative impact of digital media on health? Paralleling the rise of digital media has been the increase in obesity. In California, 1985 <10% were obese. 1993, 10-14%, 1998, 15-19%, 1994, 20-24%...

Incubation and collaboration can't be forced or institutionalized. Supported, yes but the more it becomes a mandate or a structure, the less organic it is and has a higher likelihood of failure.

I'm struck by the fact that these exact points have been discussed over the past 13 years I've been at USC. Things have been tried – were they the wrong things or is tech better now?

Navigating IP and privacy issues for teaching and research is centered on "prevention" and "protection" and it puts USC and its policies in a defensive state. How can our policies change to be permissive and helpful beyond "don'ts"?

Digital societies also have snopes.com, which never existed before.

Other risks: my work and others have found that cyber bullying victimization associated with depressive symptoms, anxiety, rule-breaking, truancy, suicide ideation, etc.

Does the loneliness and depression track with the reduction of art and music classes in K-12?

WE can refuse to participate in the polarizing discourse of piracy vs. copyright; becoming more, "proactively engaged in supporting the kind of commons-oriented culture" we want to participate in.

Change structures and/or abolish tenure? As a data point Calarts doesn't have tenure. While that question shouldn't sidetrack the "digital" topic, it comes into play as a byproduct of the "disruptive."

For open content to be useful, incentives must exist to contribute to open content or commons. Can we balance the reward of contribution to resources that aren't generating income in the most visible way?

One way is by being thoughtful ahead of time about both. E.g., using open content where appropriate, and contributing to and actively participating in the open commons where possible. These challenges can be opportunities.

Risk/reward is NOT pedestrian: it is what is burning in the back of the mind of every person in this room

IDEAS to discuss at breakouts:

- USC Digital Grand Challenge*
- Space for collaboration, incubation, coffee*
- Digital council, meetings*
- Promoting USC's many digital breakthroughs*
- Make a better world with digital & policy*

If we just keep talking about technology, we make more technology. If we talked about what we want to do with it and not, we would be designing experiences that enable healthier lives.

What about the sustainability of the digital media itself - who is USC working with about migrating the entire content forward into the future - a future that is far beyond the tip of our noses.

What if the physical space was completely "rules free" served lots of caffeine in a comfortable "third space" environment PLUS there was clear access to the multidisciplinary resources available at USC and the process for utilizing them.

Swarms and social run counter to central branding - ie you lose control. Is USC willing to accept that?

We live in an increasingly distributed world yet we're talking about creating organized centers. These are orthogonal but were trying to jam them together within the academy. Maybe that's why it hasn't worked...

There are several institutes and labs on campus devoted to digital media, but I have not heard of anything specifically devoted to learning and development. I'd like to collaborate with folks on this.

Visibility and distribution are key, what are the best vehicles (not currently being utilized or under-utilized) to ensure the right message gets to the right people, beyond the current USC audience?

If you want to answer questions, you'll have to find money to fund the work.

How can we at USC build on our geography, interdisciplinary and entrepreneurial spirit...please dive in with ideas

Digital classes are becoming a reality because of tech progression. Virtual reality, complete immersions are now feasible.

We need to be careful to try and avoid "hey kids get off my lawn" thinking. Every generation thinks kids are screwed up relative to their past experiences. Maybe we are in a totally different world but we're still analog.

Analog time and spaces have strengths. Digital should enable a university to better leverage them. Trying to (re)create a forced digital overlay is probably doomed to failure.

The effect of social media a la Steve Marshe piece does not apply to the aging and disabled community. There it does enable social relatedness and not loneliness. We should not automatically generalize the concerns for all users.