University of Glasgow

Making Film Work

A Moodle course integrating video literacy and undergraduate research (Geoflip)

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1. Background to the Geoflip project

Experience shows that in many areas of the University fieldwork is important, the crux lying in a dynamic interaction of the student(s) with 'real world' landscapes, processes and people, a process generating tangible excitement. For many of today's students 'real world' is manifest through Facebook and YouTube: digital creations posted and shared. Within more formal arenas, engagement with digital media is largely absent, despite the enormous potential it has to add new dimensions to the fieldwork experience. 'Geographers have barely scratched the surface of what might be done with (digital video) for describing social practices or presenting their results' (Laurier, 2003, p.140). Full utilisation of digital media as an exploitable academic tool needs instruction in video-literacy so that required aspects of the target topic are effectively captured, managed and communicated.

2. What is video literacy?

In their analysis of the pros and cons of Facebook, Nam and Fry (2012) suggest that new University entrants, so called digital natives, should be schooled in developing a critical intellectual approach to the technological platforms familiar to this generation. This sentiment is supported here. The phenomenal rise (72 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute) in the acquisition and sharing of digital images (both still and moving) raises issues of authenticity, reliability, ethics, legitimacy and context which students need to engage with critically and creatively. David (2010) for example, warns that low quality digital or camera phone images lend a tone of verisimilitude to images.
Video literacy is conceived as the ability to interpret digital (moving) images, to assess their relevance and significance and be able to critique their quality. It implies an understanding in how to construct, edit and disseminate images in a manner that enhances communication and fosters creativity. It also requires the ability to rationalise information, synthesise and present video data to a variety of audiences.

3. Video in geography and the social sciences

The use of video and film-making in geographical research (including the dissemination of research) is in its infancy but there is both a history and a niche for its use. More broadly, the social sciences have embraced filming: from early anthropological recordings of cultural practices to contemporary workplace studies of roving entomologists (Erickson, 2011). The creation, and subsequent use, of video can either enhance traditional research methods (filming geomorphological processes or interviews) or be used as a method in its own right (collaborative filmmaking). However used, video, in competent hands, can enrich research and move geography to the cutting edge of knowledge production (Garrett, 2010). The ubiquity of camera phones, live-streaming and social media has changed the nature of communication, migrating from a text-dominated environment to one in which the (moving) image is central (David, 2010), creating opportunity and challenge for geographical research.

Thinking outside the methodological box
The place of video in geographical and social science research, examples of research videos, video as methodology and ethical issues

First choose your hardware
What to look for when buying hardware (video vs camera phones): issues in sound, power sources and data storage

Camera! Action! Shoot!
Techniques and tips to making a good video: sound and picture quality considerations

Video – note-taking deluxe
Video in ethnography, recording focus groups, creating a field diary

Video as participatory research
Participatory research: what it is, why it can be an enriching form of research and its complications

Interviews
Pointers for filming interviews in a sympathetic way without compromising the quality of the footage or data collected.

Have film. Now what?
Advice about, and examples of, transcription and coding

Editing for analysis
Editing video using freely available software, re-ordering and structuring footage

Editing for presentation
Using film in written work and for the purposes of a presentation

Archiving and other considerations
Advice about saving data, archiving, long term storage and implications for data protection

Reference materials
All materials used in the construction of the course are listed, plus links to external video creation and editing sites

4. Structure of the Moodle site

Geoflip is intended as a self-learning toolkit to guide users in the adoption of video in research. The central panel of this poster illustrates the structure and presentation of the Moodle course being divided into sections which cumulatively address the potential uses of video, how to use it in practice and what to do with the video once edited and produced. Each section includes a range of materials (word documents, slide shows, video snippets), designed to give a more complete grasp of filmmaking and the use of video for research purposes.
The course encourages users to explore video in research without being prescriptive about its functionality and suitability. It helps users understand what makes a good, or more importantly, a bad video. It also encourages an imaginative and constructive engagement with video. Ultimately, 'geography as a discipline would benefit greatly from expanding the researcher's toolset to include the consistent use of digital video' (Garrett, 2010: 1). This course embraces such an expansion.

5. Moving forward

Davidson and Goldberg (2012) argue that educational institutions are taking insufficient advantage of the modes of digital and participatory learning available to students today despite the role that digital technologies can play in encouraging self-learning. Geoflip addresses this issue being transportable across many areas of research and teaching. It can be deployed as a video-record of minor medical procedures, as a moving backdrop to the visual arts or as a video-clip within a curriculum vitae. Geoflip should provide students with the tools to engage more critically with digital media to distinguish reliable knowledge sources from the questionable. It is also hoped that students who participate in generating and sharing research specifically, or digital images more generally, will be more discerning, imaginative, ethically aware and responsible in their use of digital technologies. Video literacy it is hoped, will enhance digital maturity. The success of the course in this regard has yet to be tested.

6. Want to know more?
View on Moodle at
http://physci.moodle.gla.ac.uk/course/category.php?id=89

David, G. 2010 New Media Review. *Visual Studies*, 25, pp. 89–98.
Davidson C. N. And Goldberg, D. T. 2012 Our Digital Age: implications for learning and its (online) institutions. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 9 (3), pp. 249-266.
Erickson, F. 2011 Uses of video in social research: a brief history. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 14 (3), pp. 179-189.
Garret B. 2010 Videographic geographies: Using digital video for geographic research. *Progress in Human Geography*, 35 (4), pp. 521-541.
Laurier, E. 2003 Participant observation. In. Clifford, N. J. and Valentine, G. (eds.) *Key Methods in Geography*. SAGE Publications, London. pp. 133 – 148.
Nam, K. and Fry, G. W 2012 Re-imagining internet scholarship: academic uses and abuses of the influential internet social network, Facebook. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 9 (2), pp. 157-172.