Collective documentation

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Abstract

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This project proposes to document the workshop as a collective project. As the workshop will include people documenting collaborative works, there is an opportunity to document how these works connect or link together through a documenting tactic that evolves over the period of development and also includes the workshop and possibly goes on after the workshop is completed. This will construct a document of the workshop and the variety of processes for capturing and documenting this kind of work as well as search for yet unrealized links across the projects and practices.

Author Keywords

Collaboration; co-creation; documentation.

Introduction

This project proposes to document together all the groups and participants in this workshop as they produce the work of the workshop, up to and including the workshop. My recent research has focused on how documentation can be used to capture diverse experiences within projects or practices in order to open up new understandings of collaborative work, and alternative ways of developing successful collaborations. I am also interested in how documentation can be used to extend the work beyond the collaboration or the event, so that future viewers can find new commonalities in relation to their own

interest. Open structure documentation means that it is possible to form new trajectories through the project or practices, extending the scope of the project and the collaboration.

The process for documenting all the projects involved is relatively undemanding for the participants and can be done at self determined intervals from a phone or laptop. It is hoped that groups interested in documentation would not be averse to incorporating an extra level of documentation into their projects. It owed not be necessary of everyone to contribute and could be at their discretion. The documentation system initially comprises of an empty web platform within which a limitless number of windows can be opened. Each window is essentially a frame. The person contributing to the workshop can open a window and can then up load gifs, text, notes, photos, drawings as they develop their work. Everything the participants upload can be tagged with a key words. The use of this type of documentation is more evident once the work is all collected together and as people traverse the different collections. The images can be scrolled through by a viewer, either backwards or forwards and as each window can be zoomed into but never to the extent that isolated from all the other windows around it. This allows for serendipitous adjacencies that may produce new un-designed connections or links for the viewer. The windows can be arranged on the screen into groups by the viewer who may choose to make a search on a particular term and then group all those windows together, forming new connections relevant to their own interests.

I have tested this system once before,

documenting a group of artists and students working together to produce four installations within a building in Melbourne. I had wanted to work with documentation more consciously in order to develop its use to both the individuals involved and the later reading of the work. I hoped to find a way that the documentation could extend the work beyond the moment of the event, potentially allowing for new relations connections to emerge from the work with future viewers. I also wanted to see if various people involved could focus the documentation on their specific interests throughout the project. I was interested to see if this produced various levels within which people could collaborate, countering the aspiration for a level relationship in collaboration and instead allowing for different people to have different levels of engagement and periods of connection yet still retain ownership and retain investment in the project.

As this online system was initially developed through the process of engagement by the students and was tested it as it was used, there are many things I would like to try to further develop by utilising it in a workshop specifically concerned with documentation and also in relation to my own interest in the structure of collaborations. It needs to be designed to load faster and to develop the navigation so it is more intuitive. As this work shop will comprise of individual practitioners with an interest in documentation, their willingness to document their own work in order to contribute to the workshop means this overlaps with an interest in collaboration. This will be more or less pronounced, but I hope this documentation tactic will reveal other connections between the projects. I am also interested in finding if the people involved are more invested in

the area of collaboration and documentation if this develops more focused into the work they up load on to the site in order to further develop the possibilities of connections and submerged affinities across various projects, practices and practitioners. I would also develop the navigation system and also the tagging system as previously the page were not predictive which meant the searches did not always produce all the relevant results.

This desire to be able to traverse projects to find submerged connections in the work had first occurred to me when I was presenting at the Practice Research Symposium at RMIT. The abstracts and posters on the walls did so little to explain the depth and breadth of research, minor interests and other ways that one project may invisibly connect with another. The presentations occur simultaneously across two days, and as they are not fully or centrally documented, it is almost serendipitous if you make a useful connection with a less explicit aspect in another project, despite the overlaps across many of the practices. It was through thinking about how you can form connections and revisit aspects of another person practice in relation to your own interests that lead me to develop this online system.

With temporary projects the documentation is often all that remains of the work or the experience. This means that the form of documentation, and the person doing the documentation, have an enormous amount of control over the final focus or description of the work. Temporary, installation or collaborative work will often be documented by photographs or video. Despite developments in the way collaborative work is

produced, encountered and sited, the traditional documentation forms, photography and video, have not really been reevaluated in relation to what the work hopes to achieve. Film and video are often augmented by text, which can provide more complex readings and relations to the work, but is also often used as a 'neutral observer' rather than actively constructing the understanding of the work.

Traditionally a collaborations is understood as being successful if there was an even investment and power balance between the people involved. Collaborations can easily become exploitive and the documentation is often the way that the power dynamic can retrospectively re-fit a project to benefit one person more than an other. I am interested in searching for ways to document collaborative projects or collections of projects, that allow for a variety of perspectives and levels of intensity to be incorporated into the documentation, countering narratives that benefit one person or party over another, or a simplified or singular understanding of more complex and multi-dimensional inter relations.

The current iteration is on line at www.collectivecommons.net. Use the zoom on the mouse to pull out. Click and drag to move windows around. Click on a window and scroll up or down to see collections within each window. Tags can be searched for in the top right hand corner.