

The CHA Summer Conversation Group Memorandum

A group of humanities and arts faculty met six times this summer for two-hour sessions to continue during the summer the discussion about the ICJMT Recommendations that were released on April 17, 2012. The purpose of the conversations was not to review the structural proposals of the Recommendations but to explore what part the humanities and the arts could play in a new academic configuration that would be oriented towards the concept of media. Participants tried to abstract from the institutional form advocated in the Recommendations (a College of Media, Design, and the Arts) and focus instead on clusters of interdisciplinary research and teaching that would be enabled by increased administrative and budgetary attention. The question guiding the conversation was: "If new resources were flowing to the arts and humanities around the topic of 'media' broadly conceived, where do we see areas of synergy and investment?"

It turned out that complete abstraction from the institutional question and from the framework of the Recommendations was not feasible. In particular, the Group worried that if the art departments were taken out of a college that affords cross-subsidization of Student Credit Hours (as A&S does) they would become vulnerable to cuts down the road. Even if the current administration is positively inclined towards the arts, the Group believes in the old saying 'ars longa, vita brevis,' and agreed on the following principle:

- In whatever constellation the art departments find themselves, it must provide not only academic and intellectual integrity, but also shelter from the metrics of Student Credit Hours as a primary measure of success.

The second area of engagement with the Recommendation concerned the concept of media itself. The Group felt that a concentration on digital media does not match up with the research profile of most CU arts and humanities faculty, nor does it take into account national and international debates about the historical and philosophical dimensions of media. Instead of focusing on digital practices, the study of media should encompass any institution, practice, or materiality involved in the transmission of meaning. In this expanded view, museums are media for the presentation of artworks; language viewed from the position of rhetoric is a medium; meter is a medium of poetry; manuscripts, books, and prints are media, as are the archives that hold them. Such an expansion of the concept of media would not only better integrate existing research interests on campus: it would also give media studies at CU Boulder a distinctive edge. Where other institutions concentrate on contemporary phenomena, or on vocational training, we can add to the study of media historical and critical depth.

Lastly, three additional principles of deliberation were articulated:

- 1) Many departments have strategic hiring plans not focused on media studies. These plans must not be compromised by the current initiative.

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- 2) Whatever fields of study and teaching are being created in this process, special attention should be paid to the inclusion of non-Western, non-Christian traditions.
- 3) New research clusters should be agents of internationalization on campus.

The Arts

Guided by these principles, the Group first considered various administrative constellations (Program / Division / School / College) that would comprise the following departments: Art and Art History, Theater and Dance, Environmental Design, Film, CU Art Museum, Music, and the Colorado Shakespeare Festival. This configuration (for which names like School of Arts, Architecture, and Design; School of Arts, Performance, and Design; School of Arts and Media were proposed) would make use of existing synergies and allow for:

- a) the creation of new courses, such as History of the Arts, Creative Practice, Arts in the Community, Site Specific Work, Participatory Art / Performance;
- b) the creation of new programs or degrees, long sought by arts departments, such as: MFA in Curatorial Studies, MA in Museum Studies, PhD in Arts Practice, PhD in Visual Studies, MFA in Acting.

These proposed creations would benefit from, and in turn feed into, media studies in the humanities, the social sciences, and in applied technology.

The Humanities

For the humanities, the following clusters of collaborative research and teaching were proposed:

- 1) *Archival Studies*. This cluster would involve History, the Languages, Classics, the Library, and Anthropology. 'Archive' should be understood broadly as any repository for carriers of meaning, from ancient epigraphy to the natural environment, from traditional libraries and state archives to digital archives and wiki information.
- 2) *Rhetoric in Philosophy and Politics*. This cluster would examine the instrumental use of language from ancient Greece to the present. It would engage questions in the philosophy of language, the history of political and religious persuasion, the rhetoric of literary genres, and the logic and sociology of argumentation in both public and academic contexts.
- 3) *Manuscript Culture / Print Culture / Book culture*. This cluster would examine the transitions and differences between textual / visual carrier media both from a historical and an aesthetic point of view. It would involve the Languages (including Asian and other non-European languages), Art History, Religion, and the Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, and have as its horizon the emergence of digital processes.
- 4) *History of Learning and of Learned Institutions*. This cluster would investigate the history of pedagogical and institutional means by which knowledge and

doctrine have been transmitted (schools, universities, academies, monasteries, etc.) and would involve History, Religion, Classics, Medieval and Early Modern Studies, Asian Languages and Cultures.

- 5) *History and Theory of Philology*. This cluster would study the status of philological inquiry and practice in various epochs and cultures, and involve the Languages and Classics.
- 6) *History and Philosophy of Science, Technology, and Media*. This cluster would investigate the history and technology of physical media as precursors to modern media of communication. Involving History, the Languages, Classics, and Philosophy, this cluster would serve as a bridge both to the Physics Department and to the College of Engineering.

Further discussions with faculty in A&H will undoubtedly lead to modifications of these proposals, or to the addition of new ones.

Curricular Innovation

With the expanded focus on media, a new unit (School / Division / College) would be in position to develop an innovative and rigorous cross-disciplinary curriculum at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Undergraduate education could blend elements of a traditional liberal arts education with practical preparation for the world. It could stress 'media literacy' broadly conceived—both a craft of making or doing and a historical, critical, theoretical, and interpretive way of understanding. A core curriculum might include requirements that students gain proficiency in multiple arts—writing, speaking, and digital composition across the curriculum; and specific areas of study in the visual and performing arts, filmmaking/videography, journalism, environmental design, museology, and others. Breadth could be encouraged through core classes across the areas, required minors to complement majors, cross-disciplinary team teaching, and creative curricular design. Graduate degree and post-doctoral programs could be organized around the particular research clusters we identify above or around established disciplines operating with more porous boundaries. Across both graduate and undergraduate programs, curricula could innovatively push beyond the study of media, objects, and artistic events considered in isolation to help students critically consider, e.g., language, visuality, and sound as ways of exerting control, facilitating expression, and mediating human experience and social reality across cultures and historical epochs.

ATLAS

Since the ICJMT report focuses almost exclusively on digital media and what it calls ICT (Information and Communication Technology), the Group was startled that the report finds no role for ATLAS in the proposed new college: it merely suggests using ATLAS as, perhaps, the basis for an institute that would be "neither a subset nor a superset" of the proposed college (ICJMT report, p. 23 at bottom). If the University is going to adhere to the ICJMT report as written, or even largely as written, with an

almost exclusive focus on digital media and ICT, it seems that ATLAS should be the foundation on which everything else is constructed, not shunted off to the side as playing (perhaps) the role of a tenuously related institute. One member of the Group noted that everything listed under "Educational Aims" on pp. 7-8 of the ICJMT report is already being done (in some cases extensively, in some cases not so extensively) by ATLAS. The ICJMT report does note at the bottom of p. 1 that "the proposed Institute has significant overlap with the mission and activities of ATLAS." But it's not just the proposed institute that overlaps with ATLAS: it's the whole ICJMT report as currently written. That being the case, the Group wondered whether the report's goals could be better achieved by expanding ATLAS or turning ATLAS into a college than by laboriously and expensively creating a new college. Several members of the group noted the potential advantages of the location of ATLAS beside the new Visual Arts Complex. The core of ATLAS is, after all, its undergraduate TAM (Technology, Arts, and Media) program and its Center for Media, Arts, and Performance. Given the side-by-side location of ATLAS and the new Visual Arts Complex--many campus visitors mistake them for the same building--they are perfectly located and perfectly suited for interdisciplinary collaboration of the sort the ICJMT report recommends. Even if the goals are widened to include more than just digital media and ICT, ATLAS would still have a logical place at the center: it is, after all, the only unit on campus focused directly on both "arts" and "media." The group was especially puzzled by the rumored relocation of ATLAS to the College of Engineering. Such a move seems inexplicable given the strong focus of ATLAS on the visual and performing arts and the purported desire of the university to create interdisciplinary "porosity" among units focused on media, design, and the arts.

Procedural Considerations

Crucial to the success of any initiative will be the establishment of procedures that allow all stakeholders to share in the process of designing and implementing the new structures. The creation of an entirely new unit (College, School, etc.) will have an impact at the level of campus logistics, the theoretical and pedagogical mission of the university, interdisciplinary exchanges across departments and programs, and above all curriculum. Because much of the existing strength that would be tapped to serve as the driving force behind any new ICJMT entity would derive from Arts and Humanities units in the College of Arts and Sciences, both these units and the College need assurances that procedures adopted for implementing the ICJMT entity would have a positive impact on our operations. We would thus ask that the following procedural guidelines be followed:

- The Arts and Humanities Departments should be given a strong and independent voice in the administration of any new entity that includes them. This would likely mean the creation of subdivisions within the entity that would include a division of Arts and Humanities. This would guarantee an institutional and administrative place at the table for these units at all times.

The most obvious precedent for this is the subdivision of the College of Arts and Sciences into three groups including one for Arts and Humanities.

- The administration should guarantee that in the design of any new ICJMT curriculum, Arts and Humanities Units be given committee representation equal to the percentage of their numbers relative to the total faculty population of the entity. In other words, if the new entity has an initial faculty population of 150 and the Arts and Humanities faculty constitute 50 of these, Arts and Humanities faculty should constitute 33% of the curriculum committee. This will guarantee that the new curriculum reflects the priorities and curricular strengths of those units that change divisional homes.
- The administration should guarantee that members of units from the College of Arts and Sciences other than the units being moved should be given advisory roles in all committees related to the entity's formation and ongoing implementation. This will be particularly important at the curricular level. In order to safeguard existing relationships, to maximize interdisciplinary exchange, and to capitalize on existing resources while avoiding redundancy, the administration should create a joint committee that will allow faculty from all Arts and Humanities units to 1) meet curricular needs cooperatively, and 2) work together on interdisciplinary collaborations.
- The administration should offer any units that may be moved the option to return to their initial home divisions after a trial period of five years. If the units are dissatisfied with the new structures imposed on them by a move to an ICJMT entity, they should be given a chance to opt out of it and return to A&S in order to preserve their strength and integrity.

Next Steps

We suggest that small teams of faculty, funded and guided by the CHA, begin exploring the feasibility of the research and teaching clusters mentioned above. To take the example of Archival Studies, such a team should gather the names of faculty and graduate students actively engaged in archival research, ascertain the availability of access to digital and "real" archives, outline undergraduate and graduate courses on the subject and identify faculty to teach them, survey national and international research, and make recommendations for the allocation of new resources (hiring, conferences, postdocs, etc.). They should also map out how these clusters would interact among one another, and with existing research and teaching initiatives on campus

It may be that during these explorations different thematic configurations turn out to be more advantageous. The clusters above only provide a general frame. The teams should be ready to present their findings to the outside reviewers.

Conclusion

We firmly believe that the arts and humanities play an integral part in any scholarly study of media. They elucidate the long history of seemingly novel means of communication and archivization, and they open the philosophical and critical spaces in which the apparent inevitability of technological innovation can be subjected to sustained reflection. Inversely, the focus on media not only opens for the arts and humanities new ways of presentation and research, but also affords new occasions for reflection on the mission of individual practices and disciplines, and for far-reaching interdisciplinary collaboration. We look forward to working with the CU Boulder community to create a strong, innovative, and truly interdisciplinary center for the study of media.

Boulder, August 27, 2012

Submitted by:

Helmut Muller-Sievers, Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures, CHA

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William Kuskin, English

Ed Rivers, English

Lori Emerson, English

John-Michael Rivera, Writing and Rhetoric

Peter Simonson, Communication

Claire Farago, Art and Art History

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Attendees at CHA Discussion Group Meetings Held During Summer 2012

June 8th, 2012:

Kirk Ambrose, Art and Art History
Lisa Tamiris Becker, CU Art Museum
David Boonin, College of Arts and Sciences
Andrew Calabrese, Journalism and Mass Communication
Bud Coleman, Theatre and Dance
Peter Hunt, Classics
William Kuskin, English
Graham Oddie, Philosophy
Tim Orr, Colorado Shakespeare Festival
John-Michael Rivera, Program for Writing and Rhetoric
Ed Rivers, English
Yumi Roth, Art and Art History
Peter Simonson, Communication
Don Yannacito, Film Studies
Helmut Muller-Sievers, Center for Humanities and the Arts

June 22nd, 2012:

Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz, Film Studies
Kirk Ambrose, Art and Art History
Lisa Tamiris Becker, CU Art Museum
Bud Coleman, Theatre and Dance
Elspeth Dusinberre, Classics
Lori Emerson, English
Susan Kent, History
Graham Oddie, Philosophy
Ed Rivers, English
Yumi Roth, Art and Art History
Peter Simonson, Communication
Philip Sneed, Colorado Shakespeare Festival
Helmut Muller-Sievers, Center for Humanities and the Arts

July 13th, 2012:

Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz, Film Studies
John Ackerman, Communication
Kirk Ambrose, Art and Art History
Diane Conlin, Classics
Lisa Tamiris Becker, CU Art Museum
Bud Coleman, Theatre and Dance
William Kuskin, English
Graham Oddie, Philosophy
Ed Rivers, English
Yumi Roth, Art and Art History
Philip Sneed, Colorado Shakespeare Festival
Helmut Muller-Sievers, Center for Humanities and the Arts

July 27th, 2012:

Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz, Film Studies
John Ackerman, Communication
Kirk Ambrose, Art and Art History
Lisa Tamiris Becker, CU Art Museum
Bud Coleman, Theatre and Dance
Claire Farago, Art and Art History
Graeme Forbes, Philosophy
Peter Hunt, Classics
Susan Kent, History
Ed Rivers, English
Yumi Roth, Art and Art History
Helmut Muller-Sievers, Center for Humanities and the Arts

August 10th, 2012:

Kirk Ambrose, Art and Art History
Lisa Tamiris Becker, CU Art Museum
Bud Coleman, Theatre and Dance
Claire Farago, Art and Art History
Graeme Forbes, Philosophy
William Kuskin, English
Noel Lenski, Classics
John-Michael Rivera, Program for Writing and Rhetoric
Ed Rivers, English
Peter Simonson, Communication
Philip Sneed, Colorado Shakespeare Festival
Helmut Muller-Sievers, Center for Humanities and the Arts

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