Coevolution of Texts & Technology

Cheryl Geisler

CASDW 2013

Agenda

- The Academic Essay

- The Run Report Document

- The Palm Text

- Closing Thoughts

The Academic Essay

Character & History of the Academic Essay

Character
- Intertextual
- "Creates a Research Space"

History
- Rise of the research university
- Johns Hopkins 1876
- German model

The Study: Expert-Novice

- PhD candidates in philosophy

- First-year college students

- Reading and writing from sources

- Example from Swain, "Wilderness and the Maintenance of Freedom"

- *Academic Literacy and the Nature of Expertise: Reading, Writing, and Knowing in Academic Philosophy*
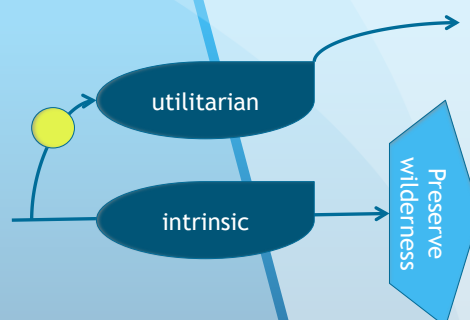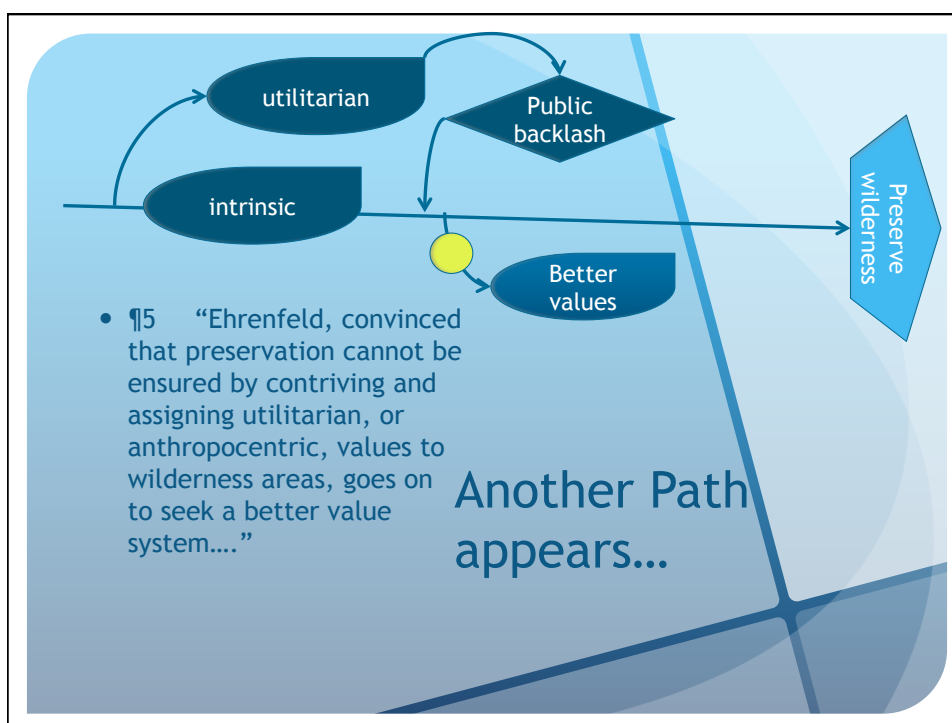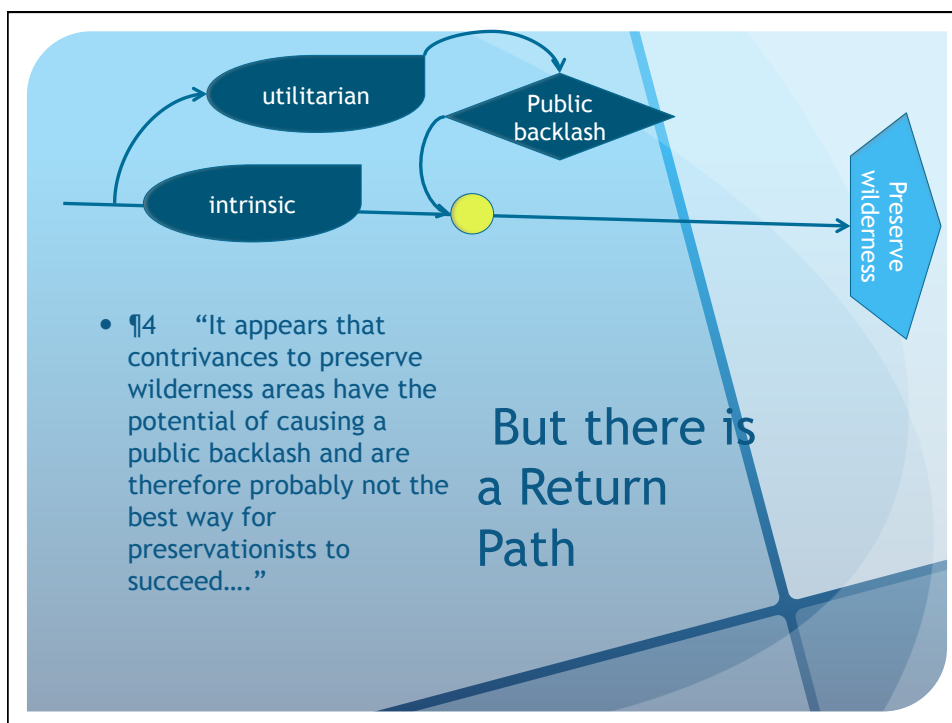
Main Path/Faulty Path Structure
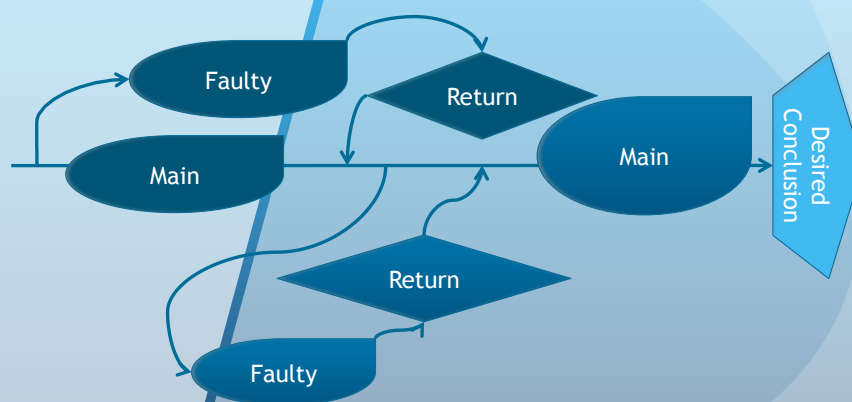
Choice of paths

- ¶1   "It has not been clear *why* people argue for the preservation of wilderness. The stated reasons have usually taken one of two courses: arguing that wilderness areas and rare species have either *utilitarian* value or *intrinsic* value…."
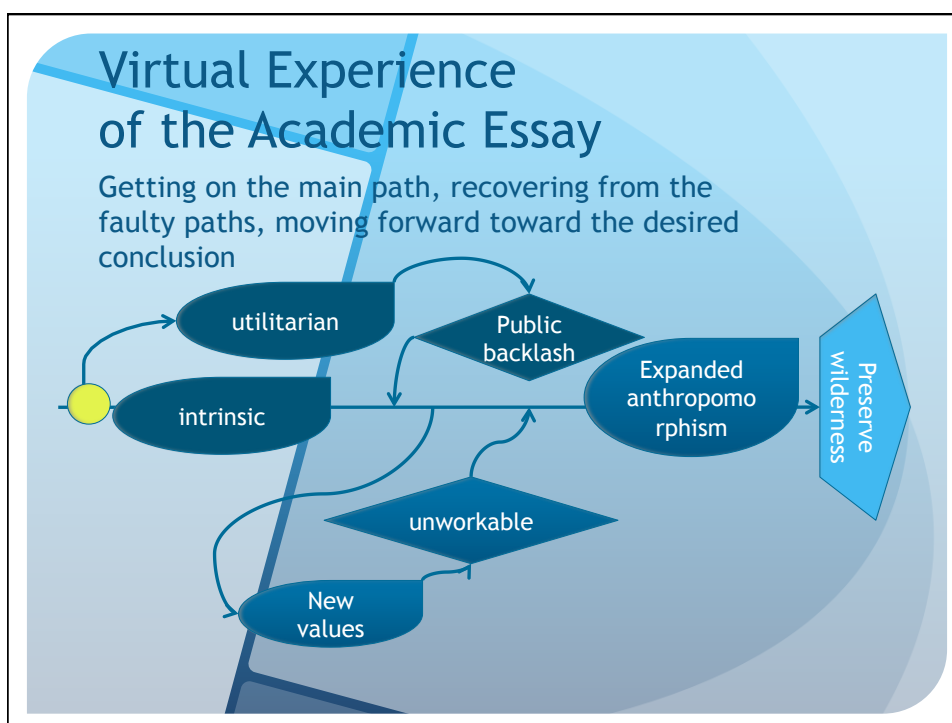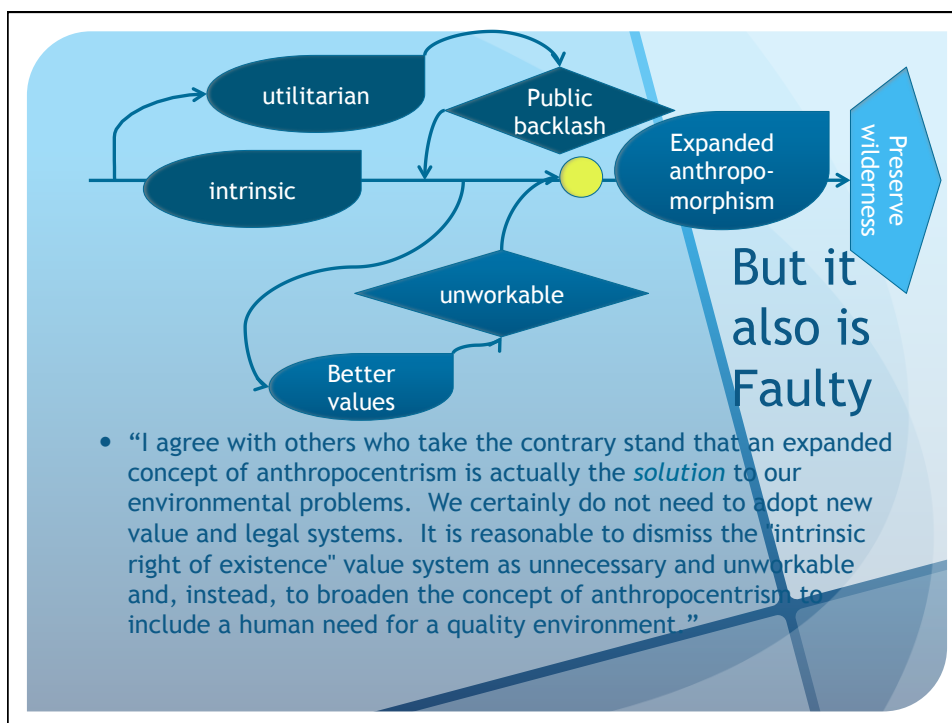
utilitarian

intrinsic

Preserve wilderness
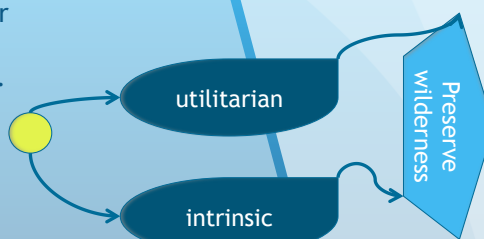
One is Faulty

- ¶2   "In his book, The Arrogance of Humanism, zoologist David Ehrenfeld makes the perceptive observation that most of the utilitarian arguments are contrived….

- ¶3   "It was not difficult for Ehrenfeld to demonstrate the weakness of these arguments…."

utilitarian

intrinsic

Preserve wilderness

utilitarian

Public backlash

intrinsic

Preserve wilderness

- ¶4 "It appears that contrivances to preserve wilderness areas have the potential of causing a public backlash and are therefore probably not the best way for preservationists to succeed…."

But there is a Return Path

utilitarian

Public backlash

intrinsic

Preserve wilderness

Better values

- ¶5 "Ehrenfeld, convinced that preservation cannot be ensured by contriving and assigning utilitarian, or anthropocentric, values to wilderness areas, goes on to seek a better value system…."

Another Path appears…

utilitarian

Public
backlash

Expanded
anthropo-
morphism

Preserve
wilderness

intrinsic

But it
also is
Faulty

unworkable

Better
values

- "I agree with others who take the contrary stand that an expanded concept of anthropocentrism is actually the *solution* to our environmental problems. We certainly do not need to adopt new value and legal systems. It is reasonable to dismiss the "intrinsic right of existence" value system as unnecessary and unworkable and, instead, to broaden the concept of anthropocentrism to include a human need for a quality environment."

Virtual Experience
of the Academic Essay

Getting on the main path, recovering from the faulty paths, moving forward toward the desired conclusion

utilitarian

Public
backlash

Expanded
anthropomo
rphism

Preserve
wilderness

intrinsic

unworkable

New
values

Reading
as a Virtual Experience

- Time stands still
  - Ehrenfeld "*makes* observations"
  - Swain"*agrees* with others"
  - others "*take* a contrary stand"

- Space expands
  - Over a main path
  - Avoiding or recovering from faulty paths
  - Moving closer to the truth
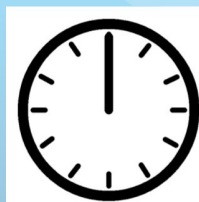
Reading
as an Actual Experience

- Times passes

- We stay put
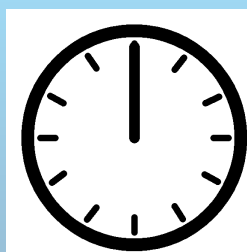
Composing
as an Actual Experience

- Positions developed over space
  - I was at Chicago
  - I was at Yale

- Conversations held with others
  - I invited him to visit
  - We had some good conversations

- Positions that change
  - He argued that..
  - I suggested that …
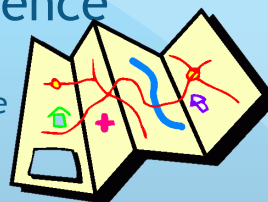
Academic Essays Create
Virtual Experiences

Academic essays create a virtual experience that
  - Obscures the context of composing
  - Ignores the private context of reading
  - And presents a timeless public position

The Actual & Virtual Tour
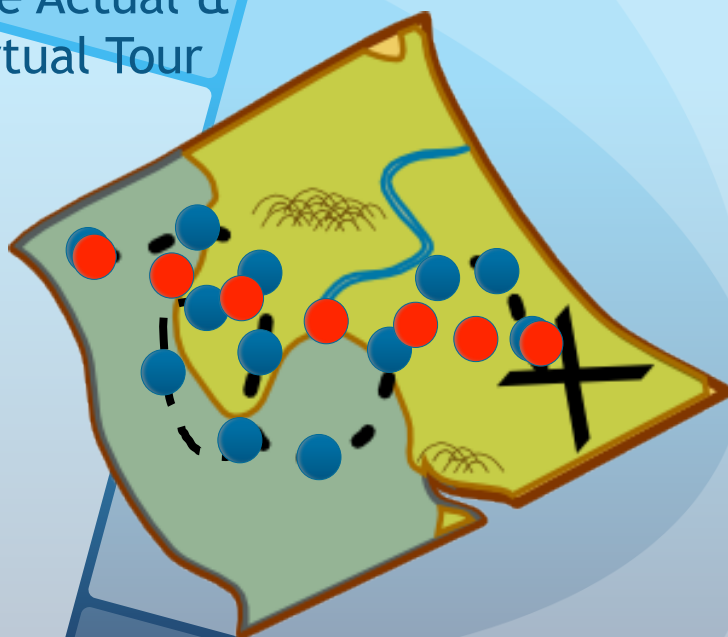
Experts Resist

- Use Rhetorical Reading
  - Author's name and affiliation
  - Academic genealogy
  - Date of publication
  - Name of publisher or journal
  - Reference list

- Reconstruct context of invention

- Open up the argument to alternatives

Resisting The Tour
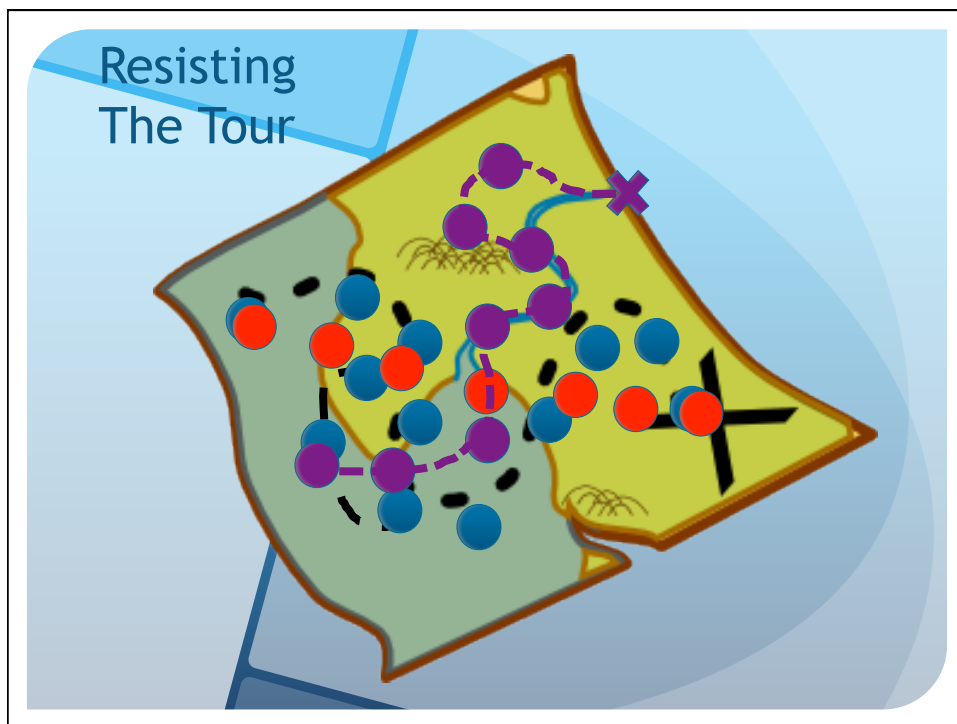
Academic Essays Do Boundary Work

- Create boundaries between actual and virtual experience of reading

- Create boundaries between actual and virtual experience of writing

- Reify boundaries between experts and laypersons

- Goal: Expert control

The Run Report Document

Character & History of the Document

Character
- Lists & forms
- Non-continuous text
- 64% of everyday writing – nearly 90 minutes per day (prose: 21 minutes) (Cohen et. al. 2011)

History
- Documentary reality (Smith, 1974)
- Monitoring in systematic management c. 1905 (Yates, 1989)

The Study:
The Genre of EMT Run Reports

- 17 EMTs at Skyview

- 200 run reports

- 150 hours of observations

- Munger, *Emergency Medical Technician Run Reports*, RPI dissertation, 1997

- Munger, *Business Communication Quarterly*, 1997

- Geisler & Munger, *Discourse Studies in Composition*, 2002

EMTs as a Profession

- Regulated by physicians

- Limited by regulation in knowledge/care

- Run Report Document
  - Primary to litigation
  - Surprisingly secondary to care
  - Unrecognized role in professional development

- Increasing routinization

Classic Run Report

Check Boxes

Narrative

Highly Routinized Run Report

Check Boxes

Short Answer

Codification

Skyview Run Reports

- Events
- Assesssment
- Treatment

Actual Path versus Virtual Path

Virtual

- Injury Present ☐yes ☐no

- Cause on injury: see Ref sheet

- Type of injury: ☐blunt, ☐burn, ☐penetrating ☐ not know

- Chief complaint:

- Condition Code: See Ref Sheet
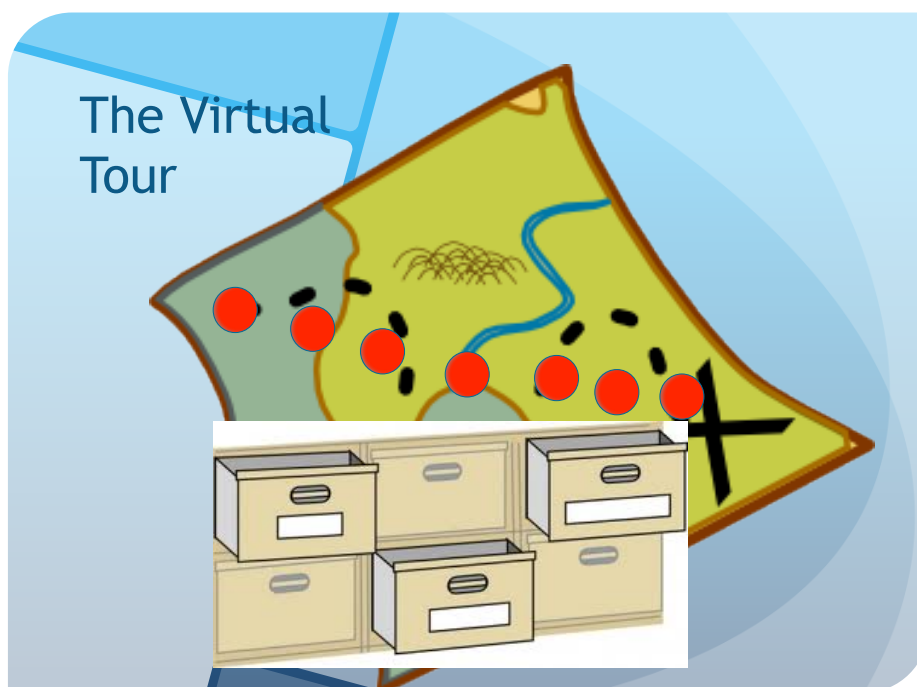
- Prior Aid: Procedure

- Performed by

Actual

- Narrative

Documents Create Virtual Experiences

Documents create a virtual experience that
- Routinizes the context of creation
- Ignores the private context of interpretation
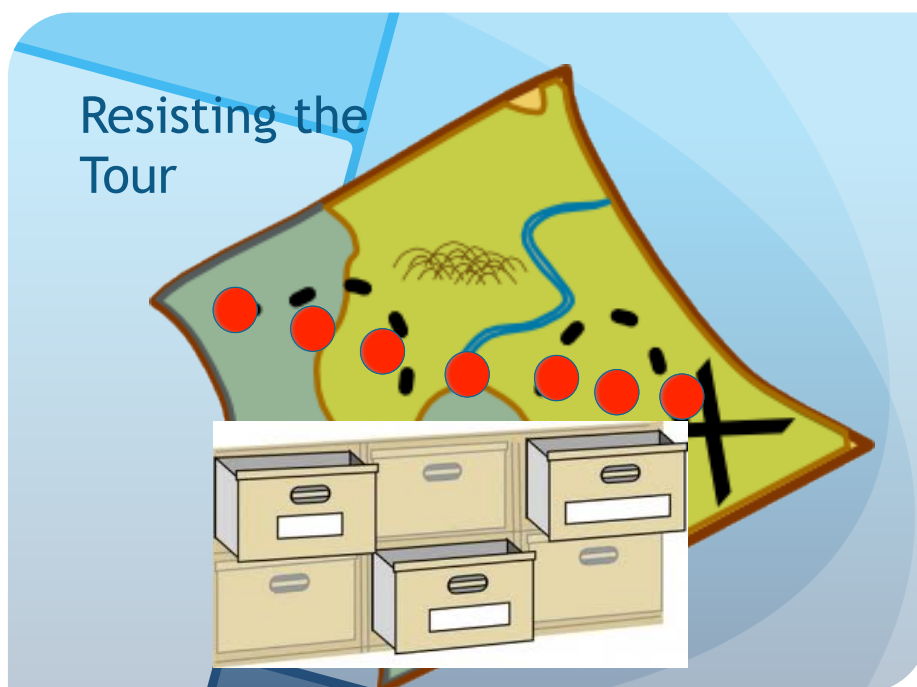- And prioritizes public documentation

The Virtual Tour

EMTs resist

- Create a narrative across the white spaces
- Construct private interpretations
- Improve their professional practice
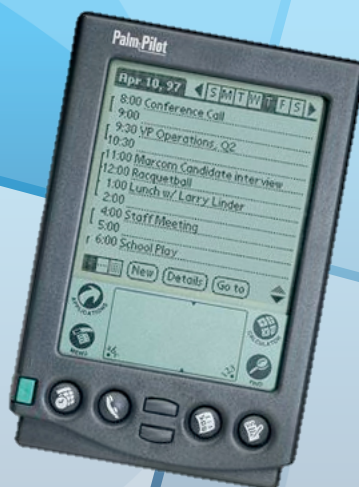
Resisting the Tour

Documents Do Boundary Work

- Create boundaries between virtual form and actual narrative

- Reify boundaries between doctors and EMTs

- Goal: Professional control

The Palm Text

Character & History of the Palm Text

Character
- Personal Digital Assistant (PDA)
- Personal information management (PIM)
- Desktop and mobile
- Calendar, To Do List, Addresses, Notes

History
- Paper-based Antecedents: Filofax (1921), Day-Timer (1947)
- Palm Pilot (1996): First major consumer electronic device
- 7 million sold between 1996 and 2000

1. Cultural Study

1997

- A technology for work

1999

A Technology for Work-Life

- "Stuck in a meeting. I'd better call that Italian place."
- "My vacations for the next five years (ever the optimist)"
- "VC profiles – next hot companies"

2000

- A technology for Work-Leisure
  - "1:37 Personal"
  - "Palm-powered handhelds can help you to do practically everything, even nothing. Email a memo then plan your getaway – take the net with you. Simply amazing. Simply Palm."

2. User Study

Work-Life Boundaries

- 42 users

- Interviews

- Content classification task

- Golden and Geisler (2006), Flexible work, time, and technology, *Electronic Journal of Communication*

Boundary Patterns

- **Life-Intensive Users** (10): 5-to1 life related items

- **Work-Intensive Users** (11): 5-to-1 work related items

- **Integrated** (21): 1-to-1 work- to life-related items

Scatter plot: x-axis "# of work items" (0 to 250), y-axis "# of life items" (0 to 300). Legend: ■ Life Intensive, □ Integrated, ▲ Work Intensive
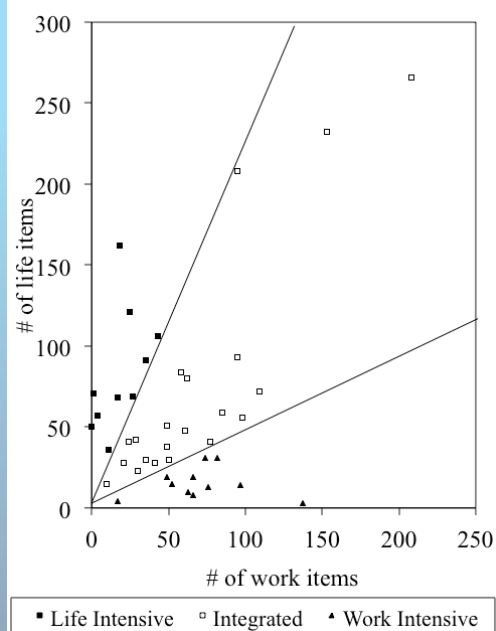
3. Activity Analysis

Screen Capture

- 1 user

- Palm Desktop

- 97 minutes

- Geisler (2003), When management becomes personal, *Writing Selves and Societies*

Palm Text in Activity

- Short: .2 minutes
- Private: 100%

Application	No. Distinct Texts	No. Times Used	Average No. of Times Used	Average Duration of Use (minutes)	No. (%) Private
Email	41	66	1.6	.5	2 (5%)
PDA	32	67	2.1	.2	32 (100%)
Browser	2	2	1.0	5.1	0 (0%)
WP	7	7	1.0	1.1	0 (0%)
SS	8	10	.8	.3	8 (100%)
Total	90	152	1.7	.4	42 (47%)

Palm Text in Doing Email
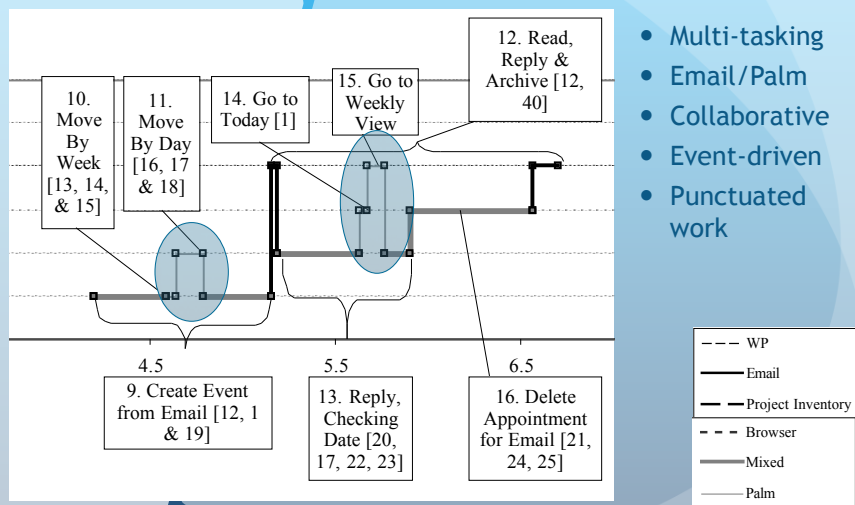

- Multi-tasking
- Email/Palm
- Collaborative
- Event-driven
- Punctuated work

10. Move By Week [13, 14, & 15]

11. Move By Day [16, 17 & 18]

14. Go to Today [1]

15. Go to Weekly View

12. Read, Reply & Archive [12, 40]

4.5

9. Create Event from Email [12, 1 & 19]

5.5

13. Reply, Checking Date [20, 17, 22, 23]

6.5

16. Delete Appointment for Email [21, 24, 25]

WP
Email
Project Inventory
Browser
Mixed
Palm

Palm Text in Planning Work
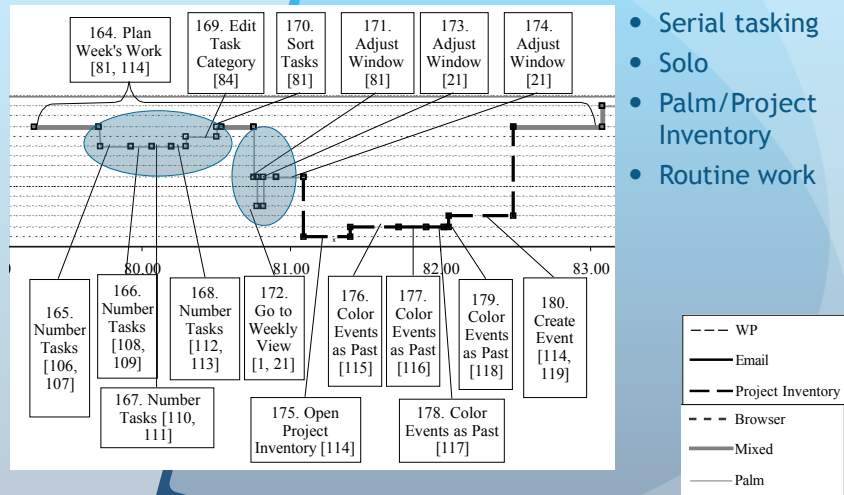
- Serial tasking
- Solo
- Palm/Project Inventory
- Routine work

Palm Text in Taking a Break
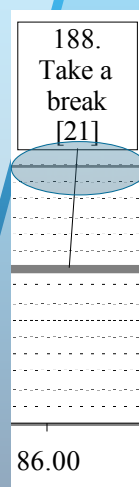
- Unplanned
- Unscheduled
- Undocumented
- Bookmarked by Palm
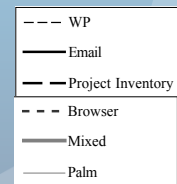
Palm Texts create Virtual Experiences

- Masculine
- Mobile
- Multi-tasking
- Prioritizing Work
- Balancing Life & Leisure
- Worlds of Events

The Virtual Path
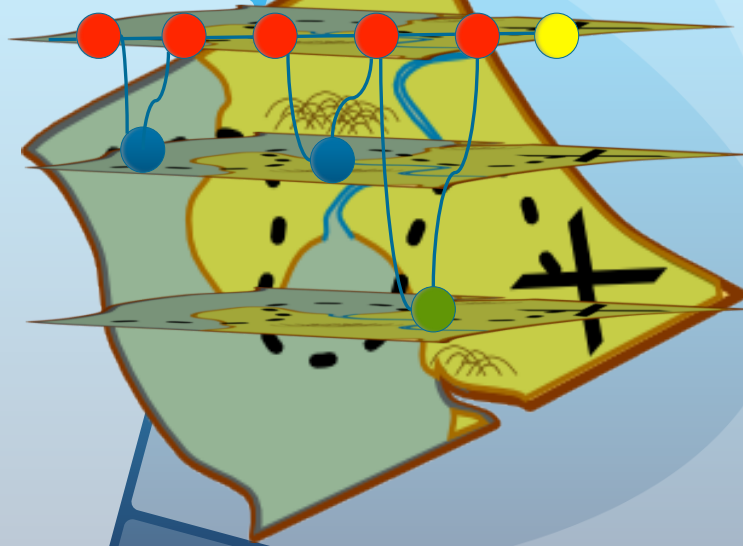
Users resist

- Female
- Tied Down
- Serial Tasks
- Balancing Work & Family
- Very Little Leisure
- Worlds of Routines

The Actual Path(s)

Palm Texts Do Boundary Work

- Serve as a resource to maintain boundaries between work and life

- Serve as a resource to link work & life

- Goal: Privilege work over life and leisure

Closing Thoughts

Texts & Technologies

- Texts are technologies, virtual experience machines

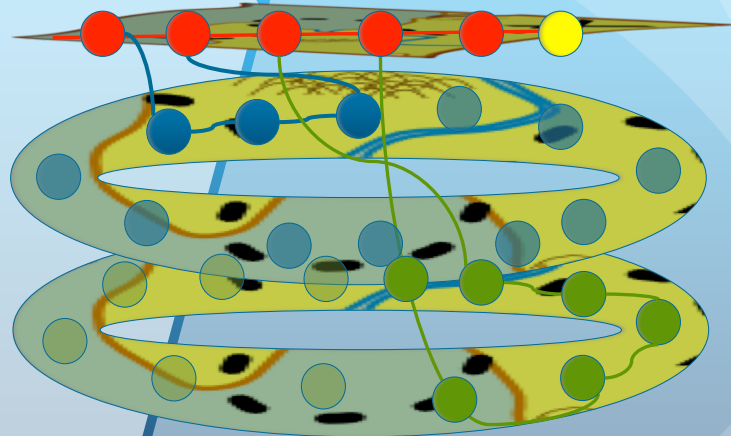- Technologies obscure their contexts of design in favor of their contexts of use

- Example
  - Coffee maker in design
  - Coffee maker in use

Texts & Privilege

- Texts have the capacity to obscure their contexts of design in favor of their contexts of use

- Academic essays use this capacity to privilege experts over laypersons

- Run report documents use this capacity to privilege doctors over EMTs

- Palm texts use this capacity to privilege work over home and leisure

ITexts

ITexts are
- Information Technologies with texts at their core
- chats, tweets, blogs, email, wiki

ITexts are
- shorter
- more frequent
- less serial
- more multi-tasked
- less polished

IText Shifts

ITexts erode traditional privilege
- removing the boundary between producers and consumers
- eroding the boundary between private and public
- privileging the amateur over the professional

- ITexts privilege the crowd, not the expert

- Example: Rhetorical Velocity
  - Devoss (2009)
  - Pantelides (2012) on informal posts: "pressure to say something useful that other classmates will agree with, consider, and incorporate in their own posts"

The New Experience Machines

- Texts of the 20th century: experience machines
  - support privilege created by credentialism
  - by obscuring the context of creation
- Texts of the 20th century: experience machines to
  - support reputations created by rhetorical velocity
  - by revealing context of creation

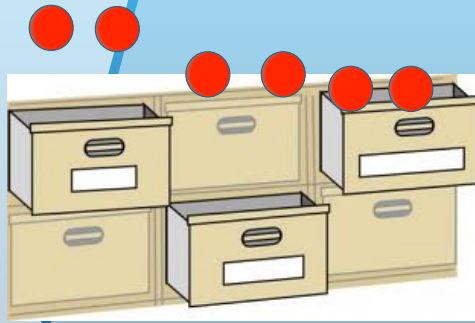## ITexts Show the Seams

20th Century   21st Century

21st century writers...

No longer willing to be led...

No longer willing to be documented …

No longer privileging work …

Closing Question

What should we be teaching them?