Web 2.0
New Challenges in Preservation

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Project Overview

• Students created wikis based on identities that recur in Shakespeare’s works.
• Wikis will begin an ongoing, changeable Shakespeare database that includes a wide range of primary & secondary sources.
• Also used to gauge how this interactive medium facilitates collaborative learning & information literacy skills.
Why Wiki?

• Gets students more involved with adding content to the course... creates a greater sense of autonomy.
• Promotes community & collaboration.
• Makes “classic texts” feel more contemporary.
• Provides insight into how students seek, use, and organize information.
Phase Two, Milton

- The project was repeated in the spring `08 semester, which focused primarily on Paradise Lost.
- About half the Milton students had also taken the Shakespeare course.
- We also received a small grant to upgrade the quality of the wikis.
Problem Statement

- Students wanted to **preserve** their version of the wikis before making the public.
- Is this a viable option... is it worth preserving a specific version of a wiki?
- Do these wikis have more value than traditional research papers?
- How do you preserve something that is "perpetually beta?"
Expectations

- What is the average life-span of a wiki?
- What are our short-term vs. long-term goals & expectations?
- How do these expectations affect our ideas about permanence & preservation?
- Do these terms have value in an environment that is in constant flux?
Value & Assessment

- Much value is experiential... users add value by creating & customizing content.
- Value can’t be assessed apart from the process or experience.
- Do blogs & wikis have value outside a specific user-community?
- How do we determine where this community ends and who is responsible for preservation?
Short-term Preservation

• PB Wiki allows users to “preserve” wikis as PDFs, Word Documents or as a slide show.
• All options drastically change the appearance & functionality of the wikis.
• History page is the only way to view a specific version of a wiki, but this puts it into a different context where it loses some functionality.
Long-term Preservation

• Should blogs and wikis be a part of the University Archives?
• Are emerging technologies important to preserve in their own right?
• Can you appraise Web 2.0 in the same way you would traditionally appraise university records?
Appraisal

- Is it a record of enduring historical value?
- Do the blogs and wikis document
  - the intellectual output of the university
  - administrative decision making
  - student life
- Are there documents of similar content already in the University Archives?
- Does the format matter? Is the use of emerging technologies important to document?
The Medium is the Message

• How does the format factor into the value of the information?
• Value is derived from the process of creation and continuous use.
• The parts do not equal the whole – a static snapshot would lessen the dynamic quality of the wiki.
Although wikis are designed to be in constant flux, creators and users cling to a need for permanence.

Permanence adds an air of authenticity and puts information into context.

Web 2.0 doesn’t frame information the same way traditional publications do... seems less “authentic,” more ephemeral.
What next?

- More questions than answers; no general consensus.
- A community based approach to preservation
- Long-term cultural shift of responsibility from institutions to the users
- Think about the possibilities of Web 3.0 as a form of community-based preservation.
Final Thoughts

• Is there such a thing as too much preservation?
• Is pre-emptive preservation practical given the rapidly changing nature of information?
• Do we preserve just to preserve, or do we need to assess value?
• What will be the long-term cultural affects of these changes?
Questions?

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