Proposal: *StudioLab Manifesto: Smart Media for Liberal Arts*
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StudioLab Manifesto: Smart Media for Liberal Arts is a textbook manifesto for renewing the liberal arts by using popular digital forms to shape knowledge, public discourse, and community engagement. Combining media theory and digital design, *StudioLab Manifesto* sets forth a practice of thinking and doing across fields and communities and provides instructors with hands-on media kits for producing everything from intellectual dialogues to TED talks to theory comics. Designed for students and instructors, as well as communication professionals, it introduces dynamic new ways to use media to connect people with themselves, others, and the world.

Common media forms such as scientific posters, public presentations, institutional reports, and YouTube videos carry tremendous rhetorical force in specific communities and contexts, while search engines, wikis, and other emerging tools have transformed the discovery of knowledge and empowered communities to connect and communicate locally and globally. At their very best, even the most derided of media forms can and regularly do produce powerful, intelligent, and sensitive effects for audiences intimate and massive—one thinks of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, which is effectively an Oscar-winning PowerPoint presentation whose precise visual storytelling generated worldwide debate about climate change.

Yet while TED talks, digital storytelling, and similar media forms have become ubiquitous, what's lacking is a *language* for analyzing them and a *practice* for creating them in scalable, sustainable ways across different fields. Our manifesto defines these forms as *smart media* and lays out a scaleable, creative practice that we call *StudioLab*. Our goal is to democratize digitality, just as 19th-century education helped to democratize literacy. Literacy produced skills associated with books and archives, while digitality adds skills for screens and databases. We seek to democratize digitality by democratizing design: StudioLab and smart media are our means for doing both.

As their names suggest, StudioLab and smart media combine creative and critical activities, thinking and media making. StudioLab mixes studio, lab, seminar, and fieldwork; while smart media mix scholarly genres and popular media forms. The processes and genres we describe are emergent in our digital remix culture, and because they draw on an array of existing genres (including film, graphic design, and performance), StudioLab and smart media are themselves inherently mashable. We are not so much inventing these practices and forms as nurturing their emergence, describing their affordances and constraints, and encouraging others to channel and remix them. Based on our experience teaching and working at a variety of universities and media firms, we believe StudioLab and smart media can "plug and play" in any institution, high-end or low tech.

Overview and Outline

We open *StudioLab Manifesto* with "Introduction: Redesigning the Liberal Arts," exploring the cultural, historical, and philosophical need for the liberal arts to embrace media forms and collaborative processes drawn from popular culture, avant-garde arts, media design, indigenous media, human-computer interaction, and philosophy. Examining the evolution of ideational media from Plato to Descartes to Turing, we argue for the need of higher education to embrace 20th-century media forms and creative processes as the building blocks of 21st-century thought

and action. The academy is out of sync with media culture and has been for a century. Today, at a time when libraries, museums, and bookstores face existential challenges that resonate with those of schools and universities, smart media and StudioLab provide ready-made genres and processes for collaborating across institutions and communities. We believe that the liberal arts' future depends upon reinscribing the ideational forms and hierarchized practices of Western knowledge within networked communities of practice whose collective wisdom draws on innumerable sources—past, present, and futural.

"Part 1: Making Smart Media" introduces the core components of our manifesto: 1) StudioLab's combination of seminar, studio, and lab practices that enable conceptual, aesthetic, and technical *learning* with potentially any content or subject matter; and 2) the smart media forms that in turn enable conceptual, aesthetic, and technical *making* with potentially any collaborators or communities. We show how StudioLab's iterative design process can empower students to translate ideas and experiences across different media for different audiences, while at the same time engaging in familiar modes of research, discussion, design, production, presentation, studio-based crit, and reflection. Part 1 focuses on projects ranging from one class to several weeks to an entire semester. We provide students and instructors with examples and guides for using StudioLab practices to design, produce, and evaluate 18 different smart media genres. Using print and online examples from students, professionals, and media history, we articulate an iterative design process that teaches three specific design frames—CAT (conceptual, aesthetic, technical), UX (user experience), and DT (design thinking). These frames are industry-standard approaches to analyzing and producing media, engaging with audiences and users, and generating organizational and social innovation They provide excellent professional development that can be used in stand-alone projects, integrated into existing projects, or adapted to structure an entire course. The frames that we introduce provide consistency in approach and vocabulary that has been absent in the field.

"Part 2: Remixing StudioLab" enables individuals and institutions to use the StudioLab approach at larger scales and in collaborative co-creation with different communities. We frame these groups as intimate bureaucracies: collaboratories that use large systems of organization to create alternative social organizations. Here we move from project and course design to broader concerns, including curriculum and program design, learning spaces and technical infrastructure, community building and outreach, support services and professional development. Drawing on 25 years of combined experience working at liberal arts colleges, small, medium, and large universities, and small and large media firms, we present models and examples for creating smart media projects in site-specific, scalable, and sustainable ways that strengthen ties between the liberal arts and other communities. We show ways to integrate smart media genres into existing programs, expand interdisciplinary collaboration, and connect with communities. Smart media can be deployed for introductory and capstone courses and also incorporated in between, enabling students to develop critical and creative skills throughout their educational experience and build portfolios of intelligent work. While StudioLab's first students literally moved between seminar, studio, and lab spaces, we show how to practice it in individual classrooms, lecture halls, computer labs, media studios, or directly off laptops. We also show how smart media projects can move from the classroom into communities and out into the field, and how media can help create strong relationships, especially when co-created within contexts of community problem-solving.