From Bricks and Mortar to the Public Sphere in Cyberspace: Creating a Culture of Caring on the Digital Global Commons

Elizabeth M. Delacruz
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Abstract

This paper is intended as a broad, conceptual and theoretical treatise on the aims of teaching art in the age of global digital media. To contextualize a set of general recommendations for art education technology pedagogy, I first provide an overview of the meteoric rise of on-line social networks, and consider questions about the nature and status of these networks as virtual communities, looking at both recent studies of Internet users and at contemporary discussions about what actually constitutes a community. Ideas about community are then connected to a discussion of the public sphere, the commons, and participatory democracy as each of these lead to calls for global civil society in cyberspace. Drawing from this thinking, recommendations for art education technology pedagogy are offered, focusing on approaches that give prominence to making time for inquiry and discourse with students about things that matter, the development of a culture of caring in the art classroom, and public engagement. A recommendation for a partnership model between university and K-12 art educators concludes the paper.

Introduction

Human social networking has gone on since the dawn of civilization. Anthropologists have long recognized that participation in social networks provides biological and cultural advantages to individuals and increases their social capital. Electronic mediated, or on-line social networking is a contemporary phenomenon, made possible by the rapid expansion of affordable computers and hand held mobile electronic communication devices, increased affordability and availability of access to networked communities, and the development of inexpensive (or free) easy to use social networking services now widely available on the World Wide Web. On-line social networking includes the creation of and interaction within electronic groups—e.g., e-mail, list serves, bulletin boards, Internet Relay Chats (IRCs), and Instant Messaging (IMing)—and on Web sites (including Web pages, profiles, blogs, and digital portfolios). These forums and media forms are widely distributed and permit audience interaction through cell phones, BlackBerry® mobiles and other portable media devices, and personal computers. Of primary concern to art and aesthetic education theory and practice is production of, consumption of, and interaction within social networking sites (especially Web sites and blogs), with particular regard for visual, aesthetic, cultural, political, and ethical interests. This paper looks specifically at cultural and ethical interests. More to the point, it addresses questions about how and why on-line social networking may lead to or reinforce a sense of community, how on-line communities may contribute to the public sphere and global civil society, and what this has to do with art education. I begin with a discussion of the rise of on-line social networking and the formation of digital communities. Following, I share ideas about the public sphere, the commons, and participatory democracy. I conclude with recommendations for art education theory and practice.

A Brief History of Social Networking and Virtual Communities

By most accounts, USENET was among the first on-line networks, created in the 1980s to facilitate electronic communications among people who were separated geographically. On-line communication networks or newsgroups (e-mail forums and discussion groups) were originally comprised of technical and scholarly oriented individuals who distributed information throughout the network. These newsgroups were soon followed by "alt" and "rec" forums comprised of people who talked about a variety of topics from gardening to politics. Commercial services and public sites grew rapidly in the early 1990s. CompuServe forums addressed professional and personal interests. Most well known among these forums was the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronik Link). America Online (AOL) and Prodigy also facilitated the development of easy-to-use, mass audience (many-to-many), networked communities. Blogs (aka Web Logs) were present with first Web browsers (notably Mosaic) in 1993, but grew exponentially with the introduction in 1999 of Blog services Web sites that provided easy, point-and-click ability to create blog sites. PITAS is often cited as one of the first easy to create point and click blog software/services available for free on the Web (Blood, 2000). The

numbers best portray the amazing rise of electronic social networks: on-line networks grew from 158 newsgroups in 1984, to 1,732 groups in 1991, to 10,696 groups in 1994, to over 25,000 in 2005, to millions in 2007, including Web logs.[i] Considerable discussion has followed this rise, much of it concerned with whether or not these newsgroups and social networks constitute a community (Rheingold, 1993; Stoll, 1995; Blood, 2002; Scheidt, 2003; Lenhart, 2005; Rheingold, 2007).

Are Electronic Social Networks Communities?

Howard Rheingold introduced the notion of a virtual community to the public beyond the on-line world in 1993, in his now often cited book *The Virtual Community*. A former editor of *The Whole Earth Catalogue*, and an active member of the WELL, Rheingold was among the first to assert that online networks were emerging as an important social force. According to Rheingold and his followers, virtual networks fulfill the elements of a community, that is, a sense of group identity and belonging, formation of relationships, need fulfillment, emotional shared experience, impact on members' lives, prevalence of specialized language, and the ability of the group to police itself. Advocates of this view claim that people who participate in on-line social networking sites feel a strong sense of connection to the group, may participate for years, and care passionately about their on-line group (Rheingold, 2007). According to Rheingold, people in on-line social networks "exchange pleasantries, argue, debate, sell things, conduct business, exchange knowledge, find or extend emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, find friends and mates, play games, create art, talk … just about everything people do in real life, but "we leave our bodies behind" (Rheingold, 1993).In Lenhart's' description, writers and readers are talking one-to-many, sometimes in a many-to-many site, but through a one-to-one interface—the writer/reader and the computer screen (2005).

Skeptics argue that virtual communities lack critical elements that define authentic, geographically based, communities. Those elements include a feeling of permanence and belonging, a sense of location--the very essence of a neighborhood, and warmth from the local history (Stoll, 1995). Some worry that the Internet degrades friendship, kinship, civic involvement, and social capital (Horrigan & Rainie, 2006). Additionally, the explosive growth in the popularity of Web-based social networking in particular has generated concerns among parents, school officials, and government leaders about risks posed to young people when personal information is made available in such a public setting (Lenhart, 2007; Gross, 2004; Lenhart & Rainie, 2001).[ii] Addressing the debate over whether on-line social networking constitutes community, Lenhart differentiates between virtual settlements and virtual communities (2005). According to Lenhart, settlements are areas where new people come and affiliate by virtue of proximity or shared interests. They are looser and less connected, whereas communities, in Lenhart's analysis, are more stable, involving the establishment of common purposes and collective action. Whether of not on-line social networking sites are

virtual communities or settlements, or neither, people are using them in increasing numbers and for increasingly varied reasons.

Recent studies of both adult and youth Internet users consistently confirm that millions of people use social networking sites and other forms of electronic communication to maintain and strengthen social ties, to manage and facilitate existing relationships, to plan and coordinate schedules, and to seek and exchange important information. Contrary to claims that Internet use leads to anti-social behavior, these studies also clearly demonstrate that U.S. teens[iii] and adult[iv] Internet users are anything but anti-social (Lenhart, 2007; Horrigan & Rainie, 2006; Boase, Horrigan, Wellman, & Rainie, 2006; Gross, 2004; Horrigan, 2001). Of particular interest to visual arts and aesthetic educators are the relative ease and creative uses of new media and social networking sites by young people. Young people, sometimes referred to as "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001) have grown up with electronic media, use electronic technologies creatively and effortlessly, in widely varied ways and for widely varied ends. It is my observation (and many others') that youth today are with the greatest ease creating websites, blogs, digital imagery, videos, and animations. They are filming, writing, and posting their media productions in on-line social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook, and using sites such as flickr and YouTube to reach out to wider audiences. They are engaged in sophisticated on-line games and virtual sites, taking on virtual personas and acting out virtual scenarios, And they are continually sharing content and commenting on one another's content, text messaging and instant messaging one another, going on-line with their fully capable wireless handheld mobile devices, and cued in and connected, moment-by-moment, to their virtual communities. The implications of this phenomenon for visual arts education are discussed later in this paper.

Saveri understands these digital natives as tech savvy cultural creatives, describing them as youngish *cyber-nomads* who roam freely amongst multiple virtual communities (2004). In Saveri's description, these cyber-nomads are the digital age information/knowledge workers, creatives, designers, innovators, service workers, students, activists, citizens, bloggers, and gamers. Their access to their social networks is ever present through IM (Instant Messaging), cell phones, chat, blogging, and roaming services (Saveri, 2004; Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). Digital proximity to their social networks means that cyber-nomads are never really alone (Lenhart, Rainie, & Hitlin, 2005; Saveri, 2004). They have physical, digital, and social mobility, they are opportunistic, and they simultaneously work across media (Saveri, 2005; Gross, 2004). They bridge and traverse multiple and simultaneous layers of context (Lenhart, Rainie, & Lewis, 2001; Saveri, 2004), adopting distinct identities for each (Gross, 2004). They don't just do lots of things at one time, they act out many personas at one time, and their multi-tasking can be complementary or fragmentary (Saveri, 2004). Flexible context-switching and multi-contexting provide cyber-nomads with multiple, simultaneous experiences, each embedded in distinct social relationships, roles, and identities (Saveri,

2004). These individuals inhabit a landscape in which physical, geographic places are layered with digital strata of activities, social relationships, information, identity, roles, and time. Such are the skills that some young people who have access to personal computers and the Internet learn as teenagers (Saveri, 2004; Rheingold, 2007; Lenhart, 2007); and these youth use these skills in vastly different ways on their own than they do in schools (Levin, Arafeh, Lenhart, & Rainie, 2002). Rheingold summarizes:

> The eager adoption of web publishing, digital video production and online video distribution, social networking services, instant messaging, multiplayer role-playing games, online communities, virtual worlds, and other Internet-based media by millions of young people around the world demonstrates the strength of their desire — unprompted by adults — to learn digital production and communication skills. (2007, ¶ 1)

The cultural and ethical significance of this phenomenon is not lost to Rheingold:

> The tools for cultural production and distribution are in the pockets of 14 year olds. This does not guarantee that they will do the hard work of democratic self-governance: the tools that enable the free circulation of information and communication of opinion are necessary but not sufficient for the formation of public opinion. Ask yourself this question: Which kind of population seems more likely to become actively engaged in civic affairs? (2007, ¶ 2).

The question of how or whether technology will be used for the common public good remains, and there is a rich and diverse discussion on-line about this very issue. This discussion is interspersed with assertions about the relationship of virtual communities to the public sphere, to the idea of a new global commons, and to our collective future in the electronic age. The remainder of this paper explores further how technology and global civil society are intertwined, and how art education fits into this scenario. First, however, a brief discussion of the notion of the *commons* or the *public sphere* is in order.

The Rise of Civil Society[v] in Cyberspace: A New Global Commons

The idea of *a commons* has had a long history in Western scholarly discourse, tracing back to ancient Greece, the Middle ages, and the eighteenth-century Europe during the Enlightenment. In *The Commons: A Report to Owners*, David Bollier writes that in pre-industrial days, common pastures, streams, and woods provided sustenance for people, and everybody used these spaces and resources freely (2006). As people moved to cities, commons were enclosed and privatized (bought, sold, and restricted in their uses and misuses to the will of their owners). Bollier continues, "the commons of the 21st century is quite different from its medieval predecessor. It embraces everything we inherit or create together and must pass on,

undiminished or enhanced, to our children: air and water, ecosystems and habitats, arts and the Internet, public spaces and soundscapes, our free time and social safety net, and much more" (2006, p. 3).

Contemporary notions of the commons are linked to ideas about common assets, public goods, the public sphere, and civil society, as these merge with conceptualizations about participatory democracy and efforts to create a new global commons. Bollier (2004) defines common assets as those parts of the commons that have a value in the market and which are appropriate to buy and sell. Radio airwaves, timber and minerals on public lands, and air and water are common assets (Bollier, 2004). Bollier continues, "by recognizing certain resources as common assets, it is easier to ask if common assets are being responsibly managed on behalf of the general public or a distinct community of interest. Similar to common assets, *public goods* are resources that, because of their public nature, are difficult to maintain, costly, and sometimes but not always necessary to exclude people from using without supervision" (Bollier, 2004). Examples of public goods include lighthouses, city parks, and broadcast programming. Research about *the commons* focuses on the sustainability of shared natural resources, and has included studies of lands, forests, fisheries, wildlife, pastures, agricultural fields, and water resources, along with studies of *global commons* such as the atmosphere, outer space, Antarctica, deep oceans, electromagnetic spectrum genetic code, and the knowledge and digital commons (Hess, 2004). What all of these commons resources have in common is that they are traditional public goods—that is, they are by definition enduring, non-rivalrous, low excludability resources (Hess, 2004).[vi] Virtual communities such as the interactive online community forming aspects of Sims 2, Second Life, Gay.com (for example) and many other virtual communities, are particularly relevant to our understandings of art, visual culture, and art education and insofar as we acknowledge such behaviors as facets of creative production, reproduction, and expression, and as cultural practices begging further scrutiny (perhaps even critical analysis) in the art room.

Along this line of thinking, Donald Waters describes the *knowledge commons* similarly, as scholarly pooled resources and as another kind of public good (2006). Seeing the present digital ecology of the knowledge commons in precarious condition due to Internet instability, legal, commercial, and economic pressures, Walker argues that preservation of electronic scholarly texts, digital scholarly journals specifically, is a commons problem and calls for an entrepreneurial approach in which producers (publishers and scholars), archivists (libraries), and consumers (the scholarly communities and others) share the costs and benefits of preserving digital journals. Bollier similarly believes that although governments often must pay for public goods, self-organizing groups may also create and pay for public goods (2004, 2006). [vii]

Writing for *Citizens Online*, a not-for-profit UK organization established to explore the social and cultural impact of the Internet, Blumer and Coleman call for an imaginative, institutionally backed, publicly funded '*civic commons in cyberspace*', that is, an electronic public sphere commons. This would involve the establishment of a public agency designed to forge links between communication and politics and to connect the voice of the people more meaningfully to the daily activities of democratic institutions.[viii] Commons writers and advocates similarly link metaphorical and extended notions of the village green (the commons) to collective local and global citizen action and democratic processes; and they similarly advocate a pragmatic, citizen-initiated, private-public partnership oriented entrepreneurial[ix] approach to preserving the common (Hess, 2004: Lessig, 2004)

Transformation of Mass Media in the Civic Commons

The notion of a civic commons is credited by scholars to philosopher and social critic Jürgen Habermas, who has written extensively about the interactions and developments between political, economic, social, aesthetic-expressive, and private spheres of life. Along these lines, Habermas explains the rise of the *public sphere* along with the structural transformation of newspapers and the mass media. His definition of the public sphere and discussion of the demise of the *public good* role of the media has generated considerable discussion and debate since its first publication.

> By the "public sphere" we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private citizens assemble to form a public body. They then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion— that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions—about matters of general interest. (Habermas, 1974, p. 50).

In *The Structural Transformation of the Media*, Habermas (1974) explains how a contemporary notion of the public sphere emerged with changes in European society, from monarchies in the Middle Ages to mass democracies by the end of the eighteenth century. In monarchies *public* referred to the systems and representations of those governing the affairs of the state (churches, priests, princes, and nobility), and *private* refereed to the activities and interests of those governed (the commoners). The notion of a *public body* or arena comprised of and serving the citizens of a state arose (a) as church state authority eroded and became a private matter, with concomitant religious freedoms afforded to individuals; (b) as the private spheres of the princely courts were separated from their public duties of administration of the

affairs of the state; (c) as those occupied in the trades, urban mercantile organizations, and emerging corporations developed as a sphere of labor and commerce, giving rise to bourgeois society—private, separate, and free from supervision by the state; and (d) through the emergence of modern constitutions which afforded to individuals specific fundamental rights. Such were the conditions that led to what Habermas calls the liberal model of the public sphere—that sphere concerned with the protecting the activities of private individuals, now capable of rational self-regulation and pursuit of their own interests, and free from supervision from the state. Within "privatized but publicly relevant sphere of labor and commodity exchange" (Habermas, p. 54), bourgeois society now stood in contrast to the state, and laid claim to the mass media of the day, previously state controlled newspapers and circulars, to articulate their own arguments for a free market economy. As a result, Habermas explains, newspapers transformed from compilations of state dictated notices or news sheets into bearers of private interests, intensifiers of public opinion, and critiques of and debates about state authority in the ongoing struggles for freedom.

A Second Transformation of the Media

Habermas explains that once the bourgeois state and the liberal model of the public sphere were established, newspapers were then able to abandon their polemical position as critics of the state and serve broader commercial interests. With the rise of the liberal welfare state and mass democracy, newspapers transformed again, this time from literary circulars and politically motivated newssheets of private individuals in service of bourgeois agendas and the promotion of public opinion into a medium of consumer culture. Freed of their pressure to articulate and foster the struggles for freedom in the public sphere of opinion-making geared at exerting pressures on the state, newspapers were free to "take advantage of the earning possibilities of a commercial undertaking" (Habermas, p. 54). According to Habermas, this occurred in France, England, and the U.S during the late 1880s. About this time, the public sphere of debate over the authority of the state, and over the nature of power itself was also expanded by influx of private interests that received special prominence in the mass media. Habermas notes that competing pressures from groups beyond or not well served by the interests of the bourgeois erupted, sometimes violently.

In Habermas's view, "it was the [very] conditions of an industrial advanced mass democracy organized in the form of a social welfare state" (p. 53) that spurred on groups who believed that self-regulating markets needed state supervision. Believing that the transformation of the media from intensifier of public opinion and critic of the state to purveyor of privatized commercial interests threatens to disintegrate the civic nature of the public sphere itself, Habermas has concluded that the idea of a public sphere, preserved in the social welfare state mass democracy is an idea that now calls for a rationalization of power through the medium of public discussion among private individuals. In effect, Habermas suggests that the mass media is lost to commercial interests. In his view, the civic can now only be realized today on

an altered basis, "as a rational reorganization of social and political power under the mutual control of rival organizations committed to the public sphere in their internal structure as well as in their relations with the state and each other" (p. 55).

The Contemporary Role of Mass Media in the Global Public Sphere

As Western democracies separated their political system to ensure a division and balance of powers between the major political institutions (notably, executive, legislative, and judicial), the free press*,* conceived in this system as the *fourth estate*, was both a key institution with constitutional guarantees and a check against corruption and excessive power in the other institutions (Kellner, n.d.). Agreeing with Habermas, Kellner observes that mainstream commercial broadcast media, i.e., newspapers, radio, and television, have forfeited their role as mediators between competing interests, powers, and institutions, and as critics of the state, thus creating a crisis of democracy. Departing from Habermas's conclusions however, Kellner argues that the public sphere may be reinvorated by citizen action with and through contemporary mass media, aided by new electronic technologies. Contrary to Habermas, Kellner is more optimistic about the role of broadcast media, observing that the rise of oppositional broadcast media and new media technologies such as the Internet are serving as a new basis for a participatory democratic communication politics. Inasmuch as "radio, television, and the other electronic media of communication tended to be closed to critical and oppositional voices both in systems controlled by the state and by private corporations", so have "public access and low power television, and community and guerilla radio … opened these technologies to intervention and use by critical intellectuals" (Kellner, n.d. ¶ 18).

With or without the mainstream broadcast media, theorization about the public sphere is now further complicated by globalization. Although the public sphere has been traditionally defined in terms of citizens in communication with their sovereign states on matters of great concern to citizens, that is, the activities of traditionally privatized institutions of sovereign states, contemporary citizen activism and formation of public opinion has become more complex and difficult due to the fact that citizens are no longer merely subjects of single nation states (nationals). Rather they are better understood in terms of border dwellers and globetrotters, trans-racial families, individuals with multiethnic identities, migrations, diasporas, dual citizenship arrangements, indigenous community memberships, and patterns of multiple residency (Fraser, 2006). Equally important is the fact that private institutions, once bounded within and accountable to, at least in some measures, nation states have now morphed, merged, migrated and expanded beyond political, legal, and geographic boundaries in the global arena, thereby undermining state sovereignty itself (Korten, 2000; Korten & Shiva, 2002). Transnational entities and conglomerates are both difficult to identify or locate within a particular nation, and accountable to no one but to their own interests (Korten, 2000; Fraser, 2006). Korten and Frasier argue that the task of global civil society must now involve the creation and realignment of transnational civic minded organizations and institutions

imbued with commensurate regulatory powers matching the scale and scope of the powerful private transnational entities that now exist, and built on broad coalitions that embrace and bridge divisions of ethnicity, religion, language, and nationality. The notion of *a civic commons in cyberspace* is particularly relevant to the conceptualization of such transnational civic-minded entities, and the Internet is increasingly proposed as the very arena in which global civil society will come together to forge public opinion and facilitate collective civic action. The Internet not only creates new public spheres and spaces for information exchange, debate, creation of transnational coalitions, and fortification of plans for civic actions across the globe, it also will become the terrain on which future political battles will be fought, as debates over civil society, participatory democracy, the public sphere, electronic media culture, sustainability, transparency, global restructuring of capitalism, politics, open source, copyright, and struggles over control of telecommunications networks are intertwined (Fraser, 2006; Rheingold, 2007; Kellner, n.d.).

Technology Education as Civic Pedagogy in the New Global Commons

As discussed earlier in this paper, technology, electronic media, and the Internet are firmly established as second nature to the plugged-in generation, and now widely recognized as the tools, the medium, the environment, and the vehicle through which local, regional, and global institutional activities and transformations will take place. We are just beginning to see the implications of this reality in commerce, communications, politics, entertainment industries, and civil society initiatives. Oddly, education has largely lagged behind. Although 99% of U.S. schools now have networked computers, and students are increasingly using the Internet at schools, they do so less than one would expect, possibly due to limited availability, old computers, filtering software, and inconvenient access (Hitlin & Rainie, 2005). Moreover, poor school technology infrastructures and restrictive school policies truncate and confine teachers' classroom technology practices (Zhou, Pugh, Sheldon, & Byers, 2002).

Yet, the field of art education has demonstrated a burgeoning interest in technology pedagogy. Art educators have long noted natural connections between creative visual expression, art and cultural inquiry, and technology. Our multiple and overlapping concerns have addressed the whats, hows, and whys of electronic technology and new media in P-16 art education programs of study (Hicks, 1993; Koos & Smith-Shank, 1996; Freedman, 1997; Keifer-Boyd, 1997); pre-service and post-service teacher education (Galbraith, 1997); school and community technology infrastructures (Orr, 2004); issues or cautionary tales of inequity (Congdon, 1997), and calls for a merging of art education with media studies (Duncum, 2004, Taylor, 2004). Art educators have explored the dialogical and liberatory capacities of new electronic media (Carpenter & Taylor, 2003), the possibilities of dis-embodied action and activism (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2004), and have considered the social nature of multi-user on-line environments (Garber, 2004). It is worth noting that technology pedagogy fits well with constructivist educational theory. Although intriguing and popular in educational discourse

and practice, constructivist educational strategies must also be accompanied by some old fashioned direct teaching, oriented toward an emancipatory pedagogy of critical analysis (jagodzinski, 1999; Tavin; 2004), and informed by contemporary notions of multi-culture (Stuhr, 1994), social reconstruction (Freedman, 1994; Hicks, 1994), and participatory democracy (Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Blandy, 2004). Building on work already done in these areas, I focus the remainder of this paper on ways that we may encourage our technology-rich students to take their place in the cyber commons as responsible global citizens: (a) having conversations that lead to public engagement, including civic works that have both personal and societal importance (Boyte, 2002), (b) caring enough to take the time to do the kinds of things that matter both in and beyond the classroom (Noddings, 2005), and (c) formation of more direct partnerships and collaborations aimed at public engagement. I believe that art education, *by virtue of* its peripheral and often overlooked position in the school curriculum, is capable of doing these kinds of things, although I do not argue that it will be easy.

We Are Allowed to Have More Conversations that Matter with Our Students

Dialogue, debate, and civic action are guided by longstanding principles of both informed rational inquiry and public engagement. The skills of both argumentation and consensus building are now more important than ever in an age of political polarization, escalating ethnic conflict, and crass mass journalism. Rationale discussion assumes that participants are or will become informed, and that they are autonomous individuals free and empowered to follow their own pursuits. Such is the nature of teaching and learning in an inquiry-based classroom, one which favors process over product, questions over answers, relationships over predetermined skill sets, and, after Dewey, learning by doing (Delacruz, 1997; Bruce, forthcoming). The deliberative process also brings competing interests to the public sphere of the classroom, for closer examination and formation of classroom public opinion followed by civic action. Although dialogues, conversations, and debates allow for the articulation of diverse points of view and must actively seek out diverse voices, not all viewpoints expressed merit equal value. The process of jurisprudential deliberation over matters of both facts and values is based on the compelling nature of the arguments offered, on the principle that a prioritization of values may be established, and that that some students' opinions and interests will either be relegated to a lower place in the hierarchy through the deliberative process itself, or even rejected on some basis deriving from the deliberative process itself (Oliver, 1980). This ranking is guided by the principles of serving the common good while respecting individuality, and the principle of doing the least violence possible to those interests so relegated (Oliver, 1980). Talking is a necessary but insufficient condition for promoting civil society. Conversations and debates must be over things that matter, and they must be followed by plans of action, similarly informed by the same processes of rational deliberation.

Although desired manners of rational discourse can be explicitly taught and practiced, art teachers need to believe themselves to be free in their own schools to pursue lengthy,

unpredictably, and sometimes complicated discussions during art time before such activity will take place in class rooms. Some school cultures may not foster such kinds of classroom activities. Finally, it is important to know that some students may not initially like this kind of discourse, favoring other kinds of classroom pursuits instead, or finding such activity discomforting. Practices show however, that such resistance may be transformed to insightful personal and communal inquiry and activity. Youth participation in digital communication networks, on-line communities, blogs, and digital communities, informed by the practice of civil conversation, rational debate, and civic work is already taking place all over the world.

We Can Foster a Culture of Caring within a System and a Society that Militates Against Such a Culture

We all care about different things at different times, but in the final analysis we all care about the same things. A former graduate student of mine lamented to me after class one day in the summer of 2002 that her high school students just seemed lethargic and uninvolved, despite her energy and passion for art and art teaching. I asked her what kinds of things they *were* interested in and suggested that she ask them the following autumn and then plan her curriculum around their interests, plugging her passion and expertise into the relevant places. She did just that, and produced the most amazing curriculum I ever encountered. It was about the issues her students told her that they cared about, the stuff of life: personal identity, a sense of belonging, being accepted, fairness, consumption, consumerism, celebration, and issues in the world, including concerns about security, violence, racism, sexism, homophobia, poverty, and the environment. I found her confidence in both her students and her own ability to start the school year without a carefully pre-planned curriculum to be daring and inspiring. But more than that, it reinforces my belief that the things that matter to students and their families also matter to us; they matter to artists, to communities, to democratic governments, and to global citizens. Our job is to find meaningful connections to the things students care about and to make that the content worthy of study. This requires us to subvert the rampant bureaucratic craze for standardization as we design and implement more relevant and humane programs of study (Postman & Weingarner, 1978; Fehr, 2000), to first ask students what they care about, and then to listen to what they tell us, and to allow more time and emotional space to let their ideas germinate and develop. An ecological and holistic approach dictates that multiple systems and ways of knowing the world be meaningfully connected in classroom inquiry, but we rarely allow students classroom conditions to explore those multiple ways, to dwell in their own "unbusy-ness" and silent contemplation over feelings and thoughts still in the process of taking form.

Although self-evident and easily said, creating a culture of caring in the classroom may be one of the hardest aims to foster in schools, as both teachers and teacher educators are subjected to all sorts of inhumane workplace conditions and institutionalized irrational terms of employment that effectively and efficiently work against such a framework (Chapman, 1982;

May, 1989; Bullock & Galbraith, 1992), and as students either learn to reap the benefits of the school culture of competition, superficial demonstrations of knowledge and ability, peer pressure, posturing, bullying, and the most inequitable of opportunities, or they opt out in varying forms of self-affirming defiance (Ashton & Web, 1986). Yet, I would also argue again that art education, by virtue of its unique peripheral position of not being as subjected to the k-12 accountability movement as many of the other (presumably) core subjects, permits us the pursuit of aims targeting the kinds of things discussed in this paper, and creation of the kinds of classes that are in fact and in deed microcosms of the kind of world we want our students to build.

Collaboration Works

Conversations, inquiries, and activities in the classroom should occasionally lead to something resembling public engagement outside of the school walls. Just as new forms of civic partnerships are occurring all over the world, so teachers and teacher educators may take advantage of the power in numbers. I believe that art education scholars in university settings are in a unique position to facilitate this kind of work through direct collaborative involvement with art teachers in the K-12 sector. I cannot recount how many teachers and teacher educators that I have met over the years who find university-situated scholarly art education discourse to be irrelevant, esoteric, undoable, unimportant, self-serving, and sometimes even perilous to their sense of job security. Creating a culture of caring in the age of technocracy means, as Wanda May (1994) observed well over a decade ago, reconstructing ourselves, becoming engaged with notions of community that extend beyond both own immediate needs and the demands of our pre-service classrooms, graduate studies programs, or preferred publication industries favored by our universities. Developing collaborative efforts both face-to-face and on-line are a logical and effective means of creating innovative models for action (aka units of study and lesson plans).[x] This kind of public engagement is mutually beneficial in that these kinds of partnerships also further inform and enrich our own university practice and scholarship.

<center>**Concluding Remarks**</center>

I have considered in this paper how human social networking has been amplified in the electronic information age; how notions of democracy have restructured relationships between citizens and the state, and between competing interests and powers within and across societies; and why these things matter for young people and civil societies. Informed by and at the same time resisting both dystopian critiques (Postman, 1993) and techno-utopian idealizations (Kelly[xi], 2007) of the impact of technology on human civilization, I have suggested that technology pedagogy is not only about technology, but also about community building and public engagement. And I have considered how art educators might create conditions in the classroom that may lead to more caring societies, by giving prominence and

time to conversations that matter, and by forming partnerships that facilitate public work. These conditions are obviously not restricted to technology pedagogy, nor should they be. Rather, they couple with the potential of technology toward other desired ends. Writings about global commons, the public sphere, and participatory democracy focus attention on a critically important facet of technology pedagogy, that is, the nature and function of citizenship in an electronically mediated world. As Rheingold observes, many-to-many electronic communication enables but does not guarantee civic engagement, and although highly capable, youth may not be self-inclined to participate in work for the common good. Yet these are exactly the terms of engagement called for by many scholars who have studied both the Internet phenomenon and the twin rising crises of democracy and ecology across the earth. Our art educational aims must embrace notions of a citizenry that is creative, caring, and connected and one that is imaginative, informed, and engaged with others toward our mutual goals of building the kinds of worlds we ourselves wish to inhabit.

References

Anheier, H. (2005). On-Line commentary about *The Journal of Civil Society.* Retrieved May 5, 2005 from http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/17448689.asp.

Blandy, D. (2004). Commentary: Folklife, material culture, education, and civil society. *Visual Arts Research*, 58, 3-8.

Blandy, D., & Congdon, K. G. (Eds.). (1987). *Art in a democracy.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Blood, R. (2000). weblogs: a history and perspective. From the weblog *Rebecca's Pocket* dated 7 September 2000. Retrieved Sept. 13, 2008 from http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html.

Boase, J., Horrigan, J, Wellman, B., & Rainie, L. (2006). *The strength of Internet ties*. Retrieved February 10, 2007 from the PEW/Internet and American Life Project: http://www.pewinternet.org/.

Bollier, D. (2004). *New knowledge commons are bursting out all over.* Blog dated 11/24/2004 – 11:54 a.m. Retrieved February 10, 2007 from *David Bollier's Blog* at http://www.onthecommons.org/node/440.

Bollier, D. (2006*). On the Commons: A report to owners from the Tomales Bay Institute.* Retrieved February 10, 2007 from http://onthecommons.org/files/Commons_Rising_06.pdf.

Bruce, B. (forthcoming). Ubiquitous learning, ubiquitous computing, and lived experience. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis, (Eds.) *Ubiquitous learning* (pp. 29-39). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Bruyn, S. T. (2005). Civil society transcends right-left gap. *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 15, 2005. Retrieved February 5, 2005 from http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0915/p09s01-coop.html.

Bullock, D. & Galbraith, L. (1992). Images of art teaching: Comparing the beliefs and practices of two secondary art teachers. *Studies in Art Education, 33*(2), 86-97.

Fraser, N. (2002-2004). *Transnationalizing the public sphere*. Retrieved February 10, 2007, from http://www.republicart.net/disc/publicum/fraser01_en.htm.

Carpenter, B. S., & Taylor, P. (2003). Racing thoughts: Altering our ways of knowing and being in art through computer hypertext. *Studies in Art Education, 45*(1), 40 -45.

Chapman, L. (1982). *Instant art, instant culture: The unspoken policy for American schools.* New York; teachers College Press.

Congdon, K. G. (1997). CAUTION! Technology in the classroom may be harmful. In D. Gregory (Ed.), *New technologies in art education: Implications for theory, research, and practice* (pp. 107-114). Reston, VA: National Art Educational Association.

Connor, R. (1998). *Introduction: The idea of a civil society.* February 5, 2005 from the Web site of the conference, *The Idea of a Civil Society,* held on November 1991 at the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park NC. http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us:8080/publications/civilsoc/civilsoc.htm.

Geremek, B. (1998). *Civil society and the present age*. February 5, 2005 from the website of the Conference, *The Idea of a Civil Society,* held on November 1991 at the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park NC. http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us:8080/publications/civilsoc/geremek.htm.

Delacruz, E. M. (1997). *Design for inquiry : Instructional theory, research, and practice in art education.* Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

Duncum, P. A. (2004). Visual culture isn't just visual; Multiliteracy, Multimodality, and meaning. *Studies in Art Education, 45*(3), 252-264.

Fehr, D. E. (2000). Teaching as transgression. In D. E. Fehr, K. Fehr & K. Keifer-Boyd (Eds.), *Real world readings in art education; Things your professors never told you* (pp. xiii-xvii). New York; Falmer.

Freedman, K. (1997). Teaching technology for meaning. *Art Education, 50*(4), 6-12.

Freedman, K. (1994). About this issue: The social reconstruction of art education*, Studies in Art Education, 35*(3), 131-134.

Galbraith, L. (1997). Enhancing art teacher education with new technologies: Research possibilities and practices. *Art Education, 50*(5), 14-19.

Garber, E. (2004). MOO: Using a computer gaming environment to teach about community art. *Art Education, 57*(4), 40-47.

Garoian, C. R., & Gaudelius, Y. M. (2004). Performing resistance. *Studies in Art Education, 46*(1), 48-60.

Gross, E. F. (2004). Adolescent Internet use: What we expect, what teens report. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 25*(6), 633-649. Retrieved February 15, 2007 from http://www.cdmc.ucla.edu/downloads/Adolescent%20Internet%20usepdf.pdf.

Habermas, J. (1974). The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article. (Translated by Lenox, S. & Lenox, F.). *New German Critique, 3*, 49-55.

Hess, C. (2004). The knowledge commons: Theory and collective action; or *Kollektive Aktionismus*? Presented at the Wizards of OS 3: The Future of the Digital Commons," An International conference held at the Berliner Congress Center, Alexanderplatz, Berlin, Germany, 10-12 June 2004. Retrieved February 15, 2007 from http://www.iascp.org/articles.html.

Hicks, L. (1994). Social reconstruction and community. *Studies in Art Education, 35*(3), 149-156.

Hitlin, P., & Rainie, L. (2005). *Teens, technology, and school*. Retrieved February 15, 2007 from the PEW/Internet and American Life Project: http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Internet_and_schools_05.pdf.

Horrigan, J., & Rainie, L. (2006). *The Internet's growing role in life's major moments* Retrieved February 15, 2007 from the PEW/Internet and American Life Project: http://www.pewinternet.org/.

Horrigan, J. (2001). *Online Communities*. Retrieved from the website of the PEW/Internet and American Life Project. http://www.pewinternet.org/

jagodzinski, j. (1989). Thinking through/difference in art education contexts: Working the third space and beyond. In D. Boughton & R. Mason (Eds.)*, Beyond multicultural art education: International perspectives* (pp. 303-330). New York: Waxmann.

Kellner, D. (n.d.). *Habermas, the public sphere, and democracy: A critical intervention.* Retrieved February 15, 2007 from http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/kellner.html.

Kelly, K. (2007). *The Technium* (a blogsite). http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/index.php.

Keifer-Boyd, K. (1997). Interactive hyperdocuments: Implications for art criticism in a post modern era. In J. Hutchens & M. Suggs (Eds.), *Art education: Content and practice in a post modern era* (pp. 122-131). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

Korten, D. C. (2000). *The civil society: An unfolding cultural struggle*. Keynote address presented to the Fourth International Conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research in Dublin, Ireland. July 5, 2000. Retrieved May 15, 2005 from the Web site maintained by cyberjournal.org http://www.cyberjournal.org/cj/authors/korten/CivilizingSociety.shtml.

Korten, D., Perlas, N., & Shiva, V. (2002). *Global civil society: The path ahead.* Retrieved May 15, 2005 from the Web site of The People-Centered Development Forum: http://www.pcdf.org/civilsociety/path.htm.

Koos, M., & Smith-Shank, D. L. (1996). The World Wide Web: Alice meets cyberspace. *Art Education, 49*(6), 19-24.

Lenhart, A. B. (2005). *Unstable texts: An ethnographic look at how bloggers and their audience negotiate self-representation, authenticity, and norm formation*. Masters Thesis, Georgetown University, Washington D.C. Retrieved Feb 15, 2007 from http://lenhart.flashesofpanic.com/Lenhart_thesis.pdf.

Lenhart, A. (2007). Social networking websites and teens: An overview. Retrieved Feb 15, 2007 from the PEW/Internet and American Life Project: http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs.

Lenhart, A., & Madden, M. (2005). *Teen content creators and consumers* Retrieved Feb 15, 2007 from the PEW/Internet and American Life Project: http://www.pewinternet.org/.

Lenhart, A., Madden, M., & Hitlin, P. (2005). *Teens and technology* Retrieved Feb 15, 2007 from the PEW/Internet and American Life Project: http://www.pewinternet.org/.

Lenhart, A., & Rainie, L., & Lewis, O. (2001). Teenage life on-line: The rise of the instant-message generation and the Internet's impact on friendships and family relationships. *technology* Retrieved Feb 15, 2007 from the PEW/Internet and American Life Project: http://www.pewinternet.org/.

Lessig, L. (2004). *Free culture: How big media uses technology and the law to lock down culture and control creativity.* New York: Penguin Books

Levin, D., Arafeh, S., Lenhart, A., & Rainie, L. (2002*). The digital disconnect: The widening gap between Internet-savvy students and their schools*. Retrieved from the PEW/Internet and American Life Project: http://www.pewinternet.org/.

Miller, D. W. (1999). Perhaps we bowl alone, but does it really matter? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 16, 1999. Retrieved October 10, 2005 from http://www.civsoc.com/links/The%20Chronicle%20Research%20&%20Publishing%20July%2016,%201999.htm.

Noddings, N. (2005*) 'Caring in education', the encyclopedia of informal education*. Retrieved from http://www.infed.org/biblio/noddings_caring_in_education.htm.

Oliver, D. (1980). Jurisprudential inquiry: Clarifying public issues. In B. Joyce & M. Weil (Eds.), *Models of teaching, 2nd edition* (pp. 260-276). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon, 9*(5). Retrieved Sept 13, 2008 from http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf.

Postman, N., & Weingartner, C. (1969). *Teaching as a subversive activity*. New York: Dell.

Rieff, D. (1999). The false dawn of civil society. *The Nation*. Retrieved from http://www.thenation.com/doc/19990222/Rieff/.

Sirianni, C., & Friedland, L. (n. d.). Civil Society. In *Civic Dictionary*. Retrieved from the Civic Practices Network Center for Human Resources, Heller School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA. http://www.cpn.org/tools/dictionary/civilsociety.html.

Postman, N. (1993). *Technopoly: The surrender of culture to technology*. New York: Vintage.

Rheingold, H. (2007). *The tools of cultural production are in the hands of teens*. Blog dated January 1, 2007. Retrieved from http://www.smartmobs.com/archive/2007/01/01/the_tools_of_cu....html.

Rheingold, H. (2000). *The virtual community: Homesteading frontier technology* (Revised edition). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Retrieved February 15, 2007 from http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/index.html.

Roland, C. (2007). *Art Junction.* Web site and Blog. http://artjunction.org/.

Scheidt, L. A. (2003). Group, Community, or Social Network: A Discussion. *Lois Ann Scheidt Academic Webpage*. Retrieved Feb 15, 2007 from http://loisscheidt.com/working_papers_archive/social_organizations.pdf.

Stoll, C. (1995). *Silicon snake oil: Second thoughts on the information highway.* New York: Doubleday.

Stuhr, P. (1994). Multicultural art education and social reconstruction. *Studies in Art Education, 35*(3), 171-178.

Tavin, K. (2003). Wrestling with angels, searching for ghosts: Toward a critical pedagogy of visual culture. *Studies in Art Education, 44*(3), 197-213.

Taylor, P. (2004). Hyperaesthetics: Making sense of our technomediated world. *Studies in Art Education, 45*(4), 328-342.

Walters, D. (2008). Preserving the knowledge commons. In E. Ostrom and C. Hess, (Eds.), *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons: From Theory to Practice* (pp. xx-xx). Cambridge: MIT Press.

Zhou, Y., Pugh, K., Sheldon, H., & Byers, J. L. (2002). Conditions of classroom technology innovations. *Teachers College Record, 104*(3), 482-515.

About the Author

Elizabeth Delacruz is Associate Professor of Art Education, Editor of Visual Arts Research, Research Fellow with the University of Illinois Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society, and former Chair of art education at UIUC. Her research focuses on the interface of visual arts education with contemporary art practices, critical social theory, intercultural education, community studies, and new technologies and media. Recipient of numerous university and national awards for her teaching, research, and public engagement, Elizabeth's work is informed by her longstanding interest in ways that art education makes a difference in the lives of children, and how schools and communities may be enriched through educational arts-based initiatives aimed toward development of intercultural friendship, social justice, and world peace. Readers may view Elizabeth's website at: https://netfiles.uiuc.edu/edelacru/www/.

Endnotes

[i] In 2006, over 30 million blogs were created, but only 12 million were actively maintained, demonstrating the instability of the Internet. Also interesting, by some accounts the exponential growth of blogs is expected to level off in 2007-2008.

[ii] Hardly an inconsequential footnote but not on the main topic of this paper are the observations that children who regularly participate in virtual communities are seeking emotional bonds, adventure, fun, and are trusting, often divulging great amounts of personal information to complete strangers; and the fact that one in five children who regularly participate in virtual communities (chat rooms, social networking sites such as MySpace, and on-line multi-user role playing virtual environments) will interact with an Internet child sexual predator. (See NBC Dateline; also http://www.crisisconnectioninc.org/sexualassault/internet_child_sexual_predators.htm).

[iii] For example, the PEW Internet Project teen call back survey of Internet users, conducted by telephone from October 23 through November 19, 2006 among a national sample of 935 youths ages 12 to 17, asked about the ways that teenagers use social networking sites and their reasons for doing so. According the their findings over half of teens who use the Internet have created a personal profile online (using popular sites such as MySpace and Facebook) and many of them visit social networking sites daily. Many (more girls than boys) limit access to their on-line profiles to immediate friends, and they use their sites to stay in touch with and make plans with friends they see frequently. They also use their sites to make plans with close friends and to maintain contact with those friends they see less frequently. Some (more boys

than girls) also use social networking sites to flirt, although teenage boys and girls on-line behaviors are found generally to be more similar than different (Gross, 2004). Similarly, in a study conducted by Gross, teens said that their on-line activities are primarily used to strengthen and maintain existing friendships (2004).

[iv] Speaking to the question of whether or not Americans are becoming less social as a result of Internet use, Horrigan & Rainie (2006) find that North Americans are no longer bound in single neighborhoods, friendship, or kinship groups. Rather, they maneuver in both close (strong) and significant (weak) social networks, multiple and separate clusters of friends. Their relationships are spread widely across cities, states, and continents. Instead of relying on a single community that provides a wide spectrum of help, relationships are specialized. Adult American Internet users use the Internet to maintain these close and distant relationships, to seek and offer emotional support, and to find important information relating to life events (including information about health, purchasing a home or car, and colleges for their children). These adult Internet users spend less time watching television or in malls than non-Internet users. Finally, despite their increased options, adult Internet users still communicate largely by traditional means, in person and by landline phone lines, and they communicate with more of their core ties as well as their significant ties than non-users do.

[v] Civil society, also referred to as *the third sector*, is a term often used to designate those elements and social arrangements between people and society that exist outside the state's reach or instigation that are working toward the public good. The term typically includes civil rights alliances and voluntary associations: churches, neighborhood organizations, cooperatives, charities, unions, social movements, and special interest groups (Geremek, 1998; Miller, 1999; Rieff, 1999; Boyte, 2002; Korten, 2000; Blandy, 2004; Anheier, 2005; Bryun, 2005; Sirianni, & Friedland, n. d.). Values and activities cohere around related political and social concerns: honesty, transparency, safeguarding public health and security, social justice, ecology, sustainability, democracy, citizen empowerment, and globalization.

[vi] One could argue on the basis of the digital divide that excludability is an issue for the digital commons.

[vii] Beyond the scope of this paper, but an important consideration nevertheless, are issues associated with the fact that sometimes those with economic or other capital create a privileging of access to "public goods". Consideration of Marxist perspectives on production, capital, and access to public goods, and counter hegemonic practices and strategies in art and art education are greatly needed.

[viii] Although publicly funded, the organization would be independent from government and answerable to an extensive range of stakeholders, including local and special interest communities, public-service broadcasters, organizations promoting citizenship and democracy, as well as governmental agencies. Blumer and Coleman explain that the staffing and activities of such a body should combine the virtues of amateurism—creativity, enthusiasm, commitment and idealism—with those of professionalism—especially thoroughness of pre-planning, organization, carry-through, and after-the-fact evaluation.

[ix] Recognizing that public assets are costly to organize, acquire, and maintain, commons writers advocate a blending of private, profit-oriented incentives with public interests in sustainability, welfare, transparency, and access.

[x] An excellent example of utilizing Web and blog technologies for information sharing and developing a sense of community may be found at Craig Roland's Art Junction site: http://www.artjunction.org.

[xi] Kelly is an original editor of the *Whole Earth Catalogue,* a founding member of the WELL, a former editor of *Wired Magazine,* and recipient of a multi-million dollar grant to catalogue every living species on earth.

International Journal of Education & the Arts

Editorial Board