

Developing an ethnographic methodology to study Web 2.0 literacies as professional practice: a case study of cricket journalism

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Taking a sociocultural perspective on a case study of Web 2.0 literacies entails striving to understand the complexity of a specific domain of professional practice, taking into account historical, cultural and economic factors. In this longitudinal study of the work of a BBC cricket journalist, Jonathan Agnew, I explore how an overall commitment to ethnography led me to craft various methods of participant observation and analysis. Making critical use of a media ecology framework (Lum, 2005), and an understanding of technobiographies (Barton & Lee, 2013), I argue that an ethnographic approach to his use of Twitter, for example, requires investigations of texts and practices using other platforms and communications technologies (Gillen, in print).

I demonstrate the fruitfulness of taking a flexible approach to fieldwork and show how I sought to integrate understandings of values, attitudes and practices towards Web 2.0 literacies through investigating also his use of traditional media, such as book authoring and radio commentating, shaped and shaped by a distinctive media ecology. This methodology enabled me to explore some interesting changes in activities and practices providing support for Hine's (2000: 27) claim, "A style of ethnography that involves real-time engagement with the field site and multiple ways of interacting with informants has proved key in highlighting the processes through which online interaction comes to be socially meaningful to participants." Finally I discuss some of the difficulties and limitations of the approach.

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Selected references

Barton, D. & Lee, C. (2013) *Language online: Investigating digital texts and practices*. London: Routledge.

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Hine, C. (ed.) (2000) *Virtual ethnography*. London: Sage.

Lum, C.M.K. (2005) (ed.) *Perspectives on culture, technology and communication: the media ecology tradition*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

McKee, H. and Porter, J. (2008) 'Digital writing research: a rhetorical approach.' *College Composition and Communication* 59(4) 711-749.

Page, R. (2012) *Stories and Social Media*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Dataset

Date	Media type	Details	Methods of data collection and selection
3 Mar 10 15 Dec 10 20 Jul 11 28 Jul 11 9 Aug 11	Interactive website	www.testmatchextra.com synchronous chat between Agnew and public (effectively 30 minute q & a)	participation; screenshots; fieldnotes; texts copied to Word documents.
May – December 2010	Twitter	sample tweets from 6 days	occasional screenshots; copying of some text to Word documents.
2011	Book	Agnew, J. (2011) Aggers' Ashes: the inside story of England's 2011 Ashes Triumph. London: Blue Door (HarperCollins).	All mentions of media throughout sections of the text written by Agnew. (The book also contains some writing by others, reproduced from other sources, which I excluded, and quotations from Test Match Special.) All these were copied to an Access database and then coded according to types/technologies of media in the terms he employed.
10 August 2011	Twitter, radio	Collection of all tweets by Agnew and some related tweets; others; TMS and communications technologies	All tweets by Agnew collected in real time, also the most immediately relevant tweets interacting with his, including anything replied to and immediate responses. Preserved by copying into Word file; some sample screen shots; sample related tweets by other cricket commentators; fieldnotes through day on all mentions of communications technologies
11 August 2011	Twitter, radio	1 hour sample of Twitter and radio	Notes; copying of texts of selected tweets; screenshot (in order to ascertain if there was any distinctive difference from the previous day).
12 August 2011	BBC sports website	1 day's live coverage, compiled by Tom Fordyce	Collection of all 213 postings copied to Word. Sources of contributions by channel and role of contributor categorised through spreadsheet.
1 December 2011	Twitter	Moussaka narrative	A story co-constructed with wife; captured through screenshots
26 March 2012	Photo site linked to from Twitter, Twitter, radio	Geoffrey Boycott and the power cut narrative	A story told in commentary and through social media– captured through notes, an image by Agnew linked to from Twitter and texts of relevant tweets.
5 December 2012	Twitter and radio commentary	1 day sample of Tweets and radio output	Collection of all Agnews' tweets, listened to his commentary over one day and made notes on mentions of new media.
May 2012 – January 2013	online newspaper and cricket forums	occasional examples	purposive sampling undertaken to explore subjects related to Agnew, Twitter and the cricket media ecology
August 2010 – December 2013	twitter interactions	occasional examples	occasional sampling of Agnew's Tweets and related Tweets by others
17 th February 2013	Radio programme (Desert Island Discs)	available for download via bbc.co.uk (in UK)	transcribed talk relating to Twitter
April 2013	email	personal communication	response by Agnew to draft version of Twitter