

## Collaborative Web Project in Composition Assignment Overview

In this collaborative web composition project, I ask you to select one key technology from the list below, research its history, and compose a website in which you make an argument about the nature of its cultural impact. How do we think, act, and/or consume differently because of the steam engine, the book, the camera? Your website should both educate a college-age audience about the history of the technology you've chosen and make a significant argument about that technology's cultural impact; in other words, it should have a thesis. Further, the project should take full advantage of the web medium; your project should not be simply an essay posted to the web, but a well-organized *website*. I will construct an online web project resource guide, which you may consult for tips on organization, design, research, and other project requirements. Its URL will appear in CourseTools once the site is operational.

### Possible topics include:

- Railroad (steam engine)
- Automobile (internal combustion engine)
- Print (printing press, technologies of the book)
- Camera (technologies of still photography)
- Cinema (technologies of motion imaging)
- Transistor Technology
- Urban Infrastructure (technologies of sanitation: water supply, sewerage, and solid waste disposal)
- Technologies of War (select from Civil War, First World War, or Second World War)
- Television (technologies of mass entertainment)
- A topic of your choice, provided I approve it

### Project requirements:

- Web architecture should be at least three levels deep (front page, links from front page, links from secondary pages). Site should be easily navigable, and its form should complement and enhance its content.
- Every citation should be correctly documented, with links to the works cited page. Use the MLA citation style.
- Site should provide an accurate historical overview of the technology you've chosen.
- Site should make a significant argument about its cultural impact.
- Site should include a credits page that gives visitors a sense of authorship.
- Site should be constructed with the design and implementation principles we've learned about in mind. It should be professionally presented, therefore grammar and spelling errors are bad.

**Other notes:**

This project will require you to communicate effectively and frequently with your group, and I will not always be there to tell you the best way to do this. I suggest that you meet initially to decide how you will keep the lines of communication open. I further suggest that you consider designating specific group members to perform specific functions. This will facilitate both communication and implementation.

The website will be hosted, for the time being, in one group member's personal IFS space. Upon completion, it will be submitted to me on a disk, and the link to the appropriate CourseTools assignment page for peer reviewing. We will workshop the web project in much the same way we have workshopped our essays throughout the term. Because the website will be hosted in one group member's personal IFS space, it is imperative that the lines of communication are well established from the beginning.

Nancy Sims in the Knowledge Navigation Center (2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Graduate Library) is aware of your work on this project, and has agreed to be of as much assistance as possible. I strongly urge you to use the extensive resources of the KNC to your advantage. And remember: I'm always available for consultation. Have fun!

## Preliminary Web Assignment 1 Website Critique

In preparation for your final web-based project, this assignment asks you to compose a 2-page essay critically evaluating one of the websites listed below with respect to content and design. Before beginning the essay, be sure to exhaustively explore the site—check out all the links, and read as much of the content as you can. Please include a printed copy of the first page of the site you choose to evaluate.

- The American Widescreen Museum  
<http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/index.htm>
- Transistorized!  
<http://www.pbs.org/transistor/>
- The History of Print and a Changing World Order  
<http://www.uweb.ucsb.edu/~jak3/>
- The Complete History of the Discovery of Cinematography  
<http://www.precinemahistory.net/>
- Electric Vehicle History Online Archive  
<http://sloan.stanford.edu/evonline/>
- Cameras: The Technology of Photographic Imaging  
<http://www.mhs.ox.ac.uk/cameras/index.htm>

Keeping in mind the workshop you attended with staff from the Knowledge Navigation Center, think about the effectiveness of the site's visual presence and its architecture in addition to the validity and usefulness of its content. Use some of the following questions to organize your response:

- What is the site's purpose? If it is argumentative, what is its argument?
- Does the site's architecture and/or its visual presence complement its argument? How?
- Is the site appropriately organized for its purpose? What makes it appropriately organized?
- Does the site's visual presence inspire confidence? Why, or why not?
- Are you distracted from the site's content by its form, its visual presence? Or does the site's visual presence enhance its content? How?

## Preliminary Web Assignment 2

### A Paragraph of Interest

On the CourseTools discussion board, post a brief (1 paragraph) statement outlining something you would like to work on for the web-based project. Take a look at what your peers have posted, and think about what group you might like to be a part of. Remember that this preliminary statement of interest is not set in stone--it's just a step on the way to coming up with a workable topic for this collaborative project. You might find other students' interests compatible with yours, and this will help you determine your groups and focus your topic.

Please submit this assignment by **Friday, March 5**, so that your peers will have the chance to see what you're interested in and perhaps respond to it. We will finalize the groups on Monday, March 8. To submit this assignment, go to the Discussion section of our CourseTools site, and either reply to a thread you're interested in, or create a new thread under the heading I've provided (Web Projects).

## Preliminary Web Assignment 3

### A Working Bibliography

In your web project groups, compile a preliminary annotated bibliography of materials that may be useful for your web-based research project. An annotated bibliography is composed of two parts: the citation and its annotation. The annotation is a short summary of the material cited along with an indication of how the text might be useful to your project (see the sample annotated bibliography.html page I've already prepared at <http://www.umich.edu/~thowe/ENG125/bibliography.html>).

- You must have at least six articles, books, audiovisual materials, multimedia materials, or websites, but this list may contain *no more than two reliable websites*.
- Your working bibliography must be properly formatted according to MLA guidelines (see the online handout for MLA citation guidelines at Purdue: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_mla.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html)).
- Put this bibliography into a simple .html page titled "bibliography.html," and upload it to one team member's personal webspace into a directory called "ENG125". The full path for this file will then be "http://www.umich.edu/~uniquname/ENG125/bibliography.html".
- **SUBMIT THE FULL PATH/URL FOR THIS FILE TO ME OVER COURSETOOLS.**
- Print out a hard copy of the published page from your browser and turn it in to me.

#### Other Suggestions:

- You will want to divide up the work in some responsible and representative manner. For instance, each of you could find four sources, compare notes, and winnow the list down to the most potentially useful.
- You might want to select member of the team to check the citation format of the list and ensure that the bibliography follows MLA citation guidelines.
- You might also want to select another member of your team—perhaps someone who is more comfortable with making and publishing webpages—who will be responsible for uploading the file to his or her personal space.

## **Preliminary Web Assignment 4: Site Architecture and Argument**

This short handout, specifically tailored to your final collaborative projects, is intended as a very general guide to constructing an argument on the web.

### **Your Topic Is Not Your Argument**

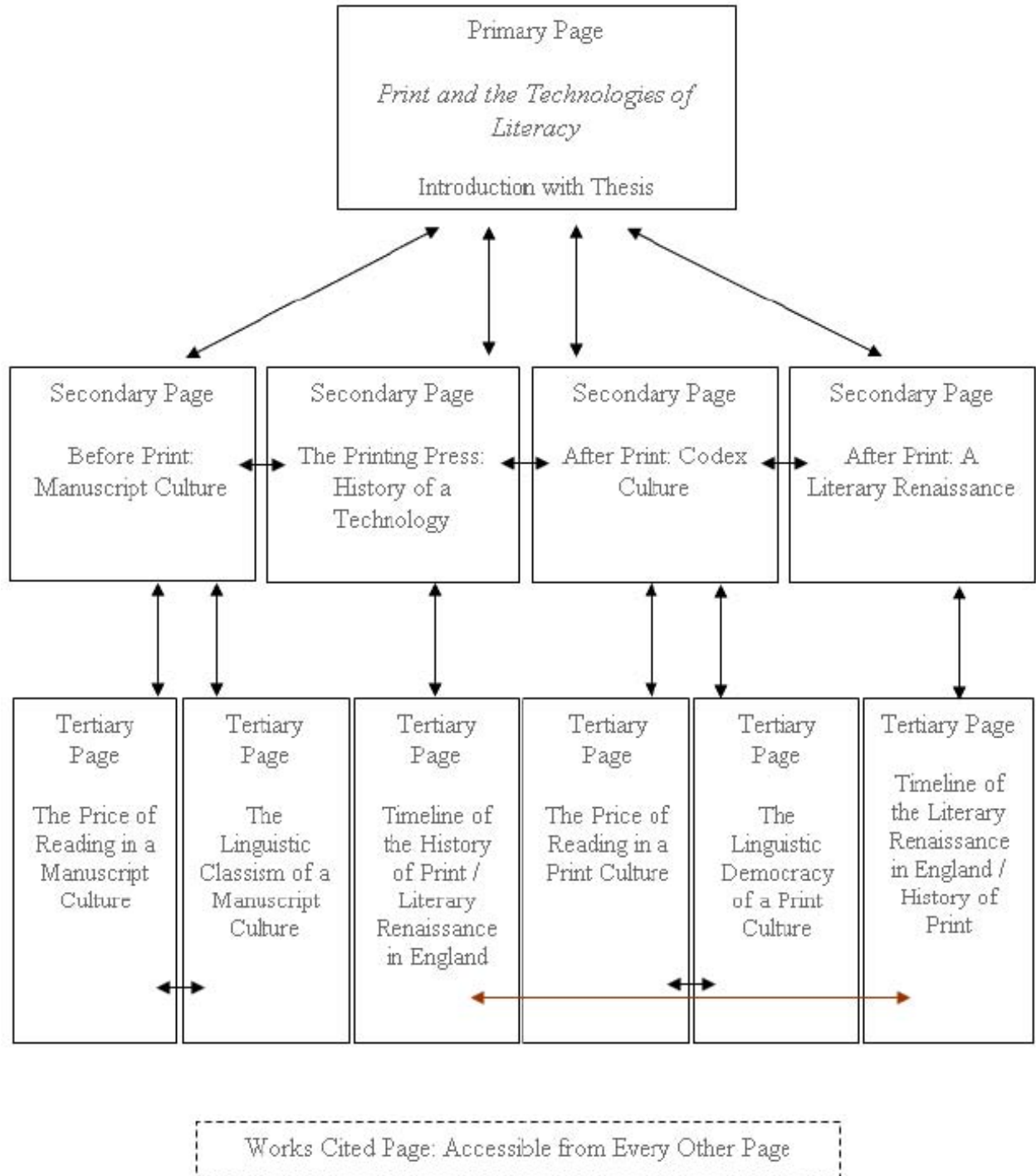
Remember that a topic is a broad statement of your project interest-not a thesis. A topic can be likened to a tree with no branches. To make an argument, you need at least one branch. The assignment itself, however, offers the general shape and direction of that argumentative branch: I ask you to make an argument about the impact of your technology on the larger cultural landscape. Hence, your thesis should contain a branch about this impact. If my topic is the printing press, my argument will be generally about the impact of the printing press on, for instance, technologies of reading. How did the advent of print change the way we read? Of course, this is still only a broad sketch of my thesis; I'll need to narrow it with a specific answer to that question. I might craft an extended thesis like this (with further expansion, this might be the content of my main page):

The advent of print in Renaissance England brought about a sweeping shift in literacy. Because the printing press altered the nature of the book--books were no longer long, hand-copied, single-sheet manuscript scrolls but rather compact, mechanically reproduced, multiple-sheet codices--it also altered practices of reading. Hand-copied manuscript scrolls were prohibitively expensive; only an elite few could afford to possess them, and even fewer were literate enough to read the deliberate Latin script the scrolls were often copied in. The printing press virtually eliminated the work of the copyist, rendering the product more accessible both economically and culturally. The mechanically reproduced text, or "codex," was increasingly printed in the vernacular tongue-English. Thus, the printing press stimulated a rebirth--a renaissance--in the literate arts, a rebirth for which the entire era is conventionally known.

In this example, I have added "literacy" as a branch of argument. Note, also, that I have sketched out a general picture of the "before" to help establish my argument about the "after." Sub-branches from the larger rubric, "literacy," are the components of literacy as I see them: "expense" and "education." Note how all these branches make an appearance in my site architecture, below.

### **Site Architecture and Your Argument**

This assignment asks you to craft a research web site of at least three levels in depth. Using the example thesis and introduction from above, my site architecture might look like this (note its resemblance to the thesis outlines we've done in class):



Red arrows indicate identical pages serving two purposes; black arrows indicate hyperlinked access.

**\*\*I cannot emphasize how important this aspect is: your site architecture should tell the story of your argument.\*\***