Geoffrey Sauer's Tenure Dossier: A Brief Introduction

Since early in graduate school, my scholarship has focused upon the history of publishing. The son of an English professor and an academic librarian, I have always been fascinated by the institutions that foster relationships between authors and readers. I can confidently say that all of my research investigates, in one way or another, how publishing (in its broad sense—including electronic publishing) has influenced the generation and dissemination of knowledge in such fields as rhetoric and professional/technical communication.

Print Publications

My book *Internet Cartography: Mapping Communication and Control*, currently under consideration at Parlor Press, is a discussion of the impact of electronic publishing upon cultural practices. It reviews a series of issues in the regulation and organization of knowledge which have arisen due to recent innovations, then argues for and develops a theory for understanding Web 2.0 publishing using a methodology inspired by the work of Antonio Gramsci, a critical theorist who argued for understanding the interconnections between cultural institutions which regulate popular innovations.

I have a range of shorter writings about these topics, including book chapters and articles, which address these issues as well. Though none of these serve as chapters in the book, many serve as early attempts to articulate the theory which develops more fully-formed in the book. Of particular interest are: my chapter "Community, Courseware and Intellectual Property Law" (2002) on the concerns which arise for faculty who use online learning management systems such as Blackboard and WebCT, later also published in Japan as "コミュニティ、コースウェア、知的財産権" (2003); the co-authored article "Expanding the Scope of Technical Communication," (2003) which reviews how emerging technologies change the nature of faculty work in the field of technical communication; the article "We Neurotic Amateurs" (2002), which responds to Edmond Weiss's article about problems with professionalism in the field of technical communication; the "Rendezvous with KnowGenesis" (2007) interview, from the Indian peer-reviewed journal *IJTC*, which details my arguments about the functions an online bibliography such as the EServer Technical Communication Library provides to a globalizing tech comm industry; and "Hackers, Order and Control" (1998), an article which discusses some similarities between Bourbon attempts to regulate publishing in eighteenth-century France and problems emerging in control of software piracy today. The issues discussed in each of these articles contribute to my later work in the book manuscript, though they are argued in different language and with what I believe to be a more modern, more coherent, consistent theory.

Conference Presentations

I give about two scholarly presentations per year at conferences, most often at the CCCC, ATTW, CPTSC and MLA. A complete list of the presentations can be found in my attached c.v. I have never yet ever had a conference proposal rejected.

Funded Research

I have also participated in numerous funded research projects, both as principal investigator (lead) and as co-PI. One multi-year project of note was an $135,000 grant with the Iowa Department of Transportation, to help them to develop a database-driven document system for maintaining their collection of thousands of pages of highway construction specifications. That project had me supervise three senior colleagues in the development of detailed functional requirements. This led to what I consider one of my most successful ATTW presentations, and will inform my future publications about unique issues in content management for governmental agencies.

Electronic Publications

But the majority of my scholarship in recent years has been in electronic publication, which I argue has become, since 1979, an increasingly critical terrain for the publishing industry, particularly for academic and scholarly publishing.

Iowa State University has an idiosyncratic, perhaps unique, category of tenurable work which it terms "professional practice." This emerges from the university's mandate, as a Land Grant institution, to serve the people of the state. This sort of work differs slightly from traditional scholarship in that it focuses on scholars serving their professions through applied expert labor (architects designing buildings, or engineers developing new technologies, for instance). And so I would like to take two paragraphs to describe a few of my electronic publications under this category, not as "service" or traditional "research" (because much of the work involves programming and interface design, rather than traditional peer-reviewed writing), but as professional practice.

Twenty years ago, in 1990, I created an online site, the EServer, in order to facilitate the publication of quality works in the arts and humanities, free of charge, online. We first built the site using predecessors of the Web (you can read a detailed history in the "About the EServer" documentation available online). Today the site publishes to just over two million visitors per month tens of thousands of works, by thousands of writers, organized into fifty-one 'collections' (discrete websites) managed by hundreds of editors. The EServer websites on poetry, drama, rhetoric, technical communication, antislavery, feminism and women's studies all rank within the 'top ten' of Google search results on those subjects.

Probably the most central of these to my tenure case would be the EServer Technical Communication Library website, which I created in 2001. After I taught my first evening graduate course for students who worked as technical communicators by day, I came to understand that the majority of people in the field have little or no formal education in the area. The scholarly literature in the field was largely unavailable to practicing technical communicators (who had no access to scholarly library indexes). And there existed no single scholarly index to integrate writings in the field of technical communication. (If you are interested, please read my short essay on the topic at http://tc.eserver.org/libraries.) The TC Library was created to address this need. The site today indexes more than 17,750 works, generating over 100,000 web pages. In keeping with best practices in electronic publishing, it has an advisory board with eight full professors and an editorial board of eight assistant and associate professors in the field. It is visited by almost 18,000 visitors *per day*. And the interviews with me by Saurabh Kudesia (2007) and Tom Johnson (2008) about the TC Library support my argument that this is a significant contribution to the field.

It would be impossible to list briefly the complete array of electronic works I have written, edited, designed or programmed online in the past six years; I have played a role in all fifty-one of the EServer collections. In some I have been the sole creator and contributor— About the EServer, Lectures on Demand, or Rhetoric & Composition—for example. Others have been the result of productive and rewarding collaborations with colleagues— The Antislavery Literature Project, The Thoreau Reader, Nanoscale Science and Technology, and Telling the Stories of Fayette County, for example. My work with online journals and their larger editorial boards, such as *Bad Subjects*, *Reconstruction*, *The Orange Journal* and *Cultronix* involved membership on the editorial boards of all these journals, as well as significant amounts of expert labor helping to develop journals using online best practices. Details about all these sites (including empirical data about our readership) can be found online at http://eserver.org/geoff/tenure/, if desired.

If my work is to be assessed in terms of my "impact upon the field," I would respectfully suggest that my contributions to research in the field of technical communication in my

book, articles, conference presentations, funded research projects, and (influential on more readers than any of the above) my work in online publishing/professional practice meet the standard for the rank of associate professor at Iowa State University.