Focus Work in the Multigenerational Workplace and Scholarly Video

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Research: Focus Work in the Multi-generational Workplace

Bridging practice experience and scholarly culture, this research explores focus work of mobile knowledge workers, who gather, interpret and transform information for business purposes. Research findings will be documented in written and in video abstract format, which will be discussed later in this paper. With two thirds of knowledge work today done outside of the office, (Grantham and Ware, 2008), offered the choice, (1) where are mobile knowledge workers getting their focus work done? (2) Why, how and when are they selecting these locations? (3)What physical and operational characteristics are important in selecting these locations? (4) Do these decisions vary with generation? In *The Welcoming Workplace: Designing for Ageing Knowledge Workers*, Erlich and Bichard (2008) discuss the implications of focus in the office:

> Open plan office design supports work that requires a short attention
>
> span, multi-tasking and communicative types of work. The
>
> breakdown of walls, borders and private spaces, due in large part to
>
> an increased focus on communication, collaboration, democratization
>
> and transparency, and coupled with cost considerations, seems to
>
> have resulted in neglecting to cater for environments which promote
>
> 'solo knowledge work.'…Spaces and environments change what
>
> people do at work. (p. 280)

Studying older and younger American workers, Kupritz (2003) concluded that "a pervasive mismatch exists between the universal privacy need for distraction-free work and the reality that most people work in 'distraction-porous' (i.e. open plan) workplaces," (p. 123). Kupritz categorizes focus and concentration work as one aspect of privacy, by describing focus work as the need for "mental concentration and the avoidance of distraction, interruption and noise," (2003, p. 124). This definition will be provided to research participants in the context of the study.

Will a pattern emerge that indicates a connection between focus work and generation or can focus work not be isolated from the more collaborative tasks of today's knowledge worker, (T. Springer, personal communication, December 8, 2010). The office environment for knowledge work has been impacted by corporate culture, distributed work patterns and corporate real estate costs. Individual workspaces are reducing in size, being shared, being eliminated and are doubling as collaborative spaces. Spaces dedicated for individual concentration or group work are also becoming commonplace. Concentrating on focus work and expanding upon the research of Erlich and Bichard (2008) and Kupritz (2003); this study will contribute (1) to the understanding of where mobile knowledge workers do their focus work; (2) to an analysis of age impacts on this choice; and (3) to the investigation of the interior attributes of the spaces chosen. These objectives can inform future decisions for the design practitioner, educator and end user.

The methodology for this research will be in depth structured interviews. The 30 minute interviews will include closed ended survey type questions and open ended questions to elicit spontaneous feedback. Interviews will be conducted in person. Survey questions will be direct and indirect in nature. Photographs documenting the locations for focus work and audio taping of the interviews will be sought with permission by interviewee.

Criteria for the case locations include (1) employees of both genders; (2) employees aged from 25 to 65+; (3) employees having an assigned workstation or office in the workplace; (4) employees allowed to work outside the office at their discretion.

Using Pew Research Center (2007) demarcations to categorize findings, four sample age groups will be included: 65+ year old participants-Traditionalist Generation; 46-64 years old participants-Baby Boomer; 30-45 years old participants-Generation X; and 29 years old and younger-Millennials.

At the time of this writing, research interviews are being scheduled.

The qualitative data from the focus interviews will be analyzed by pattern analysis. Reviewing notes and photographs, identifying themes and patterns will provide simple descriptive statistics.

A written document will summarize the research findings. An abstract of this written document will be produced in video format to inform an interior design practice audience who might not ordinarily encounter academic writing. A web site, www.multigenworkplace.com will serve as a repository for video links, complete research writings, bibliography, citations and resources.

"Venue for Sharing," (Dohr, 2007, p. xiii)

The Scholarly Video Abstract

What sort of audiences will a video abstract reach that a written one might not? An examination of the definitions of scholarship and of abstract will provide a framework. In an essay on interior design graduate education, Joy Dohr suggests that scholarly "means having and showing a wide and in-depth knowledge gained from study…devotion to learning, that is, getting to know something accurately, critically and thoroughly," (Dohr, 2007, p. vii). A scholarly source will include these characteristics: (1) an abstract of the work; (2) author affiliations, credentials or short biography; (3) specialized vocabulary specific to the field of study; (4) graphs or statistical data; (5) bibliography with references, citations and footnotes; (6) sources cited are authoritative; (7) published in a peer reviewed journal, (Cornell University Library, 2011).

An abstract is a summary of a written work, including the main points and conclusions; a compact essence of the findings. An informative abstract includes "identifying information, concise restatement of the main point, methodology and major conclusion," (Colorado State University, 2011, p. 2). Researchers may not proceed to the main work but use the abstract alone. An abstract must provide adequate information to determine whether one should read the entire work; act as a summary of the writing for future reference; provide an overview of the writing and remind readers of the contents; assist in research by indexing with keywords; provide a short

hand method to keep up on technical reading, (Colorado State University, 2011). As abstracts are more frequently maintained separately from the writing they describe, it is essential that the location of the full text be clearly identified.

This definition assumes that the video is based upon scholarly writing/research. The audience for the text is assumed to academic, while the audience for the video is intended to be practicing professionals. Exposure to the short video abstract may entice any viewer to seek out the complete writing. Both *theorist* and *practitioner* audiences are expert, but will be approaching the video and writing from different frames of reference, (Muraski, 2011). The reasons a practitioner has for watching a video abstract may be as research for a project, for background information, as follow up to a trade journal article or to satisfy curiosity. The generation of the viewer may also be a factor, along with their technological sophistication; an innovative video to a Baby Boomer may be dull by Millennial standards.

An on-line video exists for virtually every question, person, place or thing. Increasingly academic/research based web sites are joining popular/commercial web sites by incorporating video. As a creative scholarship endeavor, one exploring video abstracts may function as the writer and producer enlisting the services of those skilled in camera work, editing and sound. The prevalence of inexpensive movie making software which deliver professional results include Apple's iMovie; Window's Movie Maker; Adobe Premier, Sony Vegas and Corel Video Studio; all compatible with numerous formats for uploading to the internet.

The legal use of images, music and video footage may present challenges for the creation of scholarly video abstracts. Various media can be utilized without copyright infringement by claiming *fair use*, which is defined by the U.S. Copyright Office as "such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords or by any other means…for purposes such as critique, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship or research, is not an infringement of copyright," (U.S. Copyright Office, 2009, p. 3). Factors which contribute to fair use include:

(1) The purpose and character of the use, including whether the use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes;

(2) The nature of the copyrighted work;

(3) The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole;

(4) The effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. (U.S. Copyright Office, 2009, p. 4)

Some web sites employ video identification software which compares the assets of copyright holders with uploaded video, (YouTube, 2011). Peter Jaszi, Law Professor at American University's Center for Social Media argues that these match engines use pattern recognition that does not discriminate and affects "value added video" as much as works with clear infringement issues, (American University, 2011).

Scholarly video producers should investigate the Library of Congress and the National Archives for thousands of images, video footage and music which are considered to be in the *public domain*: when a work "is no longer under copyright protection or if it failed to meet the requirements for copyright protection," (U.S. Copyright Office, 2011). On the Library of Congress web site, under the Rights & Restrictions tab, are statements of access, reproduction, publication and other forms of distribution and credit attribution requirements, (Library of Congress, 2010). Another option for media are *royalty free* products, in which the rights to use an image, music or video are purchased. Conditions of the purchase may allow restricted or unlimited use. Popular online vendors for royalty free images include Getty Images and iStockphoto. Production music is a term for the music version of royalty free. Purchase of production music provides a license agreement for a specified use. The option to create original music using software such as Apple Garage Band, may offer the least expensive and most creative possibility. Seeking permission for use directly from the copyright holder is another option, if time permits for the extensive research and follow up involved. Securing images is a

significant factor, as six minute scholarly video projects have incorporated about 120 unique images, each on screen an average of three seconds.

Citing sources in scholarly video can be done on screen, as an in-text citation with all the conventions of the American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA). The benefit of on screen citations is the opportunity to provide additional information: photo of author, cover of book in addition to the text of the quote with source and page number. All literature resources and media citations are included at the end of the video, in written form. In the interest of time, the credit roll in the movie will also be available as a PDF on the web site.

Regarding the issue of time, what should be the duration of scholarly video? Reading a 500 word abstract aloud, takes about 4-5 minutes. The video abstract duration is suggested to be in this range. The prototypes of video abstracts explored by this author have had a scripted narrative. Conversational narratives or interviews are methods for future exploration.

The organization of video follows the abstract form: thesis statement, findings, methodology, conclusions. Adopting a repeatable format will engender rigor and consistency to the video method. On screen title pages have delineated the sections to guide viewers. Minimal video techniques such as zoom, pan and transitions have been incorporated to date, however future projects will explore additional cinematography methods.

By utilizing multiple media sources, a scholarly video abstract can be at once educational and experiential. Should scholarly video aspire to be engaging and memorable, making meaning and connections in a six minute encounter? Or will turning the video abstract into *story* diminish the scholarly aspects? There are creative/qualitative aspects in the development of the video. Like an author, the video maker creates the written abstract of the work which becomes the narrative of the video, but then assigns images, movement, video and music. The viewer is immediately subject to the video producer's frame of reference. If the purpose of the video abstraction is to serve as a means of creative expression, as well as an explanation of a written work, is the way the information is conveyed as important as the information itself? Should the

video abstract notion be accepted as a means of creative scholarship, then a series of six minute movies will not be enough. The videos must be a part of a larger context, which brings a high level of quality information to the viewer. (C. Kallenborn, personal communication, February 11, 2011).

A web site dedicated to the subject matter would be the repository for the scholarly video abstracts and would also include the full text writings, bibliography and citations for the video, links for other resources and general information about the topic and research. In addition, the web site will include additional information about individuals featured on videos and contact information on the researcher.

In describing abstracts, the APA suggests that an abstract is "accurate, nonevaluative, coherent and concise," (APA, 2010, p. 26). By utilizing a multi-media approach, the video abstract has the potential to layer additional content beyond the written word versions. The scholarly video abstract may provide a rigorous, valid, reliable method to present research and to enable the viewer new ways to engage with the content.

Questions for EDRA Graduate Student Workshop Mentors

1. With a definition of focus work as tasks or projects which require concentration, few distractions, interruptions or noise, (Kupritz, 2003), can focus work be isolated from other more collaborative tasks of today's knowledge workers?

2. Using this research on focus work in the multigenerational workplace as the content to explore the development of video abstracts:

    a. Can one apply scholarly writing standards in a video abstract format?

    b. Can video be an effective method to convey abstract information in a five-six minute time frame?

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