The Body Technologic: Emerging Intersections Between Bodies and Technology

Great Plains Alliance for Computers and Writing CFP

Date of Conference: October 10, 2015

Due Date for Proposals: September 11, 2015

Conference Site: Metropolitan State University

Conference Website: gpacw.gamerlayne.com

Proposal Submission Link: http://bit.ly/1eRyyQK

Travel Grant Application Link: http://bit.ly/1Qa1KmP

What happens when technology meets biology? In conjunction with research in cognitive science, philosophy, science and technology studies, and feminist theory, computers and writing scholars have long recognized the deep theoretical connections between the human body and the technologies we use to fix, enhance, and alter it. Indeed, cognitive scientist Andy Clark (2003) has gone so far as to suggest that it is a mistake to understand the physical body as "a biologically fixed 'human nature' with a simple wrap-around of tools and culture; the tools and culture are indeed as much determiners of our natures as products of it...ours are (by nature) unusually plastic and opportunistic brains whose biological proper functioning has always involved the recruitment and exploitation of nonbiological props and scaffolds" (86). At stake in these discussions are not only our field's most deeply held theoretical assumptions but our physical bodies as well. Advances in biomedical technologies continually push and challenge our understanding of what it means to be human, how we can use technology to be ethical advocates, and how technologies are deeply ingrained with our most cherished cultural ideas.

Much of this scholarship on technology and the body can be traced back to Donna Haraway's 1988 work, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, wherein she warns readers that simians, cyborgs, and women are destabilizing creatures, particularly to "the great Western evolutionary, technological, and biological narratives" (2). She interrogates the subversive power of technologies, as our bodies are often wrapped up with a political significance that leads to questions of which bodies have power and which do not. This technological/biological power struggle is perhaps nowhere more manifest than in reproductive technologies, as Haraway among others discuss. Changes in birth control, early pregnancy detection, sonography technologies, and countless other "advances" in maternity and reproduction encourage us to ask questions about agency, bodies, technology, and power.

Likewise, Anne Balsmo argues that "the technological imagination reproduces cultural understandings at every turn" (7). Embedded within technologies are cultural assumptions, yes, but the relationship doesn't end

there. Technologies continue to reproduce cultural assumptions, making the call for ethical designing practices of paramount concern. Balsamo argues that "We need new ways of thinking about technology, culture, education, and the multidisciplinary practices of cultural reproduction that take form as a media rich documentaries, public interactive, creative pedagogy's, digital scholarship, and new technologies of imagination" (197). She destroys the notion that culture can any longer be thought of as separate from technology and vice versa.

With this in mind, the Great Plains Alliance for Computers and Writing solicits proposals that focus on the intersection between technology and the body, paying particular attention to what this relationship means for our classrooms and our communities. Emerging biomedical technologies call for scholars of computers and writing to better understand the deep *rhetorical* connections between physical bodies and the array of discursive and material practices that continually blur the traditionally discrete boundaries between body and world. Grounded in this rich and fascinating history, this conference solicits papers addressing the following areas:

- Writing and rhetoric at the intersection of medicine and technology
- Body augmentation, enhancement, and alteration
- Technologies to augment the classroom
- Posthuman theories of technology
- Posthuman theories and the classroom
- Technology and accessibility
- Advocacy work through technology
- 3D printing, including medical devices, limbs, and body parts
- Technofeminist theories and approaches to technology
- The ubiquity of mobile technologies and connectedness
- Human/animal relationships and technology
- Ethical design practices

As always, we welcome **any** presentations that enhance our understanding of the complex relationships among computers, computer-mediated pedagogy and research, and writing instruction.

Individual presenters should expect to limit their presentations to 20 minutes. Panels will run 75 minutes. Abstracts should be limited to 150 words for individual presentations and up to 300 words for panel presentations. **Please submit your abstracts by midnight, September 11, 2015.** Notices will be made by September 14, 2015.

Travel grant applicants are required to submit their applications by midnight, September 4, 2015.

Please email the conference organizer, Alex Layne, with any questions: alex.layne@metrostate.edu

Accessibility Information

All events will be wheelchair accessible. An ASL interpreter will be onsite for the event. If you would like a copy of a presentation ahead of time, or an enlarged copy of the program, please email alex.layne@metrostate.edu before October 3, 2015. Vegetarian and Gluten Free options will be available for lunch and breakfast. Lactation and quiet sensory rooms are available (FH 125). If you need other accommodations, please email alex.layne@metrostate.edu. We are striving to make this an accessible and accommodating conference for all attendees. Please do not hesitate to make a request.

Travel Grants for Graduate and Undergraduate Student Presenters

There will be four travel grants available for graduate students looking to attend the conference. Each grant will be for $50, sponsored by Metropolitan State. We understand that the cost of attending a conference can be prohibitive, and thus we recognize this funding as crucial in aiding new scholars in sharing their ideas.

To apply for a grant, write a 250 word summary, covering the following topics: introduce yourself and your background, why you fit in the selected grant category, your need for the grant, your future plans, and why GPACW is useful in your career and/or scholarship. The link to the application can be found here:
http://bit.ly/1Qa1KmP

Note that applications must be received by Midnight, September 4, 2015.

Grant 1: Underrepresented Scholars Grant
This grant is aimed at providing funding for graduate and undergraduate students from groups that are underrepresented in academia.
Grant 2: Gender Studies Grant
Gender assumptions are deeply embedded into all technologies. This grant goes to fund a student who studies the intersections between gender and technology.
Grant 3: Accessibility Issues Grant
This grant will be awarded to a student whose work is dedicated to improving knowledge about the intersections of disability with composition and rhetoric.
Grant 4: Innovator Grant
This grant will be given to a student who is working with new and innovative ideas in the fields of computers and writing.

Please email the conference organizer, Alex Layne, with any questions: alex.layne@metrostate.edu