

MEDIA & POP CULTURE

Multimedia pedagogy for the new millennium

Rhonda Hammer
Douglas Kellner

New technologies are dramatically altering every aspect of life from war to education. While television has been regularly denounced by educators for the dumbing down of youth, new multimedia technologies are providing exciting new teaching tools. In the first week of February 1998, we had an opportunity to view two sets for cutting-edge multimedia production in the United States at the Shoah Foundation, just outside Hollywood, and at the University of California (UCLA) film and television archives in Los Angeles. We found that, properly produced and used, new multimedia technology enables students to better visualize, empathize with, and understand historical events like the Holocaust, the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, or even more ordinary instances of racism and prejudice.

The multimedia dimension enables students to experience the sounds, sights, and images of history and to learn basic facts. Testimonies of ordinary citizens, as well as political leaders, help to demonstrate the human and personal dimension of history and to dramatize the effects of historical events on ordinary people. The interactive dimension of new multimedia technology can potentially involve students in historical research and enhance moral understanding, thus providing powerful pedagogical tools to teach tolerance and promote antiracist curricula. Hence, we see the virtue of multi-

media technology in providing new tools of both historical documentation and pedagogy that can help reconstruct education for the next century.

Teaching the unthinkable: The Shoah project

The Shoah Visual History Foundation is tucked away in the dream factories of the production studios in the Hollywood Hills, not far from the infamous "Hollywood" sign. The Shoah Foundation uses the most advanced multimedia technology to document the impact of the Holocaust. Founded by Steven Spielberg, the Shoah project combines technological innovation with audio-video historical documentation to capture the experiences of the survivors of one of the most horrific events of the century. The result is a highly impressive set of multimedia materials that show how new media can provide significant teaching tools for the information age. *Shoah*, the Hebrew word for "destruction" or "annihilation," has become a metaphor for one of the most heinous programs of genocide in 20th-century history.

Although there had been a number of films and TV productions that attempted to depict some of the stories of the 16 to 18 million victims and survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, until this project there had been a serious lacuna in the audiovisual material that attempted to capture the actual testimonies of survivors.

©1999 International Reading Association
(pp. 522-526)

However, rather than simply documenting the rapidly disappearing agents of the stories and memories of survivors still living in stock footage and traditional linear, static, talking-head video or film style, this project is making use of some of the most exciting and highly developed new technology.

The project uses top quality video documentary footage archived and distributed by computerized, fiber optic interactive multimedia, and its collaborators are some of the most creative minds in the fields of technology, education, and media production. In the new, computerized multimedia technology, layers of additional material accompany the testimonies in a diversity of forms that include maps, archival historical footage, related music, and sound effects. These technological devices provide the interactive capacity to experience multiple dimensions of the historical ordeals being described, as well as to gain better contextual understanding.

The Shoah project combines video documentary footage, historical texts and commentary, and interactive computerized research archives to provide educational material on the Holocaust. It is in this sense that the project's educational potential is highly significant, demonstrating how new technologies can supplement traditional teaching materials. Indeed, the video testimony of survivors in conjunction with interactive multimedia material enables in-depth involvement in research that makes the facts and horrors of the Holocaust all the more striking and real.

It is therefore ironic that this non-profit and imaginative prototype of a new form of politicized, contextual, humanistic multimedia pedagogy is due, in large part, to the inspiration, commitment, and initial financial support of Spielberg, one of the most successful members of the Hollywood community. Indeed,

Hollywood is frequently demonized for its role in producing the kind of commercial media "junk" that is often blamed and criticized for underlying many of the problems plaguing and affecting contemporary youth.

Yet it was during the filming of *Schindler's List* (his 1993 movie about the relationships between Holocaust survivors and a Catholic, German war-profiteer who saved many of his Polish, Jewish employees) that Spielberg decided to initiate the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. Rather than just have actors represent victims and survivors, Spielberg was provoked (largely through personal encounters with survivors when making the movie) to pursue and practically apply this new video and multimedia technology to develop new types of educational and historical tools. The result is perhaps the most significant historical archive of an oppressed people ever produced and a dramatic demonstration of the pedagogical potential of new multimedia technology.

Incorporating the expertise of numerous scholars, historians, and specialists drawn from a diversity of technological, artistic, and educational fronts, the project is currently directed by Michael Berenbaum. He is a highly respected Holocaust scholar who was the Director of the Research Institute of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., before he accepted the position of President and CEO of the foundation. Since 1994 the project has archived over 50,000 eyewitness accounts in 25 languages from 35 countries.

Freelance videographers and interviewers, who undergo training sessions organized by the Foundation and base their interviews primarily on a specially designed questionnaire, ask the survivors to address three areas of their lives. These areas involve pre- and postwar background, as well as

the substantive portion involving their firsthand wartime ordeal in concentration camps, and any other World War II intellectual experiences. Each interview takes about 8 hours to index, using digital technology. The final version of the text includes multimedia and interactive documentary footage, maps, and iconic aural and oral materials mentioned earlier, as well as the options to access other associated interviews, sites, and arenas of learning. Indeed, eventually there will be linkages between the Shoah institutional holdings through networks to a variety of museums, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations within a global context.

The Foundation is also involved in the production of documentaries, books, and educational CD-ROMs to further distribute its ground-breaking archival material. Cumulatively, these products provide valuable educational material and documentation of human nobility, spirit, courage, survival, and transcendence in the face of the German Nazi system's brutal, dehumanizing atrocities and almost unimaginable abuses.

The experiences of Holocaust survivors have thus generated documents of human fortitude and heroism in the face of a monstrous social system. These testimonial archives are not only a chronicle of individual experience and perseverance, but also an innovative pedagogical approach to understanding, studying, and better contextualizing the horrors of the Holocaust in terms of both particular instances of oppression and the more general features of German fascism.

One immediate consequence of the tapes is that they contest and put in question the pernicious stereotype of Jews as sheep being led to the slaughter—a myth that has been perpetuated for far too long and has done significant damage and disservice to the Jewish

people. By covering over resistance and struggle, such stereotypes of passivity also do injustice to many other victims and survivors of the myriad forms of abuse and torture that remain all too prevalent in the world today. Consequently, one poignant and ennobling portion of each video is the segment at the end that allows interviewees to introduce their families, to show pictures or news clippings, read from letters or journals, and to include any material they feel is relevant or related to their experiences. Often, these experiences are the most accurate and credible way of asserting the actuality and reality of the existence of families, friends, and loved ones of the millions victimized.

We cannot begin to describe the indescribable here. It would obviously be inappropriate and difficult to recount the experiences captured in these records in a fashion that adequately summons the plethora of emotions they evoke and the wide expanse of human frailties, talents, courage, love, altruism, fortitude, and horrors they display. Yet we should stress the historical documentary value of the archival material and its pedagogical significance, as well as the potential of empowerment realized by these testimonies in both form and content. The project provides strength for those who may have—until exposure to the graphic ordeals of another survivor's experiences—felt alone, isolated, or marginalized by their personal victimization, as well as for those of us inspired by their courage to survive and carry on in the face of horrific suffering and evil.

Moreover, such multimedia and interactive archives' strongest applications may reside in their potential for a salutary recontextualization of contemporary history and the place of the Holocaust, combined with cultivation of a pedagogical framework of a politics of hope that individuals and groups can overcome

horrible deprivation and oppression. For subordinated and disenfranchised students who will have access to these gripping documents, the experiences should be moving and instructive. These documents transcend the often abstract and ineffectual modes of teaching that frequently fail to capture the personal and human dimension of history, especially of suffering and struggle.

The multimedia presentation of the Holocaust also overcomes the tendency in some educational circles to divide and hermetically seal one subject or dimension from another. Such abstracted and decontextualized education often neutralizes the kinds of associations between disparate dimensions, areas, and skills of learning. By contrast, combining multimedia sights, sounds, and print material provides a multidimensional context for events like the Holocaust, and the wealth of material combines history, personal testimony, and the possibility of moral education.

Documenting racism and prejudice/teaching tolerance

The success and magnitude of the Shoah project, which makes use of the most advanced technologies for educational purposes, is beneficial in showing how new technologies can advance and revitalize education for today's student. Such creative use of new technologies, of course, depends upon the convictions and sustained efforts of the teachers who present these kinds of projects with innovative teaching designs and programs. Such a reconstruction of education requires the commitment and critical intelligence—as well as hard work—of teachers, in conjunction with the students who so desperately need these kinds of resources to truly learn about the world, themselves, and their place in it.

Steve Ricci, the director of the Film and TV Archives at UCLA, and other colleagues have demonstrated that it is not necessary to have a large budget to produce an extraordinary, highly effective interactive educational pedagogical supplement. The Shoah Foundation has access to a budget of over US\$45 million, multiple sources of funding, unlimited use of state-of-the-art technological equipment, and the contributions of at least 240 paid staff members and over 3,600 volunteers. However, Ricci and his colleagues have coproduced with the Japanese American National Museum a CD-ROM that is highly sophisticated, arresting, and absorbing in both form and content.

Like the Shoah project, UCLA's Executive Order 9066: The Incarceration of Japanese Americans During World War II bursts the rigid code of disciplinary boundaries and traditional compartmentalized learning arenas to produce a transdisciplinary, multileveled portrayal and historical presentation of one of the cruelest, most blatantly racist programs in 20th-century U.S. history. (A variety of other allied countries also participated and colluded with the U.S. in perpetrating this calculated government authorized program of bigotry against citizens and residents of the U.S., Canada, and South America of Japanese descent.)

The UCLA-produced CD-ROM includes documentation concerning an often obscured and disgraceful World War II episode. With particular emphasis on the U.S. situation, this riveting multimedia interactive project documents, at a multiplicity of levels, how 120,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated by the government in numerous so-called internment or concentration camps throughout the United States, primarily in the West, Midwest, and Texas. However, it also encompasses a contextual frame that is too often omitted within these kinds of

studies. For example, it includes and chronicles the collusion of 13 Latin American countries with U.S. agents in the displacement and internment in the U.S. of over 2,000 people of Japanese ancestry from those countries, on the highly dubious charges that they posed security risks.

Like the Shoah project, the UCLA CD-ROM also stresses the necessity of revisiting and re-examining painful and repugnant instances of massive-scale, legitimized programs of persecution and inhumanity to others. Indeed, the incarceration of Japanese Americans was rationalized and justified solely on the basis of an assortment of racist myths and practices, and the CD-ROM helps ensure that we do not forget and repeat, falsify, or gloss over these atrocities of the recent past. One learns, for example, that much of the land and properties owned by these Japanese citizens or residents at the time was legally stolen or "repossessed" by government agencies.

This shameful episode of U.S. history is one that many Americans would prefer remain buried and forgotten—especially the many who personally profited from this legalized larceny. The token Civil Liberties Act, passed by the U.S. Congress 10 years ago, expressed a formal apology to those affected and allocated US\$40 million in reparations, half to fund educational programs and the other half to compensate about 81,000 Japanese Americans who suffered this degradation. The Act hardly addresses the grievances, suffering, loss, deprivation, and long-term consequences of this injustice.

Employing a multiplicity of innovative technological devices, archival and documentary footage, maps, photographs, and oral histories, Executive Order 9066 presents and interrogates the arrests and conditions of incarceration of over 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II; over two thirds of

them were U.S. citizens. From both UCLA-owned archival material and the resources of the Japanese American National Museum, rare archival footage and photos, interview material, personal accounts, chronologies, maps, and historical essays all provide a vivid historical reconstruction of the event.

In making accessible this shameful episode, the project develops a diversity of imaginative, ingenious, and original multimedia formats that display testimonies from survivors and visionary, artistic mixes of computer graphics, digitizations, and stunning examples of virtual reality to make concrete the Japanese American experience of internment. Moreover, the CD-ROM ingeniously incorporates familiar Japanese American actors and celebrities to introduce and narrate various dimensions of the program. Many of their own testimonies are included, and this further humanizes a horrendous and shameful time. It also demonstrates to the viewer the courage of those who are too often portrayed as losers or victims within educational forums and contemporary media.

The UCLA-produced CD-ROM thus clearly demonstrates, in a variety of iconic, aural, and oral forms and forums, that propensities toward intolerance and persecution lie within ourselves and within the frameworks of the systems of government and ways of life that are defined and embraced as democratic, liberal, and egalitarian. Indeed, this provocative pedagogical production reveals that crimes against humanity are not particular or restricted to peoples and nations that are commonly identified as evil, totalitarian, fascistic, undemocratic, or "Other," and hence addresses, interrogates, and teaches about some very discomfiting truths and realities in democracies.

Rather than relying on the usual bells and whistles that often typify

educational CD-ROMs, in the form of simplified computer game-like brain candy techniques, Executive Order 9066 goes beyond patronizing and condescending routines and incorporates an inventive and interactive level that permits students to learn at their own speeds and levels of expertise. It also allows for both individualized and class-based teacher-student multimedia tutorials, studies, and assignments. The CD-ROM thus exemplifies the practical applications of the theoretical and educational calls for multimedia-based projects that actually enhance and transform public pedagogies.

Consequently, this is exactly the kind of multimedia project essential for contemporary teaching. Such materials may help remedy the apparent waning of basic student skills and literacies, as well as a serious lack of historical and political knowledge and awareness. As a result, new transdisciplinary multimedia projects allow for multiple educational arenas within an underlying common, critical, and political theme. This in turn allows for teaching not only the basics of mathematics, reading and study skills, geography, history, and some dimensions of science, but also disciplines such as political science, economics, and sociology, without the often tedious and dull segregations and divisions that generally mediate these subjects.

Instead of decontextualizing historical events and divorcing them from reality, the multimedia and CD-ROM projects that we have discussed provide exceptional contextualized understanding of the many dimensions of political oppression. These projects also teach tolerance and the importance of resisting racist and oppressive political behavior. Thus, by bringing to the fore the human dimensions of persecution, multimedia technology can also serve as an instrument of moral and political education.

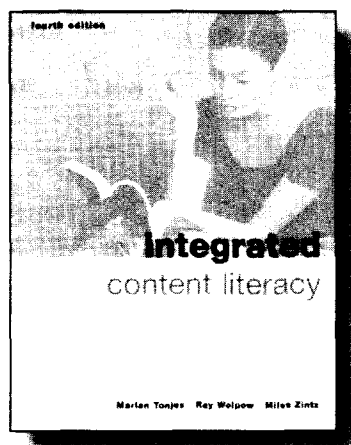
The Shoah Foundation is currently offering tours to interested parties and will eventually make its material accessible at the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance, via books and CD-ROM, and at a Web site. Call the Shoah Foundation (within the U.S.) at 800-661-2092 for information. For information on ordering Executive

Order 9066: *The Incarceration of Japanese Americans During World War II*, write Steve Ricci, Film and TV

Archives, 302 E. Melnitz, University of California-Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA 90095, USA, or call 310-826-5388.

Reader comments on this column are welcome. E-mail: kellner@ucla.edu. Mail: Rhonda Hammer and Douglas Kellner, 913 S. Holt Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90035, USA.

*To read and write
with understanding
and clarity across
the disciplines...*



Integrated Content Literacy, Fourth Edition

MARIAN TONJES, *Western Washington University*

RAY WOLPOW, *Western Washington University*

MILES ZINTZ, *Late of the University of New Mexico*

0-07-290532-8 • 1999 • 320 PP. • McGRAW-HILL

With the vital addition of Ray Wolpaw as an author, this fourth edition of Tonjes and Zintz's classic *Teaching Reading, Thinking, and Study Skills in Content Classrooms*, bears a new integrated approach to literacy studies in grades 4 through 12. The text provides complete coverage of current theory connected to appropriate practice with numerous strategies for teaching, real-life vignettes, and imbedded workshops. Easy readability, clear applications to individual content areas, cognitive maps to start chapters, and extensive references assist the reader. A new first chapter gives readers practical tools they can readily adopt. Chapter 4, the affective domain chapter, looks at motivation, attitudes, and interests with discussion of at-risk and distracted students, and new coverage of children with Attention Deficit Disorder and other behavioral learning problems. Chapter 12 on technology is completely new. The two former comprehension chapters are now one chapter and have been completely revised while adding Gardner's Eight Ways of Knowing. The former chapter on collateral reading has been omitted and now is integrated throughout.



For more information, or to reserve an examination copy, either call 1-800-338-3987; consult our Web site, <http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/education>; e-mail education@mcgraw-hill.com; or write to The McGraw-Hill Higher Education Division, Comp Processing & Control, P. O. Box 445, Hightstown, NJ 08520-0445.