Assignment 2

One of the objectives of this class is to give you an opportunity to hone your observational skills and an appreciation for ethnography. For this assignment you will study the use of technology in a classroom of OSU other than Kearney 305.

Plan to spend at least 2-3 class sessions in the classroom you have chosen, because you will be taking an inventory of all the elements in the room, as well as the student’s and instructor’s activities. You have all been in a classroom many times, but try to leave your preconceive notions and past experiences at the door. Look at the classroom experience as if for the first time. Write down you first impressions, feelings, ideas, emotions, etc. Describe the space, people, activities and technology as if you were describing it to someone who has never been to this place.

Be sure to take advantage of/explore every form of support that is available. This includes the teacher desk, which most of you may not be familiar with. Ask for permission form an instructor. After your first session in the classroom and completing your inventory, return to confirm your observations and hypothesis.

In order to make this project easier on you, I recommend that you follow the outline given below. Remember, understanding is both iterative and cumulative. You will not ‘get it all’ right away. Do not worry about ‘getting it right’ either. The primary goal of this exercise is to build your observation and analysis skills.

First, make an exhaustive inventory of the four elements that are in place:

* The people who inhabit the space
  1. Who are they? (Students, faculty, staff, what is the mix?)
  2. What are they doing?
  3. How are they doing it?

* The objects in the space
  1. What are the functional elements?
  2. What are the decorational elements?
  3. Which do people interact with or look for?

* The building: spaces, architecture, lighting etc
  1. What is the layout?
  2. What is the environment like?
  3. How does it influence the activities people engage in?
  4. How does the building support the objects here?

* The technology
  1. What ‘technology’ is here (not just computer technology, not just electronic)
  2. How do people interact with it?
  3. How does it fit in with, or support the users activities
  4. How does it fit in with the environment
Keeping these elements separate as you do your observations may work for some, and not for others, it is up to you. What I want you to turn in are your observations (cleaned up and legible of course). These should be in the form of a 3-4 page write-up + sketches. If you wish, you may scan these in rather than draw them on the computer.

What I am looking for when grading is:

A) That you looked at all the questions and elements I asked you too
B) That you looked at these in sufficient detail to notice something interesting, or which the average visitor would not normally see
C) That you derive some interesting design insight from these observations. This does not have to be an insight related to computer use or computer systems, but should be related to some real user need or activity that deserves support/attention.
D) That you describe your experience factually, clearly, and in enough detail so that someone who has never been in this classroom could clearly appreciate and understand what you saw.

Following are some examples of much more involved analysis. These are just here for reference/inspiration.

Example http://swiki.cc.gatech.edu:8080/barcelona/1724
Example http://swiki.cc.gatech.edu:8080/barcelona/1716
Example http://swiki.cc.gatech.edu:8080/barcelona/1720