Digital Folklore Project—Digital Trend of the Year

Some notes on methods for deciding the digital trend & making a case for some of the contenders

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Creating a Venn Diagram

I’m a very visual person, so I created a Venn Diagram to help me visualize my process of selecting the digital trend. In order to keep the trend choices folklore-oriented (as opposed to just viral content), we want to find a balance between topics, forms/ mediums, and sites. That way, when we write a piece on the DFP website, we can easily narrow down the conversation to just two or three representative instances of the digital folklore in question. Instead of just choosing “Ferguson,” for example, we choose #blacklivesmatter.

I will explain the Venn Diagram in the following slides.
Venn Diagram

- Topic
- Form/Medium
- Digital Trend
- Site
"Don’t Tell me to Smile" is an example of the RL application of the Venn diagram. These posters appeared in the streets of New York to try to stop harassment.
Choosing the Trend in RL

Choosing the trend based on topic, form/medium, or site alone, won’t reveal instances of folklore. In the “Don’t Tell me to Smile” campaign, for example:

- Topic alone: Street harassment is everywhere
- Form/Medium alone: Street Posters are everywhere
- Site alone: New York City has tons of stuff happening

But, combining the three together, we can hone in on anti-street-harassment posters in New York City, which is clearly folklore. If we were writing a paper on this, having this focus is important to avoid being distracted by other harassment issues, other mediums of expression, or other cities.

The same can be said for internet folklore, explained in the following slides.
Example: Amazon Faux Review

- Topic
- Form/Medium
- Shopping Reviews
- Faux Review
- Amazon
- Site
Measuring Quality

- Ermahgerd Erborla Memes or banana slicers are obviously not contenders for the digital trend. I just used them as examples of the Venn diagram, which is a qualitative measurement tool. Other tools need to be used for quantitative measurement, which I have not covered in this slide.

- More on measuring quality in the following slides.
Visualizing the Contenders

A case for quality of GamerGate, ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, YesAllWomen, NotYourMascot, Ferguson

Note: I’m not familiar enough with all of these contenders to build every case.
Contender: GamerGate

- Topic: Gaming & Feminism
- Form/Medium: 
- Twitter: 
- Site: 

#GamerGate
Multiple Ways of Conceptualizing Gamergate

- Topic: Gaming and feminism
- Form/medium: Hashtag
- Site: Twitter

- Topic: Gaming and feminism
- Form/medium: Hashtag
- Site: Facebook

- Topic: Gaming and feminism
- Form/medium: subreddit
- Site: Reddit

Measuring these sites quantitatively would be key to deciding trend.
Contender: Icebucket Challenge

- Fundraising For ALS
- Mobile Video
- Icebucket Challenge
- Facebook
Contender: YesAllWomen

Feminism

#yesallwomen

Twitter

Form/Medium
Contender: NotYourMascot

Topics:
- Race and Political Correctness
- #notyourmascot
- Twitter

Forms/Mediums:
- #
Contender: Ferguson

Race & Police State

#blacklivesmatter

Twitter
Notes on the hashtag

I’m not sure if the hashtag counts as a form as much as other things do. It seems more like a linguistic marker within tweets and posts. Is it possible that there are types of tweets that provide a more refined form? Like joke tweets, tweets that link to selfies, or fuckthepolice-type tweets?

For example, maybe better than #yesallwomen as a form, the form is the “Because ___” tweet, where the tweet starts out with “Because women must deal with harassment everyday. #yesallwomen”

Just some thoughts
Quantitative – Ripple Effects

- Being able to quantitatively analyze ripple effects from a certain trend will be important. We can’t just observe every topic/form/site digital folklore and measure each against each other. Some are caused because of others. For example, Ferguson created #dontshootofficer and other hashtags. Ferguson eventually led to the rise of KKK threats and anonymous hacking into the KKK’s twitter and revealing member identities near Ferguson (see #opKKK).

- Just something to take into account.
Topic is a Spectrum

Topic can be a spectrum of Broad to Specific – It is probably good to be as specific as possible so as not to make the form/medium or site as topic. For example, race might be too broad a topic, whereas Ferguson is more narrow, yet still relevant.

- Capitalism>occupy wallstreet>pepperspray cop
- Race>Ferguson>blacklivesmatter
- Race>Native Americans>Mascots
- Gaming>”Femenism in Gaming”>Gamergate
Form/Medium is a Spectrum

Form/Medium is on a spectrum of old to new. The newer the better, it seems, as long as it doesn’t become too narrow (i.e. amazon faux review relatively new compared to the hashtag, but it is also narrow)

- Racecar Bling Bling > “One does not simply....” > Doge
- Youtube>Vimeo>GoPro>Mobile upload
Sites

Sites are more vague and it’s hard to tell where things are happening, but some are more obvious than others.

- **ALS icebucket challenge** happened on Facebook mostly, though it was on Youtube, major news sites, perhaps in private messages.

- **#nofilter** happened on Instagram.

- **Earthporn** happened on 4chan and reddit.
Why it helps?

When selecting a digital trend based off of a topic, form/medium, and site, it helps to choose the top contender of each category. What is the biggest folklore topic on the internet and does it matter? What is the biggest form/medium which is being used to express that topic and is the form/medium new? What is the biggest site in which that topic is being expressed?
Narrowing is Important

- We can’t say:
  “the digital trend of the year is racial hashtags on twitter.”
  **but we can say:**
  “the digital trend of the year is #blacklivesmatter about Ferguson.”

- We can’t say:
  “the digital trend of the year is body image memes.”
  **but we can say:**
  “the digital trend of the year is memes about Kim Kardashian’s butt on imgur.”
Lastly, Does it Provide Cultural Commentary?

- #notyourmascot produces Real social movement
- ALS Icebucket challenge Mobile video uploads shows Power of viral fundraising
- Gamergate subreddit shows Darkside of gaming culture?

Where the trend took place matters too.