



E S 6th AVENUE AT 46th STREET.

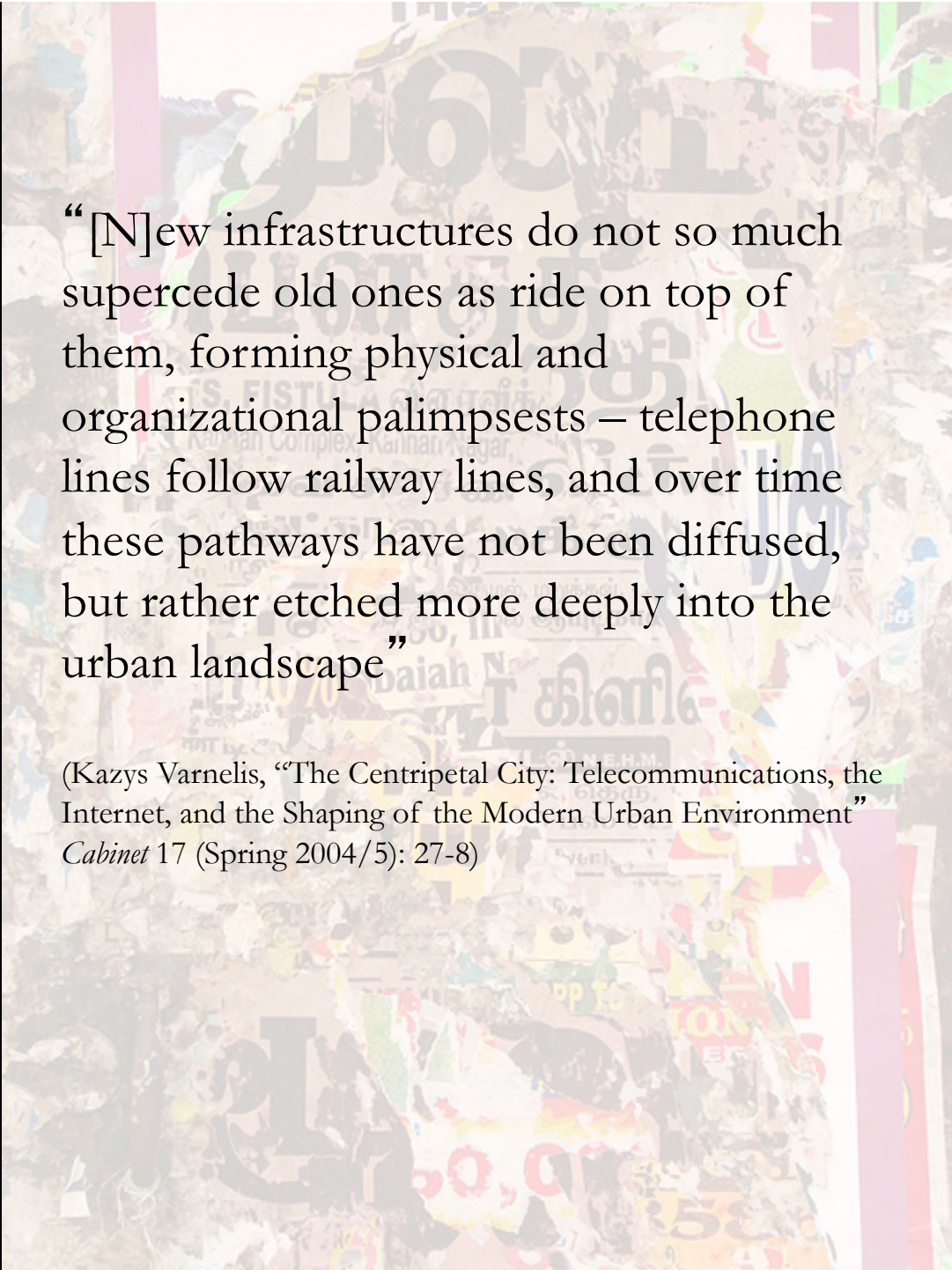
LOOKING N. E.

E C manhole partly rebuilt (showing pipes built around manhole
and one running through it), in connection with building addition
to old subway.

July 31, 1909.

Urban Media Archaeology

Shannon Mattern
Reimagining the Archive

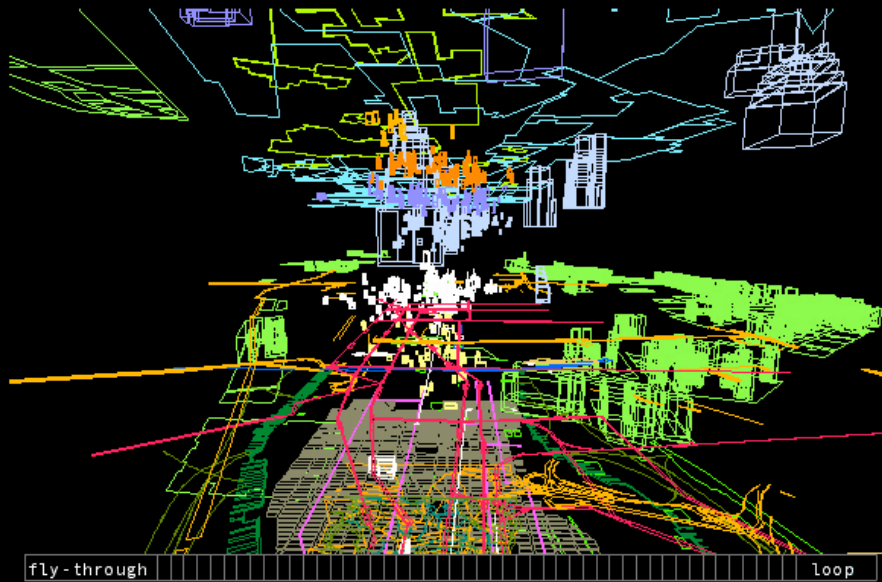


“[N]ew infrastructures do not so much supercede old ones as ride on top of them, forming physical and organizational palimpsests – telephone lines follow railway lines, and over time these pathways have not been diffused, but rather etched more deeply into the urban landscape”

(Kazys Varnelis, “The Centripetal City: Telecommunications, the Internet, and the Shaping of the Modern Urban Environment”
Cabinet 17 (Spring 2004/5): 27-8)



eBoy, FooBar



Brian McGrath/Skyscraper Museum, *Manhattan Timeformations*, 2000

“A city...is not a flattenable graph. In a city, networks overlap upon other networks”

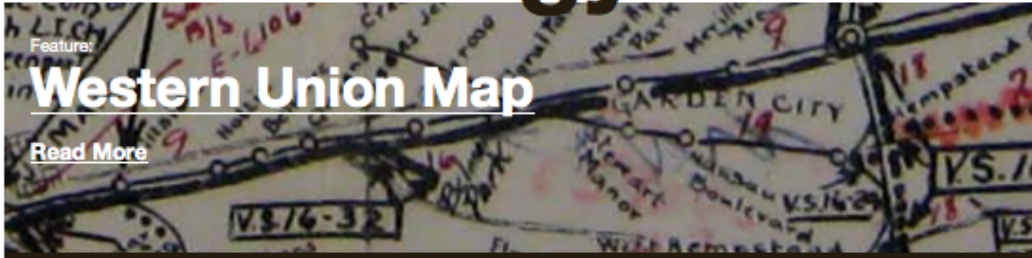
(Friedrich Kittler, “The City is a Medium,” *New Literary History* 27:4 (1996): 719)

Urban Media Archaeology

Feature:

Western Union Map

[Read More](#)



Because URT is undergoing some updates and we won't be able to post for a couple weeks, you won't be able to share an URT-based "draft map" on the 17th (see the original assignment here). Yet I would still like ...[Read More](#)

What's Due On The 17th?

Written by [shannon](#)

Posted on November 5, 2010.

Filed under [Class Announcements](#).

Read [Comments](#) (Be the first!).

[Edit.](#)

A Change? Of Course!

Written by [adrianhopkins](#)

Posted on November 11, 2010.

Filed under [Process Blogs](#).

Read [Comments](#) (Be the first!).

[Edit.](#)



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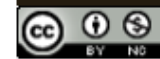
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Archives

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Blogroll

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[Making Maps: DIY](#)

[Cartography](#)

[Rory Solomon](#)

[Trac](#)

[URT \(temporary; soon to be moved to Parsons servers\)](#)

[URT Admin URL \(again, temporary!\)](#)

[URT User Guide](#)

Schedule

Tour of Downtown Internet Infrastructure
w/ Andrew Blum

Putting the *Urban* Into
Media Archaeology

Digital Humanities &
Assessment Strategies

Research Strategies

Mapping Along X, Y, and Z Axes

Student-Designed Modules

Pecha Kucha

Concept Mapping & Group Formation

Spatio-temporal Argumentation

Insight into Tech Development /
Data Management

Assignments

Project Proposals + Research Plans

Map Critique & Application

Process Blogs

Individual Research Dossiers

Final Map

Individual & Group Assessments

Each Gate Is Built For Entry and Exit

The Elevated Express

Always Dependable

No More Standing In Line

A Nickel is Your Ticket. Slip it in the slot of the new "FEATHER-WEIGHT PRESSURE" Gate, and pass through.~

The new gates will be installed soon in all Subway Stations. THEY ARE TIME SAVERS

Interborough Rapid Transit Co.



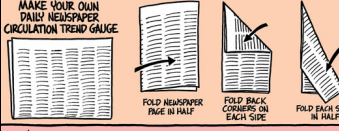
The FEATHER-WEIGHT PRESSURE Gate

The Time Door

Pass Through Door

P.S. Change-Making Booth in every station and plenty of gates.

MAKE YOUR OWN DAILY NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION TREND GAUGE



FOLD NEWSPAPER PAGE IN HALF

FOLD BACK CORNERS ON EACH SIDE

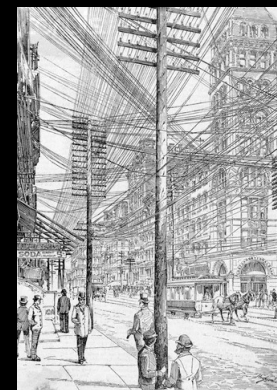
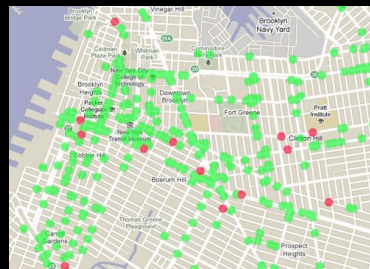
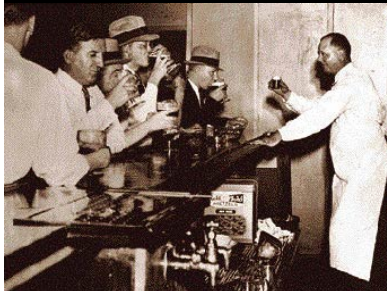
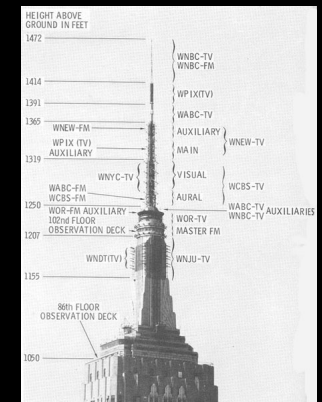
FOLD EACH SIDE IN HALF

LAUNCH TO DETERMINE LATEST CIRCULATION TREND

FOLD EACH SIDE IN HALF AGAIN

GRASP AT BOTTOM CREASE

©2008 Gannett Co. Inc.



Words in Space

Shannon Christine Mattern

Home	Publications	Presentations	Projects	Teaching
TOP TAGS				
Archives	4	Libraries	4	
Digital Humanities	6	Maps	2	
Interdisciplinarity	2	Materiality	3	

JUL 20, '10
2:07 AM

From Post Offices to Radiograms: Local Primary Resources on Urban Media History

AUTHOR Shannon
CATEGORIES Uncategorized
TAGS Archives, Libraries, Multimodal Scholarship, Teaching
[EDIT](#)

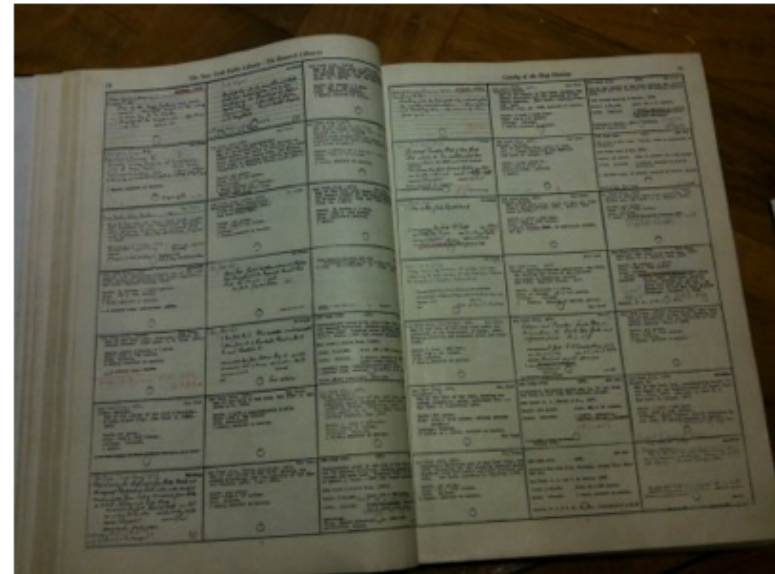


"Newsstand, 32nd Street and Third Avenue, Manhattan. (November 19, 1935)," Berenice Abbott: NYPL Digital Gallery: <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?482798>

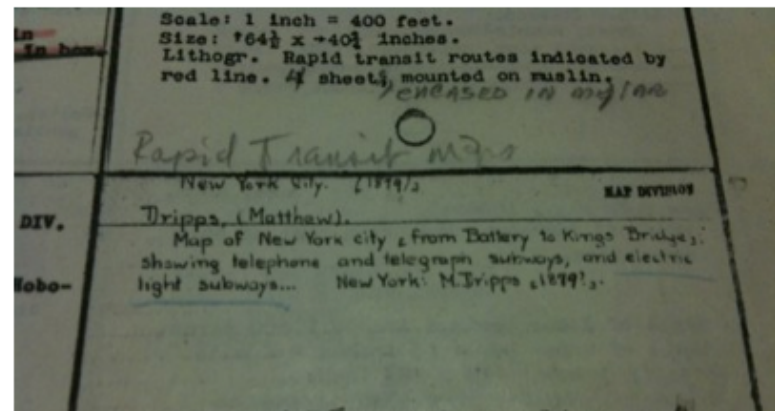
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY MAP DIVISION

Some maps are available in the **Digital Gallery** (again, we are permitted to use this material for free), and many others are listed in the catalogue, but many maps have been neither digitized nor catalogued online. To find these maps, you'll want to **speak with the Map Room staff** and consult the in-room "dictionary" catalogues, which you can search by subject or by location (I recommend searching by borough; vol. 7 is dedicated entirely to NYC).

Here's how it worked for me: I scanned through the on-site catalogue:



...and found this:



LIST YOUR ARCHIVES / SOURCES OF PRIMARY MATERIAL

- NY PUBLIC LIBRARY III
- NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY II
- EDISON ARCHIVES
- NYU Library / Fales Special Collections
- ABC No Rio
- BARNARD ZINE LIBRARY
- Bluestockings
- Brooklyn College Archives
- NY Botanical Gardens
- Ft. Monmouth Historical Office
- NYC Food Museum
- New York Post Circulation Office
- Ronnie (a Brooklyn-based NY Post delivery guy)
- BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

• BAYRD STILL PAPERS
↳ NYU FACULTY ARCHIVE

• MUNICIPAL ARTS SOCIETY

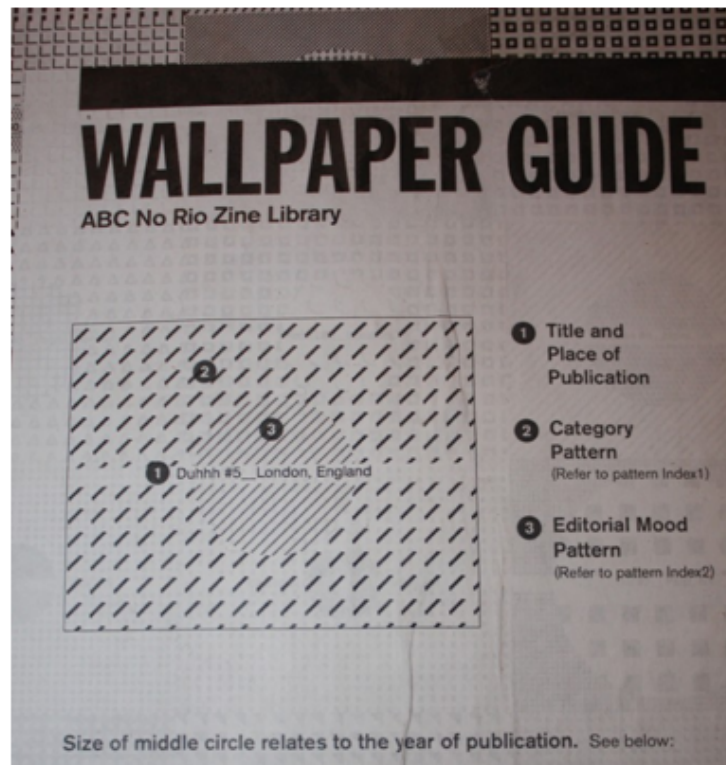
NYC Dept. of Consumer
Affairs

NY City Archives

As I mentioned in my Pecha Kucha (I think), this research project has brought up some interesting dynamics for me between analog/digital, low-fi/high-tech.

Zine culture is very much about process, about the craft of making. The zine artifact is tactile, tangible -- a physical cut-and-paste kind of thing. As I was working on designing prototype for my very high-tech interactive map, it did cross my mind that the project seemed at odds with that aspect of zine culture. I worried that it was too slick, too flash-y, lacking a sense of human touch. But it was hard to imagine the possibility of visualizing such complex data in a way that wasn't impersonal in that way.

My visit to the zine archive at ABC No Rio totally blew me away for that reason. Well-designed database mapping systems don't have to be slick, interactive, and high-tech to be effective. Check it out:



The Zine Archive As Database

Written by [jen.rhee](#).

Posted on **November 9, 2010**.

Filed under [Process Blogs](#),
[Uncategorized](#).

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2 Comments

1 Shannon Wrote:



This is fantastic, Jen. Of course there's only so much we can do to tailor the overall URT interface "character" of the site, but maybe the creation of patterns (or frameworks or better term.) to Rory, Jess might build in options.

November 10, 2010

[Permalink](#) [Edit](#)

2 Julianapere

This is so interesting and the archive sounds like one of those places you need to "be in" to fully grasp its usefulness and mapping abilities--it all looks a bit confusing otherwise! However, I hope we'll be able to recreate something similar in URT.



Amusement Spaces

My search for information on video game arcades in the city led me first to the Department of Consumer Affairs. The DCA handles all licensing and records for businesses in the city, so I figured

they would have an exhaustive catalog of all businesses ever licensed to operate in NYC. This is the case, however after a brief chat with their Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) guy it became clear that a) this material is not accessible to the general public, and b) it is not well organized and would take a lot of time to sift through...meaning there is no database or catalog, just a bunch of files in a big room somewhere. Additionally I learned that "Amusement Arcades," the category into which video arcades fall in city licensing, was only created a few years ago. Prior to that they were lumped into some sort of a general purpose category. Rocky start, I know.

However, I've already contacted the business owners I can get some sort of insight into the history of the arcade in NYC. Additionally, I plan to conduct some interviews with these people in order to procure anecdotal evidence that I can mix into my greater argument. I also plan on photographing and perhaps doing audio recordings at the arcades still in business in order to preserve the sights and sounds of these institutions. I may also select a few retail shops to catalog as well, as long as it's permissible.

It seems that the information

(or couldn't because of organizational issues). Hopefully by contacting the business owners I can get some sort of insight into the history of the arcade in NYC. Additionally, I plan to conduct some interviews with these people in order to procure anecdotal evidence that I can mix into my greater argument. I also plan on photographing and perhaps doing audio recordings at the arcades still in business in order to preserve the sights and sounds of these institutions. I may also select a few retail shops to catalog as well, as long as it's permissible.

compel others with relevant personal stories or personal archives to contribute to your project.

November 5, 2010 at 11:44 pm

[Permalink](#) [Edit](#)

Post A Comment

Logged in as [shannon](#). [Log out?](#)

I've been thinking about what kind of media I would like to include in my map and I realized that I going to have to deal with a familiar foe: Copyright.

I'm planning on visiting the Creative Time Archive in the Fales Special Collections Library and hoping to find some photographs and videos of public art projects that are long gone. According to their website, I'll have to get permission to use the resources from the director and even after that copyright restrictions still apply. I know that none of the artists I'm looking at have been dead for more than 70 years, so definitely not public domain yet. I also need to think about who holds the copyright for the photos and videos. Perhaps the archive now holds those rights?

I also want to document public art projects that are accessible today. Surely these works are also copyrighted, but since I can photograph or tape them in a public place that should OK, right?

And what about fair use for scholarship? I was doing research and came across this guide from the Center for Social Media at American University:

"Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Scholarly Research in Communication"

According to them, everything I want to use--as long as it's not to excess--is fair game. So do I stand up and declare fair use or not?

Fair Use, Or Not To Fair Use?

Written by [mfiner](#).

Posted on **October 19, 2010**.

Filed under [Process Blogs](#).

Bookmark the [Permalink](#).

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[Edit](#)

One Comment

1 Shannon Wrote:



Great questions, Mary. The Center for Social Media is a great place to start! You might remember that we talked a bit about [Critical Commons](#) in class a few weeks ago; one of their function is to provide "information about current copyright law and its alternatives in order to facilitate the writing and dissemination of best practices and

After Jesse's lecture last evening, I thought a lot about the direction of my (and our) mapping project, imagining ways I could string together several types of media that would enhance the rather factual nature of my research. I was particularly inspired by his comment about the motive behind a project or campaign

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thinking
do I wan
point I'd
data (nu
once I h

Initially,
York Cit
envision
first poin
to displa
this [link](#)
several
helpful f
informat
as this c
newspa
York nev
share a
16th, 18

Now tha
from ear
individu

research, rather, it will allow my map to be rich with potential conclusions and patterns (like Adrian's racial demographic map critique). Inspired by map critiques I've seen so far, Shannon's writing, and Jesse's presentation, I've decided to consider this factual data my "base map" and will add texture with other layers of media.

An Epiphany, A Paper Route, And Some Really Cool

An exciting prospect for video, sound, still images, etc...is my upcoming paper route adventure! I've contacted a delivery man for the New York Post named Ronnie (who I've never met), and he agreed to let me come on his delivery route next Saturday morning at 4a.m. Equipped with my flip camera, digital recorder, iphone camera, and a very large coffee, I'll ride in his truck as he travels through Brooklyn and Queens to scatter copies of that day's paper. He's agreed to media participation as well (and, I've been told, is a large Italian man with an equally large personality), so I'm looking forward to colorful conversation and recordings. Ronnie has agreed to meet me for coffee the day before our paper route, which will build trust and also allow time for background information that might inspire questions or conversations the following morning. This is my kind of research.

And I'm super-excited for your paper delivery route! This will help to provide really valuable on-the-ground analysis involving one of the industry's often overlooked players.

Finally, maybe there's some way to

argument). Since I have experience with traditional written compositions, I feel I have the first two dimensions covered. With that in mind, I figured I could slap on the last dimension and it would fit right into place on top of the foundation I had developed with the other two. Unfortunately, much like building a house, when you add a new element to the structure, inevitably other elements will need to be adjusted to accommodate the new piece. The tricky part may not even be adding the new element, but rather, modifying the other areas so that all the building blocks fit together. The introduction of a visual argument to my project has precipitated a slew of other changes I need to make in order to proceed with my multimodal research. Therefore, the question I find myself asking this week is: how can I adjust my research habits of traditional scholarship in order to accommodate the latitude and flexibility required of multimodal scholarship? I'm not sure I've figured out the best method yet, but it got me thinking about different ways of organizing information.

In thinking of URT as a large database, I decided that maybe creating my own database could help me with visualizing my research. As an Excel junkie, I find that one of the most useful functions in the program is the use of pivot tables. By pivoting information on data tables, you can view a massive amount of information in a number of different ways that can create arguments through data analysis.

Research/
information
organization

Writing/
essayistic

Visualization/
mapping

Timeline

11/08/10:

- 13:54 Ticket **#40** (bug fix: viewing a record entry) closed by solomonr
fixed: fixed with **changeset:90** and **changeset:91**
- 13:53 Changeset **[91]** by solomonr
fixing crash if no sound uploaded w/ this record (**ticket:40**)
- 13:50 Changeset **[90]** by solomonr
fixing crash if no video uploaded w/ this record (**ticket:40**)
- 13:38 Ticket **#40** (bug fix: viewing a record entry) created by irishj
<http://urt.rorys.webfactional.com/research/record/view/21>
- 03:27 Changeset **[89]** by solomonr
improving display of records in browse/list view (**ticket:22**) but not sure ...
- 01:44 Ticket **#38** (another bug (setting up a sub-project)) closed by solomonr
fixed: fixed with **changeset:88** again, this was caused by another user error that ...
- 01:42 Changeset **[88]** by solomonr
fixing stack dump on form error when creating subproject (**ticket:38**)
- 00:56 Ticket **#37** (bug fix: tried to set up a project) closed by solomonr
fixed: fixed with **changeset:87** It would've been helpful to note in the ticket ...
- 00:52 Changeset **[87]** by solomonr
fixing stack dump on invalid form while trying create a project ...
- 00:47 Changeset **[86]** by solomonr
displaying form error messages on login form

Custom Query (3 matches)

Status: accepted (1 match)

Ticket	Summary	Owner	Type	Priority	Component	Version
#26	create 'draft' mode for record	solomonr	enhancement	add to milestone later	Web Interface, Backend	0.0.0

Status: new (2 matches)

Ticket	Summary	Owner	Type	Priority	Component	Version
#28	create note to reference / augment	solomonr	task	normal	Web Interface, Backend	0.0.0
#39	Add citation field	solomonr	enhancement	normal	Web Interface, Backend	0.0.0

USER SCENARIOS

Archival Researcher Posting a Map I've discovered a collection of maps showing the evolution of Manhattan's and Brooklyn's postal infrastructure – e.g., the addition of new post offices, the development of delivery routes, etc. I'm assuming that I don't simply post these maps to a single point on the map, but, rather, to an "area" encompassing Manhattan and Brooklyn. I imagine I have to first draw an "area" on the map corresponding to the area covered by each of the maps, then post the maps one at a time? Then, how would I link these maps so that a potential user can then recognize that they're a linked series; s/he could see a list of all the "postal maps," then perhaps open them all simultaneously and increase/decrease their opacity to see how, for example, 1910's infrastructure morphs into 1920's. How can I also create a layer with my own "linear" argument? I'd like to offer some introductory comments, then control the order in which a user opens the maps, and point out, through a series of superimposed "comment boxes" (or through some other form of commentary), specific significant areas of change on the maps.

Archival Researcher Creating a Network of Individual Areas I've created a list of wireless hotspots in the five boroughs. Because I'd like to indicate the coverage of each WiFi zone, I'm assuming I should plot each on URT as an "area," rather than a site? I'm also not entirely sure about the exact range of a few of these zones, so I took an educated guess when plotting my area on the map, and I indicated in the database that I'm "uncertain" about the exact perimeter. Should the outline of an "uncertain" area appear differently from that of a "definite" area? Although I'm sure some visitors would find use in reading about these hotspots one at a time, I'd also like to show them in relation to one another – to see how they're distributed throughout the city, what areas are over- and under-served, etc. How do I link these various sites into a hotspot map "layer"?

Archival Researcher Posting a Photo of a Particular Site I'm posting a set of archival photos that show how pneumatic tubes were essential to inter-office communication in skyscrapers. In particular, I'd like to show how, if it weren't for the tubes integrated into the walls of the Western Union building, various departments of the business, spread across several floors, would have had no way to work efficiently with one another. I'd like to show a "section" (vertical) view of the building, with my photos tagged on the relevant floors. I'd also like to somehow draw a connection to the pneumatic tube network running beneath the building, alongside the subway. (Because verticality is a defining characteristic of NY, I think we need to find a way to make the "Z" axis integral to our mapping. Rather than simply showing verticality through "street view" photos that pop up at particular sites on the cartographic map, I'd like to think about how we can give equal prominence to all three dimensions of the city.)

Field Researcher Posting an Original Video I've made a video of various Telco Hotels throughout the city. Because this video pertains to particular sites, yet also addresses the underground wires that connect them, I'd like to "link" this video both to specific buildings and to the "network" they constitute. I'm assuming I therefore create a "path" on URT, and, at the same time, tag particular "nodes" on that "path." How do I then link the video to all of these individual sites and to the corresponding path, without having to post the video multiple times – once for each site?

Site administration

Research		
Citation data	Add	Change
Geography area data	Add	Change
Geography path data	Add	Change
Geography point data	Add	Change
Image data	Add	Change
Notes	Add	Change
Numerical data	Add	Change
Projects	Add	Change
Record types	Add	Change
Records	Add	Change
Roles	Add	Change
Sound data	Add	Change
Text data	Add	Change

Recent Actions

My Actions

Tube Station

Record type

“A map of New York City, divided by zip code and labeled with yearly circulation figures, is a historical reference point for other socially important goings-on: what else was happening in the East Village in the 1977 that caused New York Times circulation to nosedive in a concentrated area? Was a loss of interest in the newspaper a social cause, or a social effect? The beauty of using a multimodal platform for this research is the open, infinite number of historical connections that may either overlap lightly or connect directly with other vistas of cultural history.”

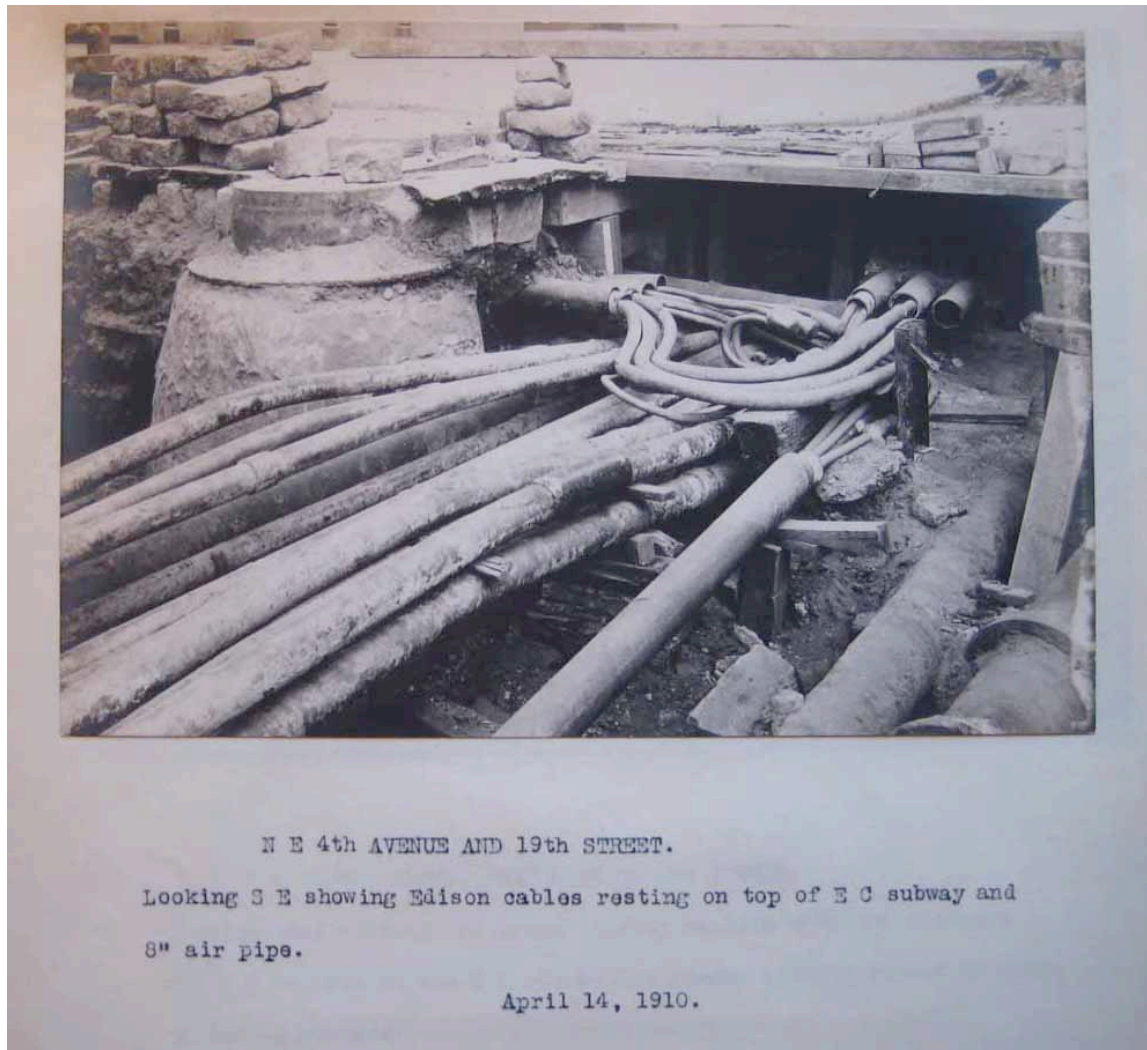
“I think that some comprehensive overview of infrastructure and usage over time is important in itself, in that it helps us to understand how this city has grown and modernized over time, but where it really gains value is in its ability to be applied to other observations and other sets of data that lie outside of my direct area of concern. In short, it is in the URT setting that such a mapping project's fruits can really be appreciated.”

Shannon Mattern, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Media Studies and Film
The New School

matterns@newschool.edu
www.wordsinspace.net

Excavating: Digging Into Urban Media History Through the Archive

"Every time an incision is made in the pavement, the noisy surgeons expose ganglia that are tangled beyond belief."
– E.B. White, *"This Is New York"*



National Archives and Records Administration, Records of the Post Office Department, Box No. 1, Folder:
"Photographs (Not Used in Report)".

Abstract

This fall semester I'll be teaching a new graduate seminar-studio at The New School. The course, "Urban Media Archaeology," will function in part as a pilot test for both a new interactive research *platform* and new research *partnerships* with a variety of local archives and special collections. My presentation at "Reimagining the Archive" would demonstrate our "Urban Research Tool" as a work-in-progress and address the collaborative archival research process that is generating the platform's content, which in turn drives modifications of the tool's form and functionality.

“Urban Media Archaeology” will address the material layering of historical media infrastructures in New York: telegraph and telephone wires, radio broadcast zones, postal routes, foreign-language newspapers, WiFi hotspots, etc. (see www.wordsinspace.net/wordpress/?p=836). Students will conduct secondary and primary research on their chosen topics, then build a “multimodal” argument using, for instance, videotaped interviews with urban planners and telephone workers, scanned archival documents, GIS data, or custom animations. All the while, students will consider how they might construct a *collective* class-wide argument – how they might use the cross-referencing and layering capabilities of the interactive platform to explore the synergies between their research and their classmates’.

I have consulted with local archives and special collections to identify primary resources that could be of use to my students; many of these institutions have agreed to grant us special permission to reproduce material from their collections on our map. Of particular interest to some of our library and archive partners, who recognize ours as a “Digital Humanities” (DH) project, is that, unlike many of the DH initiatives on which they’ve partnered in the past, ours does not involve mass digitization of collections without forecasting and tracking the use of materials in those collections. Our research will involve the judicious digitization of select materials, as well as their thorough citation, so that partner institutions can trace their materials’ use on the site. And rather than simply posting these archival materials in an online gallery – in what one archivist called a “hey, look what I found in the archives!” display – we will emphasize the careful integration of these archival materials into the development of a “multimodal” argument.

Among the many relevant local collections are the “New York Mail and Newspaper Transportation Company” Records at the New York Public Library; photograph and ephemera collections in the New-York Historical Society; and various collections regarding East Village history the Fales Library at New York University (see www.wordsinspace.net/wordpress/?p=858 for more). Students will also be encouraged to conduct their own primary research: to interview experts, to photo- and video-document their research sites, to conduct oral histories, to create field recordings. The site will thus not only draw on the material in existing archives, but constitute its own de facto archive of primary resources on New York’s media history.

My presentation will examine how our research platform draws on these archives’ collections, makes use of the material in those collections, and inspires the creation of new primary research material.

<http://www.wordsinspace.net/urban-media-archaeology/2010-fall/>