

Perspectives on “Transmedia”: A Trans-Disciplinary Symposium
March 6, 2009
University of Western Ontario

Scholars in literary, film and media studies are well aware that boundaries between different media have become more permeable and problematic as they migrate to digital formats. As McLuhan remarked (of electronic media more generally), the content of new media is often old media. Recent scholarship, however, has enabled us to chart these boundaries, together with their transgressions, in new and fruitful ways. In *Convergence Culture* (2006), Henry Jenkins coined the term “transmedia storytelling” to describe the “co-creative” dynamic of corporate strategy and audience participation that has driven the popularity of entertainment franchises: a dynamic that has explosive implications for the boundary between intellectual property and audience engagement. Linda Hutcheon’s *Theory of Adaptation* (2006) investigates adaptation as both a product, involving “acknowledged, extensive and specific transcoding,” and a process, involving “creative interpretation” and “intertextual engagement.” What is involved in adaptation to another medium? Who owns the adaptation? What is the difference between engagement and appropriation? And what regulatory practices are we prepared to level against intertextual activity, particularly when such activity manifests itself in new technologies of expression and dissemination?

These theoretical questions acquire a fresh urgency, when we consider the increasingly pivotal role of intellectual property as the preferred instrument of corporations, governments, and (lest we forget) educational institutions for setting the terms of contemporary cultural production and the rules of audience engagement, and for regulating the uses of media (old and new). How we theorize the transmedia activities of adaptation, engagement, appropriation, work, expression and participation has profound implications for the digital culture we allow to emerge, and the mechanisms we use to classify, organize, regulate and provide access to cultural artefacts.

Bringing together scholars and students from across the arts, Humanities, and social sciences, this symposium (organized jointly by FIMS and the Department of English) seeks to map (and expand) the contested (and suggestive) terrain of “transmedia” by subjecting Jenkins’ keyword to the critical pressure of interdisciplinary investigation. We welcome proposals for 20-minute papers or presentations on topics relevant to this problematic, which may include:

What does “transmedia” mean?
Methodologies for transmedia studies
Transmedia and Canadian culture
Theorizing transmedia practice
The work of reproduction in the age of mechanical art
Transmedia texts and genre
ACTA and Bill C-61: Harper’s Canada and Copyright
Copyleft and the Creative Commons: copyright alternatives and their implications
Adaptation among the disciplines
Transmedia ecology: channeling / challenging McLuhan

Please e-mail proposals to Dr. Mark A. McCutcheon at mmccutc7@uwo.ca by January 30, 2009.