

Sociomateriality in the Sandbox: Visually Oriented Documenting Practices of Young Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

Entrepreneurs are important drivers of innovation. Their work is highly creative while also requiring a distinct paper trail for processes such as incorporation of a business, filing of patents, and management of shifting resources. In order for entrepreneurial team members to interact in productive and creative ways, they need to establish shared and stable frames of reference, a sociomaterial field to support collaborative decision-making and coordination. This paper explores how young entrepreneurs build a sociomaterial field as they form their organization. In doing so, the authors draw on three bodies of work: document theory, presence/absence as articulated by John Law and visual materiality. Through exploratory analysis of an in-depth field study of a 12-week bootcamp for student entrepreneurs organized by a research university in the Northeast the authors describe three types of document oscillations emerging as the entrepreneurs build their sociomaterial fields: 1) Personal, Collaborative, Custodial; 2) Aspirational, Operationalized, Contractual, Standardized; 3) Temporary, In Progress, Stable. The approach developed in this paper contributes to the sociomaterial literature by highlighting the oscillating nature of visual materiality.

Keywords: documenting practices, visual information, sociomateriality, information behavior, social and community informatics, qualitative data analysis
