

Digital Anthropology: Projects and Platforms

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Last Sunday in Montreal, I was part of the panel [Digital Anthropology: Projects and Projections](#) organized by [Mike and Kim Fortun](#) from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

This post will highlight the groundbreaking projects created by this diverse group of anthropologists. There is a synergy in what is being done, and I want to gather it together in one place online.

I'm going to provide a list of people and projects first, and then provide a bit of commentary on the panel itself. Finally, I'll go over each project, and the accompanying talk, in depth.

I know there are other great online projects out there, so please feel free to highlight them in the comments. I also look forward to what people have to say about these projects and platforms overall.

The Projects

The projects are listed in the order of their presentation at the American Anthropological Association meeting:

[Jason Jackson](#) (Indiana), [Open Folklore Project](#) – open access scholarship for an entire field

[Kimberly Christen](#) (Washington State), [Mukurtu](#) & [Traditional Knowledge Licenses](#) – an open source community content management system for indigenous communities

[Alison Kenner](#) (RPI), [Cultural Anthropology](#) – a traditional journal going digital

[Michael Wesch](#) (Kansas State), [Mediated Cultures](#) – student learning and YouTube anthropology

[Daniel Lende](#) (South Florida), [Neuroanthropology blog](#)

[Mark Turin](#) (Cambridge & Yale), [Digital Himalaya](#) – multimedia archives for anthropology of the Himalayan region

[Kim Fortun](#) (RPI), [Asthma Files](#) – asthma understood from diverse scholarly and social perspectives

[Kate Hennessy](#) (Simon Fraser), [Inuvialuit Living History](#) – reforming museum & indigenous collaborations

[Carrie Heitman](#) (Virginia), [Chaco Research Archive](#) – public outreach, old data, and new forms

[Alex Golub](#) (Hawaii), [Savage Minds blog](#)

[Giovanni Da Col](#) (Cambridge), [Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory](#) – high-end open access online journal

On Digital Anthropology: Five Reflections

The Digital Anthropology panel drove home five conclusions for me:

-As many presenters emphasized, we view building these projects and platforms online as a core part of our scholarship. The panelists brought a consistent focus on these new mediums, emphasizing them over any particular disciplinary message. Creating these platforms takes effort and imagination. These are innovations beyond content. As one panelist said, just as archaeologists get credit for setting up and managing large digs, so too should the creation of these anthropological sites online.

-What we do online has grown out of what we do as anthropologists everyday. Digital anthropology forms a core part of how we try to accomplish an overall anthropological mission, from working with communities to getting our data and ideas out to the public, from re-creating corridor and conference conversations to re-imagining ethnography. These projects show us what anthropology does and can be through digital forms.

-As the panel itself demonstrated, life online can bring anthropologists together in new ways. Certainly the double session was “four field” anthropology, with archaeology, biological anthropology, cultural anthropology, and linguistic anthropology referenced in different ways, and an explicit applied emphasis running through many presentations. Public and scholarly goals often have to be articulated together with online platforms, since it’s not easy to segment off one type of audience from another, whether through pay walls and society memberships or simply by the physical bounds of a museum or university. These platforms also permit new ways to connect with students, and to not segment one’s own self in distinct professional and personal domains – as in teaching, jokes and personal stories are permitted online. Each project works with these inherent possibilities of audience and form and presentation, making choices to suit what is being built. These choices, as much as any disciplinary affiliation, are part of what make some projects different from others. Given the rapidly changing digital landscape and the ease of modification, the projects then get re-envisioned and re-purposed over time.

-Digital anthropology brings with it important critical considerations. Open access is often presented as a be-all end-all ideal, but it should be questioned. Open access for all is not the right model for many forms of traditional knowledge. Open access often means students and researchers and teachers given away their work for free, further undermining their economic power and often benefiting for-profit companies. How to best assess the impact of these forms of scholarship – from adapting artistic portfolio or archaeological site management models to creating new forms of peer review – is an urgent task that will require institution building. Instead of waiting for others to take this task on, the panel consistently emphasized developing our own models for assessment and review. That will ensure we get credit for what we do, rather than getting slotted into institutional invisibility.

-Successful models have some consistent elements. One of the most important is developing a curation model online – the ability to bring together diverse ideas and forms of information into one site, whether this is a digital archive, a health problem, or a set of ideas. Closely related to this is having a specific focus for content. At present, the specialist model is succeeding for anthropologists online, rather than a generalist model. Some sites take on broader roles as they grow, but most start with a central organizing idea. As Alex Golub said, we do home-brewed models better. These offer more growth opportunities for anthropologists than chasing after some professional mirage of what big companies do. But home-brewed approaches also require attention to technical details, whether adapting a professional approach to what anthropology does to building collaborative efforts to pull off larger projects to working with software companies and developers to get the sort of functionality we want. Increasingly sites are building public outreach and editorial review into the overall project, two important considerations that new projects should take on. Finally, the internet remains a place for possibilities and for play, and many sites mix imagination, humor, personal voices, and other human elements into what they do.

The Projects at Depth

Creating novel online archives. Anthropological ideas transformed into software engineering. A new sub-field that emerged through a blog. Orphaned data brought together and made available to a new generation of scholars. The informant’s perspective delivered directly. New products for communities to manage their knowledge and heritage. The importance and tensions of open access. Each project below has its own character. As was said repeatedly, more anthropologists should be aware of what is

already happening online, and how what we do there is driving the field forward. These projects are changing anthropology. So here they are as a group:

Open Folklore

[Open Folklore](#) is being created through a joint effort of the American Folklore Society and the Indiana University-Bloomington Libraries. Its main goal is to “make a greater number and variety of useful resources, both published and unpublished, available for the field of folklore studies and the communities with which folklore scholars partner.”

The site highlights Books, Websites, Grey Literature, and Journals as primary categories for access. At its core, Open Folklore does curation online, combining archival functions with access to high-quality information. This combination solves the lack of preservation and inconsistent quality problems often encountered online, and wraps that curation combo into an open-access model.

Ultimately, Open Folklore will become a multi-faceted resource, combining digitization and digital preservation of data, publications, educational materials, and scholarship in folklore; promoting open access to these materials; and providing an online search tool to enhance discoverability of relevant, reliable resources for folklore studies.

Open Folklore represents a well-conceived and well-executed collaborative model, with important partners in folklore studies coming together with libraries interested in open access and university presses pushing into new arenas of publishing. Open Folklore is not a lone researcher model, and shows how professional societies can take leadership roles in increasing access to their research and publications.

In his paper “Another World Is Possible: Open Folklore As Library-Scholarly Society Partnership,” Jason Baird Jackson emphasized how being late to the digital scene actually helped folklore studies. The American Anthropological Association got stuck into a commercial publishing model that is now very difficult to leave, largely for how finances and membership interests are now joined. Open Folklore was able to pursue the open-access route once many of the tools were in place, and with recognition of mistakes made by other fields in negotiating the bridge to the increasingly online delivery of scholarly information.

Mukurtu

[Mukurtu](#) is an open access software package built to help indigenous community manage their digital content. It is built on Drupal, and includes an innovative approach to allow access in ways that make sense to local communities – access based on traditional roles, membership, kinship, and other relevant categories. Overall, the Mukurtu enterprise emphasizes (1) Cultural protocol-based access control, (2) Flexible templates, (3) Multiple licensing options, and (4) Free and open source software.

Kim Christen, Mukurtu and indigenous communities are also integrating Traditional Knowledge Licenses into the overall digital effort.

At Mukurtu we know that managing traditional knowledge is as significant as preserving digital cultural heritage. In order to provide tools to help Indigenous communities manage their traditional knowledge we have worked with intellectual property specialists and lawyers to create a set of traditional knowledge licenses that work with traditional copyright and creative commons licenses to provide flexible and adaptable sets of agreements that clearly state the access and use parameters for materials (at the item and collections level). These licenses also provide a starting point for dialogue with others who may own Indigenous materials and not know the proper ways to manage and circulate them. Our hope is that these licenses will be a starting point for open, respectful and mutually beneficial conversations between the many stakeholders who are involved with and care about Indigenous cultural heritage materials.

In her talk “Open Anthropology: Where to Go From Here”, Kim Christen made two points which bear mention here. First, she emphasized how as an anthropologist, she was able to bring an unfamiliar

problem to software engineers and help them understand what indigenous communities wanted in terms of design. Open access is generally taken to mean access to everyone, which is not a relevant model for traditional knowledge. Designers actually got excited to do something different once they understood the problem well, something that the combination of anthropology and a community-based approach facilitated.

Christen also spoke of the “stranglehold of openness,” where openness as free access to all is taken as the end goal for all projects that fall under the “open” label. Instead of falling under the spell of a progressive ideal emanating from centers of digital power, anthropologists need to consider a diversity of means to achieve openness, and to deliver alternative ways to articulate what openness means for varied communities.

Cultural Anthropology Journal

[Cultural Anthropology](#), one of the leading scholarly journals for cultural anthropologists, is going through a transformation from a print journal to a digital journal. And they are doing that in the confines of the overall American Anthropological Association’s contract to publish all AAA journals with the commercial publisher Wiley-Blackwell. Cultural Anthropology has two main efforts online – the creation of thematic virtual issues, and the publication of online supplementary materials for each quarterly issue. Virtual issues have covered youth, water, and cosmopolitanism. Supplementary materials include author interviews, author information, additional references, relevant links, and additional illustrations.

Cultural Anthropology is gearing up for more digital engagement:

Under the current editorship, CA is committed to, and indeed sees as critically important, not only maintaining but also advancing the journal’s digital interface with the future. Current plans include expanding the discussion boards and encouraging broad-scale participation, both inside and outside the discipline, where conversations are staged around pressing events, vexed disciplinary issues (ethnographic futures, digitality, human rights activism, for example), or significant new texts.

CA would also like to raise the stakes in considering what a digital future might entail, and will consider devoting an entire issue of the journal during the editorship’s first two years to creative digital submissions. That entirely virtual issue would seek out submissions, both inside the discipline and beyond, that explore the use of hypertext or visual archives or even something like a Rem Koolhaas videography of Lagos. In diverse ways, information sharing and communication with multiple others are strategically important to the future of the field. CA will be aggressive, creative, and forward-looking in outfitting and adapting to the digital future.

In her talk “Digitizing Cultural Anthropology: Cultivating Community Around Scholarly Publishing,” Alison Kenner highlighted the tension of trying to go digital when the overall AAA format reflects a continued commitment to the printing of many small journals and the use of paywalls and membership dues to restrict access. She noted the irony that the publishers actually like the new type of content and interactions being facilitated by Cultural Anthropology, since the journal is giving it away for free. While this open access effort helps innovate and brings more notice to the journal, it also works to increase their profits.

This sort of joint public/profit effort might represent a new model in the making, but it also indicates how much the playing field of publishing is being determined by commercial companies interested first in preserving their business model. Innovation in this arena is needed, as well as questioning of how much we want to give away our own work for free, especially if it simply helps others profit from what we are doing.

Mediated Cultures

Working with students, Michael Wesch has created indelible portraits of students today through video compositions and insightful examinations of [life mediated by Internet phenomena](#) like YouTube. This is digital ethnography, in collaboration with students and in examination of the type of mediated lives

these students live. Wesch took his ethnographic work in Papua New Guinea and re-worked that approach to Web 2.0.

Wesch's videos have been seen by millions, and this approach to scholarly communication – collaborative, online, video-based – has had a tremendous popular impact, and always represent a radically different alternative than traditional monographs and scholarly papers.

Unfortunately Wesch couldn't make the AAAs meeting, so I only have his talk title – “Mediating Cultures: The Importance of Doing Digital Ethnography In the Classroom.” But here's a taste of what he might have said, drawing on his 2011 article [The Old Revolution](#):

The urgency of our movement is... grounded in broad cultural and technological shifts pervasive enough to be recognized by virtually everybody in our society. The tools that enable us to experiment with new modes of education are mostly free, and they can be implemented in many diverse bits and pieces without the need for large-scale top-down planning or intervention. And perhaps most importantly, [this revolution] is driven by what one might call a “rethinking the basics” movement, in which educators everywhere cannot help but see a disconnect between their traditional modes of teaching and the world in which we all now live.

Neuroanthropology

[Neuroanthropology](#) is this blog, so I won't say much about it in particular. Greg Downey and I co-founded it in 2007, with our initial discussion of the idea and decision to go forward taking place at the 2007 AAA meetings. As I opened my talk, if someone had told me four years ago that I would be standing at a panel on digital anthropology this year, I would have said, WTF!

But this meeting really marked the development of neuroanthropology as a field, cultivated through the blog – the edits for our forthcoming MIT edited volume *The Encultured Brain: An Introduction to Neuroanthropology* arrived in my inbox on Thursday, and that same day, a young group of scholars held their own double session developed around the theme of neuroanthropology, where I served as a discussant.

My talk focused on broader points than just that specialized development. Besides serving as a medium to develop a set of ideas and make connections among scholars, the Neuroanthropology blog became part of how I teach and increasingly has offered a platform to respond to public controversies, like the “science” controversy last year and Florida Governor Rick Scott's recent attacks on anthropology. The blog also offered a place to develop a voice, with posts ranging over serious scholarship to fun videos to round ups of news and more. The inherent multiplicity of online platforms – that we can do with them pretty much whatever we want – resonates well with the complexity of anthropology and with our own multiple interests as people.

Online platforms, particularly blogs, also get us to practice writing. It is something we don't do enough as anthropologists, nor get our students to do. One of the biggest benefits for me of the blog has been the regular practice of writing – of sharing my ideas, insights, and ethnography on a consistent basis with an audience. Getting students to blog – to develop a post, revise it, and then have a definite audience who will read what they write – is a huge difference from turning in a final paper, with a distracted audience of one – the professor.

The final point I made in my talk is that what we do online counts as scholarship. We should not accept that others slot what we do into their pre-set categories of research, teaching, or service. These are not natural fits with what we actually do online, which can easily cross all three in the course of a week or a month. Moreover, we need to develop new forms to make our online work count, as Greg has also emphatically written here in [Blogging for Promotion: An Immodest Proposal](#). We have within our power to create the forms that we will use to do peer review and to assess the scholarly impact of our own work. We need to take seriously that form of institution building as we go forward.

Digital Himalaya

[Digital Himalaya](#) has built an archive of anthropological materials online, with a focus on ethnographic and linguistic research in the Himalaya region. Like other archival projects featured in this panel, Digital Himalaya is a “project to develop digital collection, storage and distribution strategies for multimedia anthropological information.” The Digital Himalaya collection includes music, film, photographs and maps, in addition to written ethnographic and linguistic information.

One of its centerpieces is Alan Macfarlane’s Thak archive, documenting his work in the Nepali village Thak from 1969 through the present. This is longitudinal, multimedia research, and without existing in this form, will not be available to other scholars to do original research on a time and place that, like archaeological sites, no longer accessible for ethnography.

Census data, as well as general economic and social data collected at regular intervals over the entire 30-year period are included in the collection, along with 3000+ photographs and over a hundred hours of film. The collection is unique in its time depth, allowing researchers to understand social change over an extended period. Each entry has been carefully cross-referenced with other elements in the collection, creating a complex, multi-level databank of information about one ethnic community in Nepal on the micro-level, and about social change in contemporary Nepal on the macro-level.

Mark Turin is also involved in another worthy online effort, [World Oral Literature Project](#) – “An urgent global initiative to document and make accessible endangered oral literatures before they disappear without record.”

In his talk “Born Archival: The Ebb and Flow of Digital Documents From the Field,” Mark Turin highlighted the coordination and partnerships building a robust archive takes. This is not a solo project, with material simply slapped on the web. Moreover, such an effort can become a defining part of one’s career. One thing that definitely impressed me is this project’s time depth – Digital Himalaya first started in 2000. Now it has grown from an initial repository for research to addressing the “crisis of documentation” that faces anthropology and many other disciplines. Many older researchers are living their research in the garage, or donating to libraries where it simply sits, without cataloging and without context. The digital effort is not only one of creating an accessible archive, but also connecting with the context of the work itself, thus greatly facilitating the ability for other scholars to make use of such materials.

The Asthma Files

[The Asthma Files](#) present asthma in the complexity of its societal impact and the multidisciplinary research and action being done to address this medical problem.

Researchers from many different disciplines and perspectives, in many different geographic and organizational contexts, have tried to figure asthma out, but it remains elusive. Asthma sufferers and caregivers also struggle daily to make sense of asthma, trying to understand the rhythms of incidence, triggers, and effective modes of care, prevention and communication. The Asthma Files project aims to bring all these groups into conversation.

The Asthma Files is first and foremost an ethnographic project, aimed at representing the multiple voices, ideas, and texts that surround this problem that affects over 300 million people worldwide. Using text, images, video, and audio, the Files come in different folders that at present focus on caring for asthma, accounting for asthma, asthmatic spaces, communicating asthma, experiencing asthma, and knowing asthma.

Besides the file approach, Mike and Kim Fortun have crafted the Asthma Files around substantive and design logics that help frame the overall project, providing it coherence in material presentation and in the articulation of assumptions and principles. Substantive logics “explicate why asthma is an important and interesting object of study, and what kind of work needs to be done by the Asthma Files.” This substance includes “the subalternity of environmental health problems,” “subjected to asthma care,” “promising consensus in transdisciplinary research,” and “genes in our kNots,” on gene-environment interaction taking precedence over genetic determinism in both research and societal explanations.

Design logics focus on presenting different perspectives on asthma, the vantage points that community members, doctors, researchers, and many others have on the overall phenomena. Design logics aim to articulate those vantage points, “explicating them to understand their logics and their assumptions, their evidence and their oversights, their limits and their possibilities — aiming to leverage what historian of science Evelyn Fox Keller calls ‘explanatory pluralism’.” One of the most important of these design logics is focused on the site itself, the “[proposed Organizational Structure for the Asthma Files Website](#).” This approach is important in the context of this post because it offers a model for how to think about presenting complex information online using a project-oriented approach.

The Asthma Files thus provide us with at least four perspectives, or four takes, on asthma. First comes the basic ethnographic goal of representing informants’ views, which can often be done more directly using an online platform that permits a great deal of primary material than a traditional solo-authored text. Second, the Asthma Files articulate the underlying analytic lenses of the project, of a social science project that has engaged a wide community and aims to help make sense of asthma. Third, the design and the architecture of the online project are also made clear, that intersection of form and project participants. Finally, the Asthma Files has a clearly articulated goal of facilitating new understandings, of using anthropology to coordinate a transdisciplinary effort to understand a highly complex problem.

In her talk “Experimenting with the Asthma Files 3.0,” Kim Fortun took us through the re-tooling process that has been part of creating the Asthma Files. As the project has grown and new design problems have emerged and new software architectures have become available, the Asthma Files have gone through a process of re-creating what the overall site actually does. While technical people simply called this normal, Kim hinted at the inherent frustrations of moving from one platform to another. But from my outside view, each new platform presents the possibility of creating something that captures the overall intellectual effort better.

The Asthma Files squarely addresses something that Greg and I have talked about before on Neuroanthropology, but haven’t really figured out how to address. A blog presents a singular flow of information, with some organization and referencing provided through categories and tags. Nevertheless, most blogs face a serious limitation – the front page is the main way to get information, and there is not a way to easily access the various threads of ideas and themes that flow through what is written and presented. The emphasis on different design and substantive logics provides a way to articulate those different threads, and thus a format to present complex information hidden behind the front page in a more accessible and understandable way.

I was also struck by the radical re-envisioning of ethnography that the Asthma Files presents to us. Here is ethnography beyond the book form. Here is ethnography beyond the author who presents singular interpretations. The Fortun’s approach combines collaborative efforts with their own work in a novel mix. It permits the sort of informant “thick description” that many ethnographers don’t regularly access – here various informants can help present their own information and interpretation in ways not permitted in traditional articles or monographs. As the Fortuns write, “The project is imagined as an experimental ethnographic project, and as an experiment in new forms of science communication and health literacy.”

Inuvialuit Living History

Roderick MacFarlane, a Hudson Bay trader, visited the Inuvialuit community and the Anderson River region in 1857. From 1861 to 1866, MacFarlane collected 5000 natural history specimens and 300 cultural artifacts for the new Smithsonian Institution in Washington. The collection has never been exhibited in its entirety, and still today, remains largely locked away in storage vaults.

The [Inuvialuit Living History](#) project changed that dynamic. As the [2009-2011 project report](#) describes, a group of Inuvialuit, academic researchers, and digital specialists spent a week at the Smithsonian with the collection in 2009, laying the foundation for the Living History project. Subsequently, the trip “launched a much broader program of outreach with Inuvialuit youth, Elders, and community members.”

The website is meant to provide a view into the emerging and dynamic relationship between Inuvialuit peoples and the MacFarlane Collection, and to promote the collection as a place for learning and teaching. The website will feature teachers' resources and interactive lesson plans tailored to meet the requirements for the Northwest Territories curriculum, so that Inuvialuit youth can reference their own culture and history online. We use artifact descriptions from the Smithsonian, and those that were developed in the course of this project, as well as video and photographs of our workshop with Inuvialuit elders, youth, cultural workers at the Smithsonian, and our team's consultations in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, to show how the MacFarlane collection is becoming a "living collection" once again through its reconnection to Inuvialuit people.

In her talk "Cultural Production In the Virtual Museum: From the Smithsonian Institution's MacFarlane Collection to 'Inuvialuit Living History'," Kate Hennessy highlighted how this digital project helps rework what museum collections are and can do. Here the overall project acts as a mediator between a museum and a community, with the website being built as the core mediator of that process. But without the background work – the personal connections built, the visit to the museum, the full documenting of the collection – the website itself would not have the necessary strength. In other words, people and content and connections are what make a digital site come alive. It's not fancy graphics or new technology, but all the work in the background that really creates a site as something alive on the internet. That is an important point for all anthropology projects going digital – our work, our ideas, our connections to communities, that is what drives the best type of online engagement.

Chaco Research Archive

The [Chaco Research Archive](#) focuses on the famous archaeological site of Chaco Canyon and brings a century of archaeological research into the digital age. The project does public outreach, digital archiving, and research innovation in one package. Given the popularity of Chaco Canyon, the Chaco Research Archive helps visitors "explore the canyon" and roam through an "image archive."

The Archive has also brought reams of previously inaccessible information into one place. This approach required serious work – "we visited each institution and combed through all the major collections identifying, entering, and acquiring those information sources. Once those materials were digitized, we indexed them for data processing to track which accessions pertained to which rooms at which sites." In this way, work previously held in small collections or largely inaccessible to multiple researchers at once were re-created in one place.

The Chaco Research Archive also innovated with their collection work. Search functions, interactive maps providing detailed information, and the insertion of additional information like tree-ring data now make the archive a resource for doing original research – doctoral students are already actively using the archive. The Chaco Research Archive also brought new sources of information into the overall database, in particular the long history of taking before and after photographs of "archaeological stabilization" of sites. This digital record not only provide some of the earliest known photos of the sites, it helps researchers understand what changes and repairs have been made over time through Park Service activity dating back to 1934.

To date, the Chaco Research Archive team has processed over 15,000 images, created an architectural stabilization database of another 10,000 images, entered over 40,000 specimens, and processed nearly 500 rooms from three different sites.

We hope by making these legacy data available to a wider body of scholars that this resource will facilitate our ability to answer new questions as research evolves and promote understanding of the full complexity of Chacoan society.

In her talk "Historic Legacies and Emerging Research Possibilities: The Chaco Research Archive," Carrie Heitman gave us an in-depth picture of why this archive is so important for archaeology, from connecting with Native American communities to tourists who want to know more to young researchers who discover new ways to make use of the archive. What was fascinating was how the archive helped the research come alive – this presentation struck me as the most content-rich of all of

them, yet the work put into creating the archive facilitated my easy understanding of the archaeological details.

I was also struck how archaeology provides a model for thinking about the demands of curation and access to sites, just that these are digital ones. In discussion of peer review, artistic production (e.g., portfolios) was brought up as an existing model for scholarly evaluation that online scholars could adapt to help explain why our work matters. Similarly, archaeology offers a model for the coordination of lots of material and how to help researchers and the public access it and make sense of what it means.

Savage Minds

[Savage Minds](#) is another site that I hope most people know – the leading cultural anthropology blog out there, and a great voice for anthropology online. After all, Savage Minds was ranked “7th out of the 50 top science blogs across all scientific disciplines” by Nature in 2006, and called “the central online site of the North American anthropological community” whose “value is found in the quality of the posts by the site’s central contributors, a cadre of bright, engaged, young anthropology professors” in 2010 in American Anthropologist.

Its commitment to making anthropology accessible, using a model of strong posts and robust commentary, is one of the hallmarks of Savage Minds. Savage Minds is also a great example of innovation through multiple authors, with younger anthropologists stretching their legs and finding their voices here, often starting with guest posts and then growing into the role of contributor. This approach has helped keep Savage Minds a vibrant place to discover anthropology since 2005.

Alex Golub’s talk had a fancy title – “The Structural Transformations of Anthropology’s Public Sphere: Lessons from A Decade of Anthropology Blogging” – but that didn’t stop Alex from delivering a rousing and inspirational call for us to do more as anthropologists online. I particularly liked how he presented a vision of Savage Minds as where the “real conference” happens. Savage Minds is not about the panel presentations, the planned events with their delivery of straight content. Rather, Savage Minds provides the commentary at the bar afterwards, the conversations in the hallways, the real exchange and discussion that takes places in departments and in conference halls around the country.

Golub also advocated for anthropology to embrace a home grown approach to our online projects. Rather than following a professionalization model – of chasing after something like Wiley-Blackwell and for-profit publishing backed up by money, law, and company clout – we should develop our tastier craft beer model. This home brew approach has greater potential to yield original voices, and will avoid the many compromises and limits that come with chasing after that professional platform dream. This advocacy for a “do it ourselves” approach is important, and was a major highlight of the overall session for me.

Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory

[Hau](#) is a high-end effort to establish an online and open access cultural anthropology journal. Take its inaugural issue, due out any day – it focuses on “Archaeologies of Kin(g)ship” and includes peer-reviewed articles by the following people: Marshall Sahlins, David Graeber, Chris Gregory, Roy Wagner, Annemarie Mol, and Laura Nader. In other words, Hau is largely a traditional journal, but with the commitment to providing its papers to all. In contrast to a Savage Minds home brewed model, this is a professional model, providing open access to privileged content and an online platform to project powerful voices.

Like all the projects covered here, Hau has a definite focus that should help it succeed. In this case, Hau “aims to situate ethnography as the prime heuristic of anthropology, and return it to the forefront of conceptual developments in the discipline.” The endorsements capture the proposed dynamic clearly – “the grounding of anthropological knowledge in and as ethnography” and “this kind of journal, one that insists that we attend to and begin to rethink the crucial links between our very original methods of research and our theoretical potential is exactly the kind of forum that is needed to reawaken the

discipline from its theoretical slumbers.” Still, I worry that opaque language might get in the way of being open and accessible:

HAU takes its name from Mauss’ Spirit of the Gift, an anthropological concept that derives its theoretical potential precisely from the translational inadequations and equivocations involved in comparing the incomparable. Through their reversibility, such inferential misunderstandings invite us to explore how encounters with alterity occasion the resurgence and revisitation of indigenous knowledge practices.

One of its innovative steps is to create a large editorial board, with leading anthropologists from many universities who have also committed to doing peer review of at least one manuscript each year. This model – building the institutional framework for peer review as part of establishing the overall endeavor – is an important one to consider. HAU also has sought out a number of glowing endorsements, further raising the possibility of it making an impact.

The Finishing Flourish

I tell my students any post should have one. This one doesn’t, except as denouement. Digital Anthropology was a strong panel, one that deserved a better placement than Sunday morning. But, lo and behold, through the magic of the Internet, these different projects are already available to everyone with online access. And, lo and behold, now they are gathered together in one place, just like they were on that Sunday in Montreal.