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Bethany Lynn Letalien

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The Dissertation Committee for Bethany Lynn Letalien Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Vexations, Volumes, and Volunteers: Institutionalization and the Veneration of Information at a Small International NGO

Committee:

Philip Doty, Supervisor

Patricia K. Galloway

Jo Lynn Westbrook

Joseph Dean Straubhaar

**Vexations, Volumes, and Volunteers: Institutionalization and the
Veneration of Information at a Small International NGO**

by

Bethany Lynn Letalien, BSLA, MA, MA, MSIS

Dissertation

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Dedication

To the Instituto Dois Irmãos, the Two Brothers Foundation, and all of the neighbors and friends who make their and my work possible.

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How is it that one can bear one's soul over the course of months and several hundred pages and then encounter such difficulty in producing a few pages of acknowledgements? There are so many names, so many good deeds, so many kind words that deserve mention that I cannot hope to do them all justice. For this I apologize, and I hope that none of those whom I fail to name individually will take offense.

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than I can say. Lynn has kept me honest, asking difficult questions that greatly strengthened this text. Pat has done the same, and always in a way that has made both of us laugh. I thank them not only for their time, but also for their dedication, good humor, and patience.

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Clearly, many people deserve credit for the following text; any errors are entirely my responsibility.

Vexations, Volumes, and Volunteers: Institutionalization and the Veneration of Information at a Small International NGO

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Supervisor: Philip Doty

The author performed action research over the two years between March 2006 and February 2008 with the Instituto Dois Irmãos (i2i), a non-governmental organization (NGO) in a low-income area of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil consisting of a group of approximately 3-5 locals and 2-30 foreigners at any one time that in March 2006 offered few services and lacked the expertise or confidence to offer more. Together, participants and the author improved and increased the NGO's services and implemented a reading room – a place of information and literacy – for Portuguese-speaking students of English. This dissertation describes participants', the organization's, and the author's journey to transform the i2i into a better functioning organization and to create the NGO's reading room. The analysis focuses on the practical learning that took place within the i2i.

Throughout the research process, the author both made use of and questioned the concepts of participation and development. In the text, she also draws on the experiences of the i2i's leaders and volunteers to question the prevailing notion of information as a

social good. A critical understanding of these three notions is essential for the work of librarians, development professionals, and policymakers alike.

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1: Purpose and Organization

Information, when well organized and broadly and easily accessible, is widely held to be a basic building block for a more equitable, just, and prosperous world. When we “use” information, “share” it, or “convey” it, we are portrayed as acting justly; when we “misuse,” “hoard,” or “refuse to provide” it, we are accused of wrongdoing. Clearly, when we look more closely at specific cases, many exceptions to these characterizations exist: while we may ask what information individuals, corporations, or states may legitimately hide from others, the notion that there is some need for privacy and security, i.e., for refusing others access to information, is not disputed. What is important here is not to delineate the exceptions, but rather to note the combination of, first, the language we use to describe our various relationships to information and, second, the common belief that, at least in the abstract, information is something to be made widely available.

Furthermore, many believe that our markets would work well and provide prosperity to all of humanity if only we had “perfect” information with which to make decisions, while the limits of human capacity to understand our financial system are being tested and questioned. Meanwhile, we peddle information and restrict its access and use by those unwilling or unable to pay for it, while defending the notion that more of it in the hands of more people leads to greater innovation, faster growth, a skilled workforce, and that which we most desire: happiness, or at least greater economic prosperity.

Put in these terms, it is perhaps obvious that we have put more faith in one concept than might be advisable. Certainly, for example, few people today would claim that the Israelis and Palestinians would simply cease their destruction of each other’s

lives, families, livelihoods, and homes if only each side knew more about the other, or that a better understanding of that decades-long conflict would necessarily make it possible for outsiders to broker a lasting peace agreement. And yet, the idea of an “information age” or “information society” in which we have arrived or to which we (or developing nations) aspire is a powerful one that has inspired politicians, pundits, scholars, and UNESCO¹ alike to call for investment in infrastructures and technologies to bring information, literacy, and digital technologies to the world’s poor, disabled, or otherwise disadvantaged citizens in an effort to bring peace and prosperity to the globe. While it is cliché to acknowledge that panaceas for the world’s problems do not exist – and while information competes with such notions as democracy and development for the designation of the best and most efficient solution to the challenges of war, hunger, poverty, and misery – we seldom ask whether information might not be quite the social good that it is commonly depicted to be.

In the following text, with an eye to the question of whether and when information should be considered a social good, I describe my efforts between March 2006 and February 2008 to assist a group of locals and foreigners in a low-income area of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to become a functioning organization and to offer a reading room – a place of information and literacy – to impoverished, usually young, Portuguese-speaking students of English. The work of the Instituto Dois Irmãos (i2i) and its sister organization in the United States, the Two Brothers Foundation (2Bros.) relies heavily upon the above-mentioned notions of democracy and development, although many of the leaders of both non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have questioned the latter notion. My background is in information and communication studies, and my fieldwork

relied explicitly not only on information, but also on a member of the supporting cast of characters to the democracy/development/information trio: participation.

I seek in these pages not to turn the notion of information on its head, not to turn it into a “bad” where it was once a “good.” Rather, through analyzing moments in which the notion of information became salient, I wish to bring to light some of the risks we face in conferring on information the kind of power and positive connotation that the word has gained. Specifically, in Chapter 9, I ask, in the two years in which I worked with the i2i, in what ways did information conform to the expectation that it would lead to the resolution of problems, and in what ways did this expectation constrain or even endanger us or our work? When I returned from Rio, I was faced with the need to complete a dissertation in the field of information studies, but I found myself at an impasse, repeating my new mantra to anyone who would listen: “but it’s *not about information*.” I proceeded to spend a year attempting to make “it” (the dissertation, but, more broadly, the story of the i2i) “about information” before settling on the examination in Chapter 9 of what had been staring me in the face all along: the disconnect between our expectations and experiences of information.

Very briefly, the i2i is an NGO that is located in the squatter settlement (*favela*) of Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro and offers educational opportunities to residents. It focuses primarily on language instruction. It is run by community members in consultation with the current and former volunteers who make up the Two Brothers Foundation. Although the i2i has officially existed since 1999, in several important ways, it came into existence in 2006. Herein, I chronicle the i2i’s transformation from a small group of people offering English instruction in a preschool that they rented for night classes into an

institution with a building, classrooms, reading room, and administrative structure of its own.

In 2001, I received an invitation from the president of the i2i's sister organization of former volunteers, the Two Brothers Foundation, to create a library for the i2i. At the time, no distinction was made, except legally, between the two organizations, and I was assured, "we want a library." I made a site visit in 2004, in which I confirmed interest on the part of the Brazilians in the project. I then, in 2006, set out to help with and study the planning and implementation of that reading room through the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR), but I found that the i2i was in a much earlier stage of development than I had believed, and so I spent much of my time in the field helping to keep the institution functioning through a period of what can best be described as terrible growing pains. The i2i is administered primarily by residents of Rocinha, although 2Bros. exercises much power over the i2i. Foreign volunteers come to teach English, as well as occasionally other languages or skills, such as jewelry making, and they also provide occasional seminars, manual labor, or technical aid (e.g., through the creation of a database of contact information of donors and volunteers).²

The remainder of this section comprises several chapters meant to help readers follow the descriptions and analyses of Sections II and III. Chapter 2 describes action research in general and PAR in particular and offers an overview of the implementation of PAR used here; Chapter 3 looks at the discourse of development; and Chapter 4 explains favelas in Brazil, Rocinha, and information services and librarianship in Brazil. Chapters 2-4 are primarily a lengthy traditional literature review, but they also serve the purpose of providing readers with an understanding of the context in which the i2i

operates and the use of research and writing methods employed here. On a few occasions, other authors' work is introduced later as this work becomes pertinent to the text.

Chapters 5-7, in Section II, provide a narrative analysis of events that demonstrates how we conducted the action research. This analysis is presented in roughly chronological order, and a timeline can be found in Appendix A.

Section III provides two kinds of analysis: first, Chapter 8 looks at the quality of the action research that we conducted. Chapter 9 delves into the ways in which information was a primary concern or impediment to the affairs of the i2i. That chapter also offers some thoughts on the ways in which this research can contribute to methodology and to topics of particular concern to the so-called "information professions."

Chapters 8 and 9 serve as a bridge between the chronological account and Chapter 10, in which I offer some final thoughts on what taking a more critical view towards the utopia of information while remaining committed to literacy and equity might mean. Chapter 10 also provides a discussion of some of the strengths and weaknesses of this study; future directions for the i2i, 2Bros., and research; and some of the other lessons that can be learned from the experiences of the leaders, volunteers, and users of the i2i and its services between 2006 and 2008.

I derived my data from notes on observations, informal conversations, meetings held by and with the i2i's leaders and volunteers, and interviews, as well as occasional e-mails or other documents. Over the two-year period, the Brazilians grew interested in making audio recordings of our meetings to serve as evidence should disputes arise after a meeting, and so we taped some that we expected to be particularly contentious; we kept minutes more regularly, but the quality of the minutes varied, partly in relation to who

was charged with taking notes at any given meeting. I kept a “journal” in which I recorded notes most days, during meetings or other conversation or as soon after conversations or observations as I could manage. While I carried around a notebook, I took many of these notes on loose sheets of paper that I dated and later assembled into a digital journal. I took some notes directly in the software program EverNote. A more extensive description of the material and practical aspects of note-taking with the i2i is provided in Chapter 2.

This dissertation can be read in a variety of ways. Readers with a familiarity with the discourses of development and with Brazil may find Chapters 3 and 4 unnecessary, although they may still find the sections titled “Development, The Two Brothers Foundation, and the Instituto Dois Irmãos” and “Information Services and Librarianship in Brazil” helpful in understanding the narrative of Section II; for others, these chapters may constitute necessary background for understanding Sections II and/or III. Readers primarily interested in the story of the action research that I undertook with the Instituto Dois Irmãos will find Section II of greatest value and may also wish to read the discussion of Participatory Action Research in Chapter 2, the evaluation of the research provided in Chapter 8, and/or the recommendations in Chapter 10. Readers primarily interested in information studies should find the abovementioned “Information Services and Librarianship in Brazil” and Chapter 9 of use, as well as the conclusions of Chapter 10. These last two chapters will make more sense to those who also familiarize themselves with Section II.

Chapter 2: Action Research

An essential feature of any inquiry paradigm is whether it regards knowing the truth in propositional form as an end in itself, and as the only end in itself. This was the position of Aristotle for whom intellectual excellence was the highest end of man (but not woman). If knowing propositional truths is the one and only intrinsically worthwhile state of affairs, then ultimately this legitimates all kinds of mayhem on the way to acquiring it. Hence the view of Bacon that nature must be tortured to wrest her secrets from her. Hence the modern propensity to educate the intellect in damaging dissociation from feeling, imagination, and action. . . .

The participatory paradigm answers the axiological question in terms of human flourishing, conceived as an end in itself.

John Heron and Peter Reason (1997, p. 10)

Many kinds of social research are action- and/or participation-oriented. These include:

- Applied research
- Activist research
- Action science
- Action research
- Participatory research
- Participatory planning
- Participatory design
- Participatory action research.

These are overlapping terms that have been employed in diverse manners by different authors over time. Further complicating the problem of terminology is that all of these types of research can be seen as international movements and networks in which various languages are used. I sought to conduct what is termed “participatory action research” (PAR). I chose PAR in part because it has a long tradition of use in the South, including by one of Brazil’s few intellectuals to be widely known outside of that country, Paulo

Freire (1970, 1992; Freire and Guimarães, 1987, 2000). I hoped PAR would resonate with participants (and, indeed, two of the Brazilian participants went through a phase in which they approvingly used “Paulo Freire” as an adjective to describe what we were attempting to do). Also, it is extremely flexible, increasing the likelihood that we would find a way to meet the needs of the i2i and my needs with it while privileging the interests of participants. These varieties are discussed in the following section.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

PAR is research (i.e., knowledge production) that rejects the thought/action dichotomy; pays particular attention to the production and use of knowledge by human actors; involves participants in all phases of the research project, including the formulation of research questions, theory building, the elaboration of methods and techniques, and data analysis; seeks to be democratic; and results in the creation or generation of practical solutions and theories, as well as of academic papers and theories:

It simultaneously involves the cogeneration of new information and analysis together with actions aimed at transforming the situation in democratic directions. PAR is meant to be holistic and also context bound, producing practical solutions and new knowledge as part of an integrated set of activities. . . . AR is a way of producing tangible and desired results for the people involved, and it is a knowledge-generation process that produces insights both for researchers and the participants. It is a complex action-knowledge generation process (Greenwood & Levin, 1998, p. 50).

PAR takes its inspiration from a number of sources. The most famous of these include: John Dewey (1961) and his belief in learning by doing; Kurt Lewin (1945), to whom the term “action research” is attributed and who is credited with variations on the phrase “there is nothing so practical as a good theory”; and Paulo Freire, whose educational philosophy and life-long work of “conscientization” through self-teaching have inspired people throughout the world (e.g., Freire, 1970). Orlando Fals Borda (2001) and Anisur

Rahman (1993) have likewise been influential. More recent significant writers include William Foote Whyte, Davydd Greenwood, Chris Argyris, and Donald Schön (e.g., Whyte, ed., 1991; Whyte, Greenwood, & Lazes, 1991; Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Argyris & Schön, 1991). These last two consider themselves practitioners of action science.

For Northern practitioners such as Whyte, PAR is often about changing practices to affect participants' (or co-researchers') environment, whereas for Southern practitioners such as Fals Borda and Rahman, the emphasis is often on empowerment. The Northern tradition is also more amenable to the use of conventional social science methods. Still, both rely largely on conversation and on interactions among participants. The Northern tradition emphasizes learning by doing, and the Southern tradition emphasizes self-awareness.

Again, to define PAR or any version of it strictly would be to do a disservice to its underlying value of supporting a diversity of ways of being, thoughts, and actions. Nonetheless, "Northern" and "Southern" PAR are often distinguished by authors such as Fals Borda, who contributed an article titled "The North-South Convergence" to the journal *Action Research* in which he stated:

As part of our scientific task, we have the political, objective and non-neutral duty of fostering the democratic and spiritual dimensions through more satisfying life systems. To this end, northern and southern scholars can converge as colleagues and soul fellows, for the quest of meaning (2006, p. 357).

Such convergence is neither a given, nor is it easily achieved. Indeed, Johansson and Lindhult argue, "to some extent the two orientations are suited for different (research) contexts" (2008, p. 110): pragmatic action research is called for when local knowledge needs to be developed, while a critical orientation is appropriate when reflective

knowledge is sought. While it is possible for both perspectives to coexist in a single study, a tension can arise between the more technical and more emancipatory sides of a study.

At the i2i, we combined the two orientations, not always as consciously as might be preferred, but it is telling that our pragmatic work became effective after we had taken a more critical approach for several months. I do not claim that one approach is superior to the other, but in our case, the critical was a precursor to the pragmatic and then continued alongside the pragmatic. In other words, we frequently focused our discussions on the technical, but it was not until the group felt empowered and had experienced much internal change that we were able to experiment with our practices in ways more easily recognizable within the Northern tradition.³ Therefore, most of the narrative of Section II reads much like an anthropological text: we conducted our research through shared experiences much more than through, for example, surveys. Thus, the account of Section II relies more on participant observation than on those social science research methods that share the culture of experimental research.

The practice of PAR is meant to be a process that is flexible and capable of including a wide range of research methods and ways of knowing. In spite of the quarrels regarding terminology, Van Beinum states, “*the last thing one should do in action research is to define action research*” (emphasis in the original) because “we would draw boundaries with regard to our own learning” (1998, p. 69). However noble such a sentiment may be, it is nonetheless important to understand what can constitute technically and ethically good participatory action research; in this section, I provide discussions of key elements of PAR.

Readers interested in learning more about PAR are encouraged to peruse the chapter by Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart in the 2005 edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, as well as their chapter in the previous edition (2000), which provides context for the authors' more recent chapter. The 2005 version offers not only an in-depth discussion of the authors' definition of PAR, but also a critique of their earlier, and influential, thinking. They characterize PAR as:

[A] practice directed deliberately toward discovering, investigating, and attaining intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding, and unforced consensus about what to do. It is aimed at testing, developing, and retesting agreements, understandings, and decisions against the criteria of mutual comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness (e.g., sincerity, authenticity), and moral rightness and appropriateness (2005, p. 578, emphasis in the original).

The following three sections, which make frequent reference to the relationship between PAR and more conventional modes of inquiry, are devoted to the concepts of “participation,” “action,” and “research” in PAR. After those three sections can be found a discussion of quality in action research.

Participation

The notion of participation in PAR differs substantially from the notion of participation in more traditional social science research. With the conviction that individuals and groups should perform their own research in order to learn about themselves, PAR requires that at least some informants become researchers. These insider co-researchers often gain not only experience and skills, but also self-confidence and the more tangible benefits of the results of the research. What constitutes a tangible benefit is specific to the particular research project.

Nonetheless, the burdens associated with PAR are substantial. One unfortunate consequence of the burdensome nature of performing PAR is that, while very

disadvantaged members of society can and do participate in PAR, the most disadvantaged may not be able to do so. This dilemma is by no means new or peculiar to PAR. For instance, in the development and communication literature, the potential for reinforcement or exacerbation of power structures with the introduction of new technologies or social, political, or economic opportunities has been repeatedly raised. For example, Kottak (1986) provides an account of the exacerbation of social disparities in one rural Brazilian town with the arrival of television and other new phenomena.

Participation starts at the very beginning of the research: outsider researchers attempt to treat insiders as equals in processes of inquiry that range from defining problems, to determining methods and measures, to gathering data, to analyzing data, to generating theories. Researchers must recognize the existence of multiple power dynamics within the research team and between the research team and participants who play a more traditional role, such as that of respondents to questionnaires: attempting to treat others as equals does not guarantee success, and it is important to avoid naively overlooking imbalances of power. While remaining aware that full success is not possible, researchers must attempt to neutralize relations that inhibit speech or participation on the part of those who occupy positions of little relative power or the more easily intimidated.

One goal of participation in PAR is to have lasting effects. How long is long enough can, of course, vary, and “lasting” need not mean “forever.” Nonetheless, if, for example, the effects of the research cease upon an outsider researcher’s removing himself or herself from the field, then this goal cannot be said to have been met, and the PAR cannot be said to have been fully successful. Participants and outsider researchers both must feel ownership of the research process (achieved through participation) – they must

feel that they are responsible for the research, its processes, and its results – if it is expected to have positive, lasting effects.

Participants should benefit, personally and collectively, from the research in which they engage. What constitutes a personal or collective benefit will, of course, vary from one research project to another, making efforts to define benefits of PAR in general terms rather meaningless. Nonetheless, although benefits will necessarily differ greatly from project to project, from individual to individual, and from group to group, one that can usually be pursued is increasing the ability of participants to perform good, useful, and effective inquiry. Increasing such abilities may mean eventually making outsider researchers unnecessary.

This emphasis on lasting effects is particularly important in the context of favelas in general and Rocinha, a favorite destination for foreign researchers and tourists, in particular. Residents have repeatedly expressed to me their concern that researchers visit Rocinha, collect data, and leave, never sharing findings or effecting change, let alone asking residents to help them make sense of data. Residents have expressed their increasing lack of willingness to participate in research because they find research to be exploitive and of little value to them. If academics continue to perform research in that manner in favelas, we may eventually find that we have insufficient numbers of willing participants, and those who are willing will likely not be representative of their neighborhoods. Furthermore, many residents are quick to question the quality of outsiders' interpretations of what they experience in Rocinha. Working with residents through PAR is one way to incorporate residents' interpretations and increase the quality of studies performed there.

Finally, full participation is difficult to achieve, and some organizations have been accused of co-opting the term for ends that do not benefit participants. Some critiques of the use of participation in development efforts are presented in Chapter 3.

Action

PAR researchers reject the notion that thought can be fruitfully isolated from practice and instead attempt to increase the thoughtfulness of action (putting theory into practice) and improve knowledge based on the outcomes of actions (informing theory through practice). It is also asserted that engagement with the world and acting upon it (introducing change in a systematic manner) increases our ability to examine causality in human affairs. Likewise, the distinction between applied and pure research, which is closely related to the thought/action dichotomy, is implicitly questioned. PAR shares with supposedly pure research an emphasis on theory and rigorous study, and it shares with applied research an active engagement with the world and an emphasis on effecting change.

Action in PAR is an iterative process and, as noted above, is one methodological approach that aims to produce outcomes that are of use to participants. PAR questions trickle-down science and posits that at least some research must have more immediately useful results, noting that research is not a right of the privileged few who are fortunate enough to pursue higher education; it is a privilege that our participants give us or that we seize from them.

Research

PAR is a flexible, iterative process that is guided by theory – theories generated in dialogue with participants and/or outside theories that are introduced when participants’

theories appear congruent with these foreign ones. As dialogue proceeds, researchers and participants work to make assumptions and beliefs explicit and to formulate them into theories that can be examined critically, compared to alternative or similar theories, and “tested.”⁴ Participants learn how to perform research or learn that they already knew how to do so, and researchers learn how participants generate and use knowledge. All work to resolve problems that participants and researchers define together. These answers and descriptions of how the research team arrived at them can be offered to other communities that can determine whether the results from the first community may be transferable to their own realities and are worth pursuing in their own contexts.

Ideally, PAR researchers use any and all available methods that it becomes clear through dialogue are appropriate to the research questions and context: where a method is appropriate to the questions, backed by those who will use it and (where a distinction is drawn between co-researchers and participants) with whom it will be used, approved by any bodies that must approve it, and practical to use, it may be used. Ideally, data collection is pursued in a rigorous, collaborative manner, and care is taken in training inexperienced researchers when such training is warranted by virtue of the needs and desires of the researchers and by virtue of the methods being used. Insider researchers take part in judging the quality and thoroughness of data and analyses. Nonetheless, outsiders are not expected to come to identical conclusions as those of other researchers; likewise, insiders are not expected to agree entirely among themselves.

Some researchers who perform social inquiry in this vein (e.g., Stringer, 1996) emphasize the importance of reaching consensus, while others (e.g., Clarke, 2005; Madison, 2005) emphasize the value of soliciting the widest range of opinions and paying particular attention to unconventional views and to outliers. Greenwood and Levin make

a particularly valuable point when they state that they “are suspicious of approaches to AR that seem to privilege the homogeneity of communities or consensus-based decision making, believing that such approaches open up great potentials for co-optation and coercion” (1998, p. 12). I have been more committed to collecting divergent data than to creating consensus, but I view consensus in decision making as preferable to compromise. Relatedly, Ospina et al. discuss the “difference between giving up privilege (a democratic aspiration)” and “giving up authority (a suppression of one's voice),” noting that “there is a false dichotomy between democracy and authority” (2005, p. 66): consensus reached by researchers'/participants' “giving up privilege” can be a sign of successful conversation, but apparent consensus in which one or more parties suppress their voices is more damaging than a compromise in which divergent voices are recognized. Indeed, some of the most difficult moments for the i2i were those when stakeholders felt that they were being forced to agree to a particular course of action or had no voice.

Like qualitative research, with which it shares great affinity, PAR questions the notion that it is possible or even desirable to perform value-free research:

The epistemological standpoint of PAR opposes that of other schools . . . [that] reject (social) value bias in what is considered to be ‘scientific’ research, and from the same principle adopt the detached observational method of social inquiry. It may be argued, however, that no research in the final analysis can be value-free, although some specific inquiries may not be consciously so (Rahman, 1993, p. 88).

Whether we openly confront our values and beliefs, they guide our theories and actions. Therefore, PAR posits that it is more fruitful and honest to make our values and beliefs explicit to our participants, our readers, and ourselves, so that these might be responsibly harnessed for our research purposes. Additionally, research is like other aspects of our

lives, in that we should expect ourselves to act ethically; confronting our values can aid in the pursuit of ethical research. In short, PAR researchers expect themselves to acknowledge that they have values, to be explicit about these values, to consider these carefully, and to be conscious (and conscientious) about making these values guide their lives and research – rather than passively allowing them to do so. Throughout this text, I make liberal use of the first person and provide discussions of topics such as development for these reasons.

Similarly, we are all subjects: objectivity in the sense of detached, disinterested study is illusory. Furthermore, attempts to become detached mask inequitable power relations, or, as Greenwood and Levin state, “Value-free research covers up all kinds of oppressive social arrangements under the mask of an impartial, scientific ideology” (1998, p. 182), and, as Rahman observes, “non-involvement is a myth – the social researcher is involved consciously or unconsciously in his/her own bid for social power, and the observational method of research serves as an instrument to promote this interest” (1993, p. 90). Likewise, Sanford expresses the discomfort some researchers feel with the objectification of humans by the social sciences in rather strong, perhaps exaggerated, language:

Social science is also an industry that, like other industries, has been polluting its environment. It has been spoiling its research subjects by treating them as means rather than ends and it has been disseminating a monstrous image of researchable man. It has also been creating an enormous amount of waste in the form of useless information (1976, p. 29).⁵

This is not to say that the objectification of human phenomena can be entirely avoided – it means, rather, that such objectification and related operationalizations should be performed consciously and with the consent and, preferably, participation, of research “subjects.” PAR researchers seek to act as equals to, rather than superiors of, participants

in the processes of defining the objects of research, operationalizing concepts, and collecting and analyzing data. Clearly, full achievement of this goal is not always possible, and it is important to remain conscious of power relations and structures.

EXTENDED EPISTEMOLOGY

As expressed by Heron and Reason (1997, 2001) regarding “participatory inquiry” and adopted by Guba and Lincoln (2005) in the third edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ways of knowing need not be confined to what Heron and Reason call “propositional knowing.” They argue for an “extended epistemology” that takes into account not only this propositional knowing, i.e., conceptual knowing (the kind that is usually associated with science), but also “experiential knowing” (from our “experiential encounter with the presence of the world,” which “is prior to language and art,” p. 2), “presentational knowing” (evident in metaphor, imagery, the arts, p. 6), and “practical knowing” (skills and abilities, p. 6). The experiential underpins the presentational, through which the propositional is expressed to others, and practical knowing derives from the competent use of the propositional (e.g., theories or standards of practice), good use of the presentational, and groundedness. Thus, practical knowing “fulfills the three prior forms of knowing, brings them to fruition in purposive deeds, and consummates them with its autonomous celebration of excellent accomplishment” (p. 6).

Participatory researchers are free – even obliged – to consider ways of knowing that are alien to orthodox science in conducting, assessing, and seeking to improve the quality of their work. The following section describes some of the ways in which the quality of participatory action research may be judged. Following the narrative account of Section II, Chapter 8 offers an evaluation of the case at hand.

QUALITY IN ACTION RESEARCH

Like other aspects of human life, quality or validity in research is understood to be socially constructed or performed. As should be the case with any kind of human inquiry, the question of how to evaluate quality in action research remains an open one. Nonetheless, this question appears to be less well resolved in the case of AR than it is for more conventional research. This is not to say that action researchers are unconvinced of, or unconcerned about, the quality of their work. Rather, AR is performed by a wide range of individuals from different backgrounds with an array of methods for a large variety of reasons. PAR, as a form of AR, shares some ways of understanding quality with some other forms of AR. Thus, and in order to widen the scope of the literature on which I can draw, I refer here to both the PAR literature and the AR literature more generally.

Researchers can attend to rigor and quality on various levels and from various vantage points. Orlando Fals Borda expresses succinctly the many levels on which rigor and quality can be established and evaluated in PAR:

We know that rigour in our work can be gained by combining quantitative measures, when needed, with relevant, well-made qualitative and/or ethnographic descriptions and critique; that validity is not an autistic exercise nor just an internal discursive experience. Pertinent validity criteria can be derived as well from common sense, with inductive/deductive examination of results in practice, from *vivencia*⁶ or empathetic involvement in processes, and with the considered judgement of local reference groups. Moreover, critical evaluation can be done in the actual process of fieldwork without having to wait for the end of arbitrary prefixed periods (2001, p. 33).

Although this may seem paradoxical to some, participatory action researchers are at once eclectic and purposive. Fals Borda proposes the appropriate use of conventional methods, both “quantitative” and “qualitative” ones, noting that using multiple methods can increase the quality of our research. These conventional methods can be used alongside less conventional ones, for example, those that draw their inspiration from the arts. He

also observes that respect for local people's knowledge and co-researchers' or participants' judgments can be used to achieve rigor and to evaluate the quality of research: professional researchers are not alone in possessing critical thinking skills or the ability to evaluate information. Finally, over the duration of a PAR experience, which will have several or more cycles, evaluations can be performed and their results "fed back" into the research in order to improve the research practice.

Despite criticisms, PAR does not suffer from a lack of strategies or perspectives through which to achieve rigor or from which to evaluate quality; rather, were we to pursue all possible avenues, it would suffer from excessive demands, particularly if we were to seek perfection, an impossible goal in any case. The greatest challenge may be deciding how to balance various demands: even when demands from various perspectives are not in conflict, they may stretch researchers' ability to remember, respect, and respond to demands while simultaneously attempting to focus on the research questions. The balance that is achieved (or not) will, of course, depend on the context of the research and on the resolution of any conflicts that arise.

The lack of universal criteria for evaluating quality and rigor in AR is in part a sign of the variety of ways in which such research is performed and in part an acknowledgement of the importance of using local criteria at least as much as purportedly universal criteria. Local criteria will differ not only from site to site and group to group, but also within the same site or group over time. Indeed, a shift in criteria (or in goals) on the part of local researchers can itself indicate a beneficial change, thus suggesting that the research is effective. This lack of static, universal criteria also implies a commitment to the engagement in, and study of, processes rather than fixed phenomena or points in time. As Robin McTaggart observes, "validation is an explicit process of dialogue, it is

not achieved by adherence to fixed ‘procedure’” (1998, p. 225). Nonetheless, some authors (e.g., Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Herr and Anderson, 2005) have suggested partial lists of concerns to which researchers would do well to attend.

Another serious challenge that action researchers face is a lack of knowledge and respect on the part of many more traditional researchers. Although PAR projects may generate some familiar artifacts, such as tables and charts, they will also produce artifacts and deeds that seem odd or even threatening and that enjoy considerably less prestige. Indeed, much of the learning that takes place in PAR does not lend itself to academic forms of expression, being more suited, for example, to artistic expression or simply to new cycles of action. Since the goals of action research are oriented toward fostering all four kinds of knowing described by Heron and Reason, but particularly practical knowing, and research is more conventionally defined solely in terms of propositional knowledge, much of the knowledge production achieved through action research is unrecognizable through conventional academic lenses.

Action researchers seek to perform research that is useful to participants, results in social change that is beneficial to participants, and is so good that participants are willing to use it to change their practices; as Mary Brydon-Miller, Davydd Greenwood, and Patricia Maguire state, “conventional researchers worry about objectivity, distance and controls. Action researchers worry about relevance, social change, and validity tested in action by the most at-risk stakeholders” (2003, p. 25). Action researchers reject many of the assumptions of conventional social research – particularly that researchers must attempt to divorce themselves from the research and its participants in order to seek “objectivity”; that we should study others’ conditions, behaviors, attitudes, and the like, rather than examine the phenomena under study with participants; and that actively

seeking change is at odds with performing good research. In so doing, action researchers will find many of the conventional methods for evaluating research, if left unmodified, to be of little use in evaluating the quality of their own work. Nonetheless, the struggles, questions, answers, and strategies of researchers in other traditions can be useful.

Below, I turn my readers' attention to the relationships that action research has to other academic research traditions, noting in particular some of the ways in which AR differs from these. I then present some strategies for ensuring rigor and quality that can be used in PAR.

Relationship to Other Academic Research Traditions

Unlike those who perform research that is generally termed positivist or quantitative, most AR practitioners do not seek universal truths or generalizable results, although many action researchers are deeply concerned about sharing their experiences in ways that can be of use to others.⁷ Furthermore, the conventional notion of reliability rests on a belief in the possibility and desirability of replication, and the conventional notion of validity implies the isolation of static causal variables and relationships. Both of these notions are derived from the practice of experimentation in the physical sciences and are, simply put, inappropriate to the kind of action research that we pursued at the i2i. "Rigor" presents its own set of problems. Where the term refers to accuracy or thoughtful action, it remains of use, but where it refers to the rigid application of predefined methods, the term only serves to underscore the fundamental epistemological differences between positivist science and PAR.

PAR is cyclical rather than linear and understands context not as something for which researchers must control but rather as something that is integral to explanations; the notion of linear, decontextualized causal relationships loses meaning, and with it goes

the notion of the inflexible application of straightforward methods that is conventionally believed to lend rigor to a study. Cause and effect are intertwined with context and human agency and may not be susceptible to quantification or singular explanation. Replication is similarly nonsensical in complex human affairs. Researchers, participants, and contexts are always shifting; there is nothing static or centered to be repeated, no two identical constructions to be had.⁸ None of this implies, of course, that we cannot make judicious use of “quantitative” methods, always remaining careful to recognize that these simply offer strategies of inquiry and do not in themselves ensure either accuracy or high quality.

Qualitative and mixed-methods approaches to research are as varied as AR approaches are, making general comparisons difficult. While researchers whose work is termed qualitative or mixed-methods may seek tangible results for participants in the field, doing so is imperative for PAR. Furthermore, Southern PAR has as a primary goal the achievement of emancipation or empowerment for participants, while Northern PAR may include this goal; researchers who take a more conventional approach to qualitative or mixed-methods research may question the appropriateness of such a goal. Despite these potential differences, like qualitative researchers, participatory action researchers usually take an approach that is influenced by constructivism (sharing the belief that research can be used in the purposive construction of better realities with practitioners of Appreciative Inquiry [Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros, 2003]), and so criteria used to evaluate qualitative or mixed-methods research can offer guidance to PAR practitioners. The most fruitful way of evaluating PAR seems to be to build upon the extensive work already done to achieve a reasonable consensus regarding quality in qualitative or mixed-methods approaches where such building appears to be appropriate, particularly because

such work has paid considerable attention to the importance of respecting and incorporating local knowledge. Where PAR and qualitative research diverge, other strategies for evaluating research are called for. Some of these are discussed below.

Nonetheless, other important differences exist between qualitative and action research. For example, like many qualitative researchers, action researchers argue that results that do not “ring true” to participants may not warrant being held to be true. Action researchers make this assessment based on the notion that such results fail to meet perhaps the most important criterion for evaluation: usefulness, particularly, usefulness to participants (from a Southern perspective, one might employ a term such as “pertinence” rather than “usefulness”). In this way, action research shares an assessment criterion – truth value to participants – with qualitative research, while the underlying reason for using this criterion differs from, for example, a more traditional ethnographer’s reason for inquiring into whether participants agree with her assessment of data: to produce a faithful account. As Herr and Anderson point out, “while it is true that traditional ethnographers often lived in the communities they studied, had key informants, and interacted with participants in order to gain access to the setting and to gain their trust, the basic position of outsider is intentionally maintained” (2005, p. 51). In contrast to many people practicing ethnography, action researchers openly seek to “contaminate” settings, not to study them as they “naturally” occur.⁹ In short, although action research is often confused with qualitative research and indeed shares much affinity with that tradition, it is nonetheless the case that action research requires some ways of its own to evaluate the quality of research, and these will vary from project to project.

Conducting and Evaluating Useful Research

Unless one believes in absolute truths, it is difficult to sustain a belief in quality in the abstract. Quality in PAR should be evaluated regarding how well it meets its goals, and these goals should be arrived at through processes of consensus-building and/or compromise that include as many and as wide a variety of stakeholders as possible. Evaluations are complicated by the fact that these goals are expected to change. Any demonstration of such evaluations will need to take into account the intended audiences and the level(s) at which analyses should be made. Is the appropriate use of a method or methods, the quality of a cycle or cycles, or the overall quality of the research being inspected, by whom, and to what end? PAR that is used as dissertation fieldwork must satisfy the demands of the outsider researcher and insider researchers (and possibly of other participants) throughout the process of inquiry – and beyond. It must also satisfy the demands of reviewers in academia, who may wish to see it scrutinized at any or all of these levels.

Orlando Fals Borda traces the history of what he calls “Participatory (Action) Research,” describing how a group comprising primarily academics and inspired by Paul K. Feyerabend’s (1993)¹⁰ “daring thesis on the usefulness of anarchism to rebuild epistemology and to furnish a new base for scientific practice” came to question conventional notions of science while continuing to ascribe value to science and research:

Besides establishing a rigorous pertinent science, we also wanted to pay attention to ordinary people’s knowledge. . . . [W]e began by questioning the fetish-like idea of science as truth which had been transmitted to us as a cumulative, linear complex of confirmed rules and absolute laws. We started to appreciate in fact that science is socially constructed, therefore that it is subject to reinterpretation, revision and enrichment. Although this may sound obvious, we postulated that its main criterion should be to obtain knowledge useful for what we judged to be worthy causes. . . . If we could discover a way to bring about a convergence between popular thought and academic science, we could gain both a more

complete and a more applicable knowledge – especially by and for the underprivileged classes which were in need of scientific support. (2001, p. 28)

Ernest Stringer and William Genat succinctly express the importance of what they term “pragmatic validity”:

One of the greatest sources of validity in action research is the utility of the outcomes of research. When participants are able to take effective action on the issue they have investigated, they demonstrate the validity of the research. High degrees of credibility are evident as the understandings that emerge from the processes of inquiry are successfully applied to practical actions. In these circumstances, it becomes evident that emerging concepts and constructions are adequate to account for the phenomena investigated. (2004, p. 53)¹¹

Thus, the ability to use the research constitutes at once a goal and a way of demonstrating quality.

What can be considered useful depends on the original goals of the research and/or on new goals that are generated over the life of the research. Some of these are common in PAR. Reason and Bradbury identify five such goals: to have wide participation, to generate knowledge that is of practical use, to respect and encourage multiple ways of knowing, to do work that is important, and to perform research that has lasting, beneficial effects for those involved in the research. Identifying work that is important and presenting it as such requires researchers to be skilled in choosing their topics and to have a good command of language. Reason and Bradbury point out that researchers should not simply pronounce that their research is of significance; rather, it is important to “pay explicit attention to inquiring into what is worthy of attention” (2001a, p. 452, emphasis in the original). Their other four goals are addressed by the strategies described below. Of the five, the goal that it is most difficult for researchers to demonstrate having met is that of lasting change: publication or other presentation can

seldom be postponed for years, and how to determine whether change has lasted long enough to be considered enduring is unclear.

Herr and Anderson have likewise identified five goals, and they have devised criteria to correspond to each of these:

We have linked our five validity criteria . . . to the goals of action research. Most traditions of action research agree on the following goals: (a) the generation of new knowledge, (b) the achievement of action-oriented outcomes, (c) the education of both researcher and participants, (d) results that are relevant to the local setting, and (e) a sound and appropriate research methodology. (2005, p. 54)

Hence their criteria for evaluating quality in action research:

1. *“Outcome validity.”* This criterion is offered in response to the second goal listed above. Was the research successful? As Herr and Anderson observe, not only must action researchers grapple with the question of from whose point of view to evaluate the success of a project, but they must also recognize that throughout the research project, problems are redefined, so that asking if a project was successful is not the same as asking whether it met its original goals or answered its original questions. (p. 55)
2. *“Process validity.”* Was a “sound and appropriate research methodology” used? Poor methodological decisions reduce the ability of co-researchers, participants, or others to learn from the research. The authors suggest the use of criteria for determining what should be considered evidence from naturalistic inquiry, as well as making use of triangulation. (pp. 55-56)
3. *“Democratic validity.”* In order for results to be “relevant to the local setting,” Herr and Anderson believe that research should be done collaboratively or at least include a wide variety of perspectives and interests. In short, are all stakeholders’

interests taken into account and respected, and is collaborative work both “deep” and “wide”? Whose interests drive the research questions? (p. 56)

4. “*Catalytic validity.*” This criterion is based on the goal of educating outside researchers, co-researchers, and other participants. “The most powerful action research studies are those in which the researchers recount a spiraling change in their own and their participants’ understandings. This reinforces the importance of keeping a research journal.” (p. 56)
5. “*Dialogic validity.*” This criterion is related to the generation of knowledge. The authors suggest the use of peer review, critical dialogue, and collaborative inquiry to achieve dialogic validity. (p. 57)

The following strategies, in addition to those mentioned in the above discussion of Herr and Anderson’s proposed criteria, constitute just some of the many ways to evaluate and demonstrate quality in PAR. Like Stringer and Genat (2004), among others, I draw upon the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985). Stringer and Genat, however, take a more comparative approach to the relationship between the criteria set forth by Lincoln and Guba, discussing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability before moving on to “participatory validity” and “pragmatic validity.” Such distinctions add clarity at the risk of reinforcing the erroneous belief that, in AR, action and participation are “add-ons” to “real” research.

- *Triangulation.* This strategy allows researchers to identify findings that are common across sources and methods; such findings are likely to be appropriate to the context in which they were generated. Attempts to triangulate data can also draw our attention to discrepancies that can be examined in new cycles of inquiry.

- *Use of multiple research methods.* Using multiple research methods can mean combining conventional qualitative and quantitative methods, but it can also mean including literature- and arts-inspired methods, such as the construction and interpretation of collective narratives. The use of multiple methods is, of course, closely related to the practice of triangulation.
- *Research cycles.* By repeatedly discussing and reflecting on their actions and then acting upon their reflections over long periods of time, people involved in action research projects increase the likelihood that discrepancies in their beliefs and actions will arise, affording additional opportunities for reflection on both the original problems that led to the research and on new problems. As John Heron and Peter Reason put it, through cycles of research, “experiential and reflective forms of knowing progressively refine each other, through two-way negative and positive feedback” (2001, p. 184). This perspective on quality in research shifts the emphasis from decontextualized prescriptions regarding the proper use of particular methods to the processes and contexts of performing research. The use of such research cycles can be understood as including sustained member checking.
- *Collaborative data analysis and theory-building followed by action.* Data analysis and theories must satisfy not only the outsider researcher(s), but also a substantial portion of the insiders. Levin and Greenwood point out, “Not only must the theories pass the acid test of being negotiated by the involved parties, but the knowledge must also pass the test of creating workable solutions to real-life problems” (2001, p. 105).

- *Prolonged engagement and persistent observation.* Through prolonged engagement in the field, outsider researchers gain the trust of, and come to trust, insiders, increasing the likelihood that all will share meaningful knowledge. Persistent observation – by outsider researchers and those recruited in the field alike – helps researchers achieve depth in their observations and understandings.
- *Careful inclusion of stakeholders and attention to the quietest voices.* These strategies help participatory action researchers to reach their goal of inclusion and to question rather than reinforce inequitable social relations. Reflexivity and dialogue are widely mentioned as ways to achieve such inclusion and attention, but this item is clearly one of the most difficult to demonstrate.
- *Outsider researchers' handing the research over to insiders.* As insiders grow more competent in performing research and gain confidence, they should take on greater responsibilities. This strategy responds to an ethical concern while preparing the research to continue to generate long-term effects after the outsider has left the field.
- *Debriefing.* Stringer and Genat rightly note that all researchers, including insider researchers, can benefit from debriefing, which can help them to clarify their thoughts and emotions and “to review the appropriateness of research procedures” (2004, p. 51).
- *Audit trails* can be important for action research, but they also present significant challenges. In particular, co-researchers must be encouraged to be honest in their notes and diaries, but knowing that others may read them is likely to inhibit writing, particularly among those with low literacy skills or interest in maintaining privacy. Of course, ethnographers may claim that they keep honest

diaries, but they are aware that they are keeping audit trails and that it is in their interest to take publishable notes. Audit trails play another role in PAR: they can be used throughout the research process as a “shared archive” upon which all researchers can draw. McTaggart stresses the difficulties associated with maintaining such an archive, characterizing “data and interpretations” as a “moving feast” (1998, p. 225).

- *Description.* Expanding on the notion of transferability, in research reports, action researchers can offer detailed descriptions of not only the context in which the research was performed, but also of the difficulties and surprises that they encountered, as well as of the methods that they used. Such descriptions can help others who might attempt to draw upon the research to be able to use not only “results” but also, and more importantly, the processes of an action research endeavor.

Teaching non-scholars to perform social research, of course, presents its own challenges, although the objection that research is too difficult for “regular people” should be tempered with the acknowledgment that it is in the interest of those who have mastered such methods to make such claims. PAR, being cyclical in nature, offers ample opportunities for learning and committing errors – to outsiders and insiders alike. In this sense, improvements in data quality and the need to revisit themes, rather than throwing the entire project into question, can indicate that an important goal for both outsiders and insiders is being met: that of learning.

Chapters 5-7 provide an account of how we conducted our action research. I draw on Actor-Network Theory (ANT), discussed below, to construct that narrative. The ways in which the quality of our work can be judged are the topic of Chapter 8. Table 1 is

included in Chapter 8 and draws on the above numbered and bulleted lists of criteria and strategies to describe the successes, failures, and shortcomings of the particular implementation of AR of concern here. First, I turn to a discussion of the implementation of action research and the telling of this story, which I follow with chapters on the discourses of development and on Brazil.

DOING ACTION RESEARCH AND TELLING THE STORY

The research proposal that I submitted in order to gain clearance to enter the field was particularly aligned with the Northern version of PAR. I made the choice to submit such a proposal because all I could say for certain was that I had been invited to work with the foundation to create their reading room, which is a rather pragmatic goal. I also understood that the leaders would need to participate in some capacity-building in order to be prepared to work on what would constitute a large project for them. I did not know how they would seek to change the research or whether they would be more interested in pursuing Northern-style or Southern-style work.

As it turned out, when we sought technical changes to the institute's practices that were particularly congruent with Northern-style PAR, it was easy for participants to recognize our work as inquiry and to form questions such as, "what software best suits our needs?" In contrast, when we sought "softer," more Southern-style changes, the questions were less specific (e.g., "how can we run this organization?") and the process of answering these questions was more muddled and less easily identifiable as conventional research, precisely because this process was much more about reflecting on our desires, strengths, weaknesses, situation, power, and the like than about experimenting with changing our environment. Despite my familiarity with the Southern literature, and despite the Brazilians' familiarity with Paulo Freire, we were not able to

see this part of our work as research. In the case of our Northern-style work, we experimented, for example, through arranging books on shelves in a particular manner or through using particular software and then observing how students used the shelves or our own success in using the program; this we could see as research. In the case of the Southern-style work, we observed, but we also talked, and I kept a journal (my early request that the Brazilian leaders of the i2i do the same did not result in any journaling): we met formally and informally to discuss how we might reach the broader goal of improving and expanding the institute. Although we could not see that work as research at the time, it was through our Southern PAR that much of our learning occurred.

I wish to avoid the impression that the Southern-style research was necessary before we could conduct “real” research: to claim that one was real and the other not real would be akin to falling into the trap of development (see Chapter 3) by ascribing greater value to “developed world” and “scientific” ways of knowing than to ways of knowing of the “underdeveloped world” and communities. It is true that the reflexive processes that we undertook to understand ourselves, each other, and the i2i were necessary before we could form clearer Northern-style research questions. Thus, it is true that the Southern-style PAR laid the groundwork for the Northern-style PAR. However, it is equally true that the Southern-style PAR was the more intellectually and emotionally demanding, and the more rewarding, of the two.

Original Research Proposal

While writing this chapter in particular, I frequently lamented the fact that dissertations in the form of hypertext remain too far outside the mainstream for me to pursue writing this text in such a manner. Some of the following discussion will make more sense to readers once they have perused Section II; nonetheless, I offer it here as

part preface, part foreshadowing for readers whose main concern is the definition and treatment of research questions.

As is to be expected with action research, the goals of this study changed throughout my time in the field and even after I returned, when I was faced with writing a dissertation for an academic audience. In that document, in keeping with the spirit of action research, I stated my four main concerns in terms of goals rather than as questions, but they could easily be restated as more standard research questions. Again, I expected these to change, but I needed to produce a first proposal and was unable to work with the i2i until I had such a proposal; therefore, it was not possible for the institute to guide the initial formulation of goals or questions. In that proposal, I stated that I would begin this action research with four broad underlying goals:

1. To learn how better to serve the underprivileged;
2. To reimagine libraries and similar organizations and spaces;
3. To understand better the roles that entertainment and fiction can play in such institutions; and
4. To understand better the production of information resources by their users.

The four goals outlined above no longer describe what seems most interesting about the i2i's *de facto* formation in 2006, its growth since then, or its attempt to plan its reading room (the last development being the only one adequately predicted in the proposal), having been supplanted by the growth and development – one might say, re-establishment – of the Instituto Dois Irmãos as something more than Two Brothers-Brazil. Nonetheless, and to my own surprise, these four goals remain pertinent to understanding the events of March 2006 through February 2008, even if the original time lines and projected methods do not, and even if these goals did not guide the research.

This is partly because of the central role that planning plays in the story evoked by this research. After all, I had originally set out to facilitate the planning of a reading room and later found myself facilitating the organization's broader planning efforts.

The fourth goal, “to understand better the production of information resources by their users,” was supposed to focus on the organizations' Web sites and on students' additions to the reading room. With the delays resulting from the need to form the i2i before we could work on the provision of information and the need to purchase and renovate a building, this subject will have to remain largely for future endeavors. Nevertheless, the catalog that one of the leaders produced is a vital resource to him and the rest of the reading room's users, another leader makes much use of social networking tools to maintain contact with former volunteers and attract volunteers and donors, and volunteers have on more than one occasion created lesson plans for use by future volunteers. Additionally, in April 2009, the i2i launched a Web site designed by a student/neighbor of the institute. The site presents several accessibility challenges but is informative and attractive. Once the i2i is able to acquire more computer resources, perhaps more students will begin to contribute to one or more Web sites. For now, the i2i's students' active participation in shaping the institute is limited to participating in the planning of activities such as Halloween parties. Current and recent activities, however, are preparing students to participate more broadly in the organization and readying the i2i to provide opportunities for students to create new materials for the site or reading room.

The process of planning for and opening the reading room, then observing its use and having informal conversation with users, and renovating and planning improvements to services all provide invaluable ways to approach the first three goals.

In creating and enforcing their own policies and procedures, rather than strictly following recommended practices, the leadership took steps towards the second goal, “reimagin[ing] libraries and similar organizations and spaces.” When they let children who had little or no experience with libraries into the space, this space continued to change. The leadership then responded to how the children were using the space (and how the adults were making little use of it) by altering the physical layout of the reading room and, soon, the placement of books in the building more generally, as the reading room expanded into other parts of the building and began to lose its character as a room and as a service unconnected to classes and other activities.¹² The i2i and its donors created and shaped the reading room; the reading room and its users are now helping to shape the i2i and its search for donations, literally as well as figuratively. All the while, the i2i has been implicitly addressing the first goal, “to learn better to serve the underprivileged,” and the children and teachers have made clear the central role of entertainment and fiction, seldom finding value in seeking nonfiction resources. The learning, reimagining, and understanding sought in the four original goals occurred largely on the practical level rather than on the propositional level, the level that is more commonly of interest to academic research; nothing could be more appropriate to participatory action research, which aims to have practical and long-standing results for participants.

I tentatively proposed the following more specific goals, designed to respond to the request that I had received from Paul Sneed (president of 2Bros. and vice-president of the i2i) in 2001 to create the center. Since the following are necessary steps in the process of creating such a center, I expected that, as long as participants remained interested in having a center, these goals would persist throughout the research process. I expected,

however, for the introduction of new goals and the emphasis we placed on any particular goal to be determined by the situation at any given time, meaning that what participants were interested in and what we had already accomplished would drive our actions to address these goals:

- To plan the center
- To select materials
- To create materials
- To create an inviting space
- To procure funding and donation of materials
- To organize materials and make them available
- To provide participants with research skills.

In fact, our overriding goal turned out to be strengthening the i2i and preparing it for success not only with the reading room, but with all of its programs. When we focused on the reading room, procuring materials and creating an inviting space were the two goals about which the Brazilian leadership was most enthusiastic. One of the Brazilians went to great lengths to organize the materials and make them available. Another expressed enthusiasm about the creation of materials by students, not only for the reading room, but also for the i2i's other activities, and he continues to work toward this goal. General planning of the center and learning formal research methods were of less interest to participants, who left the planning largely to me and one leader and preferred to use conversation and informal observation to arrive at conclusions over more formal methods. Much of the narrative of Chapters 5-7 is devoted to moments in which we focused our attention on one or more of these goals, and I return to them in Chapter 8.

Choosing Participants

The original proposal's expectations regarding the number of participants and quality of participation were quite ambitious, calling for a core group of researchers and the participation of a wide range of stakeholders, suggesting that as many as one hundred people might be involved if we sought to use survey methods:

Sampling for participants will be purposeful: we will seek to identify groups of stakeholders and to ensure that these groups are involved in performing the research. . . . two groups of stakeholders – the drug traffickers and the police – will likely not be identified for direct participation, although the presence of complex social networks means that neither group is likely to lack access to the research process. Finally, our seeking out participants must be understood on two levels: identifying co-researchers and identifying more conventional research participants, should we decide to include any of the latter.

All five of the members of the board of directors of the Fundação Dois Irmãos who live in Rocinha have been asked to participate because of their positions in the organization's structure. Paul Sneed, the only non-resident who is a member of the board, may also participate at times. Similarly, all of the foundation's teachers, who normally number between five and ten at any given time, will be invited to participate. We will discuss and negotiate which other groups should be considered stakeholders, and, in the spirit of gaining the widest possible participation, I will encourage the inclusion of a broad range of groups. . . .

None of the proposed data collection methods of the first stage require conventional participants, and I have told the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) that I expect up to one hundred conventional participants. Nonetheless, it is possible that my co-researchers will decide not to include anyone as a conventional participant or even to include many more than one hundred other individuals.

In fact, I formally interviewed two students, although many others offered their impromptu informal observations and encouragement, with several of these signing consent forms. Additionally, the leaders, members of Two Brothers, and neighbors, who could not be expected to comply with the IRB's rules, observed the actions of the children, parents, volunteers and others and reported on what these said and did. We took

these observations into account in decision making, meaning that the voices of the children, in particular, were never entirely silent. Since we opened the reading room, this observation has intensified, both in the reading room and in the classrooms. Those individuals who by the definitions of the IRB or academia (i.e., those who formally accepted the invitation to think together about the institute's programs and future) were limited to the leadership of the i2i, members of Two Brothers who visited or corresponded with the leaders in Rio, community and foreign volunteers, and, more incidentally, an occasional adult student or former student. With the frequent arrival and departure of volunteers, any figure intended to describe the number of participants that could be provided herein would be misleading. At any given time, three to five local leaders (including, beginning in 2008, the teacher who began volunteering in February 2008 and is also a neighbor and founder but who had not been involved in the i2i for years), half a dozen foreign volunteers, several former volunteers now involved in Two Brothers (including Paul Sneed), and I were involved in thinking about the i2i's and the reading room's growth and acting on these reflections.

Methods Employed

It should be clear by now that we sought to use conversation and reflection much more than conventional methods to generate and evaluate data. We conducted the research in the following ways:

- **Through meetings.** The meetings varied greatly in character and in the number of participants present, and they are a major theme throughout the narrative. Besides the two “annual” meetings that we held in May 2006 and January 2008 (as well as in June 2009 as I was completing this manuscript), we held nearly weekly meetings. The composition of the group that attended these gatherings

differed from one week to the next because of absenteeism and over time because of changes in our understanding of who should attend. The meetings lasted anywhere from just under an hour to nearly three hours. In them, we reported on the events of the previous week, planned future endeavors, and asked difficult questions about what each of us was capable of doing and willing to do. We have audio recordings of the two annual meetings and six weekly meetings. While the recordings were primarily for my research, others wished to tape the annual meetings in particular to serve as evidence in the event of subsequent disagreements regarding what had been said in those gatherings. We kept minutes for the meetings, although these varied in quality and we would occasionally realize at the end of a meeting that no one had believed it to be his or her responsibility to take minutes.

- **In informal conversations and gossip.** These conversations occurred on a daily basis among a variety of participants. The conversations in which I participated usually involved one or two, occasionally three, other interlocutors. They fulfilled the same role as the meetings but also allowed us to speak more frankly and share our interpretations of the actions and intentions of individuals who were not privy to our conversations. In other words, our informal conversations allowed us to share information more freely. While these conversations were clearly important for us to have in order to continue our work – if for no other reason than speaking to one another only once a week would be impractical – several of us worried about the tension that we often felt in meetings over gossip that we had shared in the previous week.

- **Communication via e-mail with 2Bros.** This written communication was the basis of many conversations, in both formal and informal meetings. Similarly, the NGOs had some **written documentation**, for example, the Web site and brochures with the NGOs' mission statement that we questioned in these conversations.
- **Via observations.** I kept a journal of my observations, and others shared theirs in meetings and informal conversations. We observed ourselves, each other, students, our students' parents, the neighbors, and the world around us. Of particular importance were how we interpreted each others' attitudes (much of which goes unmentioned herein because we have chosen to use the actors' real names), our observations of the building as it changed, and our observations of the i2i's students in the classroom and in the reading room.

I attempted to take notes at least once a day, often several times a day. Still, because my loyalties were split between participating in the i2i's daily activities and maintaining a record of the same (as well as of my thoughts and emotions), it was precisely when the most interesting events were occurring that I had the least time to write. I responded to this challenge by seeking to write at least a bulleted list of events on very busy days. I also took to spending many of my mornings away from Rocinha to write, think, get exercise, and avoid the dust when the institute was under construction. Thus, I took most of my notes on paper and transcribed them later. I would write until my wrist or hand would no longer allow me to do so, often returning after an hour for another session. The first session would last nearly an hour, and the second one would last perhaps half an hour. Whenever I wrote while in Rocinha, I seldom had the luxury of completing

a writing session before being called away. As time passed and we came to occupy the i2i's new building and work on the reading room, I began to take notes on my laptop as events were occurring. Finally, I was ill for most if not all of the time that I spent in Rio and unaware of the causes of my discomfort and fatigue, which affected my ability to finish my notes at night, which would have been preferable to leaving them for the following morning. The next section, "Telling the Story," takes up the topic of these notes in relation to the narrative of Section II.

- **Through interviews.** We agreed that several of the i2i's leaders would conduct interviews with our students, but after I conducted two with adult students only to find that the others were not interviewing anyone, I ceased conducting these. Still, I conducted interviews with the four Brazilian leaders shortly after my arrival in 2006, with a volunteer several months after my arrival, with three of the leaders and a volunteer shortly before my first departure in February 2007, and with two volunteers shortly before my final departure in February 2008. I made audio recordings of all but the two interviews with the students and the initial interviews with the Brazilian leaders, which we conducted before I had received approval to make recordings. I also had several long, impromptu conversations that served the purpose of taking a deep look at a participant's concerns and interpretations, not unlike the formal, semi-structured interviews.
- **Through the application of a formal survey.** Unfortunately, since we sent this survey via e-mail to former participants who had not signed consent forms, I was not able to use the data from this instrument. I did, however, participate in creating the survey.

- **Through trial and error, testing our ideas.** For example, we experimented with using particular software for cataloging our collection, and one leader in particular created and refined a taxonomy for the i2i's materials, which we modified and refined when we encountered an item that we could not incorporate into it or after observing students' and volunteers' use of materials.

Some of these methods should be more familiar than others to social science researchers. Observations, interviews, and formal surveys are standard methods, and the idea of trial and error is intimately linked to the physical sciences. The iterative nature of our work, and the idea that much of the research took place in fairly unstructured meetings and through gossip, may be less familiar, except to anthropologists. Still, the meetings and informal conversations share an affinity with the more rigid, very familiar methods of focus groups and semi-structured interviews. We did not opt to use any of the more performative, arts-based methods that can often be found in PAR reports. In short, participants opted for observational and dialogue-based methods of posing and answer questions, as they in many other aspects of their lives.

Telling the Story

Especially at first, when I was seeking to gain an initial understanding of the power dynamics and practices in use at the i2i, my notes are disjointed and incompletely document the situation and changes at the i2i. It seemed that either everything was happening at once and I had little time to write, or nothing was happening and I had nothing to write. This paradox was partly due to the fact that I arrived believing that I should be taking notes in order to chronicle our work towards planning and possibly implementing a reading room but soon began to wonder if we would ever discuss the reading room. Although I was prepared to write about a failed attempt to plan a reading

room, I was ill prepared for the prospect that we might fail to attempt the research at all. Thus, for the first six months that I spent in the field, to an even greater degree than I had expected, I did not know to what end I was taking notes. As the challenges that we faced and the practices that we used became clearer to me, and as I gained greater and greater entry into the lives of key participants, I took notes that were more focused on challenges, conflicts, and participants' opinions and actions and less on the question of whether we would ever begin to work on the reading room. Another factor limiting my notes was time constraints when I most needed to take notes: when a crisis arose, leaders and volunteers expected me to be available to respond to the crisis, and I found it socially awkward, sometimes impossible, to remove myself to write. As a group, the Brazilian leaders and I went through a similar process of learning to create and, eventually, distribute documents.

I chose the notes and analyses that I present here at first because they are what I have of the period in question; the narrative of Chapter 5 is somewhat uneven. As I grew more competent and confident in note-taking, and as participants came to articulate the challenges that we faced, it becomes possible to identify not only what appeared to be salient at the time, but also what we later recognized as having been important. Thus, the narrative is increasingly focused.

I could have told the story in dozens of ways. Because the primary goals of this text are to make a contribution to the i2i and 2Bros., make a contribution to information studies and academia more generally, and show how we conducted the research, I have drawn on my notes, minutes from meetings, recordings, and, occasionally, e-mails to present the following topics:

- How the meetings, building, and reading room evolved.

- Similarly, the how a community of inquiry and community of practice came to exist at the i2i. This topic includes how and what we learned, as well as the development of new practices and programs, such as literacy courses that were added in 2008.
- Decision making.
- Relations with volunteers and with 2Bros. Here, the fact that I have used the real names of the actors in order to give them credit means that I have had to be particularly careful with what I share publicly. Still, these discussions should be useful at least to participants in the NGOs who seek to understand their history.
- Recurring themes in our conversations, e.g., the i2i's logo and the seriousness of participants.
- Events that in our conversations we identified as major, e.g., annual meetings.
- Outcomes of our work and other events or acts that can be called on to evaluate the research.
- Moments at which the notion of information became particularly salient.
- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Texas.

The narrative may appear to some to have a negative tone: we struggled daily to keep the i2i and its programs functioning and to maintain good relations between the two NGOs and between the i2i's leaders and its volunteers. It is important for readers to understand that most, if not all, involved had good intentions and that many of the tensions resulted precisely from our intense desire to see the i2i functioning well. This is, indeed, a story of slow improvements, hard-fought battles, and frequent moments of discord, but it is also one of friendship, dedication, and, ultimately, success. I have at times included passages for no other reason than to help readers to see and understand both the challenges and the

joys that the i2i and its collaborators experienced between March 2006 and February 2008.

Power relations are a common theme in PAR and social science research more generally. Much of what we observed about power relations remains unreported here; this is one of the disadvantages of not providing anonymity to all actors. It should nonetheless be clear from the narrative that we often felt ourselves to be in a power struggle, one about which we spoke quite openly in our informal conversations. Neutralizing power relations was not always possible, but I was able to use several tactics: I insisted that we go around the room in our meetings, giving everyone a chance to speak; I offered to bring up subjects if someone else did not feel comfortable doing so; I encouraged volunteers in particular to approach the leadership with their concerns; I talked about the possibility of the i2i's having greater autonomy from 2Bros.; I participated in and sparked informal conversations about power relations and individual actors' interests in order to hear what other actors believed; and I wrote long notes (or memos) about the tensions within the group and the interests of actors as I and others saw them. Ironically, the fact that I often lacked the power to determine the topics of conversations, particularly in meetings, or to choose actions prohibited me from doing more to neutralize power relations. Still, two leaders and at least one volunteer learned to speak up, and the i2i gained much autonomy; I may not have been able to neutralize power relations, but together we changed the group dynamic. I expect yet further changes in the 2009 meeting, which is to be held while I make the final changes to this text and in which I plan to participate via teleconference.

The many headings in the narrative chapters guide readers through themes and periods. The narrative is in mostly chronological order, but where there was a tension

between staying with a theme and maintaining a strictly chronological account, it follows the theme to a logical stopping point. There are also more than one hundred floated boxes marking themes throughout the narrative. These reflect the bulleted list above.

One might ask how to recognize cycles of reflection or turning points in the narrative. It is indeed difficult to do so because we seldom did only one thing at a time, so that we may have completed a cycle or experienced a shift in one sense but not in another. Where possible, I have noted in the narrative when shifts occurred. These are often linked to a much-anticipated event, such as the 2006 annual meeting; an event that altered our financial situation or the i2i's physical space, such as the initiation and completion of construction; or the introduction of a practice that had bearing on the reading room, such as the use of the software LibraryThing and MiniBiblio. These shifts represent changes in practices or perspectives. The events that participants frequently identified as having been shifts for them or the institute include beginning to meet on approximately a weekly basis, the annual meeting of 2006, the move to the new building, the day the participant in question came to understand something, the receipt of a large donation of books, the initiation and completion of the construction, the fund raising document that we created in 2007, and the opening of the reading room. In my case, I can add my various arrival and departure dates. I have dedicated one chapter of the narrative account to each of my three visits to Rocinha, with short discussions of the interim periods at the beginning of Chapters 6 and 7.

Actor Network Theory

Throughout Section II, I provide a narrative of the events of March 2006-February 2008 at the i2i with the purpose of demonstrating our action research. I draw on the narrative turn in fields such as anthropology and take inspiration from Actor-Network

Theory (ANT) as I demonstrate how we conducted our affairs while attempting to learn how to conduct these affairs in an ever more satisfactory manner.

Published in 1996, Bruno Latour's *Aramis, or the Love of Technology* traces the actors, including Aramis itself, in the failure of this French public transportation project, asking, “Who killed Aramis?” I am fortunate to be able to attempt, on a smaller scale, to trace the actors in a relatively successful endeavor, asking, “How did the i2i and its reading room develop?” or, perhaps, “Who made the i2i?” In keeping with the spirit of ANT (Latour, 2005), herein I introduce few external theories or concepts, avoiding framing the i2i's (and the reading room's) trajectory with any of a number of social theories that could be used to explain it.

That said, and as Latour and his colleagues fully recognize, it is naïve to assume that researchers can analyze data as if they (both the researchers and the data they generate) were devoid of or separate from beliefs, language, or history. Therefore, I devote Chapters 3 and 4 to some of the concerns that informed this research. Likewise, because these have been obvious throughout the process of imagining and performing the i2i and its programs, I make use of the notions of communities of practice and boundary objects, discussed below, throughout the narrative account. I could have devoted a chapter to each of several other literatures and notions, including “organizations,” “NGOs,” “identity,” and “autonomy,” without which it would be exceedingly difficult to proceed, but an endless game of definitions and the questions these occasion would detract from, and even make impossible, the present endeavor.

An extended discussion of ANT is out of the scope of this work, but since I have used ANT as inspiration for relating the story of the i2i, a short explanation is warranted

here. John Law included a glossary in his *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* (2004). The following entry is emblematic of the difficulty of defining ANT:

Actor-network theory: an approach to sociotechnical analysis that treats entities and materialities as enacted and relational effects, and explores the configuration and reconfiguration of those relations. Its relationality means that major ontological categories (for instance 'technology' and 'society', or 'human' and 'non-human') are treated as effects or outcomes, rather than as explanatory resources. Actor-network theory is widely used as a toolkit in sociotechnical analysis, though it might be better considered as a sensibility to materiality, relationality, and process. Whether it is a theory is doubtful. In the course of its development it has taken a wide range of different and sometimes inconsistent forms. It has at different times been criticised for its relative lack of interest in major social asymmetries such as gender, its refusal to base its explanations on generally accepted ontological categories, its tendency to a centred managerialism, the flattening character of its network metaphor, and its lack of concern with Otherness. The extent to which these complaints are appropriate to either early or contemporary work within the tradition is a matter of judgement (p. 157).

Like PAR, ANT is flexible, and it is better understood as an approach to research than as a methodology. I am conscious of the following events and perspectives in drawing inspiration from ANT:

- Actor-Network Theory (or, alternatively, Actor-Network-Theory) arises from Science and Technology Studies (STS), in which social scientists were “studying up” rather than studying the habits and rituals of groups whom they could dominate. Latour (2005) states that the common terms used to explain phenomena among “natives” did not help explain the actions of scientists. With this realization came the need for new perspectives or methods.
- Latour and others began to “follow the actors”: “actors themselves make everything, including their own frames, their own theories, their own contexts, their own metaphysics, even their own ontologies,” (p. 147) and these are what should matter to sociology. Rather than starting with, for example, an apparent

tension between structure and agency, analysts were to be meticulous in sticking to their data, bracketing off social science theories to listen to the actors themselves:

The duties of the social scientist mutate accordingly: it is no longer enough to limit actors to the role of informers offering cases of some well-known types. You have to grant them back the ability to make up their own theories of what the social is made of. Your task is no longer to impose some order, to limit the range of acceptable entities, to teach actors what they are, or to add some reflexivity to their blind practice. Using a slogan from ANT, you have 'to follow the actors themselves', that is try to catch up with their often wild innovations in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands, which methods they have elaborated to make it fit together, which accounts could best define the new associations that they have been forced to establish. If the sociology of the social works fine with what has already been *assembled*, it does not work so well to collect anew the participants in what is not – *not yet* – a sort of social realm (Latour, 2005, pp. 11-12, emphasis in the original).

This is, of course, easier said than done, and Latour describes successful ANT practitioners as being as single-minded, stubborn, and as blind to their surrounding as ants are. These scholars follow paths that appear “flat,” leaving actors to produce contexts, theories, explanations, and the like.

- The focus is meant not to be first on particular actors, but rather on their relationships, the connections among them. Law, however, notes that the choice to “follow the actors” lends ANT an “actor-centric character” (1991, p. 12).
- The goal is to provide a convincing description, not to generate explanatory theory. Any grand narratives that appear in the story should be those used by the actors.
- Humans are not the only potential actors: technologies, for example, take on lives of their own, not only being shaped by humans, but also shaping them, as a variety of authors show in *A Sociology of Monsters* (Law, ed., 1991) and *Actor*

Network Theory and After (Law & Hassard, eds., 1999), and as Latour demonstrates in *Aramis* (1996). Thus, not only individuals and institutions, but also technologies and ideas (as the notion of boundary objects, discussed below, shows) are candidates for being considered actors. If they have not yet been given form, they are referred to as actants.

- Actor-networks are characterized as performed (Mol, 1999):

Actor-network is, has been, a semiotic machine for waging war on essential differences. It insists on the performative character of relations and the objects constituted in those relations. It has insisted on the possibility, at least in principle, that they might be otherwise. (Law, 1999, p. 7)

Groups are not silent things, but rather the provisional product of a constant uproar made by the millions of contradictory voices about what is a group and who pertains to what (Latour, 2005, p. 31).

- We are also performing when we conduct research, and:

Method is not, I have argued, a more or less successful set of procedures for reporting on a given reality. Rather it is performative. It helps to produce realities. It does not do so freely and at whim. There is a hinterland of realities, of manifest absences and Othernesses, resonances and patterns of one kind or another, already being enacted, and it cannot ignore these. At the same time, however, it is also creative. . . . The consequence is that method is not, and could never be, innocent or purely technical. (Law, 2004, p. 143)

- ANT places an emphasis on heterogeneity and on not homogenizing actors.
- Relatedly, ANT rejects fixity, requiring that stabilized relationships be explained. Latour again provides a succinct characterization of this aspect of ANT: “our school views stability as exactly what has to be explained by appealing to costly and demanding *means*” (2005, p. 35, emphasis in the original).

Again, ANT has been primarily employed in the study of science and technology. Why use it here, to understand a group that was barely able to keep a single computer

functioning, often resorting to putting the hard drive in a refrigerator, thus risking loss via condensation, in order to contend with the heat of a sub-tropical zone in a building with no air conditioning? It would seem that the i2i could not be much farther removed from the realities of scientists in laboratories. I do so for several reasons:

- By taking that which is not strictly human so seriously, ANT allows me to focus on the “figure” of the i2i (and that of the reading room): how it shaped us and how we shaped it.
- Using an ANT approach means taking material arrangements seriously but does not necessitate falling into the trap of relying on notions such as false consciousness, which belittle human beings. Ironically, by refusing to place humanity above all else, ANT insists that we display and act upon a deep respect for human actors (among others) and their perspectives and beliefs. Here, ANT and PAR coexist particularly nicely.
- ANT suggests a method for coping with the fact that PAR demands participation, while dissertation writing is typically a solitary pursuit: rather than requiring the use of social theories that are alien to participants, ANT practitioners work more directly with participants' statements and actions to draw a picture of social phenomena.
- Action research, with its extended epistemology, is not well suited to full exposition in the form of academic writing. By tracing the actors in the i2i's transformation and growth, and by making use of narrative techniques, I can describe not only gains in propositional knowing, but also those in presentational and practical knowing, while at least hinting at the experiential. By forcing analysts to keep their noses to the data, as it were, ANT provides opportunities for

the description of a wider range of ways of knowing, ways that through other lenses might seem to constitute little more than distracting minutiae. Unfortunately for both me and my readers, one result is a rather lengthy text.

- The constant attention to the fact that things could always have been otherwise is analytically powerful and helps researchers guard against spurious logic. Furthermore, the notion that people experience deep internal change is essential to PAR and also implies seeing life as offering choices.
- ANT is not entirely foreign to researchers in information studies whose focus is information technologies. Information studies has long struggled with tensions, even resentment, between those who work primarily or solely in the realm of the digital and those whose work encompasses a strong analog component. By taking a perspective that is more associated with cutting-edge technology to consider a largely analog case, I perhaps can tell a story of some interest to both “camps,” as well as to those who would like to see these distinctions diminish in importance.

For this study, I understand ANT to be an approach that I can take regarding my notes, recordings, and the like that encourages me not to seek to use or generate social theory, but rather to look at how things came to be and how relationships were performed, always aware that nothing was inevitable, even if conditions highly favored some outcomes over others. This is precisely the kind of perspective that I need if I am to demonstrate how the i2i and, with it, the reading room came to be (and continue to be performed – kept alive – daily) while staying as true to PAR as the conventions of the production of doctoral dissertations reasonably allow. ANT and PAR share some critiques and concerns regarding research: the recognition that methods are performed, a rejection of the notion of inevitability, the privileging of people's beliefs and actions over

predefined social theories, an acknowledgment that there is more to knowing than conventional Western research practices admit, and a focus on process more than on ends. Thus, the incorporation of an ANT perspective is a congruent and practical way of expressing the PAR experience that I shared with the i2i's leaders and other participants.

Communities of Practice

In the original proposal, I referred to the i2i as the “Fundação Dois Irmãos,” or FDI. I stated:

The FDI already fosters an interesting and unusual set of social ties. We will consciously draw on various worlds to achieve our goals. Furthermore, the FDI is an incipient community of practice, one that can be strengthened and expanded through sustained collective work such as the proposed research: classes have allowed some teachers and students to work together and create a sense of community, but the FDI lacks coherence, and continuity is ensured by a small number of individuals, many of them outsiders. This research will allow us to effect and study change in an institution that seeks to value the contributions, leadership, and social networks of people who are more commonly conceptualized as the recipients of charity, while still drawing on the knowledge, skills, and social networks of privileged outsiders. Understanding the tensions, successes, and failures of our endeavor to create a strong, coherent community of practice that can better guide the FDI largely from within Rocinha will contribute to two goals of this research: to understand better how reading rooms and information agencies can serve the historically underserved and to conceptualize the spaces that such organizations provide in a manner more fitting of the contexts in which particular organizations exist.

As researchers have come to conceptualize learning as an endeavor that is social or group-based rather than primarily individual, the notion of communities of practice has gained currency. Through communities of practice, individuals share values and language that make understanding, collective action, and the formation of identities possible, while communities of practice are initially formed and later maintained through the development and maintenance of shared practices.

Wenger defines “communities of practice”:

Being alive as human beings means that we are constantly engaged in the pursuit of enterprises of all kinds, from ensuring our physical survival to seeking the most lofty pleasures. As we define these enterprises and engage in their pursuit together, we interact with each other and with the world and we tune our relations with each other and with the world accordingly. In other words, we learn.

Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore, to call these kinds of communities communities of practice. (1998, p. 45, emphasis in the original)

Wenger offers another, more succinct explanation: “*communities of practice can be thought of as shared histories of learning*” (p. 86, emphasis in the original).

Brown and Duguid (2000) argue that in recent years, in focusing on information in attempts to understand and to predict changes in society, scholars, industry workers, and others have unduly ignored the central role of the social in shaping what constitutes information, its production, and its uses. We have thus been too quick to dismiss institutions, communities, and practices, believing these to constitute distractions. In contrast, throughout Chapters 5-8, I explore the creation and maintenance of a community of practice that will ultimately be responsible for the long-term success or failure of a place and institution devoted to information, learning, and leisure. This focus on communities of practice is particularly appropriate to PAR, which emphasizes the importance of participants', not just researchers', learning. After all, as Brown and Duguid note, “whether the task is deemed high or low, practice is an effective teacher and the community of practice an ideal learning environment” (2000, p. 127).

The quotation above from the original proposal remains surprisingly accurate. We indeed fought to create and maintain a community of practice from which to run and

expand the i2i; the institute's younger students are avid users of both the organization and its reading room, demonstrating the utility of such services; and the physical space (and, initially, lack thereof) influenced nearly every decision.

Wenger sees communities of practice at the center of much of our learning, and he offers four assumptions reminiscent of AR's extended epistemology:

1. We are social beings. Far from being trivially true, this fact is a central aspect of learning.
2. Knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises – such as singing in tune, discovering scientific facts, fixing machines, writing poetry, being convivial, growing up as a boy or a girl, and so forth.
3. Knowing is a matter of participating in the pursuit of such enterprises, that is, of active engagement in the world.
4. Meaning – our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful – is ultimately what learning is to produce. (1998, p. 4)

He continues by emphasizing another core concern of AR, the role of participation:

As a reflection of these assumptions, the primary focus of this theory is on learning as social participation. Participation here refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities. Participating in a playground clique or in a work team, for instance, is both a kind of action and a form of belonging. Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do. (1998, p. 4)

The concept of communities of practice is, then, one that emphasizes learning through practice with others, as is the case with PAR. Furthermore, learning is defined broadly, and knowing is not confined to mental processes that can be adequately captured in expository writing:

More generally, my usage of the concept of practice does *not* fall on one side of traditional dichotomies that divide acting from knowing, manual from mental, concrete from abstract. The process of engagement in practice always involves the

whole person, both acting and knowing at once. In practice, so-called manual activity is not thoughtless, and mental activity is not disembodied. And neither is the concrete solidly self-evident, nor the abstract transcendentally general; rather, both gain their meanings within the perspectives of specific practices and can thus obtain a multiplicity of interpretations. (1998, pp. 47-48, emphasis in the original)

The discussion in Section II of the development of the i2i can be viewed largely as the story of a series of interrelated attempts to create and strengthen a community of practice of the leaders of the i2i in which the roles of others (e.g., volunteers, members of 2Bros., and students) have been particularly ambiguous and shifting. Chapter 8, in drawing heavily on Heron and Reason's "extended epistemology," highlights the collective learning that is central to communities of practice.

Boundary Objects

Boundary objects need not be physical objects and are notions, things, places, even people that can be understood in different ways by different people, groups, professions, or the like, but in ways that allow these various groups or individuals to believe and act as if they were all imagining "the same thing." Such objects (again, understood metaphorically) aid groups with different cultures, values, beliefs, or goals in working together. Star and Griesemer (1989), who introduced the term, studied how a diversity of actors, from amateur collectors, to university administrators, to scientists and professors, contributed to the work of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at the University of California, Berkeley. Medicine, with its various kinds of practitioners, lends itself particularly well to the use of boundary objects, as Mol's depiction of understandings of anemia (1999) and atherosclerosis (2002), as well as Dugdale's (1999) discussion of the production of a pamphlet about a particular birth control device, make clear.

While it is easier to think of boundary objects as singular things on which different people hold different perspectives, these authors, particularly Mol, demonstrate that they may be better understood as different objects that are given the same name – what Mol refers to as a multiplicity of performances rather than a plurality of constructions. The different performances of the Instituto Dois Irmãos and its reading room are at the heart of both the successes and struggles chronicled herein.

In the spirit of ANT, Star and Griesemer expand the notion of multiple memberships to include things and ideas that occupy a place in more than one world. Dugdale asks:

Are these performances of a single IUD? . . . If we attend seriously to the specificities of the talk, then it turns out that we are dealing not simply with one, but also with half-a-dozen different IUDs. This is a semiotic move implicit, and sometimes explicit, in the ANT programme. It is a semiotic move because semiotics insists that entities are created relationally. That, for instance, subjects are made in relations. . . . But also, and this is more novel, that *objects are made in relations* too. That they are . . . performed into being. This can be done in talk . . . but it is also done in other material orderings. What I am suggesting is that rather than thinking of this 'talk' as describing different perspectives on the same object, we approach it as 'ontological politics', as 'doing' different IUDs." (1999, pp. 124-125, emphasis in the original)

We shift, then, from construction to performance as the metaphor for how practices, institutions, and objects not only are created, but also remain in being. To use, for example, the term “the i2i” and refer to it as a boundary object may be a bit of a misnomer, and perhaps it would be more precise to speak of “i2is.” What we seem to have is not so much “objects with multiple memberships” (Star and Griesemer, p. 412), but rather the shared perception that there is one thing – the i2i – while several i2is are being performed. Indeed, in the case of the reading room, sometimes no reading rooms were being performed and the research on that front was stalled. Taking the lessons from

Star and Griesemer and from Dugdale another step, we might characterize the research itself as a boundary object.

ANT and the notions of communities of practice and boundary objects guide the narrative of Section II. First, this chapter ends with a section on my background in relation to this research, and Section I ends with chapters on the discourses of development and on Brazil.

The Researcher as Instrument

In the social sciences, researchers are among the most important research instruments. In PAR, the human instruments are many. Throughout the narrative, readers will get to know the various other human actors, and it would be presumptuous for me to speak for them more than I already have. In this section, I seek to give readers some notion of who I am – and who I was before entering the field.

I was born and raised in Central Connecticut by parents who place a high value on education but who themselves mostly ceased pursuing formal education when they graduated from high school. I was always curious about my great-grandmother, who was an Azorean immigrant to Massachusetts. Furthermore, I have long been acutely aware of the fact that if I had been born into a family of electricians and factory workers almost anywhere else in the world, I would not have had the opportunities to eat well, study, and travel that I have had.

During my junior year of high school, I applied to spend a year studying abroad through Rotary International's Youth Exchange program. I had hoped to hone my Spanish skills, since I was studying that language in school, but I was offered the opportunity to go to Brazil. At first, I was devastated, but I also saw the program as an

opportunity to learn a language that my family members had not passed on to me. I spent a year with two families in a rich city several hours inland in the state of São Paulo.

Upon my return to the United States, I decided to major in Portuguese. I went to Georgetown University in Washington, DC, and spent my junior year studying mostly Brazilian history at the University of Campinas, one of Brazil's top schools, located an hour outside of São Paulo. During my senior year, I had a translation internship at the Brazilian embassy and an internship at the Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress.

After graduating, I went to work for the Library full-time for nearly two years. Having decided that I would never make a living in Washington without a graduate degree, I left for the University of Texas at Austin, where I pursued a joint degree in Latin American studies and communication. For my master's thesis, I conducted survey research in Rocinha regarding cable television preferences. A colleague and close friend introduced me to people in Rocinha, as I describe at the beginning of Chapter 5. I then decided that I was not done with my formal education and applied to the doctoral program in information studies at the University of Texas at Austin. In Chapter 5, I also describe my decision to pursue the research described herein.

I went, then, to work with the i2i profoundly aware of the privileges that I enjoyed and of the fact that my life would have been entirely different if my great-grandmother's parents had simply decided to go to Brazil rather than to New England, a decision that many Azorean families made, or if I had been born into a family of people who worked with their hands anywhere in the so-called Third World. I also had a great respect for Brazilian culture, near-native fluency in the Portuguese language from the time I spent in São Paulo and at Georgetown and the Library of Congress, and a physical appearance that allowed me to blend into Rocinha much better than I had expected: while I am much

whiter than most residents, my body type and face are familiar and do not mark me as American in the way I had expected. My clothing, attitudes, and way of carrying myself sometimes, but not always, marked me as foreign. In fact, some residents assumed that I was Brazilian.

Roles

PAR encourages researchers to see themselves as participants in the research that they conduct. Certainly, outsider researchers are not identical in background, perspectives, goals, skills, knowledge, or myriad other ways to insiders. In an organization like the i2i, there is an array of backgrounds, perspectives, and the like even among insiders. Furthermore, it can be difficult to determine who is an insider and who is an outsider, and the answer to this question can change. For example, a long-term foreign volunteer or foreign founder of the i2i is at once an insider and an outsider.

At first, I was primarily but not entirely an outsider at the i2i. I was not new to Rocinha, nor was I quite new to the i2i. This familiarity with Rocinha meant, for example, that I did not receive Rogério's typical services for volunteers, which included help in such areas as finding a place to live and purchasing furniture. I already had a place to live, and I counted on my hosts and on Daniel for the kinds of aid that Rogério provided other volunteers. I sought Rogério's company and was sure to get to know him; the point here is not that I missed out, but rather that my role was slightly unusual from the beginning, and not only because I was not an English teacher. Because of my language skills and knowledge of Rocinha, I was able to provide assistance to volunteers as soon as I arrived, and the longer I spent with the i2i, the more being the foreigner who could explain the i2i to newcomers became a role that I was expected to play.

I will never be able to understand fully what it is like to grow up in Rocinha and not have the means to, for example, travel or pursue higher education. Although, like anyone who has spent considerable time abroad, I can no longer consider myself entirely American, I am certainly not Brazilian. In these ways, I will forever be an outsider.

In other ways, my role was and is much more ambiguous and shifting. Regarding many subjects, not just the reading room, I became a temporary member of the leadership, to the extent that I once felt the need to remind one of the Brazilian leaders that they were within their right to call an executive meeting without me. As the i2i grew stronger and my remaining time grew shorter, I changed the focus of my work from being a leader to being a volunteer with a specific project, although I did not refuse to continue aiding in leading the institute. Similarly, as the reading room took shape, I became Daniel's assistant rather than the person heading the reading room project. Finally, I returned to the United States and maintained infrequent contact with the leadership of both NGOs as I completed this text. While preparing the final version of the text, I also prepared to reintegrate myself into one or both NGOs, since I am on the board of both, and I await the June 2009 joint annual meeting to discuss the roles the leaders would like me to play.

Now, in order to provide context to the story of Chapters 5-7, I turn my readers' attention to the discourse of development and to favelas, Rocinha, and information services and librarianship in Brazil.

Chapter 3: Discourses of Development

The relationship of Brazil and Brazilians to the United States and the rest of the Global North (or First World) is bound up in the long history of conquest, development, aid, missionary work, global politics (including the Cold War), and international relations more generally. While it would be unrealistic to delve deeply into each of these topics, an overview of the discourses of development provides a framework through which to make sense of the i2i's context and work. This overview also provides a way to begin to understand the complex nature of the relationship between 2Bros. and the i2i, as well as the varied and equally complex relationships between the leaders of the i2i and their foreign volunteers.

A critique of the development framework underlies not only this analysis, but also the decision to conduct this research using participatory action research in the first place. Therefore, it is important to take a close look at the notion of development, keeping in mind the observations of Sachs and Esteva that the very term is like an amoeba:

By now development has become an amoeba-like concept, shapeless but ineradicable. Its contours are so blurred that it denotes nothing – while it spreads everywhere because it connotes the best of intentions. . . . [I]t allows any intervention to be sanctified in the name of a higher goal. (Sachs, 1992, p. 4)

Throughout the century, the meanings associated with urban development and colonial development concurred with many others to transform the word 'development', step by step, into one with contours that are about as precise as those of an amoeba. It is now a mere algorithm whose significance depends on the context in which it is employed. . . . But even though it lacks, on its own, any precise denotation, it is firmly seated in popular and intellectual perception. And it always appears as an evocation of a net of significances in which the person who uses it is irremediably trapped. (Esteva, 1992, p. 10)

In January 2009, in the midst of a prolonged and demoralizing war and economic crisis, President Barack Obama gave an inaugural address in which he vowed to “restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology’s wonders.” While decrying “worn-out dogmas that for far too long have strangled our politics,” Obama affirmed his faith in capitalism: “Nor is the question before us whether the market is a force for good or ill. Its power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched.” He proceeded to speak about U.S. foreign policy:

To all the other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born, know that America is a friend of each nation, and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity. And we are ready to lead once more.

Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with the sturdy alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead they knew that our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.

We are the keepers of this legacy. Guided by these principles once more we can meet those new threats that demand even greater effort, even greater cooperation and understanding between nations. . . .

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to the suffering outside our borders, nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it. (Obama, 2009)

Sixty years earlier, President Harry Truman gave an inauguration address that was in many ways echoed by Obama. In it, Truman laid out the nation’s “program for peace and freedom,” which would guide the United States as it embarked on “four major courses of action.” The fourth, Point Four as it is known, is widely believed to have initiated the

“development era.” Through his speech, Truman introduced the term “underdeveloped” to the general public of not only the United States, but of the world. “More than half the people of the world,” Truman announced, “are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat to both them and to more prosperous areas.” For the safety and salvation of the world, such people and their economies had to become modern: they had to come to be like the United States and its allies. These changes were imperative in a world in which there was a perceived constant threat of communism.

“For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of these people,” Truman claimed. The transfer of advanced technologies could now be achieved, leading to better lives for all, and with this prosperity – and recognizing the generosity of the United States and its allies – the formerly miserable would finally be happy, productive, modern members of society with no reason to embrace communism and every reason to celebrate the wonders of capitalism. The United States, since it was “pre-eminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques,” would lead the way, working closely with other developed nations. “This program can greatly increase the industrial activity in other nations and can raise substantially their standards of living,” Truman declared.

The hungry would be helped to “help themselves.” After all, “The old imperialism – exploitation for foreign profit – has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair-dealing.”

Underdeveloped countries were, in essence, to be remade in the image of the United States with more than a little help from the model nation. Such development would not only guarantee that the world's people would be fed; it would also ensure the security of the United States, particularly against the threat of communism, and it would open new markets for American products, although the president made sure to include the other "developed" countries in the list of nations that would contribute to the development of others and benefit from the resultant security and new markets.

The many discussions of the notion of development that have since taken place have, implicitly or explicitly, made reference to Truman's speech. The speech should be understood in the context of not only the Cold War and immediately previous concerns about fascism, but also, as Rist asserts (1997), the much longer history of European attempts to "civilize" others, particularly through the spread of Christianity. This section focuses on discourses regarding the notion of development since Truman's 1949 Inaugural Address, but readers are asked to recall that the notion has existed in many guises for centuries. What most distinguishes from its predecessors the new imperialism posited by Truman appears to be its openly expressed emphasis on economic growth.

CRITIQUES OF DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES

Economic and cultural "progress" have been essential components of development. In contrast, the topic of redistribution of wealth has often been neglected; at other times, such redistribution has been seen as a natural result of development. While the concept of cultural autonomy has gained considerable ground in recent years as the belief in cultural progress has been questioned, it remains difficult to question the idea of economic growth without questioning the very notion of development. Few people today would defend the formulation of the concept of development that is apparent in Truman's

speech. Rather, discussions have centered on how best to modify it, with some taking the position that the term and its related practices should be eliminated. In this context, this section explores both the arguments for modifying the notion of development and those for abandoning the term, paying particular attention to the association of development with economic growth.

The following interrelated beliefs are essential to the ever-shifting post-War conceptions of development:

- Third World (or, later, Southern) nations must modernize their economies and cultures, imitating the United States and other Western (or Northern) nations.¹³
- That which is traditional is static; that which is modern is dynamic. Change is good.
- There is a single goal toward which all of humanity should progress: a best way of being or living exists, and the developed world has achieved or soon will achieve the “good life” for all of its inhabitants.
- Economic growth and the growth of technical knowledge are boundless.
- The transfer of knowledge and skills is indispensable. Underlying this assertion is a faith in technology and a belief that these are ideologically and/or culturally neutral or that they are ideologically and/or culturally superior to indigenous technologies. Indeed, indigenous technologies are unlikely to merit the use of the term “technology.”
- The national security of the countries of the First World or North depends on spreading capitalism (or “market economies”); prosperity and happiness naturally follow from capitalism.

Clearly, few proponents would put these beliefs in such naïve terms today, but they provide much of the basis for development and aid efforts to this day and are therefore important to enumerate. The many critics mentioned below make reference to early and mainstream development discourses, and Brohman provides an extensive review of “Mainstream Theories and Practices” in Part One of *Popular Development: Rethinking the Theory & Practice of Development* (1996, pp. 7-197).

The main critiques of orthodox development discourse are largely apparent in the above list. These critiques, which are likewise interrelated, include (Escobar, 1995; Rahman, 1993; Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997; Rist, 1997; Sachs, 1992):

- Modernization is not a neutral process. It destroys cultures and disrupts economic arrangements that functioned well before the attempt, imposed by outsiders and endorsed by insider beneficiaries (often local elites), to base all social interactions on economics and markets.
- Tradition is beneficial; it is lived and continues to flourish. Indigenous knowledge and ways of being are often characterized as dynamic, while in other cases tradition is idealized and portrayed as relatively static.
- Humanity should not be made to “evolve” toward a single goal. People are different and should be different. They must be allowed – even encouraged – to pursue a variety of ways of being and knowing. Development amounts to Americanization, Westernization, or cultural imperialism, all of which are reprehensible.
- Resources are scarce; continuing to treat them as if they were endless will only result in irreversible damage to the environment, to our health, and to future generations. For some, this critique suggests “sustainable development”; for

others (e.g., Bennholdt-Thomson and Mies, 1999), it means that we must cease to believe that unending economic growth is a proper goal.

- Prepackaged solutions to the perceived problems of poverty, inequality, and “underdevelopment” are not in the interest of those whom they purportedly aid. Rather, they serve the interests of the powerful, who use aid to increase their control over others.
- Western science is but one way of knowing. It is not always appropriate, it will not always yield answers to our most important questions, and it is not value-neutral. We cannot count solely on technical knowledge to solve the problems we persist in causing through, for example, our unrestrained destruction of our environment. Indigenous technologies and beliefs must be valued.
- With capitalism come ever-worsening distributions of wealth. The national security concerns of the United States and its allies do not justify their actions in other sovereign nations.

To some, development and capital are strong, destructive agents: just as capital tends to destroy or consume all that gets in its way, the very notion of development has a way of thwarting all attempts to modify it. In his “definition” of “development” in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, Gustavo Esteva discusses some of the authors who have attempted to appropriate the term. Among these are two central figures of “Southern” Participatory Action Research, Orlando Fals Borda and Anisur Rahman:

Today, for two-thirds of the peoples of the world, underdevelopment is a threat that has already been carried out; a life experience of subordination and of being led astray, of discrimination and subjugation. Given that precondition, the simple fact of associating with development one’s own intention tends to annul the intention, to contradict it, to enslave it. It impedes thinking of one’s own

objectives, as Nyerere wanted; it undermines confidence in oneself and one's own culture, as Stavenhagen demands; it clamours for management from the top down, against which Jimoh rebelled; it converts participation into a manipulative trick to involve people in struggles for getting what the powerful want to impose on them, which is precisely what Fals Borda and Rahman wanted to avoid. (1992, pp. 7-8)

Sometimes, authors who seek to change development practices while maintaining the underlying notion of development intact do not address the question of the centrality of economic growth directly. Others make a point of reaffirming their belief in the necessity of economic growth and its appropriate position as an essential component of development. For example, the editors of *The Companion to Development Studies* state, "The issues on which a growing consensus appears to be emerging include the fact that economic growth is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for development" (Desai and Potter, 2002, p. 2). Others, among them Rist (1997) and the contributors to *The Development Dictionary* (Sachs, ed., 1992), might disagree that any such consensus is emerging – or they might agree with this assessment and argue that this fact is cause for concern.

In the following pages, I note a few of the ways in which development is related to Brazil. Next, I comment on the confusing and contradictory relationship of participation to development. Finally, I discuss the uneasy relationship that the Two Brothers Foundation, the Instituto Dois Irmãos, and the present research have to development.

DEVELOPMENT AND BRAZIL

Brazil is a developing country *par excellence*, the eternal "country of the future." It has, for example, experienced an "economic miracle," faced periods of nearly unimaginable inflation, survived a long and growing list of political scandals of impressive proportions and the impeachment of a president, and "progressed" from

experiencing low school attendance to having overcrowded, ineffective schools. Brazil has, in short, repeatedly served as both a model for and a warning to other nations. The country has also produced scholars who have greatly influenced development discourse.

Brasília is perhaps the most egregious and fascinating example of Brazil's self-conscious attempts to become modern – and in a hurry. Placed at “the end of the world,” the capital city, with its space-age architecture and pedestrian-hostile streets, was assembled rapidly in the late 1950s.¹⁴ The city is a symbol of the successes (people moved there, as planned) and failures (too many people moved there, and the city's layout proved inhumane) of Brazil's planning and modernization attempts. The Transamazon Highway, which disrupted human life only to have the forest insist on devouring the road and which remains only partially paved (WWF, 2006), is another example, while the country was more successful at spreading television (Kottak, 1986). More recently, apparently successful social programs such as the provision of funds to low-income families that send their children to school and participatory budgeting in municipalities, have caught international attention (Inter-American Development Bank, 2005; World Bank, 2004).

In 1964, a repressive military regime that would not tolerate communism or socialism took power. Within a decade, many of Brazil's intellectuals had fled, been jailed, or gone into exile. Among these was Paulo Freire (Freire, 1970, 1992; Freire and Guimarães, 1987, 2000), who, in his work with literacy and self-education among the poor, focused throughout his life on the older notion of “human development,” refusing to engage the notion of economic development, at least directly. Others included the dependency theorists Celso Furtado (1974) and Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979). Dependency theorists sought economic development for the so-called

Third World but questioned some of the orthodox beliefs about how to achieve development. Furtado, who over his long career held several important government positions and also worked for the United Nations, advocated autonomy in the development of technologies, while Cardoso posited that the structure of international economic relations was to blame for underdevelopment – no number of development projects would succeed unless the structural imposition of disadvantage were addressed. To both authors, Third World nations could not be expected to “catch up” simply by imitating First World nations. Cardoso later served two terms as Brazil’s president and implemented a number of structural adjustments and related reforms required by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in the 1990s.

Given the topic of this dissertation, one other area should be mentioned, if only briefly: that of libraries. It is all too easy to think of libraries as value-neutral or benevolent institutions and to ignore the political contexts in which librarians work. Indeed, “information professionals” expend a great deal of energy to maintain the appearance of neutrality (Harris, Hannah, & Harris, 1998, pp. 79-102). An integral part of many development projects has been the spreading of cultural and educational institutions, among these libraries. The United States, particularly the American Library Association and the U.S. government through its Alliance for Progress program, has been instrumental in spreading libraries and library practices and technologies throughout Latin America, including Brazil (Costa, 2000; Maymí-Sugrañes, 1996; McCarthy, 1975). These efforts were part of larger attempts to modernize the region, advocating a particular understanding of what libraries should be and do and often neglecting to take local realities or concerns into account (Maymí-Sugrañes, 1996; McCarthy, 1975).

PARTICIPATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Participation in development refers to a target population's participation in research or decision making, but what such participation should or does entail is far from clear. The parallel to the term development is clear: Majid Rahnema (1992a) argues that "participation" is a term that has become meaningless because too many meanings have been ascribed to it.

For some, such as Anisur Rahman, who cites Paulo Freire as an influence (1993, p. 5), participation means that insiders are equal partners in research. Participation in this sense is meant to be liberating, to give voice to people with little power while increasing their self-confidence, for them to drive and guide the development efforts that affect them, so that they take control of their future and do not "wait upon elite researchers to come and find the facts about them, to write about them and make policy recommendations for outsiders to solve their problems" (Rahman, 1993, p. 89). Participation is thus both a means to an end and an end in its own right. In this sense, development can be understood in non-economic terms ("human development") or as "bottom-up" economic change. However, as feminists and other critics of the rhetoric of participation have noted, local power structures are often ignored even by those who speak eloquently about empowerment (Crewe and Harrison, 1998; Maguire, 1987; Simmons, 1994). Budd Hall concurs:

Because the concept of participatory research has so often been framed in an anti-imperial, anti-colonial, or liberatory context, it may have led us to think that some of the questions of gender, race, sexual or ability privileges were being taken care of in the formulations which arose in the late 1970s and 1980s. (2001, p. 175)

Participatory approaches are also frequently used as a simple means to an end, as part of formulas designed to ensure that policies are implemented or that development projects are executed cheaply and with the intended (economic) results. Here, "economic

development” and “development” are conflated as usual, just as “information technology” and “information” are conflated in many development and research efforts. Evidence of this tendency to see development in purely economic terms is particularly striking in *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?* (Hickey and Mohan, eds., 2004), in which the notion of participation is questioned repeatedly but the aims for which participation is used are not questioned. The authors ask whether participation should be abandoned for not living up to its promise, but do not afford similar scrutiny to the question of whether (economic) development should be abandoned for not living up to its promise.

Briefly, participation in development began as a way to seek “bottom-up” development or local control of both research and development. Closely associated with the notion of participation was that of empowerment. Many Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) projects were performed in this vein. Over time, some began to question whether PRA was achieving its aims, in terms of both participation and development: little attention was being paid to social structures, they argued, and some groups, particularly women, were conspicuously absent from such projects; furthermore, economic benefits had not accrued to participants. Women’s participation was sought, but it became apparent that including the voices of women in development projects would not be easily achieved by simply including more women in projects. Meanwhile, for some, participation remained a means of achieving empowerment (also an ambiguous term), while for aid agencies and others concerned about reducing costs and producing evidence of their success, participation became another tool.¹⁵ In a chapter devoted to the rhetoric of participation, Majid Rahnema, contends “there is little evidence to indicate that the participatory approach, as it evolved, did, as a rule, succeed in bringing about new forms

of people's power" (1992, p. 123). Three of the points on which to question participation in development are participation's apparent ineffectiveness for development, difficulties related to implementing it in sophisticated ways (and the failure of meaningful participation to result from simplistic attempts at implementation) in development efforts, and the shift from a rhetoric of empowerment to a mechanistic understanding of participation, particularly within aid agencies.

DEVELOPMENT, THE TWO BROTHERS FOUNDATION, AND THE INSTITUTO DOIS IRMÃOS

In 1998, an American student living in Rocinha, Paul Sneed, began to offer free English classes to six residents, among these a current leader of the i2i. In 1999, other Americans had joined Paul in teaching English in Rocinha, and he and several residents, seeking to institutionalize the courses, formed the Instituto Dois Irmãos (i2i) in Brazil. The i2i's sister organization in the United States, the Two Brothers Foundation (2Bros.), was similarly formed by Paul and former teachers. The names were chosen in reference to the "two brothers" hill on which Rocinha is located and to symbolize brotherhood between citizens of the two nations.

These organizations were originally conceived to provide not only educational and leadership opportunities, but also cultural exchange opportunities for disadvantaged children in both locations, but the cultural exchange program, which would be expensive and politically difficult to achieve, has not yet taken form. Since their foundation, the organization in the United States has provided small amounts of funds (i.e., several thousand dollars per year) to the organization in Brazil and has served as a mechanism through which individuals become aware of opportunities to volunteer to teach foreign languages in Rocinha. The organization in Rocinha, which, for reasons of legal definitions is called the Instituto Dois Irmãos but which residents until recently knew as

the Fundação Dois Irmãos or simply as the English classes offered at a local preschool, in turn, accepts volunteers for language classes, arts classes, and other classes that Brazilian and foreign volunteers are available to teach. Volunteers overwhelmingly hail from English-speaking nations. Since the beginning, people involved in these efforts sought a space where daytime classes could be offered, materials could be stored and made available, and other activities could be added: until mid-2006, the institute operated out of a small preschool owned by the institute's president, making such daytime classes or accumulation of materials impossible.

In 2005, I joined approximately a dozen former volunteers and other interested parties in Oklahoma for the annual meeting of the Two Brothers Foundation. This was my first participation in 2Bros., aside from an occasional e-mail exchange. One of the foundation's administrators announced that the organization would have a new slogan. No longer would the phrase "youth leadership in international development" adorn the foundation's promotional materials. Rather, the more accurate "community service, cultural exchange, and education" would be used.

Although I had been thinking a great deal about the relationship between the foundation and development efforts,¹⁶ it was the first time that I had ever noticed the old slogan. What could have led these individuals, who in the years that I had come to know them through conversations with people I had met during my 1999 visit and with American acquaintances, had never once associated the foundation's work with employment, economic advancement, saving the environment, or almost any of the multiple meanings of "development," to use the term?

The culture of the foundation encouraged the group to help each student grow through education (the older notion of "human development," still present in different

guises in the work of Paulo Freire and of Southern PAR practitioners). The term “international development,” in contrast, carries with it the notions of international aid, micro credit, and job creation – not story time, art courses, or even Halloween parties, which constitute one of the i2i’s few traditions (although those parties bring the notion of cultural imperialism to mind). This was an educational and cultural organization, one that professed to teach all involved – students and foreign teachers alike – something about their own and others’ cultures and to help them gain strength from increased self-confidence. Although this was my first 2Bros. function, the emphasis placed on exchange and education in brochures and other communication, and the absence of any discussion of training, had led me to believe that dwelling on any more direct, practical – one might even say, hegemonic – purposes of the foundation was to be avoided.

Yet, there I was, confronted with a word that had long haunted me. This was a word that I could not reject outright because of the “best of intentions” to which Sachs refers but in which I could find little of redeeming value. An organization that openly rejected the notion of outsiders’ “developing” others had fallen right into the word’s trap, as Esteva had warned.

The foundation’s original plan of providing exchange opportunities for students in Rocinha with students from the inner cities of the United States was explained: the slogan had originally referred to those exchanges. Since the exchanges never occurred and instead culture was purportedly being exchanged via the presence in Rocinha of foreign university students and recent graduates, as well as occasionally Brazilians from wealthier neighborhoods, and since the foundation’s work was primarily educational with a keen sense of community service, the slogan would be changed. The old slogan was both inaccurate and confusing, we were told.

I was witnessing the process described by Esteva first-hand, and we appeared to be escaping just in the nick of time. Upon closer analysis, however, one might wonder whether we have really freed ourselves of development's grasp. Ignoring or rejecting the term does not, after all, free us from the context in which we work. Furthermore, even though the support that the Northern organization was able to provide the Southern one was meager, the mere fact that the Northern organization provided funds to the Southern one made paternalism difficult, perhaps impossible, to avoid.

The call to abandon the notion of development is not a call to become yet more egocentric or less compassionate; rather, it is a call to renewed, reflexive commitment. Yet, what is a person or organization that rejects the notion of development as economic growth and intends to cease to pursue an impossible "escape from the undignified condition of underdevelopment" (Esteva, 1992, p. 7) to do? Inequalities, inequities, and hunger remain even once the conceptual poverty of the terms "development" and its supporting cast of "needs,"¹⁷ "participation" (Rahnema, 1992a), "poverty" (Rahnema, 1992b), and "helping" (Gronemeyer, 1992) has been brought to the fore. Furthermore, if we reject development on the grounds that it destroys cultures and homogenizes people, do we not reify culture, attempting to hold it stagnant, and do we not idealize tradition? For those of us born into the West and its traditions, without development to guide us, is it possible to imagine counteracting poverty and exclusion, or will we only look back one day to see that development has been guiding us? Rahnema asks:

Who are we – who am I – to intervene in other people's lives when we know so little about any life, including our own? Even in the case where we intervene because we think we love and care for others, how is it possible to say in advance that our intervention will not eventually produce a result opposite to that expected (1997, p. 395)

There are no final, universal answers to these questions, only ways of being and acting that are more or less appropriate to any particular context – and that context can be expected to change over time. Rist describes three ways in which people have recently tried to answer the question, “what is to be done?” First, we may choose to continue to seek growth but restructure production and markets to make them more equitable. Rist continues:

The second answer to the question of what is to [be] done draws upon the experience of social movements in the South which have stopped expecting everything to come from the good will of those in power, and no longer believe either in aid or in international co-operation. They therefore organize among themselves, inventing new forms of social linkage and new ways of securing their existence. . . . The idea, then, in spite of ‘development’, is to organize and invent new ways of life – between modernization, with its suffering but also some advantages, and a tradition from which people may derive inspiration while knowing that it can never be revived. (1997, pp. 243-244)

People advocating and working in the vein of Rist’s second answer focus not on people’s poverty but rather on the positive aspects of their lives, knowledge, and culture. The third answer that Rist offers is to question the very foundations of development and current economic thought and to offer new alternative theories.

The i2i and 2Bros. have made conscious attempts to work within the second movement identified by Rist, but they remain organizations with Southern beneficiaries and Northern benefactors – legally, a pair of organizations but in many ways constituting a single entity. If members and leaders were to cease entirely to “believe either in aid or in international co-operation,” then the organizations would be left with no reason to exist. Furthermore, the U.S.-based entity continues to exert control over its counterpart in Brazil, not only through funding and the provision of teachers, but also in the functioning of the Brazilian organization. It is in this context that a somewhat naïve but sincere

attempt was made to subvert the meaning of “international development” – an attempt that might nonetheless be applauded for the faith in young, economically disadvantaged people that it revealed. Now even that reference to development has been removed, replaced by “exchange” – a word also used by the U.S. government to describe projects designed not simply to share cultural appreciation, but to be perpetually prepared for war (e.g., the various Fulbright and Fulbright-Hays awards) – and “education,” itself a slippery concept.

My work is likewise entangled in the mess that results from questioning the complex of beliefs that underlie discourses of development, progress, growth, and even national security. With a language degree from Georgetown University and a master's degree in Latin American Studies from a Title VI program¹⁸ hanging on a wall in New England, as well as a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship used to spend a year in Rocinha, I have benefited and continue to benefit directly from the post-War association of education to attempts to sustain the dominance of the United States. Having worked for the Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress and now pursuing a doctorate in what was until recently called librarianship, I also must remain cognizant of the fact that libraries are not neutral institutions¹⁹ and of the ways in which the very notion of a library in Brazil is entangled in the history of development. Indeed, Chapter 9 of this text seeks to question the characterization of information as neutral or even positive by nature. Finally, I cannot ignore the complex relationship between various notions of participation and development. Of course, my remaining critically aware does not guarantee that I have managed to avoid reinforcing the very beliefs and practices that I have sought to question. Section II gives readers an opportunity to judge my success, but first Chapter 4 provides an introduction to Brazil.

Chapter 4: Brazil: Favelas, Information Services, and Librarianship

Brazil, like the United States, is among the world's most unequal nations in terms of income distribution. As the works cited in Chapter 3 make clear, development work has in some cases provided insights into ways in which these inequalities might be addressed, but in other cases such work has led to unintended negative consequences.²⁰ Nonetheless, access to information, to some kinds of leisure and entertainment, and to education more generally is widely believed to constitute part of any effective, long-term solution to the problem of great income disparities. Through action research with the i2i, I initially sought to assist residents of Rocinha in developing context- and culturally-sensitive solutions to the problems associated with providing such access in order to address not simply income disparities, but also social disparities more broadly construed.

Indeed, as Celi Scalon asserts, inequality goes well beyond poverty and is both more complex and less easily perceived:

Any analysis of social questions in Brazil should take into account the fact that this country's main characteristic is inequality. Unlike poverty, which is more visible and is the target of specific actions, inequality is not always perceived and conceived as a problem. Nonetheless, social distance has increased and, despite the fact that this is a worldwide problem, the consequences are particularly perverse in countries like Brazil, where the indices of inequality are alarming. In this flexible net that holds everything, inequality is present in any area that an observer stops to consider: income, education, employment, and even citizenship are stratified, indicating inequality's multifaceted nature. (2004, p. 10)

Likewise, any facile connection between education and cultural programs on one hand and better salaries, happier and more active citizens, and less violence on the other hand ought to be questioned. Marta Porto, writing about cultural programs aimed at helping the poor, is clear, even harsh, but fundamentally justified:

Music, dance, or capoeira programs, which should always have been easily available as a right guaranteed by society to residents [of poor areas] who are more or less close to this cultural universe, have come to be financed not as an extension of these cultural rights of a democratic society, but rather as a remedy for the most naïve of social actions. This is the kind of action that gains the character of preventive. . . .

For middle- and upper-class youths, culture is an adventure in awareness and knowledge, humanizing their spirits and increasing their capacity to choose. For young people living in poor areas, culture is treated as a preventive medicine against urban violence and social action is linked to such terms as “to improve self-esteem,” “to feel included.” (2004, pp. 110-111)

Thus, for people of means, culture is treated as a means to greater personal fulfillment and an opportunity for self-expression. For people of little means, cultural expression is administered, used paternalistically as a means to maintain the social order. Further complicating the situation is the fact that inequality and inequity, while closely linked, are not synonymous, although they are often treated as if they were. As Chapter 3 makes clear, the Instituto Dois Irmãos and the Two Brothers Foundation, which seek to treat all of their administrators and participants with equal respect, experience the tensions evoked by Scalón and Porto, and they must work within a historical context that makes it difficult to avoid the paternalism of trying to administer “preventive medicine.”

The following text looks at favelas and Rocinha, then at some aspects of information services and librarianship in Brazil, particularly, public libraries and similar institutions, librarianship, some facets of the current national policy for the book and reading, and some places where Internet access is made available.

FAVELAS

Terminology

Perhaps the closest English term for the Portuguese “favela” is “squatter settlement.” Favelas are low-income areas that have no or inadequate access to basic

services, such as sanitation and electricity. Homes are often built of any available materials on steep hills, and it is common for heavy rains to lead to mudslides, which in turn dislodge homes. Urban planning is infrequent, and streets and alleys often lack official names; navigating the alleys of a favela can be a daunting task for the uninitiated.²¹ Brazil's first favelas appeared in the city of Rio de Janeiro at the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century, and today they can be found in cities throughout the country.

Readers should be aware that to discuss favelas in such general terms can be misleading. Residents can range from having little or no income to having steady earnings several times the national minimum wage, which is frequently adjusted but tends to be worth approximately \$100-\$200 per month. Additionally, families that own their abodes enjoy considerably more stability than those who rent. For example, many of Rocinha's residents have steady incomes that lead them to be classified as poor but that nonetheless are high for residents of favelas more generally: Rio is one of the country's wealthiest cities, and Rocinha is very well located; renting a small apartment in some parts of Rocinha can cost nearly a month's worth of minimum wages.

As 2Bros. member Robert Neuwirth (2005) illustrates in his engaging *Shadow Cities*, which was researched in part in Rocinha, the phenomenon of squatter settlements is worldwide and common, historically and presently. Nonetheless, I have chosen to use the Portuguese rather than the English "squatter settlement" throughout this work for several reasons.

First, the more parsimonious "favela" lacks the emphasis on the legality of a settlement that the English term calls to mind. This difference is important first because the English term is likely to raise questions of title deeds that are of relatively little

interest to the current study.²² Secondly, various national, state, and local governments have treated favelas and their residents in various manners, meaning that the legality and formality of favelas have changed over time and vary from location to location. Indeed, in large favelas like Rocinha, land that formerly belonged to “asphalt” areas²³ coexists with plots that were sold off to peasants under various legal and illegal schemes and with land that people have simply chosen to occupy. That is to say, the legality of land holdings is not necessarily something that sets favelas entirely apart from the asphalt.²⁴

Additionally, although squatter communities exist throughout the world, they are also very local phenomena, taking shape in particular and even peculiar ways in reaction to specific political actions, economic realities, and decisions on the part of individual and collective actors. Using the Portuguese word highlights the context of Rocinha. Indeed, throughout this dissertation, I write of Rocinha specifically wherever possible: Rocinha's physical location and its place in the Brazilian imagination make it stand out, as I explain below. Nonetheless, readers should find commonalities with other places and times, and one of the goals of any research such as this is to highlight knowledge that appears to be particularly likely to be useful in other settings.

Finally, it has become conventional among Brazilianists to use the Portuguese term. Although it is conceivable that this fact is due to an excessive belief in Brazilian exceptionalism, in this case, following the convention seems both prudent and convenient.

Favelas usually begin as small settlements with makeshift housing; over time, these settlements grow, and the housing is replaced with more permanent structures, when residents are not forcibly removed before such processes can take place. Rio de Janeiro has seen several waves of government attempts to destroy favelas and displace

their residents, making room for public works or for occupation by wealthier, more politically desirable companies or residents. These waves have alternated with other waves of attempts to “urbanize” these spaces, providing services and infrastructure such as running water, electricity, and pavement. These tactics can also coexist, as they do in Rocinha, a favela that is too large to destroy and too centrally located to ignore. In fact, urbanization projects such as the one underway in Rocinha, which may cause the i2i to have to move, can rely on the government's ability to move some residents out of the path of what is characterized as the favela's own “progress.” In this case, the project is also expected to result in more roads for people who live outside of Rocinha and commute past it to and from work. The literature on programs to urbanize or eradicate favelas is extensive. Besides the works cited below regarding favelas more generally, readers may wish to consult Linda Maria Godim's “A manipulação do estigma do favelado na política habitacional do Rio de Janeiro” (1981/82) or “Evolução da produção urbanística na cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 1900-1950-1965” by Vera Rezende (1999).

Several arrangements that are similar to favelas, such as government housing complexes, also exist in Brazil. While these places have historically different roots, some of the lessons learned by the i2i should be of interest to leaders in such places. Additionally, in some areas favelas and/or housing projects have begun to run into each other, forming “complexos.” In Rio de Janeiro, the most famous of these are the Complexo do Alemão, which has experienced significant official violence in recent years, and Maré, located on the way to the international airport and a source of great fear of stray bullets. Rocinha's size pales in comparison to these complexes, but it is one of Brazil's single largest favelas.²⁵

There exists a vast literature on favelas, and it would be impossible to do justice to the topic here. Maria Lais Pereira da Silva, in her *Favelas Cariocas, 1930-1964* (2005), provides a meticulously researched and referenced account of the establishment of, growth of, and public policies regarding favelas in Rio before the 1964 military coup, as well as of the pertinent bibliography and statistics. Teresa A. Meade, in her “*Civilizing*” *Rio: Reform and Resistance in a Brazilian City, 1889-1930* (1997), provides an engaging account in English of the period leading up to that discussed by Silva, providing context for understanding later public policies and the growth of favelas.

Jailson de Souza e Silva and Jorge Luiz Barbosa, both activists and academics, take an accessible, eclectic, and participatory approach as they look at images of favelas up to the present decade in *Favela: Alegria e Dor na Cidade* (2005). They provide an extensive bibliography, along with information regarding where the cited works can be located, providing easier access to theses, dissertations, and research papers. A fourth resource is Licia do Prado Valladares and Lidia Medeiros' exhaustively researched analytic bibliography with nearly seven hundred entries, *Pensando as Favelas do Rio de Janeiro, 1906-2000* (2003). Valladares also wrote a provocative volume on “the invention of the favela” (2005).

Finally, Dulce Chaves Pandolfi and Mario Grynszpan organized a volume of statements by twelve favela leaders that they collected between 2000 and 2001 in *A Favela Fala* (2003). Four of those interviewed had been involved in community leadership in Rocinha.

Rocinha

Rocinha is located in the Southern Zone of Rio de Janeiro on what has come to be valuable land. It is near several important parts of the city's system of roads and tunnels,

which residents periodically occupy in protests that very effectively disrupt city life. Established in the 1920s or 1930s, it is one of the oldest and largest of Rio's favelas. As a long-established favela, Rocinha also has a large commercial sector; services that might surprise outsiders, including cable television, high-speed Internet, and banks; and many multi-story homes that are, if not compliant with building codes, at least rather sturdily built. Population figures for favelas are notoriously unreliable, but it is reasonable to estimate that more than 100,000 people live in Rocinha.

Although Rocinha is located on a steep hill, much of the hill is not so steep as to present a serious danger of mudslides to permanent structures under common weather conditions. One notable exception is part of the section of Rocinha known as Roupa Suja, where many of the favela's most impoverished residents live. There, many homes are more precariously constructed and located on a steep incline. After the i2i moved to its new space (discussed in Chapter 5) and was able to offer free classes to children, some of these students came from the higher parts of Roupa Suja, changing the character of the institute and allowing it to reach users whose social and economic prospects were much less positive than those of its earlier students.

Rocinha is both like and unlike other favelas: it shares the problems of inadequate infrastructure, crowding, and low incomes with practically all other favelas, and like many others it has a bustling drug trade. Indeed, Rocinha is notorious for the millions of dollars' worth of drug commerce that takes place there every month. The sewer remains largely open, but, although there are many exceptions, much of the housing there is sturdy, and electricity and water are not nearly as insufficient as they are said to be in less well-established favelas or, indeed, as they were in Rocinha in the 1980s, when the i2i's leaders were children or teenagers. In fact, in the nearly two years I spent in Rocinha, we

lost electricity for more than a few moments fewer than five times – until my trip in early 2008, when we lost electricity several times in one week and, a few weeks later, experienced a power surge on one side of the alley and a drop in electricity on the other. The surge was so strong that it melted my alarm clock and destroyed a protected computer at the home where I was staying, a computer that had been anything but easy to acquire. The institute, located across the alley, suffered no damage.

Brazil is popularly understood as a country of contradictions; Rocinha, which to many symbolizes the dangerous Otherness of Brazil's favelas, is no exception. Life there is at once surprisingly “normal” and fantastic even to residents. Indeed, the image of Rocinha and those of favelas more generally are so intertwined that, when a report or a Web site on the subject of favelas is released, the photographs are very often of Rocinha: Rocinha often stands in for favelas more generally.²⁶

The particularly severe drug violence in Rio of the first decade of the millennium, much of which has occurred in Rocinha, has underscored the difficulties faced by residents and has increased the presence of Rocinha's and Rio's drug trade in public discourse in Brazil. Conflicts between police and the drug cartel in power in Rocinha remain a constant threat to the serenity of residents' lives.

Nonetheless, residents are fortunate in many respects: because of its size, location, political and electoral strength, drug trade, and overall reputation, the favela has received considerable attention from many sectors of society. Many organizations work there to provide education, health care, Internet access, and other services. Far from being isolated, Rocinha is a place of encounter: it has vibrant private and non-governmental sectors with services for residents, as well as many ties, both legitimate and illegitimate, to individuals and groups outside of the favela.

INFORMATION SERVICES AND LIBRARIANSHIP IN BRAZIL

Libraries

Any attempt to create in Brazil collections or a space of the kind we have sought to provide at the i2i must be understood in the context of libraries and information services in that country. Brazil, of course, has a number of kinds of libraries. Among these are university, or academic, libraries; corporate libraries; private libraries; special libraries; community or neighborhood libraries that are not primarily publicly funded and are generally part of non-profit organizations; and public libraries or publicly-funded community libraries. Also, bookmobiles and even book boats have been used in various remote communities and densely populated urban ones over the decades. Specialized information services aimed at particular audiences, such as micro enterprise owners or citizens with health-related questions, can likewise be found throughout Brazil. Furthermore, Brazilian governments and organizations have experimented widely with electronic delivery of information services, and Brazilians with access to the Internet are notoriously fervent users of the medium, particularly of social networking services. Some governments in Brazil have been experimenting with new ways of expanding access to books, information, and information technologies, from installing libraries in subway stations, to providing community technology centers, to increasing the availability of local, state, and federal government information on the Web (Brazil, n.d.; Brazil, Ministério do Planejamento, Orçamento e Gestão, 2009; Companhia do Metropolitano de São Paulo, n.d.). This section focuses primarily on libraries and information services that exist to serve the general public or low-income groups, since this study shares a particular affinity with such libraries and services. Furthermore, to the extent that residents of Rocinha are familiar with libraries, these will likely be public or community libraries,

with the exception of the university libraries available to the few residents who have overcome the significant barriers to college admission that they face.

Many Brazilian municipalities lack even a single public library, and where public libraries are available, these are often underused.²⁷ Luís Milanesi states, “according to the sparse available data for the public sector, we know that less than 1% of the population uses libraries and related services at least ten times a year” (2002, p. 93). Nonetheless, several thousand public libraries function in Brazil, and another several thousand community libraries can be found there: responses to requests for proposals for inclusion in a program that was to provide telecommunications infrastructure and services to both kinds of libraries numbered 5,007 and 5,514, respectively (Ministério de Ciência e Tecnologia, 2002). Furthermore, while I was in Rio, reading campaigns became commonplace, and the major television network took to reporting on local efforts to provide access to print materials, including such unusual cases as a butcher shop with a lending library.

The libraries that responded to the survey are believed to constitute the majority of such institutions, since the costs associated with providing telecommunications infrastructure and services are substantial and these services are highly desired. Still, one can imagine that many very small efforts, such as that of the i2i and the aforementioned butcher shop, will continue to go uncounted. Indeed, Marlene Edite Pereira de Rezende (2004) tells of a project that sought to document and work with community libraries in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais. The founders of these libraries had often had little formal education and lacked self-esteem, yet they were providing a valued service to their communities. Rezende's study and this dissertation offer rare looks into an area that is little known within the official library world and is difficult to reach and count.

Public libraries in Brazil, as in many places in Latin America, are frequented mostly by primary and secondary school students; one challenge faced by these institutions is to diversify their user base while continuing to serve current users.²⁸ Additionally, school libraries, which serve largely the same constituency as public libraries, are rare and tend to be likewise inadequate. Milanesi points out that it remains true that “a high proportion of Brazilian schools are planned without a space for information” (2005, p. 58); public libraries will likely remain at least partly *de facto* school libraries, whatever changes they might otherwise undergo.

The quality, variety, and extent of services vary, but libraries are notoriously understaffed, with small and outdated collections and inadequate hours. They also frequently have closed stacks and allow few of their materials to circulate. As Lima (1998) notes, libraries in Brazil have frequently been victims of vandalism, theft, and mutilation of materials,²⁹ something that authors with harsh words about Brazilian decisions to maintain closed stacks and designate books for use solely within libraries’ walls, such as McCarthy (1975), would do well to consider. Until recently, publicly-run libraries had another incentive for not circulating books: books were not considered expendable resources, and librarians were supposed to be held personally responsible for volumes that were damaged or not returned.³⁰ Furthermore, even urban libraries, like much of the rest of Brazil, were still without telephone lines until recently.

It should be noted that book prices are very high in Brazil, with books often costing as much as or more than similar volumes do on the U.S. market, where citizens’ buying power is considerably greater. With the exception of didactic works and those sent to public libraries by the federal government, runs are small. Magazines are also

prohibitively expensive, and daily access to newspapers is possible among the poor only by sharing one among many people.³¹

Bookstores are likewise rare outside of the main urban centers, so that even those who possess the funds to purchase books may not always have easy access to a wide range of titles. For those who have inadequate access to bookstores but have buying power, an address at which to receive correspondence, and a credit card, Internet commerce has made some titles more easily attainable. In recent years, relatively inexpensively produced Brazilian and world classics in the public domain have become widely available in urban centers, and the federal government has on more than one occasion attempted to reduce prices and facilitate access by stimulating book production, yet the problem remains, particularly for works that are less well-known and/or remain under copyright protection.

In Rocinha, and presumably elsewhere, gaining access to the Internet can be easier than gaining access to print materials, meaning that longer works of fiction and the more in-depth discussions of topics that are more suitable for books and/or remain more prevalent in book form can be harder to attain than the latest news or other kinds of information and communication that lend themselves more easily to electronic media. Even so, gaining access to the Internet usually requires spending money, and, as noted above, using such services as those offered by online merchants requires not only significant funds, but also a useful address and a credit card. As Milanesi observes, “just as papyrus was contemporary to parchment in different spaces, so too is the Internet contemporary to a lack of books” (p. 34).

Although libraries, reading rooms, and the like can serve a much wider range of purposes, this paucity and expense of print materials makes it all the more urgent to ensure the provision of reading materials via such institutions.

Librarianship as a Profession

As in the United States, librarianship in Brazil has been a female-dominated profession, one that individuals have fought to professionalize. There is a general understanding, however, that information organizations employ many paraprofessionals and few professionals. The gender of library professionals has been related to their relatively low wages and low visibility, all of which are mutually reinforcing and increase the difficulty associated with maintaining librarianship's status as a liberal profession. Women have long been responsible for education and for the maintenance of culture across generations: libraries, like elementary schools, are institutions through which these processes take place.

Librarianship as a profession requires an undergraduate degree and as such has been primarily pursued by Caucasian women. As undergraduate educations have become more attainable by people of lower socio-economic status and of Afro-Brazilian or indigenous descent (closely related and mutually reinforcing traits in a country where money "whitens") through both programs for the poor and programs aimed specifically at Afro-Brazilians and indigenous Brazilians, at least in Rio de Janeiro, librarianship has become a visibly more inclusive profession: in the conferences and meetings I have attended, obvious Afro-Brazilian descent has been unusual among the established professionals and commonplace among students and recent graduates. Females continue to outnumber males in these venues, but the latter are by no means absent from or alienated by these groups. With these changes, it can be hoped that a greater diversity of

experiences and practices might be brought to bear on the challenge of providing everyone with access to information. Again, although in Chapter 9 I question the faith we have put in the power of information, I do not wish to argue that we should abandon the goal of equitable access to information by people throughout the world.

The Conselho Federal de Biblioteconomia (Federal Library Council, CFB) is a professional organization of librarians, and it both represents library professionals and scrutinizes their behavior. The emergence of the CFB came in the context of attempts to professionalize librarianship [legally achieved in 1958 with Portaria no. 162 (Conselho Federal de Biblioteconomia, n.d.a.)], and the CFB reflects the importance in Brazil, with its heavily bureaucratic and corporatist history, of official recognition of professional categories. According to its Web site, the council was created by authorities as the result of pressure placed on the Brazilian government by librarians (n.d.b). Besides overseeing professional librarianship, the CFB attempts to influence library-related law and policy, and it apparently is partly responsible for the 1998 law that requires all individuals who practice the profession of librarianship to hold a Brazilian bachelor's degree in librarianship or an undergraduate degree in librarianship conferred by a university in another country and approved by the Brazilian government.

That law has potentially serious implications for the i2i's reading room. In order to manage a library in Brazil, one must be a librarian, and the requirement that librarians hold a particular degree means that no residents of Rocinha who participated in this study have been eligible to manage a library, although one of the i2i's neighbors holds an undergraduate degree in archival science. At first, because of an understandable reluctance on the part of at least one member of the board of directors to rely on outsiders (in this sense, readers should consider me an insider), seeking the professional aid of

someone at the National Library or a local library school through my contacts for something as important as maintaining the legal status of the center was undesirable. Additionally, even if I intended to remain in Rio indefinitely, since library degrees are graduate degrees in the United States, I am ineligible to manage a library (or teach librarianship) in Brazil. Thus, this is a case in which a law designed to protect a particular group of undervalued professionals has the potential effect of harming individuals of even lesser privilege.

It should be noted that the majority of the bill passed by the Brazilian Congress was vetoed by then-President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The reason given by Cardoso was that:

By including not only Librarianship but also Documentation and recorded Information among the duties/rights belonging solely to the Librarian, the bill extends the Market share of the Librarian, so as to include activities pertaining to other professions: Archival Science, Information Systems, Museum Studies, Management, and Communication, which have Documentation and recorded Information as their raw material for work. Thus, all of the mechanisms in the bill that would increase the Market share of the Librarian would be contrary to public interests, in detriment to other professions. (p. 1)

Cardoso continues, regarding the vetoed Article 2:

This is a case in which a significant increase in the Market share presents itself, principally in respect to the expression “recorded Information,” an element that is present in practically all professions, so that it is not appropriate for it to be considered a duty/right of a particular profession, including because it is a subject that is directly linked to the area of information systems, which, as is known, is not a regulated profession, and nor is there any reason for it to be, since it is not in the public's interest to restrict access to the job market. (Article 2, p. 2)

Cardoso's having vetoed significant portions of the bill appears to make it legally possible for the i2i to provide information services, although the institute should avoid

claiming to run a library. Had the single paragraph in Article 5 not been vetoed, this research would have been illegal:

Also belonging to the sphere of influence of the Librarian is the exercise of any other activity that, by its nature, is included in the scope of his/her profession, directly or indirectly, including counseling and participation in projects to construct libraries, documentation centers, and information centers.

Likewise, Section IV of that article would have made the present research illegal, since it declared the following activities as belonging solely to the domain of librarians:

Planning, research, organization, implementation, management, administration, leadership, coordination, supervision, and execution of Librarianship, Documentation and recorded Information services, cultural activities, and technical-scientific services related to the duties/rights defined in Art. 2.

Information services such as those now offered by the i2i may be “safe” by virtue of their existing in a disciplinary space dominated by no particular profession.

Book and Reading Policy

In recent years, Brazil's federal government has increased its efforts to provide access to books and to stimulate reading in that country. Still, the current National Plan for the Book and Reading (Plano Nacional do Livro e Leitura, PNLL) is not the first such national-level effort. Indeed, for decades, the Instituto Nacional do Livro (National Institute for the Book, INL), created in 1937, distributed books and book lists, worked to increase book production, and otherwise supported the creation and development of public libraries (Brazil, Ministério da Educação, Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira, n.d.; Brazil, Ministério da Educação e Cultura, Instituto Nacional do Livro, 1983; Rosa and Oddone, 2006). The INL also produced statistics on libraries, as has the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics, IBGE) (IBGE, 1976). The desire to create a

national culture, thereby uniting Brazil's various regions, was a driving force behind cultural policy, and, in the case of the INL, this goal was coupled with that of seeking to increase literacy rates and schooling. It should not be forgotten, however, that throughout much of its existence (1937-1989), the INL served the purposes of dictatorships intent on controlling culture and expression. Since 1990, its functions have been performed by the National Library. Rosa and Oddone (2006) provide a more in-depth discussion of the role played by the INL in book, reading, and library policies.

Since the 1980s, as is typical of Brazilian policies, a number of funds, programs, committees, and laws have been established, had their names changed, disappeared and reappeared. Those that have had the greatest impact on public, school, and community libraries have been those with the word “culture” and its derivatives in their names or those aimed more specifically at books, reading, libraries, and education. Additionally, telecommunications policies, as noted in the following section, “Telecenters,” have affected these libraries. Certainly the regulation of the profession of librarianship, as discussed above, is also of interest. In short, book, library, and reading policies need to be understood in the context of education policies and are also often part of larger cultural policies, similar to the French tradition.

Nominal access to schools and attendance have increased greatly, and complex understandings of what it means to be literate or educated are being put to use in public policy. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that universalized functional literacy remains elusive. As the authors of the exhaustive tome produced by the World Bank in 2004, *Brazil: Equitable, Competitive, Sustainable*, observe, school enrollment rates had risen sharply, “raising the net enrollment rate of 7 to 14 year old children to over 95 percent” by 2001 (p. 109). Likewise, fewer children are being held back in school. Many

of these children are passed onto higher grades, sometimes by law, without having learned what is expected at their grade level. In February 2008, the i2i began offering tutoring sessions to nine-year-old illiterate and nearly illiterate children who had been attending school regularly, evidence that the drop in repetition deserves closer scrutiny before it can be declared a “gain,” as the World Bank would have it. The book argues, reasonably, that the Brazilian practice of keeping students back for failing a single subject is detrimental (p. 112), but reading is necessary for studying other subjects, and so it is difficult to comprehend what advantage passing illiterate children could have for society or even how an illiterate child could pass another subject. That such students are easy to find in Rocinha, a favela with relatively good access to education, suggests that early primary education remains deeply flawed and that the change in policies and practices to allow students to pass without having acquired expected skills deserves additional scrutiny. Furthermore, the practice of passing “problem students” on to the next grade (and, therefore, another teacher) is decades old.³²

An adequate treatment of public policies regarding education, literacy, reading, and libraries in Brazil would yield several dissertations in their own right, and interested readers are encouraged to seek out the above-mentioned texts by Rosa and Oddone (2006) and Suaiden (2000); Brazil's online databases of theses and dissertations, the Banco de Teses maintained by CAPES (<http://servicos.capes.gov.br/capesdw/>) and IBICT's Banco Digital de Teses e Dissertações (<http://bdt.d.ibict.br/bdt.d/>); and the policies themselves, which are increasingly being made available through various, ever-changing government Web sites.

Additionally, Elizabeth D'Angelo Serra (2003) contextualizes the findings of a national study of literacy in light of public policies. Other chapters in the volume in

which Serra's text appears offer a variety of perspectives on the National Indicator of Functional Literacy (Indicador Nacional de Alfabetismo Funcional, INAF), providing both an overview of literacy in Brazil and critical examinations of what it means to be literate or to promote literacy (Ribeiro, org., 2003). The private Instituto Paulo Montenegro conducts research into literacy in Brazil every two years and maintains its Web site, <http://www.ipm.org.br/>, up to date.

The current book and reading plan is of a visibility reserved for a handful of government programs at any one time. It has been widely advertised, and the leading television network, Globo, has taken to including reading rooms and libraries in its popular telenovelas and news programs, as well as running public service announcements for literacy programs.

The then-Minister of Culture, a world-famous musician with a history of political activism, Gilberto Gil, opened the thirty-three page plan with a quotation from Umberto Eco, “the text is a lazy machine, waiting for the reader to do his part.”³³ Gil goes on to assert that good readers need “cultural perspective” (n.d., p. 4), to enjoy reading, and to have a fertile imagination. He continues:

Therefore, at this time, as we are consolidating the National Plan for the Book and Reading (PNLL), whose main objective is to develop Brazil as a reading society, we must consider, also, what kind of reading we want. Numbers are not enough for us, be they of volumes produced or of titles published. These factors are important but insufficient. More than books and book buyers, it is necessary to have readers who are capable in quantity and quality of making a text achieve its potential in the various directions in which it can go.

It is likewise important to consider the way in which this practice of reading interacts with our culture, this culture that is so very much ours, so Brazilian, so rich in orality, yet still so poor when it comes to the written word. If developing reading in this vein is no easy task, certainly the task will be fully completed only if it is performed in consonance with and with respect for the cultural diversity of our people, so as to strengthen it rather than suppress it. (n.d., p. 4)

Gil goes on to claim that reading is the basis for effective dialog “and for the construction of a social atmosphere that is well qualified, participatory, peaceful, and democratic” (p. 5). He proceeds to distinguish three “dimensions of our cultural policies,” the economic, citizenship, and the symbolic, connecting these three dimensions to the book, reading, and literature, respectively. Gil's is a far more sophisticated and academic interpretation of what it means and takes to form a nation of readers than one might expect from a federal government that has historically used required lists of books for libraries as its primary library-related policy, and this interpretation is clearly influenced by his leadership in artistic circles. His analysis of the various kinds of illiteracy is similarly sophisticated.

Although Gil's text is not dated, the National Plan for the Book and Reading grew out of the 2003 Book Law (Lei do Livro, lei no. 10.753). The current administration took several actions, including participating in the Ibero-American Year for the Promotion of Reading (2005), before officially introducing the PNLL in March 2006. The PNLL appears to have been in place by the end of that year.

Not surprisingly, the plan is multifaceted, and notwithstanding the fact that one can expect waste, corruption, and unmet goals from government policies, efforts appear to be largely sincere. The plan's Web site, <http://www.pnll.gov.br/>, provides additional information, including a “map of actions,” which has no map but, rather, is a database of projects at the federal, state, and municipal level for governments, as well as civil society projects of various scopes. These projects range from efforts to make Braille books and books on tape more widely available, to book fairs, to networks for the exchange of books, to more traditional adult literacy courses. The four “axes” of the National Plan for

the Book and Reading and their respective “lines” are as follows (taken verbatim from Brazil (n.d.), under “Eixos e Linhas”):

Figure 1: National Plan for the Book and Reading

1. Democratizing access
 - 1.1. Creating new libraries
 - 1.2. Strengthening the existing network of libraries
 - 1.3. Conquering new reading spaces
 - 1.4. Distribution of free books
 - 1.5. Improvement of access to books and to other forms of expression for reading
 - 1.6. Incorporation and use of information and communication technologies
2. Promotion of reading and of forming mediators
 - 2.1. Forming reading mediators
 - 2.2. Social projects for reading
 - 2.3. Studies and promotion of research in the areas of the book and reading
 - 2.4. Information systems in the areas of libraries, bibliography, and the publishing market
 - 2.5. Awards and recognition of actions that encourage and promote social practices for reading
3. Appreciation of reading and communication
 - 3.1. Actions to create consciousness regarding the social value of the book and reading
 - 3.2. Actions to convert the promotion of social practices for reading into State [i.e., federal] policy
 - 3.3. Publications in print form and in other media dedicated to the appreciation of the book and of reading
4. Development of a book economy
 - 4.1. Development of a productive network for the book
 - 4.2. Promotion of the distribution, circulation, and consumption of reading-related goods
 - 4.3. Support for the creative network for the book
 - 4.4. Increased presence outside of Brazil of Brazilian literary, scientific, and cultural publications

Under such titles as “Hunger for Books” (Fome de Livro, which calls to mind Fome Zero, the government's program to eliminate hunger) and the “Open Book Program” (Programa Livro Aberto), municipalities in Brazil have benefited from an increased number of public libraries (line 1.1), and the government's above-mentioned

extensive media campaign, aided by the television network Globo, is aimed at encouraging citizens to read and to use libraries. According to the September 24, 2007 bulletin of the National Library, of Brazil's 5,564 municipalities, in 2003, 1,173, or 21.09%, lacked public libraries. The National System of Public Libraries (Sistema Nacional de Bibliotecas Públicas, SNBP), managed by the National Library, expected to establish 263 more libraries through the Open Book Program before the end of 2007, leaving only 380 municipalities without libraries, meaning that between 2003 and September 2007, 530 municipalities had gained public libraries (Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, 2007). To participate, municipalities would have to hold no debt with the federal government and promise to provide space and one or more workers (the need for someone who could work legally as a librarian is not mentioned). In exchange, the program would provide two thousand volumes, furniture, stereo equipment, a television, a DVD player, and a VHS player, along with software, although computers are not mentioned in the bulletin.

Other than by possibly benefiting from an atmosphere that is favorable to the reading room and their other programs, the i2i's leadership has yet to make use of the federal government's pertinent policies. Partly, they are reluctant to form partnerships with government agencies, which are notoriously unreliable and could bring heightened scrutiny from parties within Rocinha. Partly, they are reluctant to form partnerships at all, having been taken advantage of in the past. Additionally, they may remain somewhat unsure of themselves and their ability to work with outsiders and produce the necessary paperwork, and they are committed to slow growth rather than to pursuing large grants. Nonetheless, in 2009, they pursued and were awarded a grant from the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (Koopman, 2009).

The i2i's efforts can clearly be understood as part of a larger trend to focus on various aspects of literacy, access to reading materials in paper and digital formats, and the quality of use of these resources that has become possible as a reasonable balance between the analog and the digital has grown more imaginable and as concerns regarding nominal access to education and literacy have given way to concerns regarding quality. The novelty of digital technologies and telecommunications has begun to wear off as telecommunications infrastructures have expanded (although they are still lacking in many places), allowing for the all-too-common fascination with purportedly miraculous technologies to wane.

Telecenters

With the rise of the World Wide Web, community technology centers (or telecentros/telecenters) have come to provide some information services at little or no cost to residents of places like Rocinha. More specifically, they provide telecommunications services through which users can gain access to information, play games, or partake of other activities. Although the role of telecenters in providing access to the Internet is frequently acknowledged, they can offer the use of fax machines and other telecommunications devices as well. Depending on the nature of the organization, they may also provide training opportunities in computer and entrepreneurial skills.

Although Rocinha has had some non-commercial telecenters, the market there is dominated by the favela's many commercial enterprises with several computers hooked up to the Internet, some of which invariably do not function, destroy disks, are slow to load, or are otherwise challenging to use. These enterprises range from well-lit rooms where adults can relatively comfortably conduct business or correspond with others should they locate a functioning computer, to dark, sometimes bustling "LAN houses,"

where the focus is on gaming and where the clientèle is visibly younger. Technically, a LAN (local area network) house should provide computers on a stand-alone network, usually for gaming, but the term is used in Brazil to refer to commercial telecenters, especially those that cater to young people.

Even before the initiation of this research, the goal of providing access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) was expressed on the Web site www.2bros.org, but the i2i until recently had yet to gain the hardware, space, connectivity, or expertise to provide such services. They recently acquired the necessary furniture and connectivity, and should they acquire the hardware, they expect to seek to provide such services in their small space and with their limited but growing expertise. Misgivings have centered on concerns that the i2i would find itself policing use to avoid creating a gaming or purely social networking environment or allowing access to pornography. Other concerns have been about maintaining hardware and paying for connectivity and electricity.

Brazil is a country of great variety and contrasts. Rocinha is no exception to this pattern and, in fact, exemplifies it. The country has a corporatist legacy that means that most professions are highly regulated; this regulation of librarianship has presented a challenge to me and may continue to challenge the i2i. Brazil is also a nation with a rather centralized government that sets nationwide policies in areas that are deemed in the United States to be more appropriate to the state or local level. Hence the perhaps surprising focus on national book policies rather than on state or local initiatives of this chapter. In contrast to this centralization is the decentralized nature of the many local non-governmental initiatives that exist to provide services to Brazil, especially to the poor or otherwise disadvantaged. The i2i's leaders have begun to share their experiences

with others in Brazil and around the world, and it is my hope that this text will add something of value to that discussion.

SECTION II: NARRATIVE ACCOUNT

When you are guided to any construction site you are experiencing the troubling and exhilarating feeling that things *could be different*, or at least that *they could still fail* – a feeling never so deep when faced with the final product, no matter how beautiful or impressive it may be. (Latour, 2005, p. 85; emphasis in the original)

I arrived in Rio de Janeiro in March 2006 and remained there until February of 2007. I returned to Rio in May of that year, stayed again until September, and made a third trip to the field in January and February 2008. While in Rocinha and during my absences via telephone and Internet communications, I witnessed and participated in the growth of the i2i from an organization almost in name only that provided services offered by a U.S.-based NGO (2Bros.) into a small but functioning NGO with an identity, functions, and goals of its own. Although my involvement in Rocinha and 2Bros. stretches back to before March 2006 and continues to this day (May 2009), this text looks primarily at the period of March 2006 through February 2008, when my involvement with the Brazilian NGO was the most intense and sustained.

The following pages present a narrative of events in roughly chronological order. As noted in Chapter 2, much of the data and analysis are in the telling. Additionally, this account will help readers understand the analyses of subsequent chapters in which I look at the period first in terms of the quality of the action research and second in terms of how the i2i's experiences can enlighten us regarding methodology, the information professions, and the risks associated with an excessive faith in the power of information as commonly conceptualized. Although the account is in chronological order to the extent possible, the sections below often overlap, reflecting the process-oriented nature of action research and of change itself. Readers will notice that the narrative is “messy” and that

this is particularly the case at first. Like the other participants in this research, I was learning. The quality of my journaling improved as I practiced that kind of writing, as what we were doing became clearer, as we became better able to reflect together, and as we came to think more about the reading room. The same can be said of our meetings and the minutes of those meetings.

Appendix A provides a timeline, which readers may choose to consult before, after, or even while reading this account.

Chapter 5: 1999-February 2007

BACKGROUND: 1999-2006

My Involvement in Rocinha: 1999

It is important for outsiders who wish to enter favelas to be invited to do so. For me, this invitation came in the form of an introduction by a colleague at the University of Texas whom I had known since our undergraduate years at Georgetown University. While I had spent my study abroad year at a university in São Paulo State, she had chosen to study in Rio de Janeiro, where she met several residents of Rocinha. Thus, in 1999, she had long-established ties there. I stayed with friends of hers in July and August 1999 and performed research on residents' use of pay television systems, gaining experience in survey methods, in teaching a resident to perform research, and in living in Rocinha (Letalien, 2002).

While there, I came to know several individuals who were involved in founding a new organization that was being created to provide educational and leadership opportunities to residents, especially but not exclusively children. Among them were several people who have since hosted or looked after me when I have returned to Rocinha.

Involvement in the Two Brothers Foundation: 2001-2006

I was in the process of applying to the doctoral program in information studies at the University of Texas at Austin when I attended the September 2001 Latin American Studies Association (LASA) meeting, where I was finally afforded an opportunity to meet Paul.³⁴ I had been in Rocinha when word of the official founding of the Two Brothers Foundation was received there. In fact, I was living in the home of one of the

founders of the i2i and was spending a great deal of time with the teenager who would later become the director of the i2i. When I met Paul in 2001, I could recall the excitement regarding the NGOs on the part of people who were dear to me, as well as their fondness for Paul, but I knew very little else about Two Brothers or Dois Irmãos.

The same colleague who had introduced me to Rocinha introduced me to Paul at the LASA meeting. She had told him that I was applying to the doctoral program of the then-Graduate School of Library and Information Science of the University of Texas, and he approached me, telling me that Two Brothers (readers should recall that at the time, socially, a distinction was not made between the two legally separate organizations) wanted to create a library, computer center, and toy collection in the building that they would be purchasing shortly. He asked if I would be able to create the library, and I told him that I was planning on pursuing a doctorate and would need to focus my efforts on research, but that if he acquired the space and materials, then I would find a way to spend a summer aiding them in preparing the room. That project idea, which at the time seemed to be the farthest thing possible from a kernel of a dissertation proposal, made its way into my statement of purpose as an example of the kind of service that I hoped to perform while pursuing my coursework.

Two Brothers, their work, and Paul's request came to mind frequently as I bumbled through coursework, choosing one interesting-sounding course after another in search of a research topic, until my committee chair, Philip Doty, kindly pointed out that there can be more to social science than my background suggested and gently nudged me in the direction of participatory action research. I suspect he spent some time waiting for me to realize on my own that this option existed, but action research still remained far

enough outside the scope of conventional practice that I wonder if I would ever have seen what would later seem the most obvious of solutions to my dilemma on my own.

I began to elaborate a plan to include residents in planning and implementing the creation of the library that Paul had asked me to establish: if users led the effort to create the library and I facilitated their work, then I could pursue interesting research questions while conducting research that I believed would take ethics seriously, lead to changes that might be sustained after I left the field, and allow me to make good on a promise to which I was quite dedicated, while also allowing me to make good use of my Portuguese language skills and knowledge of Brazilian culture. What was originally, I believed, conceived by Paul and others as a project in which I would provide a collection policy and organization for the facility eventually became a research agenda through which residents and I would plan and, if all went well, implement a version of the original dream of a library, computer center, and toy collection that was to be deeply informed by residents' needs and desires, although it would also be guided by what information studies can lend to such endeavors. It would turn out that we would indeed quite successfully implement the reading room; methodical planning would be more difficult to achieve.

In 2004, I made a short trip to Rocinha and spoke with several of the residents who were involved in the small amount of organizing and other work necessary to offer courses, such as making sure that the rented space was opened on time and kept clean. We discussed my intention to plan the center using PAR. I stressed that such an approach, since it includes a number of participants as researchers, has the disadvantage of requiring considerable work on the part of participants. Several members of the board of directors, all of whom were community members, assured me that they were willing to

participate in the research, but I remained skeptical: participation would mean that they would need to find the time and expend considerable effort beyond what they were accustomed to doing for the foundation or institute. Although lack of sufficient engagement on the part of the research team is a concern for any research of this sort, the president of the foundation later set me more at ease when she shared with me her experience with another project, one in which she and other educators were constructing a history of education in Rocinha, making it clear that at least she had a deep understanding of the work that participatory research requires on the part of insider researchers. It would later become apparent that my original concerns were quite warranted, and I spent much of my time in Rocinha attempting to prepare the organization to participate in the research.

During my 2004 visit, I was also told about the latest attempt to acquire space for the English classes that would include space for the library. That deal would soon fall through, as had and would others. Although participants told me about the various attempts to secure space, I was not present in Rocinha or involved in making decisions regarding a space until I returned to Rocinha in 2006.

In March 2005, I received word that I had been offered a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship. Fortuitously, the news arrived just as I was preparing to drive to Oklahoma to attend my first Two Brothers meeting. There, I met a number of former Two Brothers volunteers and announced my plans, stating (I believed) clearly that I would be receiving a research fellowship. I also joined the advisory board of the Two Brothers Foundation at that time. That board consisted of Paul, his wife, several former volunteers, and some colleagues of the Sneeds who had taken an interest in the foundation. Like the i2i, it was not very active, but its members sought to meet on a

yearly basis, primarily to discuss fundraising, recruitment of volunteers, and the yearly newsletter. I was to participate in a committee to modify the Web site based on the research I planned to do in Rocinha with residents' use of the Web site. We never conducted that part of the research because of the i2i's inadequate information technology infrastructure, and others made changes to the Web site with little participation on my part while I was in the United States in 2007.

I returned to Austin, took my comprehensive examinations, submitted my proposal, and spent months waiting to receive a visa, which was approved in December 2005. Since the work in Rio followed the academic year, I decided to wait to travel until the beginning of Brazil's fall semester, immediately after Carnival. I therefore arrived in Rio de Janeiro in early March 2006.

INITIAL MONTHS IN RIO DE JANEIRO: MARCH-MAY 2006

In this section, I rely primarily on my notes, which are disjointed and express confusion regarding how the institute/foundation operated and what its future might be. I briefly synthesize the events leading up to the annual meeting that we held in May 2006 and introduce the main actors and actants of this period. The building, reading room, and meetings emerged as important actors, and I introduce them here. The 2006 annual meeting was the first event around which we established practices, and, fortunately, it was also the first event in which I was sufficiently well integrated into the fabric of the organization to participate fully. It represents our first cycle of reflection, although I did not recognize this fact at the time.

When I arrived in March 2006, the Institute remained small and precarious. The official name of the Brazilian organization had gone nearly forgotten, and the volunteers and 2Bros. remained responsible for funding the i2i's activities, which amounted to little

more than paying rent at the preschool in order to offer three hours of classes to children and three hours of classes to teenagers and adults per week in the evenings, as well as a Halloween party for which the volunteers took responsibility. Funds were acquired through events held at universities in the United States, and the Two Brothers Foundation was led primarily by Paul. Volunteers paid no fee to participate in the program; their expected financial contribution came solely in the form of the Halloween party if they were in Rocinha in October. When I arrived, little coordination took place at the Instituto Dois Irmãos, which met approximately once a year, made no decisions of its own, and took orders from 2Bros. While Paul, volunteers, and the four Brazilians who were nominally in charge of the institute talked about seeking growth, the institute's activities required little leadership or coordination, comprising as they did only a few hours of classes per week that were taught by people recruited primarily by Paul, a yearly Halloween party, and a meeting of whoever was available when Paul happened to come to town.

All of several attempts to find a space had fallen through, and the classes were still being taught out of a preschool with tables and chairs that were not large enough even for the children who took the twice-weekly, ninety-minute course, much less for the teen and adult students enrolled in a similar course. Regarding the reading room, the i2i had no ability to store materials or provide services to readers.

Paul and Viviana were involved in negotiations to purchase a building with someone who somehow knew someone else who had died and who, in turn, had had a relationship with the family of one of the Brazilians (it was all more than a little confusing to me, but the building had once been owned by a woman who had been dear to many of the neighbors, and it had since been rented out to a series of tenants, among

them a foreign researcher who had been involved in the foundation in its early days). Several of those of us who were volunteers or members of the local leadership remained skeptical because such deals had repeatedly fallen through. This building, however, was located on the alley where I was once again residing and where two of the leaders of the i2i lived, and social and familial ties could be called upon; it was easier to acquire this building. In May 2006, the i2i made the first payment of R\$10,000 (approximately \$5,000), which the advisory board of 2Bros. had painstakingly raised since the abovementioned meeting in Oklahoma, and it made the second and final payment the following month. With the first payment, we owned the first floor; the second payment gave us not only the second floor, but also the roof “rights” that would later allow for expansion.³⁵

The funds had been acquired through a laborious campaign in the United States that included appeals to Two Brothers' volunteers' families and small fundraising parties held at universities. The dollar, which had been dropping in value, fell even more just as the funds for the second payment were transferred to the i2i's bank account, leaving the i2i without funds to renovate the building, which was insufficient in size and presented several potential hazards. The organizations had planned small renovations, nothing like the major construction that they would later manage to fund, but in June 2006, it was unclear whether they would be able to afford even basic operating costs, let alone renovations.

Although I knew before arriving that the purchase of a building had yet again been delayed, it was only once I entered the field to “stay” that I realized that the i2i effectively did not exist, or, more charitably, barely existed. I quickly discovered that, although claims regarding “the guys in Rocinha” were frequently made by individuals

involved in Two Brothers and by the teachers and the four members of the leadership in Rocinha (the president, treasurer, and two individuals responsible for opening the door before classes, leaving the space the way they found it, and locking up after class), the group planned very few activities together and met formally only once a year. A fifth local board member had all but disappeared and will not appear in this text. Besides providing access to the classrooms, their main activities were to socialize with teachers and help them in small ways to adjust to living in Rocinha. This role was an informal one played by each of the four to varying degrees, but primarily by the three men, all in their early twenties.

Unable to work on the reading room until we had not just a building but, more fundamentally, an organization (even broadly construed), I, like the other volunteers, initially participated in the creation of the i2i itself. It was clear to all that, once the building was purchased, the organization would need to adapt and its leaders would need to learn new skills; I participated in this process, offering questions and voicing concerns when it seemed appropriate to do so. The fact that the i2i had a history and institutional memory but no local management or strong identity meant that we simultaneously created the i2i and grappled with its past.

As noted above, the two organizations were not usually seen as distinct despite their legal status. In accordance with my goal of facilitating residents' planning of their own reading room, I was interested in fostering an identity and some independence for the Instituto Dois Irmãos, a goal that suited the situation well: the changes that the i2i was about to experience with the increasing responsibility that they would have to take on in order to run a building and expand their programming made it important to strive for identity-building and increased autonomy.

The Actors and Actants

The actors and actants in this initial period are already many. Recalling that an ANT perspective includes non-human actors, the following actors are listed roughly in order of appearance:

- **Viviana**, the president of Dois Irmãos and the owner of the preschool out of which the Brazilian NGO operated. While the preschool was a for-profit enterprise, it was a very small business. Her greatest interest, it was immediately apparent, was children. She did not attend classes, and she knew little English. She had a high school education and later, in 2007, would begin an undergraduate degree in education, but in March 2006, we did not know that she would do so. I had met her on a previous visit.
- **Washington**, who performed duties such as closing up the preschool after classes and interacting with foreign volunteers. His English was amazingly fluent,³⁶ and I had met him on a previous visit. The month I arrived, he began his undergraduate studies.
- **Rogério**, who did the same kinds of work as Washington. His English was as fluent as Washington's, although his accent was heavier. He had little formal education but was an avid reader, and he asked incisive questions. I believe this was the first time I met him.
- **Paul**, the president of Two Brothers and vice-president of Dois Irmãos. Nearly a decade earlier, he had started the project by teaching English to several boys in Rocinha, including Washington. When I arrived in March 2006, it was immediately apparent to me that his wishes and actions were at the center of everything that happened at the foundation,³⁷ even though he lived in the United

States and visited once or twice a year. I also soon learned that the idea of the reading room, which he had described to me as a collective idea, had been his. He was known for making more promises than would be fulfilled, and his presence in a few months was expected to “make things happen.” It seems, now, that Paul’s style involves speaking very positively about the future and about possibilities for change and for implementing projects, but at the time, that positive speech seemed – to me and to at least some of the local leaders and volunteers – to comprise promises that would not be kept.

- **“The Foundation”**: this term referred, indiscriminately, to the people in the United States and in Brazil who were dedicated to the work at hand. I made a point of distinguishing between the two legally distinct NGOs, the Two Brothers Foundation and the Instituto Dois Irmãos, thus in a way introducing this distinction. This decision is discussed in greater detail below. While “the foundation” included people in the United States other than Paul, these individuals were at first seldom mentioned.
- **The building** that we hoped 2Bros. would purchase: would we ever actually acquire one? Doing so was seen as Paul's responsibility.
- **The reading room**: it was Paul's idea, but the people I was interacting with in Rocinha were in favor of building one. Participants expected to have a place for the reading room in the building we were going to purchase.
- **Potential users and uses of the reading room**: we were just beginning to define these: they were on our minds but in only vague ways. Being such vague ideas, users and uses were completely intertwined. The students' English was so rudimentary that if we were to decide that the main objective of the reading room

would be to serve our other activities, then it would need to house primarily extremely easy books in English.

- **The volunteers**, at this point, were Nick, who was the coordinator of the teachers, and the two other foreigner teachers. In March, they are present in my notes as the people who kept the English classes a reality through their classroom instruction. In May, Nick's interest in the NGOs more broadly became clearer to me, and other volunteers with various interests and different levels of participation in decision making came and went throughout the winter of 2006. We occasionally had volunteers who performed services other than teaching. Volunteers were both male and female, and they varied greatly in stature, ethnic and racial background, national origin, and knowledge of the Portuguese language. While some blended in easily on the streets when dressed appropriately, others could not avoid attracting attention. Most were recent college graduates.
- **Daniel**: I had known him since 1999, and he had become disenchanted with and had distanced himself from the i2i, although he was its treasurer. He did not attend classes but began attending meetings. He lost his job in early March as the result of a larger downsizing effort, freeing his time but worrying me. Daniel's English was good, but he lacked the comfort and confidence with the language that the other two Brazilian men had. All three were in their early twenties, while Viviana was older than the three.
- **Meetings**: Although the notion of meetings as somehow being actors or actants might at first appear bizarre, it is the case that not only specific meetings, but also the idea of them, who should be invited, how and how often they should be run, and similar concerns both affected and were affected by what we said and did.

Meetings (and the building, reading room, and foundation) are, then, excellent examples of why ANT practitioners do not limit themselves to human actors.

- And, of course, **I** myself: I felt that I had not had as much contact with the people in Brazil as I would have liked, and this distance made my arrival uncomfortable for me. I had been concerned that I should limit my contact with them because any conversation I might have with them might come to constitute data. Since participants were on the other side of the globe and would not sign forms until I saw them, I had felt that I had no way of satisfying the requirement of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Texas that the forms be administered before data collection began other than by avoiding data collection altogether before entrance into the field. During my first months in Rocinha, I was constantly worried about topics ranging from Daniel's employment status, to the possibility of being misunderstood as being interested only in books, to whether we would ever own a building or begin collaborative, organized research into the reading room. By March 11, I was feeling that the group, including the teachers, had accepted me. At thirty-two, I was a few years younger than Viviana. Although I am of mixed European descent (including Portuguese and French), my stature, build, and facial features led some of our students to assume I was Brazilian and had also migrated from the Northeast, where the Portuguese, Dutch, and French had a significant presence.

Of course, this list suggests yet more categories, such as “everyone in Brazil,” “the IRB,” and “classes,” but this list could go on endlessly in the first month alone and never allow for analysis and movement. This list seems more than sufficient to begin showing how we conducted action research and what we learned. Others, such as “students” and

“visitors to classes” will be introduced later, when they become central to the story. This decision follows the work of Latour, who suggests following the actors who affect the story: when I arrived, the students attended classes but did not yet actively shape the institute, much less the reading room. Throughout this narrative, I refer to Viviana, Rogério, Washington, and Daniel as “the leaders.” At this moment, however, it was not yet clear who would comprise the institute’s leaders. Later in the narrative, I will add the term “administrators,” and the composition of the group of actors involved in leading and administering the i2i will undergo some changes. Appendix B provides three visual representations of the changing actor-network at the i2i. These are designed to be aids, not full representations.

We had, then, a loose group of people (some four Brazilians and up to half a dozen volunteers) providing English classes in a preschool and beginning to think about a future in which they would need to do more. No significant organizing was taking place, and decisions seemed to come from abroad; one might even say that Paul, not the Instituto Dois Irmãos or even the Two Brothers Foundation, was the boundary object through which people considered the work at hand.

The Reading Room and Building

Upon arrival in Rocinha, I took to observing classes. I interviewed the leaders separately and asked that we begin meeting regularly. While they agreed that we should meet, these meetings were at first difficult to institute, as I describe below. I also spent much of my time “hanging out” with the Brazilians and volunteers, especially Daniel and Washington. While we focused primarily on the institute more generally during the first half of 2006, I spoke extensively, both in interviews and meetings and more informally,

Box 1: Participants’ original ideas for the reading room
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with the four leaders about their dreams and plans for the reading room, as well as for the institute more broadly. Viviana expressed her interest in serving children's needs with the reading room, while I worried that we would overlook the needs of another group of stakeholders, our adult students, if we made such a choice too hastily and without greater participation from stakeholders such as those adult students. Paul's vision of what I termed "a room full of English books," as opposed to books in Portuguese, also came into focus on March 16th. Later in the month and in early April, I spoke with Washington, Rogério, and Daniel. Washington believed the reading room should be for "everyone." Rogério expressed a vision that was nearly as broad but nonetheless more defined: we should help our students, provide access to a library from within the favela to people without access to bigger and better libraries, and serve our adult students by providing foreign-language materials. He focused less on particular populations or kinds of materials and more on complementing other services, our own and those of other organizations. Daniel had older children and teens in mind when he envisioned a space for research and school projects. I expressed the opinion that these were all worthwhile projects and that, once we had spoken with some students and parents, we might work on a small piece of one or more of them, seeking to incorporate more goals over time as resources, including space and human resources, permitted. Furthermore, we were anxious to begin submitting funding proposals, and I had already begun to question whether the institute's users would be involved in the initial planning of the reading room:

There's a strong sense of urgency to start sending out proposals, and that means there isn't sufficient time to involve potential users. Every [who was present in the meeting] had a different idea of what the center should be, but none of the ideas was bad, I pointed out to Viviana afterwards, so if something comes up for which we can put a proposal together, we should start. It would be great if

potential users could be involved in defining the center from the beginning, but waiting a stage or two would not be the end of the world: there is little doubt that there is a need for all of the things that were suggested.

Here we see clearly the distinction between more conventional research, in which deviating from plans and from a set of predefined rules is deemed a flaw, and our work, in which one or more leaders would complain that we were being inconsistent if we did not do as we had planned, but we all recognized the value of seizing opportunities even if doing so meant “tainting” the data.

Likewise, other programs that the institute might offer once it had a building, such as adult literacy, gained attention. Regarding a conversation I had had earlier in the day, I noted, again on March 16th:

Box 2: Suggesting literacy classes

We discussed that there is some interest, particularly on the part of one of the teachers, in having literacy classes, but Paul doesn't think it's a good idea. In the end, it is Paul's word and his decisions that matter – we are quite far from local control, although the day-to-day activities aren't run by Paul or even by Viviana, but rather by the teachers, including Washington and Rogério.

In the following weeks and months, we would sporadically discuss the reading room's potential users and uses, as well as the other new activities that could be offered in a building owned by the foundation, or institute, as I insisted on calling the local portion of this amorphous group. We talked of adding courses, of forming a network with other NGOs in Rocinha, even of creating a kind of inter-library loan arrangement among different organizations offering access to print materials as a way of meeting the challenge of serving people living a long walk away and who might be disabled or too young, old, or busy to visit the new building. We would alternate between such ambitious ideas and feelings of despair. On March 25, I observed:

Depending on whom I ask (or who brings up the subject), the thing is either at a turning point and now it's getting itself off the ground or it's a joke, just as it has been from the beginning. Even those who see it as at a turning point express a

kind of urgency, to the effect of, if things don't change now, if we don't purchase a building now, this could be our last chance.

Three weeks later, in mid-April, the atmosphere had only intensified, and the tone of my notes varied wildly from expressing high hopes to fatalism, with a good dose of fear and anxiety. These were exciting, if not reading-room-related times. For example, I woke up one morning feeling privileged, in part “for being able to share in the process of growth that the IDI has in its near future (that indeed seems to have begun),” only to wake up sick, tired, and worried just three days later. By that time, some of the most contentious issues we would face had already surfaced.

Discussions of whether the deal would go through were soon joined by questions regarding the structural integrity of the building, whose history the neighbors knew well. It was a two-story building with an apartment on each floor. The entrance to the second floor was external, so that it was neither necessary nor even possible to reach the second-floor apartment via the first-floor one. I was told that water would run down the stairs and create a hazard every time it rained.

Box 3:
Questions about
the building

Also in early April, Paul attempted to make a decision about the building: we would initially occupy the first floor, and he would allow the tenants on the second floor to remain and continue paying rent. Little did he know that that order, as perfectly congruent as it was with previous interactions between Paul and those working in Brazil, would cause an uproar, not because it was unusual for him to make decisions for the group, but because a number of us had begun to make plans of our own for the building – and the willingness in Rocinha to carry on following orders had begun to wane. Compounding the situation was his tendency to “sell” the NGOs by acting very confident about ideas, often leading others to believe that steps toward a goal had already been

taken when in fact nothing more than a vague idea existed. Skepticism regarding the discrepancy between plans, which were often taken to constitute promises, and actions further fueled our fears regarding the building.

Other complaints about Paul's decisions quickly followed, until, by the time the annual meeting in Brazil rolled around in late May, we had worked ourselves into a frenzy over his apparent heavy-handedness and desire to exert control over us. Certainly this was not the first time that anyone had expressed discontent with Paul's or anyone else's decisions, but the passion that accompanied our incipient formation of a community of practice that would seek to lead from within Rocinha outstripped all of the stories of earlier times that the Brazilian leaders shared with me. Distance and poor communication contributed to the construction of an image of Paul that was both unforgiving and lacking in nuance.

We also made our first attempts to produce and circulate requests for donations: in weekly meetings and in pairs between meetings, we produced a wish list of basic items such as fans, water coolers, and paint that we would have to purchase or receive as donations, translated the short document, and distributed it electronically to our contacts in Rio and some others, such as some former volunteers.³⁸ The only response was from a former volunteer who sent several hundred dollars, but the experience was an opportunity to think about donors and documentation, and it afforded leaders, teachers, and other volunteers a chance to opine and collaborate on the future of the institute in a way that was not particularly burdensome but that allowed everyone's voices to be heard. In short, with lively but friendly discussions about the document and suggestions from many people, it was the kind of collaborative work that action researchers strive to initiate and perpetuate.

Box 4: Producing documentation

This collaborative atmosphere contrasted with the secretiveness of some members of the group regarding such themes as what work they were performing outside of the institute and even the dates of arrival and plans of future volunteers with whom they were in contact. Several of the Brazilians, volunteers, and I also had various private conversations regarding the amount of gossiping that was taking place. Those with whom I spoke about this tendency saw it as productive when it resulted in richer conversations in meetings and destructive when it eroded or prevented the development of trusting relationships, although there would later be evidence that one individual objected to the practice whenever that person was not a party to the conversation. The irony of the fact that we had the conversations about gossip in pairs or at most in groups of three rather than more openly during meetings was somehow lost on us at the time, although Washington and I once planned to bring the theme up in a meeting.³⁹ The above-mentioned collaboration also contrasted greatly with the more contentious atmosphere we expected for the annual meeting, discussed below, and even the atmosphere around the subject of the reading room.

I was clear that I found the institute's needs more important than my need to work on the reading room for my fellowship and dissertation, but of course I feared that I would return to the United States with no plans for a reading room. Also, since I was concerned about writing a dissertation within the field of information studies, I feared that our not discussing the reading room would leave me without a dissertation topic. Furthermore, although I hoped to secure funds to return, I worked with the expectation that I would spend only through February 2007 in Rocinha.

Although we occasionally discussed the reading room, I was concerned that we discuss the notion of quality in our work and engage in reflective practice by talking

about where each of our strengths and weaknesses, as well as those of the collective, lay. With myriad disruptions by family members and others, absenteeism and late arrivals, the frequent presence of guests, the Brazilians' reluctance to make such personal statements in the presence of the volunteers who often attended the meetings and my reluctance to bring these topics up under such circumstances, our inability to hold meetings that others did not feel they could or should attend, the multiple purposes of the meetings, and our more pressing concerns, we were never successful at discussing what might constitute quality in our work or to work in a concentrated manner on being mindful of strengths, weaknesses, and strategies to make use of or ameliorate these. Instead, the formal meetings and our informal gatherings (usually in pairs) were often an occasion to place blame on one another (particularly on those who were not present, especially when they had skipped a meeting). This pattern would persist, although as the Brazilian leaders and I worked together, among the five of us, more nuanced and sometimes more compassionate analyses emerged, and confidence in the institute's ability to administer programs grew.

Meetings

Before leaving for Brazil, I had determined that some of my work would be towards strengthening the organization before they would be ready to be active participants in a PAR study. Upon my arrival, it became evident that the i2i was weaker than I had believed based on observations from my previous visit. Indeed, such strengthening was necessary for the organization to succeed in more general terms, especially because the organization was about to acquire a building, which would imply a great increase in the amount and variety of work expected of the Brazilians. Despite my previous visit, I was surprised at the lack of coherence of and planning by the group.

I suggested regular meetings to discuss both the organization and my research project. At first, I received some resistance to this idea. This resistance was expressed in

Box 5:
Beginning to
meet regularly

various forms: verbal complaints, late arrivals, absenteeism, arriving only to give a report and then leaving without hearing what others had to say, fidgeting. Still, the Brazilians agreed, in principle, that meeting was a necessary precondition for being ready for the upcoming annual meeting and for occupying the building that we were expecting to acquire. For months, we fought ourselves and each other over the meetings: Should we meet weekly? Every two weeks? Could we please try to arrive roughly on time and stay for the duration of the meeting? Should the teachers be invited? What were acceptable topics? Should someone lead the meeting? Where, on what day, and at what time should they occur? How long should they last? What should we do about relatives, neighbors, and significant others who interrupted the meetings? Ironically, each of these subjects was reason for long discussions about which each of us would complain later, using the drawn-out discussions as evidence to suggest that the meetings were not serving their function, whatever that might have been. These arguments were, however, serving an essential function that we could not see from within, that of helping us to define what the i2i was, how it operated, and who could play what roles in its administration. In short, by struggling to define roles, goals, functions, and processes, each of us was struggling to give the i2i an identity and to shape that identity.

Despite the complaints, no one suggested that we abandon the meetings altogether, and we continued to meet once every week to two weeks. At first, I attempted to discuss the reading room, but I soon gave up on that idea to focus my energy almost exclusively on strengthening the organization, to the point where, when my time in the

field was running out, other members of the group pressed me to think more about myself and my project. Not only was I concerned that the i2i might not survive the transition it was facing, but I also wanted to be sure that the reading room was more than “my” project, not something that I was coercing others into taking on. So I often held back when perhaps I should have been more insistent about working on the reading room.

Often, our questions went unanswered. One of the most difficult questions was whether to invite teachers and other volunteers to participate in the meetings: we quickly realized that smaller meetings were more likely to be deemed successful, but it was important to make it clear that the group welcomed volunteers' opinions and participation in the organization outside the classroom. Furthermore, it was socially awkward to tell volunteers that their presence was not welcome. As a result, from one week to the next, we would not know who would be attending the meetings. To make matters worse, some volunteers, without seeking prior consent, would bring guests. Additionally, some volunteers' Portuguese was quite basic, and, when any such person was present, we would spend approximately half of the allotted time interpreting. Indeed, it was not unusual for it to appear as if two meetings were taking place at once in the same space. These were some of the meetings about which the three members of the leadership with whom I had the most contact and I would complain most passionately.⁴⁰

At my suggestion, we briefly settled on having meetings that would start closed and then be opened to volunteers for a period at the end of the meeting, right before class. One teacher took offense to this decision and began to ask us whenever she would see two or more of us in a room whether we had held a meeting. After that experience, the meetings were opened to volunteers again, but, as the group consolidated itself and as the volunteers who remembered the disorganized, open group that I had encountered when I

arrived returned to their countries, most volunteers seemed no longer to assume that they should participate in executive meetings. By the time I left the field in September 2007, with a few exceptions, those who could be found sitting in on meetings had been invited to do so. I participated in almost all meetings, although on one occasion I made it clear to one member of the leadership that I did not expect to be invited to all of them, and the four conversed privately, calling for me when they had worked out the differences that had made such a conversation imperative.

When I returned in 2008, the three active members of the leadership were no longer holding regular, formal executive meetings because, as they stated, they were working together frequently enough that such arrangements were not necessary. As I witnessed, the director would schedule a time to speak with the others when it became clear that such a measure was necessary. In a conscious attempt to improve communication, the volunteers, in contrast, had requested weekly meetings with the volunteer coordinator to which the other leaders and I were invited. While newly-arrived volunteers saw an organization with grave problems, the three administrators and I saw evidence of improvement in a process of learning to manage, communicate, and plan that is likely to remain profoundly challenging for several more years.⁴¹

Regarding Heron and Reason's (1997, 2001) four kinds of knowing – experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical – during my first months in Rocinha, we operated primarily on the experiential level, and the new meetings and discussions of the building and reading room forced us to work on the presentational and propositional levels, to defend our ideas and consider those of others. With the exception of classroom instruction, little of our work occurred at the practical level.

The 2006 Annual Meeting

In May 2006, the i2i's "annual" meeting was to be held. The gathering is supposed to be held annually, but it has tended to be held the first time after a year has passed that Paul is able to be present in Rio de Janeiro, so that the May 2006 meeting was the i2i's last "annual meeting" until January 2008, and the next one is scheduled for June 2009. Preparations for the 2006 event took considerable time and effort on the part of the four local leaders and of the foreign volunteers who were present at the time, two in particular. These preparations also helped us begin to create an identity for the group.

As we prepared for the annual meeting, we argued passionately about the institute. On each topic, each of us might agree with no one else or almost everyone else. Indeed, on occasion, we would argue even when all present agreed, perhaps because we could not believe that we all agreed on something. We also dreamed about the institute's future while conducting ourselves in ways that did not lend themselves to effective action or meetings, including being unprepared for our weekly meeting, arriving late or not at all, and not following through on commitments made in these gatherings. Perhaps this failure to act between meetings can be partly explained by the sheer number of responsibilities and expectations – I constantly complained in my notes that I was incapable of doing even a small fraction of what I wished to accomplish – but our ineffectiveness was usually labeled by the leaders, two in particular, as a "lack of seriousness," which I did not dispute: if we could just get serious about the work at hand, we might see the changes we wanted, was the sentiment. Indeed, one of the Brazilian leaders and I separately threatened to leave the institute: if we were not going to take the work at hand seriously, then each of us had better things to do with our time. Another leader mentioned the idea that the institute

Box 6: Introducing the concept of seriousness
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needed to be more serious as early as my March 2006 interview with that leader. I asked him or her what could be done to improve the institute. Not having yet secured permission to tape our interviews, I paraphrased what that leader told me and captured a direct quotation:

Everyone needs to take responsibility. They need to come when they are scheduled – it wasn't always that way. Last year, they were absent a lot. And the French teachers [who had repeatedly claimed they would teach and called at the last minute to cancel class] these weeks. Now we're starting for real. "Small steps, but sure steps."⁴²

This perception of a lack of seriousness would persist for months, and to this day the question of the seriousness of leaders and volunteers occasionally arises.

We began to ask ourselves what the Institute would be like once it had a space of its own and the obligation to open consistently and for more hours. How would the i2i

Box 7:
Imagining uses
for the building,
imagining the
institute

pay its utility bills? How would the two floors we were purchasing be used? Would our students, who were accustomed to attending class at the preschool just off a main road, be reluctant to venture farther into Rocinha and past a group of drug dealers to continue their studies? Through these discussions, each of us was forced to question what the institute was and what it meant to us. Mostly, and relatedly, we prepared ourselves to demand local control and autonomy in decision making.

In a culture in which all people involved in the NGOs voice their opinions, often strongly, another foreign volunteer and I openly encouraged this attempt to gain autonomy. I did so because I believed that the leadership needed autonomy to be able to grow as individuals and as an organization and to be able to make the many new decisions that they would soon need to make.

Box 8:
Thinking
about
autonomy

I pressed for us to refer to the institute as such – until my arrival, the Instituto Dois Irmãos had been known simply as the “fundação,” or “foundation,” in reference to the Two Brothers Foundation. The organization could not be a foundation under Brazilian law, and some believed that a Fundação Dois Irmãos already existed. I repeatedly (and in as consistent a manner as I could) referred to “the institute” as such and insisted that others do the same when dealing with outsiders.

Box 9:
Naming the
institute

To the Brazilians, I explained that I was concerned about the importance of being comfortable with using the official name as we prepared to approach potential funders within Brazil: we neither wanted to confuse anyone nor wanted to give the impression that any funds we raised would end up lining the pockets of people in the United States. After we agreed that it was legitimate to use the word “foundation” (or “fundação”) among ourselves, to my knowledge, no one in Brazil expressed any further disagreement or concern. While I proceeded to use “instituto” to refer to the group in Brazil and “fundação” to refer to the group in the United States, partly to make it easier to talk about this distinction and partly because I did not trust myself not to confuse the matter when speaking with potential donors if I were not accustomed to using the word “instituto,” others used whichever they felt more comfortable using. Such was not the case with Paul, who, in my estimation at the time, used “very patronizing language” to instruct us not to use the word “instituto.” Readers are reminded that emotions were running high and that e-mail is a perfect means of **miscommunication**, but this apparently condescending attitude fed the frenzy that led up to the annual meeting.

Meanwhile, we were in an intense period of group formation and change, as well as uneasy interpersonal relationships among those in Brazil. One of the volunteers

returned home as scheduled; another one arrived; Viviana and Daniel returned to being active in the institute, attending meetings and discussing its business but not being present during classes to the extent that the others were; accusations that some were lazy and unreliable, that some lacked ethics or good sense, and that some were seeking personal profit from the NGOs flew; and egos were repeatedly damaged. The meetings were still a new phenomenon but had already begun to involve some of the frustrating behaviors, particularly absenteeism, mentioned above.

In May 2006 and in the months that followed, the four Brazilians and I (heretofore, the group of five) asked ourselves and each other whether we would, individually and collectively, take the institute seriously enough to make it function. Yet, regarding a meeting at the beginning of that month, my post-meeting notes state, “We agreed that we need to be very well prepared for the [annual] meeting and that it is going to be uncomfortable.” Indeed we prepared our arguments and even some documentation. For example, working with Nick and occasionally another volunteer, we prepared our arguments in favor of not renting out the second floor.⁴³

1. We could receive the same amount of funds by increasing the number of courses and continuing to charge adults a small fee to participate. We drew up an estimated budget to demonstrate how we expected to attain these funds and how we would spend them.
2. Our legitimacy as an educational NGO would be put in question if we rented half of our space to be used as a residence.
3. We would have additional responsibilities to the tenants, a concern that was particularly worrisome if the tenants would be foreigners: a buffer between their actions and those of the institute was viewed as a way to reduce the likelihood

that it would become the responsibility of the institute to respond to grievances of or regarding volunteers that were not directly related to the institute's work as an educational institution.

4. We would limit our ability to renovate the second floor if it were occupied by tenants.

Meanwhile, one leader was vocal about our tendency to wait for Paul to make decisions, and, in the face of a lack of adequate information about the finances and plans of 2Bros., we wondered what our financial situation might be.

In the course of our discussions leading up to the annual meeting, one teacher, a New Yorker, forcefully expressed his belief that this was no time to be planning a reading room, that the institute had more important and pressing concerns, among them equipping classrooms and using our very limited space for instruction. I attempted to express my agreement and to state that I expected us to work on the institute's greater concerns over those regarding the reading room, but to add that the reading room could double as a classroom and that if we were to seek grants or other donations, the plan to include a reading room might make us more attractive to potential donors. Like the other volunteers, I was expected to have and express my own opinions regarding the future of the organization. I tried to place my interests and secondary and to say that the reading room was important to me only if it were to be an integrated part of the larger institute that we were attempting to design and build rather than a project that detracted from the greater goal. In my notes of May 21, 2006, I observed that the teacher's objections brought "into question the basic assumption of info[rmat]ion studies that access – particularly individual access – to info[rmat]ion resources is primary. After all,

Box 10:
Questioning the
wisdom of
focusing on
planning a reading
room

perhaps he was correct that we should not be worrying about libraries at a time when we could not yet adequately support classes. I opined, “there is tension, but there need not be opposition” between the need to “equip classrooms and a small reading-room-type-thing.”

One of the Brazilian leaders saw things differently. That individual was offended by the teacher's tone and voiced the belief that they should take advantage of the fact that I was in Rocinha and willing to help by seizing the opportunity to create the reading room while I was still available. The leader added that I had made sacrifices to be with the institute and that my efforts to be there should be met with respect for my project. While I was grateful for this loyalty, these words underscored the gulf that remained between “my project” and the project that the i2i would need to have for even me to be willing to go forward with the reading room. Although I understood the leader's reaction to the tone of the original question, perhaps because of my own upbringing in Connecticut, I had not been offended and had attempted to welcome the question. Unfortunately, my statement that the question was legitimate was drowned out at the time, and it was not until much later that I was able to explain to the teacher that I shared his concern, by which time he had already perceived the fact on his own and ceased to view the potential reading room as necessarily in conflict with classes or classrooms.

Again, we did not talk at great length about the reading room in the weeks leading up to the annual meeting, which occurred on May 29, 2006, but the work did not stagnate

Box 11: Rethinking the reading room's potential purposes
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entirely, either. Daniel began to rethink his expectations, now placing a greater emphasis on foreign languages.

Washington, who had not heard my earlier description of my dream of a system like an interlibrary loan system for Rocinha, approached me one day to talk about his long-term

dream of a network of reading rooms, some run by the i2i and some run by other organizations, throughout Rocinha. With little aid from the leaders and teachers, I experienced a nearly failed attempt at recruiting participants, especially children, managing to secure interviews with just two adults. Both of these students stressed that the reading room should be a place to gain access to materials to support their language studies. I realized that I could not expect much aid from the leaders in interviewing students. Since I was committed to a more participatory approach, and concerned that we would take participants' time in interviews and/or focus groups and then never work on the reading room, I decided to put off any further recruitment efforts until the leaders might be ready to collaborate in conducting the research with the students.

Going into May, I was preparing myself for what I expected to be a “very unpleasant” fight at the annual meeting, which was to be in May or June but had still not been scheduled. Nonetheless, I thought, “this confrontation is essential for the future of the organization”: its outcome would help determine the directions in which the institute could reasonably go and might lead to changes in the constitution of the group, since at least one Brazilian was considering leaving it depending on the outcome of the meeting and since we expected to discuss members' formal roles.

By May 22, Paul had arrived in Rocinha, and early that afternoon I arrived home to find him sitting on the couch and speaking with my hosts, whom he has known since the 1990s. He was, I wrote, “wearing a t-shirt that read 'Two Brothers Foundation – Fundação Dois Irmãos' around that horrendous graphic that is our logo” (the logo, to which several of us had come to object, was not ugly or offensive, but it seemed to have nothing to do with the goal of providing educational opportunities and instead depicted the practice of the Brazilian martial art capoeira: the logo seemed inappropriate and

confusing, and it symbolized to me the confusion regarding what we were doing and why that seemed to surround the pair of NGOs). Daniel arrived later and “joked about the various names” of the NGOs, and Paul told us that an architect would be arriving shortly and that we would be receiving a computer. I asked Paul for help in combating “my image as a librarian who cares only about books and told him that the latest terminology is ‘centro de estudos,’” or study center. We would hold the annual meeting a week later and see Paul several other times during his short visit to Rocinha.

On May 29, we all arrived very tense for the annual meeting. Besides the Brazilian leaders and Paul, the teachers and new volunteers were present, as were Paul's wife, who was active in Two Brothers, and I. The meeting was at the preschool, and the dozen of us did our best to find a comfortable way of accommodating ourselves in a room with tiny seats and tiny tables set up in a long rectangle. Consent forms were duly distributed and explained, and we set both the digital recorder on an MP3 player and an analog tape recorder: one of the leaders was adamant about producing such evidence should disputes about what was said surface later, and I was concerned about the potential failure of equipment.

Although there were many moments of lively conversation and plenty of confusion, often related to word choice and language ability, the meeting was not nearly as contentious as the Brazilian leaders, those volunteers who involved themselves in the preparations for the meeting, and I had driven ourselves to expect. In fact, the arguments over the use of the word “institute” and the purposes of the second floor hardly occurred, and we settled on “institute” and classes, respectively. Indeed, Paul expressed his discontent with the adversarial atmosphere that had been forming, stressed that we all shared the goal of seeing to it that the foundation thrived, and symbolically handing the

keys of the institute over to those working in Rocinha, saying that the time for such a transition had come. After two hours, we adjourned the meeting, leaving the question of choosing the board and defining the leaders' and volunteers' roles for June meetings.

When Paul symbolically gave the Brazilians the keys to the organization, everyone was surprised, and no one knew what to do.⁴⁴ Paul was no longer a student: he was a professor, and he needed to seek tenure. Furthermore, Paul and his colleagues at the Two Brothers Foundation (myself included) had fulfilled the dream of raising enough money for the Brazilians to have a building of their own. It was now time, we were told, for the individuals present to take on the responsibilities associated with running the Brazilian organization (responsibilities that would grow tremendously with the move to a space of their own), as well as to produce promotional materials, particularly the yearly newsletter. The Instituto Dois Irmãos was a teenager, and its father needed to allow it to mature by giving it greater responsibilities. He would, however, remain available to act as an adviser and would continue to act as the president of the Two Brothers Foundation, but many of the functions of Two Brothers would be transferred to Dois Irmãos.

Box 12: The Brazilians officially gain greater responsibility

Dois Irmãos *was* a teenager: anxious for autonomy but afraid of responsibility, lacking experience in almost all of the areas in which it would be called upon to act, seeking to be called by a name of its choosing, unable to present a coherent self-image to others, internally conflicted, questioning its own identity, occasionally alarmingly irresponsible, at other times amazingly smart and agile. In short, the group was unfit and unprepared for the job, while

Box 13: The cycle of preparing for the annual decision making begins to give way to that of preparing to run the institute and occupy the building.

at the same time it needed to take on the job in order to respond to the group's desire for change and need for growth, indeed, in order to grow fit and prepared.

Once promised more autonomy and responsibilities, the i2i had the difficult task of learning to act accordingly, and to this day their independence remains closely and primarily linked to the fact that those who might “oversee” the i2i’s work are physically distant and in only occasional communication with the leaders in Brazil. Nonetheless, the organization that exists today would have been unrecognizable in March 2006.

A Look Back: Understanding March-May 2006

The preparations for the annual meeting encouraged the continued formation of a community of practice that shared the goal of managing the institute. Nick's presence as someone with a long history of volunteering for the project, the more general uncertainty regarding who should be allowed what kinds of roles in the institute, and quite possibly my own status as a foreigner whose main objective was to see to it that the institute became a functioning organization ready to take on the task of planning and implementing a reading room contributed to keeping the institute's initial decision-making processes inclusive of volunteers, if somewhat haphazard and arbitrary. The institute's history of a culture of friendliness and, often, democratic attitude, ad hoc decisions, and tendency to have few decisions to make, likewise appear to have influenced the early formation of this community of practice.

Box 14: The institute as a community of practice in formation

The central importance of the building came into greater focus during this period, and by the time we held the annual meeting, the building had become the most obvious object at which to direct our energies, largely via preparations for the meeting, itself an object around

Box 15: New actors and boundary objects

which we consciously organized. In contrast, while the reading room came into view briefly during this period, particularly when the prudence of planning one was questioned, it had not yet become an object or idea around which to organize our thoughts or actions as a collective.

In May 2006, the notion of an institute with a separate identity from the U.S.-based NGO came fully into focus but was not realized. Likewise, potential donors and proposals to attract these came plainly into view. In short, the actors and actants, especially the non-human ones, were just being formed and imagined. This was true even for the years-old NGO(s). What would become a community of practice with relatively well defined boundaries was in early 2006 much more permeable and in question.

During this period, I focused on becoming integrated into the group and learning more about the context in which the institute operated. As a group, we were very unsure regarding what our questions should be and how we should attempt to answer them. We moved to greater engagement on the levels of presentational and propositional knowing as we formed hypotheses and opinions about the nature of the group, of individuals involved with the two NGOs, and of the work ahead of us and negotiated and communicated these hypotheses and opinions with one another, including and especially Paul during the annual meeting. While the cycles of action and reflection overlap, the annual meeting can be seen as marking the end of our initial inquiry, in which we primarily asked ourselves how to prepare for the annual meeting and used deliberation to arrive at an answer. The annual meeting also signifies the beginning of the next cycle, in which we tried to answer the question of how to prepare ourselves to move into the new building.

TRANSITIONING TO A NEW SETTING AND NEW RESPONSIBILITIES: JUNE-NOVEMBER 2006

Meetings: June-July 2006

The tendency to argue that developed at the institute as individuals in Rocinha became more active in the NGO alarmed some, including Paul, and sometimes appeared to threaten the integrity of the group and the ability of the leaders and volunteers to trust one another. At other times, the arguments seemed to be evidence of interest, important in the face of concerns regarding whether we would ever get “serious” enough to complete tasks.

Box 16: The practice of arguing
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Several of us had opportunities to speak with Paul in private during his visit to Rocinha. In an informal, impromptu conversation with some of the leaders on June 3, 2006, one of them retold a conversation in which, that leader told me later and I paraphrased in my notes, in response to Paul's request that we “treat each other as friends,” the leader had responded “that we need to discuss, disagree, and argue in favor of what we believe to be right, that it wasn't about being angry.” I am reminded of a conversation I had months later with the husband of a researcher who was not himself a Brazilianist: he had noticed that people in Rio argue frequently, that arguing seems to be an integral part of normal interactions. Without seeking to make too much of such generalizations, one might say that we were treating each other like friends in taking each other's ideas and actions seriously enough to dispute them passionately. This tendency to argue has persisted and is one of the first enduring characteristics of the i2i that all agreed existed, although not all agreed on what it meant.

On June 5, we held another meeting, one in which we were able to accomplish a variety of things. We planned a party that we would throw on the roof of the new building for a group of university students who had conducted a fundraiser for Two

Brothers; this would be the first event at the building. Paul explained the nature of the work that he would pass on to the institute, e.g., the creation of a yearly newsletter, and expressed his expectation of receiving monthly reports from Rocinha. A disagreement ensued concerning the question of whether the Brazilians could realistically take on all of the new responsibilities at once. When one volunteer suggested that volunteers in Rocinha take on some of the responsibilities, we agreed that this would be necessary, but several voiced their concerns that a lack of continuity as volunteers came and went and a lack of knowledge of Rocinha on the part of recently-arrived volunteers would present other challenges. Finally, we began to discuss formal roles, leaving the final decisions for the following week.

Box 17:
Defining the
work of and
roles of the i2i
and its leaders

Although the meeting was fruitful, it, like most meetings, was followed by complaints made in less formal settings. Although the Brazilians were usually the ones accused of not being serious or responsible, the morning after the meeting, the volunteers were supposed to join those leaders who were available at 10:00 to clean the building. My notes from that day are instructive:

By the time we got started, [one of the Brazilians] and I were annoyed and it was about 11:00. [One volunteer], in yesterday's meeting, was very concerned about order, protocol, having a designated leader – the kinds of things that are stereotypical of business students. Today, he again wanted there to be a plan and for everything to be done well. [One of the Brazilians] has made several disparaging comments about [that volunteer's] attitude. [One of the other Brazilians], whom I called when we went for lunch because he was [otherwise occupied] when we started, complained to me that the concept that we need a leader keeps being brought up by [two foreigners]. He is not convinced that we should seek to have a leader. His having been asked to run the meeting next Monday might have something to do with his reaction, but I get the sense that at least [two of the Brazilians] feel that we are doing a fine enough job on our own and do not need to have a foreign (in both the nationality and “strange” sense of

the word) [concept] thrust upon us. I feel somewhere in between: I wish our meetings had a little more structure and I get frustrated when we don't get to the things I would like to discuss, but I don't believe that firm leadership roles would necessarily solve this problem. Indeed, such roles might exacerbate the conflicts that tend to be suppressed in our meetings and expressed in informal settings when one party is not present. In any case, there is going to be tension with [the volunteer in question], and the more he insists on order, high degrees of rationality, and American ways of interacting, the more conflict there will be with him. The poor guy, though: he seems to have come here to try to rationalize things and come up with plans according to good business principles or something of the sort, and no one here seems to want anything to do with his ideas. I know how he feels sometimes, particularly when I try to discuss quality in research or to encourage more planned reflexivity.

We see here, in the very late arrival of the volunteers, that the “seriousness” theme (also sometimes expressed as “responsibility”) applied to the entire group of individuals in Rocinha who worked with or for the NGO. Soon, with the “architect” (who, we learned upon his arrival, was an undergraduate architecture student), who would spend more time talking than working and playing music than thinking about architecture, the question of volunteers' seriousness and the potential adverse effects of imprudent behavior on their part would come under greater scrutiny.

Box 18:
Who is not
serious?

Also in this passage, the conflicts between the Brazilians and foreigners other than Paul begin to come to light. Clearly, as Latour emphatically reminds us, things could

Box 19:
Conflict
between the
Brazilians and
volunteers

have turned out differently, but in fact these conflicts would grow – and their character, particularly regarding business practices, has remained amazingly stable, although new kinds of conflicts have also arisen. Here, too, we see my uncomfortable place: I often understood the foreigners' perspectives better than the Brazilians did and sometimes agreed with the foreigners, but I allied myself more closely with the Brazilian leadership and felt compassion for and a desire to defend them that stemmed from both my methodological perspective and experience with them and in Brazil. This experience with

Brazil exceeded that of most of the volunteers, but not Paul's or Nick's. I would continue to occupy this position, although on some occasions, particular volunteers' perspectives and actions would appear as foreign to me as they were to the Brazilians, particularly when it came to imprudent and unsafe acts at which some other volunteers also marveled. In early June 2006, I was becoming aware of these dynamics, and, over the following several months, they would become abundantly clear and would shape how the institute functioned.

I return to the themes of attempts to impart business plans on the i2i and of the negative consequences of volunteers' actions in Chapter 9: foreigners would often blame the i2i's tendency not to follow conventional rules of business at first on a lack of knowledge and later on character flaws, and the leaders, some volunteers, and I would often do the same regarding other volunteers' undesirable behaviors.

Box 20: Lacking information or exhibiting character flaws?

As per the minutes, in the meeting of July 12, 2006, we determined that Washington would participate in the recruitment process and early contact with volunteers, maintain communication with 2Bros. and report on this communication in meetings, and maintain the computer. With my aid, he would work on the Web site (we ended up doing little of this). Rogério would receive and provide guidance to volunteers and visitors, including the registration of visitors in our new database that one volunteer had built, and he would coordinate classes and related activities. Daniel would remain responsible for paying the bills and would write funding proposals with Viviana, who, in turn, "with a lot of collaboration" from the group, would be responsible for creating the newsletter. Paul would distribute the newsletter and continue to work on producing a proposal for \$20,000

Box 21: Defining actors' roles

for a “virtual exchange” program that in March 2009 has not yet been awarded significant funds. Also “with a lot of collaboration,” I would take the lead in designing the study center/reading room. Additionally, we learned that Viviana had reinstated contact with the American School, located near Rocinha, from which the institute had on other occasions received materials. We hoped they would help us furnish some or all of our four minuscule rooms that were together to serve as classrooms, a reading room, and an office.

Paul left a week later, and I began to spend some of my time accompanying leaders on trips to purchase items for the building: between late June and late August, I went with Rogério to purchase a desk and chair for the architecture student, with Washington to purchase accessories such as a surge protector, and with Daniel to purchase fans and lights, as well as flowers for the American School to show our appreciation for their donation.

The meetings continued to vary in character from chaotic and unproductive to somewhat organized and relatively productive. On July 10, 2006, I wrote, “the weekly meeting was particularly frustrating. Everyone was on edge. . . . I'm really not sure what we were fighting about.” The minutes from that meeting indicate that one leader exclaimed that “we have too many ideas. . . . Someone has to take responsibility for the building.” The four Brazilians, three volunteers, and I attended that meeting, which we held at the preschool. One of the volunteers had very limited Portuguese skills, another was somewhat more comfortable with the language, and the third was quite comfortable with it. Likewise, as mentioned above, in the meeting held on July 31, one frustrated leader, referring to absenteeism, asked, “if we can't take something small seriously, how will we take bigger things seriously?”

On July 17, in contrast, we held the weekly meeting at the home of one of the Brazilian leaders. Only three of the Brazilians, a volunteer with limited Portuguese who had not attended the previous week's meeting, and I attended. I wrote:

There were fewer of us and fewer interruptions. It ran smoothly. We had doubts and disagreements that we worked out in a civil fashion and reasonably quickly. I have noticed that we take forever to make decisions and that they still somehow seem to be rash ones -- we discuss, discuss, discuss without really going anywhere and eventually just give up and settle on something. Today, we seemed not to go over the same points incessantly and we seemed to get to all of the pertinent points. If all of our meetings went this way, they would be more pleasant and productive and we would probably already have proposals to show for them, not to mention actual research towards the reading room and towards improving the organization more generally.

The fits and starts in which we worked on the building, funding proposals, and recruitment of volunteers mirrored this variety in the quality and effectiveness of the meetings. Although in 2006, I desperately wished for us to achieve a more even pace, in 2008 I would recognize that the institute had developed a pattern that over the short term meant the atmosphere at any one time was either exhilarating or frustrating and that over the long run was sufficiently effective, if not a particularly desirable way of conducting the institute's business. In an informal report to my doctoral committee dated August 2, 2006, I synthesized my notes on the meetings and our minutes from them:

As for the meetings, they are extremely frustrating for all involved. We have been managing to have them almost every week, however, which is already better than what they had before I arrived. The meetings are frustrating because they never start on time, which annoys the person who has to leave soon and the teachers, since they have to get ready for class. Worse is the never-ending stream of people: the local leaders and I seem to agree that visitors are not welcome in our meetings, that only people involved in the organization should be involved in the meetings, but this conviction has had no effect on the number of visitors to our meetings. Furthermore, it is not clear whether three-week volunteers should be involved in the meetings. That kind of person has been attending, which is congruent with our democratic attitude, but we have had to hold entire meetings

in which someone had to act as interpreter the entire time. Misunderstandings are common in these not-exactly-bilingual meetings, it takes longer to accomplish anything, and it is not uncommon for the group to break into two groups holding parallel meetings. Some people have expressed the opinion that the teachers should not take part in the meetings regardless of how long they plan to stay. I find that attitude disappointing but an understandable reaction to the low quality of recent meetings, and I may have to bring the question of inclusiveness up more explicitly.

We had started with agendas and always having a leader for each meeting, but over time that ceased. When the meetings are small, they are productive without an agenda or leader; when they are large, I am not sure that an agenda or designated leader would help, but we should probably try. Of course, we would have to know ahead of time if the next meeting would be large, which seems highly unlikely. People seem to decide on the day of the meeting whether they feel like attending. Furthermore, although we have a meeting every Monday at 5:00, every Monday the same question gets asked: “Are we having a meeting this week?” This is something that I fail to comprehend. . . .

The meetings continue to be good in some ways, however: people continue not to appear to feel constrained, although there is one member who seldom expresses an opinion. No topic regarding the IDI is off-limits, which is a mixed blessing. The disruptions (doorbell, telephone, early arrival of students) continue, however. While the preschool was on vacation, we met at the president's house twice, and both of those meetings went quite smoothly with relatively few disruptions, although in both cases, people arrived after the meeting had already begun. We have still managed to avoid discussing things like quality in the research, goals, strengths and weaknesses of us individually and collectively – in short, my research.

The period of June and July 2006 can be summed up by noting the shift from a period of broad concerns regarding the future of the organization during which we paid occasional attention to specific concerns, to a time of great tension during which we turned our attention to the mechanisms of running the institute, while continuing to ask larger questions. In particular, we continued to ask ourselves the fundamental question of whether we could be serious and responsible enough to run the IDI (as we were calling

Box 22: Homing in on specific goals and practices
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it), and relations among the leaders and with the volunteers were tense. Meanwhile, we discussed very specific and practical matters, such as scheduling and announcing classes and deciding what to do with a thirteen-year-old student who was disrupting the children's class but whom we deemed too immature to participate in an adult class, especially given the fact that moving her would put her in a class with her sister.

We were in a period of often intense engagement and group formation. Daniel and Viviana had renewed their involvement in the group. Rogério and Washington were

Box 23: Recurring themes: institutionalization, roles, formation of a community of practice

adjusting to new and expanded responsibilities. With these changes came incipient institutionalization, with formally defined (and frequently ignored) roles, the

increasing consolidation of a core group into a community with shared practices, and questions about the proper roles and behavior of volunteers. These themes were not entirely new in June and July, but they were intensified and became the subject of formal discussions and attempts at decision-making.

Just as we were struggling to form a functional community of practice, we were developing images of the institute. Each of us necessarily experienced and performed a different institute from that of each other person, but some themes were common. For example, the leaders, volunteers, and members of 2Bros. acknowledged that the leaders were

Box 24: Interpreting leaders' inexperience

inexperienced. To some, this fact meant an opportunity to learn and/or the imperative to exercise patience; for others, it meant an opportunity to teach that was not always well received; for yet others, it signaled incompetence. Little did we know that all three of these perspectives would persist for years, if in somewhat altered forms. Of course, few, if any, held the same view consistently: the same person, when frustrated, might

complain about incompetence or a lack of seriousness and when seeking to defend a less-than-ideal decision might remind others of the newness of the situation. In any case, the IDI was beginning to emerge as a boundary object that was a somewhat different object for each of us and that we performed and perpetuated in a variety of manners but that was nonetheless stable and recognizable enough for us to organize around.

Box 25: The IDI
as a boundary
object

Furthermore, after the annual meeting in late May and particularly after the two meetings that followed, the building became part of the institute, something “in here” rather than “out there.”

Learning: June-July 2006

In June and July 2006, we continued to learn primarily on the presentational and propositional levels as we continued to plan, although we began to put what we were learning into practice as we slowly initiated the move to the new building and responded to new challenges by experimenting with possible solutions, such as when we sought to address the challenge posed by the various demands for legitimate and illegitimate access to the building and control over this access. Meanwhile, the teachers continued to try to put various theories into action in order to regain control over the children's class, and this “overtesting” may have reinforced the problem that they were seeking to address. In short, there were many “mini-cycles” within the larger cycle devoted to preparing to occupy the new building. More of these smaller inquiries are described in the following sections.

Foreign Visitors and Volunteers: June-July 2006

Besides the realization that the institute was getting what it had claimed it wanted but did not know what to do with its new-found freedom, it was summer in the Northern Hemisphere, meaning an influx of foreign volunteers and other foreign visitors. The U.S. summer was a chaotic time for the institute, and it came just as calm and stability were sorely needed.

The institute was overrun by short-term visitors who required a great deal of the leadership's attention just as they were attempting to transition to using the new building. Our energies were drained, and I grew increasingly worried that we would never discuss the reading room. To make matters worse, on several occasions, when few of the visitors were present, I had, to no avail, attempted to discuss what the group might consider to be a success or failure of the project, hoping to develop a definition of quality against which we would later be able to judge our work. As noted above, I had also begun to interview adult students based on questions that the group, in one uplifting meeting,⁴⁵ had developed, but I quit doing so when I realized that I was the only participant interviewing others and began to wonder whether we would ever open the reading room: it seemed unethical to take students' time on a topic that appeared to be going nowhere.

Box 26: Formulating research questions

That we were inundated with volunteers and one-day visitors just as we were attempting to learn to work together and to make decisions that we expected to shape the future of the institute served to accentuate the contrasts between “good” and “bad” meetings and activities.

An example of such activities was the preparations for creating funding proposals on which one volunteer, Mario, and I collaborated closely. On July 11, we spent the day frustrated by the frequent interruptions that prevented us from concentrating or producing much. I described the following day as an improvement: “Mario and I managed to be moderately productive.” That day, we produced a draft letter that we then asked Nick to critique, and we also got documentation regarding one funding opportunity printed, copied, and distributed.

On a long walk in late July, a volunteer who held a doctorate in anthropology and I mused about the meaning of the presence (and absence) of volunteers at the institute:

[We] discussed the ways in which the short-term volunteers have helped and hindered the organization: [the architecture student's] visit, which [the volunteer] described as "music tourism" or with a phrase to that effect, was extremely disruptive, and [the architecture student] knew that he was unable to focus, but I do not believe he understood the extent to which his presence made it difficult for others to work. Mario, on the other hand, has been mostly able to focus – focusing isn't exactly the forte of any of us – and his presence has also helped me to focus on fundraising and the materials for potential and future volunteers. [We] wondered where the two long-term volunteers (6 and 18 months) are, since one should have arrived last month and the other one should have arrived in mid-July. Looking at my list, there is a third one who should have arrived in mid-July to stay for 8 months. It doesn't look like we'll be able to have a meeting this week, but next week perhaps I'll ask for everyone to report everything they know about potential, future, and missing volunteers so we can make a list available to everyone.

Two days later, we would meet Greg, who made only a few short visits that winter but who, with the aid of his family, would soon become instrumental to the very existence of the institute and of the reading room through the financial support and books that they provided and collected from others, as well as Greg's continued enthusiasm in participating in the leadership of Two Brothers. Since then, discussions of the disruptions caused by short-term volunteers have included references to Greg as a counter-example;

we have struggled to achieve a balance between the serendipity of such encounters with the desire to achieve order.

In the July 31 meeting, the four Brazilians and I agreed to develop a list of rules of proper behavior for volunteers in order to minimize disruptions and crises, but improper behavior on the part of some of these visitors to Rocinha continues to threaten the organization on occasion.

The “endless stream of volunteers and visitors, few of whom ever plan to stay much more than a month,” as I put it in the August 2, 2006 report, had even led to a

phenomenon that had forced us to pay more attention to the routine business of classes in our meetings: “classes always seem to be full of foreigners.” While it might seem ideal to have one native speaker to work with each student, in fact the presence of so many people was slowing the classes down, and in July Rogério announced that there would be no winter break because the students would need to finish their books by the end of the year so as to be able to pass them on to 2007's beginners. We had all grown frustrated with the children and anxious to have those two weeks off. Indeed, I had begun to seek excuses to avoid classes. I wrote in that report:

Box 27:
Learning hard lessons by doing: too many volunteers in the classroom can be detrimental

I figure there is no real reason for me to join the crowd frequently, and so I stay at the school in another room working on my notes, entertaining visitors (keeping the number in the classroom down), or discussing the organization with one or more of the leaders. Sometimes I stay in our new building instead of going to the school or grab something to eat with someone from the institute while discussing the organization: both to maintain good relations with the various people involved in the institute and to make sure that I get things done, I feel it is important for me to be working during class if I am not in the classroom.

The children's classes have turned into utter free-for-alls. I once attended and announced loudly in English, “I wish they would all sit down and shut up.” I am sure they did not understand what I said, but it worked! Unfortunately, that kind

of thing can wear off quickly. Another time, the teacher sang Michael Jackson's "Beat It" to them as he ushered them out the door. That would be the same teacher who, when he was observing the class before becoming its teacher, said halfway into the class, "they're all still sitting down, almost."

They do not do their homework, but they do run around, throw things, scream, leave the room . . . and these are well-fed kids from relatively stable homes. Two things are obvious: we have no idea how to deal with a room full of children, and the classes should never have been ninety-minute night classes. It is no surprise that those who continue to attend (about half to two-thirds of them) really love English class, though. They range from nine or so years of age to twelve, and almost all make their way home on their own, although some are expected to walk together.

The adult classes seem to be going fine. It is probably a good sign that I do not have too much to say about them. (ellipses in the original)

The children's class in question had had numerous teachers since I had arrived in March, and the children had learned to control each teacher. Most of them had already spent half the day in school before coming to our classes. We were unable to get them to play the traditional role of "good," quiet students or to direct their energy to activities that incorporated English learning. The largely untrained teachers tried both approaches.

As July came to a close, it was looking less and less likely to me that we would ever focus on the reading room, and I expressed despair on the above-mentioned walk:

I said that I don't have much to say in the report: we haven't gotten anywhere near the reading room, and we won't until we get some much more basic problems if not out of the way, then at least more under control. As far as I can tell, my one contribution has been to start having weekly meetings that have gotten people back to thinking about the organization and its tasks in at least a somewhat broader vein than previously. Of course, the fact that the building was purchased since I arrived also has something to do with attention paid to the organization's bigger concerns. I can't feel too good about having managed to get meetings started, since they do not exactly go well, particularly when there are "extra" people, which has been the case with the various volunteers. When it is just the core group, things actually seem to go smoothly: we don't even seem to need an agenda or a leader, everyone comes prepared to discuss what needs to be done and what has been done. . . . But as much as we are thinking about larger concerns

and about things that go beyond the classes, we are not yet at a point to discuss the reading room, and my time is dwindling. . . .

[He] said I was underestimating my role, that I have been essential for providing continuity among the foreigners, as someone who more or less knows who everyone is and what is going on. Perhaps that explains why for a while I was constantly being called to the new building! I have certainly taken on a central role, and I am concerned that some people . . . will cease their involvement once I leave.

I had grown weary of being called to the building, which seemed to happen only when I sat down to write, eat, rest, or nurse my constant cough and headache, never when I had spent too long in conversation with visitors to my hosts or waiting for a soap opera to end so that I might catch the nightly news. The episode that best exemplified these kinds of disruptions early in our occupation of the building occurred on a Sunday evening: tired and sick as usual, I had chosen not to visit with any of the neighbors, as was my custom most nights that we did not have class and many nights after class. I had just gone to bed when one of the volunteers yelled up to my room to ask me if I could provide him dinner. I went downstairs quickly and informed him that I had some peanut butter that I would be glad to share with him but that the two women with whom I lived had a monopoly on actual cooking. He had requested dinner in Portuguese, and I was relieved that the women were at church: had they been home and heard his request, one would have labored to prepare some of their hard-earned food for the poor, hungry American. Embarrassed and hoping not to draw the attention of any of the neighbors, I told him he could have some peanut butter toast or I could stay in the building and watch his download as he grabbed something quick to eat. He returned over an hour later. I temporarily kept my anger to myself, later complaining to the Brazilians and another volunteer. Still, I was glad to have avoided any embarrassment and that the volunteer had

Box 28: Disruptions caused by volunteers

taken advantage of me rather than of my hosts. Such incidents served to increase frustrations with those volunteers whom the leaders, some other volunteers, and I saw as disruptive, whom one leader would frequently simply label as “crazy.” The disruptions had also led me to seek places other than Rocinha to spend my mornings reading and writing, thus depriving me of opportunities to observe events but allowing me the opportunity to reflect (not to mention to avoid the dampness of Rocinha and, later, the noise and dust of the construction).

By the end of the Northern Hemisphere's summer, we were tired and frustrated – but we were also moving into the new building and excited about the possibilities that having our own space would provide the institute. We were using the acronym “IDI” and referring to the organization variously as the “Instituto,” the “Fundação,” and even the “Instituto/Fundação Two Brothers/Dois Irmãos” (or some combination of these four elements), in the words of one of the leaders.

Volunteers: August-December 2006

Throughout the spring semester and the months leading up to it, I vacillated between attempting to draw attention to the reading room project and fretting over the organization's much larger concerns, which had to be addressed if the reading room or any of the IDI's programs were to be successful. Indeed, there were several moments when it seemed that the organization might not survive the transition from being responsible primarily for opening and closing doors for volunteer teachers to running what would amount to a small language school.

Making the transition particularly difficult was the presence of several visitors over the course of 2006 who were a nuisance or even a danger to themselves, each other, and residents. While it is not unusual for outsiders to inquire about and exaggerate the

dangers posed by drug trafficking in Rocinha, we were unprepared to respond to dangerous volunteers. Furthermore, no screening process was in place at either Two Brothers or Dois Irmãos. The institute had taken exchange students at a local university as teachers, but the program had been so successful that the administrators at the university had grown fearful that a student might be harmed in the favela and had severed ties with Two Brothers. In so doing, they left Two Brothers to accept volunteers who had located the organization on the Web. With no screening process and desperate to provide volunteers to Dois Irmãos, Two Brothers unwittingly endangered the work of Dois Irmãos.

One day in late August, I visited Daniel at his home. We were watching television or otherwise being idle, and I began writing. I produced a list of challenges that I believed the institute faced. Paraphrasing, these were:

1. Leaders' (including my) gossiping but not sharing information with the entire leadership,
2. A lack of "background checks" of potential volunteers,
3. Receiving volunteers without being given the option to refuse them and not knowing in advance who would be coming to volunteer,
4. Volunteers' "lack of seriousness": "Rocinha=adventure, party land," and
5. Regarding volunteers who were seeking sponsorship for visas and the like: "potential legal problems: Viviana understandably doesn't want to sign documents for people she doesn't know or for people whom she believes to have behaved inappropriately in the past."

I then struck up a conversation with Daniel:

I just shared the above list with Daniel and he agreed that these are problems for the IDI. He said that we need to sit down and discuss behavior, that the IDI could disappear in two ways: going under . . . or because of an incident like [one that had recently occurred with a volunteer]. He said that we need to “show we are serious” not only to people outside of Rocinha (who provide funds, other donations, and labor), but also to people in Rocinha: if our volunteers act inappropriately, people will associate them with the people who live here and are involved in the institute (“We’re the ones who get screwed.”) Not to mention that if people see our work as lacking seriousness, we will soon lack students and users.

Daniel is particularly attuned to the consequences of individuals’ actions and to the risks of unacceptable behavior in the context of places like Rocinha. When volunteers’ actions set off crises at the institute, he often calls attention to the fact that, if the outsiders are not physically harmed, the consequences of their actions accrue more to the “natives” who must stay behind, while the volunteers return home to the lives they once led.

Box 29: Fearing negative consequences of others’ actions

One of the volunteers that were present at the institute in 2006 likewise worried about the consequences of volunteers’ actions. In my notes, I paraphrased a conversation we held in late August in which s/he complained about another volunteer who “does things like list off the names of drug traffickers in public. [S/he] may pose a safety hazard.” We talked about the possibility that someone might confuse one volunteer with another and retaliate against the wrong person “or that the reputation of the IDI will be tainted, affecting the leadership, who can’t just choose to leave, as well as the other volunteers.”

Convinced that if I continued to focus on creating a reading room, I would either have no dissertation to write or have to write about a failure even to begin to plan said reading room, I momentarily planned to focus instead on a topic that was equally interesting to me: information

Box 30: Information for and about volunteers

exchange (and lack thereof) with potential and future volunteers. Volunteers frequently complained that they had been ill informed or even misled, while the leadership complained that they did not know enough about volunteers before they arrived. The IDI and Two Bros. seemed to need to improve their provision of information to, and gathering of information about, volunteers in order to reduce the risks posed by some volunteers and to increase all volunteers' satisfaction and efficacy.⁴⁶

In many informal discussions as well as some formal meetings, teachers, leaders, and I agreed that improving communication and information might improve decision making on the part of the institute and also improve knowledge on the part of potential volunteers. Two Brothers was not learning enough about potential volunteers before telling Dois Irmãos that the volunteers would be arriving, volunteers were not satisfied with the information provided on the Web site and (with some exceptions, most notably that of the volunteer who admitted to having performed a “background check” on Sneed before agreeing to volunteer) seldom sought out information on their own, and the i2i lacked decision-making power and experience. Furthermore, the quality of communication between the two organizations left much to be desired. Besides being skeptical about the likelihood of our ever building a reading room, I believed that improving access to information by and about potential volunteers was considerably more urgent than setting up a reading room under the circumstances at the time. Thus, when I applied for additional funding and an extension of my human subjects approval, I emphasized the work I might do with volunteers to improve the Web site and perhaps create a “volunteers' corner” in any reading room that we might eventually create.

I did so only to realize that I was in control of almost nothing, including my research questions. We did not have permission to edit 2bros.org, an individual in Brazil

who had promised to redesign the site had not done so, and the Web site was not a high enough priority to sustain interest in meetings. Furthermore, if the institute was overstretched, this was doubly the case for Two Brothers, which relied solely on the labor of a handful of otherwise occupied university professors, staff members, and students. Meanwhile, I was spending my time putting out fires, filling out paperwork, and attempting in vain to extend my visa. The months flew by, and we accomplished little towards the goal of improving information for or about potential volunteers. By the end of the semester, I felt like a failure and wondered how I would ever cobble together a conference paper, let alone an entire dissertation.

Finding Support for the Institute's Work, June-November 2006

The IDI's work and patience with the hordes of visitors had not been entirely in vain: although throughout my time with the institute, far more people expressed enthusiasm about becoming involved in the institute than actually contributed to it, we had between May and August not only the presence of several teachers, but also that of an architecture student who suggested the building should be torn down and rebuilt and that of Greg Scruggs, whose family would donate books and raise funds.

The architecture student's suggestion was unrealistic not only because we needed to occupy the building, but also because it would be impossible to get a wrecker into the area and nearly impossible to take down one structure without taking its neighbors with it unless the work were performed by hand. Nonetheless, his suggestion helped us to focus on the severity of the building's structural problems and to imagine our "ideal building." We were therefore better prepared than we might otherwise have been when a few months later, another architecture student who was willing to work with our structure as it was approached us.

Greg paid us a short visit during one of our meetings and later grew to be one of the Instituto Dois Irmãos' greatest allies. Not only did his mother, Renée, raise funds as he had promised, but she also did so in a timely fashion, and the Scruggs family has since contributed in several ways to the organization's welfare. Greg's participation in both organizations has continued to grow in the nearly three years since he was first invited to one of the i2i's weekly meetings.

In short, one of our questions was how to achieve the support we needed, financially, in the form of in-kind donations, and in terms of teaching expertise and long-term volunteers. While we continued to struggle with having a sufficient number of volunteers with knowledge of teaching English, during 2006 we began to find ways in which to fund the institute and to acquire materials for the reading room.

Moving In: August-September 2006

Crises and Challenges

After the annual meeting, our next apparent crisis would have to do with access to the building. We were faced with the competing interests of having enough keys in circulation to allow for legitimate access to the building during a time when no one yet held office hours and classes had not yet been moved to the building and of controlling the number of keys in order to be able to hold people responsible should anything go missing or otherwise wrong there.

On June 23, Washington and I needed to enter the building. In a meeting, we had devised a plan by which the family of one of the leaders who lived on the alley would hold a set of keys for use under such circumstances. The custom in Rocinha, where doorbells are rare, is to yell for people. We yelled up, expecting for someone to emerge

from a window and drop us the keys, but no one responded. We learned from a neighbor that one of the volunteers had taken a set home with him, a twenty-minute walk up a steep hill. We called him and met him most of the way to his home, and he was visibly annoyed that we had insisted on retrieving the keys and had not arrived immediately at the agreed-upon location, which was a shorter, downhill walk for him. All three of the leaders with whom I had spoken about the key situation were already unhappy with the idea of having a set of keys left at the house up the hill that several volunteers shared. Confusion regarding keys persisted until months after we had begun occupying the building on a more regular schedule and seems to have faded since early 2007. The question implicitly raised by this minor fiasco was who, if anyone, should be considered far enough inside the institute's inner circle to be provided full, unsupervised access to the building. As leaders noted, this was a matter of trust and accountability, but also of convenience, as can be seen in the practice of leaving keys with not only the family of one of the leaders, but eventually also with that of another leader and with the family who hosted me.

Indeed, most of our crises and questions involved the building, directly or indirectly. For example, since we had a space of our own that we could use at any hour and new financial responsibilities, we felt the need for more volunteers during the academic year. Thus, we increased our discussions of how to find volunteers, and one of them placed advertisements on the Internet to attract attention. Later, these advertisements would play a part in the arrival of many volunteers that were never subjected to any kind of vetting process: the pressure to “fill” the building with classes was the beginning of a chain of events that ended in the arrival of volunteers who had not been vetted or contacted via familiar channels.

Also with the new building, we were faced with many challenges that leaders of larger and better-established institutions rarely face; for example, we had almost no funds, and because the building was unfurnished, we could not begin classes there: we did not know how many chairs we would have, nor did we have lights, fans, or blackboards. Furthermore, because some of our former students had not returned their books, we did not have enough textbooks to begin registration. In retrospect, the minutes from the July 3, 2006 meeting are amusing, but the situation was frustrating at the time and demonstrates particularly well the tension between needing to make a decision or otherwise take action, on one hand, and the insufficient knowledge with which we believed ourselves to be contending and the tendency to discuss concerns at length before acting, on the other:

Box 31: Working with insufficient information
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Should we get the word out now or wait a while? Beth: we do not have time to wait. Daniel: we need to know how many chairs we will have. Rogério: we need to know how many volunteers we will have. It was decided that we must begin to make casual mention [of the classes] to potential students.

The building occupied our thoughts and time in other ways. In June and July, the architecture student's suggestion that we knock it down and start over may have been ridiculed by locals who found the idea of arriving in the alley with a wrecker and destroying numerous other structures in the process to be a greatly amusing image and one that underscored how little many foreign volunteers understood about the setting, even when they had presumably been trained to understand the effects their proposed causes would have. But the suggestion, and the architecture student's presence more broadly, made the lasting contribution of helping us to focus on what our ideal building would contain and offer. We even dared to dream about the next building, the one we

would acquire in perhaps five or ten years, after outgrowing this one, and many of the elements of that dream were included in the renovations of 2006-2008.

In short, the building, as a combination of what already existed physically and what we imagined for that site or the next one we might acquire, was the boundary object

Box 32:
Reconceptualizing
the Instituto Dois
Irmãos

and literal structure around which we organized ourselves as we began to treat the institute as a combination of a group of people and a place, whereas the institute had previously been a different

and much looser combination of people without a place of their own.

We thus began to concern ourselves with the safety and integrity of the building, particularly the stairs and an interior wall that was always wet from a leak, and to prepare and paint the bottom floor, which we planned to use for classrooms. We wondered about equipment: should the office be downstairs in one of the classrooms for the sake of convenience, or should it be upstairs, despite the exterior access, for security, especially regarding the computer? Finally, what should we do about the exterior? Graffiti is quite common in Rocinha, and we worried that any improvements to the façade might invite vandalism. We therefore settled on using graffiti ourselves, which might encourage potential vandals to go elsewhere with their spray paint. There were, in fact, myriad details to work out, and each one was potentially cause for heated discussion.

On August 7, I headed off to my Monday morning swimming practice after a weekend of fretting over whether we would be able to occupy the building and thinking about the July 31 meeting, in which we had discussed whether we should rent out the second floor after all, since we were ill-equipped to use it. By the time practice finished at 11:00, our fortunes had changed. I wrote:

When I got out of the shower, I saw that I had missed a call from the [pre]school: the American School had sent the 'seven' chairs they had promised: the seven had turned into twenty, and there are some books, message boards, and didactic posters. We are in business!

Box 33: The first large donation of materials

While in the previous week's meeting, we had focused largely on the theme of “responsibility” (a word that, in our parlance, was nearly synonymous with “seriousness”), the meeting we held on the day we received the donation from the American School was focused on reporting (e.g., one volunteer was leaving “tomorrow or Wednesday: his ticket is with Varig, which is failing,” another had left, and a third was about to depart as well), posing questions for the group to consider (e.g., one of the leaders asked whether volunteers should be given access to the telephone and Internet connection at the building), and on making small decisions. The number of practical questions, small and large, would continue to grow, as would the number of decisions. Simultaneously, the number of acts that resulted in the perpetrators' being labeled “irresponsible” or “not serious” increased. In particular, we had begun to receive invitations to conferences and training sessions to which one or more of us would commit ourselves (not always willingly) and which no one would attend.

Adding to the tension was the fact that the police presence and drug violence in and between Rocinha and neighboring Vidigal had increased dramatically, and rumors that Rocinha would experience a large invasion by either the authorities or a rival drug gang flew daily. While I had been told when I had arrived in March that Rocinha was no longer the calm place it had been in 1999 when I had first visited it and while I had already witnessed enough in 2006 to agree, by August the atmosphere had grown heavy enough that I was no longer willing to return to Rocinha at night out of fear that I might inadvertently walk into the middle of a conflict upon turning onto the street that runs

along the sewer or even onto our alley. Likewise, I was wary of walking back to the alley late at night without a neighbor. If one is nearby when a conflict begins, one is able to observe the warning signs, usually including fireworks; someone arriving on a bus has to rely on whether the streets are overly quiet, which can be deceptive in the cold or rain or late at night, and occasionally a conflict will occur near the institute without being evident from some of the other places in Rocinha where we spent our time. Certainly, being with a neighbor did not guarantee that I would not walk into a dangerous situation, but I trusted that they were better than I at judging any unexpected situation we might encounter.

I was therefore glad to be able to leave the tensions behind for three days to attend a book fair. On the bus ride back to Rio, I received a message from Greg, telling me that his mother was interested in conducting a fundraising campaign for the institute and requesting a budget. That week, we also received word that a former volunteer would donate some \$330 that we would use for fans, lights, and paint. The excitement of news of this kind, fear of an invasion, and frustration with the perceived lack of seriousness would mark the following month and, to a great extent, the years since.

We planned on starting the adult classes in the new building now that we had chairs, but in fact they were not moved until September, after former students had returned enough books and we had installed lights and fans. The classes were held on the first floor, and although we had agreed to put the office on the second floor, it, too, remained on the first floor. Each space was only a few feet long and a few feet wide, providing very little room to move and keeping the classes to fewer than a dozen students.

San Diego State University, where Paul was teaching at the time, had lent us a MiniMac computer, complementing the materials from the American School. Thus, in the second semester of 2006, the Instituto Dois Irmãos began to function in its own space, although the place was deemed as yet unfit for the children, and their classes continued to be offered two nights a week at the preschool.

That we had almost no funds of course intensified the difficulty we encountered in trying to make the institute grow and become more stable. Two facts increased our anxiety regarding funding: what little we had was under the control of Paul in the United States, and we lacked adequate information about the amount of available funds and their purposes, making planning to purchase anything extremely difficult and making any budget uncomfortably tentative. Indeed, “tentative” describes the IDI during 2006 quite well. In Chapter 9, I return to the theme of a lack of information on the part of the i2i regarding 2Bros.

Box 34: Lacking adequate information

On August 28, Daniel and I spent nearly six hours shopping for fans, lights, and flowers, only to have another leader tell us later that we had purchased the wrong items. Someone else remedied the situation, but not before the tension within the group grew yet more.

Again, although PAR is participant-led, outsider researchers can in some studies be considered participants themselves. Furthermore, at the i2i, volunteers were expected to participate in the growth and shaping of the organization. Thus, as both a researcher concerned about the success of the research and inclusion of stakeholders and as a volunteer with allegiance to the institute, I continued to worry about the integrity of the group and to voice these concerns to one leader: would key individuals leave? That leader responded by opining that this fear was precisely what allowed some leaders to neglect to

do as they had promised or to neglect to act as was expected of them, i.e., this fear allowed some leaders to lack seriousness or to be irresponsible.

One Volunteer's Perspective: August 2006

On August 21, I was feeling guilty about not conducting interviews with the volunteers. When I won a bet with an outgoing volunteer who had claimed he would quit smoking, he owed me dinner outside of Rocinha. We thus experienced the unusual: a place where we could hear each other well and not be interrupted or overheard by other volunteers or leaders. We took advantage of the situation to conduct an informal, unstructured interview. Besides our personal plans and schemes to return to Rocinha often, we focused on the same three topics that took up the bulk of our time at the institute: the children's classes, volunteers, and the organization as a whole.

Regarding the children's classes, which, as noted earlier, were chaotic and involved very little English learning, he described the thirteen-year-old as a ringleader. He and the other volunteers had discussed her case, but no one had known what to do with her. He also said that the turnover in teachers was partly to blame for the chaotic nature of the class, suggesting that we might avoid the phenomenon with the new class that had just entered. Equally frustrating for him had been the presence of a large number of volunteers, a topic that I wrote later was a "recurring concern in my conversations with others." Here, too, he expected the situation to improve because we would have only two long-term teaching volunteers and the large group of visitors had left. (Later we learned that there would be a third teacher.) Short-term volunteers had been visiting classes and disrupting his plans to the extent that he had eventually asked one large group to stop attending his class and noted in our conversation that winter break had been canceled in order to make up for the disruptions.

Over the short term, then, the volunteer expected things to improve as the number of volunteers waned and as we became better able to provide continuity to the students. When the conversation turned to the organization as a whole, it also turned to the long term. The volunteer had had the opportunity to visit with two larger, long-established NGOs in Rio:

His eyes lit up at the thought that the IDI could get organized enough to be an organization of the same caliber. That kind of growth is something about which we all seem to dream, in one way or another, and organization, transparency, and appropriate experience seem to be what we need to gain for it to happen – but we don't seem quite to do what it takes for that kind of growth to occur.

After all, we continued to question our own “seriousness” and ability or willingness to act “responsibly,” and the IDI had no processes for such activities as vetting volunteers or instructing them regarding proper and improper behavior. In short, the IDI appeared fragile and insufficiently agile.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB)

On August 30, I lost IRB approval as I waited for my annual renewal request to be processed. Residing far from Austin, having very little access to the Internet, and waiting long periods to receive responses from key individuals, I feared that, since the renewal had not been granted in time and I had been told the study had been canceled, I might need to submit a new study. Furthermore, we were experiencing our most serious volunteer-caused crisis, and a bullet had hit the preschool where we were still giving our children's classes while the preschool was in session: my presence as a long-term volunteer would likely be helpful to the new volunteers, not all of whom had honored my many requests to sign consent forms and were therefore not actually participants and, as far as the IRB was concerned, I therefore had no obligation to their safety. I was told by

the IRB to cease all research activities unless harm would come to participants if I did so. Under the circumstances, it was far from clear whether the IRB would interpret my remaining in Rocinha to advise (near-) participants as breaking or honoring its rule, but I knew that observing anything in Rocinha would constitute research activity, and so I left for several days, informing the Brazilian leaders and one of the volunteers that I could be reached by telephone if they needed me for reasons of safety.

During the time in which I did not have IRB approval, I had social plans one evening with one of the leaders and his girlfriend that I could not cancel. I insisted that any conversation about the institute have to do with safety. I also met with the long-term volunteer who had been put most directly in danger as a result of a short-term volunteer's actions, along with a former Peace Corps manager whom we asked to counsel the threatened volunteer.

I returned to Rocinha on Tuesday, September 5 for a meeting in which we would discuss the crisis caused by a volunteer. Having been unable to check the status of my IRB application, I requested that we not discuss the reading room (which, I wrote, "Daniel and Washington pointed out would not be difficult, since we never seem to do so") and said that I would consider myself to have attended the meeting as a volunteer (a tactic that one of my committee members had suggested) if my IRB approval had not yet come through. Later in the day, I succeeded at getting online and saw that my approval had been granted.

The leaders had already begun to grumble about the IRB and my insistence on following its rules. That the IRB was harming my relationship with participants and had halted a study designed to provide direct benefit to participants while usually being unresponsive to the e-mail messages that I sent on the infrequent occasions that I had any

access to the Internet had already left me extremely frustrated, too. I had had to explain that I could be audited and to insist that I would not fabricate dates. During the time in which I lost IRB approval, they were patient with me, perhaps because I agreed to discuss the crisis, perhaps because they could see I was distraught, having no idea how long the approval process would take or whether I would have to submit a new proposal now that my study had been canceled.

From Crisis to Stability

With the crisis, the group's attention turned sharply to the volunteers, for whom we had already been discussing the importance of having rules and a vetting process. With the actions of one volunteer in late August and the difficulty that another volunteer and one leader encountered in responding to one volunteer's sudden, unexpected change in behavior, discussions also turned to how the response to this change might have been more adequate.

The morning following the meeting about the crisis, I wrote, “I don't think all of the volunteers have a sense of the seriousness of their situations and of the trouble that they can cause for residents – people who can't leave.” One of the leaders and I had both brought this point up in the emergency meeting, but we devised no effective means for changing this reality.

Box 35: A lack of information or a lack of comprehension?

August and early September were primarily a period of “putting out fires” during which our regular activities were interrupted by the threat of violence and by imprudent acts committed by volunteers. In late August and early September, we also saw the departure of several volunteers and the arrival of a new, smaller cohort of teachers, who would usually number three during the following months, whereas the turnover and presence of short-term visitors had made it nearly impossible even to count the volunteers

in early August. Our larger community of leaders and volunteers was changing in character, and we had yet to develop and test adequate practices, particularly where monitoring and responding to the behavior of the longer-established of two children's classes and of volunteers was concerned.

Nonetheless, we were acting and calling attention to our work, even receiving invitations to conferences and workshops of which we did not take full advantage. Furthermore, we were gaining the material means through which we might move from a vaguely defined group with more explicit responsibilities than defined practices to one with more adequate practices. As it turned out, gaining that definition and developing or refining those practices would be far from easy and even in February 2008, when I last left Rocinha, how the i2i's leaders should act remained in some doubt, particularly regarding the behavior of volunteers.

Late September was relatively uneventful, with two important incidents and the receipt of good news:

- For the September 21 meeting, I had written up an agenda with another leader because we had had a fruitful discussion and I did not want to neglect to mention any points that had come up in that conversation. A third leader approached me to tell me not to hold such pre-meeting planning sessions, further intensifying the feeling that that individual was attempting to control the group.
- That same day, one of the volunteers entered a rival favela after we had explicitly told her to stay away from there. The four Brazilians and I had decided that for our weekly meetings, we would meet without the teachers for approximately forty-five minutes and then the teachers would be encouraged to attend for approximately fifteen minutes so that we might brief them on our meeting and in

order to provide them an opportunity to participate in the institute's decisions. We had instituted this policy because the larger meetings had been unsuccessful, but the volunteer who had entered the rival favela had taken to asking us, whenever she saw two or more of us together, whether we had held a meeting. The September 28 meeting was, in fact, one of the very few meetings in which we discussed anything that we wished not to share openly with volunteers. When we eventually relented and invited the volunteers to attend the executive meetings, she arrived late.

- On September 22, I received news from Greg: more than \$4,000 had been donated to our cause, meaning we would be able to begin renovations. Also on September 22, I purchased 2irmaos.org so we could have a site of our own because we had experienced difficulty in getting changes made to the Two Brothers Foundation's site and because we wanted one that could be updated more quickly and from Rocinha. The new site was developed only in 2009 and has yet to be tested for usability or accessibility.

With this relative calm, and having moved into the building, Daniel and I were able to focus more of our time and energy on the reading room.

The Reading Room: June-September 2006

Throughout the second half of 2006, we worked on preparing for the reading room in fits and starts and accomplished much more than I could perceive from within the daily struggles of the institute and life in Rocinha more generally. We periodically talked about the purposes of the reading room, and we chose software for creating a very basic catalog and then began creating records.

From the beginning of my time in Rocinha, I had managed to engage leaders and a few students in conversation about the potential audiences and purposes of the reading room. This subject was the motive for a great deal of disagreement. One leader, who works with children, focused almost exclusively on the children, leading me to “defend” our teenagers' and adults' interests. Another leader, who has a close relative who is in high school, saw the reading room as a place for school-related research and focused on access to the Internet and computer resources. The two adult students whom I formally interviewed stressed the reading room's potential for supplementing their language classes.

Box 36:
Thinking about
the reading
room's users and
purposes

Even before the move to the new building, we asked ourselves whether we should focus on serving our students or serving the wider community in Rocinha. The suggestion of offering adult literacy courses was introduced at this time, as was the possibility of offering story hour, as had been done on weekends at the preschool for a period. I was asked by an individual in the United States to lead story hour and responded that I would be happy to work with someone to provide this service but that I would not take the task on alone: I am uncomfortable working alone with children, particularly with large groups of them; I did not expect to stay much longer; and I wanted someone else to take responsibility for the space with me. We never resumed story hour, and the adult literacy courses have yet to be implemented – in fact, many more ideas have been discussed in depth at the i2i than have been pursued.

While completing my coursework, I had discovered that Brazilian law requires that a library be run by a librarian and that librarians hold undergraduate degrees in librarianship; since my degree was at the graduate level, I was not eligible to run the i2i's library, and even before I left for Rio, I had begun to refer to the space and collection as a

“reading room.” Despite our requests to change the term used to describe the project, Two Brothers' Web site continued to refer to it as a “community library and activities center,” an early indication of the disconnect between the i2i and its U.S. counterpart.

Although I was concerned about the legality of our work because of the above-mentioned law, I was encouraged by an employee of the Rio Office of the Library of Congress to contact the Conselho Federal de Biblioteconomia (CFB), the professional organization to which Brazilian librarians are required to belong. I was invited to speak about my work at the August 3, 2006 meeting of the regional organization (the Conselho Regional de Biblioteconomia of Rio de Janeiro, CRB-7). Before making the presentation, I had discussed with the institute's leaders the fact that I would necessarily call attention to our status, since the librarians in the room would know that, under Brazilian law, I was not authorized to practice our profession. The leaders had urged me to make the presentation despite the potential consequences. In fact, I was pleased with the enthusiasm that I encountered among the audience and organizers of the event, as well as among the other members of the panel. I agreed to write an article for their newsletter and was told I would receive instructions via e-mail.

Box 37:
Presenting the
research to
Brazilian
librarians

During the presentation, I had admitted that we did not have so much as chairs or much more than a handful of books with which to work. Four days later, the materials from the American School arrived. We had also, in the previous week, received a “pile of didactic books,” as they were described in the minutes from the August 7 meeting, from a professor whom I had met at a conference for English teachers, as well as a refrigerator, small table, two chairs, a coffee maker, some dishes, and a few books from a volunteer who was leaving.

Meanwhile, I had come to realize that I had little power to make decisions, which I contrasted with my earlier fear of unduly influencing decisions. On August 25, I wrote:

Box 38:
Evaluating the first donation of materials for the reading

“the idea that anyone except Paul could come from the States and 'make them do something' now appears ludicrous, although I was once concerned that I would push my own agenda through, unwittingly or otherwise.” Nonetheless, on August 23, just over

two weeks after we received the donation from the American school, I had examined the materials that they and others had donated and made an informal, preliminary assessment:

I went through the donations to get a preliminary idea of what was there – a lot of copies of the same books, some old magazines, portions of a newspaper dictionary, some priceless 1965 Chicago Fire Department and Police Department posters for which we might find some kind of use, some didactic materials (some English, some less useful, such as chemistry), and a fair amount of literature for all age groups in both English and Portuguese. [One of the leaders] had told me that we should keep everything anyone gives us – there is plenty of evidence to back up my hypothesis that such a course of action would be unwise.

Box 39: The disadvantages of collecting materials indiscriminately

We were not off to the best of starts with the reading room, but we had begun to amass evidence regarding the trade-offs involved in collecting indiscriminately.

With the chairs and blackboards from the American School came several hundred books, as well as posters and other didactic materials. The books were largely Brazilian

Box 40: From expecting to plan to expecting to work with whatever we had

literature that had been used by classes, and most volumes were falling apart, although none, except for an incomplete dictionary that appeared to have been acquired in

installments with a newspaper or magazine, appeared to be missing any pages. Although

I had originally hoped to start by planning and then begin to collect materials, with this donation, we had enough books to begin thinking about opening the reading room.

Introducing LibraryThing: September 2006

September 2006 was a month of much work on the reading room. We needed to choose software and to decide on which donated materials to keep. We also needed to acquire bookshelves if we were to open a reading room. On September 7, I identified LibraryThing (<http://www.librarything.com/>) as one option for creating records for the institute's reading room materials and textbooks. I wrote:

Daniel and I used it to input 26 references. I am not entirely convinced: there appears to be no way to add fields, and the ability to make global changes is limited, but these things tend to be improved over time, and with nearly 50,000 users, it is not likely to go away. The price is right, too: free for the first 200 volumes, \$10 per year or \$25 for life after that. . . .

I wouldn't want my person[al] library to be online, but I think in the case of the IDI, it could be good advertising and help people who wish to donate books to have an idea of what we have and do not have. As for lending books, we might add "lent out" in the comments section and keep our user/book list separately to increase protection of privacy. I am sure that over time the thing will improve in functionality, and people with large personal collections tend to like to keep lists of lent-out materials, so it shouldn't take long for that field to become available.

More worrisome is the fact that it appears to be a books-only database: no journal articles, no CDs, etc.

It will pull from the Library of Congress' catalog and Amazon's list of books, but it doesn't seem to look through other users' collections for citations to make cataloging easier. Maybe it does and I just haven't seen it; Daniel did most of the inputting.

We will have to sit down and discuss what field we must have, which ones we can use the "comments" section for, and generally whether the software is adequate. I believe it is a good start and adequate for our needs at this point. Add the fact that it is likely to improve, and I am slightly in favor of using it. I would still need to

work with it for a while longer before I could become enthusiastic. The reduced number of global operations worries me.

That the catalog should be electronic and not paper-based was never questioned until later, when the i2i's computer resources became insufficient to sustain the solution we had devised.

Once I had experimented with LibraryThing and shown him a few basic functions, I passed the responsibility of creating records to Daniel and the others, and I was sure to be available to answer questions. At first, I verified the records as well,

Box 41:
Learning by
doing: Daniel
catalogs

checking their unique numbers (written inside the volumes) and categories, giving each record a cursory glance. As Daniel, through his practice, came to recognize that the job is not always as easy as it seems and that we were sometimes unable to produce a record that was much better than adequate, his interest grew yet more. He took a “user-centered approach” from the beginning and would worry about subjects such as how to create a LibraryThing record for a book that held between its covers three unrelated novels by three different authors so that our users might easily locate the novel that they wanted. With greater knowledge of the processes and challenges involved in making a book available to users, Daniel, who had expressed a fondness for the libraries of his youth but was not a patron of any library in 2006, gained not only greater interest in libraries, but, more fundamentally, an appreciation for the work of librarians and the roles that a library can play. Perhaps when it is time for him to move on from the i2i, he will consider working in the field of librarianship; if he chooses to do so, he will be well (and even uniquely) prepared for any such studies that he might undertake.

In December 2008, LibraryThing had more than ten times the members it had in September 2006. Unfortunately for the i2i, improvements in functionality have focused

on linking various members' libraries. The i2i uses the “comments” section and a separate program for those needs that are not met by LibraryThing, and one donor recently used the online catalog to determine which books to send from the United States and which she should donate to another cause, saving on postage for her and work for Daniel. While we are now pleased with LibraryThing, again, things could have turned out differently, and, both in the spirit of participation and because of my concerns regarding functionality, I sought to discuss the decision in a meeting before proceeding with the creation of records. Daniel, anxious as he was to complete the work and fascinated by some of the volumes, nearly thwarted my efforts through his enthusiasm. On September 12, I wrote:

He seems to have the patience and attention to detail to do at least a decent job of it. He appears to be in a hurry to get the stuff in the machine, and so I had better bring up our system requirements in a meeting soon, just in case we decide against this software. I'm sure he wouldn't be happy to see all his work go to waste!

When it became apparent that the other leaders would not learn to use the system with the same enthusiasm and skill, I began to worry that the reading room would become a “one-man show.” Although the others were all readers, they took much longer to gain interest in the reading room, leaving the two of us to prepare the materials almost by ourselves, but as the bookcases arrived, and the books made their way onto the shelves, the other leaders' enthusiasm grew.

On September 14, I asked that all of the leaders learn to use LibraryThing and express any doubts they might have about the program as soon as possible, so that if we needed to look for a substitute, we could do so before Daniel did much more work. Many decisions at the institute are made in this manner: someone chooses to do something and announces the fact after having already begun. Sometimes it is easy to reverse course; in

other cases, it is not. This tendency is variously viewed as irresponsible acting on a whim or necessary agility and has led to much tension and occasional opportunities. In other cases, individuals have announced that they would do something and then have not done as they said, raising questions about seriousness and responsibility. Indeed, each of us was guilty of making decisions for the group in each of these ways.

Moving from What and If to How: September 2006

On September 16, I was no longer worried about whether we would have a reading room; instead, I wondered about the adequacy and appropriateness of our collections: “I think we’ll have plenty of books: the question is whether we’ll have the right ones. Reference books – sufficiently new and complete ones at least – seem unlikely to be donated to us unless we request specific volumes.” Incomplete reference books were on my mind because we had received a dictionary that had come in installments, presumably with a newspaper or magazine, and was incomplete. One of the leaders had argued that we should keep everything, including the incomplete dictionary, leading to ridicule by other leaders and fueling the accusation that that leader was seeking to control everything the group did.

On September 20, our luck continued to appear to be improving: I was introduced to the U.S. attaché in Brasília for English-language programs and promised a substantial number of State Department materials for teaching English and introducing U.S. culture. She also encouraged us to make copies for our students, noting that it was to our advantage and to that of the U.S. government that such copies were legal to make. The attaché had been visiting similar projects and shared some observations on programs that appeared to be functioning well. When I brought up the subject of accepting State Department books with the Brazilian leaders, they agreed that our students would be

sophisticated enough not to take any propaganda on face value and that the materials would be quite welcome. I was, indeed, excited at the prospect of acquiring accessible texts and textbooks. Unfortunately, the attaché's job was eliminated shortly thereafter, and although I attempted through two channels to acquire the books, I was unsuccessful.

Also on September 20, I shared pizza with the three teachers and Rogério. There:

I asked Rogério if he'd had a chance to catalog any books, and he said that he didn't know where to look. I explained where the link could be found and told him I'd try to show it to him today, but that I'd be going to the Federal Police. He said he wants to get all of the books cataloged and then begin to "peneirar," to sift through them, and to begin to ask our students about the books. I said that that was my idea – we could drop some sort of sample of books on a table and talk about them. He also said we should observe who uses what and ask people about the books they look at. We'll have to discuss privacy concerns, but this is clearly the main methodological thrust of the research now that we have a bunch of materials, and I told him that what he was suggesting was exactly where I was hoping we would go – he high-fived me. I think everyone in the leadership is devoted to the idea of seeing the reading room become available.

Devotion to an idea, of course, does not always translate easily into work towards achieving a goal, and Daniel and I would try a number of tactics to get the other leaders to learn to use LibraryThing: we believed it was necessary for all leaders take ownership of the project, and we worried that if Daniel were to become unavailable, whether because he found a job, needed to take a sick day, or for some other reason, once I left, there would be no one else to create records or, eventually, to check out books. Furthermore, I wondered if one or more of the leaders would find something in LibraryThing that would make our use of it untenable, and I wanted to abandon the software as soon as possible if we were going to cease using it at all, before Daniel did much more work and in order to avoid getting stuck using software that was inadequate for our needs.

That night, I also spoke with the teachers about the reading room. I wrote, “[One] said he would staff it and is excited about having such a space, [another] hasn't said much, and [a third] just seems confused.” The third teacher appeared to lack communication skills, had already committed several strange acts, worried us, and would indeed later endanger the group; the second was quiet that evening but would soon grow to be quite engaged in all aspects of the institute's work. I would come to have a personal relationship with the second, but not the third, and I had already helped the first volunteer through a crisis the previous week. On our way to the pizza parlor, the first volunteer and I talked:

I explained to [him] that the best we can do for now is to take the tiny front room for the reading room but that eventually it would be nice to have the bottom floor (once the building has a third floor), he was horrified at how little space the reading room would have, and we discussed the possibility of letting readers use the classrooms when classes aren't in session. I told him about the medium-term plan of building a third floor and the long-term plan of moving into a larger building, one that might hold a larger reading room, an office, storage space, and some four to six classrooms (each on the small end of the normal range of classroom sizes, I suggested), plus have a useful roof. The specifics seem to vary from person to person, but this generally seems to be the shared vision of the size the IDI should reach, physically, and that those classrooms should be in constant use.

Another advantage of LibraryThing was that it would allow us to create our own categories for materials, which was essential, since we were planning to use a very simple schema and not rely on any elaborate established classification system. One might argue, however, that the classification system that the i2i currently uses is, if not of a granularity used by libraries, certainly largely familiar to bibliophiles, teachers, and librarians. Materials are broken down by language, formats are distinguished, and the following categories are in use: three levels of children's to young adult literature, adult literature, non-fiction,

Box 42: Classifying materials for the i2i's users in particular

reference, didactic materials, games (encompassing both actual games and books such as those in the *Where's Waldo?* series), and comics. The categories do not have the character of exciting innovation, but they seem to be adequate for the i2i's uses, perhaps in part because few users seek out non-fiction works at the i2i. Reference materials and non-fiction volumes are currently shelved according to age group (children/adults), but this fact is not reflected in the catalog. Several attempts have been made to provide materials for teachers in a more detailed manner, and several teachers have expressed interest in such resources as a searchable database of lesson plans.

Although I had been in the field for six months when we chose LibraryThing, the group was still in the very early stages of thinking about the reading room. I took more responsibility for making the decision regarding this piece of software than I would in the future regarding not only software, but also a variety of use and collection policies. While at first I felt that the leadership leaned on me to make decisions and I worried that the work would not be sustainable in my absence if they did not take “ownership” of the reading room, over time I came to worry that my professional concerns were not being taken seriously enough and that the group would have to “learn lessons the hard way.” For example, my warnings regarding the importance of backing up their computer frequently were mostly dismissed, and I eventually came simply to hope that unnecessary loss of data would happen soon so that they might soon take backing up their computer more seriously. I experienced no such luck.

The fact that we had a single computer and a single Internet connection, which

Box 43:
Inadequate
computing
resources

was frequently down, further slowed our work. There was little monitoring of volunteers' use of the computer, and we did not keep a sign-up sheet or schedule for it. Students were normally not allowed to

use the machine, although exceptions were occasionally made. I would often grab the cable for long enough to place a copy of our library on my laptop: LibraryThing makes members' records available to them as spreadsheets. I would then return the cable to whoever was using the institute's computer. I would also periodically download my e-mails, respond to them while offline, and then beg to have the cable back in order to send my messages. Anyone who was fortunate enough to have gained access to the computer or cable was almost always reluctant to give up such access, myself included. This was when the electricity had not gone out (although outages were an infrequent occurrence) and the Internet connection was functioning (which it frequently was not): on such occasions, we of course had no access to the Internet at all. Our ability to complete the task of cataloging and to maintain contacts as we had promised was thus quite impaired at times.

Defining the Reading Room's Users and Collections: September 2006

In the September 21 meeting, I announced that I had heard from Greg, who was collecting books for the institute. Because we had not yet decided to what uses we would put the reading room, I had told him that I would seek to trade or give any books that he sent and we could not use to other reading rooms or libraries in town. Nonetheless, I was interested in defining the character of the reading room, and thus a collection policy, and the minutes from that meeting indicate that Rogério and I told the group about an informal conversation in which we had agreed that we should “know what public we really want to reach in order to make better use of the books in the classrooms”: integration of the reading room with classroom activities was an explicit goal underlying our reading room work.

In late September, I received a message from the Conselho Regional de Biblioteconomia (see Chapter 4, above) asking me about the article that they were expecting. I responded that I had not yet received the instructions and was sent a list of “interview” questions. On September 28, I prepared the article, leaving out the paragraph regarding whom we expected to serve. During that evening's meeting, which three of the Brazilian leaders attended and to which the fourth arrived very late because of another engagement for the institute, with little choice but to make a decision, we settled on serving our students by providing English-language materials, for which we already had evidence that we were capable of collecting. The meeting was memorable:

We discussed our concerns about [the] mental stability [of the volunteer who had entered the rival favela], and Rogério said that he is trying to find her more activities, that her problem is that she needs to be kept busy. When I told [another volunteer] later that Rogério wants the volunteers to do more stuff, he was clear that he was not interested in having anything else on his plate, and I assured him that no one was expecting him to dedicate any more of his time to the Institute. In any case, he said he would be happy to staff the reading room, where he could work on his own things and help people when they needed it.

[In the meeting] we also discussed the cataloging software's limitations, particularly regarding missing fields like one allowing us to say whether the item is checked out, and its advantages, particularly that potential donors will be able to see our collection. I asked them to think about whether the "comments" section would do the job and agreed with Washington that we should keep a separate Excel sheet for borrowers, although I suggested we use the comments section to note whether a book is checked out and how many times it has been checked out – another thing that could be of interest to potential donors and that we can use to show former donors whether and how much "their" books are being used. He asked whether we should use Excel or Access, and I replied that Access takes more initial effort to set up, so maybe we should start with Excel. . . .

Then I used the CRB's questions about what I am doing here and how [Rio de Janeiro] libraries can help to bring up my questions about the profile we should be using of the collection. Everyone wanted to talk at once, so I ended up never bringing up the question of whether there should be a corner for materials for volunteers – something that [one of the volunteers] requested again tonight.

However, we agreed on where the thing is going when it comes to books: fill it with didactic and literary materials for our current students of English, while looking to fill the needs of our students of Spanish and French, whom we should have very soon (but I'll believe it when I see it) and our next two target groups of users/students: kids who are too young to be literate and illiterate adults (or those of very low levels of literacy, of course), so that we should also have some easily accessible materials in Portuguese and perhaps some Portuguese-language classics. We were nearly fighting to say the same thing, so I am confident that the consensus was not forced. We could not have reached this consensus nearly as quickly when I first arrived, before we had the building and could look realistically at the space, when there was talk of a much more exciting but much more demanding project that would have been of use to all sorts of people doing research. Daniel in particular has changed his opinion significantly.

Yesterday, Daniel, Rogério, and I discussed what libraries in Rio could do for us, and Rogério brought up the idea of having a librarian come to us periodically – a way [of] providing that wider range of services that we cannot practically consider providing at this time. Daniel did a lot of agreeing and explaining of the idea, and I put it as the first thing that libraries could do for us.

All three of them looked at my article, and Washington who was at the computer, made a small number of minor changes – e.g., I hit the "b" instead of the "v" for "livro" ["book"] and got accused of slipping into Spanish, when the reality is that the two keys are next to each other and I typed the thing up even more quickly than usual. They were all enthusiastic about the article, praising it. Rogério particularly liked the transition from my third to fourth answers, where I mentioned our lack of space and then asked for librarians to visit us. Daniel was the least vocal about his approval, but he was physically separated from us, is less easily impressed by good writing (and more aware of writing), and was concerned about other things. . . .

The meeting was quick, friendly, animated, and productive, although we forgot to call the Web guy when we were done. It was a lot less tense than the other meetings. . . .

I was quite clear that I'd like to get the thing opened as soon as possible, even if it is only with the first 100 books, and we can keep adding books to the shelves as we get them in the system.

So far, we have not begun to assign anything resembling call numbers or control numbers to the items. We will have to decide whether it is worth doing so very soon. It is time to start making such decisions.

I would rather have had the students more involved in developing the initial conception of the resource center, but at this rate, we would never get the thing opened and the leadership would have grown increasingly annoyed. At the risk of having our initial collection of donated books unnecessarily color the composition of the collection in the future, I advocated going ahead with what we have and closely observing what gets used and what does not get used, as well as paying attention to what kinds of materials are entirely missing and whose use cannot therefore be observed or evaluated. In short, we should experiment with the collection we have. I hope no more people thrust books in my hands in locker rooms, though.

I told them about the woman in the puzzle-piece pants, and Washington said we should take whatever she offers. I told them that I am willing to keep doing so as long as the donor understands that we will pass items that are inappropriate to us on to other organizations.

The above paragraphs require little explanation, but a few points should be made here. Firstly, my Portuguese is so superior to my Spanish, a fact of which Washington was quite aware, that his comment about my having mistyped the word for “book” is best understood as one of the many (usually) friendly jokes that members of the core group of five (again, the Brazilian leaders and I) would make at one another’s expense. The incident should give readers a sense of that atmosphere at the i2i. Secondly, we took to writing LibraryThing’s control number inside the front covers of the books rather than creating our own scheme, and we did not produce call numbers for shelving purposes. Finally, “the woman in the puzzle-piece pants” was someone I had met at the club where I swam. When I met her, she was wearing Spandex pants with a puzzle-piece print; when I told the group about her offer of books, I warned them that her choice in books might resemble her choice in pants. We never received any books from her, although I did continue to receive occasional books at the pool when I was already burdened with equipment that I would have to take on my back and on the bus – this small inconvenience that would have become significant if anyone had shown up with a box of

books rather than a single volume was what fueled my hope that “no more people thrust books in my hands in locker rooms.”

Although we claimed to have decided upon our priorities for collecting, we had not yet reached a point where we would refuse to accept materials that did not fit our professed needs. I warned that we could end up with one very small room full of books we did not want and lacking room for books that we did want, but I was as guilty as anyone else of accepting whatever anyone offered. In part, I found it impossible to refuse an offer politely, especially when it was accompanied by an excited, “look what I brought for you!” After all, the offers we were receiving in 2006 were usually from private citizens whom we knew personally and who were offering perhaps a handful of volumes, not institutions with whom we would need to enter into a formal agreement in order to accept the donations that would provide an opportunity to negotiate the nature of the materials that we would accept. In part, I wanted the responsibility of accepting, declining, and weeding to rest on someone else's shoulders. In 2008, we accepted an institutional donation that was more trouble than it was worth and has since served as a cautionary tale.

Box 44: The difficulty of refusing donations
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Although I have never located the article among the CRB's publications, my writing it was central to the group's determining the purpose and intended public for the reading room: with little choice but to say whom we intended to serve, I was able to impress upon the group the importance of making this decision. All three of the leaders present in the meeting read the article and approved the use of their names in it. The fourth arrived late because of another engagement and also approved the document; although she had less opportunity to participate in shaping the decision regarding the

purposes and audiences of the reading room at that time, there had been ample opportunities, of which she often availed herself, leading up to that date.

Whereas the suggestions for use of the reading room before we moved into the space focused on facilitating access by many kinds of potential users to a broad range of

Box 45:
Experiential
learning affects
decisions

materials, we had all grown more realistic after we had moved into the space and realized how small it was and how little we had in the way of resources to keep the institute running. Furthermore, the reading room was starting to seem more real, requiring more realistic goals and plans.

Under these new circumstances, and drawing on the opinions of the two students whom I had interviewed, we were able to agree to seek to serve our students first and to use the reading room to complement and supplement classroom activities rather than to provide increased access to literature or information more generally. The decision, to me but also to those who had earlier wanted to appeal to more residents and offer a greater variety of materials, was bittersweet: we had succeeded at making an important decision that would allow us to go forward with our planning, we had been realistic about our resources and abilities, and we were admitting that we could not so much as try to reach all of the people whom we would like to aid. Still, we professed to expect to serve all of our students, which is to say, the entirety of the users that the institute already had. Also in late September, one volunteer questioned whether we would meet with success in that regard:

[S/he] said yesterday that s/he fears not too many of our current students would use the resource center. I am inclined to agree with him. As Daniel pointed out yesterday, we're going to have a lot of work to do after the end of the semester and before Carnival. I'm not sure whether he or I said it first, "vamos ter que ralar" ["we're going to have to work hard⁴⁷"]. Before, I was worried that nothing

would get done between semesters, but it looks like the plan is to work, and since we have already gotten started, we should be able to continue.

Over the following months, it was not unusual for members of the group to forget or ignore the decision we had made, and in the end, we were forced by our financial situation to accept almost whatever was offered us, so that the reading room was opened before much conscious collecting or weeding could take place. The article served to focus our attention on the work to come much more than the decision we made so that I could write the article ever affected our collections. In contrast, we carried through with the decision to open the reading room only to students, volunteers, and leaders at first.

Experiencing Conflict and Preparing for the Reading Room: October-November 2006

This is one juncture in the story in which it would be possible to claim that one cycle ended and another began: we switched our attention from moving into the building to building and sustaining the i2i's programs within that structure. Still, there was more continuity than rupture, and it is not possible to determine precisely when one cycle ended and the next began, if we indeed consider the period of June-November 2006 as consisting of two discrete cycles of reflection. Hence the designation of the entire transitional period of June-November 2006 as a single period in which we asked ourselves how we could move into and function in the new building. During that time, we engaged in many smaller cycles with more specific questions, such as how to respond to the influx of foreign volunteers.

Were the story to end in September 2006, it would end positively: we were moving into the new building, had made some key decisions, and were awaiting significant funds that we were reasonably hopeful we would receive and that we planned to use to build a third floor and a roof that we would be able to use for social gatherings.

We also expected to be able furnish the building. In short, we could expect to have classrooms and a reading room soon.

No one was quite this optimistic, and, it turns out, with good reason: the tensions among the members of the core group of five, with the volunteers, and with the Two Brothers Foundation would grow throughout the remainder of the year and in 2007.

The following sections – “Classes,” “Volunteers,” “Meetings,” “The Group,” “Reconsidering Research,” and “The Reading Room” – examine these tensions as we experienced them leading up to the arrival of a second architecture student, Filipe Balestra, in mid-November, when we switched most of our efforts to the renovations of the building. From the perspective of ANT, each of these categories might be considered actors.

Classes

The classes remained a constant source of doubt, and we frequently asked ourselves how the teachers might regain control of one class, which appeared to be on the verge of turning into a scene from George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*.⁴⁸ Specifically, the children’s class consisting of students who had been together since March remained a challenge, even once a volunteer with previous teaching experience not only took over the class, but also learned that the institute was not disregarding best practices in teaching for any ideological reason, but rather was ignorant of these practices. In mid-August, this volunteer:

Sent the kids home early because no one wanted to be there (or that’s what she said to them). Yesterday, she told me that it worked: on Thursday, there were fewer of them and they paid attention, she said. They didn’t even start talking when she turned her back to write on the board. We’ll see what she has to say about today’s class – how long will/did it last? [October 26: after class, she said she confused them by talking a lot, saying stuff they didn’t understand: “why are

they all talking? They're supposed to be quiet." She figures she confused and scared them enough that they became quiet. After that, all she needed to do was tell them they could go home if they weren't interested ("All I have to do is threaten them."). She seems to have felt she had to do so several times, however.]

I had written the above note on paper, and when I transcribed it on October 26, I added the comment in brackets. Indeed, several weeks later, the class had again erupted into chaos. At the same time, another volunteer strongly expressed the opinion that changes had to be made to the children's class, perhaps by reducing the age difference between the youngest and oldest participant. Making such changes unlikely was the reduced number of volunteers we had: three (four, including me), of whom one often skipped class, informing us at the last minute or not at all, and leaving another volunteer or Rogério scrambling to replace her. Further complicating the situation was a fact that irked me greatly: the oldest student had been moved to the adult class and had refused to go. Even though we had among us one person who seemed to some of us to have made it a mission to order other people to do things, no one forced the student to move, and she continued to disrupt the children's class.

Volunteers

Meanwhile, although the reduced number of volunteers and the absence of short-term visitors had helped make the situation with volunteers more manageable, we had among us one whose actions made little sense to anyone and who we worried would become suicidal if we asked him or her to leave. Lacking access to health care professionals of any kind, let alone expertise with what several of us wondered might be a disorder on the autism spectrum (in particular, Asperger syndrome, although at the time none of us produced this term),⁴⁹ we bumbled around, trying to incorporate our analysis of her actions into our own actions. Rogério in particular displayed a stunning amount of

patience, compassion, and good will. Meanwhile, one of us caught her looking through the IDI's computer files, two witnessed a dangerous public outburst, and several were affected by her absenteeism. I wondered why “the locals” did not seem more concerned about the damaging effect that she might have on the institute's image, Rogério sought the help of the group in making her happy and less homesick, and she and another volunteer got in a fight as the result of her absenteeism that escalated to a level that led us to discuss in a meeting whether arguments between volunteers should be considered “personal” or the business of the institute.

Two volunteers took a short trip to another city, and one returned further disillusioned with the institute and even with Rocinha. I had recently participated in a meeting in which one of the leaders had defended the idea that the information provided to volunteers by the two NGOs was sufficient. On October 9, I wrote:

I also spoke with [the volunteer] about the volunteer information – for and about them – and the conversation with [the leader in question]. [The volunteer] reiterated that it is obvious that we need to improve this aspect of the IDI and suggested that [s/he] could talk to potential volunteers before they come – [s/he] is thinking about things [s/he] can do for the IDI when [s/he] returns to the States. [S/he] also said that we should circulate a call for volunteers to appropriate academic departments, being careful to note that we don't need a wide advertising campaign to attract more unwanted characters.

Box 46: Volunteers and information
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Indeed, although the act of posting a description of our work on various Web sites had been performed in good faith, and although several serious and helpful volunteers have found the institute through those sites, they have also attracted people who have been seeking adventure and have been unprepared for the work, the i2i, or the context of Rocinha. These sites and personal contacts remain among the i2i's primary methods of attracting teachers and other volunteers.

Meetings

The meetings likewise remained frustrating. We had taken to reporting on the previous week's activities and raising concerns by going around the room. I had deferred to the other members of the core group of five and tried to go last, seeking not to control the meetings. Time and again, however, the other four would speak and the leader who was frequently accused of trying to control others would then ask if we were done and I would speak up, trying to cram at least some work on the reading room into the final five to ten minutes of the meeting. Whenever we managed to discuss the reading room, that leader would spend the time looking at the floor, rolling his or her eyes, and not paying attention unless he or she felt left out. For example, one week, Daniel and I had experimented with LibraryThing, and we were interested in having the other leaders learn to use the system and provide their opinions of the software, but we had grown tired of waiting and Daniel had already created dozens of records. On October 6, I wrote about the meeting that we had held the previous evening:

I started to talk about cataloging and [the leader]'s body language made it clear that [s/he] was barely paying attention and perhaps annoyed that I was talking so much (about 3 minutes). When I said that cataloging decisions would never get made in meetings and suggested that Daniel and I test the system and bring our questions to the meetings, [s/he] heard that Daniel and I were going to do something without [him/her], and [s/he] got interested in the conversation long enough for us to tell [him/her] that we were talking about cataloging, at which point [s/he] appeared to lose interest.

In late October, I got more aggressive about bringing up the reading room. During one meeting, I experimented with standing to gain attention, and one leader asked me to sit. I did so and later explained my experiment to that header, who laughed and said nothing when I used the tactic again the following week. We had also moved into the building sufficiently to be able to put up a board, which I began to use for posting agenda items

broken down into categories, such as “notices,” “to discuss,” and “proposed agenda items,” and I encouraged the others to do the same. This also worked well – indeed, I felt less need to stand, and one of the leaders ran through the items on the board for each of us to comment on – but use of the board was short-lived because of the arrival of the architect, which immediately led to a change in practices, discussed below. Although we did not get to all of the agenda items, using the board allowed us to see how much we had accomplished and what we had left to cover. We left up the items that we were not worried about having others see, which meant that almost everything stayed up, and the board sometimes generated questions from the adult students.

Standing during meetings and using the board would, of course, not solve our problems of absenteeism, a perceived lack of seriousness (e.g., one leader once skipped a meeting in favor of a haircut), incomplete minutes, and our seldom getting so far as to talk about the reading room. On November 6, knowing that the following week's meeting would be held on my birthday, “I told them that a great birthday present would be for everyone to show up and on time next week.” One leader responded by asking whether we would go for drinks afterwards.

In the November 13 meeting, we indeed were able to focus on the reading room. Daniel and I had identified a growing pile of materials that we either wished to discard or were unsure about whether they should be kept or how to categorize them. I had encouraged Daniel to make only the most obvious of decisions and to leave the rest for the group to help develop guidelines. On November 14, I wrote:

The meeting dragged on, as usual, and eventually it began to degenerate: [two leaders] were discussing something only marginally related to the tasks at hand. . . . Finally, I pointed at the items on the board that we've been neglecting and requested that Washington pass some books over. I complained that I have only three months left and that at this rate I'll have to live at my parents' house for the

rest of my life ("is it nice there?" asked [one of them]) or overstay my visa by several years ("cool!" exclaimed [another]). But they obliged me. The process wasn't terribly deliberative – I tried to tell them that I wanted to know why or why not, but the answers to that question were along the lines of, "that's what we should do with that" book or magazine. There weren't any great disagreements, so I let it go this time in the interest of feeling like we're making progress and not scaring them off from going through more next week.

But we came to some decisions. . . . As usual, there were several distractions: [one leader] got on Orkut [a social networking site run by Google and used largely by Brazilians], [another leader] walked off to buy a cigarette and then smoked it on the veranda while looking through the window, [my boyfriend] called and I told [one of my hosts] to tell whoever was on the phone that I was in a meeting but she made me take the phone, then they wanted the phone back, and there were probably other interruptions. At one point, [one of the leaders] kept picking up a comic book and I kept taking it and putting it back on the pile. Perhaps something we need to discuss is paying attention. I suspect that [the leader] picked the comic book up the first time to read it and the other times to be funny. . . .

Despite the frustrations, we came to some decisions that day:

"Low-quality" fiction in Portuguese is to be put in the basket/box that Rogério suggested. We discussed whether this basket or box would be there for people to use while at the IDI or for things they could take and not return. We agreed it would be a "pegue e leve" ["take one"] situation. Sometimes I wonder if [one of the leaders] looks for problems: [s/he] said no one would take them. Everyone else disagreed (or didn't understand? [Two of the volunteers] were there), and [another leader] pointed out that people would take them even if it was just to use them as fans. [A third leader] somehow managed to understand [the first one] and said that we would put up a sign saying that people should feel free to take the materials, at which point [s/he] agreed that they would take them. I find it hard to believe that [s/he] honestly thought we believed our students were a bunch of thieves and would take off with materials that they weren't told they could have to such an extent that we could use their thievery as a way of ridding ourselves of unwanted materials!

How we will draw the line between literature in Portuguese that is of "high" quality and that which is of "low" quality remains to be seen. At this point, it is clear that Harlequins are out.

Some people wanted to stick old magazines in the "pegue e leve" pile (There was enough confusion that I'm not sure who, but they were "locals"). [One volunteer] wants to look at them more closely to see if she can cut them up for classes. There

are several didactic materials for which the same opinions were [voiced]. I suggested that I meet with Rogério and the three teachers separately, when we can discuss specific uses for those materials and take scissors to them plus mark them up with suggestions, and then we can either set them aside for recycling or put them in the "pegue e leve" pile. No one disagreed, so we'll wait for [the third volunteer] to feel better and then set up the meeting.

We decided to keep comic books in English. For these, I managed to elicit reasons, pretty obvious ones: people already know the characters, facilitating reading; likewise, the illustrations facilitate reading; and they're attractive.

So, we ended up with four piles: comic books (to be cataloged), "pegue e leve," didactic materials that should be put in the reading room for students to peruse on their own, and materials to be used in the classroom (or "discarded" upon further examination – put in the "pegue e leve" pile or recycled). . . .

We looked at a few volumes that were really for discussing categorization and only marginally about whether we should keep them. As I caught them, I set them aside for discussing after we get through the other materials, but one made its way into [one leader]'s hands, [who] defended the theory that the book should be put in the "pegue e leve" pile because someone would take it home and it would get discussed. [Another leader] found this theory quite amusing, pointing out that once it was in someone's home, it would remain out of circulation. In light of last week's discussion, in which it was made clear that we would probably have strict lending policies in terms of time and number of volumes per person, but that most of our materials would circulate, I found the whole conversation quite confounding.

The note transcribed above describes well the tone and feel of our more pleasant meetings: although the meeting was friendly, it went frustratingly slowly, was chaotic, involved many interruptions, and included some jokes at the expense of participants that bordered on mean but were taken to be in good fun. Yet, we succeeded at making some decisions, and, given that my memory is of a meeting gone mostly wrong, I am surprised at how many of the decisions “stuck.”

We indeed eventually put out a “pegue e leve” box, which would later cause some trouble when children took materials that were not appropriate to their age group and

when a teacher placed items that were not for the taking in the box, but the use of the box was on the whole successful.

Additionally, a group of leaders, volunteers, and an adult student held a session in which we categorized materials and chose images from books and magazines for the box of images for teachers. Later, one of the teachers, two friends of mine who came for the day, and I categorized a portion of these images and created lesson plans. I even took to cutting out images to calm my nerves whenever I was at the institute waiting for someone, to use the computer, or for a meeting.

The Group

That some members of the group lacked “seriousness” remained a refrain in October and November 2006 and beyond. For example, in early November, we were scheduled for a second field trip to the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (CCBB), a cultural center that sponsored both trips. The CCBB had told us that there was a thirty-person minimum and that if we did not have the proper number of people for the bus that they would send to bring us to the facility, we would be ineligible for future drawings for field trips. On Wednesday, November 8, the leader who had promised to provide permission slips on Monday for that weekend’s trip so that those students under eighteen could participate had not yet done so. I decided not to try to be in charge of making sure the field trip went well or of ensuring that we had at least thirty people, wishing for others to take the excursion seriously and to act responsibly. In the end, we had twenty-eight people, and no one at the CCBB said anything about this fact. The trip was almost as chaotic as the meetings, and at one point I was almost barred by a guard from returning to find stragglers (including one leader) and hurry them through the museum to catch up with our guide, but our disorganization

Box 47: “Seriousness”

seemed not to lead to any negative consequences, unless (and I have little reason to believe this) we were indeed barred from returning and the leader who attends meetings at the CCBB never let on that this was the case.

By late October, three leaders, at least one volunteer, and I had perceived that the fourth leader was attempting to control the group's decisions, and the meetings and other encounters were growing ever more uncomfortable. That month, Daniel said that the leader in question had yet to learn how to use LibraryThing, noting that, as I wrote in my notes, "it seems easy to do the cataloging until you try, and it's in trying that [Daniel] has learned a lot." Indeed, he had grown quite adept at using LibraryThing and applying the criteria that he had developed for categorizing materials, primarily books. Ironically, when we brought up the subject of collaboration in cataloging in a meeting, this leader responded that s/he had told the others that they needed to collaborate.

In early November, we also had an opportunity to attend a conference at a local college that offers majors in various languages and Communication:

I showed them the CCAA program. [One leader] immediately started talking about making people attend. Either [another leader] or I said that [a third leader] in particular is unlikely to be interested in attending. [The] response was to say that they have to be interested. I took the opportunity to remind [them] that people can be told what to do, but they can't be ordered to want something. (At this point, I'd like to order some people to want to work on the reading room and information to/from/about volunteers.)

Over pizza one evening, Daniel and another leader bemoaned the lack of collaboration, a sentiment that a third leader expressed to me separately. One, in typically melodramatic fashion, even took to using the word "authoritarianism." In fact, the tension had grown so great that several of us spoke of digging in our heels and refusing to be told what to do by other members of the leadership. This came only a few months after we had created a

frenzy over Paul's expectations that was largely unjustified, and we continued to receive occasional “orders” from the United States that did not always match our expectations or reality. Furthermore, we wondered whether and how we were being misrepresented in e-mails regarding the institute to which we were refused access.

Further frustrating me and at least one of the Brazilian leaders was the “fake collaboration” that was common:

[The leader] laughed that people bring up questions, someone offers an answer, and we all just agree – to what extent is this false consensus or apathy? I believe we're working at a "that's good enough" and "sounds fine to me" level for many things, although there are certainly topics that bring out strong opinions. I don't necessarily see anything wrong with this: if every small decision becomes a "big deal," we'll end up frustrated and nowhere new. (October 8)

Box 48: Little collaboration, insufficient reflexivity
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Although I was not convinced that we could or should discuss every decision at length, the rarity with which we had earnest and in-depth conversations worried me. Furthermore, the refrain “that's fine by me” (“por mim, está bom”) would sometimes be followed later with, “why did you do that?” or “why didn't we think of that earlier?”, which amused one leader, who would point out the impossibility of knowing why we had not thought of something.

Reconsidering Research

As it became clearer that our moving into the new building would not miraculously turn us from an amorphous group loosely convening around a specific idea of English instruction and a vague idea of cultural exchange into a well-organized, serious, and able cadre of people with a defined mission; as my allotted year began to grow to a close; and as I came to realize that some kind of reading room would probably result from our efforts if only we could secure some bookcases, I began to ask myself

how I or we might modify the original research plan to fit our reality, beyond adding a substantial institutionalization phase. I also continued to wonder, in light of the concerns that the Brazilians, volunteers, and leaders of Two Brothers shared regarding the rarity with which volunteers arrived well-informed, inserted themselves into the life of the institute and Rocinha with little difficulty, and abstained from embarrassing or even endangering the institute and its affiliates, whether my services might be put to better use through a more traditional study examining information “flows,” use, and non-use among and with volunteers. Nonetheless, I continued to focus my energies, to the extent possible, on the reading room, and indeed by late October, I became immersed in the details of weeding and categorizing our materials and of using LibraryThing.

By mid-October, I had come to terms with the fact that we were not prepared to invite students (an important group of stakeholders) to participate more fully – after all, several of us believed that the leaders were still fighting to be included in decision-making processes, in response to perceived threats both from within the group and from the United States. On October 14, I wrote of the research:

At this point, I see the participatory part being mostly confined to the leadership, current volunteers, and former volunteers. I expect us to engage users in conversations. I doubt we'll get to all that much collaborative data analysis that would be conventionally recognized as such, but we are already doing some experimentation, if primarily with the LibraryThing system.

Six days later, I again took up the subject of collaborative data generation and analysis:

I should be at the end of data collection, yet I feel that I am at the beginning. Or, anthropologically, I'm in the middle, but collaboratively, we've just begun – perhaps this is why the power struggle with [one leader] bothers me so much: just as I saw Paul as getting in the way of the institute's getting anything done, I see [that leader] as a barrier to working on the reading room and to any kind of collaborative work. . . .

I love the idea of cycles of reflection. Maybe later I'll think we had some of those, but right now, I just don't see it.

Later that same day, I mused, “How can you ever know if you've 'stepped back'? What a bizarre thing to ask of people – it's as if I'm being told, 'yes, you're standing somewhere and always must – now stop it.’” Distance, if you can call it that, was something that we sometimes achieved after the fact, when we would look back and laugh at what we had thought or done, or when we would come to understand why someone else had acted in an unexpected manner. In particular, one leader and I interpreted another leader's actions harshly at first and softened these interpretations when the difficulties that the other leader faced outside of the institute became clearer: over the two years in question here, suspicion slowly gave way to compassion. That is to say, the cycles of reflection were not neatly planned or easily delineated, but this fact makes them no less important.

On October 25, I thought about the two main versions of participatory action research – Northern PAR, based in part on the works of Lewin (1945), and Southern PAR, which draws upon Freire's (1970, 1992; Freire & Guimarães, 1987, 2000) work. The former aims to make positive and lasting changes in such contexts as the workplace, whereas the latter is more concerned with political consciousness. I reflected on our reflection practices:

Box 49: Northern and Southern PAR

In practice, we have been working at the self- (i.e., institutional) improvement level, and I was hoping to work at the level of self-awareness. Obviously, these are not mutually exclusive, but sustained deeper reflection is not happening in groups of more than three . . . and seldom in groups larger than pairs. Reflection tends to be other-focused: what [one person] did, what [another person] said, what attitudes these actions reflect. So, reflection is first and foremost reactive, whereas I wanted to see us researching and planning together based on precedent, of course, but also on hopes. We're just too day-to-day for this to happen. With the purchase of the building and the departure of the short-term volunteers, things improved a bit – will they improve enough?

While I had written, defended, and gotten funded a proposal that on the surface aimed to create the kind of lasting change of interest to Northern PAR, I had hoped to achieve this change through the kind of greater self-awareness that may be important to Northern PAR but is the very foundation of Southern PAR. I was beginning to wonder if we might create a reading room and even an institution without really doing any “soul searching,” let alone truly collaborative reflection. Ironically, if one contrasts these two flavors of PAR based on their treatment of method rather than on the proposed goals of the research, then we were going about our work in a Southern manner. It is therefore not surprising that it was only later that even I came to see what we were doing in 2006 as research. While in 2006, all I could see was confusion and difficulties in engaging as a group, it is now evident that the struggles of 2006 laid the groundwork for the successes of 2007 and beyond.

While in the field, I had little access to new publications, but I brought some with me, purchased some Brazilian ones while in Rio, picked up more when I returned to the United States in 2007, and was fortunate enough to have some journals sent to me via a friend. One such publication was Vol. 4, no. 1 of the journal *Action Research* (2006), which I read in late October 2006.

I found my worries echoed in the words of Eikeland:

Eikeland - p. 44: "No matter how good and necessary, however, many people are not ready for the kind of open sharing, searching, and critical examination required by communities of inquiry and learning. Openness exposes. For many this is threatening. For some this is based on legitimate concerns regarding privacy or vulnerability; for others these may be the less legitimate concerns of protecting vested interests of power and privilege." But how do I get to decide that [the leader who appeared to be trying to make unilateral decisions for the institute] and Paul's "vested interests of power and privilege" are "less legitimate"? I have a vested interest in breaking down the power structure: with

this, I would have something to write about and the structure would end up better fitting my ideology, my "external values," as Boser put it (p. 13).

Also on p. 44: "By what means can we achieve change and promote our goals, without self-destruction, destroying the realization of our goals through the application of our means, through our own practice? Should we accept, in the name of freedom and democracy, all kinds of obsolete, oppressive and reactionary local and individual practices? And what happens if we don't? Power is tempting!

"The biggest challenge may be, of course, that such transitional periods – where, hopefully, relationships gradually transform into learning relationships – will almost certainly last for some time, and may never be completely overcome. Among other things, the socialization and introduction of new people into communities contribute to making transitions permanent."

Eikeland's words echo those of Wenger in his writings about communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002). While we appeared to have created a community that enabled some learning and practices, the

Box 50: The i2i as an incipient community of practice and community of inquiry

notion that we formed a "community of inquiry" seemed almost ludicrous, in large part because of a lack of openness. Furthermore, our inexperience, the quick turnover of

volunteers, and the institute's history seemed nearly to doom us to being forever stuck in a transitional period like those described by Eikeland, but I hoped that we might at least partly meet the challenge of enduring such a period and creating a community around inquiry, learning, and adequate practices.

I also found my unease with straddling the two kinds of PAR echoed in Judah and Richardson's article in the same volume of *Action Research*. They described PAR based on Lewin's work as having a "modernist drive" and that based on Freire as being "critical" (pp. 69-70):

I brought this up over lunch today – how our project has a bit of both. In saying that, I realized that the underlying purpose of strengthening the IDI (what Rogério and others seem not to see as "research") is of the self-awareness variety, while

the reading room stuff is of the self-improvement variety (not that self-awareness can be avoided) – perhaps this is why they can see that as research: it's the same old stuff but collaborative.

I remained concerned about the IRB but had begun to worry less and focus more on

Box 51:
The IRB

finding ways not to violate the letter of their rules and potentially jeopardize my entire doctoral career. For example, at the Halloween party,

I had the following exchange with Daniel:

Daniel: “Beth, take some pictures.”

Beth: “They haven't signed forms, so I can't. But you can do whatever you want.”

I then handed him the camera. He laughed and took it. For the rest of my time in Rocinha, I would hand my camera over upon arriving at an event. Because of the poverty of the leaders, they simply did not always have cameras of their own and were accustomed to relying on volunteers to take photographs in the normal course of their work with the institute. Although I cannot use these photographs in my research, I now have a nice collection of images with which to remember my time in Rocinha once I have completed my doctorate – since one is never “off the clock” with ethnographic work, this is something of which the IRB's rules would have robbed both me and the institute had no one else been capable of using my camera, or I would have had to inconvenience many people by passing out forms at parties and frantically seeking our students' parents so that the institute might have a visual record of its history. While this was a relatively inconsequential case, it was just one of many instances in which the IRB's rules stood to inconvenience or even harm the very people the rules are supposed to protect. We were fortunate that my co-researchers were not viewed as legitimate researchers by the IRB and had not been approved as co-principal investigators, or this tactic would not have been available to us.

The Reading Room

Despite the many disputes and interruptions, Daniel and I worked on making decisions regarding categories and on creating LibraryThing records for the books that we had already received. By October 6, we already had one hundred records, and I was concerned about standardizing these records, since we had used their creation as a means of raising questions about the collection and about terminology.

While I offered advice and suggestions when asked and occasionally objected to the classification of a book, from the beginning, Daniel made most of the classification decisions. For example, I later occasionally located a non-fiction book that had been classified as fiction or vice-versa, and before I understood Daniel's four levels for

Box 52:
Classifying
and
cataloging

literature (volumes for adults and three levels of children's and young adult literature based on Daniel's perception of the difficulty that our students would encounter in reading them rather than on the reading levels that would be appropriate for native speakers of the language in which the book in question was written), I questioned some of his decisions. I also kept an eye on the distinction between reference and non-fiction materials, which were often conflated by various actors. Still, the institute's LibraryThing catalog bears Daniel's signature much more than anyone else's. He was also responsible for discovering most of the quirks and shortcuts that we located in LibraryThing, and he grew quite adept at processing books whose records could be pulled from other sources using their ISBNs.

Where Daniel had questions, unless it was a minor matter, such as clarifying the meaning of a word in English or helping him to identify the publisher, I consistently advocated for bringing the question to the group, attempting in this way to provide an opportunity for collaboration,

Box 53: *Where's
Waldo?*: encountering
cataloging challenges

although I questioned whether such collaboration would effectively take place. One of the more amusing but thought-provoking questions arose when we realized that we had a *Where's Waldo?* volume (and we would later have a collection of such materials): none of our four main categories (literature, non-fiction, didactic, and reference) seemed to fit, and we agreed to set the volume aside for discussion.

October 6 was the kind of productive day that gave me hope for the reading room, if not for collaboration among more than the two of us:

Daniel has already cataloged 38 books today. The process goes more quickly when the book has an ISBN, which is the case with most of these, since we're working on the volumes in English first. . . .

He discovered two things with the ISBNs and this system: (1) case matters and (2) hyphens do not matter.

We don't know what to do with *Where's Waldo*, and Daniel suggested using a question mark, then suggested "lógica." I said we should leave the question mark and bring it to the meeting because the discussion should be amusing (and I'm curious, but I left it at "amusing"). We laughed and left in the question mark. I also just mentioned that our bringing the question up in a meeting will help us show the others that this process isn't always easy.

Two days later, one of the other leaders came by to learn to use LibraryThing and asked about call numbers. I told him or her that we were considering color-coding items by category and perhaps shelving them within their category "alphabetically by either author or title."

On October 13, the group met. We agreed to set aside *Where's Waldo?* and similar items for future discussion. We also decided to continue to use LibraryThing and to seek a patron to pay the yearly \$15 fee for an institutional membership:

The only concern was about offline control for lending, particularly on the part of Washington. When I showed him (and saw for the first time) the Excel sheet that

the program generates and that includes unique IDs, he was enthusiastic about going with LibraryThing.

Four days later, I began writing instructions for using LibraryThing to serve as a reference for the leaders who were supposed to learn to use it and as a guide for future volunteers who might find themselves creating records. A few days later, Rogério kindly initiated the translation into Portuguese, which I finished.

In mid-October, we had to contend with rains. On October 18, we experienced for ourselves the hazard that rain caused on the stairs: “We didn't end up doing any

Box 54:
Inadequacy of
the building: rain

cataloging: he arrived late and it was raining: water flows down the stairs to the second floor, where the books are.” The rain also interrupted classes: since many people in Rio simply avoid going

outside in the rain, attendance dropped dramatically, making it difficult for me to introduce myself to the new students. On October 19, desperation, or at least frustration, over the rain had apparently already begun to set in:

Now I am home trying to get the mud out of the jeans I wore yesterday. I would work on cataloging, but the books are upstairs and there is water all over the stairs. I might even have the courage to go upstairs, but I wouldn't have the courage to go back down them with books in my arms. Daniel suggested I could throw the books down in plastic bags.

In Daniel's defense, throwing things, such as keys, downstairs is a common practice – and perhaps he was joking. By the time Filipe (the architect) arrived, I had become a vociferous advocate for covering and modifying the stairs.

By early November, I had nearly given up on collaboration on the reading room

Box 55: Latour:
“things could be
different”

with anyone except Daniel, and one volunteer “suggested I just put a reading room together myself and write a dissertation about

what went wrong.” I was convinced that I would need to do just that.

As noted above, in the November 13 meeting, we successfully made a few decisions, although the meeting by no means went smoothly. In fact, one volunteer later said that:

[S/he] felt sorry and angry for me in last week's meeting, in which they were all acting like children, not paying attention and not collaborating. [S/he] suggested I start treating them like children and that I pass out a "fact sheet" and quiz them on it.

Although I did not seriously consider quizzing anyone, I had begun to feel some sympathy for the members of Two Brothers who had begun to advocate for greater control over Dois Irmãos.

Action Research, Actor-Network Theory, and Communities of Practice: A Look Back on June-November 2006

The period of June through mid-November 2006 saw increased institutionalization and numerous crises, some brought on by the actions of volunteers and some resulting from conflicts within the leadership and/or with members of 2Bros. Although questions remained regarding the long-term and even medium-term viability of the i2i, we successfully moved into the building and began planning the reading room.

While the cycles of reflection cannot be easily delineated, the more or less consecutive themes of moving into the building and creating new practices for the new circumstances of the institute are evident. These follow the earlier, and more distinct, theme of preparing for the annual meeting. "Mini-cycles" and theories-in-action are likewise evident in everything from devising ways to create and organize records in LibraryThing to discussions regarding how to interact with 2Bros. and with volunteers.

Regarding Heron and Reason's extended epistemology, Daniel in particular worked toward practical knowing through his cataloging efforts, developing theories-in-

action and expressing these to me frequently as we worked and to the group in some meetings.

While the literature on action research focuses primarily on learning how to act, during this period, we gained experience in how *not* to act that has been slow to translate into better practices but that by the end of 2006 we could express and explain in words. For example, we had already known of the advantages of having volunteers and of the occasional disadvantages associated with their actions, but in 2006, we experienced for ourselves the danger of attracting volunteers through a process that involved no vetting and almost no barriers to access; while the leaders still struggle to manage such access to the i2i and to balance its need for volunteers' collaboration, democratic tendencies, and self-preservation, the incidents of 2006 made the leaders more aware of the challenges they face.

Regarding the reading room, we were beginning to learn a lesson about which I had attempted to warn the Brazilian leaders: accepting donations is a costly and time-consuming endeavor that should not be undertaken indiscriminately.

Finally, although tensions ran high, we experimented with various modes of communication and interaction and were beginning to learn to work together, to develop the practices that we would share.

In short, although we could not see that we were performing action research, we were learning on all four of Heron and Reason's levels and, in a tenuous, uneven, and often individual rather than collective fashion, we were continuing to reflect on our practices and goals. We were still not ready to ask questions and agree on ways of answering these in a structured manner, but we had begun to inquire into a wide range of topics, to observe, and, through formal and informal meetings, to seek consensuses on

which we would later build new practices and new questions. Our work was, in a word, messy. The PAR was primarily inwardly focused and of the Southern variety, and we were beginning to hypothesize and test in manners that are more familiar to the Northern variety, all in the context of great adversity. It was through this work and these conversations that we were developing and strengthening a community of practice, a fact of which we became acutely aware each time we perceived that someone was not contributing to this community or collaborating with other members.

Mirroring the confusion of the period, it is not possible to determine a moment at which one cycle of reflection ended and another one began. Indeed, our efforts and “mini cycles” shared an ad hoc, scattered quality that appeared to endanger the institute. In 2008, that ad hoc quality remained, but it no longer appeared to threaten the institute’s existence. Still, Latour rightly reminds us that the relative stability of 2008 was not inevitable.

Finally, between June and November 2006, the meaning of non-human actors such as the building, classes, meetings, and the reading room continued to evolve, and the importance some of these (e.g., the reading room) grew. We grappled with what roles each of us should play and with what practices should be allowed or encouraged.

CONSTRUCTING THE INSTITUTO DOIS IRMÃOS: NOVEMBER 2006-MARCH 2007

On October 25, we were informed that Filipe would be coming to Rio to help us plan and complete the renovations for which we, particularly Greg and his family, had acquired funds. Although the meetings and work on the reading room did not cease altogether during Filipe's November 15-January 15 stay in Rio, these were greatly curtailed during this period and the months following it. I left Rocinha in late February and returned the first week of May.

We met Filipe for the first time on November 20, 2006. The two remaining teachers, at least one leader, and I worried that he would be disappointed with the institute: “I feel bad for him: he is one more person who is showing up enthusiastic, but this group is likely to wear him down quickly enough,” I wrote. Later that day,

I told [the volunteers] that I feel the ethical responsibility to warn him, and both [of the volunteers] . . . talked about the high hopes they had had when they first arrived – or even the not-so-high hopes – and how these have disappeared and they have become, as [one] said, "cynical." The lack of organization, [the other] in particular noted, is particularly disconcerting.

One of the volunteers went on to say that his or her family might contribute money to the cause, but not as long as “nepotism” were taking place, as was the case with one leader's decision to hire a relative to work on the building. This volunteer was ready to talk to Paul and request greater involvement by Two Brothers in the Dois Irmãos' decisions.

I found myself in a situation in which two ethical requirements were at odds: I had promised participants and the IRB that I would not share data, but I felt that it would be wrong not to warn Filipe. I settled on having a conversation with him that was frank but as vague as possible, in which I stated that I was very concerned about the seriousness and ethics of certain individuals and that he should seek details from others. I warned him not to get too close to some of us if he did not want to get on the bad side of another member of the group, who I believed felt threatened. After that conversation, I wrote, “I hope he maintains his enthusiasm and that we for once manage to avoid disappointing someone.”

Box 56:
The IRB

I wondered if the reason that we were not having serious discussions about the reading room was that I was incapable of running a meeting. Readers should remember that earlier I had consciously sought to avoid being in charge, but as time passed and few decisions were made, I had begun to experiment with

Box 57:
Self-doubt

being “pushier.” Occasionally I successfully forced the reading room onto the agenda, as was the case on November 13, but never was the group on the good behavior we were on with Filipe in our first meeting with him. When I suggested to the two volunteers that my learning how to run a meeting might help, one noted that one of the leaders had been missing from that evening's meeting, saying that that leader and another one had the tendency to feed off each other, intensifying the negative aspects of our meetings. The other volunteer took a different approach: that volunteer “said that it was not my fault, that they should all be able to act like adults and concentrate in meetings that are not very long. In any case,” I wrote, “today's meeting showed me that they are more or less capable of paying attention.”

In an impromptu meeting in November, Filipe drew “i2i,” which we eventually use instead of “IDI.” In 2007, Daniel suggested a logo with a girl's head in place of the dot on one of the “i”s and a boy's head on the other, and a neighbor created the image for use on t-shirts. That image is now in use at least as much as the one that appeared on Paul’s t-shirt in May 2006. In a way, Filipe both gave shape to the institute and renamed it, with none of the controversy that had seemed so important in May.

Box 58:
Creating a
new logo

On November 23, we came to an agreement on the general shape that the renovation project should take, including regarding the need to knock down all interior walls on the first floor except for those enclosing the restroom.

We had a short conversation about the placement of books. We had agreed that the reading room would be on the first floor, but the volumes did not all need to be in one place, and the reading room could be used as a classroom when necessary.

Box 59: The place of
the reading room in
the new, evolving
plans for the building

Although we were not focused on making the reading room a reality in the short run, the wisdom of having a book collection and eventually computer terminals was not in question, and we talked about putting some volumes on the second floor:

Filipe suggested putting some of the books on the 2nd floor outside of the classroom(s), and Daniel suggested we could make some chairs out of plastic bottles to put up there. Rogério defended the idea of having books in the classroom and I pointed out the tension between making books available when others are in class and having students surrounded by books – perhaps putting some of the collection on the second floor like that would be a good compromise.

The second floor would have a classroom, a restroom, and internal stairs leading up to the third floor. At the time, the second floor had two rooms, and we had not made a final decision on whether we would knock down the wall between them and, if we did, whether we would put in a sliding divider.⁵⁰ From the entrance to the second floor, the stairs were on the left, the room was on the right, and the restroom was at the back of the narrow hallway between the stairs and room. Under the stairway was a very small area that had served as a kitchen, and we would remove the sink.

The third floor, which we had yet to construct and therefore could mold better to our wishes, would have a single room with an unusually high ceiling to add a sense of roominess, light, and a slight difference from the surrounding buildings, as Filipe wanted, as well as to provide a good wall for projecting images, e.g., films, as Daniel wanted.

During that meeting, I wrote later, one of the Brazilian leaders:

Kept trying to shut the conversation down – I understand and share [his/her] anxiety to get something done, but we wasted our reflection time on not paying attention in meetings (and on getting off subject, skipping meetings, arriving late . . .). [The leader] seems to have something against reflection and is uncomfortable when there are various options being discussed – perhaps [s/he] is afraid that [s/he] won't get [his/her] way.

I was tired, out of patience, and running out of time. Indeed, I had decided that I would have to write a dissertation about a failure, and I was disappointed. Still, the construction would soon be underway. On the afternoon November 27, one of the leaders attempted to make the unilateral decision that we would no longer discuss the study center in our regular meetings. At that evening's meeting, Daniel and I reported that he had cataloged yet more books. Indeed, he had finished everything that did not require a decision that we were unwilling to make without the group. We said that we still needed to decide where to draw the line between reference and non-fiction materials, as well as whether to place textbooks for subjects that we did not offer with the other textbooks or with the other non-fiction. I wrote later about the meeting that I found it “frustrating,” that I had seen the “reading room as [an] 'excuse' to strengthen [the] IDI, but neither is it stronger, nor do we have a study center,” noting that I saw our/my PAR as a “failure.”

By the previous Thursday, I had decided I would no longer wait for “the locals” to start any projects. I had announced that whoever wanted to do so could meet on Thursday at the building to evaluate materials. Two volunteers, two leaders, an adult who sometimes attended classes, and I went through the materials that Daniel and I were unsure whether we should keep or whether we could find a use for them outside of the reading room. We categorized some volumes for inclusion in the catalog and cut images out of others (e.g., geography and science textbooks) for use in English lessons. In this session, the question of how narrow the definition of “reference” should be arose, when one volunteer categorized books using a broad definition, while Daniel and the other volunteer preferred a narrow one, on which we eventually settled. The question of whether to place textbooks for subjects that we did not offer with the didactic materials or with the non-fiction also emerged from this

Box 60: Deciding not to wait for others
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session. With ease of access for teachers in mind, Daniel and I advocated for placing them with the non-fiction, and this is eventually what we would do, although the decision would be made more by Daniel than by the group.

Filipe drew up plans, and, although we had not yet agreed on some of the details regarding the final design, we quickly hired a foreman to oversee the project. Meanwhile,

Box 61:
Initiating
construction

Daniel and I checked prices with two stores. The quotes were similar, and we chose the one that was located closer to the institute and would deliver to the alley. On December 4, the first delivery of materials arrived. We had planned a meeting, but one leader refused to take part, stating that the items needed to be moved to the roof. That leader then left the premises to go Christmas shopping, leaving the rest of us to haul sand, dirt, and rocks to the roof. The following day, I worked twelve hours, from 8:00 to 8:00, hauling dirt and bricks, mixing concrete, and demolishing a wall. Some others collaborated, but one leader had told me that he or she would arrive at 3:00, only to arrive at 6:00 after repeated telephone calls. We were off to an embarrassing start, and it was not long before Filipe was frustrated with the group, as several of us had predicted.

I learned to make reinforced concrete and endured the sexism of one worker, who likened maintaining ratios of water to cement mix when increasing or decreasing quantities to baking a cake – a comment that greatly amused one considerably more aware leader, who to this day uses it to taunt me or make me laugh.⁵¹ Another female volunteer responded to similar comments by doing more hard physical labor than the men, leading to admiration on the part of many neighbors: American women are strong and strong-willed, they would note. Despite the frequent absenteeism, other volunteers and leaders also hauled, lifted, carried, and built until we were all fatigued.

I continued to participate in the labor until I was too sore, tired, sunburned, and worried about keeping the institute's other activities, including the reading room, correspondence, and planning for future semesters, on track. The leaders and other volunteers also continued to work on the construction in bursts, and Daniel shared my concern regarding maintaining the institute's other activities. By mid-December, I was seeking to spend only a few hours per day on manual labor and the rest of my time on the institute's other business, my notes, an application to extend my visa, scholarship applications, and social obligations, and it seemed that however I chose to spend my time, someone complained that I was doing the wrong thing. Meanwhile, I was worried about my ability to finance a return trip, my visa, and a close relative who had suffered a heart attack the week of Thanksgiving, and I wondered if I should change my ticket and leave early.

On December 2, over our customary pizza, Washington spoke of the fact that I would be leaving soon:

He asked me to prepare the group for my leaving, said that my presence has helped bring the group together – before there were no meetings. I asked whether it was my leaving or my leaving so soon, and he said the latter, that the org[anization] won't get by without me. I told him I would try but that I didn't feel we'd gotten far enough. He asked me to bring up the subject in a meeting.

I had, in fact, no idea what preparing the group for my departure might mean, but I indeed brought the subject up and reminded the leaders that I could be reached via e-mail and telephone, including Internet telephony, as well as that I would attempt to return in a few months.

Box 62: Preparing for my departure

Although I was displeased with the leaders, with our apparent inability to organize, and with my own shortcomings, I was very pleased with Daniel's work with LibraryThing, despite his need for new eyeglasses that sometimes made seeing the screen

a difficult task for him. I was frustrated that the other leaders seemed not to be as interested in the reading room as they had claimed to be, and I thought it unjust that all of the work fell to Daniel. On December 20, I wrote that I had gone “through Library Thing and cleaned it up,” a task that went “smooth[ly]”; “Daniel did a very good job.” At the same time, classes had ended, and one of the two remaining teachers, both of whom could be counted on to work for the institute without endangering it, left, donating a pile of books. Meanwhile, Daniel and I were feeling pressure to focus solely on the construction to the detriment of the rest of the institute's responsibilities. The following week, only two leaders and I would attend a meeting: the remaining volunteer later told me that the other leaders had told her that no meeting would be held that day.

On January 8, we succeeded at holding a meeting, at which I announced “that I had no hope that there would be any reading room stuff before my Feb. 26th departure and that from here on out, I'm just going to lead my life – worry about registration, the visa, financial aid, my travels.” Although this announcement was not meant to be a bluff, I of course continued to work for the institute, although I became more selective with my time and indeed took three short trips.

Filipe returned to Europe in mid-January 2007. By then, the leaders and volunteers had tired and it was time to plan for the upcoming semester. The construction work continued, performed primarily by hired construction workers, but the several weeks of hard labor and sun exposure seemed to invigorate the organization, even if, individually, we had grown weary. Seeing the building go up lent a sense of reality to the i2i and its projects. When I left in late February 2007, I was more optimistic than I had been several months earlier, although questions regarding the viability of the i2i and the reading room remained.

One of my few remaining activities was to interview the remaining teacher and three of the four leaders (the fourth skipped our meeting and I made no attempt to reschedule it). All agreed that my having insisted on holding meetings had been instrumental in strengthening the institute, although all also agreed that the i2i left much to be desired and might not survive.

We also continued to cut images out of books and magazines and organize these images for classroom use. On January 15, I invited two friends who had experience teaching English as a Second Language to the institute. We were later joined by the remaining teacher, who was interested in eventually creating a database of images, and Daniel was also present for a time. After gathering supplies and rearranging desks to resemble a long table, over a very pleasant afternoon that contrasted greatly with the tense meetings, we chatted; shared stories in a comfortable, open, and friendly manner; and organized images. We had so many images to choose from that we used only a small fraction of these, but the end result was a range of groups of images:

Box 63: Creating materials for classroom use

After we had been cutting for something like half an hour, they started grouping some of the images: clothing, food, animals, people (which would later be broken down into a variety of categories).

It was fun, quiet work interrupted when one of us chose to share an image or tell a story. . . . An enjoyable and productive day, even if we hardly made a dent in the box if one looks at the box. The pile of discarded paper on the floor tells another story. . . .

[The teacher] remarked several times (and has done so in the past) that she would have loved to have resources like the ones we were creating for her class. She worked in a preschool before coming here, and she said she hadn't realized how much support she had at that school – that the box of classroom materials was very valuable. This isn't quite production of information resources by their users, but it's close.

In late January, a former volunteer and long-time member of Two Brothers arrived in Rio and began to investigate the situation at the i2i. Two Brothers had recently held its annual meeting, and the stories he heard during his visit about former volunteers helped him to understand why so much attention had been paid in that meeting to inappropriate behavior on the part of visitors to Rocinha. “He pointed out how funny it is that people think that the danger is the drug traffickers but that our volunteers appear to be more dangerous.” He also found it interesting that my “opinion of how much gets done around here” was negative, since he was confronted with the great contrast between the time when we worked out of rented space and the construction that was occurring at a building that we owned. In less than two weeks, he would understand my frustration when two leaders would fail to meet with him as they had promised.

In the Two Brothers meeting, the structure of that NGO had been changed to include both a president and a director. The president was to be the NGO's public face, and the director was to be involved in daily operations. The former volunteer wished to suggest a similar change for the i2i and sought to decide whom he would recommend for

Box 64:
Changes in
the NGOs’
formal
structure

the new position of director. I feared that Two Brothers would attempt to exert greater influence over Dois Irmãos and undo our work; thus, I found myself defending the institute, despite my frustration. Here, we indeed see the sway that Two Brothers still held over the i2i: three of the leaders discussed who should be given the position and agreed that Daniel would be the appropriate person. After all, he was already playing that role in many ways; in particular, he ran the office. Fortunately for the i2i, whoever made the decision at Two Brothers came to the same conclusion. On February 21, Daniel accepted the position. By

then, the new cohort of volunteers had begun to arrive and I was preparing for my February 26 departure.

In early February, we received a donation that would serve as a warning: four of us took a taxi to the home of a friend of a former volunteer to accept books that the friend wished to donate to us. We spent time, money, and effort on picking up and hauling encyclopedias from 1967 and works of the kind cited in Chapter 3, such as books by Cardoso. While one volunteer would later read one of these volumes, they have gone largely untouched, and we discarded much of the donation.

Box 65: An unwanted donation

Action Research, Actor-Network Theory, and Communities of Practice: November 2006-March 2007

Filipe's visit and the initiation of the construction presented the opportunity for many of us to learn construction skills that few of us had expected to gain. More importantly, although tensions among the leaders remained, building the third floor helped us to gain camaraderie and to see tangible results of our work. Thus, both socially and physically, the i2i grew more "real" with the literal construction of the boundary object that was (and is) the institute. Through the construction, in this phase and in later phases, the i2i's neighbors took greater notice of the institute, and several offered their services, including two children who went to great lengths to demonstrate that they, too, could fill buckets with sand or rocks for a leader to send up to the roof via a pulley system. A greater ability to focus our efforts on specific questions and goals slowly followed these transformations; thus, although at the time I saw Filipe's visit as a necessary but unfortunately timed interruption to the research, in fact it enabled us to perform the research that followed in 2007.

The period of November 2006-March 2007 saw much hypothesizing on the part of participants as they considered the uses to which the building might be put and the ways in which it might be organized. Although formal academic theories were seldom mentioned throughout the two-year period in question here, in November 2006, one volunteer introduced the notion of “founder’s syndrome,” which attempts to explain why founders of an organization sometimes resist change.

Regarding ANT, the list of actors changed to include Filipe and the construction workers, as well as some neighbors, if only temporarily. Equally significantly, our understandings of and expectations for the institute, building, and reading room continued to change.

Finally, our practices were profoundly altered to take the construction into account. The community that shared those practices continued to change as several of us arrived and/or departed during this period.

TAKING STOCK AFTER A YEAR

In February 2007, I conducted separate interviews with three leaders and one volunteer. In each case, we looked back on the year (or, in the case of the volunteer, six months) that we had spent struggling together to improve the Instituto Dois Irmãos. In each case, we spoke for an hour or more. They acknowledged that there was much work ahead of us, but also that we had managed to get some things done. For example, one leader spoke at length about his or her concern that others acted unprofessionally and laughed loudly in the building, but s/he also defended the other leaders and the volunteers, noting that they had “worked really hard” on the building. Another said, “We’re moving really slowly, really slowly, but it’s happened. We haven’t gone backwards, we haven’t stopped, we didn’t end up doing nothing, right?”

They all spoke of their frustrations with the i2i, but they all also expressed hope and the belief that it was then, in 2007, that the i2i would have to prove itself and come into its own:

It's now that we're going to know how things work, it's now that we're going to start to manage something. The NGO has existed on paper for a long time, but it's now that it's really going to start, right? It's now that it's really going to be the Instituto Dois Irmãos. (Leader 1)

Now we're going slowly. . . . Now we're going to have a lot of work to do. . . . In the next three months . . . we are going to have everything at once, all the stress at once. . . . We are really going to have things to do. . . . More responsibilities, we'll have a fixed schedule, a building to manage, several classes, that kind of thing. (Leader 2)

I feel like it's on the verge of [being able to provide resources to teachers for making lesson plans], but I feel like it's absolutely necessary. . . . We need to write down for the other volunteers that are coming here like what we're starting to do now. I feel like it's starting to change. Having the little few lesson plans that we have, at least the next volunteers that come, if they have something that works for them, we can ask them, write that down and share it with other people and have a place where they can go to have ideas. (Volunteer)

The third leader said that we were all making progress in learning. S/he stated that s/he wanted to be sure that the building was ready and the reading room was in order by the time I returned in several months, saying that s/he would sit down with Daniel (who would have my project "in his head") and help get the reading room ready. S/he warned, however, that the building would need to be ready before they could put the reading room together.

The volunteer spoke of the future of the i2i and the resource center, saying that the building would be finished in "a couple of months." The students, teachers, and staff were "excited and refreshed and have a new energy." S/he told me of the visit s/he had

made to the beach with three leaders and that they were all talking about how they would change things:

Everyone agrees that things need to change, and I think that's a good sign because when I got here, I felt like no one saw what I was seeing, so I think it's good. Isn't that the first step of fixing anything is if you know you that you have a problem, if you're an alcoholic, for example. . . . Now I feel like everyone is voicing it. It sucks that people are being taken advantage of in this organization. It sucks that the kids aren't learning, that the statute . . . says that this is what we're here to do. Are we doing that? Let's look at this. And I think that's good. But I hope that – and I know that everyone has plans for the new building and for the different – what more we can offer to people. And I know that I have my doubts. When they were talking about adding more languages, I remember asking, I'm sorry, we can't even teach English successfully and you guys want to branch out to other languages. How is that going to work, realistically? But I feel like at this point, having the new building at least is letting people think of other options, which at this point I think they need. Maybe lay off English for a while if it's not working. You know, do something else. . . . And that's something that I think is good about having the reading room, is that we'll have that. The kids can go in there and read and hopefully we can have literacy classes, which will offer – I think that's a lot more valuable than having English classes. . . . I really think the reading room will help the English classes or whatever other language classes also because of the pictures, the books, the things that they use for supplements. When I brought in that Halloween book, the kids wanted to read it. Except for the 14-year-old, and I told her she could sit there quietly if she didn't want to listen, and everyone else listened. And they were interested, and they were asking questions. . . . Having the reading room opens up more possibilities for them to have more activities, for it to be more of a community center.

We spoke of what would need to change at the i2i for it to be successful, and the suggestions were many, although “seriousness” remained a common theme: “There would need to be more seriousness, there would need to be more professionalism, there would need to be more critical consciousness” (Leader 1).

That leader continued: we needed to heal the “hurt egos” that we all had. We needed to “convince [the others] to show that we are capable of doing something and of doing a lot – I like the idea of giving youths some responsibility.” “I’d like to see [the

institute] working properly,” with a varied schedule, various classes, and a “full reading room.” Perhaps we could “call the community” and show films or otherwise get more people involved in the institute, or we could provide adult literacy courses or help children get into better schools. We also might call up former volunteers, in particular the few Brazilians who were not from Rocinha and had helped the institute in years past, when “we didn’t know how to take advantage of things”:

We could show those people that what they did was not in vain, that it was of great importance, that from that we managed to grow, that from there nowadays we have a place, that we now can work – for example, before we had to adapt ourselves to a . . . preschool that granted us space, and nowadays no, nowadays we can, for example, say, hey, we have a room that we can offer you, a good arts room, with normal tables, we can have a sink in the room, we can have paint, we can have supplies, we can have all that there, you understand? So, we can offer you that. Can you come teach again? Can you do that? We can say to someone else: we want to take up again, to do the story hour. Nowadays we have a reading room, where there are various books, where you really can go and read to the children, you know, various things. The children are more engaged. . . . It’s a population in need. It’s a different kind of person in Rocinha, a kind of person who didn’t have any contact with anything, we went farther in[to Rocinha], it’s a population that’s really in need.

Beth: It’s not [the neighborhood in Rocinha where the preschool is located] anymore.

Leader 1: It’s not [that neighborhood] anymore, yeah. The class in Rocinha that believes it’s not *favelada*.

These interviews did not differ much from our daily conversations, in that, again, we spent much time discussing our fears and frustrations, but we also spoke about how much change we had already experienced. One leader noted, “we are now engaged”:

You arrived, you helped us to organize, in quotes. We started to discuss the things that happen at the institute in a broader, more continuous manner. We were always together, in quotes, despite everything, and we achieved our autonomy.

The fact of our having the weekly meetings impacted us because we [had] never – we [had] never stopped – we never had meetings, to be frank, we just had meetings when Paul came.

Beth: If we have communication problems now, I'm trying to imagine what those meetings were like.

Leader 2: [Laughter] It was once a year, and people still skipped it.

Another leader also talked about my arrival, when I asked about influential events and people in the history of the i2i:

Leader 1: I think your arrival changed a lot.

Beth: How?

Leader 1: It allowed us to see – for us at least to see our shortcomings. I think a lot has already changed. It allowed us to see that we need to communicate more, it allowed us to see that we don't function very well, it allowed us to discuss our topics. It was really worth it, really.

I pointed out that I could not tell if these changes were because of my arrival or the purchase of the building:

That too, of course, but, like, a lot of people had taken the purchase of the building as just a move from one place to another, as if we were changing homes. They hadn't become conscious of the thing, of what it was, of what really has to be done, you know?

Beth: There was a need for new processes.

Leader 1: Yeah, that it's much more than just changing homes, much more. You're not just moving from one house to another, putting in the furniture. You're changing everything, the whole structure.

To the volunteer, I expressed one of my concerns:

Beth: My fear is that the lesson plans we put together are all going to come out of that box [and get lost] or they might even just stay in that box, which is now buried under a bunch of crap in that other room.

Volunteer: My fear also is that there are so many possibilities now, my fear is that everyone is okay with just having possibilities and I know that you mentioned

something about this in a meeting recently, and I thought you were right that everyone [was saying] in the future we need to talk about this. And you said, we need to talk about how we're going to get to that, and I feel like that's something that's still not there.

Similarly, one of the leaders talked about the need to work to think more about how we could achieve our goals. In 2007, Daniel and I would make considerable progress in this vein regarding the reading room, but the process of moving from naming goals to deciding how to work towards these remained difficult when I departed Rocinha for the final time in 2008.

One leader pointed out that we needed to improve communication: “communication among people doesn’t exist. There’s communication between one person and another, but never between one person and everyone else.” Another noted, however, that the meetings had aided communication and that “two or three weeks ago” communication appeared to improve as participants, including members of 2Bros., began e-mailing the entire group, rather than e-mailing each other individually.

The volunteer complained that he or she had attempted to come well prepared to teach and for life in Rocinha but had not received adequate support, despite the many e-mails that were exchanged: s/he would e-send requests for information regarding, for example, rent, and receive a response stating that s/he should not worry about anything and should not forget to pack a bathing suit. Furthermore, s/he had attempted to apply to be a volunteer and had simply been accepted without any need to do anything other than ask if s/he could teach for the institute. Finally, s/he spoke with a former volunteer:

I wasn’t aware of how things worked, probably, less than a week before I came here, and I remember . . . calling my friends, being like, what did I sign up for? Worried because here I was trying to establish myself professionally . . . but here I was thinking this would be good for me professionally and personally and then after I talked to [the former volunteer], it seemed like, I don’t know, high school drama.

Beth: And after you got here?

Volunteer: And then I got here and it seemed even more like high school drama.

The frustrations did not end with the preparations to go to Rocinha:

We had two teacher books and three teachers. So it was always like, where's the book?

It was really frustrating also having the age ranges. I don't know. I mean, who let that happen? Having a 6-year-old and a 14-year-old in the same room is just absurd to say the least, it's just ridiculous. . . . I feel like if the organization gets its act together and understands, you know, it's not the kids' fault that they were put into this classroom in this ridiculous manner. You know, it's not their fault. So I shouldn't have been getting mad at them. I should have been going to the meetings and saying, "what the hell is this?" I just assumed, it's not my place to say, but it is my place to say. If I'm teaching these kids and it's not working, there's a reason. And if I know what the reason is, then why, you know? And so I was happy when I went and voiced my opinion about the 6-year-old and the fact that it was just way too much because it worked. Because then they listened and said, what are we going to do about this. And really I think it was you that was listening and saying, what are we going to do about this because it's not fair for her to have to teach this way because they were all, everyone else was like, yeah, I know, it really sucks, but no one was doing anything, and that was not the first time that I brought it up. It was me at the end of my rope.

When I got here, I thought that everyone had already known a lot more about education and that sort of thing. And then we went to see [a professional English teacher who provided a short orientation to some volunteers] and I realized, holy crap, nobody knows what the hell they're doing. And it scared the shit out of me.

The frustrations and challenges of the first year in question here were repeatedly mentioned by leaders and volunteers alike, in these interviews, in meetings, and in informal conversations. We feared that the i2i would not be able to thrive, and we were aware of the battered egos mentioned by one of the leaders in his or her interview. Still, each of us noted our achievements and expressed hopes and dreams for an ever more successful i2i that might prove itself in 2007, particularly in the first months of that year.

Not surprisingly, 2007 would bring many new disappointments but also many new achievements.

Chapter 6: Reaching Stability and Improving and Expanding Services: March-September 2007

The above account of my first year working with the Instituto Dois Irmãos focuses as much on the growth of the institute as on my primary reason for being in Rocinha: to facilitate the creation of the i2i's reading room. While the institute was clearly not to be held up as a model of good organizational practices, and in particular the seriousness of some leaders continued to be questioned, between March and May, they survived as well without me as they had with me since the initiation of the construction in November. When I arrived during the second week of May 2007, I felt freer to focus my attention on the reading room. Indeed, in one of my first conversations with Washington after my return, he told me that it was time for me to focus on the reading room and to act

Box 66: Changing roles: from being a leader to being a regular volunteer
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as a regular volunteer with a more defined set of roles and tasks. I continued to attend meetings and helped produce a funding proposal; otherwise, with an occasional exception, I took Washington's advice. The following discussion reflects this change. While the themes of 2006 continued to influence the work of 2007, one might say that above I described how we made the Instituto Dois Irmãos, however imperfect, and below I describe how we made the Instituto Dois Irmãos' reading room, which was somewhat more organized but also imperfect. Furthermore, although this section covers the period of March-September 2007, frequent mention is made of continuities from that period through the present: 2007 was characterized primarily by stabilization and institutionalization of patterns and practices.

While I was away between late February and early May, the man whom we had hired to oversee the work, and who had brought in an assistant when many of us ceased

to participate in the manual labor on a daily basis, was fired in a dispute over money and the quality of his work, and the institute ran out of money to continue the renovations. The basic structure for the third floor and roof were in place, but much work remained to be done. For example, the roof, which we planned to use for events, lacked a wall to prevent people from falling off it, the entrance to the second floor was still external, and although the stairs were covered, they were still dangerously steep and uneven. The i2i had less money and less completed construction than expected, not to mention the need to find new workers, but it also had gained experience in hiring, negotiating, and accepting errors as a normal, albeit expensive, part of learning. Furthermore, the dollar continued its alarming devaluation trend, and bank fees climbed.

Preparing the Reading Room for Opening: March-June 2007

Two huge boxes of books arrived from Greg while I was in the United States. They were addressed to me. The Brazilian leaders understood that I had sent them, and they cursed me for having sent such large, heavy boxes that they had to bring back on the bus. Not only did we learn to ask that boxes come in more manageable sizes, but with the donation from the Scruggs family, the size of our collection grew into the hundreds. These books greatly shaped the collection: they are, to this day, a substantial portion of it. This donation consisted of children's books in English, a lot of them at a more sophisticated level than our students' English. These books were, in any case, more useful than the inexplicable Danielle Steele hardcover volumes in English that would later take up much space in our small room.

Box 67: A donation from the Scruggs family
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When I arrived, I saw that the books and other materials (e.g., VHS tapes and board games) had been moved for the renovations, and those materials that had been

cataloged were mixed with those that had not been. Furthermore, we had received the aforementioned two large boxes of books from the Scruggs family. The workspace that

Box 68: Crowded, disorganized workspace
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served as an office and processing area for the reading room was perhaps six feet wide and seven feet deep. It contained a hutch of sorts with drawers on the bottom and two shelves on the top, a computer desk and broken chair, one school chair attached to a desk, and boxes and piles of books. Some of the books were placed on the second floor or elsewhere on the first floor, but almost all of the space was reserved for one activity or another, and maneuvering in the office area took patience and agility. We had six hundred or more volumes, plus other items, that we expected to include in our LibraryThing catalog, and throughout this period, we would receive a series of small donations from people I knew personally and from the library of an English school, IBEU, numbering in total fewer than one hundred volumes. The scene was nothing short of overwhelming.

My first task, then, was to understand what had occurred with the books and other media in my absence. The VHS tapes, cassettes, CDs, toys, and games had been kept mostly separate, but the books, comic books and magazines had gotten mixed up. In mid-May, while Daniel created records for books that we believed not to have been cataloged, I attempted to separate the books according to whether they had already been cataloged, at first relying on whether the volumes had control numbers from LibraryThing written inside their front covers. On May 15, I wrote, “A lot of the books already had control numbers written in them, but a lot that had been cataloged did not have control numbers. The books had been messed with more than once.” While I wanted to separate the books by their categories from the beginning, I did not have enough room to work with, and so I

started by separating the cataloged materials into children's literature, didactic materials, and everything else.

Someone walking into the room could have been excused for not realizing that the books had been separated, and Daniel and I worried that our efforts would be undone:

Daniel and I worked on the books until his 7:30 class started around 8:00 (the teacher was late, apparently because he was getting his hair cut). I have taken to using pages from the incomplete dictionary to label boxes, piles, and (at Daniel's request) the computer: [asking people not to touch the materials or to return them to where they had found them if they needed to use them].

Daniel had returned to taking English classes at the institute. One can also see from this quotation that the difficulties with volunteers had not disappeared.

Meanwhile, Daniel sped ahead with cataloging the items that he had already identified as not having been cataloged and the ones that I pulled out from the piles for him. He encountered an occasional question, such as what to do with *Reader's Digest* condensed versions of two novels by different authors that had been bound together, a book that appeared to me to be in Dutch, and a book that was in Portuguese and very inappropriate for children. "Worse," I wrote, "was the one in Japanese. We settled on a title in brackets that was really a description: something like '[Português para falantes de japonês]' ('Portuguese for Japanese Speakers')," since we were unable to find the ISBN in any database and did not have the knowledge to transcribe, or possibly even locate, the title. All in all, however, his work went smoothly, and I tried to keep a steady flow of books into the "for cataloging" box so that he would not sit idly waiting for me. I had a hard time keeping pace with him on days when he was able to devote his time to cataloging.

Daniel and I perceived a continued lack of interest regarding the reading room on the part of the other leaders. Having given up on collaborative decision making regarding

the reading room for all but the biggest of decisions with anyone who did not happen to be in the room when a decision needed to be made, I taped a pile of badly damaged books back together as well as I could and dropped them in the box of items that the students would be free to take. While I was particularly careful to seek Daniel's advice because he remained interested in participating, I had also come to be better able to predict his decisions based on our work together, and so I was more willing to perform small acts like that one on my own. In other words, I took on a more active role in decision making regarding the reading room as the kinds of decisions we were making shifted from grand themes to daily practices and the two of us who were the most involved in creating those practices came to agree on these. Later, in 2008, I would do even more independent work using the practices that we were refining in 2007, and I would defer nearly all questions of judgment regarding the reading room to Daniel.

We had not yet decided what to do with the *Where's Waldo?* volumes, and one

Box 69: A student contributes to the classification of materials
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student suggested that we simply use “jogos,” or “games.” We later took the student's advice and also created entries for our card games, board games, and puzzle books using that category.

For much of the rest of May, I shuffled books around, checking that they had been cataloged once and only once, verifying that the control number was legible, marking them off in a column I created in the spreadsheet of records that LibraryThing generated, and separating them by category, praying that no one would move anything and labeling everything accordingly. Meanwhile, I thought about Daniel's categories and hoped that we would be able to test them with users. I found a few items that had been incorrectly numbered (we had received a large number of two different books with similar titles, and sometimes their control numbers were switched in the books), but I was mostly pleased

with the records that had clearly been generated by Daniel, and I would soon stop checking his work. Other records had more clearly been generated by someone else, such as in the case of books that had been cataloged twice or that had been placed in new and novel categories that were not in the list from which we were working. While it was good to see that others had made an occasional attempt to help with the cataloging, Daniel was clearly the only one who had developed skill in this area.

I confused myself so much with the inconsistencies of the catalog and piles of books that within a week, I was retracing my steps to retrieve materials that I had chosen to discard in the “take one” box, in the stack of materials to be cut up for making lesson plans, and in the stack of classroom materials. Overwhelmed by the confusion, I wrote “I half expect to find a pile or even a box that I hadn't noticed somewhere in that mess!” Yet, as I wrote on May 19, I was putting order to the chaos despite the work conditions:

Yesterday, Daniel asked me if we were going to be able to shelve the books based on what I've been doing. I said we absolutely would be able to do so, that I was separating and labeling them. He said it didn't look like it. That's how much of a mess the place is! We don't have enough boxes, and even if we did, we wouldn't have anywhere to put them. I've done a lot of my work while sitting on boxes of books, presumably crushing some of them. I don't have much of a choice.

Indeed, my piles were stacked atop other piles, with pieces of paper used as labels for each pile, and all I could do was hope that no one would shuffle anything. People were constantly entering the room and picking up books, and I was constantly telling them that they were welcome to look but begging them to put the books back exactly where they had found them when they were done. On May 22, I wrote, “it's even hard to walk around here. . . . Everything is labeled by category, and if anyone messes with anything, we'll be back where we started!”

Box 70: The
i2i's first
bookcases

On May 20, we were offered what would become some of our most valuable belongings. I shared lunch with a group of Fulbright scholars and volunteers (some of whom were both). Teresa Cribelli, who would be leaving Rio de Janeiro soon, offered us bookshelves, two tables, and some reference materials, an area in which our collection was particularly weak:

Pleasant, no work except for a brief discussion of the bookshelf donation. [Teresa] said, "you don't have many bookshelves, do you?," to which I responded, "we don't have any bookshelves." She said, "oh!," kind of jumped up and leaned back, and said something to the effect that we'll really be able to use them, then.

On May 28, I called Teresa and her husband, Daniel, who told me that the three male leaders had gone by earlier that day and picked up the large metal bookcase, the two tables, and some paint. The men were particularly pleased with the tables, and before she left, Teresa gave me the dictionaries, which greatly improved our reference collection. By then, the group had also begun discussing buying or making additional shelving, perhaps with wood from the construction.

While Daniel did most of the cataloging, one or another leader would occasionally act interested in doing some. Daniel and I were both frustrated with what we saw as a lack of collaboration or engagement, but I was worried that anyone who came in and started cataloging at that late date and under our crowded and precarious conditions would do more harm than good:

When [one of the leaders] arrived, Daniel set him to cataloging. He is frustrated that he is the only one doing any cataloging – my taking over and not doing what I have been doing wouldn't solve the problem. First, I am basically acting as his assistant, organizing what he throws at me, and consultant, answering his questions about difficult-to-decipher items. Secondly, he has repeatedly expressed frustration and anger that I'm here offering this service and no one appreciates it/makes use of it/helps to make it happen.

But we're so close to done with this collection that I'm not sure [the other leader] should be cataloging right now – the last time [s/he] tried to catalog, most, if not all (there were only a handful), had to be edited. Yesterday [s/he] proudly plowed through apparently a couple dozen volumes. . . . I also saw [him/her] going into the office this afternoon – I really hope [s/he] didn't try to do anything alone.

Daniel showed [the other leader] how to fill out a record when the ISBN does not appear in the database queried by LibraryThing (set to LC). When [said leader] encountered a book without an ISBN, [s/he] asked what to do. Daniel and I mocked [him/her].

I wrote the above text on May 19. On May 22, I downloaded a new copy of the spreadsheet and found another nearly ninety books. Some of the records were missing the text in the “comments” section, where we noted the condition of the volume and who had donated it, and some were even missing any “tags,” or categories. They went in a box for Daniel to fix or for us to insist that the other leader fix. The following week, I noted that Daniel had forgotten that we had a “reference” category, and I added some reference books to the box. I made some changes from literature to non-fiction for books whose category would reasonably not be obvious to a non-native speaker. I also spent some time locating some books that had gone missing.

On May 22, a different leader decided to do some cataloging:

[One leader] asked to catalog books and actually did so until the lights went out. They came on immediately, but [s/he] went on to other things. When [s/he] asked to learn to use the program, I asked [him/her] to take a good look around the program. Then I made . . . a list of categories and wrote down what we use in the comments section. [S/he] went flying along – the books [s/he's] working on came from Greg's family, so they have ISBNs and are in the collections of the Library of Congress. [S/he] said the work was easy – I'm waiting until [s/he] encounters something "interesting" without an ISBN. And then [s/he] realized [s/he] hadn't been writing the numbers in the books, so I told [him/her] to go look for the records and get the numbers. [S/he] started browsing by title and asked me if there wasn't some other way to find books. I told [him/her] to search, and [s/he] responded by asking if there wasn't a list of recent books. I haven't used the program much, and I'd forgotten about the recent books list, which is exactly where [one] grabs a record to edit it when [one] finds it in a database via the

ISBN. So, there [s/he] went, clicking on records and writing the numbers in the books until the lights went out and [s/he] moved on to other things. I was not positioned to see the screen, but [s/he] was certainly looking at the screen and writing something in the books.

I had grown so suspicious of anyone other than Daniel who offered to help with the reading room that the last sentence above was not written entirely in jest: the offers were still so rare that, although I tried to welcome and encourage them, I not only wondered whether the records would have to be edited, but I also questioned the sincerity of the offers. While one of the leaders never cataloged any items and Daniel did the bulk of the work, the other two occasionally pitched in over the following month.

I wondered whether Daniel's three levels of children's to young adult literature would hold once our students began to use the collection. He, too, understood that this was an experiment, and I was not worried that he would be offended if we later decided that some books' categories needed to be changed, but I was concerned about the amount of work that doing so could eventually entail.

By May 24, we were up to nearly 500 items, and I was anxious to color-code the spines of the books and acquire shelves. Around that time, LibraryThing began to experience frequent down and slow time, which was eventually remedied by additional servers, but slowed our work down in late May. Competition for the computer and Internet, and the fact that our Internet connection and sometimes even the electricity could not be counted on to work, made finishing the cataloging even more difficult.

On May 29, lacking more appropriate materials, I began cutting strips of old construction paper to use as labels on individual volumes. Daniel and I had decided to use two strips taped to the books near the bottom of their spines: one for the language, and, below that strip, one for the category.

Considering Acquisitions, May-June 2007

On May 31, I attended a book fair with the idea of talking about it in that evening's meeting and deciding whether to return with Daniel and some money to make our first acquisitions trip ever. The fair was just a bus ride away, but the idea of any kind of acquisitions activity was novel. I had already burdened myself down with catalogs when Daniel and an old volunteer who was back in town and whom I had yet to meet (and who would later paint an image on an interior wall for us and finish the box of lesson plans, both without any discord) called to say that they were stuck on a bus in traffic but would be arriving to join me in scouting out the fair. When they arrived, we walked around the small but crowded fair for a while, stopping at the booth of the Instituto C&A, which has a project to provide books to groups like ours, and then the electricity went out. It was hot, crowded, and "crawling with schoolchildren," and so we sat down for water, looked over some of the catalogs, and headed back to Rocinha for the meeting.

In that meeting, I passed out the catalogs and was amazed to see that we paid attention to them. We started by looking at some of the catalogs and taking notes on which items we would like to have in our collection, with the idea that we might someday

Box 71: Analyzing publishers' catalogs

send proposals for donations to publishers, but also to begin to think about the ways in which we might expand the collection in a more focused manner. Washington wanted titles for teenagers that he deemed fun to read, and I said that these volumes did not fit our previous description of the collection that we wanted, but that it should be possible to modify the description, as long as we took care to do so consciously. He also picked out some Shakespearean plays, abridged and in translation. Viviana expressed frustration in having to choose books

based on the very little information provided in catalogs and took the opportunity to talk about seeking funding from a variety of institutions, including Instituto C&A. Rogério found some titles in Spanish and English, as well as “a list of books, many of them of the culture, life as a teen, life as a poor person, racism, and Brazil (know your country) variety.” Daniel started his response by stating that he believed we should concentrate on opening the reading room and seeing what actually got used. He was annoyed about the load of books that a former volunteer had insisted we pick up and that had turned out to be a collection of old books that were falling apart and unlikely to be of interest to our students. Indeed, I saw the exercise as a way of increasing engagement and taking advantage of the fact that the fair was being held, not of actually making any changes to the decision we had made about the scope of the collection when I wrote my article for the CRB:

I spoke last, as I had intended. While I spoke, Rogério was rather vocal, saying we were thinking alike. He's usually quite quiet, so I usually see his talking as a good sign.

I said I had chosen my titles based on what we had determined earlier: that the reading room would be for our students and volunteers, plus our future adult literacy students. I asked myself, under the circumstances, what books in Portuguese would be admissible (we hadn't found much in other languages) and decided that, other than the materials that would be of use for literacy courses, books to learn about Brazil and Brazilian culture might still fit in our profile. So, I focused on folklore and geography, as well as Portuguese grammar. I said I also thought the "what do I do if I'm pregnant?" books could be made to fit, since they're so important to the reality of Rocinha, even if they don't really fit a strict definition of what . . . is [needed] to help keep our classes going.

Later in the meeting, we:

quickly agreed that there should be bookshelves in the classroom – earlier in the week, Rogério had said he wanted to put our one set of shelves in the classroom upstairs and I had somewhat jealously defended my interests. We were unable to

come up with a number: they just come in such different sizes and we have various ideas regarding how we could make our own.

For example, Washington and Daniel would like to make shelves between the columns with bricks and wood, big enough to use the top shelf as a table for people to read or perhaps for computers. I suggested a number, one that was so meaningless that I have no idea what it was, and we went on from there.

We then talked about whether Daniel and I should return to the fair. One leader stated that it would cost us nothing to do so, to which we responded that it would cost us time, bus fare, and the entrance fee. We settled on our returning with R\$100, approximately \$50. With that money, we acquired two identical Portuguese dictionaries (each cost R\$10, and we would leave one in the reference collection and one on the shelf behind the computer), a sex education book, and a volume of literacy exercises. We returned with change, having found the other offerings too expensive or out of scope.

Box 72: Purchasing materials

Preparing Materials for Shelving: June 2007

Labeling the books turned out to be even more time-consuming, boring, and difficult on my back than I had expected. Indeed, it was so boring that I frequently committed errors: I would place the wrong language label on a whole pile of books before realizing what I had done. I found that I could work for some four hours per day on this task and needed to take a day off after three or four because there was no good place or position in which to work, such that my back would begin to ache. I resumed my old habit of spending time outside of Rocinha, writing, but also working on an outside project. I also spent a great deal of time doing what I thought of as sitting around and doing nothing, waiting for others, and making myself nervous thinking about all of the other things I could be doing. When Daniel complained that I should spend less time on the outside project and stop neglecting my “real work,” I got angry, writing:

No one except (to some extent) him seems at all interested in participating, acting, or researching, so what work? Should I be the only one labeling books? Wasn't that supposed to be a group effort? I should be verifying books [i.e., records], but LibraryThing has been down. When I called him this morning, he told me it was back up, so I plan to spend the afternoon doing so. I just can't let him suck me into sitting on his couch all afternoon. I felt like the pot was calling the kettle black – we both do some work, but neither of us does quite enough, in part because we don't get enough support. If [another leader, who was frequently absent] had said something like that to me, [s/he] likely would have gotten an earful.

As it was, I kept my comments to myself and headed back to Rocinha in the early afternoon after doing some writing. I identified two books that had been tagged with a category that we were not using, four non-fiction works that had been tagged as literature, one non-fiction work that had been cataloged as didactic, and one unusual item that I wanted to discuss and was in favor of discarding. Twenty-seven items were missing, and I would locate them throughout the institute in the following days. Still other titles were improperly alphabetized in LibraryThing and the records needed to be modified to start the titles with the first noun in the title rather than an article. I also decided to discard two volumes that were in exceedingly poor condition and, to make room, set aside all extra copies of books, which I defined as all but the first three of any work. Whether we should give the extra copies away or hold on to them for group readings had not yet been decided. One teacher requested access to multiple copies of a work so that he could use it in class, but all of the works of which we had a large number were either in Portuguese or were adult fiction in English, too difficult for his students. Finally, in late June, I began to question quite a few of the decisions Daniel had made regarding children's literature, and on June 22, I had the opportunity to ask him about those decisions. It was then that I learned that he was cataloging the English-language children's books in the three levels based on how difficult he thought they would be for our students.

The work would continue in this vein for several more weeks, as I alternated between quality control and labeling duties. Over those weeks, volunteers occasionally offered to help label books, although I did the vast majority myself. They would also sometimes offer advice, sometimes but not always solicited. For example, one volunteer wanted to lay the books down rather than stand them up on the shelves, stating that doing so would be better for their spines. While I usually sought to be more democratic and bring questions up in meetings, I dismissed the suggestion, pointing out that it would be nicer on us and our users in terms of displaying, finding, and retrieving books to stand them up.

Box 73: Working only with Daniel or alone: would the rest of the leadership take ownership of the reading room?

On June 20, I found myself in the position of doing what I feared I would have to do: I “tried to understand the mess that had been made of the boxes of books.” Fortunately, many of the volumes had already received their individual labels. At the same time, I had grown more frustrated with two leaders who were frequently present but appeared to do little. I asked them to help label books, and they responded that that was the volunteers' job; they were available for decision making. As two volunteers and I labeled books, one of the leaders “painted people's keys. I picked up Daniel's for him, and so now my hands are covered with paint that I suspect will not come off very easily. I'm feeling quite frustrated today.” We seemed to be so close to opening the reading room, the institute was clearly functioning and offering classes, and yet I still worried about seriousness and participation in both the day-to-day activities of the institute and reading room and in the more difficult decisions that we still needed to make for both.

That day, Viviana “pointed out that the bookshelves do not look too stable.” I agreed with her and hoped that we would attach it to the wall and add something on each

Box 74:
More
bookcases

side to keep the books from falling out. On June 26, Socorro, who would become our literacy teacher in 2008, offered us a second bookcase, one that her husband had stored in pieces in their home across the alley. Rogério, Washington, and I hauled it down the stairs, and:

Washington and I, with a bit of help and a lot of discussion . . . got the thing together. It seems stable, but there were leftover heavy pieces that look to me like they were meant for reinforcement. Also, Daniel and I are convinced that at least some of it is upside-down. . . . We filled it with books and labeled the sections. We are in dire need of bookends.

During this session, I learned something that surprised me greatly: when he invited me to create a library for Two Brothers, Paul characterized it as the group’s idea, and upon my arrival, I came to believe that the idea had been Paul’s, in part because I recognized a pattern in which Paul appeared to use the “royal we.” As we attempted to reconstruct the bookcase, I learned that Washington had been the first one to suggest a library. The other leaders who were present corroborated his story.

Over the short run and lacking the tools or height to attempt to tighten the metal case, the best I could do was to be careful to remind people who touched the cases to start from the bottom and work up when filling them and to go in the opposite direction when shifting books off of them. Since almost no one but me touched the books once they were shelved, reminding those who worked with the metal bookcase that it was not very stable was rather easy. Fortunately, the metal bookcase was in the back of the building, and, except for a “table” that one leader constructed out of books and a plank of wood⁵² and the computer chair, no furniture ever fell over, down, or apart. Furthermore, being “in dire need of bookends” is the kind of

Box 75: Washington
tells me that having a
library was his idea

create a library for Two Brothers, Paul characterized it as the group’s idea, and upon my arrival, I came to believe that

Box 76:
Changing
needs

situation that we could not have so much as imagined a year earlier, when we were in dire need of chairs, a computer, and books, let alone bookcases and bookends.

We had exceeded seven hundred records on June 27, 2006, only a few books remained to be labeled, and it was time to attempt to clean up our LibraryThing catalog. I started with the typographical errors in the tags, cursing LibraryThing for not providing the option of a drop-down menu that might help keep our catalog more standardized. I made some adjustments to the “comments” section in an attempt to standardize the language used for donations that had come from a single source. Then I began looking around for collections of books that had been split into more than one category, as was the case with the classic Brazilian author Monteiro Lobato, and to find books that were falling apart. Although tape may not be recommended for long-term preservation, Daniel and I decided that for our circulating collection, tape and even the occasional cover made out of construction paper might allow some items to be used by a few more patrons before they would fall completely apart.

We had visitors one day that week, and one of them made me think about the definition of a reading room in a way that I had never before considered:

When we got back to the institute, the two women looked impressed with the full bookshelves. She said that Paul hadn't told her about the books. I said that was funny. She said he had told her about the reading room but not about the books – the more I think about it, the more curious I am about his description. What would a reading room without books be like? Would it have computers? Newspapers? Just some chairs? I mean, I can easily imagine a periodicals room or a computer center, but I got the impression that her idea of the reading room was quite literally that: a place for reading. Where users would perhaps provide their own materials.

What we had instead – and of this I was painfully aware – was a room full of books with nowhere to read. Of course, we had nowhere to do much of anything, cramped as we were into small classrooms and a small office/reading room.

With most of the books on the shelves, enthusiasm seemed to break out: two of the leaders, including the one who had never created a LibraryThing record, began labeling books without prompting, and a third enjoyed creating a cover for a book that any library would have discarded. Washington took it upon himself to search for and identify a program that we could use to register users while we waited for LibraryThing to include such functionality, and we settled on MiniBiblio, a small, simple piece of software. As we worked with it, we would come to notice its shortcomings, but the fact that it required very little hard drive space or other resources allowed the i2i to use it until the computer itself was nearly unusable when running a Windows operating system. After choosing MiniBiblio, Washington decided to play a joke on Daniel:

Box 77: Enthusiasm grows and Washington chooses MiniBiblio
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As I was getting ready to send the message to my committee and head up to Daniel's house, Washington arrived. I decided to take advantage of the fact that he was there and interested in working on the reading room. I went to have lunch at home, and when I got back, he had located some programs for lending books. He seems to be dying to create a new catalog, something that I am dying to avoid. On the phone, he told Daniel that everything would have to be done again, and when Daniel came downstairs he asked [why]. Why he would ever believe anything Washington said is beyond me. I clarified that whatever system we use now (until LibraryThing includes a module for lending) will have to have the control numbers from LibraryThing of the books that get used, that we'd input just that and maybe part of the title for each such book. He said, "ah, tá" ["oh, okay"] and sat back, no longer looking as if he were about to attack someone. He really has done a lot of work.

We also began to talk about the reading room in a focused manner during meetings. On June 21, we talked about both our potential users and the physical structure of the reading room:

The meeting went fine. I asked that we come up with a list of challenges that we may face with the reading room and decisions we need to make. I told them I'd like to record next week's discussion.

Viviana said we should discuss our public, for what our reading room should serve, like I had said to her. Daniel's eyes grew large, and I corrected her quickly: I believe that the group needs to be reminded of the decision we already made. She said we cannot keep changing our minds, that once we choose a path, we have to stay on it. I said we shouldn't refuse to consider making changes but that we had to make changes consciously and that if we make changes, we need to do so with even more seriousness than we had when we made the original decision.

We had a fairly lengthy discussion regarding bookshelves. Rogério pointed out that there is wood we won't need on the roof that could be used for bookshelves. I told him that we also need to cover the sides of the metal shelving unit, and he said that would be no problem.

Such conversations and decisions may seem to an outsider to be nothing but the normal functioning of an organization, but I had seen only a year earlier small misunderstandings like that caused by the suggestion that I wanted to redefine our intended public turn into weeks-long feuds and arguments in which it was not even clear why we were fighting.

In short, regarding the reading room, the period of March-June 2007 was one in which we formulated many specific questions and answered these through experimentation and deliberation. To my and Daniel's chagrin, much of this deliberation occurred between only the two of us, but, just as had occurred with the construction, as it became increasingly apparent that the reading room would

Box 78: Talking through misunderstandings

functioning of an organization, but I had seen only a year earlier small misunderstandings like that caused by the

Box 79: Formulating specific questions and answering these through experimentation and deliberation

come to exist, other leaders and volunteers began to take a more active interest in it and to participate in this cycle of reflection, planning, and action.

Opening and Managing the Reading Room: June-September 2007

As we grew closer to being able to open the reading room, it became easier for me to lead discussions regarding rules for use of the reading room. In 2006, I was unable to

Box 80: Reaching decisions in an efficient fashion
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maintain the group's attention on determining which of the materials that had been donated to us should be excluded from our collection (in a meeting that one volunteer later described as the worst in her life). In late June and early July 2007, in two meetings, we were able to determine whom we would invite to use the reading room, decide on hours of operation, set lending rules, and even create documentation (a list of rules and a consent form) that later required only light editing. We then performed the editing in a timely fashion and distributed the forms to the institute's students and volunteers.

We made many of these decisions in our June 28 meeting:

We agreed to open the reading room the Monday after next – that is to say, I gave that date and no one disagreed. I felt that the discussion went well, although I spoke more than I had hoped to, and we didn't actually discuss anyone's list of concerns/challenges. The conversation centered on renewals and repercussions if someone doesn't return a book. We seemed mostly to allow Daniel to make the decisions, although everyone but me thought it best to allow people to renew once a week and only in person (I would have chosen either every two weeks for renewal or allowing every other renewal to be by phone, but I was careful not to push, only to suggest).

We settled on "a month" for keeping a book before having to return it if someone else wants it. I hope we interpret "a month" as "four weeks" in practice.

I pointed out that the reference collection cannot circulate, and Viviana said that should be made clear on the shelf. . . .

[One volunteer] suggested we let people be late twice before charging but not announce the fact.

We seem to have settled on having people who lose or ruin books get us a donation of two books that we're willing to accept – or one dictionary, which was [a volunteer's] idea and I couldn't agree more that dictionaries are valuable enough to us for us to count them as two volumes.

So, we seem to have made the easy decisions regarding borrowing – how many, for how long, to whom – but we have yet to finish our discussion of consequences for lateness, loss or destructions.

Still, we left some decisions for future meetings:

We also need to make personnel/operating decisions.

And we need to come up with systems for registering users and recording borrowing and use. . . . Daniel pointed out that a lot of our collection is worthless to us (Celso Furtado and Engels don't mean much to him – the stuff from [a former volunteer's] friend is historically and academically meaningful but perhaps of limited use for us, and I have no idea to whom an *Enciclopédia Barsa* from 1957(?) would be of use), that we should be able to get rid of it as we see what is used and run out of room. . . .

Daniel took the opportunity to reflect on the many changes at the i2i since we began our journey more than a year earlier:

Daniel said that the group has improved, as a group and individually. And then he gave an example: he said he "morria de medo" [used to be scared to death] to write things (he was vague – "essas coisas" [those things]) but with my help he got going on the proposal and saw that he was capable. He stressed the importance of seeing our work as a process of learning, that the groups and individuals will grow together with the institute, learning new skills. The man could have written the part of my proposal that I don't believe I quite articulated about personal growth and learning/consolidation of the group. I can't say that many of these changes were necessarily due to my presence, much less to the reading room project, but I have clearly participated in, and at times acted as a crutch in, this growth process that all three of the guys have mentioned in one way or another to me.

Box 81: A leader speaks of collective and personal growth

Daniel's comments demonstrate that he believed we were successfully learning by doing

Box 82: Extended epistemology and a community of practice at the i2i

and that we were learning on all four of Heron and Reason's (1997, 2001) epistemological levels. We were building a community of practice that would grow stronger over time, he believed.

On July 9, 2007, we officially opened the reading room. Rogério had called our students the previous week and invited them to stop by. Other than that time-consuming and expensive act (telephone service, especially to cellular numbers, remains prohibitively expensive in Brazil), there was no fanfare involved in opening the reading room: we simply began to register users and to lend them books. Individuals wishing to borrow books were provided a form to sign and a list of rules for using the collections.

Box 83: Opening the reading room

That day, several of our adult students stopped by, although the i2i's classes were on vacation. Some borrowed books. Since that day, few have expressed interest in using the reading room, and the three administrators and I, all of whom have observed the actions of these students, believe that this lack of interest has more to do with the students than with the nature of the collections: as adults, they have other priorities and time commitments, and they first visited the reading room out of consideration for us. Although the collection is small, from the beginning it has included several classics in Portuguese, English-language books at all reading levels, and non-fiction and reference materials in both languages; given the adults' lack of easy access to print materials and their twice-weekly visits to the i2i, one would expect at least their occasional perusal of the shelves if they were seeking non-periodical reading materials. (The i2i has neither the

Box 84: Few adult students use the reading room

space nor the funds to collect periodicals.) Furthermore, since we first opened the reading room, the books and comic books have been in clear view when students arrive at the i2i. They may, however, not have been aware of the i2i's smaller and less visible DVD and videocassette collections, which were housed in the next room for lack of space. One of the adults, who worked in a hotel, on several occasions brought us books from the hotel's library, primarily adult fiction in English, since the establishment was weeding and updating its collection. During the first semester of 2008, the i2i began to experiment with having adult students use the reading room as part of their class duties.

Volunteers have been using the collections for classroom activities and, to a lesser extent, for their own reading interests. The idea of creating a “volunteers' corner” of materials that might help them understand Brazil, Rio, Rocinha, and favelas more generally would require collecting new materials and is not currently being actively pursued, although the idea has not been discarded and was included in a recent grant application. For now, the i2i's leadership is learning from their observations of teachers' use of what is currently available to them: they have experimented with reclassifying some non-fiction materials as didactic and moved the didactic materials into the classroom and out of the overcrowded reading room area. Since I left in February 2008, some volunteers have taken an interest in expanding the reading room's collections and technology resources, and they have begun applying for grants. They are also focusing their efforts on furnishing the reading room with computers.

Box 85: Volunteers and the reading room

Few of the children visited until classes began, perhaps because most of our younger students were new, while the adults were mostly returning for another semester

of classes or already had a relationship with the i2i before beginning classes. Indeed, on July 18, one leader asked about the reading room, and:

I said that as far as I know, we had had readers only on the previous Monday. [The leader] rolled [his/her] eyes, frowned, and sighed, saying we shouldn't have opened it yet, that it wasn't working. [Another leader] immediately argued that people will start using it once classes are back in session. I pointed out that anyone who didn't return or renew that day would be late and that we had a process for lost books but none for late ones.

I had made the same point to Rogério earlier when we were alone at the institute, and in the meeting he reiterated what he had told me: that he believed the penalty should be two weeks without taking out books. Viviana said that would discourage people from using the reading room. I wanted some kind of rule to increase the likelihood of equal treatment, but Daniel said we should call the person and see what the problem is, and that was the decision we went with. I asked about and registered in the minutes the possibility of developing a process should that tactic be insufficient.

In our August 22 meeting, we again took up the theme of adult users. My field notes state:

At one point, I said that our adult students aren't using the reading room, and Viviana asked if we should ask them what they want in the collection. Daniel responded, quickly, that the problem isn't what she was referring to – they never came in to check the place out in the first place. I believe it was Rogério who said the problem is habit. I suggested that adults are also busier than children, and Washington said we really haven't had adults since the day we opened. I responded that they seemed to come on the first day out of "consideração" [consideration for us], and Washington nodded his head in agreement. Of course, we can still use asking them what they'd like as a way of encouraging them to get involved, but we shouldn't think that the poverty of our collection is a major factor in why they aren't using it much in the first place. Daniel said one of the adults took out a book for children in English. He noted that the book was more accessible to her.

We taped that meeting; among Daniel's words were, "I didn't see any interest on their part."

In that meeting, I brought up the fact that I would be leaving soon. Melodramatic responses to such statements were common, and Washington did not disappoint when he exclaimed, “oh, no!” I pretended to take his exclamation seriously:

Come on, I’m not going to disappear. . . . I think you already have everything you need to conduct that research with the students, while I’m gone, to see what they liked, what they didn’t like. . . . Then because of the IRB, I can interview you.

Washington responded that we were already making changes to the reading room based on the children’s practices. I said, “right, we’ve been experimenting. You’re already starting to conduct research.” Although they continued to make such observations and changes, they closed the reading room for renovations at the end of the semester and did not reopen it until mid-February 2008.

The spring semester began in early August, and we established a schedule for the semester that kept the reading room open at least from thirty minutes before any class until thirty minutes after it, meaning that the institute and reading room were open

Box 86: Instituting hours of operation and introducing the children to the reading room

most mornings, afternoons, and evenings, Monday through Thursday, and most Saturday mornings. I spoke about the reading room to each class, and Daniel gave tours to the children. On August 7, I wrote about the previous morning’s tour:

When the 9-10 class got out (late, around 10:15), Daniel called the eight kids to talk to them about the reading room. A few minutes earlier, he had told me that he wanted to send a form home with the kids for them to be allowed to use the reading room. I complained about the IRB forms and reminded him that the form we’d already used with adults had been designed for people of all ages (there is a line for guardians to sign). He found it in the computer and edited it, for example, getting rid of the part about the hours of operation during vacation. He also put together a document announcing the classes we have available, and I marked it up (removed extra spaces and periods, fixed accent marks).

When the kids got downstairs, they first wanted to pay attention to the screen saver of a dog licking the screen, so Daniel hit a key and made the screen saver go away. Then he told them that the reading room is available to them, that they can take out books once someone who is responsible for them signs the form that he was passing out. As they were leaving, he called them back and said they could look but couldn't take out any books until they got the form signed. He explained that there were kids' books and I told them that we have books in English and Portuguese, plus even some in Spanish and French. When they were told they could look at the books, they hurried over to the back room and all started talking at once: "eu vou levar esse livro" ["I'm going to take this book"]; "não, eu vou levar esse livro" ["No, I'm going to"]; "Barbie!"

Not half an hour went by, and one of the students was back with her signed form. She went and grabbed her two books, and I told her to see Daniel before leaving. He added her and the books (one Barbie and one Strawberry Shortcake, both in English, he's telling me – he said he think[s] she went for the books that were the pinkest) and let her leave. As she was leaving, he told her that she had a week to return the books but that she could bring them back sooner and get other ones if she wanted to. I told him it was smart of him to tell her she could bring them back sooner, that one has to be very clear and literal with children. We laughed at the idea of a child's holding onto a book for exactly a week because she had been told that she had a week.

Once Daniel introduced the children to the reading room, they came to occupy the small space, and we had difficulty even keeping up with the demand for the permission slips

Box 87: High demand for the reading room

that the children took pride in signing after their parents had done so. On August 10, I described the scene of the previous day, which would turn out to be quite typical: "Opened a few minutes earlier than on Tuesday, maybe 8:40. Kids running around in the reading room, returning books, taking out books, before and after class. Gratifying, and Daniel has the right mix of firmness and patience with them."

For several weeks, they took out books in English at a faster rate than we could have imagined, until they "discovered" the books in Portuguese: it was not until one of them realized that

Box 88: The children "discover" books in Portuguese

we had Portuguese-language books on her own and spread the word that they began to use these materials:

Daniel told me that the morning kids had taken out more books and that one of the girls "descobriu que tinha livros em português" ["discovered that there were books in Portuguese]. He told me he told her, "sempre tinha" [there always were], and I noted that we'd told them so, but we're talking about kids here!

The i2i has not been able to keep up with the children's demand for Portuguese-language materials, and their preferences had already begun to shape collection decisions before the children were formally invited to help make collection decisions in January 2008.

Although we deemed the reading room a great success with the children and had

Box 89: The "reading room" is inadequate for the act of reading

decided not to worry yet about the adults' lack of use of its resources, the space was crowded, and

the children would borrow books and leave quickly; "reading room" was a misnomer:

I had to stop mid-sentence yesterday because the kids arrived from class en masse to use the reading room. Okay, so there were only about five of them, but that is a lot for this small space when they're all trying to talk to me at once. And by "use," I mean grab books and run out of here as quickly as possible. (August 15, 2007)

In short, the demand from the children has been high from the beginning, and they feel comfortable at the Institute, a fact that was reinforced during my visit of early 2008, when classes were not in session and the reading room was closed for renovations, yet many of the children were present at the Institute at least once a week.

Furthermore, the i2i has encountered none of the troubles of destruction or theft with which public libraries are said to contend. One girl helped us on

Box 90: A student lends a hand and contrasts the reading room with her school's library

August 16 and complained about the "library lady" at her public school:

I got to the office around 9:40 and the children came downstairs very soon thereafter. There was a lot of asking of questions simultaneously, but Daniel was

sitting at the computer, so he checked the books out for the kids and answered their questions, plus told one of them she couldn't take out a dictionary. There was a boy there today, which was quite unusual. . . .

There was a girl in the room, D., who I believe is the boy's sister. She kept moving books around to line them up more nicely – Washington has taken to putting books back where they belong and making a big deal about it for my benefit, but she was just kind of organizing the books in a way that made me wonder if her neatness habit didn't sometimes get out of hand. Daniel suggested to her, as he had mentioned just before the kids came downstairs, that since she liked helping out like that, maybe she could help me move books. Yesterday Daniel and I had discussed moving more of the children's books into the front room and moving the didactic materials to the back room to increase the visibility of the children's books and keep a better eye on the kids. I tried to get as much of the infantil, infanto-juvenil, and comic books into the front room as possible, while worrying about weight, particularly with the metal shelves (the wood ones seem like they would need to be extremely top-heavy before uneven distribution of weight would be a problem). The girl enthusiastically helped move books, and her brother got into the act for a while but was also involved in watching the animated film (*The Ant Bully*) that Rogério was watching. All of a sudden we had an empty bottom shelf on the metal unit and I was begging for some time to think about what to do. I explained to the girl my concern about weight, and she started coming up with ideas. Unfortunately, she focused on the wooden shelving unit, and I explained to her that that unit is so stable that it's okay that the comic books are on the bottom and the reference books are at eye-level because it was more important that people be able to see and reach the books they might want to use easily, since that shelving unit wasn't going to come down on its own. In the back room, we put the English-language didactic materials on the bottom shelf and the didactic materials for other languages on the top shelf, leaving the middle shelves for the adult literature in English and for the children's literature for which we hadn't found a space in the front room. She told me that the library lady at her school doesn't let the kids even touch the units and yells at them that the units don't belong to her – I told the kid that she can now see why the library lady is so worried, but I was somewhat horrified by the strength of the girl's description of the woman's attitude.

Because of the interest that these children have shown (and the relative lack of interest on

Box 91:
Planned future
research

the part of the adult students), the i2i's leadership has decided to focus first on serving the children who have shown intense interest in the reading room and later verify our suspicions regarding the

adults or seek to understand their reasons for not using the reading room. Nonetheless, the volunteers and leadership have begun to experiment with reading-room-related classroom activities and homework for adults, as noted above.⁵³ One long-term plan is to conduct campaigns and research to generate interest among adult students, but for now, with limited time and other resources, the i2i's most pressing concern in terms of print materials is to meet the demands of their actual users, who are quickly running out of material to read and whom the reading room (but not the i2i) risks losing if the collection cannot serve them adequately. The receipt of a grant in 2009 should help in this regard.

The i2i's new students in the children's classes are socially and economically very different from their predecessors. In an effort to encourage students to take classes seriously, the i2i had been charging a small monthly fee. When they moved the children's classes to the new building, they continued to charge adults but ceased charging children. The i2i had already given scholarships to some students who could not afford classes; nevertheless, the new students were poorer, less likely to attend private school or even to be able to afford \$3 public-school field trips, more punctual, more interested in class, and generally more pleasant to work with. Many of the previous students had come from one of the most economically stable neighborhoods in Rocinha and from very close to the preschool, and they were often former students of that private school. In contrast, many of our new students attended public schools, and they came from all over Rocinha, some walking long distances to attend our classes before or after their public school classes. Some also live on the alley where the i2i is located, a more mixed area in terms of economic and social status. The new students' enthusiasm about the i2i was in stark

Box 92: Serving some of Rocinha's most disadvantaged residents

contrast to the attitude of many of the previous students, who appeared to be in class out of obligation.

Middle- and upper-class students in Brazil study in private schools until college because the quality of education at public primary and secondary schools is often abysmal. While private schools that cater to the poor cannot offer the services that middle-class private schools offer, sending children to a private school is a matter of status in Rocinha, and uneducated and uninformed parents may not be able to evaluate the quality of the various public schools available to them in comparison with the private schools available in and around Rocinha. That is to say, while it is generally the case that a private primary education will be of a higher quality than a public one, a parent who is both willing and able to make the necessary effort can find public primary education that rivals or surpasses the private education available in Rocinha. One of the i2i's leaders is very familiar with the system, having gone through it himself recently and having advocated for a good public education for his younger sister, and so he was able to understand each child's situation in part based on the location of the child's home and on where the child attended primary school.

Our new students, by and large, are subjected to low-quality public educations, suggesting lower socio-economic status than our previous students, parents with less knowledge or ability to navigate the complex system (we have seen no evidence of a lack of interest on the part of parents – after all, they send their children to the i2i hoping that they will learn a valuable language), and an overall greater need for services and personal attention.

It is in this context that it should not surprise my readers that, shortly after we opened the reading room and began classes, the fact that one of our third-grade students

Box 93:
Illiterate
students

could not read was discovered by both his teacher at the i2i and Daniel through his work in the reading room.⁵⁴ The i2i was unsuccessful in its attempts to aid the child in getting professional help: the boy's mother expressed concern but lacked adequate knowledge, and his teacher at the public school did not respond to calls. Since then, the i2i has begun offering literacy courses for children like that boy.

Box 94: Clean-up
and maintenance
of the catalog

Between the opening in July and my departure on September 11, 2007, I spent the time that I devoted to the reading room on cleaning up the catalog and similar tasks. Cleaning up the catalog involved correcting typographical errors and solving such mysteries as why over ten percent of our records lacked an author, when I estimated that some five percent of our materials actually had no author to which they should be attributed. The answer was two-fold: records input by someone other than Daniel contained many errors, among them improperly empty fields, and records imported from Amazon.com frequently had the authors' names in a different field. We had also set some materials, such as board games, comic books, and DVDs, aside in June to finish cataloging the books, and I created records for these items. Finally, we ran out of room on the shelves, and I boxed up the volumes that were not being sought out, starting with didactic materials in languages other than English and adult literature in English. By mid-August, I felt confident about leaving the reading room in Daniel's hands, although I remained concerned about other aspects of our work and about what would happen if Daniel left the i2i or became unable to do his job:

Box 95:
Running out
of room

I've started doing most of the reading room stuff myself, except checking out materials. I'm not too worried about this because Daniel already knows how to do everything – I'm just taking some of the pressure off him for now. . . . That is to

say, my doing work is not taking valuable experience away from any of them or keeping them in the dark, so I feel that I am contributing/collaborating, not depriving anyone of the chance to learn skills. This is different from the computer stuff (not meaning LibraryThing or MiniBiblio, but rather OpenOffice, master documents, that kind of thing), where skills are still very much being acquired. Also, Daniel is the only one who really knows how to use LibraryThing for our means, but there isn't much I can do about the fact that no one else was interested in learning how to use it. He, as director, is going to have to deal with this concern, unless they by some tragedy lose him unexpectedly, in which case I guess they'll learn that they should have paid more attention/cared more.

Box 96: Changing roles:
from leader/facilitator to
volunteer/assistant

Although I continued to worry about other leaders' collaboration in cataloging, Rogério and Washington were showing interest in the reading room in other ways. Inclusion of students in decision making still appeared unrealistic:

Daniel, Rogério, and Washington have all taken to making small suggestions frequently – about the placement of books, about programs for the reading room, about policies. The next step, obviously, is getting the students involved, but I'm starting to see that as a January thing.

When I left Rocinha, one member of the leadership attended the weekly meetings and maintained contact with some individuals and organizations of interest to the i2i but spent very little time physically with the i2i. The other three members (herein, the administration) had learned, to varying degrees, to check out books and help readers. Daniel was primarily in charge of the reading room, and many small decisions were still being left for him. Indeed, one of the leaders would sometimes tell students, some of whom walked long distances alone to get to the i2i, to come back later when Daniel would be available to check books out to them, but after being admonished by the others in the group for this behavior, s/he sought to learn to use the system. Not two months after I left, the i2i's computer resources were such that they were no longer able to count on being able to turn

Box 97: The
administrators'
involvement in the
reading room

administration) had learned, to varying degrees, to check out books and help readers. Daniel was primarily in charge of the reading room, and many small decisions were still being left

on the computer (which, despite my protests, was spending some of its time in the refrigerator to cool) and check out books using MiniBiblio. Three of the leaders told me that they were arguing over how best to record data and control lending until they might have adequate computing resources.

The provision of a reading room had become a part of the leadership's understanding of the i2i, and the "minor" details of its planning – those that I had sought in vain to discuss over the course of my earlier research – now held the leadership's attention and merited planning, or at least spirited discussions. All in good time, after some stability had been achieved for the organization more generally.

Box 98: The reading room is integrated into the functions of the i2i

The i2i's collections have grown rapidly since they opened the reading room, in large part because of the second donation from the American School: when I left in September 2007, they had cataloged nearly 1000 items, primarily books; two months later, they had over 2,000 unique items, necessitating, I believe, a search for a librarian and legal status as a library that has yet to be undertaken. As of April 8, 2009, the i2i's LibraryThing catalog contained 2,531 records. This growth has also meant the need to learn to weed the collection and a concern about the inadequate size of the building, even now that it has three floors and a roof that is used for Pilates, social gatherings, and other activities.

In summary, the days leading up to the opening of the reading room saw an increase in participants' interest in reflecting together on its management and growth. The preparations afforded Daniel in particular an opportunity to learn to use new tools and to inquire into how we might organize our materials and eventually increase our collections. Finally, until this point, we had used deliberation, experimentation, and

observation in reflecting on and changing our practices regarding the institute more generally, but most of our work towards the reading room had been in the form of, first, ineffective deliberation and, second, experimentation with tools and categories. With the opening of the reading room, we were able to add observations of the actions and preferences of our users, and the leaders were able to interview those users informally. The data we derived from those observations and conversations would inform future cycles, and these cycles would become more discrete.

Meetings and Other Institute Business: March-September 2007

Again, during this period, I focused more of my efforts on the reading room than on the institute's business more generally, as Washington had suggested I do. Earlier in the year, the i2i had conducted its business for several months without my presence, this visit was to be shorter, and the i2i was enjoying a period of greater stability than it had in 2006. Nonetheless, I continued to mentor new volunteers, and I worked closely with Daniel to produce a document that we used to convince Two Brothers to release funds for the second phase of construction and then used as a fundraising tool to complete the renovations through a third phase (see Appendix C). I was also able to observe the maturing of the organization and the leaders' increased confidence in themselves and one another.

The meetings seemed to be less contentious than they had been in 2006, and I took to writing, "the meeting went rather smoothly" or "the meeting went fine." This is

Box 99: The changing character of meetings

not to say that they were without tensions, absenteeism, attempts by one participant to control others, unilateral decision making, or conversations that outsiders might (and did, when they attended)

deem pointless or inappropriate. Rather, volunteers attended them less and were less

disruptive when they did so, and the four Brazilian leaders and I seemed to have grown accustomed to the more unpleasant aspects of our meetings. We even became more capable of reaching decisions and consensus, as the relative ease with which we developed policies for the reading room illustrates. Again, no magic switch had been flipped and there were many exceptions, but the number of topics that we managed to cover in a single meeting grew, and we were more likely to use the decisions we made in meetings to guide our actions. In fact, my notes on the meetings were longer in 2007 than they were in 2006, reflecting both the greater number of items that we covered and the greater attention we paid to the reading room. Nonetheless, many of the old complaints persisted, especially regarding seriousness and absenteeism from both the meetings and the institute more generally. Similarly, when I first arrived, it was difficult to make even short-term plans, and long-term plans were almost always vague and unrealistic. In contrast, in mid-2007, we were able to think about the upcoming semester and plan the remainder of the construction.

The excuses for not attending meetings remained varied and unusual, sometimes frustrating (“I had to get my hair cut”), sometimes amusing and tongue-in-cheek: one day in early June as I was walking in Rocinha, I heard my name and looked over to see Nick, who was back in town for the U.S. summer. Washington was with him and “tried to tell me that he couldn’t go to the meeting because he’d been hit by a stray bullet, which was really a paintball pellet.” Despite Washington’s “injury,” we met later that day and discussed our concerns about Two Brothers, with whom achieving more frequent, direct, and open communication was still a matter of great concern. The subject that was most on our minds was how and when more funds would be released so that we might be able to continue the renovations.

Creating Documentation: March-July 2007

More funds to continue the construction had been approved by the Two Brothers Foundation in March 2007 pending the submission of documentation by the Instituto Dois Irmãos. A misunderstanding regarding the expectations of such documentation led to substantial frustration and confusion. In mid-June, what was being asked of us in order to have the funds released was made clearer: Daniel had sent an informal request of the kind that we were accustomed to sending, and the decision had been made in the U.S. that the i2i would need to submit a formal request in order for more funds to be released. By the time the confusion had been cleared up, more than one request had been refused, and Daniel and I decided to create formal, detailed, and serious documentation of our plans for the renovations.

Writing such a document seemed daunting, and we lacked many of the numbers we would need to complete the budget. Daniel and I both dragged our feet, watching television or frantically cataloging and labeling books, working on the proposal for an hour here or there, until we finally got up the nerve to write it. Neither of us had any experience producing a report or proposal of the kind, with the most similar work between us having been my fellowship applications and dissertation proposal. Once we

Box 100: Writing our first proposal for funds	we were able to begin, however, we were increasingly pleased with what we were creating and began to see it as the basis for a proposal that we might circulate in both English and Portuguese, thereby increasing the size and scope of our imagined audience. As we prepared the proposal/report, the other leaders offered advice, and eventually Washington and Greg helped me with the English translation, which we expanded to include information about the i2i that was unnecessary for a report to 2Bros. We presented a bound copy of the
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English version to the Scruggs family when they visited us in August and the Portuguese to Íris Chang, a Brazilian volunteer who showed the proposal to her family and acquaintances (see Appendix C). The result was not only the release of money by 2Bros. for the next phase of construction, but also fund raising by the two families that has made it possible for the i2i to finish the construction.

The process of producing the document demonstrates the maturity that the group had begun to reach:

Thursday night, we finished up the document to the extent possible (still missing some prices). I lured Washington with the promise of macaroni. He made a lot of small changes, and Daniel threatened to kill us for messing with his work, but they really were small changes. I continue to believe that the writing still isn't up to par with "real" proposals, but given our utter lack of experience, it's not bad – and it looks quite good, all modestly aside. One of the graphics is too light, but it's not worth putting off sending it. I'm still afraid Paul will send it back saying [the language is] not "professional" enough. (July 15, 2007)

While we were leaving, Daniel called. He said the Chinese people whom Íris had invited had made us a visit and he had given them a copy of the document. It is becoming apparent that the document is going to end up being used more widely than we originally intended, and for that there will need to be a bit of clean-up, which Daniel noted yesterday. I would add that there needs to be some reorganization and an expanded introduction. (July 16, 2007)

While I was concerned that the language was not yet polished enough for wide distribution, it should be noted that the document as it was on July 16, 2007, was instrumental in our securing funding for the renovations. We sent it to Paul, although it still lacked some figures for which we had not been able to get quotes and contained some colloquialisms. On July 22, we received word that R\$2,000 would be released for the construction. We translated the document into more formal English, added text about the i2i, included illustrations of each floor and of the façade before and after the construction, had it spiral bound, and proudly presented

Box 101: Successful fundraising

it to the Scruggs family on August 5. They used the document in their very successful fundraising efforts, and we finished the last of the major construction in early 2008, although minor renovations continued afterwards.

With the success associated with the fundraising document and increasing contact

Box 102: Talk of having achieved goals and learning by doing
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with outsiders not mediated by the Two Brothers Foundation, the members of the i2i's leadership grew more sure of themselves and came to talk about our achievements and about learning through experience. We noted the relative ease with which we completed tasks and our ability to take on larger tasks:

We have started having frequent conversations about how the i2i isn't really doing so badly after all – Washington initiated one such conversation, Íris initiated another one, and Daniel and I have both initiated them. If we look at things from mid-2006, which is both when people here took more control and we bought the building, a lot has happened: we have the tourism group along with our regular group [of afternoon students], we have a bunch of Fulbrighters as teachers, we have done a lot of construction on the building, the reading room is about ready to be opened, and we have made quite a few interesting contacts, some of which have been fruitful. We may even be about to see some snowballing. If we look at the i2i as an institution that has been around since 1999, then it hasn't come very far, but why focus on 1999-early 2006 if there was a huge change in mid-2006? (July 9, 2007)

Indeed, the minutes from the June 28, 2007 meeting state, “Daniel and Rogério spoke of how they and the Institute have grown together.” Nothing could be closer to the purpose of PAR, particularly its Southern variety.

Through an earlier contact, the i2i had received textbooks for their teachers and students. The first semester of 2006 was the first time the teachers used the books in class, and by the first semester of 2007, the i2i's administrators (the three active members of the leadership) had learned to keep track of the

Box 103: Requesting textbooks

books, which had been donated with the intention of having them used over several

semesters by different students. With the move to the building and the subsequent increase in the number of classes and students, the i2i came to have an insufficient number of textbooks, even though some students shared their books, as did the teachers. The individual who served as a mediator with Cambridge University Press put the i2i in direct contact with the publisher. Whereas a year earlier, writing any kind of letter or other formal communication would have been the source of great stress and many meetings, the leadership handled this communication skillfully, and I was called upon not to instruct them on how to write the letter, but rather for my fast typing skills. I offered only minor suggestions, and within weeks, we received the textbooks and easy readers in English for the reading room. The process of writing the thank-you letter went less smoothly than that of writing the original request, but it still contrasts sharply with our earlier difficulties in generating any documentation, for example, the request for donations that we eventually sent out in 2006 after extensive negotiations:

The Cambridge University Press books arrived: two copies of the *Cambridge Essential English Dictionary*, two copies each of some easy readers, and books for class. The guys (Washington, Daniel, and Rogério) ripped into the box and got the reading room ones catalogued almost immediately. Daniel said they should write up a contract and request IDs to lend the books out: the form was generated almost immediately, too. Then on Tuesday, Daniel told Rogério to write the thank-you letter and asked me to help Rogério. I said I'd be back shortly and would help, but they should get started. It was several hours before we got started (I actually forgot about it when I got back and there was no one working on it). At 9:30, Daniel showed back up and gave us hell for not having written the letter. In half an hour or so, we got the thing written, with dictations by Daniel and me and typing (with corrections) by Rogério. He complained that I kept correcting him, but book titles need to be italicized and written correctly in something as serious as a thank-you letter.

I said the task seemed little, but a year ago it would have taken two weeks to write the letter. Daniel laughed and nodded his head. I said, "é ou não é?" [right?] and laughed, and he laughed and nodded more. (August 30, 2007)

The administrators have since conducted subsequent communications with Cambridge University Press without my participation, and they have received numerous volumes for use in the classroom and reading room.

The i2i's Success Draws Attention: August 2007

Earlier in August, Daniel talked about the new students: “Daniel also tells me that there is a whole family – 3 children and a parent – taking classes with us. He has used as an example of the i2i’s success that people are coming considerable distances to take our classes” (August 5, 2007).

Others who had watched the i2i grow also commented on our success: neighbors talked about the i2i, complaining about the noise and dust of the construction whenever it was underway, but also commenting on the popularity of our programs, and members of Two Brothers congratulated us. Additionally, through a colleague at the University of Texas, I had met a researcher who was studying successful and unsuccessful NGOs in Rio de Janeiro. She visited the institute on occasion, and I was pleased and somewhat surprised that she considered us to be successful: since we had so few resources and so many lingering problems, I saw us as having made great strides but as inferior to larger, wealthier, older NGOs. She interviewed me on August 21 and offered her assessment of the Instituto Dois Irmãos:

Perhaps the most important thing [the researcher] said, other than to suggest that we are more impressive than we think when it comes to our success, is that the biggest factor for success or failure in the NGOs that she has studied has been the ability to organize or a lack thereof. It's amusing to think of the i2i as relatively well organized, but we have certainly made great strides in that direction! All stereotypes of Americans, with their obsessive planning, and Brazilians, with their inability to make good on a promise, aside.

Later that week, a volunteer told me that she was impressed that I kept the i2i from falling apart without “ruling with an iron fist,” and I wrote, “I find it interesting that people think I am somehow in charge of the i2i.”

Discussing Including More Stakeholders and Seeking Partnerships Rather than Charity: August-September 2007

We began to talk about ways in which we might include our users and their parents more fully, but the end of my visit was approaching. I hoped they would include other stakeholders more fully in my absence. For example, Washington brought up collaboration in our August 9 meeting:

Washington's suggestion of community meetings was a nice, PAR-type thing to see, and I took the opportunity to note that we have to create opportunities for students and parents to participate, not just hope someone will show extraordinary interest. Washington specifically asked me to write that observation in the notes [i.e., minutes]. When I suggested students participate in the meetings, there was an uproar. I pointed out that we have teenagers and adults who take classes with us, to which the response from at least three voices (I saw Daniel, Washington, and Viviana say it) was, "ah, tá" [oh, okay]. My comment was in the context of a collective attempt to estimate the number of people we would be trying to cram into a room. Washington said he wants me there to be at a desk in the front of the room, a panel that would ask questions of participants and accept questions and suggestions from participants. Again, that would be good PAR. It's a shame I have to leave just as these things are getting going.

In our taped meeting of July 6, 2007, we talked about children who might be groomed to have greater responsibility within the organization. Daniel spoke of one boy whom he called “very responsible”: if he expected to be late or miss class, he would be sure to let

<p>Box 104: Considering greater responsibilities for enthusiast children</p>	<p>Daniel know and that he came to talk to Daniel about needing to be 10-15 minutes late to class every day because his school got out at the same time that his class at the i2i started. He also told the story of a girl who missed class because there was no alarm clock at her house:</p>
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“she came crying” about having missed class. He added, “these kids are much more well behaved” than the more privileged ones we had taught at the preschool. In the annual meeting in January 2008, a foreigner would bring up the idea of involving more community members on the board of directors. The leaders disagreed on whether any of the adult students were ready to take a more active role in the organization, but they agreed that there were several children that they expected to grow into positions of greater responsibility.

In August, Viviana asked what we would like her to say in her yearly request to the American School, and the group was uncharacteristically well prepared. Daniel spoke of not wanting to continue to be part of a one-way relationship, of wanting to invite the American School’s students to visit the i2i, of creating a partnership with the school. Before I had even left Rio, the i2i’s students had been invited to prepare bookcases with the American School’s students, and within weeks our students had gone to the American School to work on the bookcases, which they adorned with images in pastel colors. The bookcases, along with hundreds of books (but, as requested, with enough space for some of the books that we had been forced to put back in boxes), arrived in October 2007, shortly after I had departed Rocinha.

Volunteers: May-September 2007

Throughout my visit of May-September 2007, volunteers continued to offer their own challenges, but they also pitched in, not only to teach English classes, but also to run workshops, prepare lesson plans, label books and other materials, add shelves to the wooden bookcase, and paint.

Disappointments during this period included several promises to volunteer that were never kept; being expected to make considerable adjustments to our plans in order to meet the needs of short-term volunteers whose visits we did not have the power to refuse; finding that the second floor, with its external entrance, had been left unlocked overnight; and one volunteer who did not feel that he had been welcomed warmly enough and left early.

Also during this time, Rogério began what would become a successful experiment with MySpace and other social networking sites to maintain contact with former volunteers and attract new ones.

Changes at 2Bros.: July-August 2007

In late July, we learned that Paul wanted to step down as president of Two Brothers. Although he made it clear that he would continue his involvement with the NGOs, this announcement led to many questions and much fear: who would take Paul's place? As much as we often disagreed with Paul, we more or less knew what to expect from him, requests for proposals aside. What kind of relationship would the i2i have with the incoming president? Who would the leadership of the i2i like in that position? Did I want it? (Answer: no, but was I really being given a choice?) As it turned out, 2Bros. got a new president, and at first the leadership of the i2i continued to correspond as much with Paul as with the new president, but these questions served as a diversion for several weeks. Nonetheless, throughout the crisis, we continued to focus on the work at hand, beginning the new semester and welcoming our young users to the reading room.

Action Research, Actor-Network Theory, and Communities of Practice: May-September 2007

Again, the notion of cycles is perhaps an inadequate metaphor for the events of March-September 2007. The reading room can be seen as having gone through several phases, each of which involved short cycles of reflection and action on small concerns. Daniel and I first worked on preparing the materials for us to open the reading room, and the group acquired and assembled bookcases. The larger group then worked together to answer questions regarding opening and managing the reading room. Finally, we opened the facility and observed its use. We based changes to the reading room's organization on these observations.

Regarding the i2i, the two cycles of reflection centered on creating documentation for raising funds and on considering opening decision making regarding the i2i up to a greater variety and number of stakeholders. The leaders have begun to work in that vein but have not substantially opened the management of the i2i to a wider variety of local stakeholders; instead, they have begun with former volunteers and a founder who had ceased her involvement in the NGO.

While we continued to bicker, question each others' commitment (or "seriousness" or "responsibility"), worry about funding, and find relations with some volunteers to be difficult, by September 2007, we could see the fruits of our labor, and others were beginning to see the i2i's story as one of success. We had experienced much learning on the practical level (Heron and Reason, 1997) through preparing and opening the reading room, on the propositional level through our conclusions based on our observations of use of the reading room, and on the presentational level through the creation of the funding proposal and other documents. Despite the often high level of tension, we had begun to ask questions more explicitly. Furthermore, the greater stability

increased our ability to use small but relatively discrete research cycles, that is, it afforded us more time to reflect on our actions before a new change occurred, particularly regarding the reading room, which was less affected by external events than the i2i as a whole was.

Regarding ANT, we see the reading room and the building taking on ever-clearer contours. As the reading room began to take shape, it became an object with which all of the leaders had a relationship: the more shape it took, the more real it came to be, the more it became an actor in our story, as had been the case with the building earlier. Some individual volunteers came and went. We also began to see the i2i's reputation grow much more positive.

While I sought to foster a community of practice at the i2i that would include among its practices working together on the reading room, that task fell primarily on two of us. In other ways, such as in the writing of the funding proposal, the broader community of practice was indeed strengthened. Most importantly, although the exact composition of the i2i over the long term remained in doubt, we moved from questioning whether we would be able to manage the institute to seeking to improve our practices and, especially, our resources.

I left feeling more at ease regarding the i2i's ability to prosper than at any point in the past, but I worried about including an important group of stakeholders – our users – as participants in the study, and so I planned a seven-week trip in January and February to coincide with the upcoming annual meeting and to take advantage of the fact that we expected to finish the renovations by the end of 2007.

Chapter 7: Continuing to Grow and Acting with Greater Ease: September 2007-February 2008

When I arrived in March 2006, I had planned to include students as more active participants in the i2i's decision making and planning, but the i2i and its leaders had neither the clarity of goals, roles, or identity nor the autonomy or experience to do so. As noted above, as the end of my second trip was drawing near, our conversations turned to how our students and their families might become more active participants in the organization. These discussions were sparked by different members of the leadership and by me on numerous occasions and in various contexts, from formal meetings to bus rides that afforded us opportunities to converse.

Before I left Rocinha in September 2007, the i2i's leadership had begun to discuss the Halloween party, always the year's most anticipated event. We began by seeking ideas for activities: I made a list of Web sites for the leaders to peruse, and they asked volunteers for ideas. Once they had a number of activities in mind, they invited the children to help plan the party and held weekend workshops to make masks and decorations. In contrast, in 2006, the volunteers had been taken by surprise about the Halloween party, which was organized at the last minute, involved duplication of efforts, and, as I learned in a conversation with a volunteer a few months later, angered at least that volunteer. The planning process for the 2007 Halloween party afforded the students opportunities to learn to participate more fully in the i2i's activities and to recognize that the i2i values their opinions and skills while they are still at an age at which they are usually expected not to offer their opinions or otherwise make worthwhile contributions.

Meanwhile, construction continued on the building, providing opportunities to students, volunteers, and neighbors for small acts of solidarity, such as pitching in to

paint the rooms in order to reduce construction costs. In November, I spoke with Daniel and corresponded with the other leaders:

The bookcases and books from the American School have arrived, and there is no room for everything the i2i has anymore. Many books are back in boxes, reference and non-fiction books that teachers tend to use in classes have been reclassified as didactic, the didactic books are being moved to the classrooms, and there still just isn't enough room for everything.

Daniel tells me that the construction is going well. The next things are the stairs, which requires classes to be out of session, and the bottom floor. He said he is considering getting going on the bottom floor to create more space: without the wall between the two rooms, the piece of furniture Socorro and [her husband] gave us could be pushed back to occupy the space the wall now occupies and both sides of the piece could be used for books. He has also taken to talking about their need to get rid of books. He says a lot of what they have is simply useless to them and they are expecting more books. . . .

They are up to 2045 cataloged items (or were last week, anyway). (November 11, 2007)

In the following pages, I describe my short visit of January and February 2008. The visit turned out to be too short and full of unexpected events – not to mention the delays in completing the renovation of the first floor – to allow for a cycle of reflection and action on the reading room with our students. Still, I was able to observe how far the i2i had come; to see that disruptive volunteers remained a problem, while volunteers also collaborated on a wide range of activities; and to watch Daniel select materials from a donation we received from a parochial school in Rio.

2008 Visit: January-February 2008

I decided to return for the beginning of 2008 in part because I believed, anxious as I was to graduate, that I could not afford to wait much longer to end the data-collection portion of my research. In retrospect, this was quite a poor decision: after all, the i2i's rhythms and schedule were far from under my control.

When I purchased my ticket in October 2007 to arrive in Rio on December 31, I believed that the construction would be completed before my arrival or, at least, within a few days of my arrival. We would then get the reading room set up by mid-January, and I would have until mid-February to use the reading room with our students before classes would begin.

As is to be expected with PAR, and as was often the case with the i2i and 2Bros., things did not go as I had anticipated: the final phase of the construction, which involved knocking down walls on the first floor to open up the space for use as a reading room and office, was not completed until February, and so the books remained boxed up. Indeed, the reading room was reopened the day I left town for the United States for the last time, February 18, 2008.

I was unable to interview students because I would have needed signatures from their parents and did not receive the necessary support from the administrators, who are

Box 105: The IRB	accustomed to sending forms home (not an acceptable practice according to the IRB at the University of Texas), or from the students, who did not bring their parents to me or have their parents contact me, as I had requested:
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I am concerned that I won't end up interviewing any of the kids because I need to administer the consent forms to their parents personally, as per the IRB's rules. I can get to the kids and could have had plenty of conversations with them by now if it weren't for the consent form rules, but I've asked the kids to get me in contact with their parents and no parent has come forth. I don't know the parents, and [two leaders] were supposed to have contacted them for me before I arrived, but all they ever did was present me to the kids (not the parents!) when they came in to get their consent forms for the field trips, which are just sent home with the kids. I feel that it is the administration's responsibility to be involved at least enough as to call the parents, which I just don't see happening. (February 6, 2008)

To make matters worse, the wireless network that someone had installed during my absence ceased functioning and no one was able to fix it, making working on the Web

site considerably more difficult. The volunteers and administration were unhappy with each other's (in)actions, eventually leading to the loss of two volunteers. The electrical work had not been completed, and so we were without electricity, and therefore without fans, on the very hot day in January on which we held the annual meeting. A few weeks later, we went without any Internet access for several days because the telephone box had been shot out: with the beginning of registration for construction jobs for the project that may lead the i2i to have to move came increased police presence, both resulting in the loss of Internet access and leaving Daniel and me stranded outside Rocinha on one of my last days in town. I even encountered yet more time-consuming, unexpected visa-related difficulties. In short, the seven weeks that I spent in Rio in 2008 afforded me perhaps two weeks' worth of work time.

Nevertheless, I was able to observe how far the institute had come. For example, recently painted bookcases were everywhere, physical evidence of the success of the children's visit to the American School, on which the leaders had reported very positively. On January 3, I took a look around the building:

Box 106: Evidence of change during my absence

The computer has been moved to the second floor, while workers make a racket on the first floor. They have apparently already knocked down the internal walls. I have seen the new door, but I haven't gone inside. The new exterior wall is almost complete, and they haven't started taking down the old exterior wall. I asked Daniel about the stairs, and he said that the guy had wanted to get going on those, but he had told him one thing at a time, that he wanted things completed, not left half done. I couldn't agree more, but what happens when classes start and we don't have a staircase? . . .

I also wonder where the three school desks came from. They are just desks with a space for material, no chair. . . . One of the desks is being used as a TV stand (the DVD player is on top of the stand [note: I believe I meant "television," not "stand"]), another for a desktop that isn't plugged in [note: it lacked a monitor],

and the last one for, well, dirty plastic cups, a pen, a notebook, a photograph, a plastic bowl with a sponge in it, and the top to a pot. I'd probably rather not know.

I also wonder why we have two small children's chairs.

The phone seems not to have fallen completely apart. Small miracle.⁵⁵

The cables come in through the window. I'm not sure that's quite the best way of getting your cable and TV – what if it rains? – but we're up here only temporarily, although I hope we eventually plan to wire the whole place for Internet and get a Skype name for each floor.

There is a small corkboard on the wall with three pieces of paper: the brochure, showing the donation information (it looks like it's a new brochure: it has the i2i logo instead of the capoeira one), notes regarding what I hope are upcoming meetings, and [a definition of “volunteer work” that Rogério had posted]. . . .

One of the new bookcases is in this room, below the windows. It has three shelves, but just about everything is on top of it: a bunch of magazines and art supplies. It looks like it might have wheels. If not, they're feet.

They're wheels. And now my hands and legs are quite dirty.

The bookcase is painted orange, blue, and green, all pastels. Let me guess: the kids picked the colors. I'm not sure the wood is new. . . .

There are two bookcases upstairs. Both have three shelves, but one is very long. Given how little space we have here, we need taller bookcases. They are both painted in pastels with cutesy designs for kids. One of them has the Brazilian flag painted on the top. That one also has wood blocking the first few inches above each shelf. Do they have the thing facing the wrong way? . . .

The walls are white, and the wall to keep anyone from falling [off] the stairs has kids' handprints. The place is looking more and more alienating for teens and adults. Whether they'll care, I don't know.

Even though it was summer break, the children were present at the institute and clearly at ease with the adults. The volunteers and leaders held Friday afternoon field trips to the beach, a short walk away, but nonetheless a place with which the children were largely unfamiliar. They even took a trip to a park, arranging for transportation for the group and painting the children's faces, some of whom walked right into Rocinha with their faces

still painted, for example, like Spiderman's. Adding visibility to the institute was the fact that the students were often asked to wear the t-shirts with the i2i's logo that they had been given for the visit to the American School – t-shirts that had been sponsored by a local high-end Italian restaurant, Ettore, through contacts of two of the leaders.

The Annual Meeting and Volunteers: January-February 2008

The “annual” meeting of January 2008 was mostly uneventful, the stifling air that left us all more than a little uncomfortable notwithstanding. Indeed, I described it as having felt like a weekly meeting attended by several people who had been absent from previous meetings and needed to be caught up on the institute's activities: the four local leaders, Paul, several male former volunteers, and I were present, as was a potential volunteer invited by one person without consultation with the group, even though the volunteers who were already working there had not been invited. We taped the encounter, which lasted more than two and a half hours. It was friendly and animated throughout and frequently amusing; the annual meeting was similar to one of our more pleasant and productive weekly meetings.⁵⁶ Indeed, to listen to the tape, one should maintain a steady hand on the volume control: someone would begin to speak, another would begin speaking over the first person, and soon everyone in the room except for the newcomer would be speaking at once. I never did so, but on several occasions someone pointed out that we were taping and that I would be unable to understand the recording. In fact, it is mostly intelligible. Some of this talk can be seen as competition to decide the topic of the conversation, some of our talking over each other was to agree with what someone else had said, and on several occasions, someone fought to get the floor in order to clarify or correct what someone else had said. When we talked out various courses of action, our discussions and disagreements could start with everyone talking at once, but they ended

with turn-taking, deliberation, and consensus, with some agreeing fully and others agreeing with reservations.

While I would have been disappointed had I flown to Rio solely for the purpose of attending the meeting, I was pleased that we were able to come to several decisions regarding rules and information for volunteers with an efficiency that in no way resembled the way in which the i2i had operated when I had first arrived in March 2006 and with a tone that contrasted with that of many of our weekly meetings. Furthermore, the local leaders used the opportunity to show the foreign visitors what they had accomplished since the previous “annual” meeting in 2006.

The meeting gave us an opportunity to discuss the reading room and for me to praise the work of the three administrators in the presence of several influential individuals. I was asked to talk about my work, and Daniel, Rogério, and I together gave

Box 107: Talking about where the reading room has been and where it is going
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an account of the history of the reading room. One person attempted to give me credit for the reading room, praising what was framed as my work and asking me questions about how the reading room was functioning and about reading habits that I could not answer. I responded that I had been out of town since September and that the administrators were more responsible and knowledgeable, Daniel in particular, since he had taken it upon himself to run the reading room. I enjoyed the rare opportunity to give them credit in the presence of some of their colleagues from Two Brothers, but I would spend my remaining month frustrated with the lack of support I felt I was receiving in reaching out to parents to get IRB forms signed in order to be allowed to speak with the children.

Viviana asked about “opening the reading room for the community,” reminding us that when we agreed to start with our students, we also agreed not to end with our

students. Rogério and Daniel said that the institute was not yet ready to open the reading room to more users, certainly not before the building was completed. Washington added that they had already begun to do so on a small scale, quietly inviting neighbors to borrow books. Rogério defended their decision, saying, “With each step, we're being careful. Some of the volunteers don't seem to understand that. They think we don't do anything.” Similarly, Nick said that we needed to work to include whole families rather than just individual students, and Rogério explained some of the ways they were thinking about getting the children’s parents involved.

Finally, we had the opportunity to discuss the case of two volunteers who had

Box 108: Understanding Volunteers

acted very inappropriately, as well as other conflicts with the volunteers. Leading up to the meeting, I had spoken with the leaders individually and in small groups about such challenges and about what they had learned about the volunteers:

Over lunch, they started talking about the volunteers who have been [acting inappropriately in public] and interrupting meetings with their side conversations. I said they need to have three sets of rules: one for classroom behavior, one for behavior while in Rocinha, and one for behavior in meetings. I also said they need to stop fearing that they won't have anyone to teach a class and just make people leave when they violate the rules. . . . Daniel stressed that they don't need to worry about not having enough volunteers: they won't have a problem if someone leaves, and Washington added that he and Rogério could teach. (January 2, 2008)

I ran out of time to write on January 2, but I retook the subject of our lunchtime conversation regarding volunteers in the following day’s notes:

At lunch yesterday, Daniel said they held a meeting that was supposed to be for the volunteers to voice their complaints. Instead, [two volunteers] kept having side conversations in English. They claimed that [one] was translating for [the other], but they kept laughing. Daniel asked them to share with the group. I said they needed to make ridiculously explicit rules, that good manners vary from culture to culture, but that was unacceptable. That's when Washington said that it

came out that the volunteers expected to be told what to do, that when they volunteer in other places, someone goes up to them and gives them explicit instructions. (They don't want the freedom they've always been given – this seems to go well with the fact that they have stopped assuming they belong in executive meetings.) Washington said that the guys hadn't yet been ready to give orders, implying that now they are. I said, well, if they want orders, then give them orders: it's easier than actually working with them. Washington said it was amazing: when they told two of them to paint a room, they just went and did it with none of the complaining he expected.⁵⁷ (January 3, 2008, regarding January 2, 2008)

The subject of the volunteers came up in the meeting nine days after that lunch:

After patting ourselves on the back repeatedly, we began to discuss the problem volunteers, including the two [whose behavior most concerned us]. . . . We agreed that they had to go, and [one of the former volunteers] said it would be best to have the group get rid of them so that it wouldn't seem personal. The four leaders will meet with them.

Just as we were concerned about volunteers, we were also interested in opening up membership on the board of the i2i to more local residents, as we had begun to discuss during my previous visit, to increase participation in decision making:

Paul suggested we allow anyone who wants to become a member do so, and I asked what happens if a drug trafficker wants to join. [One leader] tried to say that would never happen, and I said that wasn't the point; the point was that we have to think through a decision like this one. The ensuing discussion was interesting, and we decided on a somewhat more formal process in which the person is presented to the group and voted on electronically. I'm not sure exactly who would have the right to vote. We're still not so good at the details, but it really doesn't seem to end up mattering all that often. . . . (January 13, 2008, regarding January 11, 2008)

Box 109:
Considering
increasing the
size of the board
of directors

On January 14, the leaders and volunteers held a meeting that I attended, and the leaders performed the difficult task of firing the two aforementioned volunteers:

Box 110:
“Firing”
volunteers

Before the meeting, Daniel, Washington, and Rogério brought the two volunteers

who were getting the axe upstairs and gave them the axe. Later, Daniel told me that it was one of the hardest things he's done in his life. . . .

The meeting was pretty civil, but we had plenty of side conversations. Things could have moved more quickly if we hadn't gotten off track so often. . . . The first floor is supposed to be ready next week, but no one said whether that would be towards the beginning or end of the week.

Regarding the volunteers and foreigners more generally, three trends continued: I served as an informant or mentor to some incoming volunteers, some offered new ideas and programs, and some volunteers and other foreigners acted in ways that endangered themselves or others.

On January 13, I encountered a volunteer who had had some previous experience in Brazil and with the Portuguese language before coming to the i2i:

Came home and was heading in when [the volunteer] showed up. We had a long discussion in which I mostly served as informant, telling him a bit about the history of the i2i, my work, the group dynamic. He suggested a survey of former volunteers, and I said that was an idea that we had brought up before. We agreed we should just do it. He said he'd sign a consent form, which he did today. He brought up the fact that the guys had decided to get rid of two of the volunteers and said that maybe a warning would have been better, also that a month has passed since the incident.

Indeed, we drafted a survey instrument that the group critiqued and Rogério sent to

Box 111: Using a formal research method: circulating a survey

former volunteers. In the e-mail, we requested not only opinions and stories, but also materials for the reading room. Because of concerns regarding the IRB and the time it took to receive responses, I have not viewed them.

On January 23, I had what I deemed a less successful conversation with two new volunteers, one of whom planned to make changes to the i2i in a visit of less than two weeks:

Monday we had another volunteers/leaders meeting. Unfortunately, I'll probably miss next week's meeting because I'll be dealing with the police [because of my visa].

We have two new volunteers: a woman from [the United States] who plans on staying for two or three months and a man from [an impoverished nation in Asia]/[a top U.S. university] who is spending just over a week here. She has several years of experience teaching English in Spain but is interested in offering an earring-making workshop with a final project of selling the pieces. He is interested in making the i2i "efficient," which I find laughable. He also has talked about a technology center and "leadership center," but I'm not quite sure what he means by the latter. He seems to have experience with NGOs but he kept asking me yesterday why the i2i, which he characterized as being ten years old, has progressed so little.

Both signed consent forms.

She wants to work with adults because she doesn't want kids to be working, selling their wares. But later in the evening I visited with Daniel, who said he'd like the kids (the ones who are old enough to handle the tools) to be involved because he's sure they'd love to learn to make jewelry for themselves and their mothers. We seem to have a conflict in goals: making money and providing residents with a new way to earn a little more cash versus skills for personal enjoyment and fulfillment. This isn't unlike the training/education tension I brought up in the "annual" meeting. When we talked about it, she wasn't averse to teaching the kids, just concerned about their selling their wares in public, but the guy is all about generating funds. He doesn't seem too interested in the culture of the place, although he has said he needs to understand the place before he can help. But how can he expect to understand and help in just eight days?

[Another volunteer] kept notes of the meeting. . . . We talked primarily about scheduling, and I let everyone know that there was work to be done with the reading room. Downstairs is supposed to be done this week, but every time I ask, I get a different answer regarding which day. During the meeting, the best I could get was "this week." . . .

I spent most of yesterday morning getting ready and then waiting to go downtown. The two new volunteers, [two other volunteers], and I arrived there after noon. We did some shopping, mostly for jewelry pieces and materials. . . . Then I sat down with the two new volunteers for some 80 minutes.

I'm pretty sure I beat the don't-do-drugs-and-think-about-your-use-of-cigarettes-and-booze subject like a dead horse. I also talked repeatedly about the culture of

Box 112: A
volunteer seeks
to effect
change quickly

the organization in response to his asking why an organization that is ten years old has grown so little. I pointed out that for the first eight years, growth had not been the goal here (although Two Bros. was already seeking funds in the U.S. – I guess in that sense there was already a division, even if no one distinguished between the two legal entities), but he just kept talking about the ten years. He also asked me why I wasn't including computers in my work, and I told him that we've been promised those but never received them. I took advantage of the opportunity to point out that computers are not going to save the world through some kind of magic, but I don't think he agreed with me. The woman suggested that a lack of following up on leads might have kept us from receiving the machines, and I said that that was likely the case on some occasions, but I bothered the Rio Office and the consulate enough that that can't be all that's going on – and I took advantage of that opportunity to point out that there need not be a single reason for anything. I was, generally, unimpressed with their linear thought that appeared to lack nuance, but particularly in his case, which I guess makes sense, since it takes being linear and reductionist to think you can learn about a situation in eight days, let alone learn about the situation and effect change – no matter how experienced you are. It all seems to come down to the very simple concepts of efficiency and accountability for him, whereas I see things as being bound by culture (institutional, of Rocinha, of Rio, of Brazil, and so forth) and history (particularly the fact that the organization has existed as such only since mid-2006). History takes time to understand; culture, even more so. (January 23, 2008, regarding January 21 and 22, 2008)

The following week, the male volunteer left Rio de Janeiro disappointed with his experience with the i2i.

On February 6, we held a meeting in which several volunteers, two leaders, and I were present.⁵⁸ One of the volunteers asked me to give my opinion of the institute, and so I spoke in English for the sake of the new volunteers, whereas the meetings were usually held in Portuguese. I spoke first of the strides that we had taken, of how much the i2i had matured since 2006, and then at length about the problems that I believed persisted: absenteeism and follow-through. I was particularly disappointed that I had not received support in contacting our students' parents. I consciously spoke softly but honestly and

urged the volunteers who would remain in Rocinha after my departure to understand that the i2i was maturing and that they would all experience frustration.

Again, imprudent behavior on the part of volunteers remains a top concern of the leadership, and in February 2007, even foreigners who were not affiliated with the i2i served as examples of such behavior:

Daniel mentioned something [a volunteer] had mentioned to me the previous day: that some people from [a top U.S. university] had been with him and had taken a mototaxi through Rocinha, filming as they went. They were stopped by drug traffickers and the guy reacted when the trafficker tried to take his camera to see the film. They are no longer welcome in Rocinha. Daniel said it's good that these things happen every once in a while to show the volunteers that the dangers are real and serious, saying that "a gente" [we] tell the volunteers but they never seem to believe, that [one volunteer] in particular thinks it's not "barra pesada" [serious/dangerous]. (February 6, 2008)

Other actions had potentially serious consequences for the i2i. For example, in mid-February, one of the fired volunteers felt slighted and spoke ill of the other volunteers and the leaders, including to 2Bros. Fearing a lawsuit, one leader at 2Bros. suggested temporarily shutting the i2i down, and two leaders at the i2i told me that they would not comply with any such order if 2Bros. handed one down, citing the obligations and promises that the i2i had made to its students. In a conversation on February 12 with one of the leaders, "I added that things tend to blow over," which, fortunately for both NGOs, is exactly what happened, but not before one of the leaders experienced psychological distress that negatively affected his relationship with the remaining volunteers.

Some suggestions regarding how to improve relations with volunteers came from the volunteers themselves: in an interview, one lamented the "lack of community" within the cohort of early 2008, suggesting that bringing the volunteers together more within the institute might improve relations more generally. S/he added, "I think we'll change that a

little bit, and I think we've got regular meetings coming now." A group of volunteers had requested those meetings.

At that time, the tension between some of the volunteers and one of the leaders was running particularly high, and two volunteers commented on that tension in an interview. We wondered together how participants might come, in the words of one, to "separate personal things out from the professional." They suggested that having clearer, more explicit goals might help: were we training people, educating them, working towards community involvement, or fostering cultural exchange? One of them also suggested a management course for the leaders, an idea that volunteers and leaders alike had brought up on other occasions. Since then, the leaders have begun to participate in networks of NGOs, and Daniel has received an award to spend several weeks in 2009 in California to participate in a program with the aim of improving his leadership skills.

Clearly, the troubles with volunteers remained, and they are likely to persist, since, in most cases, no sooner do they become integrated into the group than they have to leave and the leaders are left with the need to socialize a new cohort of volunteers. Nonetheless, the experiences of giving volunteers specific tasks and of firing others, as well as the decision we made in the annual meeting to be yet more explicit about rules (especially our prohibition of using or carrying illicit drugs in Rocinha) and about the consequences of breaking these rules, may help the leadership address problems with volunteers when they arise.

Finishing Construction and Readying the Reading Room: January-February 2008

On Tuesday, January 15, anxious to get to work downstairs, I spoke with the workman:

The pedreiro started working on the stairs today. He said it should be done on Thursday, and he really seems to have done a lot today: there is apparently considerably more structure than necessary (the concrete is thicker than needed), and so he scraped off a bunch on either side of the stairs to give us a little more space. He said it was about 4cm, but that was on just one side; he scraped on both sides. He also scraped out the outline of the door and put a hole in the wall where part of the door will be. I had thought we would be left with a hole people might just walk through, but that was a small hole that he just stuck a board over, and at the speed he works, I suspect he'll knock out the wall for the door and install the door on the same day. He said he'll make all of the stairs the same size and roughly square, between the heights of the two alternating kinds of stair we have now. He said he could also do away with the need to bend down to get up to the top floor if we wanted. I'd just like it if someone would put in a handrail to the third floor, but I didn't say anything.

As we were nearing the end of the construction, we were given access to the first floor. We had numerous one-day or short-term volunteers help us to plaster, paint, wipe dust off books (a fruitless endeavor), and shelve books. By the time we were done preparing the room and shelving the books, at least one neighbor who had volunteered to help and I had developed allergic reactions and could tolerate no more dust.

Easter was early in 2008, and therefore so was Carnival, the earliest in decades: it was so early, in fact, that when I decided upon a mid-February return, I did not bother to check a religious or holiday calendar. When I discovered that Carnival was to be in early February, I expected to lose one of the seven weeks I had left on my visa waiting out Carnival. Much to my surprise, we worked through the holiday and during the days leading up to it, although the pace fell off shortly after Carnival, leaving me disappointed that I had not participated in a single cultural event: if we were going to work through Carnival only to take a vacation right after the holiday, why hadn't we just taken some time off when everyone else was doing so? Indeed, the i2i, Daniel and I in particular, often worked in bursts followed by periods of rest (or frustrating stagnation, it would sometimes seem) rather than according to conventional work schedules.

And so, as luck would have it, the next period of intense work after the annual meeting came in the first week of February, when we received a donation of dusty books from a parochial school that, we discovered as we began to examine the materials, had used us as a junkyard, even giving us their old photo albums. We had been told that they had conducted a book drive with their students, but what we received was their library's trash. The experience cost us a Saturday, more than R\$50 in transportation, and much of our ability to trust even librarians. A school administrator made sure that Daniel signed a form acknowledging the receipt of the materials, most of which ended up in a Dumpster: we were, undoubtedly, a boon for the men who scour the trash for recyclables. A neighbor, founder of the i2i, and soon-to-be teacher there (Socorro), another neighbor, at least one of the volunteers, and I disagreed with Daniel regarding some of the volumes he chose to discard – “but they're *books*,” Socorro would say – but the majority of what he discarded, including an encyclopedia of Brazilian municipalities that was decades old and in itself occupied several large, cockroach-infested boxes, we could agree were useless to us. Nonetheless, the neighbors saw the materials go in, and then they saw them leave for the Dumpster, making us look wasteful. Thus, the experience also negatively affected our reputation:

Box 113: A disappointing and costly donation

We got going a little after 9:00 yesterday morning. [A friend who was visiting from out of town] offered to go get the books, so I called [our contact at the school], who said it would all fit in a large car and agreed that it would fit in a car plus a taxi. . . . Apparently the book drive had no criteria, and so we have such things as prayer books in Latin. There were more than the twelve boxes she had said, plus two large bags of books and at least three small ones. We're going to have a blast going through all those! We got it all done around noon, with the help of the neighbor, whom Daniel paid R\$25 to move the boxes from Mega Mate, since [our friend] didn't want to go down the Valão [i.e., the sewer] with her car and then have to come all the way back down it in reverse. The taxi cost another

R\$25. So, we probably paid half of what we would have if we had paid some van driver. And this was more exciting.

Daniel signed the paperwork at the school. [Our contact] said she could join us to go through the books, saying there was probably a lot that we wouldn't want. The director of the school made a similar comment . . . if we had been able to select them before taking them away, we probably could have brought everything in [our friend's] car rather easily. I told [our contact] not to join us both because there wasn't any room in the vehicles and because we're still painting and not quite ready to go through the books. (February 3, 2008, regarding February 2, 2008)

Over the following days, several volunteers and leaders worked to paint the walls of the first floor, dust books, and shelve them. When we finished those tasks, we moved on to examining the new materials. By then, I had grown insistent on not being the one to make decisions:

Chaos set in: every thirty seconds or so, someone was asking me what to do with a particular book or section. Whenever Daniel was present, I would say I didn't know, that Daniel was the director and should make the decision. . . . The three new (one-day?) volunteers left, leaving just [one volunteer], Socorro, and I there to work, with [another volunteer] showing up eventually and Daniel also coming downstairs eventually. When it was just the three of us, the chaos diminished and we were able to get books on shelves. Then [the first volunteer] left and Socorro and I were able to work well together. . . .

We started going through the boxes and bags of unlabeled books. The neighbor showed up and helped pass books to Daniel, inspecting them as she went. Daniel was clearly in charge of selecting books, although I looked at the computer ones and told him if they were outdated (I took that upon myself; I wasn't asked to do

Box 114: Daniel decides what to keep and what to discard

so). He tossed some 80% on the floor. Socorro objected loudly, vetoing some of his decisions and taking some of the books for herself. As she objected to a book, she would explain what it was good for. She plans on offering the tutoring class and wants a shelf for that. Daniel kept arguing that we don't have space, but before he had said that we had enough shelves. I think more than anything, he didn't want to catalog all that stuff, and so when in doubt, he tossed, whereas the rest of us would have preferred to keep items about which there was doubt as to their usefulness. There was plenty of stuff that wasn't useful to us, e.g., an *Enciclopédia dos Municípios Brasileiros* that had at least 27 huge volumes and would have taken up more than a bookcase. It was from 1958, if I'm

not mistaken. . . . [A volunteer] showed up and expressed horror that the books were going to the trash, saying it hurts to see books thrown out. So, I started asking Daniel why we couldn't give the religious books we had received . . . to the Catholic Church, the adult literature in English to IBEU, or a box for students to take what they want. He said he wasn't holding on to anything for anyone else, that we didn't have the space, that he wanted to get rid of everything at that moment. When he was done going through what was on the first floor (Rogério had sent some of the books upstairs to make room to work, against Daniel's wishes), he called for Washington to take all of the "junk" away. . . .

Daniel repeatedly said that the school hadn't had a book drive, that they had simply given us all the junk from their library. I had to agree. Indeed, many of the books had been stamped by the library. . . .

Daniel left me to watch Washington take the materials away. [The volunteer] started going through them for things he might want to keep, and I did the same, but only with what I could reach without getting out of the chair, since I was really tired and [the volunteer] was enthusiastic. I pulled out some recent geography books (Daniel had said that geography changes, countries change names, but these books were from 2005), photographs of the i2i, a dictionary that may have fallen from the pile of books he had selected to keep, a book of stories about ethics that included such authors as Machado de Assis, and a collection with facts about animals that is not complete and is falling apart, and so I can see why he would want to get rid of it, but I think we should at least offer it to Rogério to add to the materials for teachers before we get rid of it. I didn't get a good look at what [the volunteer] pulled out, but he was mostly interested in didactic materials. He took one or two away, too. I threw the dictionary back (I hope) in the pile of books to keep, and we put the rest (including the photographs) on the one remaining empty shelf in the back of the room, where we are keeping the adult literature for now. They are something like 12 books plus the animal collection, which has some 50 booklets – enough that they would fit in a small "take me" box and not get in the way.

Washington took everything away and I [left]. . . . Socorro was downstairs, and she complained that Daniel wanted to get rid of everything. She said that whoever went picking in that trash would make out well, and I said that fact was leaving me feeling a little better about the situation. I agree that most of the stuff needed to go, but I think Daniel was too severe and should have given some thought to people who might want the newer books, maybe 20% of what he threw out. He also could have entertained the idea of arts projects, but there I have to agree that we have very limited space and don't need any more bugs: I saw enough roaches as it was. Furthermore, someone will come along and take the books for recycling, thereby making some money, and the people who do that kind of work

are among the most needy around here. Still, one would hope that as they become more organized, they'll be able to do something better than throw books in the trash. . . .

It really is a very small pile that we are requesting be reconsidered, which in a way suggests a consensus, even if Daniel's voice was strongest: Socorro was not exactly silent, and even the pile of books she took away was small enough for her to carry them away easily [in one trip]. I don't know how many she "saved" for the i2i, but it was probably [fewer] than a dozen, certainly [fewer] than twenty. And hundreds went in the trash without a peep from Socorro, [the neighbor] (who was also vocal when she liked a book), [the volunteer] (who went through the mess), or me (although I stayed mostly quiet). (February 6, 2008, regarding February 5, 2008)

As we prepared to reopen the reading room, many people stopped to peer in. Many of their faces were unfamiliar to me; others I had seen around or even knew. One small

Box 115: The reading room attracts interest

child who seems to spend her days unsupervised in the alley even walked right in and started playing with the books. Fearing that she might get hurt, Socorro and I gently tried to shoo her away, encouraging her to return another day. She paid little attention to our pleas but eventually wandered back out. Another person once popped her head in and asked if we were opening a bookstore; others asked when we would be opening.

After the renovations of the first floor were completed and we discarded the vast majority of the materials donated to us by the parochial school, we finished organizing the materials in anticipation of the beginning of the semester:

Box 116: Organizing materials to facilitate browsing

First [a volunteer and I] separated the volumes that Daniel had selected by language, then we went through them again and separated and labeled them by rough categories: didactic, literature, non-fiction (including reference). I figure Daniel should make the more specific decisions, i.e., about which of the four levels of literature each book should be placed in and which non-fiction works should be placed in the reference collection. Around 4:00, maybe closer to 4:30, Washington showed up and asked what he could do. I said I didn't know what Daniel had in mind for him, but until Daniel showed up I could give him

things to do. I gave him the option of carrying books or organizing them, and he decided to bring the books that Rogério had sent upstairs back downstairs. When he was done with that, I set him to separating the 3rd-level English books (juvenil, blue with blue) by series, author, main character, or whatever else seemed to make sense to him, while I went through the books he had brought downstairs and pulled out the ones that I knew Daniel would not want, again leaving him to make the decisions that required a closer look. Meanwhile, [the volunteer] worked on the same thing as Washington, except with the level one books in English (infantil, blue with yellow). Then I helped Washington. We came up with some series (e.g., Goosebumps), as well as some subject categories: Washington came up with mystery, school (stories that take place in schools), and dates (Mother's Day, Christmas, etc.); I suggested animals; a category that started out as Halloween and ended up including witches and scary stories, which Washington decided to call "terror," although he later then asked what Harry Potter was doing there – maybe we'll take it out; and sports. There might have been more. We started with the books that did not have a category, including those that we had pulled for being by the same author, and I got those on the shelves in alphabetical order [by author]. We had first [two volunteers] and then just [one of the volunteers] write labels for the authors that had a lot of books. When we were done with those, we placed the subjects on the juvenil in English shelves wherever they and their labels seemed to fit well. . . .

[A volunteer] came downstairs and asked about getting rid of the [remaining uncategorized] books. I said I had made the pre-selection, but the final decision was Daniel's and I was sure some of the books I had not put in the "trash" pile would end up there. Daniel was sitting outside. . . . He went through the books and went upstairs. [The volunteer] took the books to the trash, losing our one good cardboard box in the process. (February 8, 2008, regarding February 7, 2008)

Each floor at the i2i is approximately five meters by five meters, or smaller than seventeen feet by seventeen feet. The new space, even without the interior walls, remains small, crowded, and uncomfortable, but it is considerably more inviting and organized, and students must walk through it to go upstairs to the classrooms. The reading room and office occupy the same space, with no clear division between the two, meaning that the reading room is visible to people who stop by to register for classes and impossible for the administrators to ignore. As I was preparing to leave, the teachers (i.e., a subset of the

volunteers, many of whom were also preparing to leave) began to show an interest in the reading room.

Furthermore, Socorro, an experienced teacher, began tutoring a group of ten students who were approximately nine years old and experiencing difficulty with Portuguese. Some of these students came to her illiterate, and at first the task was so demanding that Daniel, whose primary duty is to keep the institute running, helped teach her students. Within weeks, they were all reading for the first time or reading with much greater ease: when I spoke with Socorro and Daniel separately on Easter, in mid-March, both told me of having been stopped in the street by mothers who thanked them profusely. The children, who a month earlier could not read or had shown little interest in doing so, were picking out books from the reading room:

Box 117: Tutoring for literacy

Daniel said that one drug-addicted mother stopped him in the street and cried, thanking him for the work with the "aula de reforço" [tutoring class]. He told me Socorro has ten students, that he sometimes helps out (and did so particularly in the beginning), that they have some 9-year-olds who aren't literate. I spoke with Socorro today, and she told me about that mother, whom she also described as addicted to drugs, and that another mother had stopped her in the street and thanked her, to the point where she was embarrassed. She said these classes go for R\$60 [per month], and offering them for free makes them possible for these mothers.

Daniel also told me that the reforço students have been taking out the "poucos volumes que temos em português" ["the few volumes we have in Portuguese"].

I wondered if, now that I'm writing, he was trying to put the best face on the thing as possible, but he didn't hold back regarding [one of the leaders], and Socorro corroborated his story about the drug-addicted mother, so I don't think he was exaggerating. (March 23, 2008)

Thus, my early 2008 visit was some of the most frustrating, frantic, and apparently methodologically fruitless, and yet rewarding and ultimately fruitful time I spent in Rocinha. I left confident in the i2i's ability to continue to grow and

professionalize and sure of the success of the reading room. Still, I was disappointed and worried about not having included more stakeholders in decision making and about ongoing disputes with volunteers and Two Brothers. In short, the i2i's leaders, volunteers, and students were continuing to experiment, learn, and grow.

ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Buildings, collections, and programs do not cease to change once they are erected or renovated, formed, or instituted. Nonetheless, by January 2008, the basic form of the i2i, both as a physical location and as an organization, was no longer in constant question. Volunteers continued to shape what the i2i meant, in part by devising summer programs; the first floor took on a new shape; and the nature of the reading room could have been altered substantially with the donation from the parochial school, had Daniel not discarded most of the donated materials.

The group continued to evolve. Foreign volunteers came and went, as was expected, but the return of a founder to the i2i and her tutoring were new. We continued to struggle to define our practices in the context of an ever-changing group in which some were much more deeply aware than others of the history and culture of the organization. Three categories of practices around which disputes arose were responding to volunteers' inappropriate actions, managing the i2i, and working with donations to the reading room.

ACHIEVING MATURITY IN ACTION RESEARCH

While my short visit in early 2008 afforded me little opportunity to conduct additional collaborative research, it allowed me to collaborate in the more traditional role of volunteer and to write extensive observations. When I departed Rocinha for the final

time, I was able to see that some of the i2i's challenges persisted, particularly regarding volunteers, but the organization had changed dramatically. Our work in early 2008 reflected the maturity and confidence that the group had begun to achieve. Actions that had at one time appeared impossible had grown routine. The leaders had moved from reluctantly admitting that they needed to meet, to learning to meet effectively (if still somewhat reluctantly), to working so well and closely as to have legitimately ceased needing to hold formal executive meetings on a regular basis: when they needed to meet, they agreed to do so and, for the most part, then in fact proceeded to do so. Meanwhile, they began to hold sessions with the volunteers, at the request of a group of these. While we continued to benefit from self-reflection, we were also able to formulate questions and produce instruments (e.g., the aforementioned survey of former volunteers) in order to gather data from external sources in a more formal manner. No longer were such tasks as writing letters viewed as impossibly out of reach, and, indeed, it had grown possible to introduce new techniques such as surveys without the fear that in 2006 accompanied the introduction of nearly every new practice. The i2i's leaders had learned how to modify their practices and incorporate new ones into their work.

Since February 2008, the i2i has continued to grow. They have experimented with social media, video production, various programs in the reading room for students, and proposal-writing for major funding. While I still occasionally receive a telephone call in which a leader describes to me the latest controversy or dangerous act on the part of a volunteer, the leaders have learned to work with each other and with volunteers to see to it that the institute's many programs, including the reading room, continue to thrive and grow. The members of NGOs still have far to go, individually and collectively, and the learning process never ends, but it seems safe to predict that the leaders of both groups

will continue to inquire, reflect, and act together, with each new wave of volunteers, and with students and new leaders for years to come.

SECTION III: EVALUATING THE RESEARCH, CONTRIBUTIONS TO ACADEMIA, AND CONCLUSION

Chapter 8: Evaluation of the Research and Findings

In this chapter, readers will find a reiteration of the specific goals of our work and of the inroads we made into reaching these, a discussion of quality using the criteria outlined in Chapter 2, and, finally, an explanation of the “findings” of this research, to the extent that the word is appropriate to action research. While this story of an organization’s struggle to become a bona fide institution and create a reading room should be valuable as an example for librarians and others who seek to create libraries (as institutions and as collections) under precarious circumstances, Chapter 9 is more firmly rooted in the field of information studies. That chapter discusses contributions of this study to methodology, to the “information professions,” and to our understanding of information. In particular, Chapter 9 presents a less process-oriented, more “after the fact” analysis of the period in question with the aim of shedding light on some of the ways in which faith in a simplistic notion of information that ignores process is present in our lives: when some participants felt the need to learn by doing and others expected to be able to convey information simply and with ease, conflict often resulted.

As noted in Chapter 2, the original proposal, submitted in 2005, stated that through this research we would seek “to learn how better to serve the underprivileged, to reimagine reading rooms and similar organizations and spaces, to understand better the roles that fiction and entertainment can play in such institutions, and to understand better the production of information resources by their users.” It further stated:

We will use participatory action research, in which the specific research questions will be formulated by individuals affiliated with the Fundação Dois Irmãos with my aid. My co-researchers and I will choose the research methods, selecting among the methods that they already use to gain knowledge – perhaps through their social networks or through methods that are less known or unknown to academia – and arts-based and social science methods (e.g., creating and analyzing drawings, administering surveys, holding focus groups, or doing interviews). I will explain the advantages and disadvantages of using multiple methods, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each method that I bring to their attention. We will likewise design the research instruments in the field, and we will jointly make decisions regarding how to make sense of our data.

The appropriate data analysis methods will, of course, depend largely on the data collection methods. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the use of PAR implies cycles of data collection and analysis and the inductive generation of theories through the examination of data. These theories, which are generated through discussion of data by co-researchers rather than through a solitary process undertaken by a single outside researcher, are then used in subsequent cycles for the development of new instruments or even the implementation of experiments.

Upon my return to the United States, I will conclude the writing of a doctoral dissertation based on our collaborative notes and analyses, as well as my own. My co-researchers will likely participate in other dissemination efforts, such as holding discussions with or providing materials to other community organizations.

Although at the time I wrote those words, they seemed vague and appeared to convey the sense of “messiness” that pervades the literature on all kinds of action research, the above statements now seem idealistic, overly clean, and, indeed, utterly unrealistic in the face of the lack of organization and ability, interest, or willingness of participants to conduct methodical inquiry at the i2i in March of 2006. Although I expected my original characterization to become inaccurate once I entered the field, I was somewhat unprepared for the extent of the disarray in which I encountered the i2i and the extent of the changes in plans that the research would undergo and I would experience.

Over the two years during which I worked closely with the i2i, and in the months since, the two leaders who have been unable to make the commitment of time and effort

necessary to run the organization have distanced themselves, one during the period in question and one shortly thereafter, and one more fully than the other; neither announcement came as a surprise. The two who continue the i2i's daily work have increasingly taken an active interest in running the institute, showing the kind of dedication that is likely to exhaust them, and at least one community member seems poised to take on an increasingly active role in the institute. The three are deeply concerned about the quality of the institute's programs and about literacy and education more generally. They also share a democratic attitude, and we created a culture of discussion and engagement with ideas. We also made the long-term goal of including students and their parents, caregivers, or guardians clear. In short, the i2i's leadership is growing towards being stable and whole enough, and is now democratic enough, to call upon other members of the community, perhaps including the children, to help define the organization's future directions. Nonetheless, resources remain scarce, volunteers continue to come and go and also require services, the institute has not yet settled on a fully satisfactory way to incorporate the volunteers' voices in decision making, and everyone's time remains limited. Furthermore, the i2i remains subordinate to 2Bros., whose leaders' priorities and beliefs often diverge from those of their counterparts at the i2i. Therefore, it would seem that the i2i is still a few years from being able to implement any plan like as the one set forth above, and whether they will ever come to be interested in formal, academy-friendly, mixed-methods approaches to evaluating and planning for their needs and programs is yet another question.

Yet, I am struck by the ways in which we followed the plan set forth in the original proposal, often despite ourselves. Furthermore, the inquiry was in a way more significant than I had expected, since it focused not on a single program, but, rather, on

the i2i's very existence. We did not seek to use any particular methods and seldom could we see what we were doing as research. I entered the field expecting messiness and relatively little reliance on data collection instruments, and so there were times in our conversations when I recognized our actions as research, but I doubt that the others felt the same way, and I, too, was frequently unable to see what we were doing as research: we did not seem to be going about our business in enough of a rigorous (i.e., rigid, inflexible) or structured manner to meet the expectations of academia. Furthermore, when I thought about messiness, I imagined my desk or a complex task involving half a dozen co-workers; it eventually became apparent that the messiness of a divorce was a better model for understanding this action research: raw emotions and inexperience were even more salient than the commotion and complexity with which we lived.

Our methods were, then, not planned, and they were not formally taught, although the acquisition and honing of skills (i.e., “practical knowing” regarding research, in the parlance of Heron and Reason) was more than evident over time. We all observed actions, our own, one another's, and those of volunteers, students, parents, neighbors, and contacts. We would bring these observations to each other, sometimes in meetings, often in informal “gossip sessions,” occasionally in a word, phrase, or action that we would let escape. More than observing, we learned to talk, to question our thoughts and those of others, and to do so together. Although I frequently wondered if this would happen, we eventually learned to act on some of the decisions that we made in conversation.

The original proposal stated that the research would have three initial components, all of which might continue to be useful throughout the research: observations, interviews and focus groups, and a Web site evaluation. In fact, observations, first inside the classroom and later in the reading room, along with

meaning-making in groups (meetings rather than more formal focus groups), were the most important methods of creating, analyzing, and acting on data. We never acquired sufficient resources to conduct the Web site evaluation, and both 2bros.org and 2irmaos.org have been sites of significant tension.

At first, as explained in Section II, some group members lacked the necessary skills and commitment to attend and participate in meetings, and yet we were not communicating in other manners that might have made such formalities as unnecessary as they were burdensome. Two years later, group members had learned to meet. Indeed, they were working with each other closely enough and communicating well enough that they believed they no longer needed to hold executive meetings, while acknowledging that the meetings had earlier been crucial: regular executive meetings had outlived their usefulness, and the leaders were skilled and confident enough to recognize this formally, whereas earlier at least two of the leaders would have simply scheduled and then skipped the meetings without advising others of their intention not to attend them.

Thus, our methods of inquiry were observational and conversational. Nothing could be more appropriate for Southern PAR, focused as it is on reflexivity and learning rather than on more conventional data generation. Furthermore, collection and analysis were not easily distinguishable from each other. While writing my academic research proposal, I sought to use language and to propose methods that were recognizable and that would lend themselves to the production of a text that would be equally recognizable within academia. Yet, in Rio, I was not in charge and did not mean to be in charge; the leadership sought to learn in more appropriate, context-sensitive, and meaningful ways than my proposal accounted for.

This dissertation is only a stage in the learning process on which the i2i's leadership (with its changing membership), some of the volunteers and members of 2Bros., and I have embarked. One can expect that only a handful of people will read a dissertation; fortunately, most people involved in Two Brothers could reasonably be among this audience. While I write this document with the conventional illusion that it will contribute to the conversations on information, library services, action research, Brazilian and Latin American Studies, and the like, I am confident that it will reach and aid at least some of the leaders of Two Brothers, some of whom are themselves academics and who hold so much sway over Dois Irmãos. One such leader, who read an earlier draft, has informed me that this document has already been useful to him. No promises of a career or degree could be more gratifying.

We are continuing our work, the leaders in Rio intensely and I to a much lesser degree, as they offer classes and services, make difficult decisions, and seek donations from multinational corporations and international organizations on their own initiative; I still opine on a very irregular basis on the reading room and on occasional crises that the i2i continues to face, in a way that I hope makes clear that I believe my role should be to offer opinions and advice when asked but not to make decisions alone, and I remain hopeful that I will someday help the i2i produce a clean, standards-compliant, usable, and useful Web site – skills that I hope someday to teach them in a more traditional sense than I ever taught them research.

The research proposal stated that the group would make conscious decisions regarding how to evaluate its work. In reality, I attempted to spark conversations regarding what we might consider to be high-quality work to no avail. I further stated, “our frequent evaluations will be multi-faceted, inquiring into how well we meet the

goals of the organization and those of PAR more generally.” In fact, our evaluations were constant and usually took many factors into account (although each of us would usually emphasize one or two factors to the detriment of others), but I am not sure I ever managed to explain what PAR's goals might be, although I tried.

The proposal text continues:

Each of us will, of course, produce her or his own interpretation: while consensus is a powerful indicator of high quality, apparently complete agreement is more likely a sign of unspoken disagreement, lack of engagement, or the need to look harder or more earnestly for disagreements. Questions of usefulness and effectiveness – usefulness to the Fundação Dois Irmãos, Rocinha, Brazil, the poor, information studies, academia, and our other audiences, but also effectiveness in learning and in creating beneficial change – will inform our decisions regarding the evaluation of quality, and I will eventually produce my own text for an academic audience.

Although such pseudo-consensuses arose several times, they lasted only briefly, and we rarely missed an opportunity to disagree: rather, I found myself explaining to others, particularly foreigners, that these disagreements were natural, common, and usually culturally appropriate, if sometimes exaggerated. Nonetheless, as the text of earlier chapters indicates, the level of engagement was uneven among participants, across topics, and over time.

SPECIFIC GOALS

As noted in Chapter 2, in the proposal, I enumerated four initial, broad academic goals and expanded on these with the following initial specific goals:

- To plan the center
- To select materials
- To create materials
- To create an inviting space

- To procure funding and donation of materials
- To organize materials and make them available
- To provide participants with research skills.

Keeping in mind that goals in PAR are expected to change, it should be noted that we worked toward each of these goals to varying degrees:

To plan the center. We opened the reading room, which in 2005 I called a “center,” and this act required planning, including deciding on software, categories, and materials, as well as developing use policies. Nonetheless, because we had little control over the donations we received, our ability to plan the collection was limited.

To select materials. Likewise, with few volumes, little selection occurred until 2008, when we received the donation of such materials as the donor school's photographs and extremely outdated materials, most of which we discarded. Also limiting the i2i's ability to select materials was a disagreement regarding whether we should ever discard materials. In early 2008, Daniel settled that dispute by discarding the majority of a donation (and earlier I used an incomplete dictionary as scrap paper and we gave away and cut up several boxes of materials), but a more aggressive policy regarding unwanted items might have delayed the i2i's capacity problem.

In April 2008, one of the administrators wrote that those administrators were considering “recycling” the collection and setting an approximate limit on the number of volumes. He also said that they had successfully initiated conversations with two large retailers with the hope of acquiring “books that have never been used” and that they were constructing bookcases for “all 2000 books” in their possession. At the time, there were nearly 2,500 unique items in the i2i's LibraryThing catalog, although some were VHS tapes, DVDs, or games: the weeding that we had been discussing for months would need

to happen soon. The collection has continued to grow and they have continued to write proposals for additional materials. Indeed, they recently received a grant to purchase more materials.

To create materials. This goal is far from met, and yet several activities are promising: although the work has been intermittent at best, reserving a part of 2irmaos.org for students has long been a goal; the students painted the bookcases from the American School and planned their own Halloween party in 2007, helping them to grow accustomed to participating; and we made a box of lesson plans with images cut from books and magazines that we had received as donations. Furthermore, Daniel created the LibraryThing catalog, and Rogério took it upon himself to create a MySpace page with the intriguing name “2brosinstitute” (<http://www.myspace.com/2brosinstitute>, which, according to the profile, joined MySpace as an eighteen-year-old female living in Rocinha), which he has been using to post and link to videos and photographs, as well as to communicate with former volunteers and other interested parties.

To create an inviting space. The physical changes to the building have made the entire structure more inviting and better organized. Routing students through the reading room on their way to class should help encourage them to explore the space. Furthermore, when the reading room was first opened, we decided to open it for at least half an hour before and after each class, and students are told of this commitment when they start classes. The administrators are friendly and encouraging, and the children have responded favorably, more favorably than we could have dreamed. The adults have expressed less interest, and the administrators and teachers are working to encourage the adult students to use the reading room and its materials. The volunteers have used the books in classes and borrowed materials for their own use, although not with the

enthusiasm displayed by the children. Several times, children watched animated films in English together, once with popcorn that I was berated for burning on my stove across the alley and delivering late. If we have met one goal, it is that of making the space inviting, but efforts to improve this aspect of the reading room continue: the administrators are aware that the institute would benefit from more places to sit and read and from several computers with access to the Internet, not to mention simply from more space for all of its activities. If the i2i continues to grow in success and popularity, it will someday need a larger headquarters for even its core services, among which the reading room must now be counted.

To procure funding and donation of materials. These efforts have been the most difficult, since they required the i2i to interact with the larger world. The i2i has had some success regarding procuring both funding and in-kind donations – the funds to finish the construction were acquired primarily through the efforts of the Brazilian organization, and the reading room has over 2,500 unique items because of their efforts – but funds remain insufficient, and many of the materials in the reading room are inappropriate for the i2i, leaving them with the dual problems of overcrowding of shelves and inadequate collections that can be only partially explained by the small size of the room in which they are housed. With the current economic downturn, the i2i and 2Bros., like most NGOs, are now in a particularly difficult situation regarding funding. In April 2009, they received word that they would be receiving a €3,000 prize from the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) for the reading room, both further necessitating weeding of the existing collection and mitigating the effects of the economic downturn.

To organize materials and make them available. We, but particularly the director Daniel, devised a rather simple but effective system for organizing the materials and for lending them out to students, volunteers, and leaders. There are plans to open the reading room to more people as the leaders gain greater confidence in their skills; teachers are encouraging the use of the reading room by adult students and low-literacy children, trying to make the materials not only available, but also desirable; and teachers have discussed organizing (and creating) additional materials for use in preparing for and teaching classes.

To provide participants with research skills. No participant learned formal, conventional research methods, such as survey methods, statistics, or analysis of textual data. They did, however, hone their observational, conversational, and analytical skills. Unfortunately, this learning was confined to a much smaller group of participants than originally intended: primarily the leaders, with some volunteers and members of Two Brothers, whereas I had intended to include students and their parents or other caregivers. This failure was primarily due to two factors: the state in which I encountered the i2i and concerns about the IRB, which required me to speak personally with parents. Speaking personally with parents turned out to be impractical, both because it became possible to consider adding students and parents only shortly before the end of my last trip to the field and because contacting the parents was less important to the Brazilian leadership than their many other activities.

CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALITY CRITERIA OF ACTION RESEARCH

The first column of the following table provides a list of characteristics of AR as described in Chapter 2. The second column compares these characteristics to the methods and results used and achieved in the study described herein. The rows are, somewhat

artificially, given the categories “general,” “participation,” “action,” “research,” and “evaluation”: clearly, many rows could have been placed in more than one category, but, given the limitations of paper and in the interest of respecting the convention of linearity in such presentations, each is presented where it appears to fit best. The strategies for evaluating and demonstrating quality in PAR mentioned in Chapter 2 under the heading “Conducting and Evaluating Useful Research” are marked with the word “strategy.”

Table 1: Methods and Results of This Study in Light of Definitions and Quality Criteria of Action Research

Action Research	i2i: Methods/Results/Evidence
General	
Flexible	Changing goals and roles meant that what we thought about and discussed evolved.
Process-oriented	Frequent discussion of the fact that everything was new and we were learning; emphasis on story when interacting with 2Bros. and others.
Creation of practical results and theories	The research has resulted in a functioning organization, reading room and other programs, as well as changing beliefs by which participants live and through which they manage the i2i, i.e., theories-in-use.
Results in academic papers and theories	The present work
Co-generation of knowledge	Group discussions and activities
Lasting effects	The i2i is now a functional institution that continues to improve and offer new programs, the reading room is thriving, children have learned the lifelong skill of reading, and there is no sign that the i2i will disintegrate or close the reading room. Of course, one can ask how long effects must be shown to have lasted to be considered “lasting.”
Benefits accrue to participants individually and collectively	New skills, new attitudes, new ways of carrying themselves, and a functioning institute and reading room are just some of the benefits of this study.
Dissemination of “findings”	Dissemination remains incipient, in the form of the present work and conversations with other researchers and institutions.
Value-based, not value-neutral	We shared a commitment to providing services that are usually considered in Brazil to be the government's responsibility and to serving the most vulnerable (e.g., the poorest, the illiterate, children with a drug-addicted parent or from a single-parent home).
Respect for/incorporation of local knowledge	The research was participant-led; participants spoke with users and were perhaps particularly aware of local and national beliefs and habits because of the presence of foreigners with other beliefs and habits.
Participation	
Seeking to be democratic	Participants were encouraged to speak their minds and act on decisions. Still, power dynamics and the new nature of the i2i limited our ability to be democratic, internally, with students and parents, and with 2Bros.
Consensus-building	Consensus building proved to be a very difficult process, especially regarding the Northern organization. Achievement remains partial, and steps in this direction have partly been made through attrition, bringing into question what will happen as others join.
Participants conduct their own	The entire process is evidence of this facet of AR: participants

Action Research	i2i: Methods/Results/Evidence
research to learn about themselves	conducted the research through meetings, activities, gossip, and the making of difficult decisions that required significant reflection on priorities, needs, and desires.
Neutralizing relations of power	Here, we were somewhat successful: through giving each person an opportunity to speak, we gained some ability to neutralize power relations; regarding the funding, Northern organization, the situation is more complex, imbalances are greater, and success is much harder to judge: the threat (inherent to power relations) of action remains regardless of whether 2Bros.' power over the i2i is exercised.
Feeling of ownership by insiders and outsiders	The leaders who remain engaged continue to toil with little financial compensation; the children's unusual respect for the books is further evidence of the feeling of ownership by participants (and beneficiaries of the research, more broadly). I remain somewhat engaged in the i2i's work, and new outsiders who have arrived since my departure have continued to work to shape and improve the institute and its reading room.
Including a wide variety of stakeholders as co-researchers	We included the leaders fully; volunteers and some members of 2Bros. to a lesser extent; and students and parents only incidentally, although leaders spoke with and observed them casually and brought these conversations and observations to meetings.
Action	
Learning by doing	We experimented with classes, software, meeting formats, and the like.
Iterative process	Our practices included trial and error; getting one project underway and then initiating another one; and moving books around and recategorizing them according to use, rethinking the purpose of the reading room and our acquisition priorities.
Introducing change in a systematic manner	Little at the i2i is as systematic as one might wish. Nonetheless, efforts to avoid taking on too much at one time helped guard against chaos and sometimes allowed us to identify apparent causal relationships before trying something new.
Research	
Involving participants in formulating research questions, theory building, elaboration of methods and techniques, and data analysis, from the beginning	<p>This involvement was achieved through group discussions, until I left the field and proceeded to ask new questions of my notes, recordings, correspondence.</p> <p>I initially set the goals and questions, in response to a request to create a library for the i2i and in order to obtain clearance to enter the field. We modified these goals and questions in light of participants' interests and together chose how to work towards meeting and answering new and changing goals and questions. While I have consulted with participants since my return to the United States, the dissertation text is my responsibility and necessarily from my perspective.</p>
Outsiders and insiders treated as equal partners in processes of	If either group was the greater party, it was the insiders, who usually decided what we would do and when. At times. I was unable or

Action Research	i2i: Methods/Results/Evidence
inquiry	unwilling to assert myself and have my concerns treated as equal to those of the Brazilians.
Consciously guided by theory	We tended to explain why we believed what we did, hypothesize, and test. Still, we could have made greater use of formal theories.
Hypothesis testing, broadly construed	The group hypothesized that a particular action or project would be beneficial or work well (and why). In the process of acting on these hypotheses, dissenting opinions (analogous to competing or null hypotheses) were likewise tested.
Acquisition of conventional research skills	Participants experienced some growth in observational and analytical skills; otherwise, this goal was not achieved.
Learning to conduct inquiry	Participants showed increasing ability, but this may have been due as much to changes in attitudes and behavior as to changes in personal skills. We also became more adept at working as a group.
Co-researchers (i.e., participants) trained to conduct research	We did not use conventional methods; I did not have enough power for the group to focus on my priorities and for me to insist on training anyone early enough in the process.
Rigorous collection of data	If one defines rigor in terms of complying with rigid external rules, then the data collection was not rigorous. If, instead, one's definition is process-based, then our constant questioning of the accuracy of our and others' claims provided rigor to this study.
Evaluation	
Incorporating evaluations into subsequent <i>cycles</i> (strategy)	Our constant discussions of what was going well or not were employed in decision making.
Shifting goals	Within the i2i, the shifting of goals is evident in the increasing and changing programs, as well as in the incorporation of children in planning (e.g., the Halloween party). Similarly, the reading room experienced changes in scope, some reclassification, and the moving of some books to classrooms.
Changing understandings, "catalytic validity" (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 56)	Participants and I frequently remarked that we had changed significantly, learned confidence, and gained new understandings and attitudes.
Tangible results, practical knowledge (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a), important work (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a), lasting effects ("outcome validity," Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 55; Reason & Bradbury, 2001a)	The i2i is now a functioning institute, with a reading room and a full schedule of classes. Additionally, there have been changes in co-researchers' skills and attitudes and high demand for and use of the i2i's services, including among some of Rocinha's most disadvantaged residents.
Usefulness/"pragmatic validity" (Stringer & Genat, 2004, p. 53)	That changes to the i2i have been useful is evident in its waiting list for classes, children anxious to borrow books, and crying mothers who thank teachers, as well as personal growth on the part of participants.

Action Research	i2i: Methods/Results/Evidence
Wide participation (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a), “democratic validity” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 56)	We could have incorporated volunteers more effectively and students and parents more actively; the i2i may yet do so as it continues to grow.
Multiple ways of knowing (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a)	We could have used a greater <i>variety of methods</i> (strategy) and a more <i>careful inclusion of stakeholders and attention to the quietest voices</i> (strategy); we sought to hear everyone out, but power relations sometimes damaged this process. Encouragingly, one of these “quietest voices” grew louder and much more confident.
<i>Collaborative data analysis and theory-building followed by action</i> (strategy)	We could have been more explicit about collaborative analysis, e.g., examined notes together more regularly, but analysis was implicit in meetings and eventually led to some action (less than was discussed or proposed).
Generation of new knowledge, “dialogic validity” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 57)	Our collaborative inquiry, intense at times but slow at others, resulted primarily in new knowledge about ourselves and each other, as well as deeper cultural understandings. Additionally, the leaders learned to request donations and respond to 2Bros. more effectively.
Methodological soundness (“process validity,” Herr & Anderson, 2005, pp. 55-56)	We were unable to incorporate a sufficiently wide variety of methods and, therefore, to <i>triangulate</i> (strategy). However, the methods that we used were appropriate to the organization and situation, and they were chosen, not always consciously, by participants. Triangulation in the sense of comparing various accounts was more fully achieved, but some stakeholders were absent from this process.
<i>Prolonged engagement and persistent observation</i> (strategy)	I gained trust in the field; interest varied from person to person and over time, but we worked closely together over two long years.
<i>Outsider researchers' handing the research over to insiders</i> (strategy)	This criterion is based on the erroneously assumption that the researcher is necessarily in control at the outset. I started with almost no control, gained some over time, and withdrew myself from daily participation three times. Each time the work continued without me.
<i>Debriefing</i> (strategy)	Others frequently discussed the i2i with friends and family; I struggled with the tension between the requirement to maintain confidentiality and the need to talk and would have benefited from easy access to people who did not know the participants.
<i>Audit trails</i> (strategy)	Although I have my own notes, recordings, and other documentation, our efforts to keep an audit trail have been insufficient: it was difficult to encourage good record-keeping, diary-writing, or remembering to send copies of messages to the group e-mail account. One individual resisted another's request to see meeting notes. The taking of minutes was sporadic, and they varied in quality and detail. Maintaining an audit trail was simply not a priority for most participants.
<i>Description</i> (strategy)	The present text constitutes part of the effort to describe this research. More informally, we described the work in conversations, particularly with new volunteers when we explained how the i2i had come to be what it was at the time of a particular volunteer's arrival.

Using positivist criteria, we failed miserably: I did not maintain control over any “subjects” (in fact, participants often controlled me); we did not make extensive use of any easily discernible, inflexible methods for collecting data; we were “tainted” by our values, particularly by the pursuit of making a very small corner of the world a little more just and democratic and giving it a little more access to education and safe forms of entertainment; and we neither tested nor produced hypotheses or theories with the intention of adding another brick to the edifice of science or of producing broad generalizations. These kinds of achievements, however, were never really sought, never really at stake in Rocinha.

We failed to do much of what I claimed, in earlier proposals, we would do: conventional research methods, except in the case of a few interviews and where parts of our meetings might be viewed as constituting focus groups, never became the focus of our work; we have not yet shared our experiences as widely as I had anticipated we would, although two leaders' recent trip to Sweden to participate in a global symposium on informal cities is evidence of advances in dissemination of accounts of the i2i's growth; given the i2i's relationship with 2Bros., over which we enjoyed very limited influence, the research on the reading room was more democratic than that on the organization as a whole; the same could be said for consensus-building and neutralizing relations of power; and, of greatest concern to me because of the fact's ethical implications, we never fully included the range of stakeholders in the study of the reading room because we focused primarily on strengthening the i2i and, when the institute was stable enough to invite greater participation on the part of students and their parents, I was running out of time on my visa and unable to respond to the demands of the IRB to obtain signatures. Thus, a procedure ostensibly in place to protect people and designed

from a perspective that views participants as vulnerable subjects caused harm to already-disadvantaged children, who were deprived of an opportunity to voice their opinions and shape their world. Fortunately, the i2i's leaders are not obliged to procure signatures from parents before speaking with children and taking their needs and opinions into consideration: they have acted more in accordance with the spirit of action research than I have been free to do, and in so doing, they have, within their limited means, sought to include the voices of the most vulnerable in their practice.

That we did not do what I set out to do is not necessarily a weakness of this study: action research is best planned from the beginning by co-researchers, and, even so, the goals are expected to evolve. Although I was invited by 2Bros. to plan the reading room for the i2i, and although I had visited the i2i before submitting any proposal, the original plan was necessarily mine and also perhaps imbued with too much language that would be readily recognizable to an academic audience but of little practical value. More importantly, we included the necessary stakeholders (the leaders, teachers, and, to a lesser extent, 2Bros.) in our primary work – that of building and strengthening the i2i, even literally – and thereby prepared the i2i to include additional stakeholders in subsequent endeavors, from renovating the reading room to designing new classes and activities. For example, in early 2008 it was possible for the teacher who had long lived in the alley and had been a founding member of the institute to become reintegrated into the i2i by offering her tutoring services. When she observed the students and met with their parents, she realized that the greatest need was for help with Portuguese, and so she went from viewing her sessions as homework help to literacy instruction. Three kinds of stakeholders – a former leader who was finally brought back into the fold, illiterate children, and these children's mothers – thus successfully participated in meaningful

ways in what two years earlier had been nothing more than a small group of people barely able to provide six hours of often mediocre English instruction that did not have such a formal channel through which to invite participation.

Where we succeeded was in being true to the values and broad methodological perspectives both of the group and of traditions of participatory inquiry: we included the widest range of stakeholders that the i2i could reasonably accommodate in its early stages of development; defined problems together and deliberated; acted and learned from our actions; saw our goals change as our understandings grew more accurate, grounded, and sophisticated; and produced tangible, very useful results in the form of practical knowing that has served the leaders and teachers well, not to mention a functioning organization, with its classrooms, roof, office area, and reading room all functioning and in great demand. With each attempt to improve the institute, the leaders and other participants evaluated recent practices, i.e., they judged the quality of their work, which they had performed based on the theories-in-use that they were developing (outside theories were less prevalent).

Here, again, Heron and Reason's (1997, 2001) extended epistemology offers a valuable way of looking at this research. To reiterate, the authors' four kinds of knowing are:

- Experiential knowing, “direct encounter”;
- Presentational knowing, “evident in an intuitive grasp of the significance of our resonance with and imaging of our world, as this grasp is symbolized in graphic, plastic, musical, vocal and verbal art-forms”;
- Propositional knowing, “knowing in conceptual terms that something is the case”;

- Practical knowing, “knowing how to do something, demonstrated in a skill or competence” (1997, p. 6).

The experiential can be seen in our prolonged engagement and persistent observation of the i2i, the reading room, and, indeed, ourselves and each other. We shared hot office space, cramped quarters, dusty books, allergic reactions, overheating computers, culturally hybrid meals, even empathy for the loss of one member's family pet. This experiential level bleeds into the presentational: hugging the pet owner to show empathy, using or not using a knife with one's food, arguing with our words and body language for or against a particular course of action. These arguments, in turn, made use of propositional knowing, which we honed through questioning and testing our and each other's beliefs: if we invited the students to use the reading room, would they come? Would the children destroy or lose the books, as we feared? How could we improve the quality of our meetings, making them lead to more action and covering more topics (or covering the same ones in greater depth or in less time)? If we sent a request to Two Brothers, what, if any, might the response be? In each case, we deliberated, discussed the possible risks and benefits of potential courses of action, and tried new actions, revisiting these later. Through these processes, the group, collectively and individually, contributed to improving the most vital of Heron and Reason's four kinds of knowing: practical knowing.

As a group, we learned to sustain the i2i, however fragile it may remain, and to manage its programs. Individually, we specialized while remaining aware of the importance of maintaining some redundancy of technical knowledge and skills: volunteers increasingly took their place as volunteers rather than administrators without ceasing to voice their opinions and concerns; one leader continues to hone his ability to

plan and administer programs and is in no small part responsible for the i2i's growth in this area; another demonstrated great skill and ease in running the reading room (including cataloging) and in overseeing the i2i's work; and I found my place in temporary manual labor, from tiring but otherwise undemanding labeling (and occasional mislabeling when my mind would wander) of books to, with the others, hauling buckets of rocks and mixing reinforced concrete. Perhaps not all of the practical knowing we experienced will be of use to us in the future, but the act of learning a limited part of the construction trades contributed to the above-mentioned experiential knowing, was symbolically important, and literally provided the structure that made the rest of our work possible.

In short, there are many ways to evaluate the quality of the work in which I participated between March 2006 and February 2008 with the Instituto Dois Irmãos. From a positivist perspective, one might claim no research so much as occurred. If my dissertation proposal is taken as a benchmark, then we fell short in several important ways. When looked at from the perspective of the goals of action research or Heron and Reason's extended epistemology, however, although we frequently faltered, we met the vital goal of participating in a process through which our practical knowing was enhanced; through which we created sustainable, valuable, and tangible results; and through which we learned and thus modified our beliefs and goals.

“FINDINGS”

The metaphor of finding conclusions is a misleading one at best, implying that reaching conclusions is a matter of locating what was, in fact, already there. Indeed, the location metaphor is misleading in much the same way that the conduit one is (see Chapter 9). Throughout this text, I have instead employed the related metaphors of

construction and performance, both of which are widely employed in qualitative research, ANT, and action research. At the i2i, we constructed and performed our “findings.”⁵⁹

Regarding some forms of action research, Bob Dick (1993, p. 4) writes:

The “research” may take the form of increased understanding on the part of those most directly involved. For this form of action research, the outcomes are change, and learning for those who take part.

For Participatory Action Research, particularly its “Southern” or “emancipatory” strains, findings are indeed such change and learning. They are not meant to be universal or generalizable, but they should be described in such a way that people in similar circumstances might learn a lesson or borrow a technique or question from the account, and findings should be of use to participants and perhaps to colleagues of the participants. A truly full account of the two years in question here would greatly exceed any reasonable length, but Section II provides a lengthy account of our work to strengthen the i2i and to create its reading room, chronicling these changes and learning. Furthermore, while this chapter and Chapter 9 are “analysis chapters,” much of the analysis of this research is in the cycles of reflection recounted in Section II and even in the telling itself.

These change and learning outcomes include:

- *The transformation of a nearly non-existent core group of supposed leaders into “real” leaders and planners of the i2i, albeit each with his or her own strengths and weaknesses, not to mention continued in-fighting and inefficiencies, as can be expected of any organization or bureaucracy. The i2i’s nascent community of practice (Wenger, 1998) was transformed into a functioning, if imperfect, community of practice with Brazilian, rather than foreign, leaders at its core. While the i2i’s Brazilian leaders and foreign volunteers continue to struggle to strengthen and maintain this community of practice and to maintain their*

ambiguous relationship with 2Bros. and its members, one might say that the i2i became a more “normal” organization.

- *Not only the acquisition of knowledge about how to operate a non-governmental organization and improved technical abilities (particularly those pertaining to operating a personal computer), but also, and more fundamentally, a greater understanding of ourselves, each other, and the world.* This greater understanding stemmed from introspection, conversation, observation, and sometimes from being harmed. Not all of these lessons were positive, and there is no guarantee that they were all accurate, although the cycles of reflection help guard against inaccuracies,⁶⁰ for example, insiders learned to avoid trusting outsiders who offered aid, information, or goods through experiencing the feeling of being taken advantage of. Of course, where insiders cut themselves off from outsiders, the cycle was broken, leaving us unable to test the hypothesis that the risk that members of any other organization would take advantage of us if we tried to work with them was greater than any potential reward, an assertion that I believe to be exaggerated but also to be a reasonable conclusion based on the evidence at hand.
- *Greater, but tentative, respect for the abilities and opinions of the Brazilian leaders by decision makers in the United States.*
- *Changes in the composition of the core group, reflecting the time commitment that full and effective membership in the new, stronger core group with greater responsibilities required.*

- *Communication skills.* While communication remains among the i2i's greatest challenges, the core group learned to discuss and negotiate in meetings that very slowly grew less contentious and more fruitful; several members learned to produce written correspondence, which they had been too intimidated to do; some of the fear of speaking with outsiders dissipated, while apprehension regarding others' motives grew or persisted; we experimented with various modes and tones in communicating with members of the Two Brothers Foundation; and the importance and difficulty of communication, both within the group and with others, became a topic that we could discuss openly. In contrast, although communication with volunteers was frequently the topic of discussion, it was only as the two-year period covered in this study was coming to an end that evidence of improvement in this area emerged, these improvements were limited, and there was no strong evidence to indicate whether they would persist.
- *The creation of an identity for the group and the i2i as a semi-autonomous organization.* This identity stemmed not only from the work we performed together and individually for the group within and between meetings, but also from having a physical space.
- *The establishment of a headquarters.* This effort involved not simply purchasing a two-story building with funds from Two Brothers, but also the procurement of funds through efforts in Brazil, including the production of a funding proposal in Portuguese and English that led to the construction of the third floor and usable

roof, as well as to a remodeling of the first and second floors. The headquarters drew attention to the i2i and contributed to its identity.

- *The creation of the reading room and its integration into the i2i's other activities.*
 - *Learning to organize the materials* using LibraryThing and experimentation with the physical placement of books throughout the reading room and in the classrooms, as well as with categorizing materials for their most effective use by teachers.
 - *Creating lending policies* and enforcing these, including developing incentives for respectful handling of materials and devising exceptions that were themselves meant to serve as incentives for respectful use, e.g., the waiving of the rule against borrowing dictionaries for a child who returned books on time and helped shelve volumes.
 - *Encouraging use through classes.*
 - *Developing guidelines for collecting materials* that were never quite respected due to desperation to receive books and a lack of resources to choose these for ourselves. Just as students' use of the collection influenced the placement of volumes, their preferences have help shape the i2i's "wish list," if not their collecting practices.
 - *Recognizing the downside of accepting donations.* Every organization that accepts donations will likely eventually confront the situation of being offered items of little or no use to that organization. While most, if not all, of us were aware of this potential problem, our experience of being used as a landfill by a local private school will live on in institutional memory and shape future decision making. In the face of such evidence and its

deleterious effects on our finances and reputation, it became more difficult to defend the thesis that we should take anything offered to us and sort out the materials once in our space or hold on to everything we received indefinitely.

Before I arrived, the reading room was at one time called a “community library and activities center” within an educational institution; what is emerging is an educational institution that offers an increasingly wide range of activities and houses a reading room that is integrated into these activities when appropriate but also available for less structured use. More significantly, what was, all along, often described as a project in the process of failing (the i2i, and with the i2i, its programs, projects, and reading room) now is more easily viewed as a success, although the i2i is far from enjoying the self-sufficiency or relative stability that larger, older NGOs often enjoy.

Indeed, the relationship between the i2i and 2Bros. has changed dramatically and appears to be in the process of moving from one of subordination to one of partnership. 2Bros. still holds sway over the i2i, since it provides funds to the i2i and the i2i has little that is tangible to offer in return, the occasional dramatic suggestion by a leader that they go on strike for a week to demonstrate their vital role notwithstanding. Nonetheless, as the i2i has sought funds, other donations, and contacts of its own in Brazil, the United States, Canada, and especially Europe, the balance of power has begun to shift. Many individuals who are associated with Two Brothers are former volunteers, and all are committed to the success of Dois Irmãos: reducing the control of one over the other may allow both NGOs to function more effectively. Certainly the i2i has benefitted from its leaders’ and students’ ability to voice and act on their concerns and interests.⁶¹ The reading room is but a part of this larger change; while it cannot be disaggregated from the

i2i's other activities, the reading room, with all of its remaining flaws (e.g., inadequate space and gaps in the collection) stands today as evidence of the capabilities and seriousness of the Instituto Dois Irmãos.

At the risk of stretching the metaphor too far, we can say that the i2i matured and that the path was more arduous and longer than we had anticipated. While we had hoped to see the i2i grow fully into adulthood, we in fact saw it mature into late adolescence, still somewhat dependent on 2Bros. and not as wise as one might hope, but more autonomous, responsible, reliable, experienced, competent, and confident today than it was in 2006. The i2i also has a more coherent image and has, through repeated crises and disappointments, slowly grown more well prepared to respond to new and unexpected challenges.

While this chapter and the account of Section II, though long, are necessarily cursory when compared to the breadth of experiences of the two-year period under study, these chapters demonstrate the “change and learning for those who take part” to which Bob Dick refers, i.e., the outcomes of this research, as well as the ways in which we did and did not succeed at conducting action research. These chapters are process-oriented and show the “messiness” and non-linearity of the changes that occurred at the i2i. In Chapter 9, I explore some of the implications that this study has for methodology, the so-called “information professions,” and how we understand information. I look at what one recurring theme – that of a disconnect between how actors expected themselves to learn and how they expected others to learn – in the process of learning and growing described above can tell us about the tendency to use a simplistic definition of information and treat information as if it were something that could be easily and seamlessly conveyed. In so

doing, Chapter 9 presents an analysis that is stylistically distinct from the above narrative and likely to seem more familiar to most readers.

Chapter 9: Contributions to Information Studies

The contributions of this study include the changes to the i2i depicted in Section II, from which the members of the i2i and those of Two Brothers have already benefited and will continue to benefit. Furthermore, other NGOs and similar small organizations can learn from our experiences, both as a cautionary tale and as an example of “triumph over adversity” – and over diversity, for that matter. While diversity, in terms of ethnic, religious, national, and other backgrounds is becoming an unquestioned social good, the co-existence of people with a wide range of backgrounds is often uneasy, and the struggles at the i2i with volunteers and with 2Bros. may be instructive to others seeking to bring people from diverse backgrounds together under already less-than-ideal circumstances.

In any work, we must decide where the boundaries of our knowledge-seeking will lie. For this research, I familiarized myself with the information studies, action research, and development literatures. Although I have a background in languages, have done some reading in the field of linguistics, and have lived my life in frequent cross-cultural communication for nearly two decades, I did not have the opportunity to gain any deep knowledge of the literature on cross-cultural communication. Similarly, my knowledge of theories and perspectives on NGOs is derived primarily from lived experience and from conversations with other researchers who are well-versed in that vast literature. The fact that it was unrealistic to become well-versed in all of the many pertinent literatures might be considered a limitation of this study, and this impossibility is certainly a peril of conducting cross-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary research.

Still, it is clear that the research described herein is highly pertinent to the study of both cross-cultural communication and NGOs, and it is perhaps valuable to point out some of the ways in which those more knowledgeable than I about these topics might make use of this research. In our case, the two topics are inextricable.

While NGOs working in many places might benefit from the i2i's story, it may be of particular interest to those working in corporatist traditions or other traditions in which the state has long been expected to play a much greater role in providing services to the public than it has in the United States. In Brazil, the provision of services such as those offered by the i2i is considered to be the responsibility of the government, and it is not uncommon for Brazilians to note that NGOs must exist because, in their view, the state does not do its job well enough; ideally, according to this logic, there would be no need for NGOs. Thus, the question arises whether NGOs are allowing the government to be remiss. In contrast, while the provision of library services and education is considered within the purview of the U.S. government, here NGOs are more likely to be seen as manifestations of a robust civil society, as citizens' doing their part rather than as government's failing to do its part. Of course, it is possible within the Brazilian context to argue, as leaders of NGOs often do, that the strengthening of civil society and a reduction of the role of the government are beneficial; likewise, within the United States, some would argue for a more expansive role of federal, state, or especially local governments. Still, it is commonly believed in Brazil, with its corporatist history, that the government should care for its citizens; in stark contrast, in the United States, fear of government intrusion in the lives of private citizens is deeply felt and directly linked to colonial history and the founding of the nation. Logically, in the United States, while individual

NGOs may be viewed as threatening a particular government, NGOs in general are not held to do so by their nature.

Socorro once opined that, since the end of the dictatorship, Brazilians were still learning the difference between liberty (*liberdade*) and the libertine (*libertinagem*), i.e., between acting freely but responsibly and acting without restraint. She tied the need to learn to act responsibly to an emphasis on rights that ignores the duties that accompany rights. I would argue that the same could be said of a substantial portion of the U.S. population as well, but her point that the i2i had to function in the context of a citizenry that, some twenty years later, had not yet fully recovered from decades of military dictatorship and had not yet learned to take responsibility for itself gave me pause, even though I already had heard the rhetoric of building citizenship on many occasion. The i2i can be seen as an organization that is “letting the government off the hook,” or it can be seen as yet another party to the redemocratization of Brazilian society – or, indeed, it may represent a bit of both. NGOs that work in a similar context may encounter many of the same challenges that the i2i has faced.

Clearly, the difficulties that this pair of NGOs based in two different countries encountered in communicating are worth pondering. While linguists know that communication is always difficult and always requires work, the lay perspective that if two people speak the same language, then they should be able to communicate well was both pervasive and repeatedly challenged at the i2i and 2Bros. Particularly fascinating was the assumption on the part of one leader that once a foreigner appeared to speak nearly flawless Portuguese, that individual should be aware of all of the cultural cues and assumptions that accompany spoken language. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to speak with many other near-native speakers of second languages, and our

conversations about language almost invariably come around to the fallacy of that assumption. We have often wondered if it would be easier for us to speak our second languages somewhat less well, if we might then be “cut some slack” regarding non-verbal cues and cultural assumptions. While I was fortunate to have few direct experiences of such challenges in the course of my work with the i2i, I am no stranger to this dilemma and witnessed others encounter this challenge. Similarly, even within our own cultures, communication is not always the easy process that it is assumed to be. I return to this theme later in this chapter and in Chapter 10.

Turning our attention to academia, and particularly to information studies, the contributions of this study can be grouped into three categories: those that touch upon general or methodological themes, those related to the academic study of information and its place in society, and those of a more professional interest. Clearly, the three categories overlap. Because this dissertation is grounded in the field of information studies, constituting much of this chapter is a discussion of the notion of information that considers the ways in which a common faith in the power and simplicity of information, using a definition that reifies and commoditizes information, shapes our interactions with others and our interpretations of our world.

Some contributions to research and scholarship are noted below, in the sections “Methodology and Institutional Review Boards” and “The Information Professions.” Following these two sections, readers will find “Information Studies,” which contains an analysis of several key manifestations of the above-mentioned faith in information. Although it might logically fit better under “The Information Professions,” a discussion of fiction in public libraries appears in the section entitled “Information Studies.” I place the topic of fiction there because some of the literature of the section on information

studies is central to my discussion of fiction. Furthermore, the line between the professional practice and academic study of libraries is and should be permeable.

METHODOLOGY AND INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS

Let us first return to Orlando Fals Borda's story of "Participatory (Action) Research," in the South. As noted in Chapter 2, Fals Borda tells us of a group of academics who called upon Paul K. Feyerabend's (1993) "daring thesis on the usefulness of anarchism to rebuild epistemology and to furnish a new base for scientific practice" as they reconsidered what science meant to them. The passage quoted in Chapter 2 bears repeating here:

Besides establishing a rigorous pertinent science, we also wanted to pay attention to ordinary people's knowledge. . . . [W]e began by questioning the fetish-like idea of science as truth which had been transmitted to us as a cumulative, linear complex of confirmed rules and absolute laws. We started to appreciate in fact that science is socially constructed, therefore that it is subject to reinterpretation, revision and enrichment. Although this may sound obvious, we postulated that its main criterion should be to obtain knowledge useful for what we judged to be worthy causes. . . . If we could discover a way to bring about a convergence between popular thought and academic science, we could gain both a more complete and a more applicable knowledge – especially by and for the underprivileged classes which were in need of scientific support. (2001, p. 28)

Where the Northern and Southern varieties of PAR, each of which is itself practiced in myriad ways and eludes definition, diverge is in the kind of change that they purport to bring about. The Northern flavor is more easily recognizable as applied research, since it is more likely to focus on, for example, the improvement of services; the Southern flavor is more inwardly-focused and seeks to bring about less measurable changes, such as Freire's "conscientization" or greater self-knowledge. They come together, however, in their embracing of an eclectic mix of methods to collect, create, or analyze data. Both draw on a number of ideas that are present in Feyerabend's work: they are suspicious of

science that does not produce results that are useful to stakeholders or participants, and both perceive great value in the knowledge of so-called ordinary people.⁶² They agree that “*there are no general solutions*” and that “non-experts often know more than experts *and should therefore be consulted*” (1993, p. xii, emphasis in the original).

There is a great tension between the two flavors of PAR, and they are indeed difficult to conduct simultaneously – that is, as long as we feel ourselves straight jacketed by methodological requirements. If we must follow, for example, a preordained path in recruiting participants, training them, and having them interview others without ever allowing them to ask a leading question, then clearly we must “get down to business” and cannot allow the meandering self-discovery that is so characteristic of Southern PAR and that does not admit measurement to go on for very long. Surely it is possible to learn much, including about ourselves, in taking either a more rigid or a more meandering path, but we cannot do both simultaneously.

Feyerabend suggests, rather, that methods are for our use, not for our imprisonment. Furthermore, scientists recognize this fact in practice:⁶³

All we can say is that scientists proceed in many different ways, that rules of method, if mentioned explicitly, are either not obeyed at all or function at most like rules of thumb and that important results come from the confluence of achievements produced by separate and often conflicting trends. (1993, p. 242)

In seeking to humanize science, Feyerabend and practitioners of both flavors of PAR (but especially of the Southern kind) invite us to reconsider how and why we conduct research.

At the i2i, we demonstrated that it is possible to work to meet the goals of both kinds of PAR if we do not seek to be overly rigid in our application of methods. Indeed, like Feyerabend’s scientists, at the i2i we encountered method not in the form of abstract

laws, but rather in our discussions and decisions regarding how best to proceed under particular conditions. Methodologically, then, we acted more closely in accordance with Southern PAR, but some of our goals (e.g., understanding what the i2i was and our roles in it) were typical of Southern PAR, while others (e.g., creating the reading room) were more typical of Northern PAR. Not surprisingly, the Northern-style goals were often easier to articulate. The story of the i2i, in which we began and ended with primarily but not exclusively Southern-style methods and in which we increasingly added Northern-style goals to our Southern-style ones, offers one manner in which to conduct research that seeks outcomes that include both intense capacity-building and the development or improvement of programs (not an unusual combination of needs in NGOs or new organizations of any kind).

Just as Feyerabend and PAR encourage us to rethink how we approach generating data, they also provide an opportunity to consider how (and even why) we judge our research. Once we eschew the slavish adherence to method, manners of appraising our research that amount to policing our use of methods lose sense. Feyerabend's statement, "There is not a single rule that remains valid under all circumstances and not a single agency to which appeal can always be made" (1993, p. 158) applies equally well to the conduct and appraisal of research. Nonetheless, as Feyerabend acknowledges, within particular contexts, particular standards can help guide our work:

The limitation of all rules and standards is recognized by *naïve anarchism*. A naïve anarchist says (a) that both absolute rules and context-dependent rules have their limits and infers (b) that all rules and standards are worthless and should be given up. Most reviewers regard me as a naïve anarchist in this sense, overlooking the many passages where I show how certain procedures aided scientists in their research. . . . Thus while I agree with (a) I do not agree with (b). I argue that all rules have their limits and that there is no comprehensive 'rationality', I do not

argue that we should proceed without rules and standards. (1993, p. 231, emphasis in the original)

Hence the need to take Chapter 8 of this text with a grain of salt. The customary list of criteria is provided to aid readers in making their own judgments about the text and research. At the i2i, we judged our work not by whether it constituted research in any conventional sense, not by whether we asked leading questions, but rather by its utility and practicality. Our ethics and values guided our judgments of our work, which were negative when we appeared unable to communicate or collaborate and positive when we appeared to be learning and producing tangible results. These internal criteria, and the values and ethical positions from which we derived them, aid the i2i's leaders in remaining reflexive and responsive to their environment.

This study constitutes additional evidence for those who do the academic equivalent of warning, "don't try this at home": action researchers, in discussing methodology, must not only exhibit the broad flexibility to which I allude above, but also balance their defense of the approach as legitimate with the warning that it is difficult and "messy." This messiness can be discouraging, and researchers must be prepared for the possibility that the research will not emerge. Additionally, scholars often also touch upon the subject of achieving and maintaining approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) under a system that was devised with experimental and invasive methods in mind. Some authors, such as Bob Dick (1993), warn that conducting action research may not always be feasible or advisable because it is not appropriate for all research questions and contexts, as well as because it is not always advisable within a particular academic setting, in that other academics, including IRB members may resist, reject, or block such research.

I encountered both kinds of obstacle, and the messiness frequently threatened to overwhelm me. On many occasions, one or more of us participants threatened to leave the i2i, and I frequently wondered if I would have anything to write about in my dissertation. One cannot overstate the fact that one consideration in deciding whether to embark on an action research journey should be the need to produce a dissertation or other writing, whatever occurs in the field (including whether one runs out of time and/or money).

The IRB, on the other hand, was the source of greater fretting than of roadblocks, although much of the fretting was the result of slow responses on the part of the IRB, not to mention the many stories that I had read and heard regarding resistance on the part of IRBs to action research. Ironically, on several occasions, I was but a step or incident away from being in the position of having to choose between acting ethically and doing what was required by the IRB, and it was not unusual for me to be unsure of how the members of the IRB would want me to act (indeed, they might not have agreed with each other). Worrying about the IRB took up much of the time that I should have devoted to the research, i.e., to effecting change that would have benefitted the very participants that the IRB was designed to protect.

Further complicating matters were changes in staff that led to my waiting weeks, for example, to receive clarification regarding an ambiguity in their language for the consent forms that prevented me from completing the translations of these forms (the first collaborative work I was doing with participants, who had, of course, not yet signed the forms because these had not yet been translated). In some required language, the antecedent to the word “it” was unclear, so that we could not determine the proper gender of the word “it” in Portuguese, and repeated e-mails went unanswered. As long as the

translation was not completed, I could not get required signatures from participants. I even was without IRB approval at a time of crisis within the i2i because of delays in my one-year reauthorization.

Again, this is a cautionary tale, but it is also one that could have been much worse had I not been a student at a university with a strong group of activist anthropologists; I would caution any student at a university without a similar group of action researchers or activist anthropologists against conducting action research, and indeed, any student who is under severe time limits should consider avoiding working with people, especially vulnerable populations, from any methodological perspective. This would be particularly the case for master's students, who may not be able to take more than two years to complete their degrees, and doctoral students seeking to avoid incurring debt by completing their degrees in a timely fashion.

Had I returned from the field intent on writing an ethnographic account of our work, rather than on writing a “research report” detailing our hypotheses and how we tested them, i.e., on showing that we had conducted research that I expected would be easily accepted within academia, I would not have struggled nearly as much as I did to produce the present text. The added “hook” of Actor Network Theory, for which I have my colleague Lance Hayden to thank, finally helped me to move forward with the analysis and narrative of Section II: when I stepped away from trying to provide a grand explanation and, instead, to produce a convincing description, events began to explain themselves, although these explanations must now be found between the lines of the text and in actors’ actions and words. Counting oneself among the actors, as is necessary with PAR, is challenging, in part because the author runs the risk of overshadowing other actors. This challenge is more than compensated for by the clarity that considering non-

humans, such as the reading room and building, as actors brings to the narrative. Particularly important was keeping in mind Latour's "troubling and exhilarating feeling that things *could be different*, or at least that they *could still fail*" (2005, p. 85; emphasis in the original) and depicted the struggles to keep the i2i from failing. Furthermore, the most troubling aspect of Southern PAR is its affinity with a belief in others' false consciousness in contrast to an outsider's clear understanding of power relations; I find this assumption insulting and demeaning to participants, and yet the goal of increased self-reflection and improved self-understanding is rightly key to PAR endeavors, including the one described herein. By refusing an omniscient position, ANT offers a way to look at how actors reflect on their lives without falling into the trap of false consciousness. I hope this text serves as an example to others of how PAR and ANT can be fruitfully combined in an endeavor that follows neither perspective slavishly.

THE INFORMATION PROFESSIONS

Most obviously, this study involves a group using a new tool, LibraryThing, that is designed to organize personal book collections and relies on the social aspects of the Web. We did not use any of the recommendations or other social networking features of LibraryThing, but the story of one small group's use of this system may be of interest to those who study such new tools, their developers, and information professionals more generally: we organized materials (or cataloged) according to our needs, adapted the program to our needs, and ignored all of the purportedly special and attractive features (indeed, those features sometimes annoyed Daniel, particularly when the addition of a feature added a step to his process for creating or editing a record).

The traditional area of information studies on which we spent the most time acting was that of organization. However, the area that we spent perhaps the most time

discussing was collection development and guidelines. We must have broken every rule in the book, for example:

- Have a set of rules or guidelines for collecting materials
- Follow these rules
- Do not accept donations of materials that you do not want or cannot use
- Weed on occasion.

With the exception of the recommendation to weed collections, these were simply unrealistic: we were not ready to make decisions regarding what we should collect until after we had begun collecting; we were not prepared to stick to these decisions and would have missed out on opportunities had we done so; we were socially not always in a position to turn down donations, a problem faced by many libraries and archives – indeed, by organizations of all kinds that accept in-kind donations – no matter how good and clear their collection guidelines might be; there has been much discussion of weeding but little implementation, in part because for some time, one of the leaders was adamant about keeping everything, including incomplete dictionaries. The questions of donations and weeding are further complicated by the fact that we tarnished our reputation when we discarded most of what we received in early 2008 from a school that used the i2i as a way to rid itself of volumes that were of no more use to the i2i than they were to the school. Parallel warnings regarding accepting volunteer help could be made here as well.

This is not to say that the actors at the i2i always acted in the most prudent of fashions or that their example should be closely followed. Rather, that such challenges exist is not particularly novel, but their breadth and depth are difficult to understand without living them. To the extent that it is useful to hear such stories, it would be helpful for aspiring librarians to compare the situations faced by organizations such as the i2i

with the recommendations that are presented in information studies courses, and doing so could likewise sensitize librarians to the need to be flexible in expanding services under adverse conditions and to take a critical look at the advantages and disadvantages of the orthodoxy: while our not having acted in an orthodox fashion left us vulnerable to exploitation such as that practiced by the above-mentioned school, our unorthodox approach also helped us to survive. As UNESCO, governments, and local groups work to expand literacy and access to the written word, much of this work will necessarily be done in precarious manners by people with little formal education, much less college coursework in librarianship, under circumstances that will be far from ideal. In both the ways in which it has succeeded and those in which it has failed, the i2i would provide for some projects a more analogous example and a better cautionary tale than, for example, a public library in a middle-class community in the United States.

INFORMATION STUDIES

This section discusses some of the ideas of importance to information studies that the story of the i2i evokes. I have asked myself, “what are some of the ways in which the story enlightens or challenges us about information and libraries, and what are some of the ways which information was at the center of the story?” The results of this inquiry are five sections in which I consider what is meant by information and fiction and how these definitions were employed at the i2i. Regarding information, I contrast the relative ease with which information in the form of welcome news was incorporated into practices at the i2i with the confusing attempts by the foreign volunteers to understand the i2i and by the i2i’s leadership to understand the foreign volunteers. The discussion regarding fiction is shorter because fiction was never the divisive topic that information was at the i2i, but I invite my readers to consider the implications of the contemporary practice of

eschewing process-oriented definitions of entertainment, information, and communication. For a discussion of the goals that initially guided this research (which were firmly rooted in information studies) and some of the ways in which these remained pertinent even after two years of intense changes, I refer my readers to the section of Chapter 2 titled “Original Research Proposal” and to the section of Chapter 8 titled “Specific Goals.”

Reification and Commoditization of Information

Ludvik Fleck writes of what has been translated as “thought style” in science and society more broadly. The thought style of the times constrains how we see the world:

Neither the particular coloration of concepts nor this or that way of relating them constitutes a thought style. It is a definite constraint on thought, and even more; it is the entirety of intellectual preparedness or readiness for one particular way of seeing and acting and no other. (1979, p. 64)

We regularly make assumptions that upon closer examination are logically and/or empirically flawed; when we question those assumptions, we are critiquing the thought style of the world in which we live, an exceedingly difficult task because we must make what seems natural appear unnatural. This questioning is what critics of development do when they deconstruct not only the notion of development, but also related concepts such as poverty and needs (e.g., Escobar, 1995; Sachs ed., 1992), and the task parallels the tactic of the critical wing of the social sciences, and especially of anthropologists, of making the familiar appear strange and the strange familiar. It is also part of what practitioners of Southern PAR seek to do in their efforts to raise consciousness.

In the tradition of critical theory, in *The Modern Invention of Information: Discourse, History, and Power*, Ronald Day denaturalizes the idea of information:

I have examined professional and authoritative texts that have attempted to valorize information and communication as central social values and that have attempted to reify such values in terms of modernist notions of progress, capitalist exchange value, and transcendental historicism. . . .

The meaning of “information” has recently come to be attributed with the characteristics of “factuality” and auto-affective presence. . . . In order to gain the type of clear and distinct presence that is usually attributed to information, an extraordinary amount of control must be forced upon the sensory or cognitive process – either by tightly framing the object for perception or by habituating the subject toward a perception. . . . Since machines have innate limits in design for the purposes of cognitive adjustment, over the long run system design must work upon users. . . .

Given the manner through which “information” and “communication” are relegated to the positive social sciences and given the lack of tools for discussing ideology in the public arena . . . it is not surprising that these problems of sensory and cognitive “framing” and of social production in regard to information and communication are not very much engaged by professional organizations involved with directing information research. As dedicated as professional organizations may be to producing policy statements and guidelines on such issues as information literacy, freedom of information, computer ethics, equal access, and the like, the critical problems of what information is, how information has been culturally constructed and produced, and how an ideology of information and communication is then globally spread is low on their members’ research agenda. To put this another way, information professionals and theorists question very little what information is, why it should be valued, or why it is an economic and social “good.” (2001, pp. 114-115)

The notion that information is a social good, should be widely available to all, and is among our most important resources is part of the thought style of the day. As *The Modern Invention of Information* demonstrates, this is not the only possible way of understanding the meaning and place of information. Day continues:

From the trope of information, other tropes are generated, forming a discourse of information (such as “information society” and the infamous “information super-highway,” as well as “information designers,” “information architects,” “information planners,” and “ontologists” [formerly referred to as “catalogers”]). Indeed, the generation and maintenance of tropes surrounding that of information seems to constitute a profession unto itself. . . .

Coupled with the dominant tendency of such research to be “practical” in the service of professional and business organizations and in the service of military and industrial research projects, research in information simply shies away from critical engagement, as well as from foundational, qualitative, or materialist analyses, especially from that which is seen to employ “pretentious,” “political,” or, equally, “foreign” vocabulary, let alone philosophical or Marxist analysis. What is at stake here is not only the social production of a professional or scholarly field such as “information science” but ideological limitations upon concepts, vocabulary, and other practical tools for analyzing the cultural reality or nature of information and of the information society that we are repeatedly told that we are socially in and historically moving toward. Too often, the terms “practical,” “science,” (historical) “age,” and others mask those ideological boundaries that block critical agency and thought from straying off standardized communicational and informational routes. (pp. 116-117)

In other words, as Feyerabend (1993) warns, adherence to a limited (and limiting) set of standards, methods, definitions, and perspectives that are expected to lead to incremental advances in scientific knowledge serve, rather, to narrow our field of vision and hinder the production of knowledge.

“Information,” Day continues, “is a central term of ideology because it determines and patrols its own meaning over a vast expanse of social and cultural spaces. Through information, vocabularies for the future are included or excluded” (p117). Not coincidentally, the same could be said about the sprawling concept of development, and many of the critiques cited in Chapter 2 parallel Day’s assertions. Indeed, the notions of information and communication for development, information technologies for development (e.g., “leapfrogging” or the use of telephony or the Internet to link rural areas to urban ones), and the “information society” intimately link information and development, as well as communication and development.

As Day demonstrates, information has been reified and commoditized in today’s dominant thought style, and this understanding of information blinds and binds us. In short, information is conceived as either what Buckland describes as “information-as-

thing” or what he calls “information-as-knowledge” (1991) and it is prized for its exchange value.

Within economics, the myth of perfect information that would allow actors to make fully rational choices reigns, and within a political system that makes little distinction between capitalism and democracy, all of life’s choices run the risk of being reduced to simple calculations that could be solved if only one had perfect information. This subtle but powerful assumption was prevalent at the i2i. Strikingly, this assumption manifested itself in one party’s belief that another party would act differently with more (or more perfect) information (having “learned that,” i.e., having gained propositional knowledge; a noun), whereas the learning of importance to the second party was taking place on the experiential and practical levels of knowing (learning how, not what; a verb). For example, foreigners would arrive and offer business plans to leaders who were learning to live and be as leaders, and the leaders and sometimes the volunteers who had learned to live in Rocinha would assume that the kind of understanding that new volunteers needed in order to thrive in their new setting could be provided through “information resources,” even though they believed that they themselves needed to learn, or had learned, by doing. While, in both cases, the “recipients” of the information might have benefitted from the reified information, this simplistic understanding of information and learning hindered participants’ ability to understand one another.

Buckland (1991) identifies three meanings of the term “information”: “information-as-process,” “information-as-knowledge,” and “information-as-thing.” Whereas information-as-process might be expected to encompass the four parts of Heron and Reason’s (1997, 2001) extended epistemology, Buckland uses the term to refer to news, to the process of being informed (by someone, by a document, or the like).

Buckland maintains that information-as-knowledge is “that which is perceived in ‘information-as-process’” (1991, p. 351). Finally, information-as-thing is information-as-knowledge that has been embodied and is therefore tangible. While it is only this third kind of information that has a physical form, and is therefore, in the strict sense of the word, the only meaning that requires reification, reification in a broader sense occurs earlier, with the definition of information as informing someone of something. Information in this sense is a short-lived, transparent process and follows the tradition of earlier thinkers of influence to both information and communication studies (e.g., Weaver, 1949). A broader sense or definition of information is thus precluded.

Michael Reddy writes of what he terms the conduit metaphor of language. While he writes about the English language, the metaphor is used in the same way in Portuguese: through such expressions as “to get ideas across,” we use “dead metaphors” that “involve the figurative assertion that language *transfers* human thoughts and feelings” (1993, p. 167, emphasis in the original).⁶⁴ Words and strings of words, then, “contain” thoughts and emotions. When the conduit metaphor is used, communication is assumed to be easy. When communication fails, this failure is deemed to have occurred either because the receiver was a bad listener or the sender failed. Thus, “in terms of the conduit metaphor, what requires explanation is failure to communicate” (p. 175), that is, discontinuities require explanations. This is, of course, precisely the kind of assumption and metaphor that scholars and students of both ANT and communities of practice question when they advocate for studying how, for example, an NGO is maintained intact: successful communication and organization, they maintain, require work and explanation.

Perhaps most salient to the present research is Reddy's assessment of what happens when we assume that communication should require no effort:

This model of communication objectifies meaning in a misleading and dehumanizing fashion. It influences us to talk and think about thoughts as if they had the same kind of external, intersubjective reality as lamps and tables. Then, when this presumption proves dramatically false in operation, there seems to be nothing to blame except our own stupidity or malice. . . .

To the extent that the conduit metaphor does see communication as requiring some slight expenditure of energy, it localizes this expenditure almost totally in the speaker or writer. The function of the reader or listener is trivialized. The radical subjectivist paradigm, on the other hand, makes it clear that readers and listeners face a difficult and highly creative task of reconstruction and hypothesis testing. Doing this work well probably requires considerably more energy than the conduit metaphor would lead us to expect. (p. 186)

We have, then, a definition of information that assumes passivity, is concerned about the very short term, treats information as either tangible or something that can be made tangible, and is inextricably bound to capitalist modes of production and exchange. Alternatively, we can perhaps turn, as Reddy does, to radical subjectivism, or to the process-oriented perspective of action research that is also shared by Latour (1996, 2005) and Wenger (1998), among others.

Again, action research, in its many varieties, focuses on learning over time rather than on the "introduction" of information into a system. Still, information in the common sense of the word is important when participants are ready to "take it in" and when they are willing and able to work to interpret texts, utterances, or signs. Furthermore, in many action research traditions, the most meaningful learning is that which occurs internally and encompasses all four kinds of knowing, not just propositional knowing, where the conventional notion of information resides.

Information-as-News and the Instituto Dois Irmãos

I did not set out to collect data about the relationship of the i2i and its various actors to information; rather, I sought to facilitate and study the planning and implementation of its reading room. Thus, this section is not meant to be comprehensive or subjected to any kind of statistical analysis. Rather, I seek to provide some examples of how the notion of information as critiqued by Day and Reddy manifested itself and affected our ability to communicate or work. In other words, what are some of the ways in which the reification of information and, inextricably, the conduit metaphor shaped our relationships and actions?

While Latour and others might suggest looking at the occasions on which communication succeeded, most of the examples below are of failures, and I mention counter-examples more briefly. I chose these examples for several reasons: we spent most of the two years in question aware that our communication was neither easy nor transparent and yet judging ourselves and each other harshly for not communicating more effectively; some striking examples of frame conflicts that support Reddy's assertion that our assumption that communication is easy are apparent in these failures; and those occasions on which communication apparently succeeded quite well were also, and probably not coincidentally, the most banal of our communication attempts.

Indeed, Buckland's "information-as-process" describes quite well the occasions on which information was "introduced" and had an immediate positive effect of making a difference:⁶⁵ when we received news, in the form of statements of fact from an outside agent whom we believed, we were sometimes able to act upon the news. For example, the leaders and I were anxious to know when we would move into the new building, but we felt constrained from deciding whether to stay at the preschool and rent the new building

out for the semester until we received word of the donation of chairs, blackboards, and other materials from the American School. While such events greatly influenced the path of the i2i, they are among the simplest and most obvious uses of information. In this case, we all believed that we had an information need, agreed about what constituted information in that context, trusted that the information was accurate (and we could verify it as the chairs arrived), and felt confident to act on it.

Of course, the introduction of news did not always lead to decision making; sometimes the news was insufficient or inaccurate, sometimes the “messenger” was not trusted, and sometimes we were not institutionally prepared to act. For example, finally arriving at an understanding of what was expected of the i2i in order for 2Bros. to release the funds for further construction was only part of what Daniel and I needed to begin producing appropriate documentation; the rest had to come from within us. Similarly, the i2i learned about but passed up several opportunities to apply for grants while the leaders gained experience and confidence; later, in 2008, they began appealing to outside funders. Here, again, we could agree that the deadline and procedures for applying for a grant constituted new information and did not doubt the source. Indeed, we could agree that we should act on that information. Yet, it was not until the leadership was ready to act on such news or felt compelled to do so that it made any difference to our actions over the short term (certainly, becoming aware of grants may have affected attitudes toward later grant opportunities).

Similarly, we often disagreed not on the so-called “content,” but rather on what we should do about the information. These are simple, commonplace examples, wherein the actors involved together focused on “information-as-knowledge” or “information-as-thing.” For example, the four Brazilian leaders and I realized something about the

Internet connection that we were using that led us to want to seek a faster, more reliable connection, but we were unable to agree on a course of action, i.e., we agreed on the problem but not the solution:

When [one leader] said it may be time to get [a better Internet connection] and I agreed, [another leader] attempted to veto the idea, claiming it was too expensive. I said it would cost nothing to see; [the first leader] said it would have to be researched, since it would involve a one-year contract; [a third leader] said the guy in Canada has expressed interest in paying our Internet bill; [the fourth leader] tried to speak and failed to get the floor; I said they might have something for small NGOs and that it was worth looking into; [the fourth leader] agreed with me; and he and I together explained that companies do all sorts of things to get clients. [The second leader] made faces and repeatedly said that it was too expensive. And then we just moved on.

Later, one of the leaders looked into the standard rate for a better connection but did not approach the company for a discount, and the problem was remedied only in 2009. We agreed enough on the information-as-knowledge to agree that we needed a better connection, but we still could not agree even to seek out additional information, much less to change the service.

In yet other cases, we simply do not know if news would have been sufficient because we never learned what we wished to learn. What can be said is that we spent much of our time lamenting a lack of information of the “news” variety: arrival dates of future volunteers, the number of volunteers that we could expect for a semester, what 2Bros.’ financial situation was, and the like. This situation is in contrast with learning-by-doing, about which we procrastinated but, except regarding specific expertise (e.g., for construction), did not wait for anyone else; rather, once we finished procrastinating or otherwise found the time, we would proceed to experiment, such as when we chose LibraryThing and MiniBiblio. Thus we employed an active view of what it takes to

become well informed about something, a view that involves none of the passivity associated with information in the conduit metaphor.

Of course, there is also the case of information or communication that has a negative impact. For example, reports to 2Bros. have threatened the autonomy of the i2i. Additionally, two other phenomena were present: misunderstandings accompanied by confusion and/or anger, especially in the course of electronic communications and/or between native speakers of different languages, and intentional misrepresentations, which contributed to distrust among participants. These kinds of difficulties are likewise not surprising. Again, the assumption that communication is a simple act hindered understanding. For example, I more than once attempted to no avail to convince one leader that being an extremely good speaker of a second language did not mean that the individual with whom s/he was having a disagreement (e.g., over whether we should have been focusing on the reading room in mid-2006) was fully aware of all of the connotations of his or her words, tone, or posture.

Information-as-news was, then, one possibility for the uses and understanding of information and learning. Scholars in the field of information studies have developed many processes for studying and ways of thinking about such information and its use.

More interesting were the incidents in which one party believed that another party would be well served by information in the above-mentioned sense (the combination of Buckland's three kinds of information, which I am calling "information-as-news") and the other party was faced with the challenge of achieving practical knowing more than that of achieving propositional knowing, such that the two parties were using very different frames.

Indeed, perhaps the most striking aspect of the period between March 2006 and February 2008 at the i2i was the gap between what the Brazilian leaders believed regarding the i2i's relationship to information and what many of the participants in the waves of volunteers believed and vice-versa. I often understood each group's position, but, when this was not the case, I was as bewildered by the foreign volunteers in question as were the leaders. It should be noted that neither group was monolithic and that the size, composition, and living arrangements of the volunteers changed frequently and dramatically. At times, a group of volunteers lived far from the i2i but still within Rocinha, in a place where the leaders deemed the drug traffickers less predictable, and cliques would form among those volunteers, thereby exacerbating conflicts and misunderstandings.

The leadership and I initially acknowledged our lack of knowledge about how to proceed with managing the i2i and its programs; this was a constant theme at first. As we worked, we grew not only more knowledgeable, but also more confident, individually and as a group: "we need time to learn before we can do anything" gave way to "we need to introduce change slowly because our resources are limited, we need to control said change, and we are still learning." We focused, in short, on practical knowing and sought to expand our propositional knowing at specific moments when we believed that we had a need for information in the sense of information-as-thing, e.g., when we sought to learn the prices of items in order to produce a budget.

Regarding the leaders, many (but not all) volunteers, on the other hand, focused primarily on information-as-thing and much less on the learning process or on practical knowing. They would often arrive, size up the situation quickly (or at least believe that they had done so), and begin doling out unsolicited and unwanted advice that

demonstrated a lack of understanding of the situation, as well as a belief that information was the key to solving the problems that they believed the i2i had. Similarly, insiders, myself included, often expressed the belief that money would solve the problems that we believed plagued the i2i, despite our concern that some of our internal conflicts might be exacerbated by an influx of funds.

In many cases, the volunteers would grow disdainful of the leadership: when new practices did not immediately result from the purported introduction of new information, this fact was used to justify the belief that the i2i would fail because its leadership was not serious enough. Although this complaint about “seriousness” was also made from within the leadership, often loudly, and while it was difficult for the leadership (myself included) to focus on a task in any sustained fashion, this criticism was not accepted when it came from outsiders, and it obscured the (from our perspective) more salient point that the leadership required more time and experience to improve the i2i. The emphasis on information-as-news obscured many individuals’ ability to sustain a focus on the process of learning practices that either had little to do with information or that needed to be mastered in order for good use to be made of information in this sense of the term. It should be noted that, just as our faith in information was not so great that we could not see the fallacy in the notion that information is the answer to all of our woes, the volunteers knew that change is not easy and takes time; nonetheless, many reacted in ways that were incongruent with this knowledge.

As time went on and as those of us who remained in Rocinha for an extended period of time, including the Brazilian leaders, grew able to see that we were effecting changes and improvements, however slowly, I came to speak at length with volunteers shortly after they arrived in Rocinha. I would talk about how far I believed we had come

and about my conviction that the i2i needed time to continue to grow at its own pace and the autonomy to make decisions of its own, even if this sometimes meant frustration, failure, or waste over the short term. I would request patience from newcomers and, likewise, from 2Bros. Nonetheless, the pattern persisted among some newcomers and 2Bros. board members. The most egregious example of this pattern was our experience with the volunteer who, in early 2008, attempted to change the i2i in an eight-day visit.

Meanwhile, volunteers and the leaders of the two NGOs frequently espoused the belief that more information regarding and on the part of volunteers would solve our perceived problem of “crazy volunteers,” those who acted in ways that were inconceivable from within the “thought style” of the institute and in the context of Rocinha. This assertion was both supported and refuted by evidence of apparently insane actions by volunteers. For example, if we had known more about some of the volunteers, we could have rejected their applications. Nonetheless, one particularly dangerous individual “looked great on paper” and would likely have passed any screening test that we had the resources to implement, such as requiring telephone interviews or letters of recommendation. In our meetings, we would frequently focus on how to request more detailed information about potential volunteers and how to inform and welcome incoming volunteers better; while we recognized both that experiencing the favela was a necessary prerequisite for understanding Rocinha and that any screening process for potential volunteers would be inadequate, the notion that more, more accessible, and better information should form the core of our solution was not questioned. Indeed, the minutes of the 2009 joint annual meeting, in which I was unable to participate because of a failed Internet connection, indicate that the topic of information for and about volunteers remains of great concern to the leaders of both NGOs.

Similarly, volunteers repeatedly started sentences with phrases such as “if I had known,” but much of what they needed to know can be gained only through experience. Again, the simplistic notion of information as something that can be easily sent, received, and used hindered understanding of the i2i, Rocinha, and Brazil, even though the actors were cognizant that learning is a process that occurs over time.

Foreigners’ Attempts to Understand and Act in Rocinha and the i2i

Relations at the i2i were often tense. They were tense among the leaders, and they were tense between the leaders and 2Bros. and between the leaders and some volunteers. Within the leadership, absenteeism, distrust, and personality conflicts often made the atmosphere so tense that we would fight over nearly anything, and, indeed, on at least one occasion I left a meeting convinced that we had been fighting but unable to articulate what we had been fighting about. The leaders frequently expressed the belief that poor communication negatively affected the relationship between the leaders of the two NGOs, although often this assertion was accompanied by accusations of stupidity and/or malice (both mentioned by Reddy, 1993). With the foreign volunteers, a combination of an assumption that members of the other group did not know enough, questions regarding the integrity and work ethic of those individuals, and even questions regarding their mental health all contributed to a negative atmosphere.

The i2i was not a dark, conflict-ridden institution in which nothing was ever accomplished; rather, this chapter focuses on conflicts in order to understand these better through the lens of the critiques of Day and Reddy. The above-mentioned conflicts were indeed frequent and troubling, and although they hindered the work at the i2i, they did not prevent us from performing our duties. Furthermore, the i2i is often a place of great

joy and good humor, especially when it comes to the leaders' and teachers' relations with the students they serve.

The experiences of the Instituto Dois Irmãos and the Two Brothers Foundation are somewhat unusual for international NGOs. Whereas international and “developed nation” NGOs working in the so-called developing world are usually much larger than 2Bros. and benefit several or many projects, 2Bros. exists to serve Dois Irmãos alone. The most common path for volunteers is to contact 2Bros. to express interest in volunteering, spend anywhere from a few weeks to several months in Rocinha with Dois Irmãos, and return to their home nations, sometimes joining 2Bros.

Nonetheless, in other ways the experience of the two organizations is quite conventional. Firstly, the Northern organization has held significant sway over the Southern one, raising questions of equity, among other concerns expressed by critics of international development. Secondly, cultural misunderstandings and cross-cultural communications are central to understanding a wide range of relationships, within and between the two NGOs. The complexities of these relationships, including how volunteers navigated their new reality in Rocinha, turn out to be anything but transparent and easy to parse.

One version of conventional wisdom, that shared by many critics of development efforts, would have it that the foreigners, with their education, money, social ties, and, often, whiteness, would have more power, if not a greater “stock” of knowledge, than the residents of Rocinha. The “natives” would lack the ability to “compete with” or “hold their own” in disputes with the foreigners, and the “natives” would be information-poor, surviving in a small world of few, strong social ties, whereas the foreigners would be agile users of a larger, looser network of ties that would help make them information-

rich. Thus, the foreigners would be in an excellent position to aid or exploit the natives. This vision relies upon an understanding of the terrible weight of global and local structural inequities that severely limit agency. It also relies on what Chatman (1987, 1990, 1991, 1999) characterizes as reasonable decisions not to seek out information (again, in the conventional sense of the word) based on an inability to make positive use of such knowledge, again because of structural disadvantages.

Another common way of understanding intercultural encounters would expect the story to turn out quite differently: the foreigners, for all of their First-World cultural capital, could be expected to lack the necessary knowledge, social ties, and linguistic abilities (broadly construed to include such notions as body language) to “hold their own” in a land as strange to them and as remote from their worlds as Rocinha. In short, “culture shock” would make even everyday experiences difficult for foreigners.

The volunteers and Brazilian leaders often lacked the cultural capital to understand one another, as the second version of conventional wisdom would predict, and the assumptions that underlie rhetoric of the “information-poor” exacerbated the challenge of reaching understandings by deflecting attention from cultural differences to information and then, when the information was not acted upon, to character flaws. Thus, rather than recognizing that various actors understood and desired different things and doing the hard work of seeking to understand one another and reach an agreement, actors resorted to expressing frustration regarding other actors’ decisions, beliefs, and (in)actions. Perhaps a good boundary object would have been helpful, but one always seemed to be lacking in moments of crisis.

Attitudes and practices regarding planning and carrying out plans were the site of many disagreements between foreign volunteers, who often saw the i2i as dysfunctional

or incompetent, and the leaders, who characterized some of the volunteers as stunningly naïve or simply crazy. I often found myself agreeing with nearly everyone, despite the contradictory nature of some of the arguments. In particular, I, too, was frustrated with the seeming inability to make and carry out clear plans, but I also wanted volunteers to understand the struggles that the leaders faced and wondered if particular volunteers were emotionally prepared for the shock of living in Rocinha. I even feared that they posed a threat to themselves and others, not to mention to the reputation and integrity of the institute. Indeed, I was very worried that someone would get hurt and/or cause the i2i to have to close.

We never quite learned to predict well which volunteers would pose a threat to the i2i or themselves, although we honed this skill. Some other volunteers and I did, however, identify a pattern: volunteers would arrive anxious to share their ideas; grow disappointed as they realized that the culture of the i2i was not conducive to quick changes; come to identify what they saw as character and operational flaws (e.g., absenteeism, a lack of clear plans); begin to see the leaders as lazy, incompetent, or corrupt; become disillusioned; and leave, sometimes vowing to return, despite the frustration and disappointment they felt. A subset of the volunteers would, during or after the phase of identification of flaws, commit one or more dangerous or socially unacceptable acts.

The question here is not whether these flaws existed or even whether the volunteers had good reason to be frustrated. Rather, the question is what the assumption that accompanies the conduit metaphor that communication (and also observation) should be simple and easy and should lead to the same kinds of actions, regardless of the actor, has meant for relations at the i2i. The leaders were characterized as not just doing what

they needed to do, as being unable or unwilling to conduct the i2i's business, and as being unworthy of their positions at the i2i. Such a conclusion was, not surprisingly, not conducive to the kinds of change that the volunteers sought. Again, it should be noted that, although the pattern was clear, it was not universal, nor did it develop in exactly the same way or with the same intensity for all volunteers.

Understanding Volunteers and Providing Information to Them

The leadership's lack of even the most basic of "information," such as the expected dates of arrival of future volunteers, negatively affected their ability to manage their programs and to plan future semesters, thus negatively affecting our ability to focus on the reading room. Likewise, volunteers, once they reached the field, complained that they had not been adequately prepared (or, in some cases, prepared at all) for what they would encounter. We can only wonder how many volunteers the i2i did not receive because potential ones were unhappy with the information made available to them, primarily via 2Bros.' Web site (<http://www.2bros.org/>).

From my first arrival in March of 2006 until shortly before my final departure in February of 2008, I often considered focusing this research on the provision of information services to volunteers in lieu of or in addition to the provision of the reading room to the i2i's students. The leaders, volunteers, and I discussed the 2Bros. Web site repeatedly and at length and considered creating a volunteers' corner in the reading room. The i2i did not have control over the Web site, although one leader eventually collaborated on its redesign and on translating parts of the site into Portuguese, which I proofread for that leader while in the United States around Easter of 2007 and which was added to the site shortly thereafter. Furthermore, the focus of the reading room has as yet been on supporting classroom activities and lending to students, providing services to

volunteers when these services are expected to benefit their classroom activities directly; the i2i has prioritized these roles over other possible roles, such as providing information about Brazil to volunteers, enticing adult students to use the reading room, or serving a more general public. Nonetheless, with the limited time and access to the Internet that I had, in early 2008 I began working in conjunction with two of the leaders on a new site, www.2irmaos.org, and I hope to take this work up again at a later date.

Certainly simple news, such as dates of arrival, would have been beneficial, but the above discussion suggests that much of what the volunteers needed to know would be of the kind that requires learning by doing. Unfortunately, just as it is true that many children need to learn what “too hot; don’t touch” means for themselves, so, too, many volunteers needed to witness, for example, violence or the threat of violence for themselves before they would heed others’ warnings to police their actions carefully. Perhaps in part because the volunteers were not children, who, in contrast to adults, are expected to be tempted to conduct dangerous experiments, it was difficult for some of us to understand why these warnings were not more easily heeded.

From the perspective of the leaders, a pattern similar to the one described above emerged: volunteers would arrive, they would be warned about the dangers and rules, they would do something “crazy” or “dumb” that threatened their well-being and/or that of the i2i, and they would suffer the consequences or narrowly avoid a disaster. All because they had not listened to what they had been told and/or because they were “crazy.” Suggested solutions centered around improving the quality and “delivery” of the warnings, with at least one leader eventually coming to the conclusion that some volunteers needed to hear of a recent event or witness one to believe the rhetoric.

Complicating matters was the fact that we would sometimes learn that one of the leaders had played down or joked about the risks with volunteers.

Now, two volunteers committed acts that were so erratic that the present discussion does nothing to diminish the hypothesis that they suffered from mental instability brought on by the stress of being in Rocinha or Rio more generally, in one case, or from a psychological disorder, in the other. Still, viewing the incidents in which other volunteers committed socially unacceptable acts through Reddy's critique of the conduit metaphor adds clarity to many of these cases. If we live by the conduit metaphor, then it seems that statements such as, "Rocinha is a dangerous place with teenagers who tote guns and occasional invasions by the police or the army. The neighbors judge people harshly and quickly on the basis of the actions that they witness. Keep your distance from the drug traffickers and act conservatively on the streets" would be easy to comprehend and respect. Indeed, some volunteers were careful; others were not. While the i2i and 2Bros. can and should be more comprehensive and organized in preparing future volunteers, recognizing that all statements take work to understand, that meaning is not simply "conveyed" via these statements, and that learning-by-doing is part of what helps us reach beyond the propositional level to the practical would go a long way in reducing confusion. Furthermore, although conflict is unlikely to dissipate, at least the parties in question could move beyond accusations of apathy, stupidity, and insanity to less divisive interpretations of events. These recognitions require sustained attention and reflexivity. In the case of the i2i and 2Bros., they also mean the need to recognize that dangerous acts will continue to be performed and to seek ways to mitigate these threats that include but are not limited to Buckland's "information-as-process" and are used in a reflexive manner.

What is fascinating about this case is that the parties knew quite well the importance of learning by doing, that communication is not easy, and that different interpretations exist. Why, then, did we frequently act as if we knew that learning was instantaneous and communication was a simple technical matter of moving a message? The answer is certainly not simply that the conduit metaphor is in use, but, coupled with the recognition that it is easier to perceive complexity in ourselves than in others, the use of the conduit metaphor goes a long way towards explaining these sometimes bewildering conflicts. More importantly, critiquing the use of the conduit metaphor offers the prospect of a change that might, ironically enough, improve communication.

None of these assertions is greatly surprising; what is shocking is the extent to which many actors' understanding of their own learning diverged from what they expected of others, even where the actors were actively engaged in thinking about learning. Again, it was not that all actors at all times were blind to the learning processes of others, but rather that the phenomenon of expecting oneself to learn through doing and others to learn through a conduit occurred repeatedly.

Again, for example, few today think that information, or even the loftier goal of understanding by each participant in a conflict, will by itself end conflicts. Nonetheless, it is imperative that we become *and remain* aware of the assumptions that we make in our daily lives and the ways in which these can both benefit and hinder our ability to live, work, and create change in an increasingly integrated world. The belief that others' learning processes are less complex than our own and the belief in the conduit metaphor should count among these assumptions.

Finally, the example of the work of the i2i and 2Bros. might be viewed as an extreme case because of:

- Language barriers
- A lack of formal education among the natives of Rocinha
- The preference among the long-term volunteers for education in fields such the social sciences and even engineering, rather than for such areas as business or management
- A lack of administrative experience, all around
- The youth of most involved
- The context of Rocinha
- A lack of funds.

Rather than meaning that the experiences of the i2i and 2Bros. therefore constitute an unusual institutional case of little consequence, the extreme nature of our lack of experience, lack of appropriate education, lack of cultural and linguistic knowledge, poverty, and dangerous context allows for the study of a combination of a range of common institutional difficulties. Thus, the i2i/2Bros.’ case is at once singular and even anecdotal and also reflective of the many other singular and anecdotal cases that, in turn, together reflect many of the challenges facing organizations of all sizes and natures.

Fiction in Libraries and Reading Rooms⁶⁶

In recent years, what the field that is variously called librarianship, information studies, or information science should study, and what it should be called, has been questioned and altered. As long as we consider information in its reified, commoditized, and short-term definition, the move from valorizing institutions – libraries, but also archives and similar institutions – and their buildings to valorizing information, “information resources,” “information architecture,” and the other tropes to which Day refers risks stripping fiction from information institutions or subsuming the arts under the

ill-fitting umbrella of information. We appear to have opted for the latter, justifying fiction in our libraries and schools for what we can learn from it and downplaying the centrality of play and entertainment in our lives, or we have simply chosen to pretend that fiction has a place in what Chelton calls “the exclusionary rhetoric of ‘information’”:

While concerns about using public money to purchase sensational books and worries over what children read continue at some level . . . a possibly larger contemporary concern might be how public libraries came to be swept up in the exclusionary rhetoric of ‘information’ when daily evidence of public library user preferences shows at least an equal interest in “entertainment” (1999, p. 45)

In fact, the role of fiction in libraries has been discussed since before the current pressure to subsume all of the functions and meanings of libraries under the banner of information, and already Day’s and Reddy’s critiques are echoed in these discussions. Indeed, the question of the relationship of information to entertainment and what should be provided or suggested to the public for reading or viewing have been important to both library and information studies and communication studies. The term “the people’s university,” used in an 1876 report on public libraries in the United States (Quiney, 1980, p. 400), has been used to defend the position that public libraries (and, by extension, in today’s context, the reading rooms of organization such as the i2i) should be in the business of providing information (narrowly construed) to the public with the express purpose of providing education. Furthermore, as Chelton notes, “public library rhetoric since the inception of the institution has used lofty aspirational expressions (‘the people’s university’ comes to mind), leaving public librarians particularly vulnerable to attacks of peddling ‘trash’ with public money. Worse still, some public librarians believe it” (1999, p. 46). Public libraries, then, were to provide “facts” and, perhaps, high-quality, highbrow literature with the intention of instructing rather than entertaining, never mind the frequently made

observation that Shakespeare's plays did not begin as high culture any more than do the works of popular fiction writers today.

Indeed, many researchers and practitioners have recommended the inclusion of popular fiction in public libraries' collections. Harris (1973) points out that much of this work to include fiction has been based on the belief that offering such materials would get readers in the door and that, once in, they could be guided to facts. Other authors, such as I. Duncan Smith (1998), have pointed to the educational or emotionally salutatory potential of fiction, including when these materials are associated with low culture.

In contrast, an American Library Association (ALA) publication prepared by the Baltimore County Public Library's (BCPL) Blue Ribbon Committee, *Give 'Em What They Want* (1992), which provides a perhaps somewhat overstated, radically user-centered approach to library services, expresses the sentiment that public libraries should not strive to be "the public's university":

Librarians in public libraries have no teaching responsibilities (except, perhaps, for preschool children) and cannot and should not compete with the research function of universities and colleges. Public libraries make information and recreation (it is almost always difficult to separate these two functions) affordable to the general public through sharing. Like water distribution, or sewers, or highways. They provide educational services in the broadest sense to the broadest cross section of the public, but they are not an academic institution, and an attempt to make a public library into an academic institution, or to serve as yet another academic institution in the community, kills its effectiveness as the public's library – the only library the public has access to. (p. 3)

According to this view, public libraries are, in a word, conduits, distributing information and recreation in much the same way in which water companies distribute water, and such libraries' users are simply customers. The report not only accepts the definition of information questioned by Day, it also takes the logic underlying this definition to a

logical extreme: information and entertainment are mere things to be distributed, and a public library's job is to distribute what its customers want.

Clearly, how information and the roles of libraries are understood has profound implications for many aspects of librarianship, including selection, reader's advisory services, cataloging, who we believe to constitute a library's stakeholders, and how, when, and where libraries should operate.

Further discussion of fiction in libraries and the roles of public libraries in relation to fiction or, more generally, in Western societies, is out of scope here. Many facets of the rich history of public libraries in the United States, including disagreements over how fiction should be treated, are discussed in *Libraries as Agencies of Culture*, edited by Augst and Wiegand (2001). In *Into the Future: The Foundations of Library and Information Services in the Post-Industrial Era*, Harris, Hannah, and Harris (1998) discuss everything from the mission and roles of libraries and librarians in American society, to information policy at the national level, to the notion of an "information age." Particularly salient to the present discussion is Chapter 4, "Neutrality, Objectivity, Information Professionals, and Librarians" (pp. 79-102). Additionally, Bakewell provides a discussion of the various roles and missions that have been ascribed to public libraries (1990, pp. 14-21) and also touches on collection policies for public libraries (pp. 153-158). Also, *Guiding the Reader to the Next Book*, edited by Shearer (1996), provides an introduction to the topic of providing advice regarding fiction.

One of the original goals of this research was "to understand better the roles that entertainment and fiction can play" in "libraries and similar organizations," especially those serving the underprivileged. It was with a profound discomfort with attempts to subsume all of the functions and meanings of libraries under "information" that I set out

to understand the roles that fiction might play in a library-like setting that would not be as burdened with the context briefly described above. Indeed, fiction made the i2i's reading room a reality in a way that placing books on shelves cannot do, and it is through the use of fiction that the reading room continues to thrive. The underlying questions, it now seems, are not only how we should and do treat fiction, or even the relationship of fiction to information, but why we continue to live by such flat definitions of information, communication, and entertainment that do not take process into account over any period longer than the very short term.

Chapter 10 offers some final thoughts on how we might reconcile the abovementioned critiques of how we approach information with a commitment to literacy and equity in a world in which information is a key component of inequitable relations. In that chapter, I also discuss some of the strengths and weaknesses of this study, and I conclude this text by providing recommendations for the institute, Two Brothers, and future research.

Chapter 10: Conclusions and Recommendations

Section II gave a chronological account of the research that I conducted between March 2006 and February 2008 with the Instituto Dois Irmãos. I intended to provide a narrative with sufficient detail to convince readers of the claims of Chapters 8 and 9 and to help guide future endeavors of the i2i, 2Bros., or other organizations that might take an interest in our story. That is, one of my aims was to show how we succeeded and failed to perform action research, most particularly how the various actors learned and changed. These actors were both the human participants and the non-human characters of the story: the institute, its building, and its reading room. Secondly, the experiences of the i2i provide an opportunity to think about methodology, the “information professions,” and how people treat the notion of information in their own daily actions and in their interpretations of others’ actions, intentions, and characters.

Throughout the above text, I have already offered many conclusions and recommendations. Here, I first offer some thoughts on information, development, and literacy in light of the critiques of Reddy (1993) and Day (2001). The strengths and weaknesses of this study are described at length throughout Chapters 5-7 and especially in Chapter 8. Nonetheless, it is customary to include a “strengths and weaknesses” section in dissertations. Readers are encouraged to read that section in particular with an eye to what they have already seen in previous chapters. I end this text with a set of recommendations for the i2i, 2Bros., and future research.

THE CONDUIT METAPHOR: INFORMATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO LITERACY AND EQUITY

The rhetoric of the “information society” or “information age,” at its most extreme, would have us believe that the way to health, happiness, and economic prosperity is a simple matter of providing ever greater access to “information,” especially in digital forms, to ever more people. Not coincidentally, the rhetoric of development makes similar claims.

When not used reflexively, the conduit metaphor (Reddy, 1993) makes the rhetoric of the information age appear all the more sensible and the information society all the more a matter to be administered technocratically. Such a faith in the power of information to bring prosperity to people living in poverty, with a disability, or with other barriers to the full benefits of modern society echoes earlier attempts to provide radio, television, telephony, and other communication technologies to the disadvantaged. Furthermore, it is no mere accident that a differentiation between information and information technologies – or between communication and communication technologies – frequently goes unmade.

In short, the notion of an information society and an information age fits all too nicely into the trajectory of development and aid questioned by the contributors to the *Development Dictionary* (Sachs ed., 1992) and other authors whose work is discussed in Chapter 3 (Bennholdt-Thomas and Mies, 1999; Escobar, 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997; Rist, 1997). Indeed, the critiques of Reddy (1993) and Day (2001) support the arguments of critics of development by demonstrating the deceptive simplicity and apparent naturalness of the conduit metaphor and commoditization of information in the sense in which the term is employed in that metaphor.

Thinking about how relying on the conduit metaphor dangerously reduces complex human phenomena to simple exchanges may help us to think about why development and aid efforts have not yet rid the world of poverty and hunger. Certainly there are local elites and powerful international forces to blame for some failures, some people act incompetently or carelessly, and top-down development programs (and some participatory ones) run the risk of not attaining local “buy-in.” Furthermore, the willingness of those of us who benefit from the “underdevelopment” of others to perpetuate a system that relies on low-wage labor and environmental destruction stacks the cards against equity, if for no other reason than that the planet cannot provide for what we see as a modest middle-class lifestyle for everyone. Furthermore, the economic models by which we live appear to be flawed.

Layered atop all of these challenges, or perhaps underlying them, are the conduit metaphor and the damage it does: as long as we attempt to “transfer” technology and skills to the world’s most disadvantaged citizens, we will continue to see learning by others as a process that should be easy, even when it is not quick. When efforts fail, we will be tempted to put the tactics of incremental science to work, looking to understand what we overlooked in our message and trying again after reducing “noise” in our messages or adding complexity to our frameworks, or, worse, we will brand those whom we tried to help as hopelessly lazy, stupid, fanatical, savage, or with some other term that can only hinder cooperation and understanding. Even if we are not wrong that the practices that we want to impart on others are the best ones for them – a dangerous, ethnocentric idea in and of itself – as long as we see others’ learning as a simple matter of accepting and using our messages, breakthroughs will likely remain elusive. Technocracy may have fallen out of favor, but the metaphor that inspires technocratic solutions

continues to interfere with understanding, as the disconnect between how actors at the i2i believed they and others learned demonstrates.

Regarding information, we are left with a dilemma that is analogous to the one faced by critics of the notion of development: equitable access to information is a lofty goal, perhaps less essential to maintaining life but no less admirable than that of equitable access to clean water. Yet, our understanding of information, of how it is “shared,” “exchanged,” and learned risks making victims of non-“recipients” and villains of those who do not respond to it in the ways expected of them. Action research and actor-network theory, in contrast, teach us that the “victims” can change their worlds themselves and that the “villains” can have reason to “ignore” what they are told or given. Reddy (1993), Day (2001), and Wenger (1998) add ways of seeing information and learning as something other than a combination of an active sender, a message, noise, and a passive recipient, but our language often betrays us.

Perhaps the notion of information needs to be abandoned, or perhaps it only requires reform. Whatever happens to our understanding of information, there will be consequences for our understanding of literacy. Literacy is regarded as a primary means of accessing information and runs the risk of being reduced to information in much the same way that fiction has been treated in discourses regarding public libraries: in an extension of the conduit metaphor, as a mere means to the end of acquiring information.

Literacy remains both an essential part of modern life and elusive to many members of society. While it is one way through which we access embodied information, it is also a way through which to access cultural expressions that should not be reduced to information. Indeed, reading is one of the many ways that humans have to hone their

ability to interpret words – a particularly important skill to have once we recognize that communication is a difficult, active task for listeners as well as for speakers.

Thus, it seems no less foolish to advocate ceasing literacy efforts than to advocate ceasing to combat malaria outbreaks. Similarly, to cease altogether the many efforts to produce and provide low-cost information technologies to the poor, disabled, or otherwise disadvantaged would seem ill-advised. Still, development and aid, with which these efforts appear inextricably linked, are not the panacea for the problems of the world's poor, hungry, and illiterate that some – among them brilliant scholars and world leaders, including U.S. presidents – claim. What we need is an open discussion of the potential for good but also the potential for harm that these projects bring with them. And any such discussion must include not only a multitude of voices, but also a critique of the very notions of information and communication “flows” and of the commoditization of information in the conventional sense of the word. The i2i is but one site at which this conversation might take place.

Perhaps one answer is to do as 2Bros. and the i2i have implicitly done and follow Paulo Freire in pursuing “human development.” Doing so would mean to fight the tendency to reduce education to training, fiction to a path to information, and literacy to a mere tool for accessing information. It would also mean paying constant and conscious attention to learning by doing, and it would mean resisting the urge to live by the conduit metaphor. In a world in which there is little left to reduce and commoditize, it is far from clear that such a strategy could be successful.

It may seem strange that an author who writes of “practical” results might make such idealistic and perhaps impractical suggestions. I contend, rather, that nothing fits the spirit of the i2i better than to appear a little contradictory, and nothing fits Southern PAR

better than to question the reductionism of development and related concepts and, instead, to seek answers that are not predicated on the notion of exchange.

Earlier in this chapter, I wrote that I would offer some thoughts on the intersection of the conduit metaphor with information, development, and literacy. What I have offered are, indeed, only thoughts: as with the many attempts to reconcile the weaknesses of the structure of development and aid with the goal of equity in terms of health, happiness, or prosperity, there may, in the end, be no good answers or solutions, only weaknesses of which we must force ourselves to remain cognizant and goals that we may nonetheless wish to continue to strive to meet.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS OF THIS STUDY

The advantages and disadvantages of taking a PAR approach to research should be evident in the extensive discussion of Chapter 2. To reiterate, action research has the potential to, and aims to, result in outcomes that are of utility to participants. Providing such a service to others is a value in and of itself; when one works with people from whom much value in the form of research results, grants, and promotions have been derived but who have received little benefit from research, PAR becomes all the more advantageous because it offers a manner in which to counter patronizing and exploitive trends in social research. Furthermore, in engaging so intensely and for so long with people and their ideas, we increase the likelihood that our interpretations will ring true to participants; once we reject the notion of absolute truths, if we are to seek truth at all, it is in this kind of verisimilitude. Finally, if we agree with Feyerabend that we should seek to employ an “anarchistic methodology,” then the very fact that action research differs epistemologically and methodologically from other modes of research makes action research all the more valuable by adding diversity to our practices.

Just as (participatory) action research presents opportunities, it presents challenges. It is, of course, better suited to studying processes closely with a limited number of people than to taking a broad view of, for example, literacy at the state or national level. It requires prolonged engagement, which is time-consuming, exhausting, and expensive. Furthermore, action research will not always be well-received within academia. Finally, “the researcher” does not have the luxury of being a lone researcher purportedly in control of his or her own destiny, time, and data collection and analysis activities. The group may not always proceed in ways that lend themselves to academic discourse or, for example, quantification. This flexibility can further complicate the process of producing a research report.

The opportunity for change also means a heightened opportunity for inadvertent harm. For example, since participants are asked to take a more active role in the research, they may later believe that they have wasted their time and energy and have damaged their relationships with other participants or loved ones who might resent their participation, sometimes all just to have the research fail and to be left with no new or improved practices, programs, self-esteem, or whatever else might have been sought. Stakeholders who get left out may find that their lot in life is not improved, but rather worsened. In short, with PAR, the stakes are higher, and so are the risks, time commitments, emotional requirements of participants and researchers alike, and social (and sometimes financial) burdens.

One of the greatest strengths of our use of action research was that it fit the situation nearly perfectly. Just as I arrived in Rocinha, the i2i began to undergo changes that it would need to experience with or without the research. The introduction of methods such as holding nearly weekly meetings, I was later told by the leaders and by

volunteers, was essential to the i2i's growth. The leaders were convinced that had I not been present to conceive our work as research and introduce such ideas as regular meetings, they would have continued using their old practices to their own peril. An approach other than action research would have failed to contribute to the i2i at a critical moment.

Again, we successfully worked together to create and improve the i2i and its programs. Our use of action research was responsive to the situation, based on shared values, and, in the end, effective in producing much-wanted change to the individuals, group, and institutions involved in the research. The outcomes of the research, not abstract measures of our adherence to predetermined rules, are the best indication of our success.

Any research, however successful, has its weaknesses. Questioning "the idea of a fixed method," as Feyerabend puts it (1993, p. 18), and even proclaiming that "anything goes," does not preclude us from asking how we might have performed better. Any attempt to separate the research from the institute's work would be a fruitless endeavor, since everything we did was in the context of inquiry into our practices and was a potential topic for further exploration. Thus, our successes and failures in the research overlap almost entirely with our successes and failures as a group and institution. Likewise, the context of the research cannot be entirely disaggregated from the research itself. I should have stayed longer in the field for another cycle of reflection that should have included the students and their parents in studying the reading room, which would have required more interest in doing so on the part of the leaders, more insistence on my part, more funds, and a visa that allowed me to do so; we should have been more proactive in including a greater variety of stakeholders in various aspects of the research;

I should have been more “on” every day, more ready to take notes and more focused on taking notes about what I would eventually write about, which would have meant knowing better why I was taking notes and would have required me to be in better health; while I would not wish to stifle creativity, there were many times when we would have benefitted from being more systematic in our practices, including in our inquiry; if I had recalled Reddy’s conduit metaphor sooner, while still in the field, it might have been immensely useful to us in navigating our conflicts, which often inhibited our work. In fact, greater consistency in all we did – in attendance at our purportedly regular meetings, in regular note-taking, in maintaining a record of our e-mail correspondence through the use of a shared Gmail account that we never learned to use consistently, in frequent, scheduled interviews – would have made nearly everything we did easier, and the i2i struggles with consistency to this day.

To reiterate, the initial goal of this research was to work with leaders and users to create a reading room for the i2i. While this goal was not discarded, the research morphed into incorporating a second goal: that of seeing to it that the i2i became a functioning organization. Partly as a result of the i2i’s having been in a very early stage of development, we failed to bring potential users into the research in ways that I had hoped and anticipated, but by making the i2i a reality, we perhaps did more significant work.

While we were able to strengthen the i2i and to create and open the reading room, the i2i’s dependence on individual and institutional donors for computers, books, other materials, and financial support has meant an impaired ability to plan its collections and even to maintain computerized circulation records. This dependence has led to a *de facto* policy of accepting nearly any materials the institute is offered, despite several members’ (and my) concerns that the institute would come to approximate a junkyard. One result

has been overcrowding, first of the only two bookcases the i2i possessed and of the first floor of the institute's new building, then of the six new bookcases it acquired and of the building as a whole.

The work that preceded the opening of the reading room was primarily that of making it part of the i2i's plans and goals. That is to say, as the i2i grew to have an identity, at least in the eyes of the leadership, these leaders also needed to identify the institute with a reading room and information services before the project could be taken seriously, given attention, and made to go forward. The reading room needed to go from being “my” project to being part of the services that the i2i planned to provide – and while I waited for this process to unfold, there were times when I believed I had to insist on “ignoring” the reading room rather than working on it out of members' consideration for me. At other times, the frustration and fear I felt regarding the possibility that we would never initiate the research regarding the reading room would lead me to suggest unrealistic paths, such as holding a discussion about what the group wanted to gain from the research and how it might define success or failure. My experimenting with how much pressure to put on the other actors to focus on the reading room might conventionally be viewed as a weakness because I introduced change in an uncontrolled manner. From a PAR perspective, the weakness lies in the fact that I did not reach an entirely comfortable balance between gently putting pressure on actors regarding the reading room and allowing events to unfold.

In another sense, we were already conducting action research before we ever focused on the reading room: the planning activities, however unsuccessful they may have been, were a form of experimentation that led to enhanced self-knowledge and helped leaders and me amass observational data regarding the two NGOs that we were

able to use in later, more successful, planning efforts, including the reading room. In particular, learning about the interactions of the two organizations helped me to make sense of individuals' later actions and to suggest preparing ourselves for obstacles that we might expect to encounter.

In short, the strengths of this study are evident in the outcomes of the research, which have been valuable to participants and others whom the participants serve and are recounted in the narrative analysis of Chapters 5-7 and in Chapter 8. The i2i and its many actors grew as individuals, as a group, and as an institution. The i2i now has a three-story building, reading room, and roof that are in constant use and demand. Participants have learned about themselves and each other and how to perform new tasks. Students have gained literacy and learned that some people are open to listening to them, whatever their age. The weaknesses are likewise evident in the story of the abovementioned chapters: we could have done better. We could have included more stakeholders in the formal research, reached out more effectively to other organizations (including 2Bros.), managed relations with each other and with outsiders more effectively, used a greater variety of research methods, been explicit about our expectations sooner, or, at times, acted more deliberately.

Regarding my status as a researcher/instrument, my ability to speak and write Portuguese fluently, and my previous familiarity with Rocinha, were advantageous. So, too, was the fact that I was able to spend so much time in the field. I stayed long enough to “come out the other side” of the process of disillusionment that volunteers experienced. My time in Rocinha was also long enough for us to accomplish much, and my return trips to the United States afforded me the opportunity to see whether the i2i would continue to function in my absence.

Where I was less successful was in always being present and always being “on.” Of course, it is not physically possible to be present at all events and observe everything, and trying to do so would have resulted in other tensions with participants who might have come to resent my constant presence. Moreover, I was ill and discovered the extent of my ailments only after my final return to the United States.

One of these causes fatigue and cognitive impairment (“brain fog”). Its progression is slow, and it is easily treated with medication. My case was apparently caught early, but I cannot say how much the condition affected my ability to work. I know that I experienced fatigue in the field, that the “brain fog” began to worry me and negatively affect my daily routine around June 2008, and that the “brain fog” disappeared and this text became much easier to produce with proper medication in December 2008. I never felt that I recovered from the fatigue of entering the field, but I also did not grow more tired while in Rocinha, except during the period in which we working with heavy materials under the hot sun on constructing the building. Still, nearly every day, I noted that I felt fatigue, a stomach ache, a headache, shortness of breath, and/or allergy symptoms that often affected my ability to write or socialize. I believe that the fatigue was an impediment throughout my time in the field but that the “brain fog” became a serious impediment only around mid-2008, after I had already departed, and that therefore the temporary cognitive impairment’s primary effect on this text appears to have been to slow its production; readers are the best judge of whether this impairment has had any other effects on this text.

In short, I know that my ailments sometimes kept me from making all of the observations that I would have liked to have made and from writing as much and as often as I would have liked. I suspect that my cognitive functioning was not yet impaired, but I

cannot say this for certain. Fortunately, I had many conversations about my observations with the Brazilian leaders and often with the volunteers, who offered confirmation of my interpretations, mitigating any potential effects of the impairment. Furthermore, although I may have missed some events, my notes are quite repetitive, and gossip is so endemic to the i2i that it is difficult to imagine that anything transformative could have happened without my knowledge.

Finally, of course, I could have explored more radical, multivocal narrative forms of writing here, but doing so would have reduced the accessibility of this text and gone against the expectations of my collaborators, who from the beginning expected me to leave Rocinha and write my own account of what we lived, trusting me to portray them respectfully. This account should not end the negotiations about the meaning of the i2i and its reading room; rather, it should be another tool for the continued transformation of the many actors involved in the two NGOs and of the institutions themselves. Nonetheless, that I did not explore such forms of writing might be viewed by some as a weakness.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE I2I, 2BROS., AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Like the strengths and weaknesses of this study, the recommendations for the i2i and 2Bros. are evident in the above chapters. Recommendations for future study may be less obvious but should be no more surprising.

The i2i would benefit from formal and/or informal relations with one or more libraries or librarians. Such relations would allow the i2i to benefit more fully from the conventions of librarianship, particularly in the area of collection development. Furthermore, the leaders have now demonstrated a maturity and ability to reject

suggestions from authority figures and would learn to reconcile the recommendations of a librarian with the peculiarities of their situation and context.

The i2i should continue to seek ways in which to make their relations with 2Bros. more equitable. While goodwill usually prevails between the two groups, it is undeniable that 2Bros. can exercise great control over the leaders by threatening to withhold funds. While funders understandably seek to know how the money they donate is used, this subordination of one organization to the other impairs the ability of the leaders in Brazil to create and maintain programs that make sense locally. Furthermore, the two NGOs unwittingly reproduce aspects of the development model that they have sought to avoid: Northern benefactor, Southern recipient; one-way movement of people (with occasional exceptions that appear to be growing less rare) from North to South; and money from the North, work from the South.

A less subordinate role for the i2i might be achieved through a variety of measures: continuing to strengthen the i2i's network of individuals and institutions, with the i2i as a more important node than 2Bros.; gradually shifting more responsibilities to Brazil and more rote work (where feasible) to the United States, but only when staff are available to take on any added responsibilities; greater representation within 2Bros. of leaders of the i2i; and even lengthy discussions with donors regarding the importance of allowing the leaders in Rio to make decisions (and err) regarding funds and programs. Finally, the i2i should continue to seek other funding sources, pursue professional development opportunities for its leaders, and try to identify its own future leaders. The fact that most members of 2Bros. have spent months with the NGO in Rio and are fond and supportive of the leaders in Brazil should facilitate the process of arriving at a structurally more equitable arrangement between the two groups, and members of both

are aware that at least some of us believe that such reorganization is necessary. One potentially important step toward a more equitable structural arrangement was taken in the 2009 annual meeting, when those in attendance agreed that all board members of each NGO should automatically be voting members of the other NGO.

Members of 2Bros. must, in turn, remain receptive to changes at the i2i and accept the Brazilian institution's position of greater power and autonomy. Leaders of both NGOs should seek to communicate more frequently and effectively with one another. Here, a deeper understanding of the fallacy of the conduit metaphor would be particularly helpful. Likewise, if actors more fully understood the difficulties associated with cross-cultural communication – even when actors have co-existed with a particular culture for years – tensions and misunderstandings might be greatly reduced.

Regarding future research, the situation we encountered with volunteers suggests that one fruitful avenue of exploration for anthropologists and sociologists might be a renewed and more nuanced look at culture shock and interpersonal relations through the lens of young people who volunteer in communities that are not their own or who study abroad. A large-scale, comparative study of the challenges that such individuals face, how they do or do not integrate themselves into their new surroundings, and the ways in which they are endangered or endanger others would likely be instructive to everyone from study abroad advisers to the Peace Corps to Americorps and Teach for America. Such a study should include individuals who have not gone abroad but have uprooted themselves to volunteer in rural areas or the inner cities of this country, and it might look particularly closely at the theme of the danger that these individuals can pose to themselves and others. Stories abound about the negative effects of outsiders and the challenges of integration, both within the development and anthropology literature and

among practitioners, but what appears to be lacking is systematic inquiry into these phenomena. While universities and groups that are larger and more well established than the i2i typically provide orientation and some support, they would likely benefit from systematic data to supplement what many already know through their lived experience and anecdotal evidence. Furthermore, the story of the i2i and the above-mentioned critique of the conduit metaphor remind us of the limitations of any orientation session or document.

Those concerns that are related to information studies include the development of small, grassroots information agencies; the place that information centers can have in NGOs with educational and cultural missions, even when these organizations are exceedingly small and underfunded; making the best of a sub-par collection of donated materials where the luxury of a set of rules for collecting materials (generally perceived as a necessity among the more fortunate) cannot be afforded, as will likely be the case for many similar NGOs throughout much of Africa, Latin America, Asia, and even some places in the United States, Canada, and Europe for many years to come; and the advantages and disadvantages of information services run by non-professionals. All of these themes warrant closer investigation.

The events that transpired at the i2i between March 2006 and February 2008 were experienced and interpreted in at least as many ways as there were actors. While nothing could be more gratifying than to see the i2i flourish, as it already does, it is my hope that this text will help former, current, and future actors in the i2i's story to understand the i2i in all its complexity. I also hope that it will help these actors to act with greater compassion and patience for one another than we at times displayed. Finally, if any of the "information" that I have attempted to "convey through" this text (it is indeed nearly

impossible to avoid such constructions) can help ease the pain of another organization's necessarily arduous task of learning by doing, then this dissertation will have been a success.

Endnotes

¹ UNESCO was an early advocate for attempting to reduce imbalances between “first world” and “third world” countries in information and communication technologies and in news “flows” through international regulation. Most evident of this trend within UNESCO was the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) supported by UNESCO and opposed by the United States in the 1970s and 1980s.

² Occasionally, a middle- or upper-class Brazilian will volunteer in a similar capacity, but most volunteers come from the United States, Europe, or Oceania. Usually, volunteers participate first in the i2i in Brazil and later join 2Bros. upon leaving Rocinha, but they often make their initial contact through 2Bros. Recently, more volunteers have been making their first contact directly with the i2i.

³ Much of what we did before that stage was also experimental, but it was not as easily recognizable as such. John Dewey’s definition of experimental thinking is instructive. Although Dewey is associated with Northern PAR, the definition is congruent with both flavors of PAR:

When we say that thinking and beliefs should be experimental, not absolutistic, we have then in mind a certain logic of method, not, primarily, the carrying on of experimentation in laboratories. Such a logic involves the following factors: First, that those concepts, general principles, theories and dialectical developments which are indispensable to any systematic knowledge be shaped and tested as tools of inquiry. Secondly, that policies and proposals for social action be treated as working hypotheses, not as programs to be rigidly adhered to and executed. They will be experimental in the sense that they will be entertained subject to constant and well-equipped observation of the consequences they entail when acted upon, and subject to ready and flexible revision in the light of observed consequences. (1954, pp. 202-203)

⁴ The language of causality and testing of theories or hypotheses recalls positivist modes of inquiry. Action research takes a number of forms, some of which are more congruous with such language than others. I find my own use of such terms disquieting but employ them here for the sake of simplicity and intelligibility to readers trained in a variety of traditions. By “testing,” I simply mean examining in practice, in as systematic a manner as is appropriate: as Clarke (2001) makes clear, overly systematic practice can lead to rigidity that stifles creativity and therefore discovery, but systematic inquiry is nonetheless important for describing tendencies and patterns, as well as for recognizing silences.

⁵ Calling information “useless,” it should be noted, is one of the harshest criticisms that one can make of any “piece” or “body” of information. Others include “inaccurate” and “dangerous.” Indeed, these words serve to negate the common assumption of information as naturally a social good.

⁶ “We found little use for scholarly arrogance and learned instead to develop an empathetic attitude towards Others which we called *vivencia*, meaning life-experience (Husserl’s *Erfahrung*)” (Fals Borda, 2001, p. 31).

⁷ Some action researchers have chosen to retain the terms “generalizable” and, particularly, “validity” and to modify these to fit their needs. In any case, participatory action researchers and practitioners of various other kinds of action research tend to share qualitative researchers’ rejection of final, universal truths and thus do not seek generalizability in the more traditional sense of the term. The diversity within action research makes, for lack of a better word, generalization about action researchers nearly impossible. Narrowing our gaze to PAR reduces this difficulty only marginally; it is only when we focus on Southern PAR (e.g., the works of Fals Borda [2001] and Rahman [1993], but not Whyte [1991], whose work tends to focus more narrowly on change within organizations) that it becomes reasonable to make general statements.

⁸ It is well known by now that the same can be said for the physical sciences, but whether this recognition contributes anything to the present argument or has simply become a requisite reference to demonstrate an author’s knowledge is less clear. Furthermore, frequent comparisons of the social sciences to the physical sciences contribute to the misguided belief that the social sciences should emulate the physical ones in order to achieve rigor.

⁹ Of course, just as there are many kinds of action research and many perspectives on quality in AR, qualitative researchers do not all share a single perspective on the complex notions of contamination and natural settings. The popularity of activist anthropology is evidence of the blurring of lines between action research and the academic discipline most responsible for the development of ethnographic methods.

¹⁰ Fals Borda notes that a 1970 edition of *Against Method* was “especially noteworthy” for the group of researchers who, that same year, were beginning to develop Participatory (Action) Research” (2001, pp. 27-28).

¹¹ Similarly, Elliot G. Mishler discusses “validation in inquiry-guided research,” defining such research as “a family of approaches that explicitly acknowledge and rely on the dialectic interplay of theory, methods, and findings over the course of a study” (1990, p. 416, n. 1). Mishler offers the following suggestion for evaluating the quality of research:

As a first step, I propose to redefine validation as the process(es) through which we make claims for and evaluate the “trustworthiness” of reported observations,

interpretations, and generalizations. The essential criterion for such judgments is the degree to which we can rely on the concepts, methods, and inferences of a study, or tradition of inquiry, as the basis for our own theorizing and empirical research. If our overall assessment of a study's trustworthiness is high enough for us to act on it, we are granting the findings a sufficient degree of validity to invest our own time and energy, and to put at risk our reputations as competent investigators (p. 419).

¹² This integration had always been a goal of the leadership, particularly of one of its members, and of the architect, but it occurred before expected for lack of space in the reading room: we had planned to wait until the construction had been completed, which would have provided better security for the collections, since the entrance to the second floor was originally external and not visible from the first floor. It should be noted that the reading room still exists as such and there are no plans to integrate it to the extent that a separate space for books, audiovisual, and computer resources would cease to exist altogether. Quite the contrary: the combined reading room and office gained space through the renovations of early 2008.

¹³ Such statements appear crass in 2009, but the idea of cultural modernization stems from the desire to see suffering diminish and to bring "the good life" to others. Ashis Nandy reminds us of the notion of stages of history:

The 1950s and 1960s were a period of optimism. It was widely believed that in the modern world, and in the modern centres of the non-modern world, that every society had to pass through clear-cut historical stages to finally conform to the prevalent model of a proper nation-state – exactly as every economy had to go through fixed stages of growth to attain the beatitude of development. It was also believed that to go through these inescapable stages, each society had to restructure its culture, shed those parts that were retrogressive, and cultivate cultural traits more compatible with the needs of a modern nation-state. (1992, p. 264)

It is striking that Marxists and capitalists alike saw a world of clear stages of political, economic, and cultural.

¹⁴ Sometimes overlooked is the fact that plans to move the capital inland were first discussed in the previous century; nonetheless, the timing and the way in which Brasília was constructed were clearly related to modernization efforts.

¹⁵ Fals Borda protests:

As demonstrated in our congresses and in the field, participatory research projects, among others, are clearly different, their language is 'politically correct' now, and they have proved successful. Hence developmentalists, experts,

academicians and entrepreneurs have recently gone on a rampage to co-opt P(A)R (2001, p. 31).

¹⁶ It just so happened that I was reading *The Development Dictionary* (Sachs, ed., 1992). After the meeting, I discussed Zed Books, which publishes critical studies in the area of development, with two members of 2Bros. who had been present at the meeting and were concerned that we maintain our skepticism regarding the notion of development.

¹⁷ The notion of needs is particularly important to information studies. “Information needs” do not exist in a vacuum, and we would do well to consider Ivan Illich’s critique of the idea of basic needs: “With unscrupulous benevolence, needs are imputed to others. The new morality based on the imputation of basic needs has been far more successful in winning universal allegiance than its historical predecessor, the imputation of a catholic need for eternal salvation. As a result, needs have become the worldwide foundation of common social certainties that relegate inherited cultural and religious assumptions about human limitations to the realm of so-called personal values that, at best, deserve tolerant respect” (Illich, 1992, p. 89). Referring to “information needs” may make our concerns appear urgent, modern, and vital, but we do so at the cost of some conceptual clarity.

¹⁸ Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1121 et seq.) supports higher education in foreign languages and international studies, originally and to this day in the context of national security, to which development efforts are closely related.

¹⁹ As should be evident from the fact that I chose to use PAR to assist the i2i, I do not mean to suggest that not being neutral is necessarily a shortcoming. While there are good arguments to be made for and against libraries’ striving for neutrality, not acknowledging the ways in which they do not achieve this goal is misleading at best.

²⁰ Development agencies have a vested interest in claiming success. Nonetheless, readers may wish to consult the Inter-American Foundation’s yearly publication *Grassroots Development* or the Web sites of the World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org/>), Inter-American Development Bank (<http://www.iadb.org/>), International Monetary Fund (<http://www.imf.org/>), and similar organizations. For dissenting opinions, see the many works presented in this chapter, especially the chapters in the volume edited by Wolfgang Sachs (1992) and works such as Arturo Escobar’s *Encountering Development* (1995). The literature on critical action research also makes reference to the failures of development, either explicitly or implicitly by way of the topics addressed in many such research endeavors.

²¹ In fact, a favela the size of Rocinha can be difficult to navigate even for residents. For example, on June 8, 2006, we were in the process of moving into the building that we had recently purchased and were still giving classes at a school. Referring to the previous evening’s class for adults, I wrote:

Class was almost over when I called the school to see if Nick had brought the coolers and other things that his girlfriend had offered. Washington and I went after the things and stayed for the end of the class. Then we announced the party. I started to try to explain where the building is located, but I wasn't able to. I looked at Washington for help, but he made his 'I don't know what to tell you, fend for yourself' face, at which point I suggested that we walk over there for everyone to see where it is located.

My Portuguese skills were not what made it difficult to explain the building's location; rather, the students were not all familiar with the landmarks near it. Perhaps Washington could have done better had he not been enjoying the scene, but the students were concerned that they would encounter difficulty in locating the building, and so the best course of action appeared to be simply to show them the new location.

²² I do not mean to imply that legal title to land is unimportant to residents of Rocinha or to the i2i. In fact, the i2i is being threatened with the prospect of removal to a building to be constructed by the government and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Rather, it has been my experience that the question of legal access to land is disproportionately a topic of discussion and concern among non-residents; the term "squatter" stands to encourage such a focus and to detract from the topics actually under study here.

²³ It is common in Brazil to refer to what one might describe as "normal" or "regular" urban neighborhoods as the "asphalt." Although certainly much of Rocinha and other favelas is paved, and although using the binary favela/asphalt can overemphasize differences and ignore similarities (Perlman, 1976), the word "asphalt" has the advantage of avoiding an overt value judgment, unlike the terms "normal," "regular," and even "neighborhood." Therefore, and in seeking balance with my use of "favela," I will use the term "asphalt" throughout this text, sometimes also using terms such as "upper-class neighborhood," since the term "asphalt" is used primarily in the abstract and not to describe specific neighborhoods.

²⁴ Similarly, although recognizing the existence of a highly informal economy and, in many cases, a power structure parallel to that of the state created by those responsible for the trade in illicit drugs is essential to understanding favelas, these are often set apart from "mainstream" society based on this informality. Not only is it true that some formal economy and landholdings exist within favelas but, more saliently, the informal economy is of supreme importance to all segments of Brazilian society: setting favelas apart as informal implies that the asphalt thrives on formality and can lead to blaming favelas and, by extension, the poor for Brazil's larger problems.

²⁵ The question of whether Rocinha is Brazil's largest favela has been raised in the last several years. If it is no longer the largest, this change is not the result of a reduction in

population in Rocinha, but rather of higher rates of growth in areas where it is easier to expand. That Rocinha was once Brazil's largest favela is not questioned, and to argue over whose favela is the largest appears both fruitless and insensitive. I mention Rocinha's size to provide readers with a sense of its enormity, not to take part in such arguments.

²⁶ For example, on September 6, 2006, I was writing notes in a room in which others were watching television:

What a surprise! Globo is showing a report on the growth of favelas – not a favela in particular, but *favelas*. The reporter is standing at the overpass where the van to Gávea passes. She interviewed some people there. Rocinha's importance in the media and in the production of fear is difficult to underestimate.

²⁷ Two stories are illustrative: first, during my high school year studying abroad in a wealthy city of over 300,000 inhabitants in the state of São Paulo, I once asked to visit the library. My host family found the request odd, but they honored it: the building was large and impressive – but virtually empty of users. The other story is about Chile but rings true for Brazil: an acquaintance spent several years in the United States as a child, returning to Chile still rather young. Her Chilean classmates mocked her when she suggested visiting the library for recreation, a common practice among children in many communities throughout the United States.

²⁸ Noting that the presence of schoolchildren who “occupied all the seats in the public libraries” drove other users out of public libraries and led to decisions to purchase primarily didactic and basic reference materials, Suaiden goes so far as to say, “the library was public in name only” (2000, p. 55).

Milanesi makes a similar observation: “municipal libraries are, in practice, school libraries” (2002, p. 47). He explains how this phenomenon came into being, partly as the result of a law that required “research” on the part of schoolchildren, which often amounts to the use of encyclopedias in public libraries. Milanesi offers many recommendations for improving libraries and librarianship in Brazil.

²⁹ The i2i, in contrast, and contrary even to our own predictions, has found that its books are returned on time and in approximately the condition they were lent out in, *especially when the borrower is a child*. It seems that the i2i's unspoken policy of welcoming and trusting its youths has paid off, in that they have acted in accordance with the respect they have been granted. Before we opened the reading room, we discussed the importance of recognizing and accepting as part of the process of learning to use a collection that some materials would go missing or be damaged, and we discussed at length the steps the i2i might take to request the return of a book or compensation, even producing a form to be signed by users and/or adults responsible for them. We cannot know to what extent this threat of repercussions has also affected the children's treatment of the materials. While

the children have noisily taken over the small reading room on many occasions, they have yet to run amok and become destructive, quite contrary to the common images of schoolchildren in public libraries.

³⁰ Suaiden, referring to the mid-nineteenth century, states:

At that time, it was necessary that the institution known as a library be dedicated to propagating reading policies. Instead, the greatest concern was that of preserving the bibliographic material, and many libraries refused to lend out materials for fear that they would be stolen and the professional in charge would therefore have to account for this permanent material. (2000, p. 54)

³¹ There are many newsstands in Rocinha. One woman with whom I lived purchased the newspaper on a daily basis, and this was seen as unusual but with some pride within her family. At least five of us would often share the paper when she had finished with it.

Newspapers can also be, in Rocinha, an occasional purchase for literate residents, like books or magazines might be for the general population in the United States. On the day that the drug traffickers were unhappy with a report in a newspaper and ordered all copies burned, many people brought copies in as they returned home from work. This incident shows the importance given to information by those who seek to maintain their position on the top of the power structure, the ineffective means available to them to restrict access, and the connectedness of Rocinha to other parts of the city: even if they had been able to set up check points to prevent people from entering with the article in question, they could not have prevented residents from reading the news outside of Rocinha and reporting to their friends, families, and neighbors, nor would they likely have been able to restrict access to the Internet for any sustained period of time. By burning the newspapers, they created curiosity and, out of earshot, were mocked for their preposterous acts.

³² During my time in Rio, education policy was often in the news, and the decision to pass students from one grade to the next automatically was repeatedly ridiculed by members of the household where I resided and Brazilians who participated in the i2i's functions. Residents complained that too many students were already being allowed to pass before they had mastered what they needed to learn in their current grade.

In *Fala Maria Favela*, Antonio Leal (1988) tells the story of his work in 1981 successfully teaching a group of such students at a public school in Rocinha to read. The children ranged in age from nine to eleven years. In this case, rather than allow the students to pass from one grade to the next, in Leal's word, the school "marginalized" the children into their own class of illiterate students. When Leal arrived to teach them, they seemed beyond hope: "The children, who for more than three years had tried to read and did not succeed at doing so, arrived in the classroom tired of carrying their cases full of books, notebooks, scissors, rulers, primers, etc." (p. 17). Through play, he slowly gained

their trust and taught them to read, using words, phrases, and sentences that he expected to resonate with them, for example, “The Pope went to the favela. Maria watches the telenovela and sees the bullet kill him. She saw the Pope. She saw the pistol and was afraid” (p. 81).

³³ Gil left the ministry in mid-2008 when his third resignation was finally accepted. He had complained that the ministry was underfunded and had expressed an interest in returning to a full-time career in music, but the fact that it took three attempts for his resignation to be accepted is evidence that he was not ousted from the government and that his presence was highly valued by the administration.

³⁴ In order to give credit for participants’ dedication and successes, all names are real. Where statements might embarrass a participant, I have avoided using a name. I have had numerous conversations with participants, and they have agreed to being named; in fact, many have insisted on it. Also, at the i2i, all interactions are on a first-name basis; I use first names throughout this narrative.

³⁵ This might better be stated as “legitimate access to the opportunity to build up”; while residents express this access in terms of rights or privileges, State involvement in the form of such instruments as building permits is not at issue for families or small organizations unless a dispute arises. Under most circumstances, owning a roof means being able to build up, so that the top floor of most buildings will be particularly highly valued, except where there is reason to believe that the building would not sustain yet another level. Even then, for a residential building, having access to the roof means having a place where clothing will be exposed to sunlight and dry quickly after it is laundered – no small fact in the winter. Of course, as we experienced, none of this means that neighbors will take kindly to the noise, dust, and blocked light that come with additions to buildings, and, as Rodrigues (2002) explored, disputes over responsibility for “negative externalities” such as blocked windows and water running off new roofs and into neighbors’ homes are common and may involve state-sponsored dispute resolution. In any case, some neighbors (myself included) complained about the (unavoidable) noise and dust, but we anticipated and avoided more serious, more legitimate complaints.

³⁶ I mention participants’ English because the i2i’s primary role is that of an English school. With the exception of occasions on which one of them wished to practice the language, we spoke Portuguese, which I already spoke and wrote nearly natively. In contrast, especially in the weeks following their arrival, many of the volunteers relied heavily on the fact that two of the leaders and all of the volunteers spoke English.

³⁷ This fact was apparent in others’ constant references to Paul and Paul’s opinions, in acquaintances’ characterization of the NGO as “Paul’s NGO,” and in a general reluctance to do anything without first consulting Paul. From early on, one leader complained about

what s/he saw as excessive deference to Paul, and other Brazilians and foreigners would later come to make the same critique.

³⁸ Here is an example of iterative, collective work: on May 10, 2006, I wrote, “Yesterday evening, I went to Daniel’s, where we made a first attempt at putting together a document to circulate requesting donations. I translated it to English. . . . I ran into Viviana and told her I would show it to her after I show it to Washington and Rogério, perhaps tomorrow.” On May 11, I shared the document with Washington, Rogério, and two volunteers, and both Washington and one of the volunteers suggested changes that we incorporated into the document.

³⁹ Indeed, on May 16, 2006, we began to write a list of topics to discuss in a meeting:

Yesterday during class, W. and I sat in the small room and talked. We're here again, taking notes regarding that conversation:

(1) The need for mutual trust. We are still lacking such trust. There is a lot of gossip, and people share information in pairs, not later bringing up that information with the whole group. I will bring it up in a few weeks in the context of the literature on action research. Money is a big part of why we are in this situation.

We ran out of time and will write some more tomorrow.

Although we talked the next day, our conversation centered on Washington’s future rather than on the institute.

⁴⁰ The question of who should participate in meetings came up with great frequency in August as well. In one meeting, one leader scolded another leader in the presence of several volunteers, and in the following meeting, the second leader complained that the more or less public scolding had been inappropriate, again in the presence of volunteers. The first leader reiterated his or her preference for holding meetings without volunteers. Indeed, when two leaders were frequently absent, it was suggested that we might call meetings without inviting them, either.

⁴¹ Brazil (especially Rio) is often characterized as having a “take your time” culture – a trait that has been blamed for even such embarrassing and thought-provoking historical events as Brazil's having been the last Western nation to abolish African slavery but that can also serve to allow people adequate time to adjust to difficult changes. This stereotype, with its basis in common practices, contrasts sharply with the American disposition toward quick problem-solving that might, less charitably, be termed “fixes.” One of the i2i's challenges is to find a pace of change with which the leaders feel sufficiently comfortable and that does not frustrate the (largely American) foreigners who volunteer for them to the point of causing major rifts. There is, of course, no guarantee that finding such a balance is possible.

⁴² On another occasion, this one in late July, the four Brazilian leaders and I were supposed to hold a meeting. Two arrived late, late enough for the question of seriousness or responsibility to appear in the minutes:

Lack of responsibility. Where are the others?

[One of the leaders]: “if we can’t take something small seriously, how will we take big things seriously” (people skip meetings)

We need . . . rules of conduct: documentation for volunteers.

Volunteers’ irresponsible acts had likewise become cause for concern.

⁴³ We had these conversations in meetings and more informally. We recorded some of our concerns in the minutes from the May 20, 2006 meeting, in which we noted that we agreed that renting out part of the building, whether the second floor or a third floor that was yet to be built, did not make sense to us. We said that losing the space for classes would not be worth the R\$300 that we could get for an apartment, and Daniel added that “renting is alien to the reality of the project,” i.e., renting is incongruent with the foundation’s/institute’s goals. Furthermore, we expressed our interest in gaining some local autonomy, noting in the minutes, “Paul cannot/should not control everything.”

⁴⁴ In February, I told Washington that I thought the process of gaining autonomy was weird, that we wanted autonomy, but when we got it, we did not know quite what to do. Washington responded that we were “just like a dog that chases its tail. When it catches its tail, it doesn’t know what to do next.”

⁴⁵ We held the meeting on April 12, 2006. The interviews were to be semi-structured. We agreed to collect basic demographic data and to ask questions in four other categories: the participant’s “role in the IDI” (“What have you done here at the IDI?” and “How long have you been participating in the IDI’s activities?”), “visions of the IDI” (“What is your opinion of these activities?” and “What is your overall opinion of the IDI?”), “reading room” (“How often do you visit a library and which ones do you visit?,” “What kinds of subjects do/would you look for at a library?,” “Is there a library at your school?,” and “What do you expect from the reading room?”), and “availability” (“What could you do to help implement the reading room?,” “Would you be interested in participating in a discussion group regarding the reading room?,” and “Do you know anyone else who might be interested?”).

⁴⁶ Partly to be able to offer an answer from a participant and partly for amusement, on October 15, 2006, I posed a question to Washington that one of my committee members had asked me. Washington seldom disappoints anyone who is seeking a good laugh:

I asked Washington about Pat’s question regarding who decided we needed more information for volunteers and he looked at me like I was nuts, so I said, it’s

obvious to everyone, isn't it? He continued to look at me like I had lost my mind for even asking such a question and agreed. If he ever becomes a social scientist, he'll understand.

⁴⁷ The term “ralar,” taken literally, means “to grate,” as one grate’s cheese. The word is commonly used metaphorically in Brazil in reference to working hard.

⁴⁸ In February, I interviewed one of the volunteers, who spoke at length about the classes. That volunteer had felt unprepared to teach in an environment that was so different from anything s/he had experienced before:

It depends on each class, and it depends on the culture of the students. And that's something that I feel – it's a disadvantage having foreign teachers come in trying to – I think that's my biggest mistake was wasting my time trying to get the kids to sit down like American students. Because they're not.

Beth: No.

Volunteer: You know?

Beth: And they're not middle-class students either.

Volunteer: No. It's totally different. And it's after school and they've had a long day and there's so much stuff going on that no one will ever even know that they're not going to talk. . . . And there's just so much more than meets the eye, and I would be so frustrated, like what's wrong with this kid, why is he doing this? Well, you know, you might not know that he didn't get a night's sleep because, I don't know. . . . There are so many things that I've seen, you know. And no one complains about all that stuff. I mean, if that happened in the U.S., the kid would be like, I didn't get any sleep last night because blah, blah, blah.

⁴⁹ The individual in question would ask the same question many times in a row when met with the response, “I don't know” and otherwise exhibited unusual patterns of interaction with others and oddly literal interpretations. For example, I once told that volunteer that I had “grown up in a Polish church,” which is to say, I attended a Polish Catholic church as a child and teenager. The volunteer responded, “you grew up inside a church?” When I said I had not done so, the volunteer asked if I had lived on top of the church. We then proceeded to have a similarly bizarre conversation about the pains I was feeling in my stomach, which I suspected might have been psychosomatic (“but why would you do that?”).

⁵⁰ Indeed, the plans for each floor received much attention. For example, one day in December, Washington and Daniel were at the institute when I arrived there:

They were discussing the second floor: Filipe wants to take down the wall between the rooms and put up a retractable divider. Daniel thinks this would be expensive and doesn't think we should take the wall down, but he was still thinking about different kinds of dividers. Washington suggested we make a Russian-doll-like divider of formica-covered wood. Daniel wants plants on the first floor, which at first seemed to me to be a nice idea, until I realized the plants would be in what will effectively be the corridor to get from the front door to the stairs – someone would either knock a plant down or break a foot, and it wouldn't take long.

The wall was taken down without further discussion, and the resulting room remains small. Although there is a column in the middle of the room, the space has served nicely as a temporary office and a permanent classroom. To my knowledge, there was no further talk of a divider or of plants.

⁵¹ From my December 9, 2006 notes:

[One volunteer] tried to put things in my terms by saying that I should pile bricks like books. That was cute, if a bit strange. [Another volunteer] told me to use a hand saw with “long strokes – like swimming,” which was funny and endearing. [The worker] told me to use 8 buckets of sand and 2 of concrete. The bucket is huge; I suggested to [a third volunteer] that we fill up the small bucket with cement, since the bags are on the second floor. Clearly, we would have dumped the cement into the big bucket until we had a full, big bucket and then done so again. [The worker] exclaimed, “no! It has to be in the same ratio, just like a cake.”

In February, I would admit in an interview with a female participant that I disliked spending time on the construction site because of the discomfort I felt with the sexism that I was experiencing. I noted that only a subset of the men made jokes that made me uncomfortable and that at least one male participant was also uncomfortable with the jokes. She agreed, stating that the men's lunch conversations were unacceptable. The jokes surprised me because they seemed to be incongruent with the comfortable gender relations before we began the construction. Indeed, after the foreman left, the moments at which such jokes made me uncomfortable became once again few and far between.

⁵² One could never accuse the i2i's leaders of lacking creativity. In August 2007, we had a collection of unwanted encyclopedias. In the classroom on the first floor, one leader amused him/herself by making four table legs, each made of three volumes placed vertically with three more placed horizontally atop those volumes. A board was placed on those four legs, and some audio cassettes were stored on the resulting table. None of the pieces were secured and, needless to say, the table was not very stable. On August 28, 2007, I was sitting in the classroom typing notes: “I just knocked the encyclopedia ‘table’

over by stretching my leg the slightest bit (forgot it was there)!” Thus ended our only experiment with making furniture, although the idea of recycling books or bottles into pieces of furniture was a popular subject of our conversations throughout my time with the i2i.

⁵³ On February 18, 2008, Rogério wrote me:

I believe you would like to know that the adult students are using the reading room as homework. Another solution that we have found to make the adults become interested in the books. The children remain very curious. We turned on the computer that Mark (in Canada) donated and now MiniBiblio is working again.

⁵⁴ In our meeting on August 22, 2007, which we taped, Daniel told us of an incident with that child that I witnessed:

There are kids that are 10 years old that don't know how to read. . . . That's the case of [one child], he said, “Is this in Portuguese or English?” And I said, “Do you know how to read?” He said, “I don't know how to read well.” So I said, “From what little you know, can you understand anything?” . . . And so I thought we really ought to try to have tutoring sessions.

⁵⁵ For reasons that no one could discern, it seemed that every telephone we acquired was broken within weeks, even when we exercised great caution with them. Additionally, the telephone bill was often high, with a combination of legitimate but expensive calls to students' cellular telephone and personal calls. Thus, the telephone and related bills were the reason for much tension but also amusement, and the i2i has since opted to go without telephone service. On December 11, 2006, Daniel and I arrived from downtown with, among other things, a third telephone. The adventure was typical:

I went home and went to bed, expecting to get up and move materials to the roof, but [the foreman] had an appointment and he hadn't left the pulley system set up, so we didn't have the materials delivered. Instead, Daniel and I went off to the center of town in search of a monitor and printer/fax/copier/scanner. We ended up getting one that doesn't send a fax without turning on the computer – the one that did so was R\$800+ and didn't have a flat bed, although the amazingly incompetent saleslady tried to tell us it did. Daniel and I decided to stick to an ink jet despite the price of ink because we agreed that that particular fight with [another leader] . . . was simply not worth it. The printer, an HP, cost R\$330. Washington says he'll refill the cartridges – we'll see how long it takes for one to explode in the machine. We also picked up a 17" CRT with a flat screen for another R\$330. The salesperson thought a CRT was an LCD – she was not any fun to work with.

Washington met us at the [overpass at the entrance to Rocinha, where the taxi dropped us off], and we brought the stuff to the building. Besides the monitor and printer, we now have a box of 50 pens, a box of 12 pencils, a pair of scissors for adults, 5 CD-Rs, 2 CD-RWs, tape, a stapler, staples, and another broken telephone. This one doesn't make any sound when it rings, but the light blinks. This is our third telephone. Washington pointed out that this sort of thing happens only with Dois Irmãos.

Daniel later suggested that the telephone was for the deaf.

⁵⁶ The tone was similar to that of the days and meetings during which we were not experiencing overwhelming tension. For example, Filipe suggested organizing the books in accordance with the eight levels of English instruction that Rogério and the teachers were developing based on the four years' worth of books we expected to have. I said I would not know how to recategorize the books to that level of granularity, that we had three levels, from children's through young adult literature, as well as a fourth level, adult fiction. Daniel agreed, adding that we had reference, non-fiction, and didactic books, as well:

Daniel: I think everyone knows up to what level they can go. I read children's books.

Rogério: Me too.

Washington: Me too.

Rogério: I read Captain Underpants all day long.

Daniel then confirmed Rogério's assertion. Washington and Rogério are, nonetheless, capable of reading at a higher level, and I suspect Daniel is, as well.

⁵⁷ Later in the month, I interviewed two volunteers who had not committed any actions leading to similar concerns. Both defended the notion of giving more structure to the institute, while saying that the institute's openness and willingness to allow volunteers to design programs was attractive. Furthermore, although they complained about the Brazilian leaders, they also pointed out that some of the volunteers should not have been present at the i2i in the first place:

Two Brothers is one of the few organizations that don't require volunteers to pay exorbitant fees, so that was appealing, but it was also appealing because the Web site was – I don't know, it was user-friendly, it sounded like it was doing a lot of positive stuff. It sounded really open-minded and wanted to start new programs, coming together, not just teaching English, and it just sounded really, really positive. It also didn't require me to speak fluent Portuguese, and of course I had no Portuguese at that stage, so it just sounded right. . . . I was in contact with Paul

and with Rogério, and they both gave me a really positive response to the e-mail, and I was really excited. (Volunteer 1)

I didn't think it would be so informal. I thought it would be more organized. (Volunteer 2)

It took a while to realize that if you want to get something done, you have to do it completely on your own. . . . I felt like we came into an organization where the culture was just – there was very little structure. I felt like some people just really didn't want to be here, volunteers and employees. The group of people just seemed to be really over it or something, or they were really all exhausted. Just, fine, you've got an idea, but don't expect me to bend over backwards to help you. (Volunteer 1)

They don't need to hold the hands of the volunteers, they don't need to do that at all, they just need to provide a bit more structure. (Volunteer 1)

[They need to continue] leaving some room for the volunteers to do their things, but as long as you feel you're supported. (Volunteer 2)

We have to make sure we don't go around just bashing the employees here. Because there have definitely been volunteers who should just not be here, that are just a waste of space. And no one's got the balls to tell them – well, finally a bit of action has been taken, for whatever reason, but there are other issues that should have been resolved a long time ago. . . . Screening has to happen. (Volunteer 1)

⁵⁸ On February 8, I found time to write about that day:

I went to D.'s for a second breakfast and then he said he would start lunch and go downstairs. Then I sat around waiting for something to happen. He eventually let me on the computer, and I spent over an hour on the Web site, mostly trying to get IE6 to behave. . . .

Some time between 2:00 and 2:30, Rogério showed up, although he should have been there at 2:00. As I got on the phone around 2:30 to call Pat back and accept an invitation to go to the movies, [a volunteer] told me we might as well not start working now since it was almost time for the 3:00 meeting. That was the first I'd heard of the meeting, as far as I can remember, but [the volunteer] apologized, saying he thought he had told me. I said it was no problem and that his version was certainly possible: if I'm staring at a screen, you can pretty much tell me anything and I'll act as if I'd heard and agreed. I went home to grab my consent forms and digital recorder, only to get to the i2i and find out we still had no electricity, so I couldn't copy the form and had only one copy besides the original.

[one volunteer] signed it and [the other new volunteer read the form and] agreed on tape to sign one once I had another copy for her. I taped the meeting.

⁵⁹ The construction metaphor emphasizes creation that leads to fixity, while the performance metaphor emphasizes the work we do to maintain practices. Both are process-oriented. I briefly struggled to choose one over the other, but they are both valuable for understanding how practices are created and perpetuated. That I might simply continue to use both metaphors came to me recently, as I stood between a Yankee Stadium that will soon be torn down – the “house that Ruth built” – and a shiny new Yankee Stadium, which both bows to the tradition of the older structure and snubs it. Although I grew up in the 1970s and 1980s rooting for the Yankees on television every time I got the opportunity, I am not the kind of avid fan who knows all of the players’ stories. Yet, it took me a full fifteen minutes to be willing to enter the new structure: while the team and its fans will continue to make and revise the Yankees’ history, that literal structure, over years of performances by players, artists, and fans alike, has become an actor in its own right. It will soon be torn down, returned to the city as municipal ball fields. For years, people will reminisce about controversies and plays made on that field, and some old footage will be migrated to new digital formats, while much of the footage will become inaccessible and/or uninteresting. Indeed, some will argue that this process began years ago, with the renovations (which I cannot recall) of the 1970s, if not earlier. While the old stadium will fade out until it is a mere footnote, the new stadium will become more real with every pitch, every out, every memorable call, every \$9 beer sold to a Bleacher Creature, until it is as real to fans and opponents alike as the old stadium once was. I felt the process begin for me when I heard Mariano Rivera’s signature music as he came out to pitch the sixth inning of the first exhibition game in the new stadium, and I wondered, if the stadium had been built in the 1990s, would it now be the house that Mattingly, Jeter, or Mo built? Both literally and figurative, construction is part of how we produce and perpetuate practices, but without continued performance, these constructions fade away, often replaced by other ones. It is no wonder that these changes can be difficult to achieve, even when we seek them.

⁶⁰ As noted in Chapter 2, this process can be seen as akin to member checking. To add a final cycle of shared reflection, in June 2009, I circulated the penultimate version of this text to all of the named actors and several others. My doing so also gave them an opportunity to request changes to how and when I had named them or made them anonymous.

⁶¹ The i2i has slowly, in the fits and starts chronicled herein, grown more effective; greater knowledge of 2Bros. would be necessary to determine whether the same could be said of the U.S.-based NGO.

⁶² The term “ordinary” or “common” people betrays us by implicitly accepting the very power relations that we seek to neutralize. While turning a blind eye to differences in status is naïve at best, perpetuating these differences through our use of language is equally ill-advised. We must develop ways to use language to question while acknowledging that which we seek to change. In this text, “so-called ordinary people” will have to do.

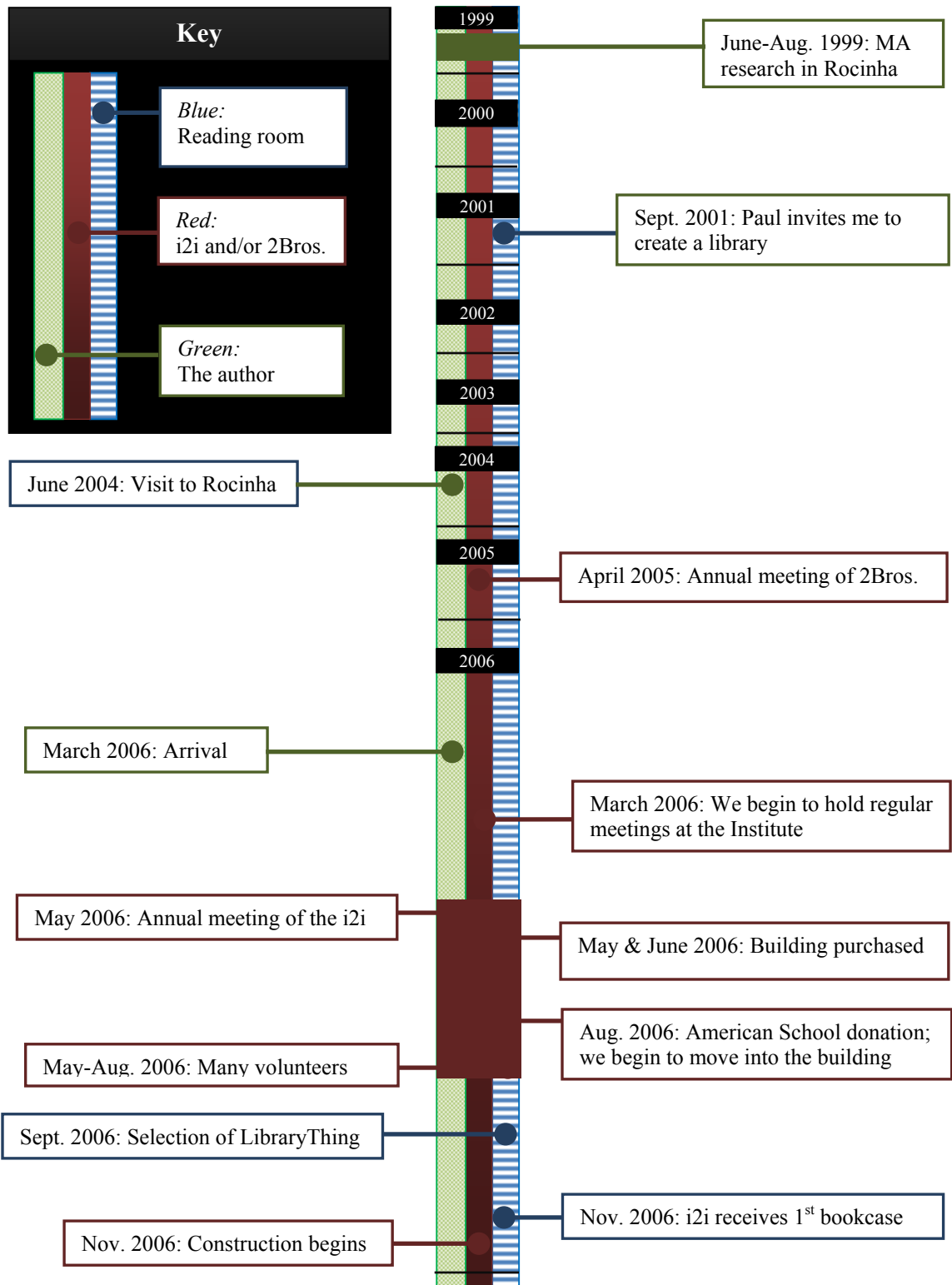
⁶³ Again, frequent comparisons of the so-called hard and soft sciences have the potential to romanticize the former and devalue the latter. Feyerabend’s observation perhaps works to counter this tendency.

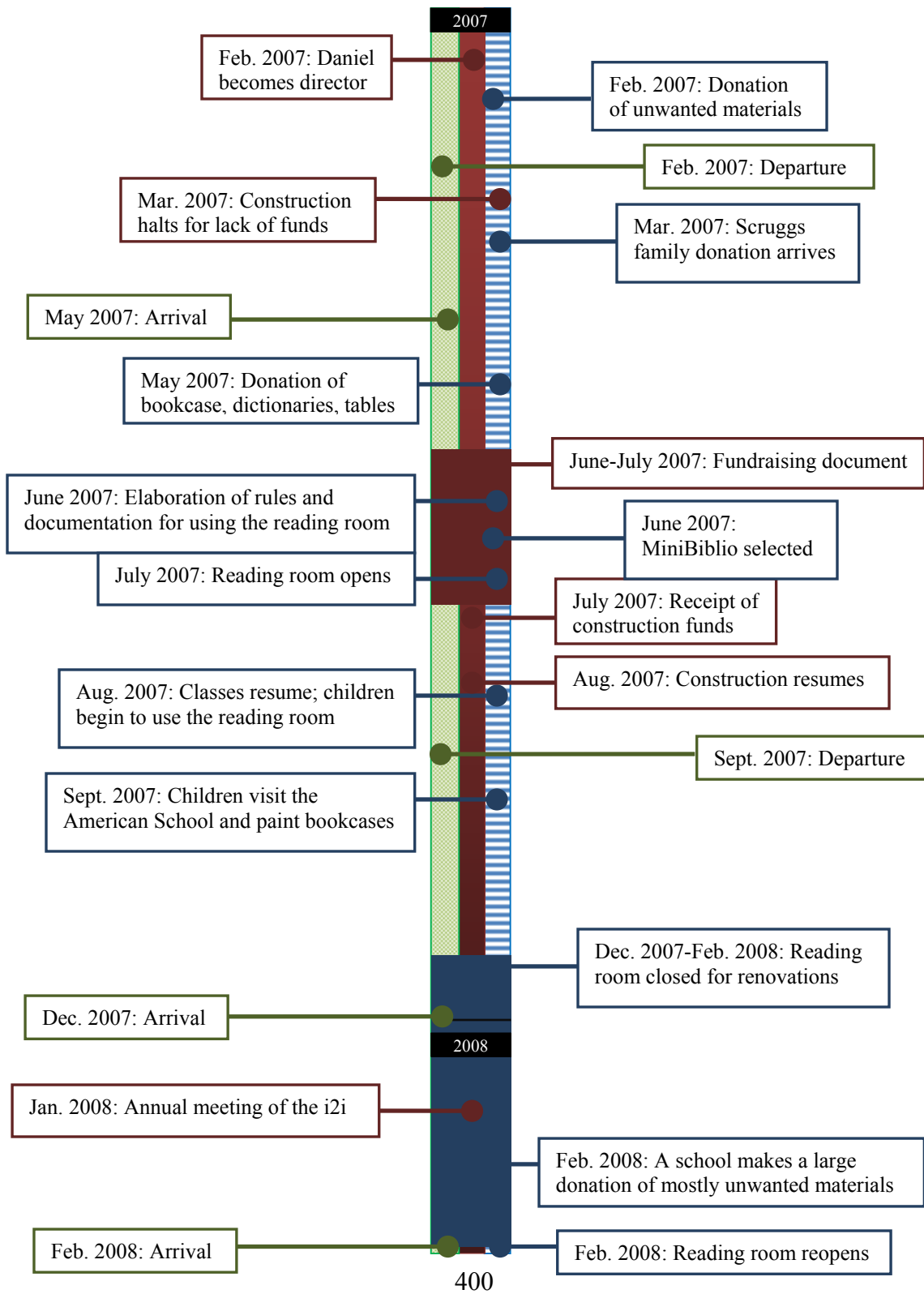
⁶⁴ One of the most common such expressions is, “vou te passar as informações,” literally, “I am going to pass you the informations,” e.g., via e-mail, as if these “informations” were table salt.

⁶⁵ Gregory Bateson is known for defining information as “a difference which makes a difference.” While this definition has become cliché, it remains influential.

⁶⁶ I focus solely on fiction here because the importance of non-fiction in libraries is seldom, if ever, questioned. Since the i2i relies on in-kind donations, its non-fiction collections are nearly non-existent, and I therefore cannot comment on the use of non-fiction at the i2i, except to say that the few volumes that the i2i possesses attract little attention from students, even though Daniel has been careful to point them out to students.

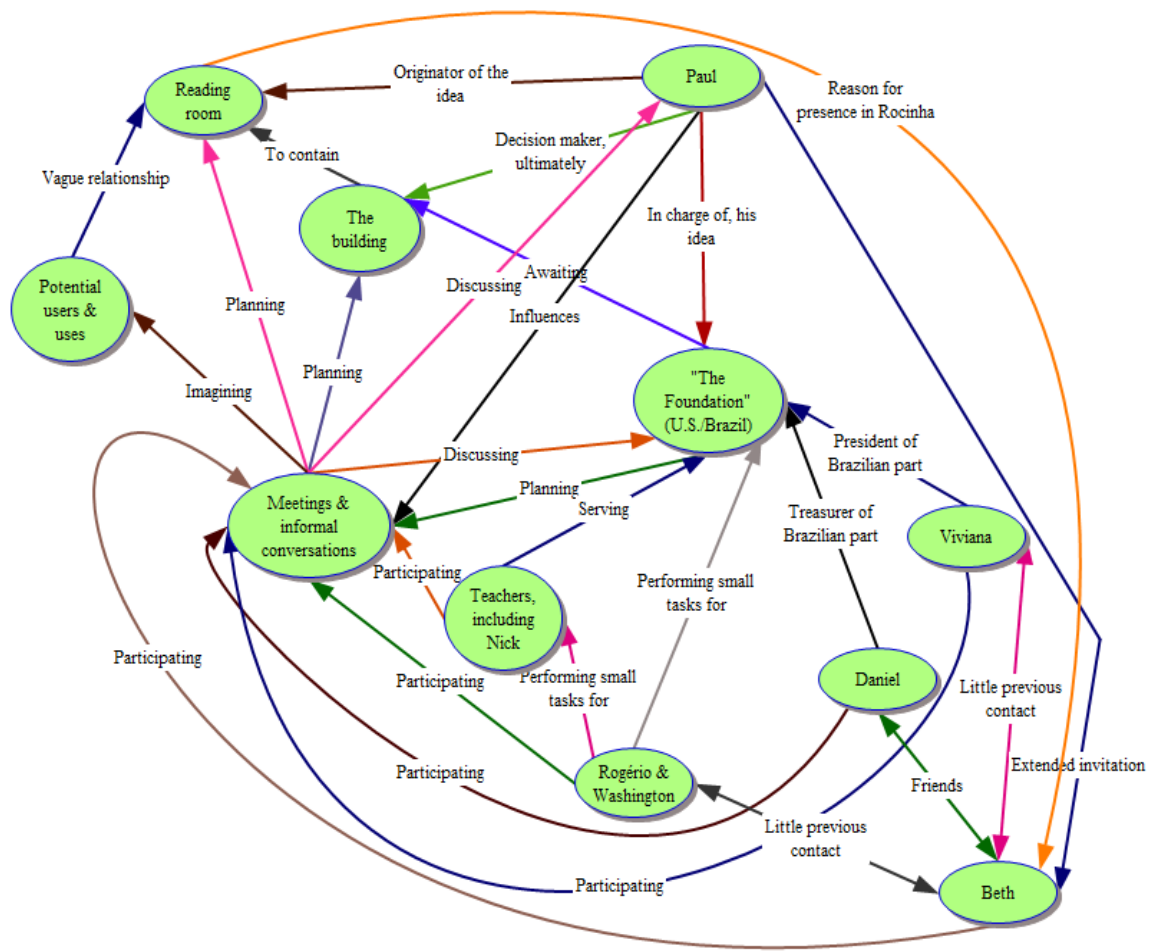
Appendix A: Timeline





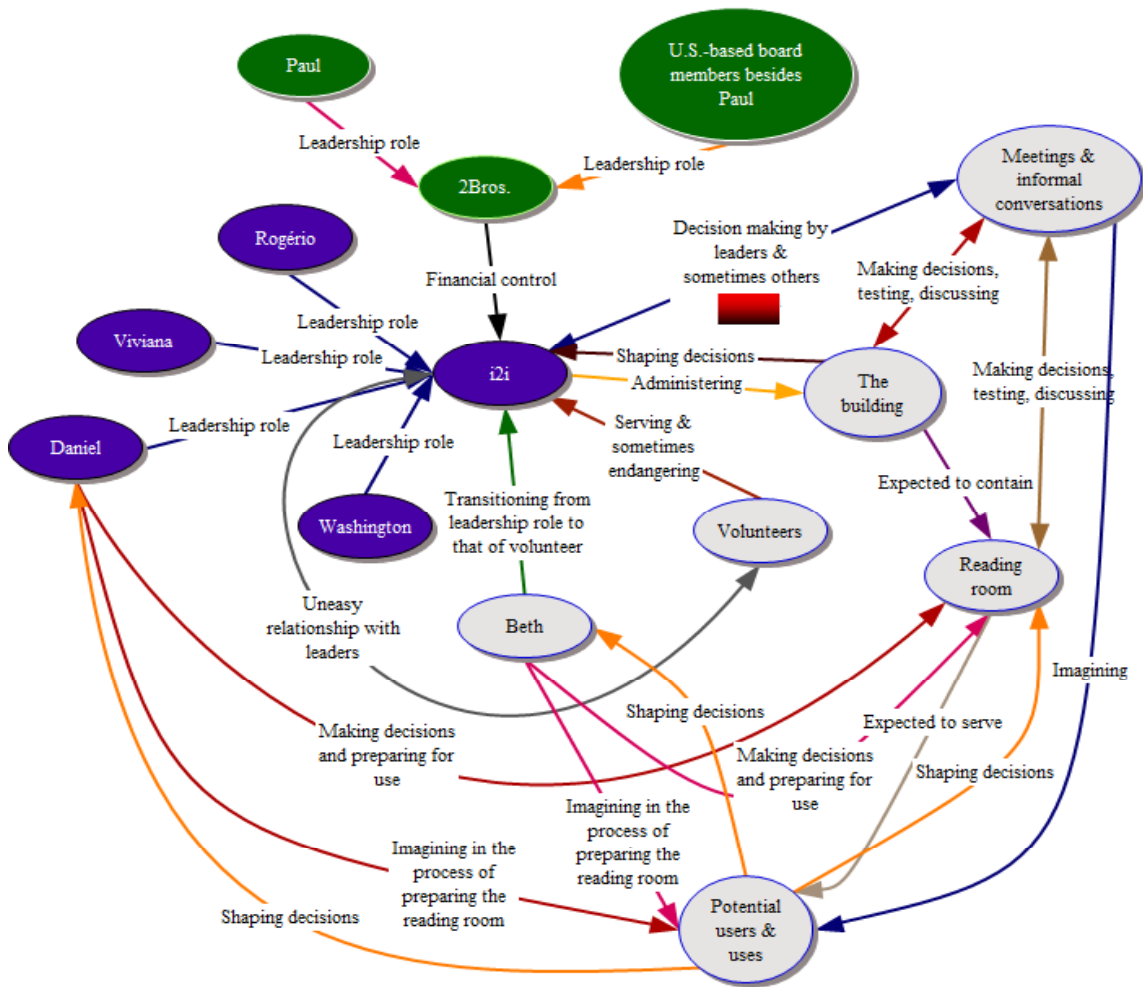
Appendix B: The Changing Actor-Network at the i2i

April 2006

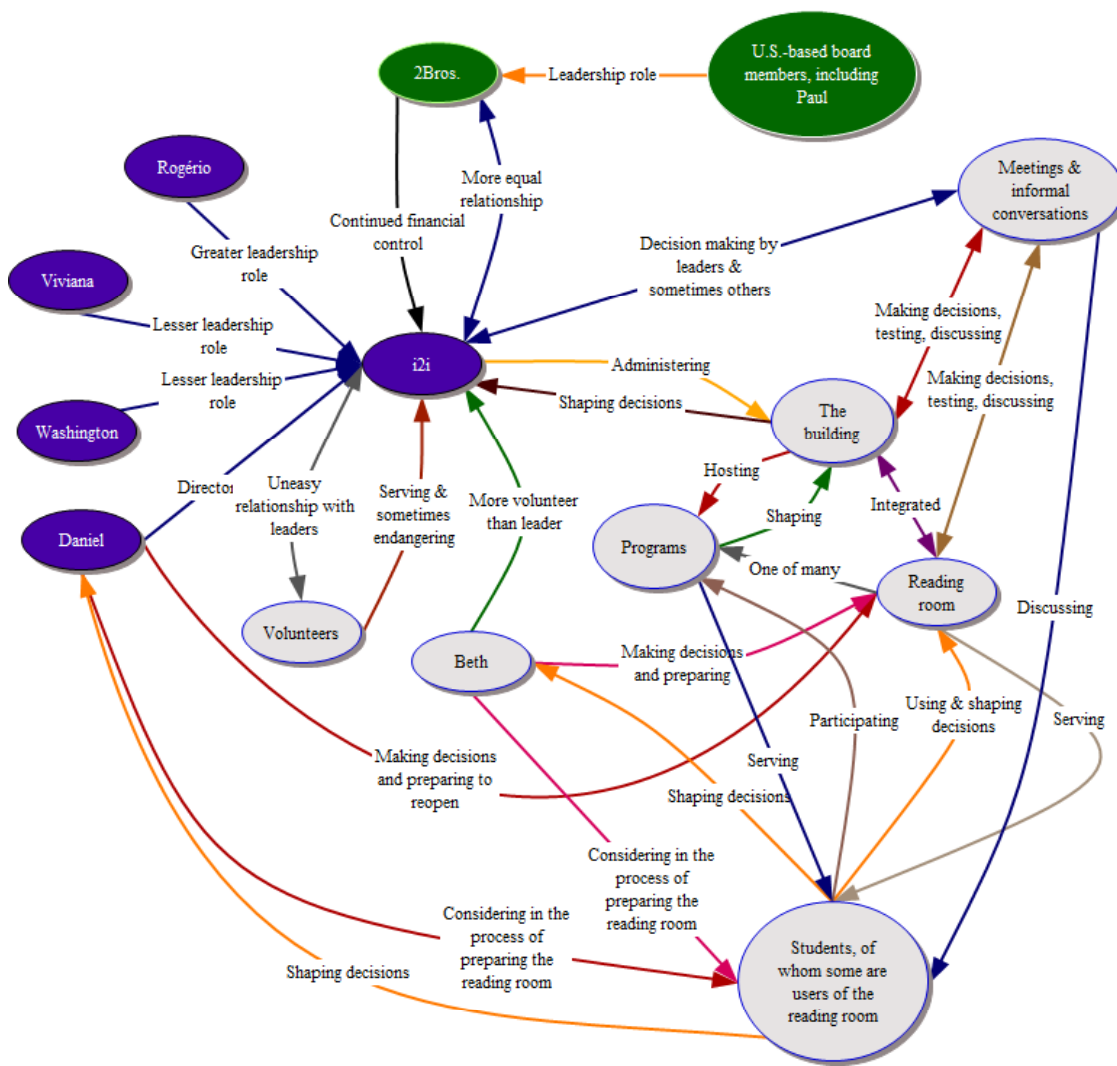


Note: to reduce complexity, not all relationships are shown in these images.

May 2007



February 2008



Appendix C: April 2009 Funding Proposal

Proposal for the Instituto Dois Irmãos' Community Center

Daniel de Oliveira, Diretor

Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro

April 7, 2009



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I. Introduction

The Instituto Dois Irmãos (I2I), created in 1998, is seeking to remodel its small, two-story building in the *favela* of Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Rocinha is one of the largest shantytowns in Latin America, located near three of Rio's most expensive neighborhoods. Population figures are notoriously inaccurate, but it can be estimated that Rocinha has some 150,000 to 200,000 inhabitants. With such a large population, Rocinha is home to diverse groups of people and cultures, as well as a wide variety of services. Nonetheless, Rocinha lacks the structural integrity and comforts of its neighbors. Furthermore, drug trafficking is a constant presence in the community. The I2I seeks to provide alternatives in the form of educational opportunities to residents of Rocinha and similar communities -- and even to entire families.

The I2I's building is expected to serve as a community center and to provide a space for the non-governmental organization's educational, social service, and international exchange programs. Once the building is completed, we will offer a wide variety of activities, such as language classes (English, Spanish, and French), Portuguese-language literacy courses, tutoring, children's reading groups, art classes, photography and video projects, meetings, cultural events, and other activities focused on education, the environment, sports, and health. These activities will be developed with the help of the Two Brothers Foundation, an NGO in the United States with whom we have collaborated since 1999.

The I2I has the following members: Viviana Rodrigues, President; Daniel de Oliveira, Director; Rogério Rodrigues and Washington Ferreira, Coordinators. The Institute plans to add several residents of Rocinha and other collaborators to its membership in January 2008.

The I2I is located at Campo da Esperança, beco 2, n. 17 in Rocinha, but it maintains a post office box for receiving correspondence:

Av. Ataulfo de Paiva, 822 -- Leblon
Caixa Postal nº 38078
22450-970 Rio de Janeiro, RJ
Brasil

The Institute can be contacted by telephone at (55) (21) 3205-3460 and by e-mail at instituto2irmaos@gmail.com. The I2I is always happy to accept proposals from potential volunteers, as well as books, information technology, and other donations of time and materials.

You may also visit the shared Web site of the Institute and the Two Brothers Foundation at <http://www.2bros.org>, where you will find additional information regarding Rocinha and our work to date, as well as digital still and moving images.

Worldwide, monetary donations can be made to the Two Brothers Foundation via the above-mentioned Web site. In Brazil, donations can be made directly to the I2I through bank deposit. The account information follows:

Bank: Unibanco
Agency: 0163
Account (checking): 207609-8

II. Acquisition of Building

In May 2006, we purchased a two-story building at the above-mentioned address. On the first floor, there was a very small apartment with two rooms, a bathroom, and a pantry. The second floor had the same physical structure, but our space constraints were even greater there, since one of the rooms had a small veranda that was useless to us. To make matters worse, we also had a staircase inside the former apartment, further reducing the amount of usable space. This staircase led to the roof. Although roofs in Rocinha are frequently useful in the way one might use a deck or balcony, this one was not functional because of lack of maintenance and served only to house our water tanks.

In July 2006, we began to use only part of the building, since we did not yet have the proper infrastructure to conduct all of our activities or serve all of our students. The physical structure of the building, which at the time was the only building we could afford, presented several problems, among these, frequent leaks that left our rooms humid and compromised the physical integrity of the building. We also had insufficient lighting and ventilation, so that we first had to provide the minimum of adequate classroom conditions in each room. Another problem that contributed to our inability to expand our programs was a general lack of space, since the two rooms that we were able to turn into classrooms could each hold only six students at a time. Finally, one of our greatest challenges was the outside staircase with uneven steps that were exposed to the elements, so that water ran down them when it rained, making the stairs slippery and at times even unusable, leaving us no choice but to use only the first floor.

As we were attempting to solve our greatest problems, we received an e-mail message from an architecture master's student, Filipe Balestra, who offered to help us renovate the building. With his help and with that of the Two Brothers Foundation in fundraising, we began meeting the above-mentioned challenges.

III. Overview of Renovation Plan

On the first floor, we plan to enlarge the rooms, creating a multipurpose room and an office. This room will offer our students space to read, as well as access to research materials and books related to our language courses. In this same space, computers will be available to increase our students' access to Internet-based research, virtual exchanges, and digital teaching materials, thereby increasing their cultural and intellectual capital.

As could be expected, on the second floor we would also have a multipurpose room, turning the two rooms and the space-wasting veranda into a single room with space for fourteen students to sit comfortably. The room still has two doors, and so it can be sectioned off into two rooms in order to offer two smaller classes at the same time.

We have had more freedom with the third floor that we planned to construct, since the only existing structure for the third story was the floor. We thus chose to make a tall, spacious room with capacity for twenty people and large walls onto which we will be able to project films. This room will also serve as a classroom for language courses, including those for adult literacy. The third floor will have space designated for children, where we will provide story hours. Finally, the third floor will be used by the board of directors for its meeting and as a space for lectures.

On the roof, we plan to offer crafts classes, sports, and celebrations and parties, such as our annual Halloween party. In order to use the roof, we will need to cover it and put in a bathroom and a screen for the safety of our users.

Please see Appendix I: Interiors on page 8 for a visual representation of the building's interior spaces after completion of the renovations.

IV. Renovations Completed to Date

In mid-June 2006, with the help of friends and our volunteers at the time, we decided to begin small renovations so as to be able to begin to use the first floor. Our first objective was to solve the above-mentioned lighting and ventilation problems. With the financial assistance of a former volunteer, Brianna Carrigan, we were able to purchase fluorescent lights and ceiling fans. With the lights and fans purchased, we began to work on other problems, such as a leak in one of the rooms and a small hole in the wall of another room. We painted the rooms and removed a sink from the pantry, turning the pantry into an office.

With this work finished on the first floor, we had two small classrooms, each with capacity for six students, and a small office. That is to say, we had room to start, but we lacked furniture, books, blackboards, office materials, and other such resources.

Just as we were worrying about how to acquire furniture, we received a very important donation from the American School (Escola Americana) of Rio de Janeiro of twenty-one desks, hundreds of books, and English-language posters and didactic materials. It thus became possible for us to offer classes to our students on the first floor during the second semester of 2006 (August-December), leaving the second floor and roof inactive due to a lack of resources to solve the challenges that those areas offered us.

In August 2006, we received a visit from Greg Scruggs, a student at Harvard University, who became interested in our project and offered to conduct fundraising activities for the I2I with the help of his family. In September, we received notice of the first set of donations, which amounted to \$4,200. Besides these donations, we benefited from the fundraising activities of the

Two Brothers Foundation in the United States. With all of these donations in hand, we were able to consider more ambitious renovations. From September to November 2006, we held several meetings to discuss how to conduct these renovations. During this process, we received the above-mentioned e-mail from Filipe Balestra, who expressed interest in aiding us in planning and conducting the renovations.

Mr. Balestra arrived in Brazil in November 2006 and immediately began to work, such that the renovations began during the first week of December. The plans he created can be found attached (see Appendix II: Plans on page 11 and Appendix III: Façade on page 12).

With the arrival of the financial resources, we decided to hire a mason in order to carry out Mr. Balestra's plans (see Appendix IV: Cronology on page 13). On the second floor we had the same lighting and ventilation problem, as well as the challenge of the veranda that made it impossible for us to turn that room into a classroom. With the architect's project, we decided to knock down the wall between the two rooms, reinforce the existing column, enclose the veranda, put in three large windows, and paint.

While some members, volunteers, and friends of the I2I knocked down walls on the second floor, others, along with the mason, worked on constructing the third floor. It was a beautiful endeavor that even mobilized some neighborhood children and included the participation of more than fifteen people at various times.

With the renovations occurring on the two floors simultaneously, the roof became a new floor, which we were able to construct as we wished. Once again, Filipe Balestra's ideas were instrumental. He opted for creating a single large room with six windows to increase air circulation. On that floor we were able to construct and/or install:

- Structural girders
- Walls, including the front exterior wall with room for six windows
- Storage space
- Stairs to the new roof
- The new roof
- Dry-walling in most of the interior

We spent more than we had expected in terms of money (see Appendix V: Past Expenses on page 14) and especially time on this phase of the project.

Filipe Balestra returned to Europe in January 2007, and the I2I continued the renovations in his absence but with his constant aid via the Internet. This phase of the renovation was concluded in March 2007.

V. Finishing the Renovations

There are two phases to the renovations that remain: 1) urgent modifications that will allow us to operate safely, and 2) renovations that will allow for full operation for the first semester of 2008.

We have a \$2,000 budget, as promised by Two Brothers Foundation, for the first of these phases. The priorities of this phase are as follows:

- Finish construction on the 3rd floor:
 - Lay the floor
 - Construct and dry-wall a wall next to the staircase that ascends to the 3rd floor
 - Dry-wall the corridor that leads to the rooftop
 - Install 6 windows on the 3rd floor
 - Dry-wall girders
 - Construct and dry-wall the walls and a closet
- Finish construction on the rooftop:
 - Construct a wall around the entire rooftop
 - Dry-wall
 - Install a door between the 3rd floor and the rooftop
 - Lay the floor
- Building structure:
 - Install a new water tank to replace the existing, unsanitary unit
 - Renovation of hydraulics
 - Installation of plumbing system

See Appendix VI: Expenses for the Second Phase (page 15), which lists materials and other expenses. The mason whom we hired for this phase estimates that it will take approximately 25 days.

The second and final phase, which will lead to the full operation of the Institute, will be longer and more expensive, and prices may yet vary over time or as a result of changes in exchange rates. Therefore, the prices provided in Appendix VII: Expenses for the Third Phase (page 16) ought to be considered particularly susceptible to variation.

The goal of this phase will be significant renovations to the first floor and the conclusion of work on the other floors. On the first floor, as noted above, we will have a multipurpose room: The two existing rooms will be enlarged and made into a single room. We will have our office in this room, along with space for reading and accessing digital resources, where we will make fifteen computers available for virtual exchanges, research, and use of the Internet in language classes.

During this phase we will:

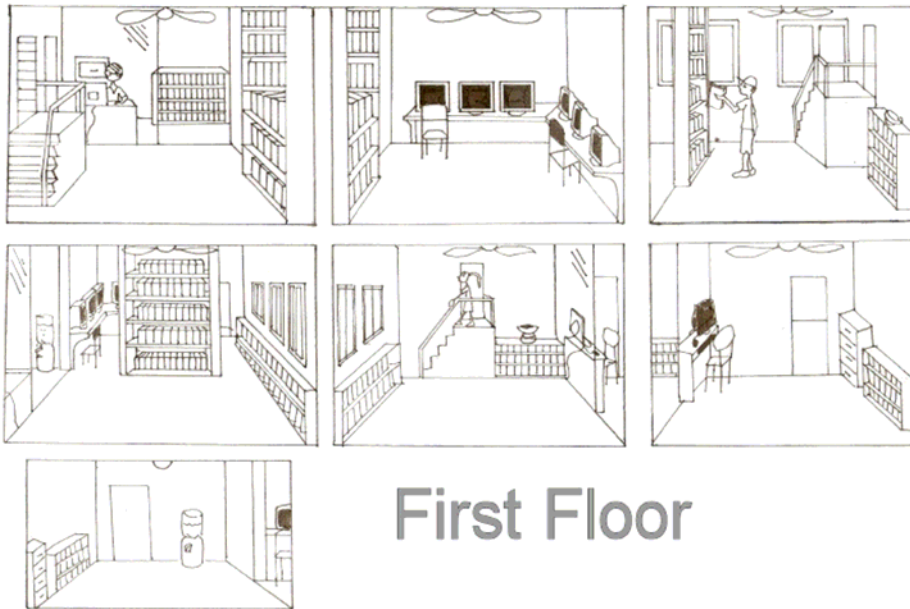
- Lay tile flooring on all the stories, including the roof and staircases
- Put in a new staircase between the first and second floors
- Enlarge the room (knock down the walls)
- Fill in the veranda to level off the floor
- Install windows
- Drywall internally and externally, including the façade
- Install a gate
- Reinforce the columns
- Modernize the wiring and electrical installations, making it possible to use many computers simultaneously

VI. Conclusion

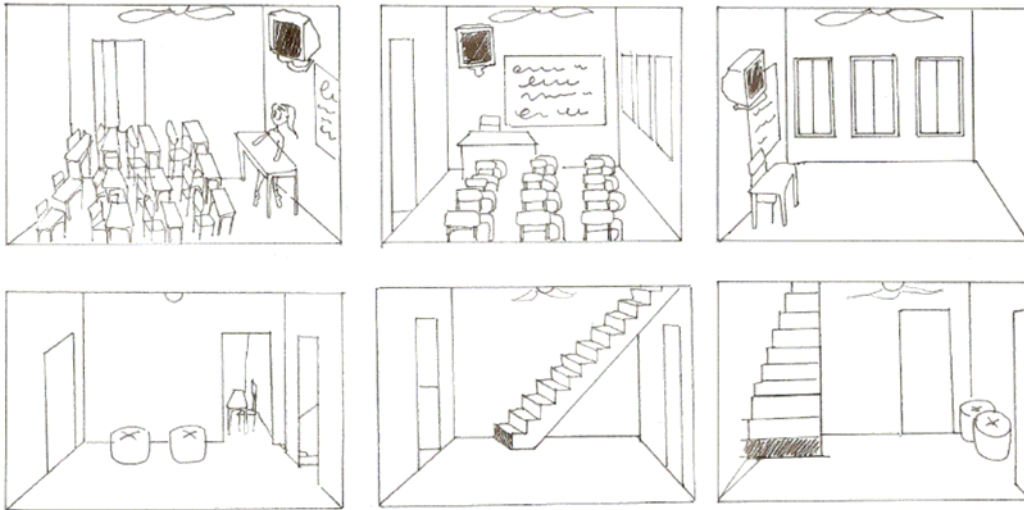
The Community Center of the Instituto Dois Irmãos represents a huge investment of resources, time, and dedication from donors, volunteers, and students in Rocinha, across Rio de Janeiro, and around the world. Finishing the renovation in a quick and efficient manner is fundamental to the Institutes's success. We would like to thank you for participating in this very important project and increasing access to educational opportunities in our community.

Appendices

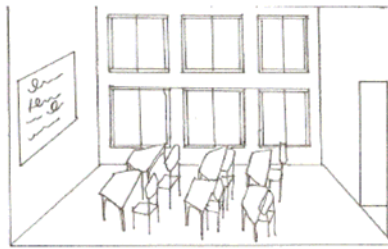
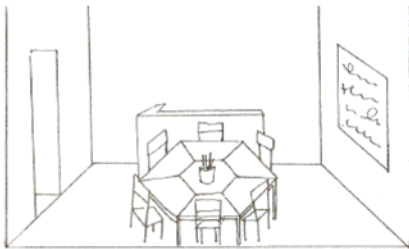
Appendix I: Interiors



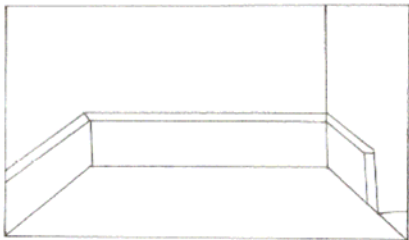
First Floor



Second Floor

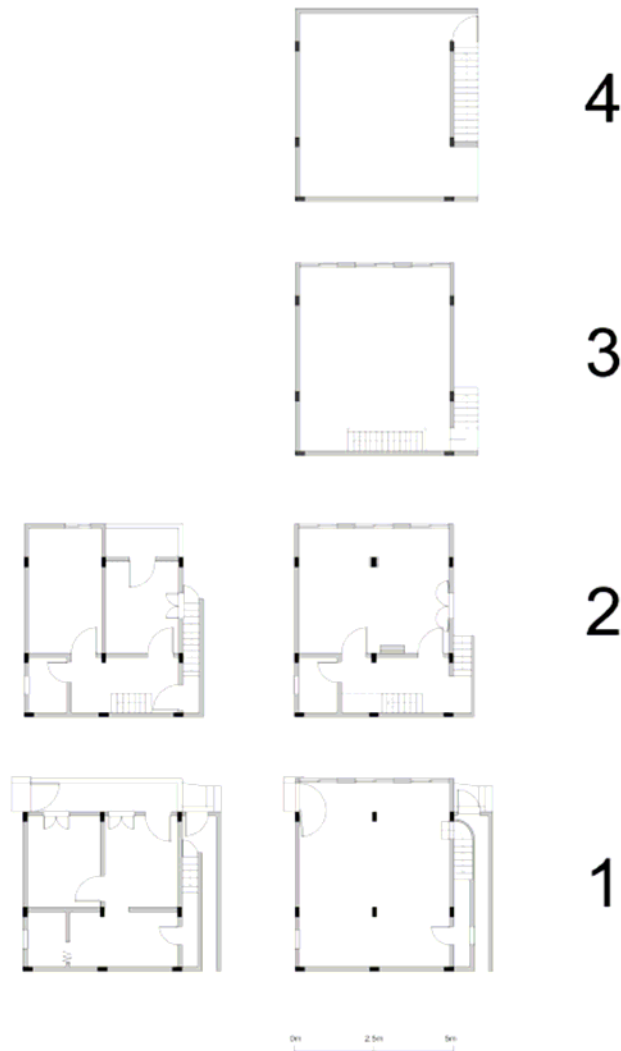


**Third
Floor**



**Fourth
Floor**

Appendix II: Plans



The plans on the left show the building before the renovations, while those on the right show how the building will be once the renovations have been completed.

Appendix III: Façade



The first figure corresponds to the original façade of the building. The second one shows the building as the third floor was being built. The third drawing shows the current façade, and the final drawing gives an idea of how it will look when the work is completed.

Appendix IV: Cronology

Event	Date
Purchase of the building	May 2006
Donation by Brianna Carrigan	June 2006
Beginning of use of the building, with the donation by the American School	July 2006
Receipt of news that we had sufficient funds to begin renovations	September 2006
Arrival of Filipe Balestra (architect)	November 15, 2006
Beginning of 1 st phase of construction	December 4, 2006
Departure of Filipe Balestra	January 15, 2007
End of 1 st phase	March 2007
Beginning of 2 nd phase	July 18, 2007
End of 2 nd phase	August 21, 2007
Beginning of 3 rd phase	November 26, 2007
End of 3 rd phase	January 28, 2008

Appendix V: Past Expenses

Item	Cost
Labor	\$4,367.00
Concrete	R\$1,970.00
Plumbing	R\$113.60
Lumber	R\$908.00
Tools	R\$290.70
Wiring	R\$450.20
Structure	R\$763.20
Windows	R\$1,967.00
Roof	R\$1,223.00
<i>Total</i>	<i>R\$12.052,70</i>

Appendix VI: Expenses for the Second Phase

Item	Cost
Bricks	R\$600.00
Concrete	R\$634.80
Structure	R\$378.90
Labor	R\$2,000.00
Gate	R\$280.00
Paint	R\$285.00
Plumbing	R\$141.30
<i>Total</i>	<i>R\$4,320,00</i>

Appendix VII: Expenses for the Third Phase

Item	Cost
Lumber	RS287.00
Concrete	RS696.00
Structure	RS90.20
Labor	R\$4,200.00
Gate	RS280.00
Flooring	R\$1,439.60
Bricks	RS200.00
Wiring	RS382.10
Tools	RS71.10
<i>Total</i>	<i>RS7,646.00</i>

x

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Vita

Bethany Lynn Letalien was born in Connecticut in 1973, the daughter of Keith and Nancy Letalien. After graduating from Georgetown University in 1996 with a bachelor's degree in Portuguese, she worked for the Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress until mid-1998. From the University of Texas at Austin, she was awarded MA degrees in Communication and Latin American Studies in 2002 and a Master of Science in Information Studies degree 2005. While studying at the University, she was employed as a graduate research assistant by the Latin American Network Information Center. Her work includes various conference papers, book chapters, and journal articles. She also served as assistant editor of the *Handbook of Portuguese Studies* and co-editor of the volume *New Perspectives on the Ancient World*. After leaving the University of Texas, she will join the federal government as a Presidential Management Fellow.

Permanent address: 30 Eugene Avenue, Bristol, CT 06010

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