

PREFACE

My academic journey began with an undergraduate degree in socio-cultural anthropology, supplemented by a minor in the fine arts. I viewed the arts degree as a valuable outlet, providing time for creative and practice based experiences, not imagining how it would so wholly affect my future career path. Taking two classes; one in basic web development and the other in graphic design, I found myself enjoying the combination of design and technology. I had always figured on a path that combined anthropology and the arts and these new technical skills were welcome guidance along the way.

Upon graduation, I sought employment in nonprofit organizations where I could use my anthropological ideals and education surrounding Society's relationships and structures. Through an environmental nonprofit in Seattle, I found an AmeriCorps placement utilizing my artistic and basic technical skills, which also provided an educational grant to use anywhere in the United States. I took this opportunity to enroll in further web design classes, finding my previous experience provided me the jumping platform I needed.

Performing well and enjoying the majority of the courses, I decided to complete the entire web design program in the year before heading off to graduate school. At the time, my goal in finishing the web design course was to present my thesis online as a way of opening up my research and increasing accessibility. However, my interests developed once again at the end of the program.

Due to several classes in methodology, Wordpress, and user-experience, I realized I thrived in the information architecture process of web design. My anthropological background made organization and distribution of content a fluid process and my design needs were satisfied through well laid out schematics and documentation. Still ignorant to the discipline of design

ethnography, I imagined my research in anthropology would best be used for an extensive usability study centering on the nonprofit sector, volunteering for an organization in need of website.

Arriving at the University of Kent was excellent for the reintroduction of anthropological theory, current debates surrounding the discipline and essential research methods. This slow integration back into the academic world was difficult at times, where theory and practice support the expansion of a mental process rather than an end-product (e.g. website) being the sole measure for success. As a result, I was led to find the ideal combination of anthropology, technology and design in the fields of Science and technology studies and design ethnography.

After the completion of this research I intend to continue onward to complete a Master of Science in Human Centered Design and Engineering at the University of Washington, which will be direct study and utilization of user-experience design and design ethnography. This will achieve a convergence of the somewhat separate paths of the nonprofit sector, technology/design and anthropology I have followed in the past, fulfilling my ultimate career goal in becoming a design researcher.

Sharing this bit of information is meant to help portray this study as an applied work due to my own interests, talents and values. I strive for increased knowledge in anthropological theory and rhetoric; however my own strengths do lie in the activity of research and creation of relationships. For this reason, I am fortunate to have been able to challenge myself by completing a master's degree in social anthropology, prior to shifting to a discipline that will benefit greatly from further anthropological influence.

Thank you in advance for reading this thesis. I hope its interdisciplinary nature provides you with the knowledge you seek and spurs a few ideas along the way.

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