

Select an academic technology you think might benefit teaching and learning at Macalester College. Describe how you would introduce the technology to faculty.

Annotation of texts and documents is a scholarly practice with ancient roots. Marginalia and markups of texts with commentary, interpretation, questions, glosses, and other forms of engagement reflect the kind of deep reading and analysis that is central to a liberal arts education. As texts have increasingly migrated to and originate in digital formats, platforms, and networked environments, [new possibilities for collaborative reading and annotation have emerged](#).

[Hypothes.is](#) is a digital annotation application that “seeks to enable a conversation over the world’s knowledge” by enabling in-line annotation and discussion on web-based texts and documents. I believe it would be an excellent technology to benefit teaching and learning at Macalester College. Hypothes.is is completely open-source and free, and normally requires only the installation of a simple browser extension and creation of a user account. A growing community of educators is making effective use of Hypothes.is across a range of disciplines and contexts to enhance student interaction around texts and to promote close reading and analysis. The Hypothes.is website has an [extensive set of resources for educators and students](#), including quick start guides, tutorial articles and videos, webinars, user case studies, and assignment examples.

When activated on a web-based document (html, pdf, epub, etc.), Hypothesis presents a side panel that can be toggled to display and retract. When a portion of the text (word, phrase, sentence, etc.) is highlighted, the side panel opens, and the user makes an annotation, anchored to the highlighted text, which can include links, images, and video. The annotation can also serve as the beginning of a threaded discussion, as other users can respond to previous annotations. These annotations and conversations are situated in the context of the document, thus facilitating the interplay between the original text and the notes. Instructors have the option of creating private groups or of allowing the annotations to be fully public. A useful taxonomy of annotation use cases is presented in the article, “[Back to School With Annotation: Ten Ways to Annotate With Students](#).”

I have given a number of [presentations on Hypothes.is to faculty](#), and have worked closely with several of them to implement digital annotation practices in their courses. For example, Brian Watkins uses Hypothes.is in an upper level course on anthropological theory at Austin College. I wrote about his initial experience in a blog post, “[Better Reading Through Annotating: An Anthropology Example](#),” and Brian later followed up with his own post, “[Digital Annotation in ANTH 385: History of Anthropological Thought](#).” As he indicates, “The outcomes were so successful that I would not want to teach the class again without using digital annotation.” There were “two distinct results: higher grades on tasks involving close reading and theoretical thinking; and, more nebulously but also importantly, greater class camaraderie and discussion.”

To introduce digital annotation generally, and Hypothes.is in particular, to Macalester faculty, I would first seek to discover whether any faculty are currently using this practice and this application. If so, I would arrange a demonstration so that colleagues could observe, ask questions, and have a conversation. I would couple that with a workshop of my own to introduce Hypothes.is, giving examples of effective pedagogical uses cases from undergraduate liberal arts contexts, and walking faculty through the workflow of setting up Hypothes.is for use in a course. I would make myself available for individual or small group consultation (say, within a particular department) and support. In addition, I would connect faculty to the existing resources and community of practitioners, and encourage them to connect with others, especially in their own fields, who are using digital annotation and Hypothes.is in teaching and learning.

My friend and colleague, [Jeremy Dean](#), is the Director of Education for Hypothes.is. He has conducted a number of webinars and other learning events in which I would invite faculty to participate. If resources were available, I would considering inviting Jeremy to come to Macalester for a day of presentation, demonstration, and conversation about digital annotation.

Assuming that there are at least one or more faculty willing to use digital annotation as a pedagogical practice, I would then also offer robust support to students in those courses. If there is some unit on campus (perhaps within academic affairs or student life) such as an academic skills center, I could offer programming there for students, as well as make class visits for tutorials. And, I think it is important to showcase and communicate successful implementations of digital annotation, and the student work and outcomes that it leads to (with due regard for the privacy and intellectual property rights of the students). I am a strong believer in highlighting good student work for others to observe and learn from. These kinds of testimonials are the best way to promote effective uses of academic technology in the scholarly community.

The range of applications designed for annotating digital content continues to evolve quickly, and I would commit to remaining current with the field. However, I do expect Hypothes.is to continue to develop and to remain an important tool for annotation. I have also successfully implemented uses of video annotation with platforms such as [Classroom Salon](#) and [VideoAnt](#). All of these are ways for faculty and students to increase their interaction with content and to deepen their digital and information literacies. I would be happy to support the Macalester community in building these literacies.