

Assignment 7 – Due November 6, 2018

1. Activity: Ethnographies of Public Spaces

In this activity, you will work in groups to research how public facing institutions like libraries and museums are producing innovation at the *intersections between physical space and information technology*. Between now and our next class, visit one of the institutions listed below and conduct an informal ethnography using the questions below as a guide. The ethnography should take the form of a 250-word post on our GitHub site and integrate pictures of the site to illustrate your results.

List of Potential Sites to Visit:

- Boston Public Library
- Cambridge Public Library
- Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
- Museum of Fine Arts
- Museum of Science
- Harvard Art Museums
- Boston Children's Museum
- JFK Museum and Library
- New England Aquarium
- Institute of Contemporary Art
- Harvard Museum of Natural History
- Choose your own public institution (discuss with K. Fendt first)

Here are some aspects to consider when conducting your ethnographies. Although you do not have to answer *all* these questions when you are writing your post, you should address those that are most relevant to your chosen institution.

- Who is using the space? (which demographics, etc.)
- What technologies (such as apps, displays, touch screens, mobile phone tours) has the institution already implemented? Do the visitors actually use this technology, and if not, in what ways could we encourage more participation?
- Are there any “unexpected” or unintended uses of the space by visitors?
- Is there anything frustrating or alienating about the space? Do you see ways in which technology could help facilitate more social interaction?
- What is the current relationship between interior and exterior space? How does the institution “welcome” its visitors?

Below are some potential “genres” of museum technologies to look out for:

- Large scale displays - kiosks, touch screens, wall-mounted or suspended flat screens
- Audio tours
- Mobile phone apps
- Augmented reality
- Participatory curation, tagging
- Games
- Smart tables

2. Read Lev Manovich’s article “The poetics of augmented space” (on Stellar)

In this article, Lev Manovich describes how physical spaces can be overlaid with dynamically changing information that is specific and localized for each user. Comment on the article in light of the “Ethnographies of Public Spaces” activity and what lessons we might learn for potential museum innovations. Post your comments on our GitHub site under Commentary with the tag “Augmented Space”.

3. Final Projects

Give a short in-class presentation of your first designs, the initial technologies, refined concepts, lessons learned from research, and potential changes in direction, scope, or focus.