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17 Beyond single genres: Pattern mapping in global communication

Abstract: This chapter reviews the literature using qualitative, ethnographic, historical, and bibliometric methods that examine the role of genres in activities and should ~~be~~ provide ways of observing the organized production of genred texts within social systems as well as the dynamic and intertwined change of genres and systems. Genres are parts of larger systems which reinforce their familiarity, patterning, meaning, and even recognizable and meaningful variation. ~~These larger collections of genres have been characterized as sets, systems, chains, colonies, repertoires, suites, and ecologies, to emphasize different aspects of their systematic relations. These larger systems locate the texts within groupings of readers, relations to other texts, and larger nexuses of organized activities, for which those genres are produced, to carry out socially located activities.~~

~~Thus any text's meaning and the motives that lead to text production reside in systems of organized human activity. Further the typified communications of genres are a consequence of the dynamic social structure, as well as form significant ligatures in that social structure. Text production within a genre, accordingly, can be mapped within larger communal systems of activity which shape the underlying motives, resources, channels of circulation, and consequences of text production. Genres are frequently institutionalized and regulated as part of the stabilization and regulation of social institutions, but these regulated social forms also generate informal workarounds to recognize the important functions missed by the regulated order. The technologies available to inscribe, produce, store, and disseminate genres — from stylus on clay tablet to the printing press and now digital information technologies — also have an impact on the social groupings that can be coordinated, enlisted, regulated, or otherwise influenced by them in systematic ways, including the extent, tempo and degree of alignment of participation.~~

Within the social structures and relationships mediated by these systems or collections of genres two specific kinds of informational domains are constructed: the ordered, related network of texts that define the activity space and provide resources for each new text (intertextuality), and the actual knowledge represented within the network of texts (including the evaluation and application potentials of the represented knowledge). These systems of intertextuality and knowledge are in turn consequential for the social documentary systems they circulate among in the form of genres.