In one memorable instance, the speaker identified only the notion of a “primary figure” as being analogous to the notion of the curator as a gatekeeper, and he likened his role, seemingly quite comfortably, with that of a "wp." At the same public event, and at the other extreme, another curator made a claim for an intense and potent subjectivity, extending, in his words, "from the fundamental polyschizophrenia of the curatorial figure to his internal laceration." I have become familiar with the idea of the curator as a kind of pioneer-discoverer figure, charting out new territory on the aesthetic or cultural frontiers.

And... We have been acquainted with the model of the curator as a "transgressive" figure—called into being in the transgressive... I have heard moving appeals to the role of the curator as guardian of a cultural ethics. And many curators... see their work as a form of cultural activism. Finally, no such list could be closed without the idea of the curator as an artist.

So, finding myself on a panel on methodology, I find myself confronting a certain gap between the status of the curator as (Inevitably) a desiring subject, and any notion of method as an orderly and logical curatorial procedure. 

—Renee Barlow, "Provisional Practices," 1986

In part II of the book, we move toward a more detailed investigation of curatorial practice... how curators account for the behaviors of works of new media art and what logic of curatorial procedures they might undertake in response to it. In particular, we're interested in metaphors and models of curating engendered by the characteristics of the works that present the greatest opportunities for rethinking what a curatorial approach means... We have seen how new media art crosses boundaries within the history of art and beyond the field of art—stirring metasemiotically disparate idioms within the avant-garde, conceptual art, video art, and finally, curatorial practice... Meanwhile, Matthew Fuller has acknowledged that although other histories such as conceptual art can help in understanding new media art, perhaps the best response to this understanding is the "hypercultural" approach that "makes art" (2005). Similarly, it can be imagined that if histories help curators to understand new media art, then the least expected route towards a model of working is to make new ways of producing and distributing (beyond the art). As such, we have also noted how new media art is akin to other hybrid forms of art that challenge the spaces of art's exhibition as well as the mode of engagement it demands from its audience.

Now, we see how new media art forces a crossing of boundaries beyond an history and within curatorial practice.

6 Introduction to Rethinking Curating
In chapter 2, we look at the evolution of the field of education, and how media is used within various educational frameworks. Art, technology, and communication have been converging in ways that challenge our understanding of what education is. In this chapter, we explore the different ways that digital technologies are being used to support learning and teaching. The impact cannot be underestimated, and it is essential to understand the implications for education and society as a whole.

In chapter 2, we explore the ways in which digital technologies are transforming education. From personalized learning to the use of digital tools in the classroom, we examine the ways in which technology is shaping the future of education. We also consider the implications of these changes for teachers, students, and society as a whole.

In chapter 3, we delve deeper into the use of digital tools in the classroom, and how they are being used to support different learning styles and needs. We consider the ways in which technology can be used to support the development of critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities.

In chapter 4, we turn our attention to the impact of digital technologies on the workforce. We explore the ways in which technology is changing the nature of work, and the skills that will be needed in the future. We also consider the implications of these changes for education and society as a whole.

In chapter 5, we look at the role of technology in the development of new forms of media, and how these technologies are shaping our understanding of the world around us. We also consider the ways in which technology is being used to support communication and collaboration in new and innovative ways.

In chapter 6, we explore the ways in which technology is being used to support research and innovation. We consider the ways in which technology is being used to support new forms of inquiry, and the implications of these changes for education and society as a whole.

In chapter 7, we turn our attention to the role of technology in the development of new forms of art. We explore the ways in which technology is being used to support new forms of artistic expression, and the implications of these changes for education and society as a whole.

In chapter 8, we consider the ways in which technology is being used to support new forms of social and political organizing. We explore the ways in which technology is being used to support new forms of activism and resistance, and the implications of these changes for education and society as a whole.

In chapter 9, we turn our attention to the role of technology in the development of new forms of governance. We explore the ways in which technology is being used to support new forms of governance, and the implications of these changes for education and society as a whole.
The "Embedded" Curator

"Then the curator at the intersection of the museum as an institution and the public as consumers..."

A curator working within a museum is usually a member of the collection or exhibitions program team or both. The primary reference on curatorial work is the structure and definition of institutions of the institution itself—their direction, architecture, collection. For instance, in a small-museum environment, the curator has to be a connoisseur of the objects in the museum's collection, and those which might be acquired into the collection or be the focus of particular curatorial initiatives. Those objects, so that the historian can be communicated to the public when he or she purchases works on display. This means that the curator in question spends the majority of his or her time within that museum structure judging works of art. As a result, when that curator works to organize a new show, this or those thinking and scope are in part limited by his or her end goal of interpretation. What is this exhibiter's relationship to space? Does it seem new and original knowledge or has it been critical examination of contemporary practice? These questions are combined with a series of practical questions. What space is available, when, and how long? How much of a budget has been allocated? What is the project's relationship to the rest of the program? What is the project's relationship to the collection and to the works of art in the other collection?

The result of beginning from any sort of interpretative standpoint in relation to art is generally an exhibition that either looks inside the work's own medium or could be called a "formal approach to curating" or looks beyond the work to its place in a biographical, historic, or thematic story or indeed a political and formally engaged approach to curating. On many levels, the exhibition is itself the temporary collection, representing a moment in time in terms of specificity of art production. The embedded role suggests a curatorial desire to arrest artistic practice temporarily in order to better examine its results or conditional conditions.

From the examples discussed in this book, curators who can be seen working in the embedded role include Susan Dias at the Walker Art Center (to see particular institutional approaches to the exhibition "Art Entertainment Network," discussed in chapter 1) or Benjamin Veal at MAM/OMA and his curating of the exhibition "OMA/OMA" (discussed more fully in chapter 5). The embedded role of curatorial practice is also evident, however, in San Francisco's "Institutional Icons"—for instance, where curators are working within organizations with fixed resources, such as media labs (discussed in chapter 6) in relation to the SFOF Media Centre, but also in chapter 1. If it is often easier to make museums the change to work within a team, and a regular exhibitions schedule that keeps curators embedded in organizations, as opposed to what might be seen as a less secure way of working—that of the "adjunct" curator.

The "Adjunct" Curator

In keeping with curators...to be somewhat for both the institution and the guest curator because the curator lends them, he is then a few weeks, the curator in to end the whole thing is gone. I'm interested in the intersection of these two so that there are regular collaborations with curators and these curators are then part-time but they also work on other things and then to continue..."
—Robert Storr in his office of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's Contemporary Art Institute, New York, June 1999

There is a large number of contemporary art curators who work freelance, but in conjunction with institutions. When mixed-media art institutions are looking for curators to work with, they might seek expertise on a project by project basis depending on the nature of the work to be exhibited, as Beryl Graham did in relation to the exhibition of Larsen in chapter 5. Museums have adopted this customized way of working with new media more often than with other art forms. While "embedded" museum curators often have their attention focused on new art production in the form of a collection, "adjunct" curators are able to take the time needed to focus on the contemporary culture that surrounds them, and must often choose to support avant-garde or emergent practice. In order to help support art, they commission new work, as we saw with the example of "Fiorello: Plagiarists" which was written as the time (chapter 2). In comparison to the embedded role, the adjunct role suggests a curatorial desire to keep pace with and continue to push art practice, primarily fulfilling the ongoing process of the work's development.

Curator Christian Ulrich is a good example of a curator working in an adjunct role in relation to, in her case, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. She admits to working against the museum's institutional constraints—from the practical consideration of its space allocations and timelines of exhibitions to the more theoretical considerations of its mandate to show only the work of American artists. The result of her curating in the adjunct role has proved to be thematic yet very highly focused exhibitions of work for the particular exhibition structure, as was the case with "Interview" (2001). Housing on the long history of institutional critique (chapter 2), artists have also taken on the adjunct role to realize their own conceptual projects—as seen in the example of 'Vik Muniz' projects." This adjunct role suggests a greater scope for curators to posit their own politics and tastes beyond that of the institution with which they are working. The adjunct role thus allows for a greater degree of risk taking by the curator.

The "Independent" Curator

"I thought maybe, nothing seemed so secure...in the case, so easy, and yet so pathological and dubious, as being an "independent curator." So pathological, in fact, that all the rest are probably..."
We're away by now, after debates about the mushrooming role of curators puffed up seminars and the pages of art magazines over the last couple of years like many drunken alr smooches. Much has been written—not all of it good—about the plight of the Independent curator, or more recently, “co-dependent” (O’Neill 2005). For those curators who find themselves caught between the desire to be embedded in the institution’s power structure and the real need to be adjunct from the institution in order to gleefully trip after the interesting work that doesn’t fit, it is worth considering other forms of independence which allow curators to sit between the positions of “embedded or adjunct,” such as the freelancer, often invited as a guest curator, but more often self-identified as the independent curator, or more recently, “co-dependent” (O’Neill 2005). Much has been written—not all of it good—about the plight of the independent curator and about how institutionally bound curators have tried to emulate their style, becoming the authors and stars of the show above and beyond the art. For those curators who find themselves caught between the desire to be embedded in the institution’s power structure and the real need to be adjunct from the institution, the identity of the freelance or “independent” curator is a growing default identity for young curators. Being an “independent” curator certainly offers an opportunity to act more quickly. Within new media, the benefit of the freelance new media art curator is the range of organizations that are open to collaboration, from art museums, to science and technology museums, to media-specific festivals. This positioning is often a result of the independent curator’s consciousness and necessity to make engaging interests. It’s probable, in some cases, that this idea begs questions. Models describing independence is a simple way that young curators are truly self-determined and can act. Whether they have the clout of the curator, they qualify. In addition, an attitudinal change of the institution, looking outside the institution, looking to projects that are determined by a large corporative or institutional player, should their economic self-sufficiency or departmental duties. Models and Modes—The Practice of Curating

As we move into the second half of the book, it seems as though we have taken as a given the role of the institution (or of the curator in relation to the institution) in defining curatorial practice, but we could just as easily have approached the topic of curatorial practice from the other angle—the curator’s output, which is predominantly but not always the exhibition. Exhibitions might take the form of thematic group shows or monographic solo shows or even small exhibitions that their own terms with their own intrinsic narratives and constraints—the off-site show, the blockbuster. Museum-based exhibitions are a particular form of art legitimization, tending not to support emergence of new art forms as much as to consolidate a history. However, museums (as we see in chapter 8) also seek to sustain art through other activities such as collection and education programs.
And yet it is clear that we are in the midst of a new media art, the curatorial approach Data adopted for this exhibition. At Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), for example, it is an important process with necessary didactic and curatorial treatments of the exhibition. The space might be said for exhibitions that take place outside the museum, such as the temporary exhibition or "the platform" discussed in chapter 6. We have seen examples of exhibitions that seem to suggest that curators have tried to maintain their autonomy from the collaborative characteristics of new media art by applying embedded models of curating to specifically, but not only, similar practice, most problematic of them being the recent on-line works as though they were static objects. This can be seen from a contextual analysis of the predominant way in which new media art is seen, in a case with Morgan's intervention at the Tate or Salt Lake’s project女Chateau Jour (see chapter 2). With curators reacting whether the medium does not allow the interactivity in which an exhibition is seen. The use of structural and historical definition of new media art is not always evident. Curators need an adaptable framework in which to investigate and interpret new media art that allows for the autonomy and the practical coordination of not only those characteristics but also the behaviors of new media art to be evident.

Models of Exhibitions: Iterative, Modular, Distributed

Many exhibitions have moved beyond the postmodernism that defines single-authored narrative-based exhibitions. These new models of exhibitions are not only an outcome of curatorial intervention but also a result of the new media art itself. Curating in the digital age is about adopting hybrid codes and rules of behavior. Institutional curating will consist of a combination of new, old, and social practices. New media and social practices are not always evident. Curators need an adaptable framework in which to investigate and interpret new media art that allows for the autonomy and the practical coordination of not only those characteristics but also the behaviors of new media art.

—David S. Trimm, "The Co-Exhibitions Gallery" 2005

There is a wide variety of types of exhibitions that can be grouped into five groups, and it is not a single exhibition. One can identify a number of iterations that are important to contemporary curatorial practices. The exhibition is a platform in which new media art is seen, in a case with Morgan's intervention at the Tate or Salt Lake’s project女Chateau Jour (see chapter 2).

The modular model is based on the work of Richard Pine-Adkins (2006) as "em-brewed" at Innenlocos Gallery in Toronto, supporting works into art and technology. It describes how an exhibition might change direction from one venue to another such as a consultant, essentially growing new ones around successful works (like a smoothie-based recipe, whereas a first batch of ingredients forms the basis for subsequent batches). The modular model is based on the work of Anthony and "adjacents" curatorial such as New Geographies and Jana Bohrman, in particular on how they developed workshop-based events simultaneously in countries in the world (England, 2002, 2011). It describes how an exhibition might be not just one incarnation of a multimedia or multimedia network structure (a platform) that "works" in a way that is familiar. The exhibition is a platform, and the exhibition is a network. These types might be considered as different formal means of exhibition-making and certainly aren't the only ones out there. Not only well in response to the, in posed, emergent nature of new media art.
Modes of Practice — “Curator as . . .”

In this title of opera, Schubert himself is the curator. “I am the head of a town, a city; a profane, an irreverent, a representative, a householder, a host of the party, a reporter, a phrase book,” Chopin says, “in short, an artist, an aristocrat, an ambassador.”


In March 2003, CCI 220 hosted a discussion about curatorial models. What resulted was a major shift of focus around the metaphor for the curatorial role, which, as Allee Burt’s list goes, at the end of this introduction:
Curator as producer
Curator as collaborator
Curator as champion of objects and/or transactions
Curator as creator
Curator as facilitator
Curator as representative
Curator as behind-the-scenes action (police, etc.)
Curator as communicator
Curator as a center of “new” art
Curator as an advocate of society’s perceived duties to “the formal”
Curator as “low-paid, over-educated” intermediary (in Graham 2009a)

In subsequent conferences, the list of possible metaphors has grown further to include “curator as theoretical figure” (Dunne 2005), “curator as keeper” (Gero 2006), “curator as conservator” (Ploharz-Dansor in Cook 2006b), and curator as creator of culture (McDonald-Crowley 2006).

Why this shift in the title of the curator? Why have we viewed so much in it when it’s almost universally assumed that being a curator is not important? Of course, some things are as important as the role of art itself, given who doesn’t see “the world of art.”

So, really, what’s under the word “curator”? It is used in many and perhaps all institutions and contexts. Perhaps these three roles can create some sense (McAteer 2006).

What we have realized is that there are not really any models of curatorial practice, but rather “modes” in which curators function — many of which are collaborative.

Given both the theoretical and practical nature of these modes and the practical and social issues that the institution (finding the right space and getting the right technology, models of practice (theoretical, molecular, distribution) are useful, but understanding the modes is essential. It is these modes, particularly when it comes to collaboration, that best “fit” to meet the needs of new media art. Therefore, part of the book addresses the pros and cons of these “modes” — from working in a museum to creating platforms for engagement and curating a festival or running a gallery adopting modes from the practices of artists — all for both the production and the distribution of new media art.

All the while, we are focused on how the characteristics of new media art force the curator to cross boundaries between roles and between departments within an institution. In chapter 7 on interpretation and education, it would seem that the different zone of the museum, but new media art suggests other event-oriented structures for its inclusion. Chapter 8 on museums shows how new media art encourages cross-departmental collaboration. In chapters 9 and 10, which concern other models of curating and examples of artist-led practice, new media art is seen as a more fluid part of a landscape. A distinct change in approach is evident, from a focus on the object of art to the landscape of curating outside the object.

Summary: Curating Now—Distributed Processes?

My “curatorship” was thus defined in relation to the practice of art: J. Seth, Larry Conner, On Kawara, Robert Barry, Steve Kish, Herbert, Doug Herring, among them, not in that order. Each one we asked to paint or “interpret” the role of the . . .

Figure 4.1

Installing the exhibition: the Art Gallery of Ontario's New Media and the contents of the context of the “chamber for the display of the work of national” (Richardson “curator as ‘art’”)

Exhibition assistant: G. Carra (photography by Steve Dett.)
It is not just the physical space at issue. It is the context and the meaning of the space. The way people interact with the space and how they use it. The relationship between the space and the people who use it. The way the space is perceived and understood. The context in which the space is located. The history and cultural significance of the space. The way the space is used and its impact on the community. The way the space is maintained and cared for. The way the space is protected and preserved. The way the space is adapted and transformed. The way the space is used and its impact on the environment. The way the space is experienced and remembered. The way the space is celebrated and commemorated.

Chapter 5

Introduction to ReThinking Curating

5. The development of independent curating closely maps the rise of networking art and so in many cases is a more appropriate model to work within when curating new media art explored in Chapter 4.

6. The use of independent curating closely maps the rise of networking art and so in many cases is a more appropriate model to work within when curating new media art explored in Chapter 4.

Notes

1. These two roles were first theorized in Sarah Cook’s Ph.D. dissertation, “The Essays for a Third Wave of Curating: New Media Art: Rethinking Context and Content in and out of the Institution” (2004).

2. Program curators are often responsible for more than exhibitions and events as curators such as museums, galleries, and archives.

3. The curatorial exhibitions might therefore include works that have been collected, works that can be acquired into the collection, and a commitment to build a new work that can be transferred to the space.

4. In fact, all the curatorial exhibitions mentioned in the first half of the book—Jean-François Barthez and Jean-François Barthez’s exhibitions at the Centre Pompidou (1984), John Russell’s (1988), Jack Burnham’s (1988), and the Jewish Museum (1987)—are evidence of the collaborative mode of curating.