

react

research

observe

learn

understand

transform

English

act

question

share

listen

record

play

collect

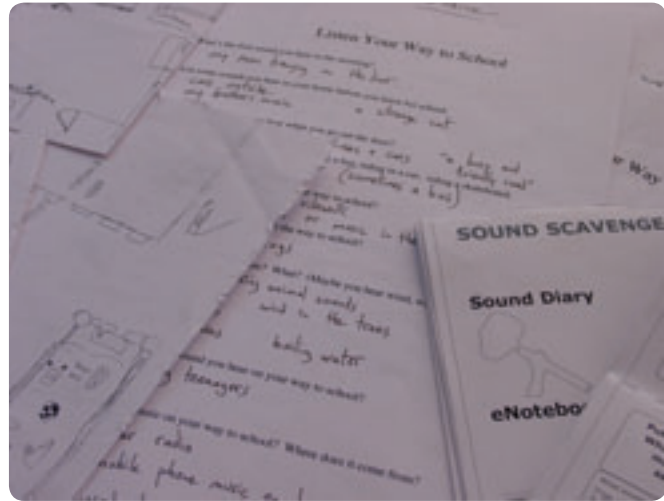
SCHOOL

THE MARKET

Public Authoring in Education

Proboscis' vision for public authoring in education is to investigate how it could be used to increase the sense of ownership students have in the learning process itself as well as to make external connections to their locality and community. Students collect and map information about their own world and community as part of the taught curriculum. By placing learning within a student's own everyday experience and environment we hope to make it more tangible, especially for those in areas of deprivation and lack of opportunity where school and learning might seem remote and irrelevant. The sense of ownership and relevance to their daily life contrasts with the remoteness of many examples found in generic textbooks.

This kind of associative learning not only connects with a student's lived experience but it also breaks down traditional curriculum boundaries. For instance, students mapping and recording different dialects and languages spoken in their family or community for an English class would use the same data in their History class to explore the social history of their community, and in their Geography class to investigate social movement and change. The same data might also be used in a Maths class to look at pattern



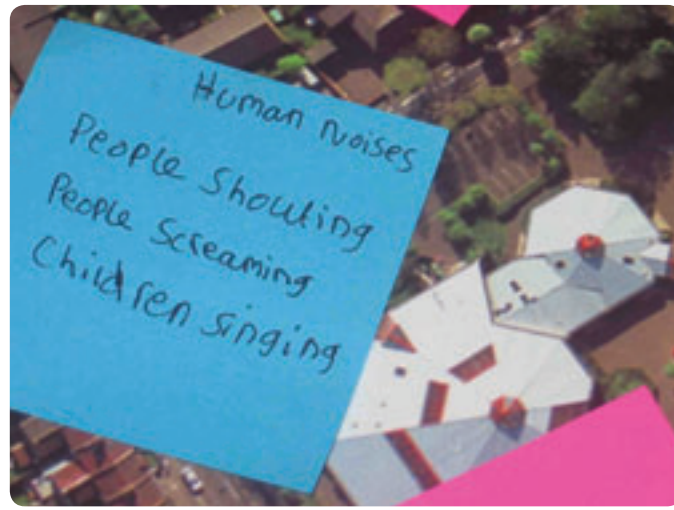
and distribution theories. Public authoring allows students to interweave the formal learning process with their individual, lived experiences. It offers new opportunities to develop their understandings of issues, by playing to the very natural desire to form links and bridges between different kinds and types of knowledge and information. By embedding creativity into the learning process Social Tapestries encourages the development of learning relationships with specific localities and communities. Encouraging students to take a participatory role in learning, through creative and artistic channels, empowers them to address their local environment in ways that are real and meaningful.

A Culture of Listening

Alongside 'authoring', the act of listening is crucial to our vision of knowledge sharing. Where public authoring offers people a space to have a voice it also needs to encourage that voice to be heard and listened to. In the noise and confusion of the modern world, where we are bombarded with ever-increasing amounts of communication, it is becoming harder to listen, or find the time to listen to those around us. Social Tapestries aims to develop practices of public authoring that in turn engender cultures of listening – places and spaces in which we pause to reflect on what we hear, to disentangle the meaning from the babble of noise. We believe that it is just as important to listen to the voices of others as to make our own voice heard and that this skill is, in itself, a significant aspect of understanding citizenship, toleration and participation in democracy.

Future Directions

Proboscis is building on a relationship with the Jenny Hammond Primary School by working with the staff to embed the concepts of public authoring into everyday teaching and learning. We aim to demonstrate how these practices can have a positive



impact on the way children capture what they know or discover about their own environment and use that knowledge to make the teaching of subjects in the school curriculum directly relevant to their everyday experience, not just abstract tasks they are required to do by custom and law. Future collaborations include working in this way with several schools (both primary and secondary).

In Summer 2006 Proboscis will run a second week-long workshop exploring *Everyday Archaeology – children's relationship to their environment*. The workshop is designed to trigger associations and connections between three areas of the curriculum (Transport, Architecture and Climate) and issues within their local environment. Over the course of the week the students will gather information, collect evidence and share the knowledge about their locality which they create. The final exercise of the workshop will be to encourage the students to use what they have learnt and discovered to redesign their environment – to imagine the kind of future they wish to grow up in.

Based on our discussions and collaborations with teachers, students and educationalists, as well as our evaluation of the projects we have run so far,

we have sketched out some of the positive aspects that public authoring in education could achieve:

- offer a practice and toolset offering marginalised students a space for their voice to be heard.
- develop a sustainable model and tools for creative engagement for teachers.
- create strong links to locality and community that extend beyond the curriculum and school.
- aid students to think critically about space – an important skill that can begin early in childhood and develop through to adult life.
- personalise a project for a student while conforming to the curriculum, privileging their own experience and understanding.
- develop sensitivity to listening through interview and sharing techniques.
- develop democratic models of participation and sharing within a group of students.
- enable students to kick-start change and improve society on a local and tangible level.
- map histories of a local area and enable inter-generational interaction.
- link the use of emerging popular technologies to learning through playful and innovative collection of data and information (such as the Feral Robots) about their everyday environment.



Kingswood High School

Proboscis was invited by Creative Partnerships, Hull and Kingswood High School to develop a year-long public authoring project for Year 7 students. Proboscis' objective was to create a model of creative engagement that could continue to be employed by the staff beyond this project – developing some basic tools and activities such as Bodystorming Experiences, DIFFUSION eNotebooks and individual and group maps of the locality. The aim was to devise a series of creative interventions into the school's curriculum that would provide the students and teachers with a framework for gathering, representing, understanding and sharing different forms of knowledge located within the community.

Proboscis worked with the staff to find appropriate uses of new technologies to capture, organise and share this knowledge, and through the process of sharing give the students new perspectives on the value of learning. In particular, Proboscis aimed to demonstrate how these practices could have a positive impact on the way students capture what they know or discover about their own environment and use that knowledge to make the teaching of subjects in the school curriculum directly relevant to their everyday experience.

Proboscis approached this collaboration with a desire to create a project with the school that would continue to be implemented once the project itself had been completed. In order to interweave the project with existing activities it was important to build the project in collaboration with the school rather than to parachute in a fully formed project. Year 7 was chosen by the school as it transitions students coming from primary into the secondary school system; at Kingswood Year 7 students have a single teacher for around 80% of their lessons, and cross-subject associative teaching and learning is already well established.



Public Authoring, Education & Learning

LISTEN YOUR WAY TO SCHOOL

SOCIAL TAPESTRIES

Sound Scavenger Kit

Proboscis collaborated with Loren Chasse in Summer 2005 to create *Sound Scavenger Kits* for exploring audio ecologies with groups of students. The kits include an eNotebook, a sound recorder, a music box, earplugs, a blindfold, a cardboard tube, a bulldog clip, a pen and post-it notes. The kits are designed to enable students to make and collect various sounds in their local environment. Each component is used to think about and understand how sounds are made, what sounds can be made using various objects, the ways that sound can be heard, recorded and described, and how sounds move through the environment. Students also use the eNotebook to keep a sound diary. Sounds can be shared among the students through podcasting and mapping the sounds and experiences collected.



Bodystorming Experiences

Bodystorming is a fun and tactile way of collecting stories, developing ideas and making connections. It brings participants together around a central situation, allowing individual and group efforts to emerge, always generating some surprises and unexpected outcomes. A key component of these events are large scale maps and aerial photographs of the local area. The scale is important – making exercise more like a game – allowing participants to interact directly with the map and share knowledge as a class or group, as well as ownership of the experience itself. The act of mapping their personal experiences creates meaning and relevance to the participants' immediate environment and allows layering of information within and across subject areas over time. In a school setting the Bodystorming Experience can be played out over a long period, allowing the map to become encrusted with knowledge and objects made by the students.

DIFFUSION eNotebooks & Generator

DIFFUSION eNotebooks use Proboscis' DIFFUSION eBook format and are a simple and effective way of creating a notebook that is personal or specific to an activity, class or student. Since 2003 Proboscis has custom made its own eNotebooks for specific projects; in Spring 2006 we began testing the DIFFUSION Generator – a web-based system of creating DIFFUSION eBooks without the need for DTP skills or software. In education the Generator could be used to create eBooks (or eNotebooks) for a variety of purposes: by teachers for a particular class, student, project or subject, or by students as a way to record personal experiences. The Generator allows for eBooks to be edited and stored online, making them useful tools for both collecting data and making notes for projects as well as for sharing and redistributing the results on completion. They are free to download and re-distribute – enabling the knowledge contained in the books to be shared beyond the classroom.



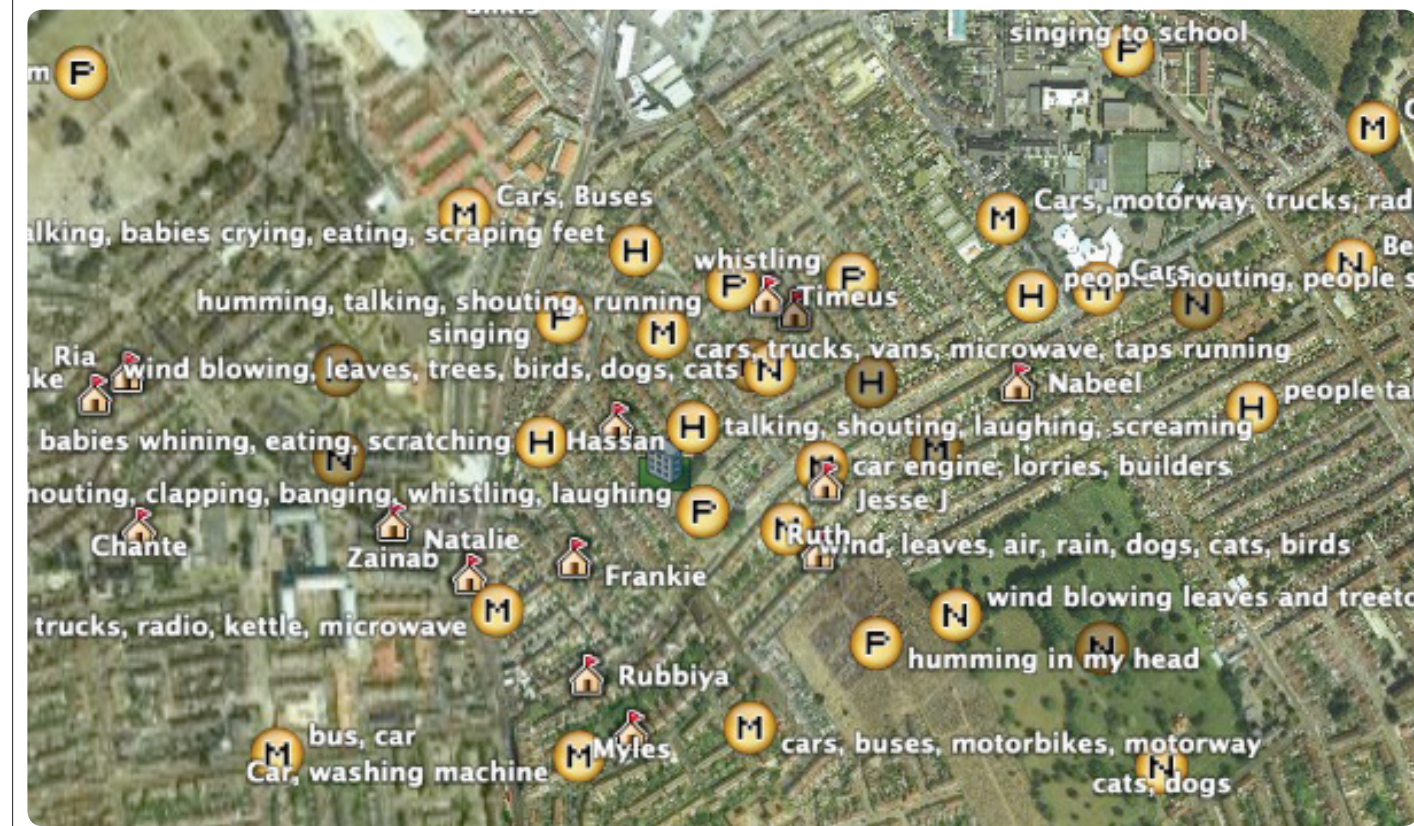
Urban Tapestries

Proboscis has been developing Urban Tapestries version 2 alongside the collaborations with the Kingswood High and Jenny Hammond schools. We have developed concepts and uses of public authoring specific to the context of primary, secondary and lifelong learning which are being woven into the platform's functions. These have also influenced our thinking about appropriate interfaces for accessing and authoring pockets and threads, particularly around group activities and authorship as part of public authoring within an education curriculum. Research into data collecting devices that can upload to UT, such as the Feral Robots, is one of the main outcomes of this approach. Other considerations specific to the context of schools have also been explored, such as the need for teacher or parent supervision of authoring by schoolchildren, which respond to external issues like child protection. Reflecting the complex tissue of social and cultural agendas surrounding education and learning presents a significant challenge. Time and experimentation are required to tease out the ramifications and to develop useful public authoring practices and technologies. Urban Tapestries represents an opportunity to test how knowledge mapping and sharing can help take education beyond school and into the wider community.

Jenny Hammond Primary School

Proboscis is collaborating with staff at the Jenny Hammond Primary School in Waltham Forest, north east London to develop ways of embedding the Social Tapestries framework for knowledge mapping and sharing into the everyday teaching and learning methods of the school's curriculum. Jenny Hammond is a diverse, high achieving school which believes in enriching the curriculum in imaginative and creative ways. In 2004, it had 192 pupils of which 44% were girls and 56% boys. 15% of the students' first language is believed to be other than English.

As part of Social Tapestries, Proboscis and sound artist/elementary teacher Loren Chasse undertook sound and mapping workshops with Year 5 in July and December 2005. The students (ages 9-10) participated in investigating how sound could be used to map and explore their local environment.



This project included a sonic mapping exercise called 'Listen Your Way to School' where the students described the various sounds they hear on their way to school and mapped them geographically. The project looked at ways of listening, listening cultures and how people navigate. It asked, how do people form relationships with their environment? What is meaningful to them? What sounds are important? Why do we listen?

Proboscis also took part in a school open day where we presented the Social Tapestries vision of public authoring and associative learning. The response both from parents and students was very favourable, some parents being particularly interested in becoming involved. This kind of investment is critical for creating a programme that is not an extra burden on everyone, but deeply integrated into the everyday life of the school.

SOCIAL TAPESTRIES

Public Authoring, Education & Learning

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