New Media Writing

Reading Guide

Lev Manovich’s “Prologue” and “How Media Became New”

**Prologue**

**1.** This prologue, "Vertov's Dataset," serves as a non-linear index to the major ideas of the book.  Through the use of this prologue, this book can therefore function like a database.

Try to use this database:

1. Browse through the prologue and find one page that interests you.
2. Read the passage carefully and study the picture(s).  Try to see the connection between words and image(s).
3. Turn to the page in the book which appears in brackets at the beginning of the passage, and read the passage in context.  Backtrack to start reading a page or so before the passage, and read for a little ways beyond the passage.
4. Turn back at the original page from the prologue.
5. Having seen the context of the passage, **explain in a short paragraph** some of the key terms and phrases from the passage that you didn't initially understand (or at least not fully).  What point is Manovich making about New Media on this page?

**2.** Manovich calls the early Russian experimental director Dziga Vertov a "database filmmaker" and his 1929 film *The Man with a Movie Camera* the most important example of a "database imagination" (xxiv).

Watch at least ten minutes of the film on Google Video (see the link on our schedule).  After the opening credits, you can choose any ten minutes you want, but don't skip around or you'll miss seeing the logic of the editing.

**Write a paragraph answering the following**.

* In what ways is *The Man with a Movie Camera* an example of "database imagination," as opposed perhaps to the "narrative imagination," or "theatrical imagination."
* What does the example of this film suggest about the logic of the database?
* In what ways is Vertov using this database logic for imaginative purposes and effects?

**How Media Became New**

**3.** Manovich argues that "new media" is not defined by its newness, but instead by its *parentage*.  New Media is the offspring of two different principles of old media that have been coexisting and occasionally crossing paths for at least two hundred years.  These forms of old media have converged spectacularly in recent decades in the form of web sites, video games, and other computer interfaces.

**Write a paragraph answering the following.**

* What are these two old-media parents of new media?
* Why have their different principles or logics kept them separate for two hundred years?
* Why have they come together now?
* What are some instances from the past when these two old-media principles have combined briefly in forms and processes that--in an almost Steampunk kind of way--anticipate new media?