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Exploring DVD Territories

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Our formal conceptual intent will be to critically revisit and remap the territories of DVD, transgressing the medium's hastily established borders and conventions with an emphasis on considerations of interface and HCI [Human-Computer Interaction]. Some of our research may be presently impracticable due to limitations of the medium and its current deployment; this fact should be no obstacle to innovation.

Thematically we will continue the metaphor of territories, examining, documenting, cataloging, categorizing, archiving, & interfacing for DVD retrieval, chosen aspects of our natural/cultural surroundings or environs.

Production: With *DVD Studio Pro*, *Final Cut Pro*, *Quicktime*, *ProTools*, *Photoshop*, *Flash*, and the DVD standard's internal programming language, we will prepare video, audio, stills, text, & graphics for 'multiplexing' - or compilation, linkage, and authoring - as an interactive DVD [Digital Versatile Disk].

Technical Instruction will include digital video & audio editing & compositing using *Final Cut Pro* & *ProTools*, interactive menu production using *Photoshop*, *Final Cut Pro* & *Flash*, and DVD encoding, structuring & multiplexing using *DVD Studio Pro* & *Quicktime*.

The DVD disk medium stores large amounts of high-resolution video, audio, or other digital data. It constitutes an archive accessed by an audience through interaction with hardware/software configurations, or *interface*. It is structured so as to allow relatively fast access to a selection of *video-'chapters'*, [camera]angle-tracks, *audio-tracks*, *language-tracks*, *subtitle-tracks*, *hyperlinks*, *'stories'*, etc. Its advanced interactivity is accessed through its internal programming language.

Interface design is all-important in a medium that constitutes the *space* of an archive. The interface of such media is more like topography data than the familiar guided-tour through space & time of conventional narrative media - mapping the territories to be explored without prescribing an individual experience. [* Topography: the configuration of a surface and the relations between its natural and artificial features.]

The Cinematic aspect of the Medium. Although radical *cerebral* treatments of Film & Photography were in place early in the histories of Modernism, conventions from previous technologies - linearity, illustration, etc. - effectively constrained the new media, ultimately compounding pre-conditioned human perceptions *via the media*. DVD is already showing such tendencies - locked into Hollywood values and present TV/DVD-player standards - it is already somewhat conventionalized and *conventionalizing*. However, alongside its 'chapters' and 'stories', DVD has an internal scripting language that can be put into the service of advanced interactivity; DVD is network-aware and jumps readily from *the local* to *the global*; DVD is open to non-mainstream, non-linear, cultural production. Still, by recognizing its role as a continuation of the whole experience that [Peter Greenaway](#) has termed *Cinema* - that is the entire spectrum of *screened* productions always - and by retroactively applying the formal logic of digital media to older technologies and their histories, DVD has the potential to reshape our experience of the world and its expression. Just as Film refocused *vision* for an earlier audience versed in the codes of *staged* performance, one way or another, DVD and digital media in general will continue to significantly alter our perceptions.

The differences of User experience of DVD [computer or TV, personal or communal, interaction or consumption?] will need to be accounted for in respect of the actual technological *convergence* of the various types of screen that we presently either engage with or passively watch. Alongside the *art*, we will also need to consider the present state of the technology. What are the possibilities, if any, for group interaction? What kind of experience will users engage as they explore the hyper-linked database that is a DVD disk? Not really TV/VCR, not quite LCD/CPU, how should the medium emerge from its *tweened* state?

Class research takes into account all of the considerations above and looks at present possibilities for cataloging and expanding the capabilities of the interactive DVD medium early in its history - much as Vertov did with [Man with a Movie Camera](#) early in the history of Film. The premise is that - as with Bertolt Brecht's concept of 'Epic Theatre' and [Verfremdungseffekt](#) - the structure of DVD, its conventions, its assumptions, can be examined and turned inside-out by innovation and experiment to beneficial effect for the medium and its users. This is also seen as an acknowledgement and affirmation of the Duchampian principle that ultimately an audience must 'complete the artwork', thus playing a key role in the production of meaning. Appropriate issues of authorship will be raised as reading and discussion topics.

We will: brainstorm and work in groups; divide jobs according to expertise; share skills and acquire new ones; pursue critical-theoretical issues parallel to production.

•text: [The New Media Reader](#) by Noah Wardrip-Fruin [Editor], Nick Montfort [Editor]
