Fieldwork 1

Jonathan Leff

February 21, 2009

Research Methods in Library and Information Science
Topic: Ethnography (with a focus on technology)

LIBR 285-03 – Spring 2009

School of Library and Information Science - San Jose State University
Part A – Group Task

Our group, consisting of Shelly Ann Buchanan, Monica C, Quincy Dalton McCrary and Jonathan Leff, was given the task of working as a team to reproduce the screenshot provided in the assignment for Fieldwork 1. We met via Elluminate on February 10, 2009 to accomplish this task. The result of our work is the screenshot displayed below:

Field Notes

We were all in a good mood. We had had to reschedule as one group member had a last-minute conflict that was unavoidable. We each took the lead in various areas. There was no one person “in charge” whom everyone followed (i.e. no one person calling
the shots). We were able to figure out that there were four elements to the image that
needed to be reproduced, and that there was a certain order in which the images needed to
be drawn, as they were layered. We divided the drawing thusly:

1. Monica C: circles
2. Jonathan Leff: rectangles
3. Shelly Buchanan: squiggles/straight lines
4. Quincy Dalton McCrary: highlights

We had some trouble with images disappearing from the screen after they had been drawn, but then got the hang of it.

The key thing is, everyone cooperated and was in general agreement with how things should work. We came up with ideas as they occurred to us, and did not try to have a set pre-conceived notion as to the “proper” way things should be done. The fact that we were all in a good mood helped, plus the fact that we each had a good sense of humor, and did not take the process deadly seriously. This kind of attitude really made the process go very smoothly. In this respect I think we were very lucky, as I’m sure not all teams have that experience.

In addition to the fact that there was no one person “in charge”, it must be said that no one tried to impose their will on any of the others, nor were sides taken by one group of teammates against another, nor were there any factions. I think we all recognized that we were all in this together. It’s not so much that we went out of way to be cooperative, but that it seemed to kind of come naturally.
**Part B - Transcription**

Date: February 10, 2009

Session begins at 7:45 PM EST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chat Room (Time listed is actual time)</th>
<th>Spoken/Microphone (Time listed is Elluminate recording time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:04 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jonathan leff: plan? we're supposed to have plan?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:04 PM</td>
<td>17:15-17:38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly Buchanan: not yet should we</td>
<td>Monica C: I had an idea about it. Since there were four of us and there’s sort of four types of graphic images I was thinking someone could do the circles, someone could do the rectangular bars, somebody could do the squiggles, and then someone could do the lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:04 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quincy dalton mccrary: nice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:04 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quincy dalton mccrary: good plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:04 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jonathan leff: good idea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:05 PM</td>
<td>17:45-17:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quincy Dalton McCrary: I will volunteer for rectangles</td>
<td>Monica C: But then if we want it to work out right maybe the circles would have to go first?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:05 PM</td>
<td>17:59-18:35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica C: exactly</td>
<td>Jonathan Leff: Yeah, especially as it looks like other stuff goes over the circles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:05 PM</td>
<td>17:59-18:35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly Buchanan: I will do squiggles</td>
<td>Ummm, so it’s a question of do the…I think it’s circles, then rectangles, and squiggly lines in that order and straight lines can go I guess anywhere. Well I guess the straight lines have to go at least after one of the rectangles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:05 PM</td>
<td>8:05 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quincy Dalton McCrary: Yeah, to get the same justaposition</td>
<td>Quincy Dalton McCrary: circle &gt; rec &gt; sqig &gt; straight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part C – Reflection**

**What happened?**

In the portion of our meeting captured by the above transcription, we decided on our plan for reproducing the screenshot in the fieldwork assignment. Monica C
introduced the plan, and the rest of the group agreed to it. Jonathan Leff expanded on the plan. Quincy Dalton McCrary summarized it.

What was interesting about the conversation your chose to transcribe?

To me, the interesting part was how easy it was to agree on the plan. Out of a session lasting over an hour, we agreed on our plan in little over a minute. I think this indicates a very healthy and cohesive group dynamic.

Who is the group you are studying?

In this exercise, I am studying my teammates – Shelly Ann Buchanan, Monica C, Quincy Dalton McCrary – and myself.

How is this a “participant observation”?

As I was a member of this group, not only am I observing the dynamic of the group as a whole, but also my own part in it. Observation is split into three parts: observation of the group members other than myself, observation of the group including myself, and observation of myself to the exclusion of the other group members.

What are the people like?

In observing the group members other than myself, I noticed that in general they seemed calm, and open to participation and cooperation. I noticed that I was nervous and bit self-conscious. It also took me a while to get used to talking “at” the computer. All in all, it was easy to reach consensus, and people did not seem to feel hesitant, reluctant or uncomfortable about suggesting ideas for how to proceed with the project.

What roles did individuals take?

Shelly Ann Buchanan seemed comfortable taking a less pro-active role, generally agreeing with the plans that were made. I find this interesting, as she was the one who
took charge of the effort to get the Elluminate session scheduled and who was the liaison between the group and the instructor in that regard.

Monica C was the one who first laid out the plan as to how to accomplish the task, i.e. reproducing the screenshot from the assignment. She grasped the logistics involved and laid it out for the others. I find this role of hers interesting in that I feel I know the least about her among the members of the group.

Quincy Dalton McCrary did not take a leadership role, though he did voice encouragement and support for Monica’s plan. He also was instrumental in laying out the order that the screenshot elements should be drawn, in a concise manner.

Jonathan Leff expanded on the plan voiced by Monica, especially in regards to the order in which the elements of the screenshot should be drawn.

How do your “re-observations” compare with the notes you took just after the meeting?

First, the re-observations are focused on the one-minute transcription as opposed to the general experience of the entire session. Secondly, I am focusing on individual roles more than on the group dynamic. Focusing on a specific section of the event rather than the whole allows me for a higher level of detailed analysis than is evident in the field notes.

What was difficult/easy about studying this meeting?

The most difficult part of studying this meeting was trying to study my own actions objectively. The thing that makes this most difficult is that reviewing my sections of the transcript serves to recall my own thoughts and feelings that are associated with it. This is not possible in the case of the other group members, as there is no objective way of knowing what their feelings were. Whatever thoughts they were having were only
discernible from their statements in the transcript. As it is difficult to separate my statements in the transcript from the associated thoughts and actions, it makes it difficult for me to be an impartial and objective observer of myself.

Another difficult part was finding a one-minute segment out of the entire session that sums up what for me was the essence of the meeting.

The easy part is comes with the distance in time between the actual event and the review of the recording. This gives me the opportunity to review the event with a new perspective.

**What do you think will happen the next time your group attempts this task?**

On the one hand, we may continue in the roles that we assumed in this assignment. On the other hand, that assumption may serve to undermine us if we assume that things will go just as they had previously, and yet for some reason they do not.

On the whole, however, I think that already having had the experience of doing this together once will make it easier to come up with the plan much sooner in the next assignment. I think there is a possibility that we will also be able to complete the task much more quickly and efficiently based on the knowledge gained from this experience.
Fieldwork 2

Jonathan Leff

March 14, 2009

Research Methods in Library and Information Science

Topic: Ethnography (with a focus on technology)

LIBR 285-03 – Spring 2009

School of Library and Information Science - San Jose State University
Part A: Screenshot

Date of completion: February 23, 2009

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Part B: Field Notes:

Things went more quickly in this session than in the last. There was a brief discussion as to how to proceed, and it seemed that the procedure was decided upon fairly quickly. We discussed the difficulties of transcribing Fieldwork 1, especially synchronizing the chat room discussion with the spoken discussion. There was some discussion this time as to whether or not we should just use the microphone and not the chat room. Monica C brought up this idea. I recall Quincy Dalton McCrery mentioned
that it was not so much about the actual technique we used, but about the process. I agreed with both of them, as did Shelly Ann Buchanan.

When it came to reproducing the screen shot, Shelly volunteered to do the drawing of the sun, star and squiggle. Quincy chose rectangles/squares. I chose circles/ovals. As everyone chose rather quickly, Monica was left with the text and text boxes. I wound up choosing my selection third as I was looking at another program at the time, and so I wasn’t paying attention. When I got back to the Elluminate session, circles/ovals were the first things I noticed, so I chose them.

We rather quickly figured out the order that the picture elements should be drawn. The process of doing so seemed to be a lot more spontaneous than in Fieldwork 1, which I credit to our experience with that assignment. Picture elements were drawn in the following order.

1. sun/star/squiggle
2. rectangles/squares
3. circles/ovals
4. text and text boxes

I find it ironic that the elements were laid down in the order that we each chose them, but I think that was purely coincidental.

Shelly started with the sun/star/squiggle. At first she drew an orange circle using the drawing feature, and then realized upon looking at the drawing, that this was meant to be drawn using the “draw circle” feature.

I asked Quincy to scale his rectangles smaller, so I could fit one of my ovals in at the bottom, and he obliged.
I spoke up about having a “process junkie moment”, in which I was getting anxious about the order that I was supposed to draw the circles. I felt that I had to wait until Quincy was done with his portion before I could start mine, though that was not necessarily the case.

I also had trouble figuring out how to draw ovals using the “draw circle” feature, and it took a while to match the color to the screen shot provided in the assignment. One of the problems with Elluminate, is that if a person does not like the last thing that he or she drew, then there is no choice but to erase everything that person has drawn and start all over. It’s very frustrating as it means you have to be careful the first time around, or you wind up having to repeat the work you just did.

Due to the order of the picture elements, I believe Monica had to wait until everyone else was done before she could draw the text and text boxes. It was rather fun watching the fonts seem to change at random. It was also interesting to note that presumably depending on what kind of computer we were using, we each saw the text box differently: some of us saw it with a vertical scroll bar, and some without.

In the midst of all this, somewhat as an aside, Quincy did a “mini-survey” as to who was using a desktop vs. a laptop, an who was using a laptop mouse pad vs. an actual mouse. I then asked who was using a pc vs. a mac.

In the end, as the time for our session was reaching its limit, we decided we were happy with the result and ended the session.

All in all, I liked our session. Knowing the people made it much easier to get the task done, especially as I was comfortable with everyone.
**Part C: Transcription**

Date: February 23, 2009

Session begins at 7:00 PM PST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Chat Room (Time listed is actual time)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Spoken/Microphone (Time listed is Elluminate recording time)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:02 PM</td>
<td>18:02-18:35: Shelly Buchanan: Yeah, and I could go either way as well, I actually wrote that into my report as well as, that in the virtual space, just lacking all of the physical cues, the eye twitches, the hand movements, the kind of averting of eyes, I was trying to compare that to how that feels in a virtual space with, like, who’s typing, who’s talking, but how it is definitely very hard sometimes to read it… and uh so I don’t know, maybe this adding a whole picture – hey Quincy good little smile there at least we have emoticons, right? (laughs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:06 PM</td>
<td>18:40-19:15: Quincy Dalton McCrary: it is an option we could use, that if one of us wants to speak, that raise the hand kind of like we’re in a classroom or a parliamentary meeting or whatever, something like that, um, Instead of using the chat ‘cause… um, maybe it’s difficult to… see what I did was just looked at, um, the chat the text the chat as I was looking at the time that I was transcribing and just saw from the beginning of my transcription where the chat was and then where it ended at the end of my transcription and cut and paste that section and look at that and the data that was included.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part D: Reflections

1. Who is the group you are studying?
   
   I am studying students in the San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science Master’s of Library and Information Science (MLIS) program. There are four students in this group: Shelly Ann Buchanan, Monica C, Quincy Dalton McCrary and myself.

2. What are the people like?
   
   Everyone is very pleasant to work with, and we all seem to find it easy to work with each other. Shelly and Quincy seemed to have the most insight regarding the ethnographical process. Monica and I seemed to focus more on the technical aspects of the process involved in completing the assigned task.

3. What roles did individuals take?
   
   Monica laid out the order in which the task was to be performed. Quincy summarized the roles, and also provided theoretical insight regarding ethnography. Shelly provided commentary on the issues involved with completing this assignment in a virtual space, where people could not see each other. I set up the Elluminate session, and weighed in on whether or not to use just the microphone, just the chat feature, or both.

4. Were roles different then before?
   
   Shelly and Monica seemed to take more passive roles than in the previous ethnography assignment (Fieldwork 1). I played less of a “comic-relief” role than in the previous assignment. I also played more of a coordinator role in acting as a
liaison between the course instructor and the other group members when setting up
the Elluminate session in which we did the assignment.

5. What was interesting about the conversation your chose to transcribe? What
happened?
This section of conversation was part of a larger one about the difficulties of
transcription, in particular, syncing up the chat feature and spoken recording. Shelly
discussed the difficulty of not being able to see the other people, and not having
visual cues that indicate other participants’ thought processes. Quincy pointed out
that we could use the tools provided by Elluminate (e.g. raising the hand and using
emoticons) to ease communication in the virtual space, though he went on to describe
his method of transcribing conversation.

6. How do your “re-observations” compare with the fieldnotes you took just after the
meeting?
They are definitely more detailed then the field notes and go into greater depths as to
peoples’ roles. The re-observations also tend to focus less on my own role in the
process than do the field notes.

7. How did your fieldnote differ (both in content and perspectives) from the one(s) you
received from your group?
I felt as if my field note was more focused on the assignment, and that it did not
include as many personal reflections as the others. Monica and Shelly included
reflections as to their day and how they were feeling at the time of the meeting.
Quincy included reflections on his feelings during the meeting, but his notes seemed
to me to be a bit more ethnographically focused than mine.
8. What was difficult/easy about studying this meeting?

The first difficulty is that I am looking at four people’s perspectives, including my own. However, the fact that there is no one perspective is an element of the group dynamic as a whole. It was difficult to exoticise the participants of the group, and especially myself. It was difficult to exoticise the others as doing so felt a bit cold and impersonal. Exoticise myself was difficult as a) it is difficult to look at myself without a critical eye, and b) I know my own thoughts, feelings and motives, whereas I do not have empirical knowledge of those of the other participants. However, once I realized this, I made the best attempt I could to leave my own thoughts, feelings and motives out of the field notes. It was easy to study this meeting as I was familiar with the participants and the process involved in completing the assignment.

9. How was this fieldwork activity the same as your previous meeting?

We had basically the same task, and we split up the elements involved in a similar was as to last time.

10. What was different about this fieldwork activity versus your previous meeting?

As we were familiar with each other and had done this before, it went much more smoothly and quickly than previously. There was also less chit chat and joking around. We seemed to focus in on the work at hand much more quickly than previously.

11. What do you think will happen the next time your group attempts this task?

I think it will go even more quickly and efficiently due to our familiarity with each other and the task at hand.
12. What do you think your co-participants would say about your participation?

I’m really not sure. I hope they will say that I was a team player and that I was not overbearing, and that I made sure not to dominate the process.
Fieldwork 3

Jonathan Leff

May 11, 2009

Research Methods in Library and Information Science

Topic: Ethnography (with a focus on technology)

LIBR 285-03 – Spring 2009

School of Library and Information Science - San Jose State University
Part A: Screenshot

This is the screenshot as our group finally reproduced it:

![Screenshot Image]

The original screenshot that was assigned to us can be found in Appendix A. The sections of the screenshot are included in the order they were reproduced in Appendices, B, C, D and E. This is also indicated in Section D (Observations), Question 4.

Part B: Fieldnotes

- **Assignment:** LIBR240 Fieldwork 3
- **Date and Time:** 4/7/2009 at 8:00pm
- **Observer:** Jonathan Leff
- **Participants:** Shelly Ann Buchanan, Monica C, Jonathan Leff, Quincy Dalton McCrary
- **Narrative:** The participants met at 8:00pm PST on 4/7/09 via Elluminate to complete the screen shot assignment for Fieldwork 3.
Notes:

1. I wasn’t feeling well, and this colored my perceptions as to what was taking place.

2. I felt I might have been a bit overbearing in that I “grabbed” the portion I wanted to do (text boxes).

3. It took a bit of time to figure out what the elements were and who was doing them. The elements and the person doing them were as follows:
   a. Circles/ovals – Quincy
   b. Text boxes – me
   c. Rectangles – Shelly
   d. Lines (straight and squiggly) – Monica

4. The elements were drawn in the order listed above.

5. I apologized for possibly being overbearing and was told that I wasn’t, so I felt better about that.

6. Quincy did his section and I asked him to let me know when he was happy with it so I could start mine. Partly this was because I didn’t want to step on anyone’s toes, and also because if he needed to make a change, then we both would have had to scrap our work and start over again.

7. I had trouble figuring out the text boxes. It turns out that the text and the surrounding boxes were separate elements. I tried my best to get the alignment, and color just right, but I don’t think I did.

8. Shelly did her part and asked for our feedback and we said it looked fine.

9. Monica admitted to having trouble with the squiggly lines and asked if she could practice as she went along, and we said that was ok.
10. After Monica did her section, it was pointed out to me that the either the text or the surrounding box for one of the elements I drew was supposed to be pink, rather than blue as I had it. I pointed out that the text was blue but the box was supposed to be pink, though I had made the box blue by mistake. I also pointed out that if I corrected it, then two other people (Shelly and Monica) would have to re-do their work, and I asked if it was ok to leave it as it was. They said it was ok.

11. We agreed that we were ready to take the screenshot and discussed the ways we used to capture the screenshot either on a mac or pc. Shelly asked me to email her the screenshot as she was having trouble capturing it herself, and I did so.

12. I asked people what their practices of writing up field notes were, and mentioned that I wasn’t feeling well and asked people if they thought it was ok for me to write up my notes the following night. Shelly said it was a good idea to write something down right afterwards, but that it was probably ok to wait if I really didn’t feel well (note: I did write these notes down about half an hour after the end of our session).

13. We noticed that Quincy seemed to have disappeared, and Monica pointed out that his computer had crashed and she was communicating with him via gmail instant messaging, and that he said goodnight and sent best wishes.

14. We thanked each other for being such a good group to work with, and mentioned how lucky we were to be able to work with each other. We wished each other good wishes for the rest of the semester, and hoped we would meet again in another class or in person.

15. The session was then over.
Part C: Transcription

Start time: 10 minutes:46 seconds after start of recording
End time: 11 minutes:45 seconds after start of recording

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chat Room (all times in Pacific Daylight Time)</th>
<th>Audio Recording (all times are times after start of recording)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:04 PM jonathan leff: so we have circles/ovals, text boxes, rectangles and lines (both squiggly and straight)?</td>
<td>10:45 Shelly Buchanan: I’m happy to do…anything. So we have circles, ovals, rectangles, text boxes and lines, squiggly and straight…so, Monica: circles, Quincy, do you have any preference?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:04 PM Monica: can i do circles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:05 PM Shelly Buchanan: jonathan-text monica-circles</td>
<td>11:07 Quincy Dalton McCrary: no preference for me, I’m, uh, just trying to print out the page right now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:05 PM Quincy Dalton McCrary: Quincy oval</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:05 PM Shelly Buchanan: i can do the lines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part D: Observations

1. Who is the group you are studying?

   In this ethnography, I am studying three of my classmates from LIBR 285, as well as myself. My fellow participants are Shelly Ann Buchanan, Quincy Dalton McCrary and Monica C.

2. What are the people like?

   All of my fellow participants were very friendly and easy to work with, and each indicated that they were invested with completing the assignment well. Each of the participants seemed to have a good sense of humor about the work involved,
which I attribute partly to their own personalities and partly to the fact that this
was the third time we had worked together, and so were familiar with each other.

3. What roles did individuals take?

Shelly and Monica took the most hands-on approach. Monica initiated the
process by asking if we should get started. Quincy seemed to be the most laid
back, and was agreeable to all the decisions made. I did not show a lot of
initiative, as I was not feeling well. The only initiative I showed was in choosing
the text boxes.

4. Were roles different then before?

Roles were only different in terms of which person reproduced which element of
the screenshot. The table below shows how this changed over the course of the
three fieldwork assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Fieldwork 1</th>
<th>Fieldwork 2</th>
<th>Fieldwork 3</th>
<th>Fieldwork 3 Appendix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quincy Dalton McCrary</td>
<td>Highlights</td>
<td>Rectangles/squares</td>
<td>Circles/ovals</td>
<td>Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Leff</td>
<td>Rectangles</td>
<td>Circles/ovals</td>
<td>Text boxes</td>
<td>Appendix C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly Ann Buchanan</td>
<td>Squiggles, straight lines</td>
<td>Sun, stars and squiggles</td>
<td>Rectangles</td>
<td>Appendix D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica C</td>
<td>Circles</td>
<td>Text boxes</td>
<td>Lines (straight and squiggly)</td>
<td>Appendix E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beyond this change, everyone seemed to fulfill the same roles as previously, as
far as who was more proactive, who was more laid back, and who was somewhere
in between.
5. What was interesting about the conversation you chose to transcribe? What happened?

I chose this conversation as it seemed to point out that the more experience we had working with each other, the easier it was to make decisions as to who would reproduce which element of the original screenshot. In this conversation, we decided on our roles out within minutes of the start of the session, whereas in previous sessions (particularly with Fieldwork 1), it took us a while to determine what roles we would play. I attribute this to the fact that we were not familiar with each other and didn’t want to “step on each others toes”, as well as to the fact that by this assignment, we knew what was expected of us and were able to make use of our previous experiences.

6. How do your “re-observations” compare with the fieldnotes you took just after the meeting?

As I observed in my fieldnotes, I was not feeling well, and that this factor may have colored my perception of the proceedings. Upon re-observation, I was able to be more objective.

7. How did your fieldnote differ (both in content and perspectives) from the one(s) you received from your group?

I believe each of our fieldnotes had roughly, the same content, though as I was the last person to join our session, I did not have any of the observations that the other participants had. Regarding perspectives, I felt I was the most self-critical of the
participants, which I attribute to my not feeling well while conducting the assignment or writing the fieldnotes.

8. What was difficult/easy about studying this meeting?

The easy part about studying this meeting was the familiarity I had with the participants. The difficult part was trying to be objective about my own participation (i.e., to exoticize myself).

9. How was this fieldwork activity the same as your previous meeting?

The activity was the same as far as its structure was concerned. In other words, we met via Elluminate at a time chosen by us and arranged by the teacher, and we fulfilled the assignment of reproducing the screenshot. We examined the composition of the screenshot and divided up the roles according to the elements of which it was composed.

10. What was different about this fieldwork activity versus your previous meeting?

One of the differences is that we each seemed to feel comfortable reproducing different elements than previously. Additionally, our experience with the previous assignments made us more efficient in completing this one.

11. What do you think will happen the next time your group attempts this task?

I imagine that we may feel more comfortable with experimenting with different ways of completing the assignment. Again, this is due to our familiarity with each other as well as our experience with the requirements of the assignment.
12. What do you think your co-participants would say about your participation?

Upon reflection and re-observation, I think that my co-participants will say that I was a team player, and that I contributed my fair share to the completion of the project.

**Part E: Reflections on the Development of your Group**

1. How did your group develop over time?

For the Fieldwork 1 assignment, we were still pretty much in the “getting to know you” phase, though Shelly and I knew each other from classes the previous semester and had actually met in person. We were very careful to negotiate our roles and to cooperate with our co-participants. By Fieldwork 2, as we were already familiar with each other and each other’s working styles, we found it easier to launch into the completion of the assignment than in Fieldwork 1. By Fieldwork 3, we were comfortable with each other and were aware of the expectations of the assignment, which made it easy for us to complete it more efficiently.

2. Did roles solidify or change with each meeting?

I would say that both happened. By Fieldwork 2, our working relationships with each other had pretty much solidified, which gave us more room to be open and state how we were feeling about the assignment (e.g., stress, etc.). By Fieldwork 3 we were comfortable enough with each other to state that we didn’t like certain tasks and to request others.
3. Would you say a micro-culture developed? Ground your discussion in Fetterman. Fetterman (1998, pp. 17-18) states that two of the ways of looking at culture are the materialist and ideational models. From an ideational viewpoint, I could say that a micro-culture developed in that we felt sense of connection with each other at the end of the three Fieldwork assignments, which was evidenced by our expressions of having enjoyed working with the other members of the group. We could also be considered to be a micro-culture, in that we were a subset of many sub-cultures that were nested within each other. Our group was part of the LIBR 240 class, which was part of the MLIS program, which in turn was part of SJSU. This would seem to follow a behavioral model, in that the members of our group were participating in a shared set of activities which helped define our roles vis a vis the above-mentioned nesting subcultures. Our group also had shared ideas as to how to complete the goals of the assignment. It can be assumed that we had shared values in that we were each interested in information science in general, libraries in particular, and completing the assignment successfully at the most particular level.

4. Your thoughts on electronically-mediated ethnography or ethnographic methods in digital environments.

a. What may be afforded by this medium?

Digital ethnography provides the affordance of ease of data gathering, particularly as data gathering technologies grow more efficient as they develop over time. It is now possible (in 2009) to record data using much
smaller yet complex devices than were available at the time of Fetterman’s writing.

b. What kinds of constraints would someone encounter?

One constraint may lie in not being able to gather data digitally if one is visiting undeveloped regions that do not have access to Western technology, such as electricity or telecommunications. Another constraint would be in preserving digitally gathered data in such a region, until the ethnographer could return to his or her home environment where he or she would then be able to connect the digital data gathering equipment to a computer.

c. What tools/understandings do you think would transfer to in-person environments?

I think that it depends on the environment being studied. Basic data gathering methods such as audio recording, whether or digital or analog, as well as handwriting of notes would transfer more easily to environments that are not as technologically developed, due to the limits of the kinds of technology that can be supported by such environments. In more technologically developed environments it would therefore be possible to use more technologically complex and sophisticated means of gathering data.

I also think that the behavioral model for understanding culture would transfer more easily than the ideational, in that one must be able to observe the behavior of a group and gain an understanding of it before one can
begin to question the meanings and values that a group attributes to that behavior. Behavior is more easily observable than ideas.
References

Appendix A: Original Screenshot

This is the original screenshot from the Fieldwork 3 assignment that we had to reproduce:
Appendix B

Quincy Dalton McCrory – Circles/Ovals
Appendix C

Jonathan Leff – Text Boxes
Appendix D

Shelly Ann Buchanan – Rectangles
Appendix E

Monica C – Lines (straight and squiggly)