Towards a Philosophy and Science of Outreach: its Nature, its Methods and Mission

Universities are often charged with "creating, preserving and applying knowledge." This last part is at the heart of Outreach: bringing content to constituents in a form that is usable (scope, depth, format) and accessible (easy to locate and obtain, find relevant elements and suit to own purpose). Whether one gathers other's work or is authoring something from scratch; whether one is spurred by a specific request (reactive) or is driven by the need to fill a missing part of one's products and services (proactive); whether one's efforts are governed by the principle of "picking the low hanging fruit" near to hand, or is guided by a long-term strategic plan for sustained and cumulative sub-projects, the work of connecting people with resources requires many skills and interdependent projects.

There are a couple of reasons to ask about the nature of Outreach. First, there is merit in identifying all the parts and better understanding how they work together (think form & function of the undertaking, where form follows function). Second, and armed with this overall understanding of the enterprise, it becomes possible to tinker with the elements of the system in order to reach the objects of the outreach work better. Think *Outreach'ology* or a science of outreach, complete with observations, measurements and publication of conclusions.

The two-part session today begins with papers about how outreach works; and how it can work best. Then in the second session that adjoins, the workshop format will allow for guided conversation about what we *know already*, what we *would like to find out* regarding the nature of outreach, and what steps will lead to those answers. As chair of the first half, I will give a brief framework for the 3 papers and pass the baton to Ann Schneider, who will begin with the analysis from her larger report on the state of international education exposure and training among practicing teachers and administrators, as well as among preservice teachers. Following Ann, I will take a turn to sketch some of the issues and dimensions of outreach for which we seek answers to the question about *how to focus effort in order to leverage the resources we have for greatest impact* [see this document, below]. I shall include a few lists of practical advice aimed at newcomers to outreach, as well. From me the baton goes to Alice Horrigan, who will talk about making outreach products and services effective by tailoring them to the needs of the diverse people who one is serving.

So, in total, this first session will follow the international education and outreach food-chain from its earliest phase among preservice teachers, out into the schools, through the field of outreach philosophically in general, to the specific application of outreach experience when working with one's constituents.

[presentation by Ann I. Schneider, www.internationaledadvice.org]

What is the Nature of Outreach?

Thinking about the widest scope when examining the structures and functions of outreach, several questions come to mind:

- What *elements* comprise the work of outreach? Best/worst examples surveyed?
- What are the *typical forms* that outreach takes? Best/worst examples?
- What are the institutional roots or *context* for conducting outreach? Best/worst examples?
- What *synergies or collaborations* of outreach follow most naturally? Best/worst examples?

-What *obstacles* are frequently encountered in outreach projects? Best/worst examples?
-What are the chief aims or *missions of outreach*? Best/worst examples?
-What are the *indicators* of successful outreach? Best/worst examples?
----- after 1 month? 1 year? 5 years? 20 years? Lifetime (50 years)?

Capturing the Dimensions of Outreach

Analogies made in visual terms offer a shorthand for talking about complicated subjects. Two imagistic analogies shed light on the work of outreach: highways and bridge building. The highway image includes the work of building roads to connect you to the people you work with (think network building), the design and manufacture of vehicles that will carry you on those roads (think outreach workshops, lecture series, annotated documents and audio content) and finally there are the products that go in the vehicles (events, materials, services and other products you provide). In other words, one's outreach efforts are taken up in some cases by all of these: road construction, designing vehicles, making products and then actually delivering them.

The second analogy is with bridge building. Effective outreach forms a bridge that takes a person from the place of their prior knowledge to a new place, neither too far away, nor immediately next to the old place. To make a strong bridge one must take stock of both foundations: to extent of the person's prior knowledge, and also an inventory of the assets at one's disposal (things --but also skills, colleagues' available expertise and interests).

Products Available and Services Performed

All of the following instances of outreach can be assessed by asking three questions:

1. How *successful* is this expression of outreach? (rate this product/service)
2. If adding products/services, how well would the outreach item *contribute to the end goal*?
3. How *important* is this instance of outreach in your overall work? (prioritize)

PRODUCTS (provide for each country, culture or language group covered)

1. Rationale for int'l education; for a particular language/society (relevance; role models).
2. FAQ for teachers, for students (ele, ms, hs, higher education), for general public.
3. Opportunities and resources (links), including study-tours, language study, volunteering.
4. Career connections & exemplars for a person versed in the particular language/societ(ies).
5. Interesting facts and factoids about the language(s) and culture(s).
6. Levels of core knowledge (modules or self-paced capsules): minimum, cultural literacy 1 &c.
7. Vignette on school, youth and popular culture, comparing US and the particular societ(ies).
8. Vignette on English language properties & communicative lore, (US vs. particular society).
9. Vignette on US social life (culture), comparing US and the particular societ(ies).
10. Foreign language(s) supplements and supporting social information.
11. Orientation for US travelers headed to particular countries: teen, adult, family.
12. Quiz Bowl (foreign language; or social studies Olympiads): instructions, examples.

SERVICES and functions you perform for the people you serve

1. Offer "how to" guidance on sister city or sister-school exchange program.
2. Partner with state-wide social studies council(s).
3. Cooperate with community colleges in one or more states.
4. Coordinating of local L.A.T.T.I.C.E. (teacher + int'l grad students).
5. Advocate for teachers (announcements & opportunities), and for students to promote and pursue int'l education: spark foreign interests, encourage skills of observation and (critical self) reflection, increase student awareness of culture among themselves and the foreign society.
6. Agent that works on behalf of teacher to find answers or illustrative materials.
7. Consultant that works in support of teacher-led projects.
8. Author or co-author events and materials.
9. Transform content to convenient scope, medium and comprehension level.
10. Modulate content to more sophisticated levels: moving from questions of *What*, to matters of *How* and *Why*.
11. Facilitate and serve as go-between to match kindred spirits.

Listing this collection of products and services has another use. It can serve as a checklist or auditing of one's own program of outreach at present. Which from each list do you already undertake? Which could you or should you undertake?

Dimensions of outreach can be measured in many ways, of course. Numbers of people reached, geographic scope of one's reach, frequency of contacts, longevity of sustained contacts all are examples that use *quantities* for comparison.

Qualitative measurement is less precise, but may tell what matters most: changes in knowledge and experience that lead to a broader world view and indeed to new attitudes of respect and curiosity that may be observed in changed behaviors: foreign people have meaningful "normal" lives. They have names that are important to them. And the language they speak is not nonsense. Empathy is easier to feel, and ideas about comparing and examining one's own way of living comes naturally to mind. Finally, a person who delves into foreign culture and language is able to imagine herself or himself going to that place; no longer is the idea of living outside the comfort of one's home culture preposterous. It is allowable, possible or even likely. Perhaps it even becomes desirable and is to be hoped for. But are all these changes in perspective and behaviors too much to ask of international education outreach work?

Asking the Really Big Questions

Maybe the boldest question to ask about the nature of outreach is regarding ambitions. If we recognize the jack-of-all-trades, multiple functions involved in outreach to connect several categories of constituents with resources (tailoring products and services), then how far can we

take this matter? How big can we dream? How far can we stretch our imaginations? How ambitious can we be?

If we go to the extreme, or even half-way there, what kind of impact may we expect? What outcomes will result? An accurate knowledge base *may lead* to better intercultural communication strategies and attitudes of mutual respect and recognition. Interest in a particular language and place *may lead* to further studies and expertise in a world region. If these changes in attitude and world view, and the specific behaviors that lead to a person investing deeply in a particular expertise are the primary objects of outreach, then how best to proceed to those ends?

Granted that outreach comprises a number of dimensions (the highway, vehicles and packages), and typically consists of a set of products and services, then it is fair to ask *which* of these dimensions and *which* of these products and services lead to the practical end-goals of outreach most expediently and most effectively? Perhaps that is best answered as an empirical question, for which individual observations will have to be tallied.

Looking from another angle, suppose one were to map out all of the past year's contacts, participation and engagement with constituents. Then add to this all of the *potential* instances of collaboration, presentation, or conversation with constituents. Given all of this actual as well as hypothetical outreach work, under the optimal conditions of willing seeker and well prepared outreach person, then what is the very most that one might expect as a result? In other words, under the very best conditions and maximum efforts, how far along the slope of wider knowledge base, more sophisticated attitudes and merit-making behavior might one see results?

There is the Big Question about which elements of outreach seem to work best to achieve the stated end-goals. And there another Big Question about how much impact outreach *could* possibly have under the best of all possible conditions. In neither case is there a simple answer. But by posing the questions, at least the nature of outreach work becomes clearer.

Outreach veterans will know these many sides of outreach first-hand and will already have formed some sense of the nature of the work. This understanding may not be verbalized or visualized in these identical terms, of course. For newcomers to outreach, however, a recitation of issues relating to the work may been the most helpful. And so, with special attention to the needs of newcomers to outreach, I close with a collection of lore that is fairly common knowledge after spending time in the field of outreach.

[1] WORKING PRACTICES

1. For reporting purposes keep a simple text file at hand (desktop shortcut) to track efforts.
2. Pillage peer documents instead of framing a document from scratch (forms, flyers, maps).
3. Periodically back up your work on removable media (cd-rw or portable hard drive).
4. Seek out (and share) time-savers to your outreach functions (e.g. transforming content). *See the PowerPoint by Witteveen,* My Digital Toolbox.
5.
6.

[2] SKILL SET (*see also* "My Digital Toolbox" wioc session 1-C)

[3] NEWSLETTERS and Electronic lists to subscribe to

1. www.glef.org (the parent org. of edutopia) -George Lucas Educational Foundation with emphasis on showcasing interesting uses of tech in k-12 ed.

2. http://ali.apple.com/ has a bi-weekly k-12 educator's list with neat things periodically (from apple.com)

3. There are the country-specific lists, like the H-Japan (www.h-net.msu.edu) suite of country, discipline or thematically specific digests.

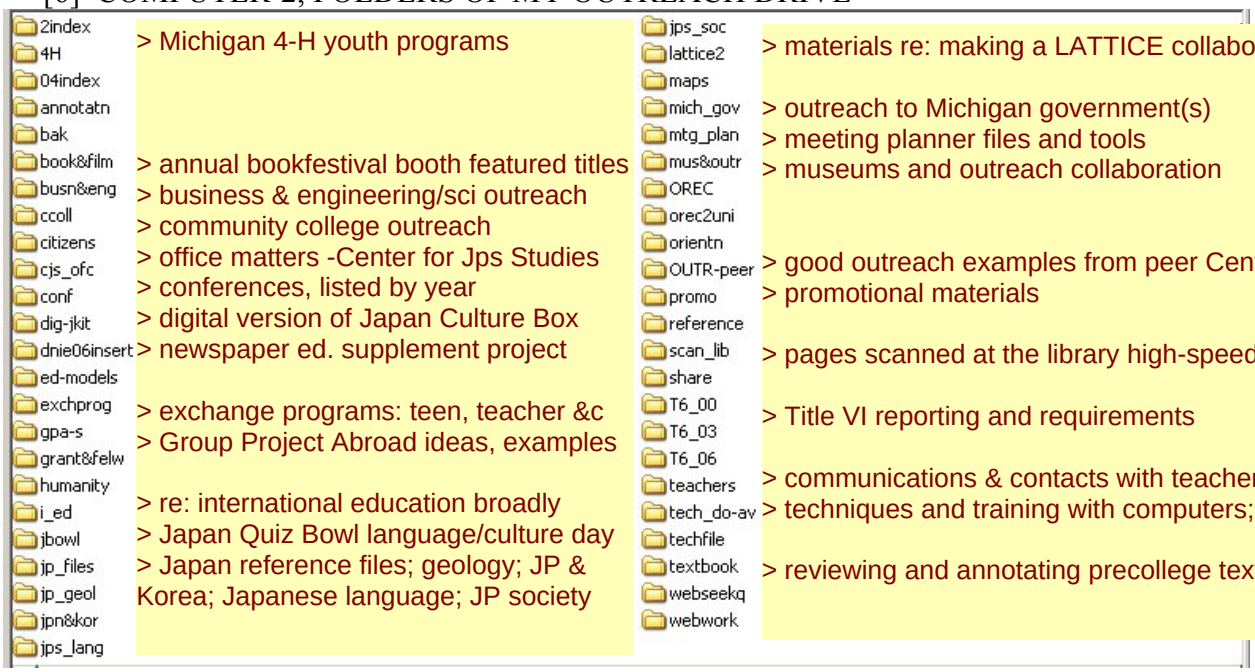
[4] ABOUT PROMOTIONAL WORK (s.o.p. & f.a.q.)

<> photo releases vs. workarounds <> gather SIG names from audience (grow a mailing list)
<> piggy back on other's events <>
<> <>

[5] COMPUTER-1, desktop Quicklaunch toolbar (frequently used programs)

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t

[6] COMPUTER-2, FOLDERS OF MY OUTREACH DRIVE

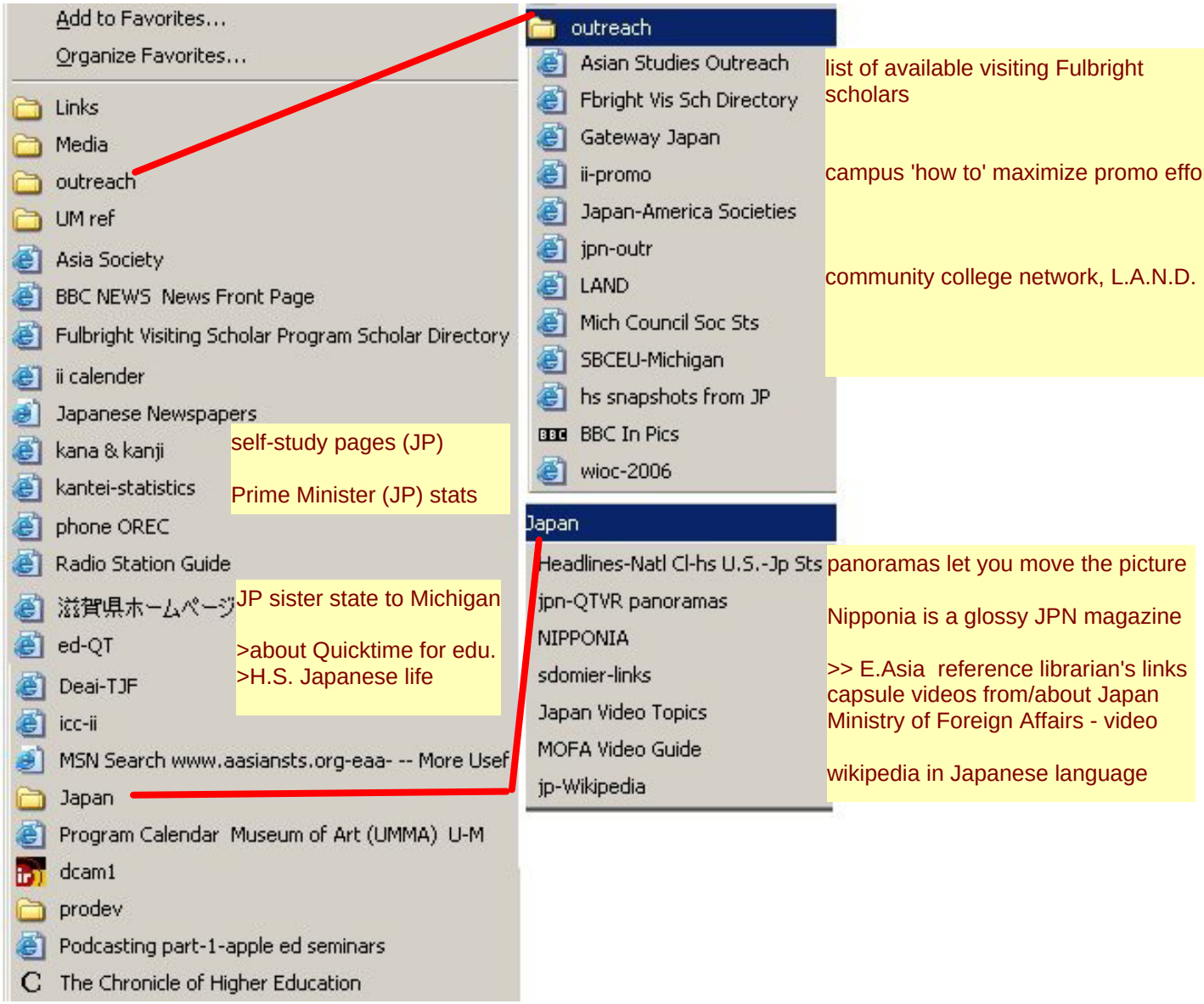


> Michigan 4-H youth programs
> annual bookfestival booth featured titles
> business & engineering/sci outreach
> community college outreach
> office matters -Center for Jps Studies
> conferences, listed by year
> digital version of Japan Culture Box
> newspaper ed. supplement project
> exchange programs: teen, teacher &c
> Group Project Abroad ideas, examples
> re: international education broadly
> Japan Quiz Bowl language/culture day
> Japan reference files; geology; JP & Korea; Japanese language; JP society
> materials re: making a LATTICE collaborative
> outreach to Michigan government(s)
> meeting planner files and tools
> museums and outreach collaboration
> good outreach examples from peer Centers
> promotional materials
> pages scanned at the library high-speed scanner
> Title VI reporting and requirements
> communications & contacts with teachers
> techniques and training with computers; with A-V
> reviewing and annotating precollege textbooks

[7] ANNUAL CYCLE (reports, records keeping, repurposing documents)

[8] SOME OF MY BOOKMARKS (next page)

a Adobe Acrobat (full version): web capture, mark up documents, fillable forms, winnow your notes off the marked-up document
b freeware audio editor (I'll soon change over to freeware 'Audacity' http://audacity.sourceforge.net)
c podcast 'catcher' (aggregator) software, formerly called 'I-podder' but now called Juice
d old Webpage editor, Frontpage Express (good for intial drafts, simple)
e Dreamweaver f textfile to mark Title VI statistics for annual reporting
g textfile for insights and ramblings about the nature of outreach work
h textfile for ideas relating to outreach projects i browser j email client (Outlook) k old email (outlook express)
l photo editor (utility from older MS Office suite) m Microsoft Word n notepad (programs >accessories) o Palm Pilot
p ftp for secure file transfer (up/downloading from our server)
q desktop button r Windows Media Player s Quicktime (full version)
t textfile of annual cycle, month by month of repeating projects



[9] FOOD FOR THOUGHT *BUFFET* (Witteveen's favorites)

http://www.oneminutevacation.org gives recordings submitted from around the world, some of which will transport the listener to the spot

http://www.umich.edu/~wittevee/korea/andjapan has images arranged in several ways (2005 study tour of Korea)

http://www.aasianst.org/eaa-toc.htm gives full-color art from the monochrome magazine; one or more articles in PDF given from each issue

http://www.edutopia.org offers video vignettes of interesting educational work

http://earth.google.com allows people with a fast Internet connection and quick computer processor to flyover the globe: collect your favorite spots to redistribute to your constituents

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLACS/resources/nrc_lrc.html lets you keep abreast of Title VI peers