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Time & Society

No Time to Think

Academics' life in the globally wired university

Heather Menzies and Janice Newson

ABSTRACT. This article reports on a study of how Canadian academics use on-line technologies to deal with increasing demands and time pressures. The results suggest that, in struggling to manage conflicting organizational and temporal priorities, academics are adopting practices to manage these conflicts which adversely affect the quality and content of their teaching and research. Moreover, these changes in practice are integral to reconstituting the temporal and organizational order of universities so they can function as nodes in the wired global economy. Academics are urged to vigorously champion temporal practices which allow time for reflection and the 'deep presence' required for creative intellectual work. KEY WORDS • academics • creativity • global economy • on-line technologies • pace • temporal order

Introduction

The 'ivory tower' has been breached. The university is no longer a refuge from the hustle-bustle, a slow zone for reading and reflection, critical dialogue and knowledge creation – to the extent that it ever was. Some research we have carried out not only confirms what others have documented about academics' increasingly stressed state, as Canadian universities have been restructured and have become nodes in the wired knowledge economy (Kinman and Jones, 1998/2004). It also develops the proposition posed by Ylijoki and Mantyla

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(2003) that the 'conflicts in temporal perspectives' (e.g. between 'scheduled time' and 'time-less' creative time) 'are closely linked' to profound organizational shifts in universities. These shifts have been associated with concepts such as 'value for money' (Cassin and Morgan, 1992), 'managerialism' (Newson, 1992), 'the knowledge industry' (Polster, 1998), 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997), 'the new public management,' and the transformation of relatively autonomous, self-governing academics into 'managed professionals' and 'state-subsidized entrepreneurs' conforming to the 'fast-zone' tempo of business and politics (Pels, 2003).

Our research not only sheds a light on these linkages and how the changed temporal and structural order of the university campus is accompanied by significant changes in academics' practices. It shows the impact this is having on the quality of teaching and research. The research also reveals how academics are themselves participating in these changes, thus helping to co-produce, through changed temporal and organizational practices, a new 'social in motion' (Thrift, 2004) and a different 'metaphysics of being' (Adam, 2005). Yet, having identified their participation and agency, the research also explores the struggle many academics seem to be engaged in over the conflicting temporal and organizational priorities within the wired university environment, and some of the personal initiatives they are taking in response. We end with some thoughts on negotiating personal, organizational and public policies to support, and even renew, the academic vocation and the university as an institution of public culture.

The research involved a detailed survey of academics' time and the quality of their work life mapped against their use of new information technologies in a context of significant shifts in universities' funding arrangements. Follow-up interviews probed some of the paradoxes and contradictions the survey results uncovered – for example, that while most respondents felt better connected, especially nationally and globally, many also felt more isolated; and while considering themselves more productive, many also felt that they were becoming less creative. The research has completed its pilot-project phase, with around 80 questionnaires completed and 20 follow-up interviews done. The results are rich and compelling enough that we want to give them broad exposure here.

The Social-organizational Context: Retrenching, Retro-fitting and Repositioning[1]

Over the past two and a half decades, in response to successive shifts in government funding policies, Canadian universities have significantly shifted from being the public serving, collegially governed, nation-building institutions that emerged during the post-Second World War period of expansion.[2] They have reinvented themselves as institutions more integrated with the global knowledge

economy. This reinvention has not happened all at once. It has not only been cumulative. Each layer of adaptation and each new initiative has rested upon and interwoven with others, with mutually reinforcing effects.

The retrenchment layer began around the mid-1970s, as federal and provincial levels of government gradually reduced their funding for education, health and social programmes. At first, universities responded to funding shortfalls as short-term fiscal crises which had to be handled until things returned to 'normal'. Over time, it became evident that 'under-funding' had become the new reality.

As fiscal pressures increased, so too internal tensions were exacerbated. The task of controlling and overseeing the budget became a determining feature of university decision making. Correspondingly, the role and tasks of 'management' began to occupy the institutional centre while the role of collegial governance through academic bodies such as faculty councils and senates became increasingly marginalized.[3]

In the early 1980s, a powerful idea began to infuse higher education policy that for universities to survive fiscal retrenchment, they needed to reposition themselves to secure new sources of funding. Organizations such as the newly founded Corporate-Higher Education Forum, the Canadian Manufacturers Association and the (now defunct) Science Council of Canada argued that mutually beneficial partnerships between universities and private sector corporations would rescue universities from their funding woes while enabling Canadian corporations greater access to cutting-edge science to advance their competitive position in the globalizing economy. In response, Canadian universities began to orient their programmatic objectives toward the economic and political priorities of external agents who could provide additional, albeit marginal, sources of funding.

Over the course of the 1980s and early 1990s, a range of changes in universities' institutional practices 'retro-fitted' them for their new and expanding role in promoting economic innovation and competitiveness. On the one hand, the expanding managerially oriented apparatus of decision making and university–corporate linking arrangements reinforced each other and wove together. As government funding became less reliable, universities needed to exist within new and constantly fluctuating budgetary configurations. For this, universities developed an extensive tool-kit of performance-based measures and systems for monitoring and supervising the activities of academics individually and collectively. Cost-efficiency, productivity and accountability to real or putative external paymasters in terms of quantifiable, business-like 'deliverables' became *the* predominant criteria for assessing and making decisions about 'worthwhile' expenditures of money, time and energy. On the other hand, universities needed to develop tools for attracting and managing contractual partnerships with corporate clients. For this, mission statements, strategic plans,

and advertising campaigns became the institutional instruments for shaping and representing their research and teaching priorities as attuned to the needs and objectives of these potential funders. By the mid-1990s, universities had made the necessary cultural shifts and developed the institutional capacity to function as more permeable, multi-purpose, and networked knowledge businesses.[4]

Since 1996, the federal government has infused a massive jolt of research funding through the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Canada Research Chairs programmes – $4.5 billion – into these newly emerging 'knowledge businesses' in ways that push them further down a market-focused path.[5] Three-quarters of this funding must secure 60 per cent matched funding from research partners who, more often than not, are private sector corporations. Added to this, in 2002 the presidents of Canada's universities signed an agreement with government committing their universities and researchers to doubling their research productivity and tripling their commercialization performance by 2010.

Finally, the substantial restructuring that has occurred in Canadian universities since the 1980s has been significantly enabled by information and communications technologies (ICTs). These have been a key element in 'retro-fitting' universities to function as externally guided, strategically minded, production-driven knowledge businesses. As our research confirms, these technologies range from specific tools, such as instructional software, listservs and chat-discussion groups for students, to an Internet-connected networked environment allowing global collaboration among academics and new non-academic partners, web-based teaching and administration and comprehensive data collection to serve both on-campus and off-campus reporting requirements. It is not surprising that the increasingly networked, boundary-crossing university would so rapidly embrace these technologies as essential 'tools of the trade' for doing academic work. It also makes sense that, in keeping with prevailing policy rhetoric, many advocates of technology-mediated teaching, global connectivity and 'the wired campus' have promoted the turn to technology, not only as the 'cutting edge' of higher education in a fast-paced globalizing world but also as an efficient way of responding to the many opportunities and demands that confront universities and their faculty.

The Findings

Our research not only confirmed academics' widespread use of the ICTs in everything from research, preparing and teaching classes, to administration (largely self-serve now since the cutbacks in support staff) and communicating with students, friends and colleagues locally and internationally.[6] Academics seem to have adapted to the medium to the point that it is fast becoming a comfort zone, though fraught with anxiety and contradictions.

Clearly, they like many things about the new university environment. It's increasing the exposure of their work, especially to national and international colleagues (nearly 60% reported this, the women more so than men). It's increased their collaborative projects not just a little but a lot.[7] They also feel that it's made them more productive (55% of women and 42% of men reported this). And it's increased their connections with students, colleagues and friends, seemingly without jeopardizing their sense of being in touch with them; although there's ambivalence here and even a hint of contradiction. It's also increased their sense of being part of university decision making, though just as many indicated that this had decreased. On the other hand, 51 per cent said that it had *not* allowed them to have more control over their work schedule. Sixty per cent (71% of the women, 50% of men) feel that it's increased expectations of what they can accomplish. Nearly 40 per cent (45% of the women, 31% of men) reported feeling overwhelmed by the plethora of opportunities to which the new environment exposed them. And 43 per cent (40% of women, 47% of men) reported that it uses up their time solving technological problems.

It is clear, then, that there are many things academics do not like about the new environment. In the most decisive response in the questionnaire, 69 per cent said that they do not thrive on the time pressures and fast pace of it (56% of women indicated this, compared to 81% of the men). Not surprisingly, the respondents reported many of the most common symptoms of stress, from sleep deprivation (53% of women, compared to 42% of men) to new allergies or food sensitivities (26% of women, compared to 6% of men), short-term memory loss (45% of women compared to 25% of men) and problems concentrating (37% of women compared to 19% of men). Interestingly, while the women also reported more stress in personal relationships, from strained relations with family (26% compared to 11% of men) to strained relations with colleagues (34% of women compared to 19% of men), the men reported far more incidents of road rage and its variants (22% of men, versus 5% of women).

Stress is an important personal and public-health issue in itself, and deserves urgent attention. However, echoing others' speculations, we see it here as a symptom of some fundamental contradictions involved in the pursuit of efficiency through time compression (Sabelis, 2002). In particular, we explore this through two related themes: first, academics' ability to be present with themselves and others and, second, their ability to be socially and intellectually engaged in a way that will yield original knowledge, rather than a higher publication rate.

Presence and engagement

A number of contradictory findings led us to focus on this aspect of academics' existence. For example, despite reporting enhanced connectivity and collabora-

tion with others, 34 per cent of our respondents reported feeling isolated (40% of women compared to 22% of men). We specifically asked whether they 'are able to stay centred in yourself, to know what matters to you' in a wired environment where they are increasingly accountable to multiple outside and corporate-linked actors and subject to their demands and pressures. The results were equivocal. Thirty-four per cent said that this ability had decreased, 29 per cent felt it had increased and 37 per cent said it hadn't changed. On the other hand, a startling 65 per cent reported that their ability to follow through on informal, personal/professional commitments (possibly off line and off campus in the community) had decreased. As well, 57 per cent said that they felt like they were 'reacting, not acting on my own initiative' on occasion, and another 19 per cent said they felt this way frequently. Forty-five per cent reported feeling anxious about keeping up with work demands and expectations frequently, and another 12 per cent reported feeling this way chronically. In a similar vein, 47 per cent feel as though they're fighting to keep control on occasion and another 20 per cent feel that way frequently. Moreover, 58 per cent reported that their ability to stay focused on their work had decreased, and 42 per cent reported that their susceptibility to being distracted by all the information and communication coming at them had increased.

These findings suggest a significant degree of 'temporal alienation,' which Ronald Purser (2002) defines as a 'loss of situated presence in time' (p. 163), and which we interpret here to mean presence with others and to one's self.

A professor of organizational behaviour at one university reported having 'fewer and fewer coffees with colleagues who are right in the building and . . . [now] more short conversations with people I would never have contacted before. So I'm trading one for the other.' 'Quantity for quality?' she was asked. 'Yes', she said. 'It is very superficial and there is no real depth of communication, but if it weren't for that there would be none.' She went on to say that she's losing her political consciousness because 'there's no one to push me and develop me . . . and say, that's good as far as it goes, and have you thought about . . .?' As a result, she said, 'I have less confidence in my own analysis . . . It's almost back to those pre-consciousness days. We are living in that isolation and not having any validation.'

A professor of English at another university misses the long, late-night phone calls she used to have with close colleagues and friends now that everyone has answering machines and communicates through email: 'there's the absence of voice and all of the lateral thinking that goes on when you actually have a real conversation, instead of just a focused interchange . . . the actual isolation from people in a local community has increased enormously'.

A professor of occupational therapy at yet another university echoed this theme: 'I feel very connected to people I don't expect to see. But what I do find is that people I expect to see, like my colleagues who are in the same building, I

may not see.' When she does see them is at meetings. But then, 'I find I'm often, now, lately quiet in meetings, when I'm not by nature quiet. And I think part of it is because I'm now with people who I only see at meetings! And so, it's like meeting quasi-strangers . . .'

A professor of social work at the same university worried that as she and others become habituated to email communication, a more superficial level of social engagement can become the cultural norm: 'It is a stilted dialogue.' She was asked, 'does it move you away from spontaneity?'. 'Yes, and that's not all. Sometimes we think with our mouths. But on the other hand, we're so pressured to give a response that we type up something and send it out because of the pressure for a response, so that doesn't improve it.'

Elsewhere, a professor of film studies lamented that this pressure serves as an alibi for non-presence: 'It is easier if everyone is anonymous. It makes it easier to refuse social interaction. It makes it easier to turn people into things and to just not be creating a humanistic environment.' This has particularly acute implications for women, she thinks. 'We women have always been the embodied subject and technology seems to be erasing our presence in the world . . . That's how we exist – as an embodied subject. And I feel technology is just damaging our sense of authenticity that way – authentic subjects who interact.'

A professor of engineering at yet another university likes how the 'log-on classroom' allows shy students to at least start opening up. However, he also quickly invites students to his office once they've broached something substantial: 'With email, you can't read the person's mode of thinking. So I say, let's have an appointment.' Face to face, he continued, 'I can see if they are communicating with me, if they understand what I am saying, if the point is getting across, if the problem or issue is worth elaborating more. I can't see that through email.' Finally, he added, his racial and ethnic-minority status makes him sensitive to being misunderstood. He feels free to be more fully himself when he's face to face, likes the freedom of being more spontaneous, he said.

A professor of political science who tele-conferenced into committee meetings for the years he was on a satellite campus ended up feeling that his participation was largely a sham. He was staying 'briefed' he said, but not engaged meaningfully in decision making. As colleagues told him when he returned to the main campus, 'you weren't here; you weren't around'.

The themes of elided presence and of perceived loss of spontaneous, sustained dialogue with people to whom you can be real warrant further study and discussion in themselves. They also bear watching for what they predict about a possible shift in academics' sense of themselves and their work, a theme we have framed as a possible shift from knowledge creation to knowledge production, more narrowly focused on gathering data, processing information and packaging it as knowledge, with more business-like, instrumental action crowd-

ing out the time and pace that the mental and social habits of reflection and critical dialogue require.

Knowledge creation, or production?

Academics' ability to stay focused and their susceptibility to being distracted, discussed earlier, clearly affect the ability to think critically and create original knowledge. The survey also included questions probing intellectual engagement. For example, an overwhelming majority (65% of both men and women) reported that they are not reading as deeply and reflectively as they used to or as they want to. Nor are they reading as broadly and inter-disciplinarily as they used to or as they'd like to. Instead, they are scanning, mining sources for selective bits of information. ('I am reading for specific information . . .'). In response to suggestive statements such as 'I don't have enough free chunks of time in which to think', 51 per cent indicated that they did not, reinforcing one of the significant findings of an Icelandic study of academics, which documented a loss of what they called 'timeless time' for research and reflection (Ylijoke and Mantyla, 2003). As well, a significant minority (28%) identified with the phrase, 'I can't slow down enough to be in touch with myself and my innermost thoughts' and, in the same proportion, the statement 'Everybody I know is too busy to just talk'. As a kind of summing up, they were asked to consider Marcel Proust's lament for a quality of being in time that allowed for deep memory association. Forty-one per cent said that their capacity for this level of original/creative thinking had decreased, and fifteen per cent, that it had increased.

Overall, we think that the findings on this theme reinforce Ida Sabelis's (2002) concerns about time compression: not just what gets left out, including the time for reflection and dialogue, but also how difficult it is to decompress, thus decreasing what she considers to be the most important aspect of communication: 'the expression and exchange of meaning' (p. 93). The interview comments flesh out these concerns, and their implications for the future of learning and knowledge creation.

A professor of English described sitting at her computer with several windows open at once and simultaneously having new emails signalling on her screen: 'So you have all these things going on, and in my mind it is almost the perfect match for attention deficit disorder . . . By the time you are a couple of hours into your email you have lost it. You're skimming, fragmenting . . .Your life is so fragmented. All these emails are coming – "get back to me before my meeting".'

The professor of occupational therapy quoted earlier described having been involved in an international book project that was three years behind schedule: 'We tried to do a lot of it by email, and sending our chapters to each other and talking about it, but we didn't put real fire into this book until I went over to

Australia for six weeks. So it's a really interesting illustration, because email made it possible for us to work together, but somehow it didn't help us to get the work done.'

A professor of mathematics and statistics at yet another university commented on how the fast-paced productivity push toward getting the next grant; publishing the next paper drives out the time for creating a social space-time of shared learning and knowing:

> We are becoming loners . . . We are creating in our offices . . . because we have more access to information and we have tools to do things faster, but we are not sharing with other people to become more sociable. That is the contradiction . . . For example, it used to be they had a weekly seminar and every professor would come and show what they were doing. Everyone commented. This has stopped. There are no weekly seminars anymore because people have said that they don't have time . . . [But now, she finds] The big questions aren't being asked anymore.
>
> I feel that we are giving students the wrong idea about what learning is. I think the students are now coming to believe it's just reading a lot, being familiar with a lot of information, trying to get information somehow. We are not teaching them to use that information, to process it and then to create something. I think that in this sense, that is what they call passivity. If they are passive, they don't create.

A biology professor at another university echoed this concern, worrying at how much both how teachers teach and how students do their work has devolved into 'modules' that students alternately ingest or cut and paste into assignments. 'But learning isn't about the details of what you are learning, I think. It is more fundamental . . . The important point ultimately is just to get the students to think. It doesn't matter, it could be biology. Thinking about how biology works as opposed to knowing little bits about biology.'

The professor of engineering quoted earlier talked about how important face-to-face dialogue is to convey to students that one is always creating knowledge afresh, not just replicating it prescriptively. For example, he said, 'how to deal with a design problem on line. In many ways it is trial and error. Even defining the problem, it isn't really an absolute. We say the structure could be very rigid or very flexible. We can solve the problem this way, or this way. You know what I mean? . . . The problem is open-ended. If it is closed, innovation is meaningless.'

Interpreting the findings through the lens of temporality

Clearly, the changes affecting universities through the combined effects of retrenching, repositioning plus retro-fitting have included a radical change in temporality. From the evidence of the survey and the follow-up interviews, this change, while linked to the organizational structures and related routines of universities, has resonated through the routines and rhythms of academics' daily

life. To grasp its importance, particularly with a view to developing an agenda for research and policy action, it's useful to identify some of the particular ways in which this cultural transformation is manifest, for instance through temporal frameworks, through temporal-social practices and through the shaping power of temporal rhythms.

Dick Pels (2003) provides a useful overview of the shifting temporal coordinates on which universities now run. In what he calls the 'social triangle' of discourse in the public sphere, he locates the university in the 'culture/science' node (p. 21). He argues that its reputedly tempered pace traditionally had a mitigating influence on the otherwise faster time frames and pace associated with business and the market economy, occupying the second apex of his triangle, and on politics/the state, occupying the third. Now, however, the macro influences of globalization and the 'fast' subject positions of the new economy (Thrift, 2000b: 674) combined with 'the imperatives of academic entrepreneurship and self-generated funding' – features of a repositioned and retro-fitted academia – are breaking universities out of their own largely autonomous temporal framework, and integrating them with the faster and more present-minded ones associated with business and politics. As our research documented, this is clearly happening, with ICT networks and their users playing a decisively enabling role. Moreover, academics are adapting to the shorter time lines and new 'infrastructural routines' associated with the wired campus, often willingly and for their own self-interest.

Our research also sheds light on the changing temporal practices associated with the networked, on-line campus. Not only is time compressed. It is fragmented and then recombined as many-layered moments through multi-tasking. As discussed, this has consequences, ranging from the suppression of time-consuming activities like reflection and memory (Sabelis, 2002) to temporal alienation. While Purser (2002) links this explicitly to a shifting temporality, arguing that the loss of presence happens as people 'embody' and 'obey' the mechanical or digital rhythms of clock time, Nigel Thrift (2004) perceptively adds a layer of useful complexity by discussing how temporal practices are diffused more broadly through organizational innovations like productivity measures and the application of logistical reasoning to expediting the flow of goods and information.

Instrumental rationality, of which logistical reasoning is a variation, essentially 'takes the world largely as given and attempts to find means of living ever more productively and efficiently in it' (Hassan, 2003: 229). It's thinking focused on the how of things rather than the why. It trades in data (givens) over the more experience-based stuff of interpretation. While historical critiques of instrumentalism, associated with the Frankfurt School for example, didn't speculate about the role of time (Hassan, 2003), we would argue that it runs on clock time: not only an externally determined and regulated time, and a time of

isolated moments, of instrumental observation, of data analysis and so on, but a time that can be optimized by standardized processes and speed-up, driven by others. Its service to business and industry has been one of the hallmarks of capitalism, epitomized in the phrase 'time is money'. As it was then, in the days of factory-like rational bureaucracies, so it likely will be now as global digital networks embody instrumental reason in their systems and software, and extend the efficiencies of particular managerially oriented innovations throughout public life. 'Results' and 'expected outcomes' are achieved more quickly. Performance and delivery are made faster, no matter what the 'deliverables' might be, be they student job placements or time-sensitive research reports.

Our research yielded shifts in thinking, from interpretation toward instrumental productivity. Our academic respondents have shifted a lot of their focus to self-serve administration, fund raising, report writing and technology problem solving, and their social interactions have shifted from spontaneous conversations with local well-known colleagues to brief, focused, task-specific exchanges with many near-strangers.

If instrumental reasoning is the grammar of a new temporal systems order, the bits and bytes of digital communication are its language. The relevant point here is that it is a language of standardized abstractions delinked from the particulars of place and people, their embodied experience, stories and memories. And while it still takes time for people to key this language onto the screen, or click and drag it from one file to another, the abstract immateriality of the medium means that its scope for embodied presence is minimal and its capacity to invoke the rhythms of dialogue, nil. Partly, this is due to another temporal aspect of the wired university environment, namely that communication is instant.

This is the novelty of 'real time', making digital networks hyper-efficient from an instrumental point of view but potentially dangerous from a human and cultural point of view. As Ronald Purser (2002) argues, in its deft collapse of action and reaction through simultaneity, the real time on which digital networks operate models a reality characterized by Hannah Arendt as the 'means-ends paradigm' (p. 156). This view of what's real is focused entirely on bringing about the desired result. Purser argues that time of any duration longer than an instant is immaterial, an obstacle to be removed. Yet the effect of this – what one interview subject referred to simply as 'the pressure to respond' – is for people to 'fall back on learned routines and unconscious cognitive biases', in short to 'perform'. In Thrift's (2000b) characterization of life in the globalized new economy, where everything is a 'blur of change', a permanent state of 'emergency bordering on chaos' and every advantage 'temporary', the watchword is 'performability'. This means, as the word suggests, performance to script and specifications, delivering on prescribed deliverables and maximizing whatever advantage is available now, now, now. For academics, this implies getting grants, producing knowledge, and accumulating publications, patents and other

results – not necessarily authentic original knowledge, oriented to the public good.

Moreover, this performabilty dynamic can be habit forming, and can fundamentally shape the consciousness, or habitus,[8] of all participants, including academics. For example, nearly 30 per cent of our respondents affirmed, 'I can't slow down enough to be in touch with my innermost thoughts', displaying Sabelis's concerns about the inability of chronically time-compressed people to decompress and, as Pels (2003) recommends, to generally 'decelerate' or 'unhasten'. Academics, like others 'repositioned' as actors in a globally networked world, can 'become entrained to the rhythms of the dominant economic order' (Purser, 2002: 157) and its quick-click, real-time beat.

It's true to the point of being a truism that we are all rooted in the 'rhythmicity of the cosmos, the seasons and the times of the body' (Sabelis, 2002: 11). Nonetheless, rhythms based on social convention have so eclipsed natural rhythms, particularly in the 'socially integrative role' which rhythms play, that many primal rhythms are residual to the point of being vestigial. Moreover, as the staccato, now-this, now-this beat of real time augments the metronomic, externally regulated beat of regulated and scheduled time and permeates the social environment, there is a danger that the sense of rootedness in anything embodied and physical will become that much weaker. Accordingly, the social habits, the temporal practices and social rhythms associated with embodied reflection, memory and dialogue may wither as well.

The academics we interviewed are wise, therefore, to ask what kind of temporal and cultural practices they're modelling to their students as they practise the processing of information rather than its interpretation through dialogue, and performance-to-specifications ways of thinking rather than open-ended innovation. As Helga Nowotny (1994) notes, 'new knowledge arises under changed conditions of creation and in changed structures of organization' (p. 87).

The English professor quoted earlier commented on the cost-efficient shift from face-to-face seminar discussions to electronic chat groups at her centre-of-excellence university:

> I worry about the computer and the screen and the absence of embodiment, [and] that the people who are going to make it through the system and arrive at decision-making places are people who have an absolute disdain for the human condition – for the human body! Does one want people in policy making, making decisions about one's health . . . who are so immune to, or who need so little inter-human action?

A professor of biology makes a point of keeping his office and lab doors open, and frequenting the public spaces across the campus: 'I think the students need to see you as a real person, someone who is in a lab or coffee room or in the halls . . . Students need to realize that academia is a part of society. It is part of what our lives are about,' he said. In short, it seems that he's modelling what Barbara

Adam (1995) calls being 'an implicated participant' in the world (p. 141). In turn, by getting students talking, and having some continuity with them from one course to another, he says, they get 'a sense that they matter . . . By [my] being interested in what they have to say, being interested in their ideas, they ask questions, even if they are afraid they are what they call "stupid questions".'

The professor of engineering at the same university quoted earlier also takes time to meet and talk with students. He does this to model being open-ended in one's thinking as an engineer. 'Doubt,' he said, 'you can't make that electronic.'

A professor of film studies at the University of Regina talked about the importance of modelling speaking with one's own particular voice as a way of encouraging students to find their own. 'The way the new generation goes about doing research, with absolutely no depth,' she said. 'The kind of things they will search out on the internet – switching from this to that. But there's just no depth to their sense of what you do with all this material. How do you focus?' And so she tells students to come see her, where she helps them find that focus by getting them talking and, by listening to them stumbling to express themselves, helping them realize that 'what you have to say is important'.

Conclusion: Implications for Research and Policy

Perhaps the biggest lesson to be drawn from our analysis of the changed temporality of academics and their work is the importance of time to understanding/analysing organizational and social change. Not only is the body a 'bio-political terrain' (Thrift 2000a: 46), but so also are organizations like universities, and the social environment in general, including the one in which research and policy debates take place. They are landscapes and timescapes rooted in bodies that remember and experience life through all their senses.

A second lesson is that the medium is the message. If the goal of the university in a democratic society is to affirm the importance of critical thinking, dialogue and original knowledge creation in academics and their students, then the debate about the changes in universities and academic work which we have described, and decision making on appropriate policy responses, must be broadly, democratically participatory, with all that this implies in temporal terms. As the interview comments suggest, academics who had chosen or gone along with on-line communication for practically everything are now choosing to set limits and, in returning to sustained face-to-face communication in, for example, brainstorming with students, are rediscovering the benefits of that attuned in-depth engagement. We might anticipate, therefore, that in an inclusive debate about the changing university environment, as academics and administrators take the time for face-to-face dialogue, they might more vigorously champion measures to uphold these temporal practices in organizational

policy. Equally, as academics, personally and collectively, take the necessary steps to restore presence deep enough for reflective dialogue, they might discover a refreshed originality in their own work, which would inspire more people to read and talk about it.

Notes

1. An expanded discussion of this material can be found in Newson (2005, 1998).
2. In the 1950s and 1960s, federal and provincial governments in Canada committed increasing levels of funding to expanding existing and new universities to serve two primary objectives: developing a highly skilled labour force to aid Canada's economic development and educating citizens to fulfil their democratic role in society.
3. George Keller's book, *Academic Strategy* (1984), was an influential intervention during this period, advocating a shift in universities from 'administration' to 'management'. Keller described the advantages of 'management' as being more assertive, fast acting, strategically oriented and externally focused than traditional university administration which took direction from the internal considerations and priorities of collegial bodies.
4. Claire Polster (University of Regina) coined this term.
5. Claire Polster (2002) has written the definitive analysis of the CFI and CRC programmes and their implications for Canadian higher education.
6. And again, using individual tools such as email and listservs, web-based searches and course postings, but habitual use of the Internet-connected wired university environment for daily administrative routines to collaborative research and other projects with academic and non-academic partners around the country and around the world.
7. Here as elsewhere, there was a significant gender difference, with 37 per cent of women reporting 'a lot' compared to 22 per cent of the men. Generally, women's responses showed some of the most dramatic extremes, both embracing new benefits through ICTs and sensing the contradictions more acutely. See Menzies and Newson (2005) for a more extensive gender analysis.
8. Drawing on both Bourdieu's original coining of the concept and Christopher Gosden's (1979) modification of it, we consider habitus to be a fluid habitat for the mind and consciousness, a sort of 'sedimentation of past practice in the human organism so that it unconsciously guides future practice' (Gosden, 1979: 117).

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