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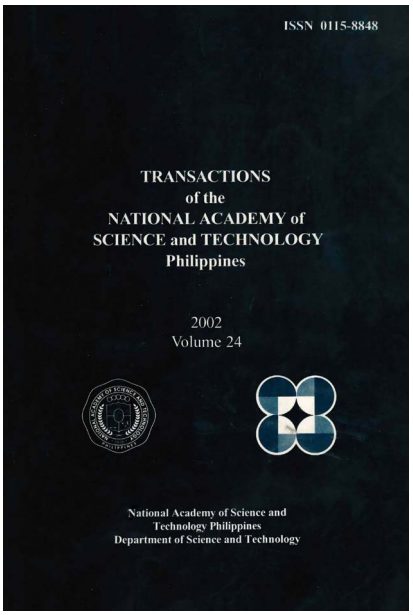

"Filipiniana Online": Knowledge Production through ICT

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"FILIPINIANA ONLINE": KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION THROUGH ICT

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ABSTRACT

The UP Open University online course "Filipiniana Online" is a course offered online which aims to build a sense of Filipino-hood and a concept of nation. The online course is interactive and is facilitated for each of the four modules of Philippine Theater, Literature, Art and Popular Culture and Philippine Culture and History. To aid the course are the Filipiniana Reader, a printed anthology of critical essays on Philippine theather, art, literature and popular culture) and a Filipiniana CD which contains digital versions of art works. Filipiniana Online is also hyperlinked to various websites on Philippine culture and history.

Keywords: online course, ICT, Filipianiana

David G. Post in his Keynote Address during a Computer Policy & Law Conference at Cornell University on July 9, 1997 quoted Daniel Webster who in 1825 wrote:

> *We live in a most extraordinary age. Events so various and so important that might crowd and distinguish centuries, are, in our times, compressed within the compass of a single life.*

Professor Post wanted through this quotation to drive home a point – that today what Webster wrote is relevant; even more so if we read the last line instead as – "Events so various and so important that might crowd and distinguish centuries, are, in our times, compressed within the compass of a single decade."

The Cyber Revolution that Post interrogates is, he asserts, truly a revolution that divides people, the globe even, into believers and non-believers. Those who think they can wish the Internet away and those who believe that our world has changed indubitably because of this cyber revolution. (http://www.cli.org/Dpost/cornell)

I would like to think that I am a believer. The dynamism of knowledge production on the Internet is a critical reality that scholars, academicians, scientists and artists who are involved in the dissemination of knowledge and information must acknowledge if they want to continue to overdetermine the shape of their respective societies today. In terms of the humanities and social sciences, in particular, there are 29,910 websites on Philippine Culture which incessantly construct their own discourses on the Filipino and Philippine social practices.

Topics address various interests of different audiences here and abroad. Ethic cuisine, wedding facts and trivia from www.weddingsatwork.com, first hand accounts of somebody from the Foreign Service while he was on tour here from cyberbayan.org, 10 Bornean datus landing in Panay from Philippine Culture and Info's website - philinfo.com, Philippine Folk Arts from Kamayan ng Lahi, Philippine Centennial Series from the Philippine History Group of Los Angeles, articles from the Psychological Association of the Philippines, Philippine Gay Culture from Binabae to Bakla from amazon.com, Philippine Media in the 1990s from the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, Philippine Martial Arts from kalisilat.com, the conditions of elderly Filipinos from asienhaus.de, the Loyola schools from ateneo.edu, knowing...being...believing in pinoy from nativeswish.com, Philippine culture at work and play by japanupdate.com, Marawi City from clickmindanao.com, Asian-American film database from asianamericanfilm.com, Philippine Literature in Spanish from pinoyhangout.com, Filipino Facts, Recipes & Phrases from webskills out-reach.isf.edu, Carlos Bulosan from tribo.org, from Cultural Center of the Philippines, the UP System and the Contituent Universities from up.edu.ph, Philippine Culture by Filipina Ladies from all-filipina.com, the social structures of Mt Pinatubo from scs.Kyushu-u.ac.jp, outstanding Pinays and Pinoys from pinoycityusa,com, Philippine Churches from Hawaii.edu, Simbang Gabi from the Philippine Embassy in London, the President's Report from erap.com.

The Internet has a way of flattening out Philippine hierarchical discourses. It is a "vast, but almost entirely unorganized, archive" (Wood, URL: http://candem-www.rutgers.edu/-wood/pedagogy). Official pronouncements of the various branches of government, reports from NGOs, articles from professional and private organizations are all equally accessible through the click of a mouse. No distinctions are made between private/personal and public; between commercial and academic; between official and informal; between US/UK/Euro-pean/Australian/Asian-based communities of Filipinos and those here; between knowledge and information, between fact and wild imaginings. The Internet has truly democratized access to information and knowledge.

Therefore, the Internet is an arena that we have to aggressively enter. However, we also need to approach it with creativity, and intelligence in order to optimize the pedagogical potentials of the "information superhighway." At the UP Open University (UPOU), we would like to believe that we made a very good start. Last year, we offered online 66 graduate and undergraduate courses through our Integrated Virtual Learning Environment (IVLE) platform.

Today I shall focus on just one UPOU online course, the Filipiniana Online, which I conceptualized and produced through a team of researchers, multimedia artists and technical specialists in 1998. Under Dr. Ma. Cristina Padolina, then the UPOU Chancellor, the Filipiniana Online Team constructed a course on Philippine Culture that was offered on the web as early as Second Semester, 1999-2000. Accompanied by the Filipiniana Reader (Patajo-Legasto 1998), which is a printed anthology of critical essays on Philippine Theater, Art, Literature & Popular Culture, and a Filipiniana CD, Filipiniana Online sought to contribute to the twin projects of nation-formation and identity-construction. To build a sense of "Filipino-hood" and a concept of nation that recognized the diasporic nature of Philippine Society was our political agenda. These goals were effected through the interactive structure of Filipiniana Online – i.e., threaded electronic discussions facilitated by four specialists for each of the modules of Philippine Theater, Literature, Art & Popular Culture as well as a Filipiniana Digital Library that gave participants hyperlinks to other websites on Philippine Culture and History. Thus, its online nature enabled participants from different Filipino communities here and abroad to get involved in discussions and projects (i.e., the final requirement included the construction of websites, compact disks, VHS, or papers on any of the topics that resulted from the discussions). Moreover, the Filipiniana Reader gave course participants easy access to critical essays by noted Philippine scholars, while the Filipiniana CD gave them digital versions of art works like paintings and pieces of sculpture, excerpts of theater and dance performances and films, pictures of the young, up and coming as well as nationally-recognized writers and artists, visuals of book covers, and summaries of books and films. Cultural resources would have been difficult to access by those who live outside the Metropolitan Manila Area with its high concentration of galleries, museums, libraries and publishing houses. Then as now, the course seeks to democratize access to education. Filipiniana Online is today a post-baccalaureate course called Cultural Studies 250, which is being offered this First Semester 2002 through the UP Open University.

As I said earlier, there are no hierarchies or authorities on the Internet. Yet while part of the power and allure of the Internet is precisely that very freedom, still the challenge for those of us who want to be able to significantly contribute to knowledge production is that we must interrogate this new technological mode of communication. Not only interrogate but also mediate and set up structures so that those who want reliable information, scholarly research, and wisdom can be guided while exploring the Internet. The universities and other institutions of higher learning must be centers of wisdom and excellence even as they construct virtual classrooms on the Internet to extend their reach.

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