

Technological scholarship

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The article reports on the increasing ubiquity of cell phones or mobile phones, which have begun to supplant the function of telephones, and how the unique qualities of cell phones – particularly their symbiotic relationship with other forms of telecommunications – present unique cultural ramifications for society at large. The author notes that cultural studies have generally neglected scrutinizing the telephone – essentially the fixed counterpart of the cell phone – despite the respective work done in the area of communications and technological scholarship.

However, there does exist a modest amount of literature on the technology for the author to conduct a brief review of literature relevant to such an interest, but he observes that these have emerged largely in the wake of the cell phone, reasoning that studies about the increasing complexity of telecommunications technologies and the proliferation of social and cultural functions of cell phones made it difficult to ignore the invisibility of the telephone as a social object and cultural technology.

The author notes that works centered upon the cultural and social dimensions of cell phones tend towards comparative study and cross-cultural analysis simply because the rapid proliferation of cell phone use across the world begs the question of how use is related to varied national and social contexts. (Goggin, pg. 4) However, the author's contention is that such studies do not sufficiently account for the cultural aspects of cell phones themselves.

He maintains that because cell phones are not just a communication technology, but a cultural medium which borrows liberally from the cultural components of other mediums. The author notes that as a

mobile cultural technology, cell phone culture finds its closest precedent in the Sony Walkman – associated with a specific set of social practices, a particular demographic of users and represented within the language of culture itself. (Goggin, pg. 7-8)

However, the author also points out that the Sony Walkman and the cell phone parallel as a fusion of multiple technologies developed by a wide configuration of businesses, industries and services and in that sense are devices which emerged due to the cultural convergence of various interests. This is an important point to note, as it presages the author's succeeding point, which is that technology and society shape each other in tandem, as posited by the actor-network theory of human-technology relationships.

Essentially it: “ refuses ... formulaic oppositions between technology and society [and] declines the lures of technological determinism [and] the countervailing reaction that society determines technology. ” (Goggins, pg. 11) Furthermore, he maintains that the ‘ success’ of technologies is viewed under the actor-network theory as determined by relationships rather than as a consequence of the stable and linear progression of historical conditions. Simply put, “ a technology needs to be loved, nurtured and, above all, materially fashioned and supported.

As such, the ‘ state’ of a technology is determined by the interaction between it and society. Before concluding with an outline of the remainder of the book's contents, the author finishes his introduction by noting that the future of cell phone studies and examinations of the interactions between culture and cell phone technology may draw rich inspiration from Internet

studies. Like the cell phone, the Internet is a technology that has been the subject of many works of techno-cultural scholarship.

Initial studies became obsolete due to directions of evolution that went unpredicted, but present important lessons in techno-cultural scholarship in revealing the extent to which such a highly personal technology resists the very determinism that actor-network theory refutes. As such, cell phone studies must recognize the intimate relationship between a technology and the uses it acquires through its interaction with culture. (Goggins, pg. 13)

REFERENCES Goggin, G. (2006) Cell phone culture: mobile technology in everyday life. London/New York, Routledge.