MAKING, MARKING, MATTERING: WHAT WE CAN LEARN ABOUT WRITING, RHETORIC, AND TECHNOLOGY FROM A MAKERSPACE


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This dissertation draws on data from a year-long ethnographic case study of a makerspace in Seattle to argue for and model a theoretical and methodological apparatus for studying making as mattering, and I offer accounts that explore acts of making at three levels: 1) the ongoing making and re-making of the research(er) apparatus, which involved integrating myself into the knowledge, social relations, and practices of the makerspace, as well as integrating theory and findings; 2) the ongoing making and re-making of bodies (human, cyborg, machine), relations, and the makerspace itself as localized practices; and 3) the connections among the local makerspace, the global maker movement and international professional practice, and maker-inspired digital rhetorics pedagogy.

The results of my study speak both to growing interest in makerspaces as well as to ongoing conversations about the entanglement of bodies, technologies, and communication in rhetoric of science, material rhetorics, and cultural usability studies. I highlight the ways in which neither "maker" nor "space" is a given in a makerspace, the ways in which writing is both entangled with and marked as different from other forms of making, and the ways in which work toward diversity and access in technology is a highly localized practice, even in an increasingly global movement. I also offer implications for teaching writing—including a reminder that makerspaces and maker culture, even when we import them into our classrooms, can privilege certain kinds of making and bodies.

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