

Spinuzzi, Four Ways to Examine Assemblages of Texts"

Things to keep in mind

- The main takeaway here is that texts/genres don't exist in a vacuum. And, often, you need to do some observation to understand how genres are deployed/used and how they are used in concert with other genres.
 - Spinuzzi outlines four frameworks that researchers have used to do this kind of work—all of which are valid, but focus on different things (see Table 1, 115). In your research for WP2, you may find it useful to adopt one of these frameworks to better analyze how your genre is used in concert with other genres (i.e. other genres one should be aware of when one composes)
- Pay specific attention to the ways that the initial case (Ralph's call to a customer) is understood by the different frameworks
- Spinuzzi is partial to the ecological framework largely because he developed it (with a few other researchers); but it is also worth noting that the ecological framework was originally developed to help describe the way that computer documentation is developed, used, and changed.

quotations/examples

Table 1. The four frameworks

	Genre sets	Genre systems	Genre repertoires	Genre ecologies (and later versions of genre systems)
Model of action	Communicative	Communicative	Communicative/Performative	Mediational
Agency	Individual	Individual	Individual	Distributed
Foregrounded genres	Official (stabilized)	Official (stabilized)	Official (stabilized)	Unofficial (dynamic) and official (stabilized)
Perspective	Individual	Communitarian	Communitarian	Activity
Relationship between genres	Sequential	Sequential	Sequential and overlapping	Overlapping/ intermediational

"A genre analysis of a particular technological artifact can be useful for understanding how the artifact is typically interpreted and used, but any given artifact is typically used in concert with others. That is, genres are used in assemblages or complexes" (110)

- the four frameworks outlined here are different ways to understand how to examine a genre amongst the other genres it is used in concert with
- "choosing a framework means choosing a set of phenomena to highlight" (115)

"Genre ecologies ... emphasize genres as collective achievements that act as much as they are acted upon" (114)

- What does it mean for a genre to act or to mediate activities?
 - A *very simple* example would be to think of the resume or CV: The conventions of a resume (what kinds of things are included, what is valued, etc.) might mediate your activities. For example, you might decide to join a club because it

looks good on your resume. Alternately, you might decide that some other activity is not worth your time because it isn't something that is valued on a resume or wouldn't appear on one.

- What does it mean for a genre to be a 'collective achievement'?
 - What Spinuzzi is getting at here is that genres stabilize over time with repeated use. So the resume represents the collective achievement of employers, employees, word processors, etc. that, through years of practice, have resulted in this thing we call a resume. The conventions have changed (look at a resume from 50 years ago and it probably looks different from today) but at any given time the genre is relatively stable.

"genres are not simply performed or communicated, they represent the 'thinking out' of a community as it cyclically performs an activity" (114)

key terms/definitions

- *assemblages*: also called complexes; a way to describe any set of resources that are used together to do something
- *distributed cognition*: the idea that cognition (knowledge/thinking) is not confined to the individual, but is distributed across individuals, artifacts, objects, tools, etc. It is this idea that influences Spinuzzi's ecological framework and its insistence that genres (not just individuals) have agency