Perpetuating Papert's Legacy of Powerful Ideas for Researchers and Practitioners Alike

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Note to committee: This session is suitable for a short paper, demonstration or workshop setting. In a workshop setting, much greater deliberation, discussion, reading and viewing are possible.

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Abstract

This presentation will explore newly uncovered writing by Seymour Papert and rarely seen video of public presentations. Curation, dissemination, and evangelism of Papert's powerful ideas find a new audience on the web site, DailyPapert.com. Constructionism 2014 attendees will identify patterns of thought consistent across four decades of work, research, and development while new themes will be identified as a basis for ongoing scholarship.

Paper

For the past several years, the web site, Dailypapert.com, has sought to bring the wit, wisdom and pioneering vision of Seymour Papert to a generation of educators unfamiliar with his work. The site acknowledges the difficulty of introducing complex ideas in a sound-bite society and responds by publishing a short quote from a Papert text, audio, or video recording four times each week. Each Dailypapert.com entry is accompanied by a link to the original source and is shared via social media. The entries are categorized by theme, keywords, and era. There is anecdotal evidence that this approach has not only succeeded in introducing Papert's work to a wider audience, but has also led readers to dig deeper into the original texts.

The primary audience for The Daily Papert is practitioners and policy makers. Despite the availability of books and articles written by Seymour Papert, the site's curator became concerned that Papert's many contributions were increasingly absent from culture of K-12 education. Survey texts about "educational computing" or "ICT in education" intended for pre-service or in-service educators frequently contain no mention of Seymour Papert, much less forty years of his contributions. Academics, particularly those invested in the "Constructionism" community or learning sciences are a distinct, and much smaller audience. It should also be noted that there are no guarantees that Papert's books will remain in-print or that the incomplete collection of articles found at papert.org will remain active.

The Daily Papert seeks to preserve the resources that exist, share rare finds, and add to the body of literature created by Seymour Papert. The curation of the site has four primary goals; preservation, dissemination, evangelism, and research.

The Daily Papert attempts to expose the breadth or Papert's interests, influence, and expertise by publishing work related to educational computing, programming, mathematical thinking, school reform, artificial intelligence, learning, teaching, 1:1 computing, and precedents for the modern maker movement. To date, no passage has been repeated since the site's inception due to the wealth of existing documents, including three books and a couple dozen widely available articles.

Naturally, as time progresses, it will become more difficult to harvest pearls of wisdom from the texts most readily available. The site's curator has conducted research to locate, preserve, and share texts with the global audience on the World Wide Web. This research has been conducted using online databases as well as contacting collaborators who may possess copies of otherwise lost documents. A good number of early works from the 1960s through the mid-1980s, as well as texts written since the late 1990s have been made available at Dailypapert.com.

The early texts document the creation of Logo, early experiments in educational computing, and the Logo phenomena spurred by the availability of personal computers. The later texts chronicle Papert's influence in his last institutional research project in a prison for teens, the statewide effort to provide laptops to every seventh and eighth grader in Maine, the influence of the Web, and the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative. Both the early and late periods provide an important context for better understanding the intervening period of Papert's work, most commonly explored by academics and practitioners alike – the *Mindstorms* to *Children's Machine* (1980-1993) era. The consistency of vision from "Teaching Children Thinking" in 1968 through 1:1 computing in Australia to OLPC or "Twenty Things to Do with a Computer" in 1970 to code.org or the maker movement in 2014 is just one of the qualities that make Papert's scholarship so extraordinary. Preserving primary sources from the otherwise overlooked historical periods bookending the middle period, corresponding with the heyday of turtle geometry, makes a significant contribution to knowledge.

Papert's intellectual gifts include a consistency of vision over four decades, making complex ideas accessible through plain speaking and an embrace of his role as a public intellectual, not just a tenured academic with two Ph.Ds. Understanding Papert's body of work is dependent on an appreciation for his newspaper columns, Omni Magazine interview, and public speeches, as it is his peer-reviewed papers.

In 2014, The Daily Papert embarked on an ambitious project to collect and transcribe and publish video recordings of public presentations made by Seymour Papert which otherwise would be lost to history. Excerpts from these newly available documents will be shared subsequently in "DailyPapert.com" format and in their entirety on the site for years to come. Some of the videos feature less than

stellar audio quality and every attempt has been made to make them legible. For this reason, and the needs of future scholarship, the site has made the decision not to publish multimedia clips without searchable textual transcriptions. This process is expensive, time-consuming, yet   worth it.

A few of the major works about to be available for the first time include:

- Papert's keynote at the 1999 MIT Mindfest Conference
- Papert's explosive keynote address at the 2000 Computer-Using Educators Conference in Palm Springs
- Papert's provocative keynote address to the American Montessori Society in 2000
- Papert's long and substantive public address at Bates College in 2000 shortly after the announcement of the plan to provide every student in Maine with a personal laptop computer
- Papert's keynote address at a 2004 conference hosted by Apple Computer in Sydney, Australia
- A spirited panel discussion with Seymour Papert, Howard Gardner, Sherry Turkle, Mitch Kapor and Mitchel Resnick in which Papert warns about exaggerating the informational aspects of the Web for learning and questions multiple intelligences theory
- An extensive discussion with Papert describing the need for megachange in mathematics education
- An endorsement of "Kid Power" on behalf of Generation YES
- The 2004 AERA Conference address on the occasion of Papert being honored for his contributions to educational research

These newly transcribed texts will be shared at Constructionism 2014 with excerpts played in order to generate discussion and identify new themes to serve as the basis for future scholarship.

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