

I214: Field visits and observation

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Project pitches

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Signup at tinyurl.com/214projects

Naïve usability observations

- Emotionality
 - Shock when a familiar operation goes awry
 - Needing reassurance that a unfamiliar operation would go well
- Situational factors (time of day, other distractions)

The key is looking carefully at what people actually do in various situations and asking ourselves questions such as these...

Why has someone placed this object here?

What are those people doing and why are they grouped like that?

Why is it that people apparently avoid being here?

Curiosity will reveal meaning behind these nonspectacular interactions that take place around us all the time.

*Thoughtless Acts?
Observations on Intuitive Design*
Jane Fulton Suri and IDEO

Make the familiar strange



Flickr photo by Scania Group

WHY OBSERVE?



Purposes of observation in the field

Identify “ground truth”
behavior and beliefs

Draw out worldviews or
belief systems

Evaluate your own
hypotheses or assumptions

Why?

... to write requirements

... to assess current or
future choices

... to focus future strategy

... to generate design
principles

... to inform and inspire
creative designing

Doing observations

PLAN AHEAD



Introduce yourself to the domain

Expert interviews

Desk research

Try it out yourself

Make your hypotheses and assumptions explicit

Lists, collaged “mood boards”

Flickr memes: “Day in the Life”; “What’s in your bag”

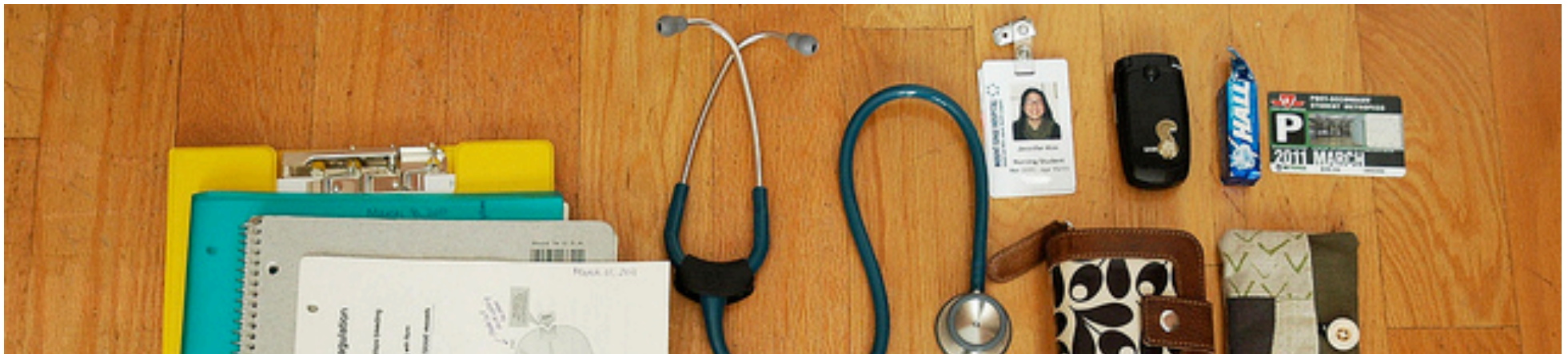
Forums and blogs

Academic literature

Non-fiction books

Textbooks and educational materials

Memoirs and oral histories



Doing observations

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

To begin in place

Traces of activity

Workarounds

Paths

Feelings

Territories

Goals

Talk



What you observe at first should

- Balance between selection and inclusion
- Determined by the focus of your study
- But try to be broad

DIRECTING YOUR OBSERVATION

Making choices without a clear plan

- AEIOU (activities, environments, interactions, objects, users) or Contextual inquiry
- Or just pick what is most relevant:
 - Pick a place – everything that flows through it
 - Follow someone – everywhere they go, everything they do
 - Interactions with technology
 - Interactions among participants
 - Sequences of tasks
 - Tools/artifacts
 - Methods of getting things done

Models for interaction

Do

- Master/apprentice
- Partnership

Don't

- Novice/expert
- The guest
- Complaints Dept
- The boss' spy

FIELDNOTES AND DOCUMENTATION

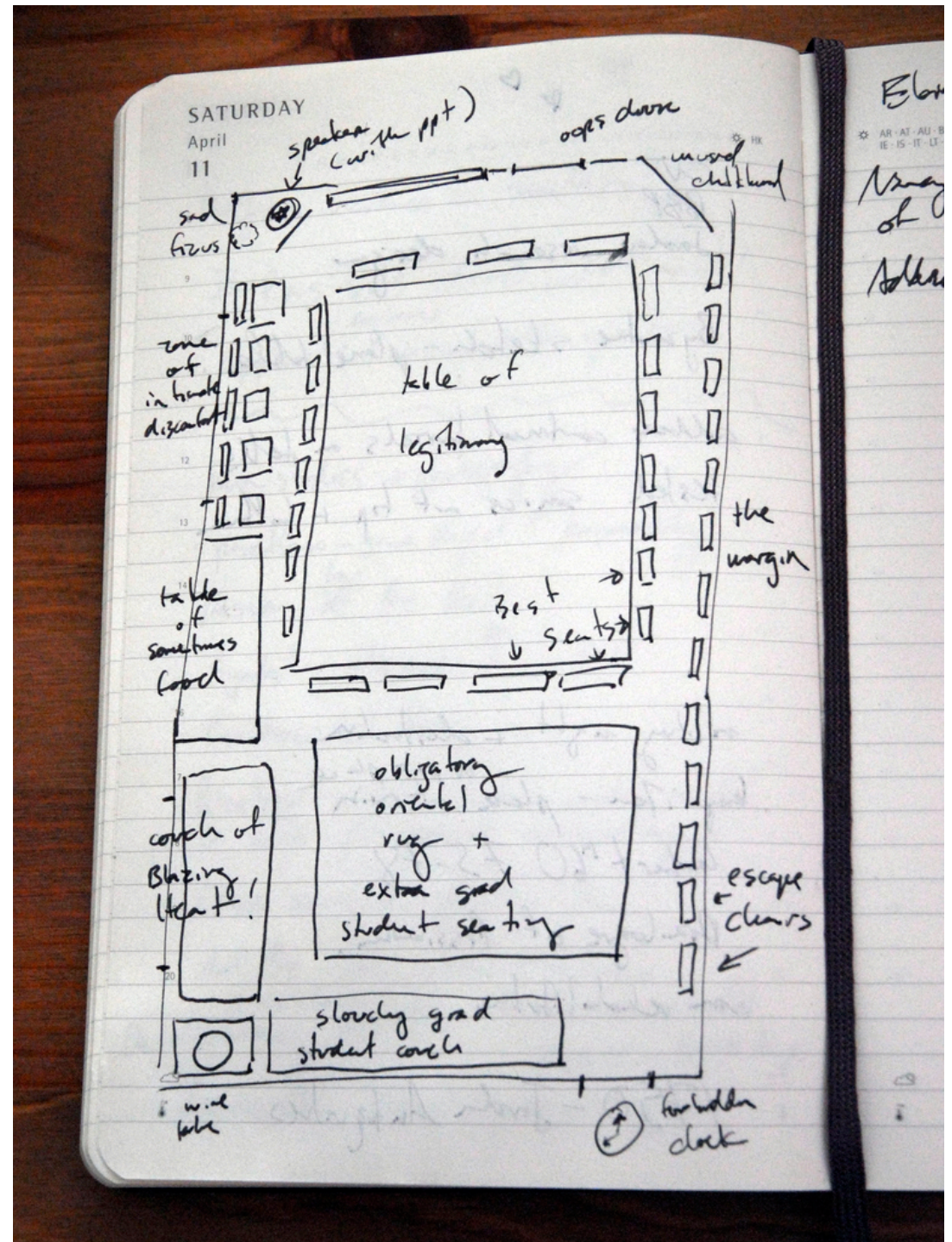
Making records

Fieldnotes

Photos/Video

Maps and sketches

Sample artifacts



Notes and photos

Are interpretive representations

From a partial point of view (yours)

Require choices about what and how to represent

Whatever gets eliminated at this stage is *gone*



What to write down

Quotes or paraphrases

Initial impressions

Look and feel of the setting

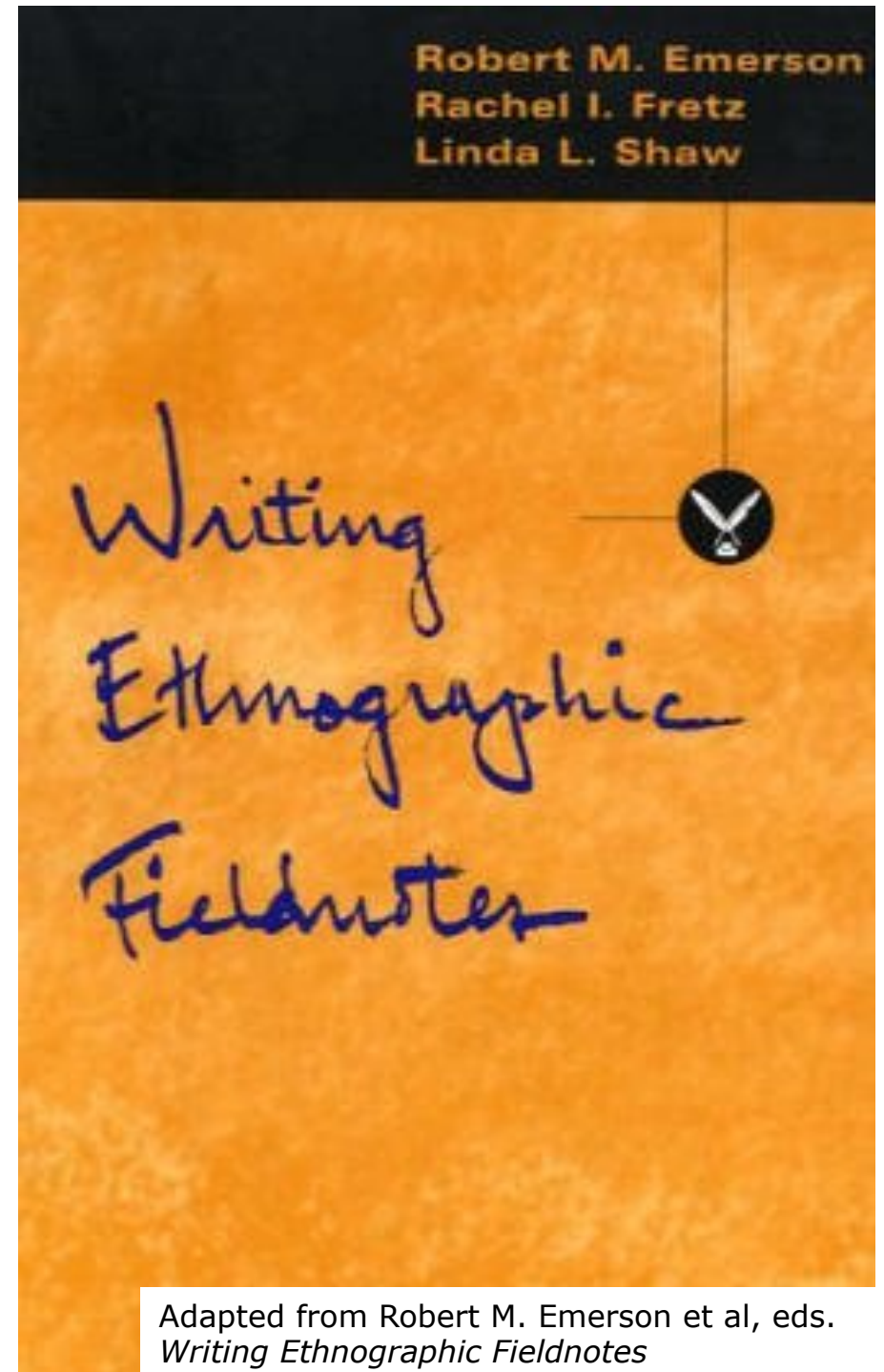
Key events or incidents

Your reaction? Theirs (as far as they are visible)?

Sensory **details** of actions and talk

Avoid generalizations

Whatever will help you reconstruct the scene



An example

Just photos in general? Started photography in high school. Off and on. Basically didn't take a lot of photos when I was in college, in the early 90s just because film was such a pain. I regret that.

Got my first digital camera in 98, been off and running. Had about 5 or 6 since then. My father had one, so... I was when I first moved to the bay area, seemed like everyone had one.

The differences were huge, just the freedom to take as many pictures as I want, and get immediate feedback. The reason I stopped in college was because of cost ...

I took it on a trip with friends that month, and got amazing photos,

Now when I look back at the pictures I took since I've had a digital camera, it's great. And making them available to friends, you don't do that with film... Post it to Flickr and

It's actually my wife's, she wasn't using it so I took it. Canon Sd300. My older one was a sd400, but this is smaller and better. I'm contemplating making the jump to SLR. I would love to have a cellphone camera with halfway decent.

Whenever I see something. Having a point and shoot. On the train, walking. I live in SF, so keep your eyes open and there will be a picture. Buildings and sky.

But...you ARE there

Separate but *don't ignore* your experiences, interpretations, reactions

Note *why* and where you focus your attention

Note emerging understandings, questions

Never stop questioning your OWN experience, assumptions, understandings, interpretations

	A	B	C	D
1	Title:	A Passionate Gaming Artiste		
2	Date & Time:	6/15/2010 15:20:00		
3	Set the Scene:	At the headquarters of Realtime Worlds in the common space, "where we eat."		
4	Main Character:	Lucas Bowser		
5	Background Story:	Lucas volunteered to speak to us from our appeal and list of questions which were posted on the notice board at his work. He has a background in sculpture, fine art, and digital design.		
6				
7	Environmental Notes & Timestamps	Direct Quotes, Topics, The Gist of What's Going On!	<u>VISIONADE! Ethno Eye! Spidey Sense! Links! Questions!</u>	<u>1st Tag</u>
8	approx. 15:25	He works in Quality Assurance (games tester) at a video game developer. They test the games and he says its an entry level job at the games company that brought him into the company. He also does is a UI artist part of the time, like he goes on a 6 month UI design an then comes back to QA.	Asking about what he does at wor Flickr photo by Rachel Shadoan	

Sample AEIOU notes format

Observation notes	Date	Time	Place
Activities _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Observation		Interpretation
Environments _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____			
Interactions _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____			
Objects _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____			
Users _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____			

Writing up fieldnotes

- As soon as possible! Before you sleep.
- Write like mad, organize later
 - If possible, talk into recorder on the way home
 - If you're working with someone, talk together - debriefing
 - Organize into chronology
 - Reflections, questions, themes, etc – write them up but distinguish them
- For whom?
 - For yourself as a future reader – you *will* forget
 - If you're working with others, for them
 - Most of all, notes have to read clearly, know who is saying what. If a direct quote, say so. If paraphrase or summary, make that clear.

Other media for fieldnotes

Photographs

But choices are still made about what to photograph

Video

Where camera is placed, what it sees, what sound is captured...

What do you do with hours and hours of video?



"Making a weibo post for Free Lunch"
Flickr'd Instagram photo and text by Tricia Wang

Making a weibo post for Free lunch program is a 4 step verification process. 1:) teacher writes accounting in books 2) second teachers writes a text message and sends its to village party secretary 3:) party secretary confirms text and posts it to weibo a