

Week 4 - [4.4] Task 4: Manual Scripts and Potato Printing (Optional task)

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It was both normal and strange for me to write this diary entry by hand. I mostly write by typing in my daily academic and professional work because it is faster, more flexible, and easier to change. Writing by hand, on the other hand, made me slow down and contemplate each sentence carefully before putting it on paper. This slower pace made the task feel more like thinking than just doing, a contrast to what Bolter (2001) describes as the efficiency and fluidity of digital remediation.

I did encounter some minor issues. I either crossed out the word I wanted to change with a single line or reworded my thought in the following sentence. When typing, it is easy to delete and rewrite instantly, but when writing by hand, the traces of revision remain visible. This visibility of process made me accept flaws, which was difficult for someone accustomed to polished digital documents. The physicality of handwriting—the pen moving across the paper and the ink smudging—also affected how I interacted with my words, echoing the material dimension of inscription emphasized in Cooke's (2012) film on the letterpress.

The most significant difference between handwriting and mechanized writing is the ease of revision and the speed at which it works. Typing makes it simple to rearrange sentences, while handwriting emphasizes permanence and continuity. Yet, as Innis (2007) reminds us, media carry biases of time and space; handwriting carries a temporal weight, offering continuity and a sense of memory. I felt more connected to the words I wrote, as if the act of writing made thought and expression more closely linked. Moreover, research suggests handwriting can improve memory retention, further underscoring its cognitive benefits.

While I prefer typing for efficiency in meeting deadlines, handwriting serves as a gentle reminder of the more thoughtful aspects of writing. On a busy day—balancing professional development, graduate assignments, and family responsibilities—writing by hand unexpectedly provided a pause, a chance to think more deeply instead of just rushing to finish. This balance between productivity and mindfulness, between the fast-paced digital world and the slower, reflective nature of handwriting, illustrates why integrating both writing methods is valuable.

Potato Stamp Printing



Reflection on Potato Stamp Printing

For this project, I chose the five-letter word "*CONES*" because it has no repeated letters, combines curves and straight lines, and offered a visually interesting challenge for reproduction with stamps. Using recycled grocery bags and food coloring, I carved each letter as a mirror image on a halved potato so the prints would transfer correctly. This preparation was time-consuming, requiring precision and steady attention to spacing.

Stamping was both satisfying and unpredictable. Variations in pressure affected how bold or faint the letters appeared, and while I aimed for uniformity, one version bled more ink and showed uneven edges. Curved letters like *N* and *S* proved especially difficult to carve smoothly, while straight letters like *C* were easier to manage.

The activity reminded me of the physical labor required to inscribe even a short word by hand. Innis (2007) argues that communication technologies shape cultural rhythms; in this case, the potato stamp situates writing within a slow, fragile medium. Cooke's (2012) film on letterpress similarly illustrates how imperfections are part of the artistry of manual printing. In contrast, Bolter (2001) highlights how digital tools remediate print, favoring efficiency, precision, and replication. By comparison, my potato stamps emphasized writing as a tactile and imperfect process.

As a teacher, I see how such a project could benefit my students. Engaging with the materiality of writing helps them appreciate the effort behind older technologies and contrast it with the speed of digital production. The unpredictability of handmade stamps also teaches that imperfection can carry meaning, offering each learner a unique product of their own labor. Beyond literacy, students develop patience, creativity, and resilience—skills that are as valuable as the final stamped word.

References

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