LAB 9: INVESTIGATING CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND INSENSITIVITY ONLINE

INFO 300
Intellectual Foundations of Informatics

GOALS
1. To explore Web-based interactions from the perspective of cultural diversity and cultural insensitivity.
2. To gain experience with defining a question, identifying a method to address that question, carrying out that method, and evaluating the result.

OVERVIEW
In this lab, you will work in groups of 2-3 to explore an aspect of cultural diversity or cultural insensitivity online. In contrast to other labs in which the method of investigation was well-defined, this lab is open-ended: Your group will identify an aspect of Web-based interactions to investigate from the perspective of cultural diversity and insensitivity, identify a method, carry out that method, and evaluate your results.

HOW TO PROCEED
1. Form a group with 3-4 people.
2. Define a question. First, define a question that you would like to investigate concerning cultural diversity or insensitivity in Web-based interactions. You may wish to brainstorm several different questions here and then choose one to pursue. For example, you might ask: "How well do Web sites that are likely to attract international populations account for differences in language and cultural norms?" or "What evidence for cultural expression can you find online?"
3. Identify a method. Likely there are several ways in which you could go about investigating your question. Again, some brainstorming may be helpful here. Come up with several ways to approach your question. Then prioritize these methods and begin with the first one (and do as many as you have time for). For example, if your question was "How well do Web sites that are likely to attract international populations account for differences in language and cultural norms?" you might examine Web sites from different countries aimed at tourists. Or, if your question was "What evidence for cultural expression can you find online?" you might examine Web sites maintained by different cultural groups within a single country or Web sites from a group of countries that share the same language but have other cultural differences (e.g., England, Ireland, the United States).
4. Evaluate your results. Based on your investigation, what evidence do you find to support cultural diversity online? Cultural insensitivity? What insight do you have into your original question?
5. Brief write-up (to be done during lab). At 10:30 write-up your question, how you went about investigating it, and what you might do differently next time (there is always more one could do or things one might do better).
6. Reporting back to the class as a whole. At 10:45 we'll have groups provide brief presentations on their investigations: What question did you ask? How did you go about investigating that question? And what interesting insights did you discover?

WHAT TO TURN IN AT THE END OF LAB TODAY
Email Nathan (nfreier@u.washington.edu) a copy of your write-up. Only one write-up per group please.