When I see the term "mechanization" I can't help but think of factories with their many machines cranking out widgets on time, in standardized shapes and colors and following a schedule. Whether the widgets are books or e-books almost becomes irrelevant. The factory is indifferent to what it produces – a reconfiguration of the factory floor allows it to accommodate different types of widgets.

Mechanization and production seem like a straightforward operation. You know what you want to produce – for instance, copies of a book – and you have a printing press, boxes, etc. and once everything is configured the process operates smoothly. As Chandler offers: "Machines are characterized by their relentless and rigid regularity. They are assembled from parts and can be analysed or disassembled into them. A machine like a clock, once it is initiated, is autonomous in the sense that it can run independently for long periods, but it does not select its own goal" (Chandler, 1995).

Creating is different and much more difficult. Even something as "simple" as a comment on a blog post is more difficult than it appears. The process to create is non-linear, personal, social, unevenly paced, and the likelihood of success is debatable. The technologies that go into the creation process vary by the individual and group. Some items that shape the process and the product include:
- Coffee maker. For myself, I have a French-press.
- Music. I like to have some music in the background as I write.
- Lighting. The lighting needs to be just right. Warm, clear, but not too bright.
- One or more of:
    o Notebook / pencil
    o Tablet
    o Whiteboard
    o Laptop
    o …noting that the cycling through these depends on the day. Sometime, I need to start with a doodle, image, or just writing some words. Other times, the words need to go straight to "paper" as sentences and paragraphs.

"For the biologist Rene Dubos, 'the mechanical definition of human life misses the point because what is human in man is precisely that which is not mechanical' (Dubos 1970, p. 132)" (Chandler, 1995). I'd put forward that the creation process is human and it's messy (especially if the coffee gets spilled, but that's another story). We can even look to stories about the pencil and eraser as examples of misunderstandings about the creative process: "In the primary grades we used pencils – big blue Eberhard pencils without erasers. We were, in fact, forbidden to have erasers. Why no erasers?... The goal was to write properly the first time. Any fool (or sinner) can make a mistake and then fix it" (Porter, 2002, p. 376).

Since creation is messy, non-linear and hard to understand – I worry that it gets less coverage. Many of our readings so far speak of "writing" in the abstract. The idea of creation is left untouched as it is perhaps easier to dig into the topics of consumption, production and mechanization. Perhaps the closest we get to the creation process is a discussion of editing and

revisions. While an important part of the process, they still are much more mechanical than creative.

While "Machines are also under complete control – we can turn them off…" (Chandler, 1995), our creativity doesn't have a visible set of switches, knobs and levers that we can access, monitor and adjust. Having mechanization is valuable as it allows us to access more content to use for inspiration, to more easily get feedback, and to experiment and adjust. But, there's still that messy human side of creation that all of this production and mechanization is built upon.

I appreciate how you call out reflection and practice for your students as they write. I also appreciate how you call out that keyboards are just a low-level substitution for writing. I suspect that the ability to think, be creative, and communicate will happen via reflection, practice, re-work, sharing, and yet more practice.

References

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