

explore a place by sequencing and discussing images in a photo essay. Always have a structure in mind. Don't just expect the parts of a project to hang together.

Remember, too, that readers will enjoy your project more if they actually learn something new about a place from it. Look for an unusual point of view. Then fill your work with **evidence** and **details**. Expect to do some research to find them: use the library and Internet to discover all you can about your subject if only to avoid factual or contextual blunders. But don't limit your explorations to what you find in the library and online. Do creative field research (see page 91), whether that means trips to

interview people in a neighborhood or hours browsing a virtual environment. For academic projects, keep track of your sources so you can document them later.

Finally, edit your project robustly. Spell names and proper nouns correctly—especially any foreign words or expressions. Keep descriptions lean and honest (see pages 63–65), avoiding the tendency to pile on adjectives and adverbs. *Less* is often *more* when you need to share a sense of place. In multimedia projects, explore the technical tools available to you, whether it's a digital camera or specialized software. Take the time to read the instructions or help menus.

PROJECT 4.1

Observing and Analyzing a Public Space

Many of the writers and artists featured in this chapter document how the physical characteristics of places influence (and are influenced by) the people who inhabit them. For this project, you'll engage in a similar process of observation. Visit a public place, then write a three- to five-page analysis that connects the physical space, the people in it, and the activities that go on there. You may need to spend time systematically recording what you see, especially if the locale is new to you. Social scientists use the term *field observation* to refer to this process of collecting information (see page 91).

- Choose a space that interests you. The analysis may be more objective if you begin with a place that's not too familiar.
- Check the accessibility of the site. Is it nearby and open to the public? Will the presence of an observer alarm or embarrass people using the

space? Avoid sites where you're likely to intrude on private conversations or activities—as you might in the locker room at a fitness center.

- Study the environment. Analyze what its details say about the relationship between the physical features of the space and the people and activities you observe there. Look for interesting social or cultural patterns and connections in the information you've collected and use them to focus your discussion.
- Notice what catches your eye. Does the space resemble or look different from other places that serve similar functions?
- Pay attention to people in the space. What are they wearing, doing, and saying? Do they appear comfortable, excited, impatient, tired? Who is *not* here, and why? Is the space designed to interest particular groups?

MLA FORMAT

FINAL PAPER: 5 PAGES +

WORKS CITED PAGE 3 to 4 SOURCES

- Think about how people use the space. Where do they sit, stand, or gather? What is a “normal” activity here? How can you tell?
- Think about how people interact in this space. Who talks to whom? Who seems to be in charge? How can you tell? Do you see anything that surprises you? Does anyone use the space in an unexpected way?

Since it’s likely that readers won’t have visited your site, describe it thoroughly and vividly (see pages 63–65) and provide examples to illustrate any patterns you see. Bring the sights, sounds, and activities of the place to life, and then help your audience appreciate the significance of these details.

Although you’ll gather most of the material for this project through direct observation, do the necessary background research: Who owns this space? When was it built, and has it been renovated or changed since that time? Has the space ever been used for something other than its current purpose? Find the answers to these questions by asking owners or employees, consulting local historical societies, checking the archives of local newspapers, or conducting research in the library or online.

As you compose, consider a few questions. How will you introduce readers to your site, providing background information and a thorough description of it based on your field observations? How can you analyze the place, drawing readers’ attention to one or

more ways in which the physical layout of the environment influences how people use or inhabit it? And how can you identify connections among the physical space, the people in it, and the activities that go on there? Provide supporting examples and details to illustrate your major points. And do make larger points about the space.

Style counts for a lot in descriptive writing. The choices you make about word selection and tone give readers a sense of the place, as do concrete details and the sentence structures that carry them. A competent and lively style, free of both academic jargon and mechanical errors, enhances your credibility.

Although the primary medium for this project may be words, use drawings, maps, recordings, videos, or photographs to introduce readers to your locale or to capture aspects of the place that are difficult to express with language alone. Remember that any materials you don’t create yourself must be appropriately cited and documented.

Start your project early enough so that you have time to return to the site if needed to check facts or fill gaps in your observations. When you’ve completed a draft, review it or have a classmate or friend do so, suggesting areas for revision and editing. Don’t be surprised if the project heads off into directions you haven’t anticipated or reveals more about a place than you had expected.

FINAL PAPER = ^{FIVE} (5) PAGES MLA FORMAT

- WORKS CITED PAGE
- THREE (3) TO FOUR (4) SOURCES.
- (YOUR OBSERVATIONS / FIELD RESEARCH COUNTS AS A SOURCE)
- IN-TEXT CITATIONS
- YOU CAN INCLUDE A VISUAL OR TWO - DOESN'T COUNT AS A PAGE