

NOTES TOWARD A PHILOLOGY OF MODIFIED VIDEO GAME CONSOLES contents ▾

DARREN WERSHLER

As part of its holdings, the [Residual Media Depot](http://residualmedia.net) (<http://residualmedia.net>) at Concordia University includes the largest institutional collection in the world of modified (“modded”) video game consoles. Through a bewildering assortment of ad-hoc operations and more-or-less coherent techniques, a loose global community of practice has transformed these devices in ways that allow them to do something ... other than what their stock versions do. In many cases (but certainly not all), that something involves producing a different quality of video signal, output through a non-standard port connecting via custom-made cabling to an altogether different type of display than the console’s creators had intended.

In the face of the “ubiquitous imperfection” of technological artifacts and systems, Siegfried Zielinski argues that we require “a philology as exact as possible of nonperfect precise things.” This approach seems ideally suited to describe the modded consoles in the Depot. Such a philology would have to involve careful documentation of at least the following:

- the material technologies that serve as the occasions for modification, along with an account of the circumstances of their production, circulation, consumption and afterlife
- a forensic description of the chains of operations and techniques performed on them by particular subjects at a

