

Wikis, Forums, & Blogs Oh My!

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Today' Plan

- **Description of digital teaching tools**
 - Learning management systems
 - Wiki
 - Forum
 - Blog
 - RSS
 - Podcasts/vodcasts
 - Second Life

Today' Plan

- **Demonstration of digital teaching tools**
 - Wiki
 - Forum
 - Blog

Importance of Digital Teaching Tools

- **Interaction** is one of the most important components of teaching and learning experiences.
- Interaction can be in the form of **dialogue**.
- **Social Software** (web 2.0) describes anything where the content of a website is created by the people reading the site

Learning Management Systems

- Aka. course management systems
- Software for detecting, tracking, and managing learning
- Institutional level
- Commercial (e.g., Blackboard) and open-source systems (e.g., Sakai)
- Contain a number of tools

Wikis

- Web page that anyone can read and edit (markup language)
- The focus in on the content not the format
- No authorship, owned by its community
- The community is the “watchdog”

Wikis

- **Wikipedia (2000)**
 - >2.8 million articles in English alone
 - www.wikipedia.org
- **Google's Knol: A Unit of Knowledge**
 - knol.google.com

Wikis

- **What wikis are good for**
 - "Electronic version of brainstorming" –G. E. Gorman
 - Sharing resources (text, graphics, video, etc.) and communicating
 - Collection of links (i.e., social bookmarking)
 - Writing a collective letter, paper, or web content

Wikis

- **Uses**
 - **Living course website:** James (2004) posted lecture material, reviewed last class period's wiki, and conducted in class activities asking students to post their thoughts.
 - **Group projects:** Students can collaborate on writing a paper, creating a website, or problem solving (e.g., high level mathematics and physics)
 - **Class debate**

Wikis

- **STOLEN Principle for Using Wikis (Foord, 2007)**

S	Specific Overall Objective	Clear objectives for the wiki
T	Timely	Definitive times for stages of use
O	Ownership	Students need to feel they collaboratively own the wiki
L	Localized Objective	What is expected of the students
E	Engagement Rules	Who can edit and what is editable
N	Navigation	Clear, simple navigation

Wikis

- **Wiki charter**
 - **Code of Conduct**
 - Etiquette
 - Define usage, expectations, and acceptable behavior

Wikis

- **Problems with wikis**
 - They can become **chaotic**, filled with “one-upmanship” or over-achievers
 - **Participation inequity**: 90-9-1 theory
 - **Copyright and permission issues**: These are problems if the wiki is open to the entire world or if the instructor wants to re-use wiki content in future course(s).
 - **Assessing students individually**: Students rarely work for nothing.

Forums

- Aka. Internet forums, online forums, message boards
- Provide asynchronous discussion
- Analogous to bulletin boards
- Discussions maintained in “threads”
- Knowledge forum: collaborative database developed for knowledge building—defining problems and hypothesizing, collecting information, analyzing, and collaborating

Forums

- A student posts a comment or a body of information that other students and the instructor can comment on.
- Novice writers often are not successful in reviewing their work; they may benefit from review by their peers.
- Instructors need to decide how much structure to give to the forum and when and often to comment.

Blogs

- Web logs
- **Self-reflection**, comments for others to read
- Successor to the learning journal
- Unlike wikis, the author maintains ownership
- Comments are posted in chronological order

Blogs

- **Experiential learning (Kolb, 1982)**
 - Students approach a subject with a set of concepts that need to be challenged by the learning context. By reflection on this experience, students explore the realities of the subject area.

Blogs

- **Constructivist learning:** Each learner individually constructs meaning, i.e., his or her own understanding and knowledge of the world
- Vygotsky believed the role of a teach is to provide scaffolding (collaborative dialogue) to assist students on tasks in their zones of proximal development.

Blogs

- **How do we encourage students to engage in deep reflective reflection?**
 - Thinking by writing
 - Private journals
- **Public aspect of blogs can still encourage students to be thoughtful.**

Blogs

- **Students can**
 - Reflect on course content
 - Post results of research and comment on each others results.

Podcasts/Vodcasts

- **iPod + broadcast**
- **Mobile (m-) learning**
- **Students receiving podcasts of lecture have scored higher on exams compared to students in face-to-face lectures.**
- **iTunes University**
 - <http://www.apple.com/education/mobile-learning/>

RSS

- **Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary**
- **Headlines and breaking news**
- **Can syndicate wikis, blogs, and podcasts**
- **Subscribe to RSS feeds**

RSS

- **RSS reader or aggregator**
 - E.g., FeedDemon (NewsGator Technologies)
- **RSS feeder to create and publish RSS feeds**
- **Uses**
 - Receive updates from journals or web sites
 - Send updated information to students

Second Life

- **Virtual online world**
 - <http://secondlife.com/>
- **Avatars**

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