Wikis, Forums, & Blogs Oh My!

Today's Plan

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

Today's 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 is on the content not the format
- No authorship, owned by its community
- The community is the “watchdog”
Wikis

  - >2.8 million articles in English alone
  - www.wikipedia.org

- Google’s Knol: A Unit of Knowledge
  - knol.google.com

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>Specific Overall Objective</th>
<th>Clear objectives for the wiki</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Timely</td>
<td>Definitive times for stages of use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Students need to feel they collaboratively own the wiki</td>
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<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Localized Objective</td>
<td>What is expected of the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Engagement Rules</td>
<td>Who can edit and what is editable</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Navigation</td>
<td>Clear, simple navigation</td>
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**Wiki charter**

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

**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 teacher 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

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/

- Avitars

References


References