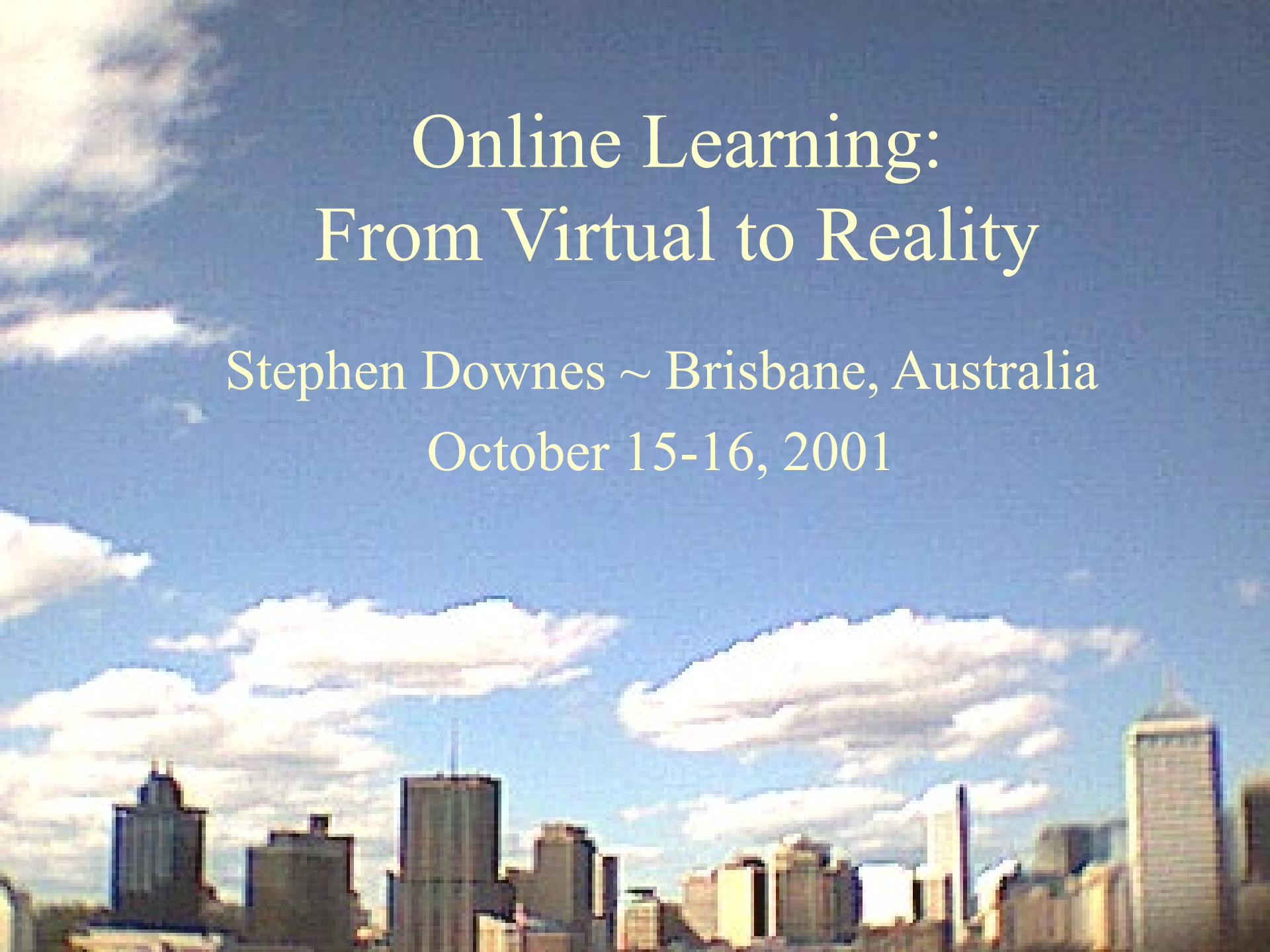


Online Learning: From Virtual to Reality

Stephen Downes ~ Brisbane, Australia

October 15-16, 2001





A Voyage on the *Tribal Warrior*

Built in the Torres Strait more than 100 years ago as a pearling lugger, it now promotes awareness of the Aboriginal community



*This is a story of reconciliation.
This is the meaning:
Let us come together and talk peace*

The Tribal Warrior
Association uses the
boat to train
Aboriginal youth to
attain their Master
Class V Commercial
Maritime Certificate



What is Virtual? What is Reality?

The theme of this conference suggests that online learning is something that is becoming real, becoming mainstream....

I want to suggest that online learning will help education itself become real...





**My Thesis:
Online learning moves
education of out the
text-based language-
based classroom and
into the community...
and thereby makes it
more real**

A Range of Reality...

TEXT --- STORIES --- SIMULATION --- EXPERIENCE

Less Real

More Real

More Abstract

Less Similar

Less Interaction

Less Abstract

More Similar

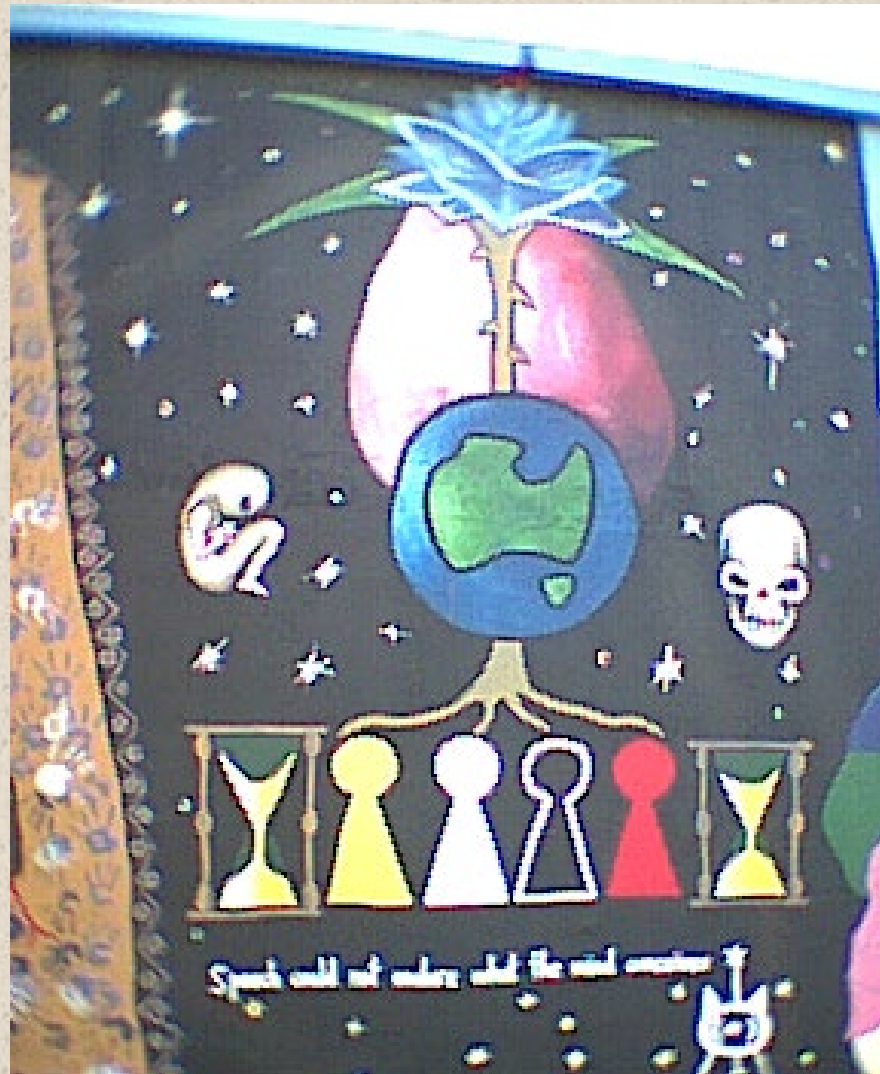
More Interaction

More

Expensive!



The written word, powerful as it is, is an abstraction, at remove from what it represents, and therefore vague, subject to ambiguity and multiple interpretation



Text is virtual
It is the *most*
virtual
The term *virtual*
reality was most
applicable when
the internet was
text-based

- *Speech could not endure what the mind conceives*

We make
learning
more real
through
storytelling



- The personal experience and the interaction of the teacher takes learning beyond text and makes it more real for the learner

There are many forms of storytelling



Music and theatre, for example... these create a wider range of experience, stimulating more senses, touching us emotionally

But it's even better when we participate, interact...



Most online learning stops here

- It focuses on the text...
- If it's good, it adds an element of dialogue, of storytelling
 - » But if it seems virtual, it's because it *is* virtual...
- We can do so much more...

The next wave in online learning is simulation

It has started already....

This is a project that allows students to work in a simulated economy...



<http://crec07.bus.utexas.edu/index.html>

Albert Ip and Roni Linser...

Four essential ingredients...

1. Goal-based learning
2. Role-play
3. The web (as a virtual space)
4. Traditional teaching (as a supplement)

*Evaluation of a
Role-Play
Simulation in
Political Science*

[http://horizon.unc.edu/TS/default.asp?
show=article&id=816](http://horizon.unc.edu/TS/default.asp?show=article&id=816)

(continued)

Designing a Simulation:

1. Determine roles in the simulation
2. Write the scenario
3. Design specific forums for interaction
4. Set up a social structure to define roles
5. Create tasks to scaffold the roles

Immersive Simulations...

Digital Peacekeeping

USC Information
Sciences Institute

- large IMAX-type screen
- populated with autonomous digital constructs



http://www.beyond2000.com/news/May_01/story_1135.html

“... people will be surrounded by intelligent and intuitive interfaces in everyday objects around us and an environment recognizing and responding to the presence of individuals in an invisible way by year 2010 - Jari Ahola

The next step... Ambient Intelligence



http://www.ercim.org/publication/Ecrim_News/enw47/intro.html

Detroit...

5th Graders at
Lessinger Elementary
School use Palms to
draw wildflowers
while on a field trip at
Madison Heights
Nature Center



[http://www.detnews.com/2001/schools/
0110/01/c04-307099.htm](http://www.detnews.com/2001/schools/0110/01/c04-307099.htm)

Hawaii...

Ocean of Knowledge



11 junior high school students will spend 11 months studying in a maritime environment

<http://starbulletin.com/2001/19/04/news/story3.html>

The virtual fishing rod...



How would you teach civic politics?




What we did at MuniMall...



Which brings us back to the
Tribal Warrior...
and the subversive
wall



The most real learning is reality

The background of the slide is a photograph of a cityscape viewed through a large, curved metal grid structure. The grid is composed of dark, intersecting lines that form a series of irregular, diamond-shaped openings. Through these openings, a city with various buildings, including a prominent white building with a tower, and green trees are visible under a clear sky. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting daytime.

The Internet frees us
from the classroom...

From Virtual...



To Reality...

