

# Reusable Media, Social Software and Openness in Education

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AOL, Prodigy, CompuServe join  
the internet... why?

"Gradually, people are coming to realize that the term 'free' has to do with access, not with price. . ."

– GNN's Tim O'Reilly

<http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1995/jul/cutting.html>

But he also said...

“In looking to start up its Internet service, AOL is certainly hedging its bets, half-hoping perhaps that the Net will go away and leave them their proprietary business.”

The tension has never gone  
away...

Open vs. Closed

# Broadcast vs. Conversation

# Institution vs. Individual



# Hierarchy vs. Network

# Centralized vs. Decentralized

# Product vs. Remix

Planned vs. Chaotic

# Static vs. Dynamic

# Push vs. Pull

The trigger...

When the internet came to the  
desktop, people gained a great  
new capacity

New technologies...

Text editors, email clients,  
HTML, web servers, digital  
media, blogs...



New markets...

A global reach via greater  
connectivity, peer to peer,  
disintermediation...

Traditional media and services,  
quite correctly, perceive this as a  
threat...

The fax machine...

vs. courier services

The internet

vs. television

Skype

vs. the telephone

Blogging

vs. newspapers

In general, new technology is introduced in two stages...  
First, it duplicates existing products and services...  
Second, it obliterates them...

Traditional models of production,  
business models, and distribution  
channels are threatened



Production...

Demand vs. Volunteer

Encyclopedia Britannica vs.  
Wikipedia

# Business Models...

Proprietary and commercial vs.  
free and open source

Windows vs. Linux

PDF vs. Plain Text

Elsevier vs. Open Archives

Distribution models...

Broadcast vs. network

MPAA vs. Gnutella

NY Times Editorial vs Instapundit

CD-ROM vs. online

But even as we bring our local  
forms of interaction –  
conversations, friends, sharing –  
into the global arena...

... the global forms of  
interaction are being brought into  
our homes... copyright, points  
clubs & air miles, profiling,  
tracking, authentication

“If 'technology' means 'everything is a copy' - which, of course, is the design of the network - and if the consequence is that everything is copyrighted - then all remix today presumptively requires the permission of someone first.”  
(paraphrase)

Lawrence Lessig

<http://www.downes.ca/cgi-bin/website/view.cgi?dbs=Article&key=1094072167>



... infiltrating not only our homes  
and our lives but even our  
language...

Aspirin, xerox, coke, just do it,  
piracy, collateral damage, ethnic  
cleansing...

Even as we become more free,  
the calls for a closed network are  
becoming more insistent and  
more pervasive...



# Bundles...

Music albums, preformatted radio,  
Elsevier (again), image libraries,  
cable packages, Windows, 'enterprise  
solutions'

# Closed Spaces and Markets...

Friendster, Orkut, site registration,  
federated search, the LCMS...

# Learning Design...

The analogy of the play vs. the  
analogy of a game... direction vs  
action, package vs. materials

# Media Formats...

PDF vs. HTML/XML, Real or WMF  
vs MP3

# Digital Rights...

XrML and ODRL (whatever is not expressedly permitted is prohibited)



Dan Rehak: ‘Behaviours, services, etc: identification, authorization, authentication, digital rights, etc., all have to be worked out and all have to be defined in the system.’ (paraphrase)

<http://www.downes.ca/cgi-bin/website/view.cgi?dbs=Article&key=1094171195>

Really? Did RSS work that way? Blogs?

When we understand what we are  
looking for we can see it  
everywhere...

Types of barriers...



# Lock-out

Subscription access, user registration,  
passwords, network authentication...

# Lock-in

Proprietary content and software,  
closed markets, 'solutions'

# High Bar

APIs and interoperability, web  
services, Java, metadata

# Flooding

Starbucks and AOL, spam

# Legal

The attack on fair use, the attack on  
free software, SCO, DMCA

... and we, as a community, are  
complying...

# IMS Metadata

Why 87 fields and detailed taxonomies? Why not Dublin core... or even RSS? Why metadata at all?

# SCORM

Why a content (resource) based independent study mode based on commercial content (and providers, and LMSs) and no interaction?



# Learning Design

... wherein we tell people what they ought to do, rather than provide what they need when they need it...

directed play vs. improv

# Digital Repositories

Why would we adopt a federated system characterized by closed gates, instead of a harvest system characterized by open access?

# CORDRA

Object identification and handles...  
and permissions and authentication  
built into the backbone of the  
network?

In the history of the internet, ask  
yourself, what has been  
successful, what worked?

FTP, email, Usenet, the web,  
blogs, RSS...

What did these have in common?

They were...

- simple
- decentralized
- open
- free... etc.

IMS landed on my desk in 1997  
or so...

Where is my 'blogger' of  
e-learning? Where is my RSS?

One view... the market will do it  
for us (Lessig?)...software  
companies, publishers...

I have no faith...



It is worth noting – none of these major waves were commercial innovations – commercialization only came after – html and web pages, simple, easy to use... mailing lists... blogs.... RSS.... Photo blogs....

‘If you put too many features up front, it's too feature-heavy. We have to say, we're not growing communities, it's communities that are growing communities...

Dave, for example, had a community using Slash code. But the moderation system is so extensive, it killed the community.’  
(paraphrase)



**David Wiley and Brent Lambert**

<http://www.downes.ca/cgi-bin/website/view.cgi?dbs=Article&key=1094172221>

We have to do it ourselves...

Existing institutional structures –  
yes, including universities – will  
tend to throw up barriers rather  
than open access...

‘We believe that collective minds are better than a genius translators. If we tried to hire a genius translator... If you use a publisher and the translation isn't good, you can't fix it. But our way, we can fix it. We depend on good will. We got a lot of volunteers, doctors, lawyers... Ordinarily, you cannot buy their services, that's not their job. We ask them to donate their expertise.’ (paraphrase)



Luc Chu

<http://www.downes.ca/cgi-bin/website/view.cgi?dbs=Article&key=1094072840>

Why?

the idea that new media is like a  
vocabulary...

but nobody can learn only by  
listening, nobody can teach only  
by speaking

We need to be able to speak, to use  
the syntax of our new language...

‘There are two ways to do it. Wrap everything up in one bundle, call it a folder, and you just drag and drop the folder. It's pre-packaged. The other way to do it is that it's not prepackaged, it's just there.’  
(paraphrase)



Jacques du Plessis

<http://www.downes.ca/cgi-bin/website/view.cgi?dbs=Article&key=1094072450>



‘Programs are to digital media what syntax is to language. With one, it's a package, signed, sealed and delivered. With the other, it's open. The conceptual way in which you deal with it in an instructional sense is open. In the prepackaged way, the decision has been made. In the open mode, I deal with it as it arises.’

We have to have conversations

- need negotiation, for example

We have to have diversity

- access across multiple communities,  
new resources, new ways of thinking

# We have to have symbiosis

- shared resources, elimination of redundancy (otherwise, we will be paying for all those features in Word forever...)

We have to have feedback,  
checks and balances

- back propagation
- recommenders and reviews

We have to have emergence

‘The wisdom of crowds’, the idea of  
democracy, the marketplace

‘So the pedagogy of peer to peer process, we get the concept of 'regotiation' - is a term that captures this process of posting a need, responding to a need, posting a resource, etc, the iterative process that meets the need...

The more diverse the community, the more stable it tends to be. Boundary members are especially important - creates links with other groups. ’ (paraphrase)



Erin Brewer

<http://www.downes.ca/cgi-bin/website/view.cgi?dbs=Article&key=1094170319>

# The mechanism...

- filter
- repurpose
- remix
- feed forward



We want layers, not channels

Instead of trying to organize the network, we should be looking at how it can organize itself...

We are now at the point where we have pretty much replicated the non-digital environment –  
online courses, class,  
newspapers, etc.

But the potential of the net is as a  
communications tool... speaking  
not only in the old language, but  
in the new language

We have to gain our voice, to  
speak for ourselves, to reclaim  
our language, our media, our  
culture

Go fast, go cheap, and let it go  
out of control...

Lamb, Levine, Norman – Small  
Pieces Loosely Joined

<http://careo.elearning.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/wiki.pl?SmallPiecesLooselyJoined>

Marie Jasinski ~Educhaos

<http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/showcase/presentations/pres3.html>

Reusable media – we need a  
blogger of learning content

Social software – we need a way  
to support conversations and not  
just content



Learning – we need to leverage  
the principles of self-organizing  
networks...

We need to transform learning...  
from something we do for people  
to something they do for  
themselves...

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