

Chapter 58

Blended Learning and Digital Curation: A Learning Design Sequence

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a case of successful integration of digital curation in a repeating series of blended classroom activities. Digital curation, in education, can be understood as the collection, organization, interpretation, summary, and sharing of online resources by learners on a topic of inquiry. This research reports on a blended digital curation learning design integrated into a third-year university course. A digital curation activity sequence development process and the classroom activity structure form the basis of the educational implementation presented here. In theory, digital curation activities can support the sharing of collected resources between learners. In practice, digital curation learning activities in higher education can also support blended and flipped classroom engagement models while providing opportunities for the development of critical thinking skills. The chapter describes the activities, the learning design, and the outcomes of a digital curation activity sequence. This provides other educators with a learning design roadmap for engaging students in pre-lecture activities or blended learning that adds value to classroom lectures.

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INTRODUCTION

In a recent study of online learning activities (Ostashewski, 2013) students reported that building a collection of online curated resources that could be later used in their professional practice was particularly valuable. Students reported that their exposure to some of the content-focused hyperlinked websites supporting a workplace topic continued to be helpful beyond the course. Similarly, sharing of the website URLs and short annotations or descriptions of the particular value of those websites provided a “filtering” or “digital curation” of content for others. Digital curation is about “maintaining and adding value to, a trusted body of digital information for current and future use” (Beagrie, 2008, p. 3). A simplified definition of digital curation for education is: “the online or digital curation of content for education can be understood as the sharing and reviewing of online resources using websites” (Good, 2012). The literature supports digital curation activities as valuable learning designs for both blended and online learning (Ravitz & Hoadley, 2005). For example, resource sharing or *sharing and curation of online resource* is reported as a key online-networked learning activity (Wenger, Trayner, de Laat, 2011; Ostashewski & Reid, 2011; Sinha, Rosson, Carroll, & Du, 2010) and may, in fact, represent a learning design suitable for blended or flipped education delivery. In summary, the literature reports that students engaged in online or blended learning describe their joint and shared exploration and evaluation of curricular resources (e.g. materials presented to them in a course or found via researching) as valuable online learning experiences. This was the basis upon which digital curation activities were integrated into a third year business education course in one Australian university. This chapter will provide an examination of how integration of digital curation activities into a blended higher education classroom occurred and presents a learning design sequence arising from the research.

The goal of this chapter is to present a case of successful integration of digital curation as a series of weekly classroom activities. Some ways that digital curation activities can be utilized are by:

1. Taking advantage of a network of curators working for you (building your own customized network) and consuming the curated information.
2. Collecting, organizing, connecting, attributing, interpreting, summarizing vast amount of information on any topic.
3. Sharing knowledge by being the curator for others for a particular niche area of expertise or interest.

The unique implementation of digital curation activities in a university setting described in this chapter demonstrates digital curation activities can provide a method for students to prepare for lectures and critical analysis of topics. The activities are described, including the underlying learning design rationale, and the outcomes of the blended digital curation sequence are outlined in order to provide a roadmap for others looking to actively engage students in pre-lecture, flipped, or blended learning activities that can add value to classroom lectures.

DIGITAL CURATION

Blended learning often requires a considered use of one or many of the online technologies which support educational tasks and activities. Yakel, Conway, Hedstrom, and Wallace (2011) noted that with the ever-expanding collection of digital information all around us, a new generation of digital curators is needed to manage this information. Digital curation, as a process, aligns positively with the affordances of blended learning, and has been defined as an active process whereby content/artifacts are purposely selected to be preserved for future access. In the digital

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