

Chapter XVI

The Future of Rich Media, Learning Management Systems, and Content Management Systems

Introduction

In a world of increasing bandwidth it is no surprise that the content of the Web is changing. A trend away from text richness towards media richness is evident. The rise and popularity of video sites such as YouTube and media-rich, social software are further examples of this trend and it is reasonable to expect a future that will be rich in online media. When rich media are integral components of online social and leisure experiences, it is reasonable that students will expect video and other examples of media richness in their online learning experiences rather than a preponderance of text as is the current experience in many institutions. Rich media have for years played the role of adjuncts to teaching and learning. For example, for many years assessment by video, in some classes, has been an option although one that has been slow to be adopted. Perhaps the time is now ripe for this and other online uses of video and audio as the tools for production are becoming simpler and cheaper. In the past, sharing video was limited to the physical distribution of

the tape or disc. Today one preferred method of sharing of video is by uploading to purpose-built, public Web sites.

Learning management systems (LMSs) have played a significant role in learning for the past six to eight years. To date they have usually been text-rich in both content and interactions. The content, generally written by academics, has been dominated by text. This is not surprising as writing in their discipline is a large part of academic work. However, for the reasons mentioned previously, manufacturers of LMSs must be feeling the need to include media-rich content. Further, many institutions are moving to couple content management systems (CMSs) with LMSs. CMSs are repositories for digital learning objects that can be conveniently tagged, stored, and reused. There are many benefits that can be achieved with CMSs. Faculty who invest large amounts of time in the production of rich media resources can see greater returns on their investments when they are reused and reuse can be maximized through CMSs. Publishers are extending their traditional markets, selling digital learning objects to accompany textbooks, these too can be stored on CMSs to not only maximize reuse but also to track copyright provisions. There is a role for student-created content to be stored in CMSs and used as resources by subsequent classes, as often student perspective can provide appropriate perspectives. These are all ways in which the levels of rich media content in e-learning will increase. However, the change from text-rich to media-rich is not limited to content. The past few years have seen the birth and growth of instant messaging and its evolution into voice messaging, Voice over Internet protocol (VoIP), and video instant messaging. Videoconference has for some years been used for interactions in teaching and learning and as the communication tools become widely distributed it is expected to increase.

Clearly rich media have roles in the content and interactions of online learning. The challenge then to those who design learning events is to take these new applications of the technology and design events that are appropriate to the subject material and the participants, their preferred way of learning, the context, and the budget. This challenge is made more complex due to the changing technological environment. The Web is changing to Web 2.0 and e-learning is changing to e-learning 2.0.

Web 2.0 and E-Learning 2.0

Web 2.0 and e-learning 2.0 were mentioned in the first chapter of this book. Those writing about e-learning 2.0 suggest that it will represent a major paradigm shift from e-learning 1.0, or text-rich e-learning. However, technological changes of this magnitude generally do not happen overnight. Rather the changes are gradual and graduated with the newer technology operating in parallel with the older for a period of time. O'Hear (2006) suggests that e-learning 2.0 will be a loose connection

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