

# Chapter 7

## Bringing Web 2.0 into the Learning Environment

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### ABSTRACT

*Social Networking, or the so-called Web 2.0 phenomenon, is changing the way we use the Internet. In turn, the way we use the Internet is changing the way we work, learn, communicate, and research. This chapter outlines a series of issues, tools, techniques, and pedagogy that may lie behind the process to bring social media into a learning environment. It then concludes with a four-year experience bringing these concepts into a senior undergraduate seminar, and offers observations and conclusions about the efficacy of our approach. Social networking has brought the Web into a conversation. Similarly, the chasm between synchronous and asynchronous learning is closing as the classroom becomes one part of a larger, continuous learning experience.*

### BACKGROUND

#### Web 2.0

There are numerous definitions of the concept of the Web 2.0 since Tim O'Reilly (2005) coined the phrase. The basic premise is that the Web itself underwent a fundamental transformation from a one-way broadcast medium to an interac-

tive one. The concept is straightforward, but its impact is extensive. Web 1.0 has been described as a broadcast, and Web 2.0 as a conversation (See, for example, Tingling, Gemino and Parker, 2011). Corporate Web pages and online catalogues have given way to product and seller ratings alongside product offerings and more personalized discussions. Tools like static Web pages and email have taken from the forefront of the Internet to a place

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alongside Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Flickr and all things Google. Similarly, the educational process is evolving at a rate faster than ever.

The adoption of social networking is a result of evolutions of both product and process (Tingling, Gemino & Parker, 2011). Faster, richer and ubiquitous Internet access enabled users to work with rich media virtually anywhere, and portable devices such as tablets and smartphones moved this communication off the desktop and into a pocket. The resulting forms of communication have also evolved.

The genesis was the emergence of cellular devices and interactive Websites. Such advancements have not only impacted our personal and educational life, but have also changed the commercial world (See, for example. Personal Websites such as Facebook and Twitter in addition to resources such as Google, Yammer, and course management platforms such as Blackboard (<http://www.blackboard.com/>) and Moodle (<http://moodle.org/>) have changed the way we live our daily lives. Engagement is key. See, for example, DeloitteAustralia for a discussion of how such a tool changes a level of corporate interaction.

In this chapter we are suggesting that our teaching and learning strategies should keep pace with current technology. To this end we describe our notion of the ‘teach 2.0’ concept to set the context for looking at how particular human-computer interaction (HCI) works in post secondary seminars. Because this territory is new, we analyze the environment and suggest strategies for dealing with the Web 2.0/teach 2.0 dilemma and then provide an overview of a ‘case study’ where we propose to practice what we preach.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Teach 2.0**

The first characteristic of communication in the Web 2.0 environment is ‘participation.’ While Web 1.0 was a way to provide communication

through Websites, Web 2.0 moves to a more active two-way dialogue. To use an everyday business metaphor, one could suggest that the general Internet-storefront had inventory to offer in the Web 1.0 world. Yet the concept of the Web 2.0 has brought more than just product description. The digital goods on offer include: dialogue about the products offered; information and support; and introduced the ability to articulate and influence a seller’s reputation. Sellers on eBay, for example, have a reputation that can be quickly measured by the amount of feedback received, and the percentage of that feedback that was rated ‘positive’. Yet, with such a reputation comes trust. Other business offerings with the advent of the Web 2.0, the techno-tools now offer the ability to rate a product, and customers can share their experiences with a store, and with its offerings. This is empowering to both the vendors and to the customers. A tool such as ‘shop savvy’ (<http://shopsavvy.mobi/>), for example, allows a consumer to scan a bar code and receive reviews of the product, online and nearby prices, and choose to purchase online instead of at the location where the product was scanned.

Another attribute of social media is that of engagement. Tapscott and Williams (2008) coined the term ‘prosumer’ to describe the new consumer as someone who simultaneously produces content while they consume products. A prosumer in an educational setting offers the opportunity to greatly expand roles. It also offers the challenge of blurring the line between ‘teacher’ and ‘learner’. In a subsequent book, Tapscott and Williams (2010) expanded on the notion of collaboration in the learning environment, suggesting collaboration impacts both inter-institutional relations and the role of the student. In discussing his experiences with a communications course, Howard Rheingold (<http://www.rheingold.com/>) suggested in his ‘social media classroom’ (<http://socialmediaclassroom.com/>) that there were typically students in his classes that knew more than him than about a specific element of discussion. His job, he suggested, was to find them and draw them out. If an educator can accept this fact, which we allege is

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