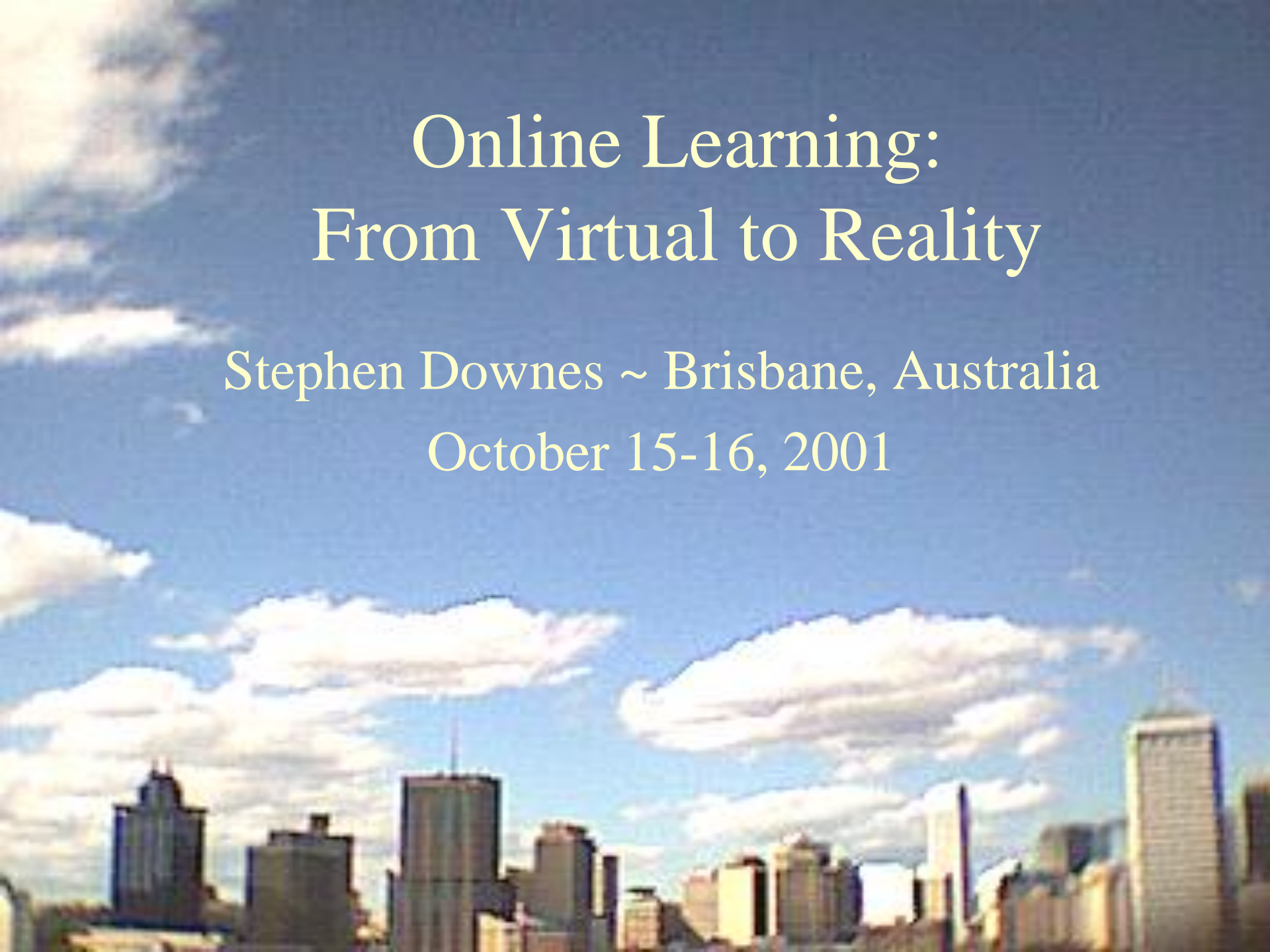# Online Learning:
From Virtual to Reality

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
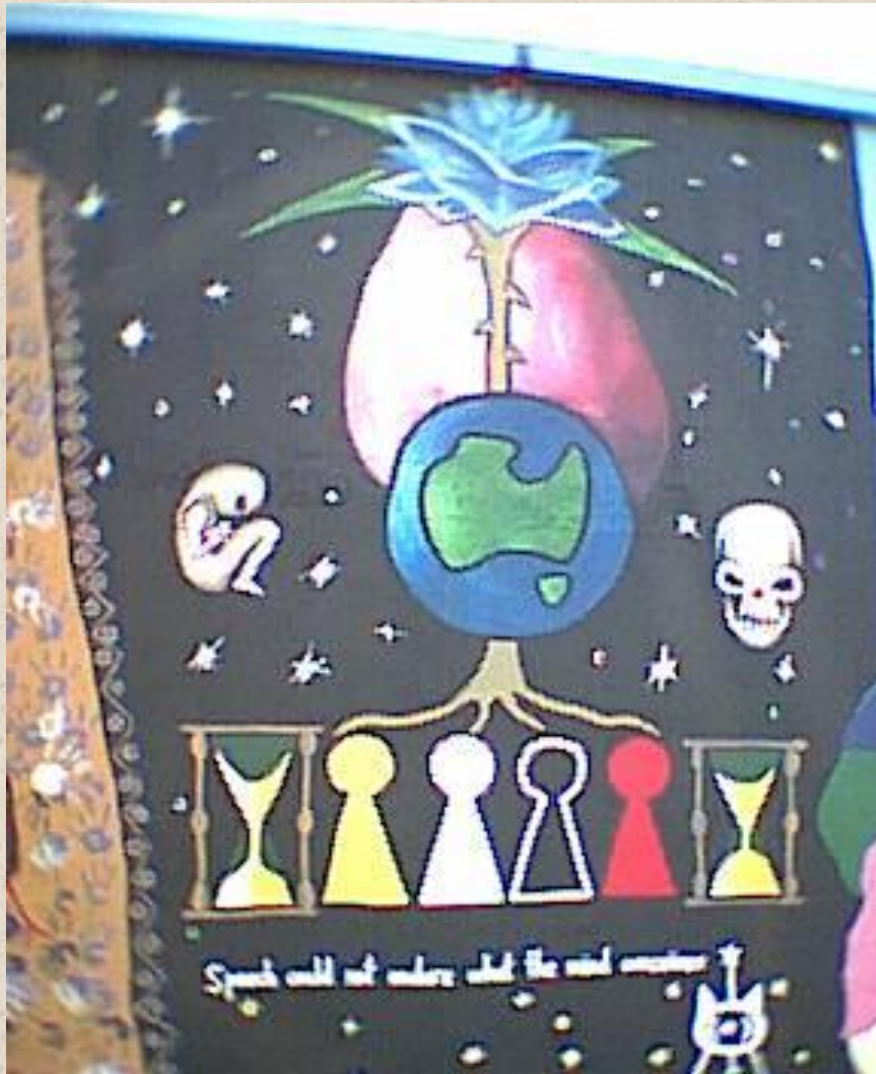
Less Abstract

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 though 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…

EDE
Experimental Digital Economy

Student Signup	Student Login
Professor Login	Supervisor Login
Guest Login	Login Problems?
Related Links	Online Help

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

(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

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…
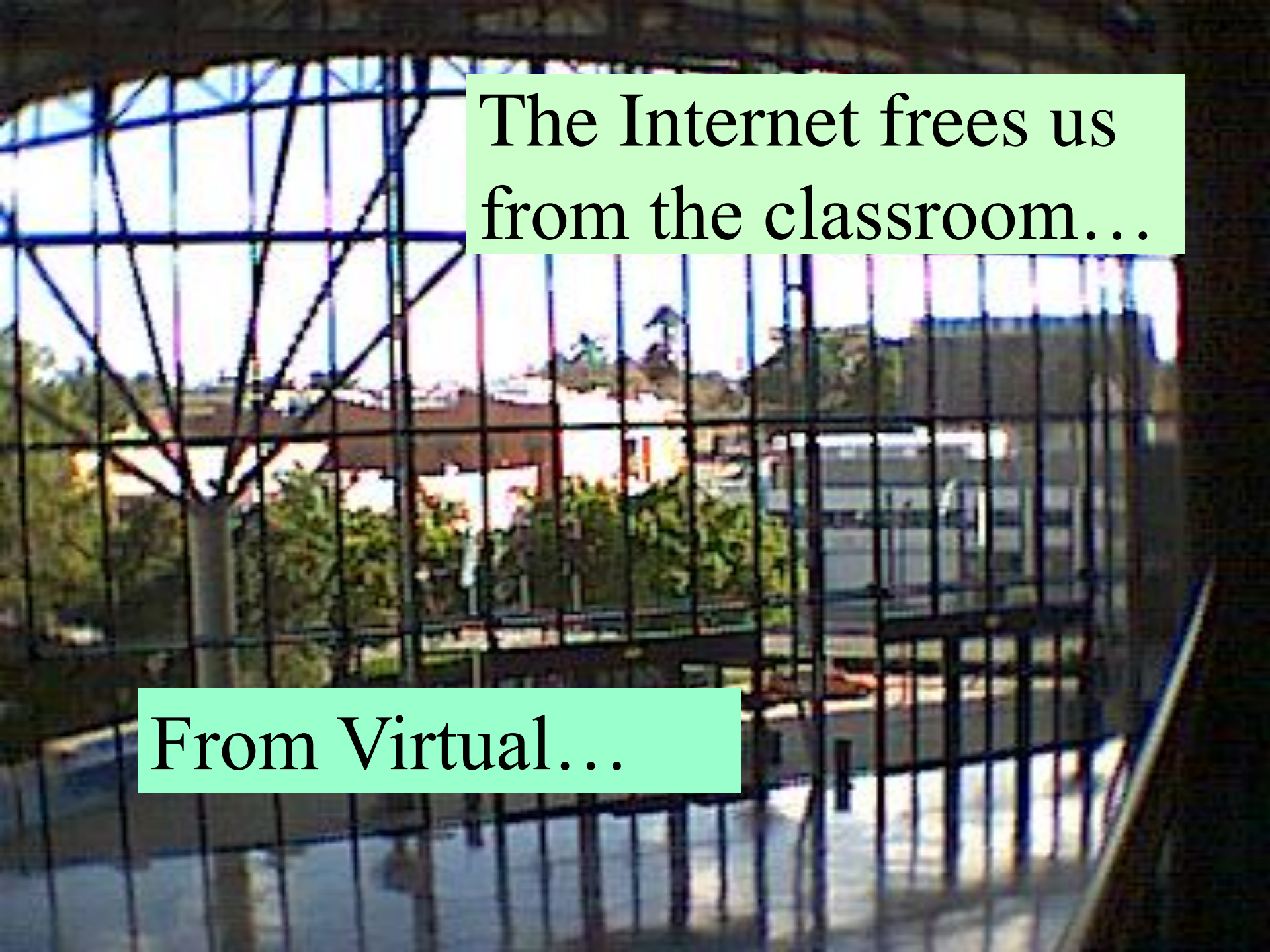
How would you teach civic politics?

What we did at MuniMall…

Which brings us back to the *Tribal Warrior…*
and the subversive wall

The most real learning is reality

The Internet frees us from the classroom…

From Virtual…

To Reality…