Syndicated Learning

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Overview

1. Origins – How I Got Here From there
2. The Very Idea of Syndicated Learning
3. Tools – RSS, Javascript and a Shot of Web Services
4. Design Spruik
5. Principles of Syndicated Learning Design
6. Some Applications

Origins – How I Got Here From There

- The Start
  - Online Learning and Online Courses
  - Courses, Lessons, Modules
  - The Need for Reusability
  - The Need for Course Resources

- NewsTrolls - 1998
  - Originated in Online Community
  - Based in Discussion List with Sharing of Resources
  - NewsTrolls Etrolls
  - Revisions, Revisions

- The Brandon Pages – 1998
  - Civic Information Site
  - Added Resource (Links) Base
  - Generated Pages Dynamically

- Stephen's Web - 1998
  - Started as a Personal Resource Base
  - Added Discussion from Online Courses
  - Added Dynamic Pages from the Brandon Pages
  - Deployed RSS and JavaScript Feeds

- MuniMall – 1999
  - Intended as Portal for Municipal Sector
  - Built Around a Resource Base
  - Was Required to Work with Web CT Courses
  - Developed MuniVille Simulation
  - Developed MuniMall Newsletter

- Evolution of The Model – 2000
  - *Knowledge* – A Common Resource Base Drawing Materials From the Net
  - *Learning* – Structured Learning Opportunities into Which Resources are Fed
  - *Community* – Community Environment; discussion, sharing (today, the blogosphere)

- OLDaily – 2001
  - Email Newsletter for Stephen's Web
  - Formally Articulated Design Principles
  - Multiple formats – HTML, text, Javascript, RSS
  - Integrated tools – Refer, Research, Reflect (and one day, Read and Remember)

The Very Idea of Syndicated Learning

- Originates in News Media
  - Think, for example, of wire services such as Reuters, AP
  - Online Syndication (using RSS and NML)
  - Examples: Moreover, news.google.com, Yahoo!, News Is Free, Carmen's Headline Viewer

- Syndication Has Two Major Elements

  1. *Upstream* – The Collection of Resources You Draw Into Your Online Resource

  2. *Downstream* – The Collection of Resources You Send Your Resource Into

The Two Parts are Equally Important

[A drawing here would be neat-o)

- Syndication is Like Learning Objects, but:
  - Without the "Learning" and
  - Without the "Objects"

  In Other Words, Syndication Employs the *Concept* of Learning Objects, but Without the Baggage

- Without the "Learning"…
    - The Resources are not *Learning Resources* in any Specific Sense
    - May be Newspaper Articles, Journal Articles, Photos, Data, Whatever….
    - These Resources *Support* Learning but
    - (Typically) They Do Not *Substitute* for Learning

- Without the "Object"
  - The Resources do Not Use Learning Object Metadata or Wrappers
  - Indeed, their Producers (Newspapers, Magazines, Governments, etc) Will Probably Never Tag them Properly
  - It is Up To the Syndicated Learning System to Adapt to the Protocols that Exist

- Downstream…
  - You Are Not (Necessarily) Producing Learning Objects
  - Expect to Provide *Multiple Output Formats* (for example, HTML, Text, Email, RSS, Javascript, etc.)

- Learning With Syndicated Learning
  - Learning is *Open Ended* – The Syndicated Resource Does Not Worry About a Starting and an Ending Point
  - Learning is *Multi-Threaded* – It covers all topics (and various levels of difficulty) at Once, Not an Ordered Sequence
  - Learning is *User Driven* – There is No Curriculum, Only Options

- The Essential Concept - Dynamism
  - Syndicated Learning is *Dynamic* – Your Set of Resources is Always Changing (Because the World Changes)
  - The Idea is to Connect (Dynamic) Real World Data and Information With Static Learning Content
  - A Course About Ecuador, for example, Should use Today's News and This Year's Statistics

- Exercise:
  - Think of a Domain (Geography, Social Studies, Math, etc…)
  - List the Resources you Could Use in Such a Course From Day to Day…
    - Newspaper articles, government statistics, live data feeds, online articles….?

Tools – RSS, Javascript and a Shot of Web Services

Design Spruik

Principles of Syndicated Learning Design

- Find Your Niche
  - Syndicated Learning Works Best When It's Focused
  - Otherwise You and Your Readers are Swamped
  - Also, Focus Allows You To Develop Expertise
    - not just in content, but in people, resources

- Go Alternative
  - Remember, Everybody Can Access Mainstream Sources
  - Troll the Discussion Lists, Blogs, Specialty pages
  - Internationalize

- Be Yourself
  - Don't Try to Be Reuters
  - Add Context, Interpretation, Evaluation
  - Be an Idoru (Spot Patterns in the Phenomena)
  - *Use* Your Own Knowledge Base (even before Google)
  - Let the Selection Reflect Your Biases and Interests

- Add Value
  - Include Your own Articles, Essays, etc., into the Mix (They Will be Picked Up Downstream (And Will Bring Readers to Your Feed))
  - Connect online Commentary to the Resources Listed (and Syndicate the Commentary)
  - Contribute both Upstream and Downstream

- Design For Text
  - Keep Graphics to a Minimum – Most Output Formats are Text Only
  - Never use Graphics for Navigation (Think About the Poor Slug Using WAP)

- Integrate
  - Support Your Resources with direct Links to Comments, Similar Content, Etc.
  - In Your Own Work, Include Links back to the Knowledge Base
  - Or Even Better, Syndicate Resources into Your Own Online Publications (and Courses)

- Update Regularly
  - The Value of Your Resource is that it is Dynamic (I.e., Contains the Latest Stuff)
  - Generating an Email Newsletter Creates Discipline
  - If You Don't Have Time, Share

- Avoid Noise
  - Strive for Quality Content, Not day-to-day Chatter
  - Questions to Ask: Is it a new Point of View or Innovation, Does it Add Information
  - Things to Avoid (Unless You Specialize in Them): Awards, Stock Prices, Mergers, Press Releases, Minimal Product Updates, Non-News

- Foster Community
  - Contribute to Your Own Discussions
  - Recognize Contributions
  - Make it Easy to Add Comments (Both Publicly and Privately)
  - Help People Share Your Resources

Some Applications

- Sample Applications:
  - MuniVille
  - Budget Simulator
  - Nations of the World