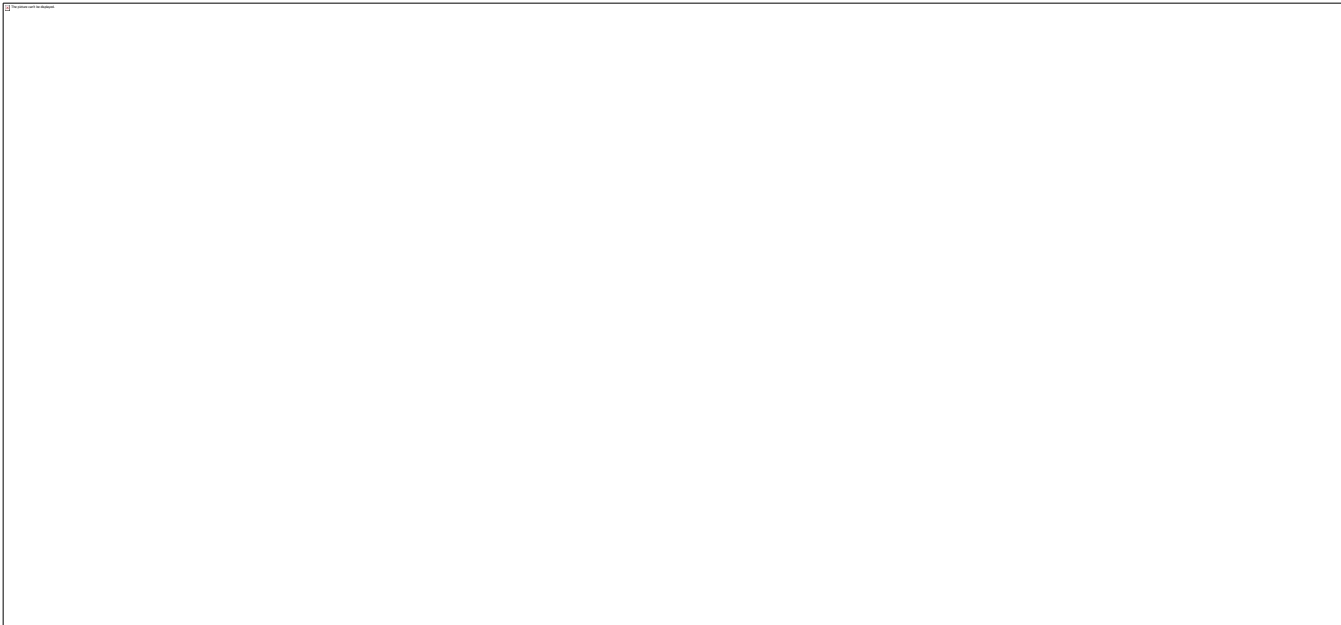


Free Learning and Network Learning

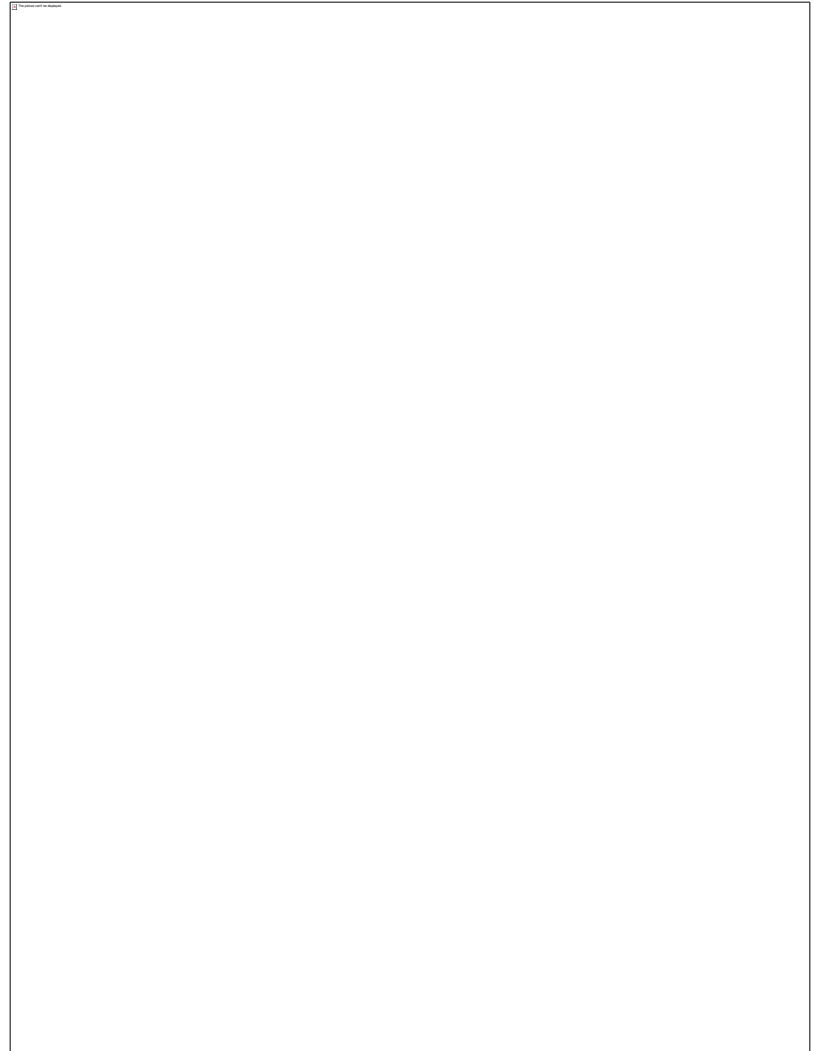


Free Learning

- The *picture* of learning you should have is one of a large set of connected nodes (like the neurons in a brain)



- Teachers are nodes, students are nodes
- Both teaching and learning consists of sending and receiving communications to other nodes



- The *learning* in such a picture happens in two ways:
- First, *society* learning as the network of connections between individuals takes shape
- Second, *individuals* learn as the process of being a node shapes connections in their own brains

- The *communications* between nodes were, in former days, text based (consisting of *language*)
- The *materials* used for such communications were *free* - the letters, the words, the grammar, the syntax
- Nobody *owned* language (though there are pressures to change that)

- Communications today are in the form of (what might be called) multimedia objects
- We send cultural artifacts back and forth to each other, as though they were words
- Example: lolcats, YouTube videos, Flickr images, the rest

<http://icanhascheezburger.com/>



- Cultural artifacts, as the new language, need to be free - otherwise *we can't communicate* - otherwise, we are stifled, muted
- The free movement of cultural artifacts fosters learning - the hindered movement of such artifacts fosters control

- Al Gore - *The Assault on Reason* - clearly describes the consequences of this
- Gore: a society that used to *think for itself* (through reading) is now one that has its thinking done for it (through television)

Understanding ed delivery

- Today's dominant understanding of educational technology is as a *system*
- This needs to be contrasted (as before) with one based on *standards*
- By this I do *not* mean 'learning object metadata' (which is totally a publisher mindset)

- Educational institutions need to think of their offerings as entities that will be a part of, and interact with, the larger environment
- For example, again: the photo editor that connects to Flickr
- Think about what an *art appreciation* resource would do with Flickr photos

- Not just that - they need to *use* this data to form composite wholes
- Eg. The application that takes photos tagged 'St. Peters' to create an image built from thousands of Flickr photos
- (This is the fundamental understanding behind connectivism)

- Educational institutions need to:
 - *Make resources available* for use in other contexts (rather than having students come to them)
 - Such material will be offered to people automatically, in other contexts, and may or may not be used (deal with it)

- Resources will be offered:
 - Student-selected, from a ‘library’ (which you share with other ‘publishers’)
 - Event-driven, by the system, which will offer a resource at an appropriate time
 - Time-driven (think of Tony Hirst’s RSS-driven course)
 - Instructor (or mentor, or coach) driven - as in a blog offering or RSS feed

- These resources need to:
 - Be able to learn about the environment they are being offered in
 - Be able to learn about the student
 - And to get this information, not just locally, but from anywhere on the internet
 - Communicate state and other information to other (authorized) systems and services

Where we are

- Not 'there' yet...
- Institutions do not (yet) understand how to deliver to external systems
- But we are seeing first signs - eg., iTunes University
- We may see it inside 'courses' first - but the long-term trend is to open delivery

The Principles

1. Diversity

We want to encourage students to engage in diverse readings, diverse environments, diverse discussions

The Principles

2. Autonomy

We want students to chart their own course, to select their own software, to pursue their own learning

The Principles

3. Interaction / Connectedness

The knowledge in this course emerges as a result of the connections among the students and staff – and is not some ‘content’ shoveled from experts to recipients

The Principles

4. Openness

We don't draw barriers between 'in' and 'out' – which means we can accommodate the full engaged, the partially engaged, and the rest – creating strong ties and weak ties

Thanks!

<http://www.downes.ca>