Beyond Free: Open Learning in a Networked World

For APT 2014 (8th July, Greenwich)

https://showtime.gre.ac.uk/index.php/ecentre/apt2014/schedConf/index

As the concept of 'open learning' has grown it has posed an increasing challenge to educational institutions. First admissions were open, then educational resources were open and now whole courses are open. Proponents moreover are demanding not only that open learning be free of charge, but also that the resources and materials be open source – free for reuse by students and educators for their own purposes. This formed the basis for the original design of the Massive Open Online Course as a connected environment in which participants created and reused resources. In such a learning environment, the provision of education moves beyond the programmed delivery of instructional resources and tasks. Education is no longer 'delivered' (for free or otherwise) and instruction is no longer 'designed' in the traditional sense. Institutions are no longer at the centre of the ecosystem; their value propositions are challenged and new roles for professors and researchers must be found if they are to survive. In this talk Stephen Downes outlines the steps educational institutions must take to remain relevant: embracing the free and open sharing of knowledge and learning, underlining their key role as public institutions, and engagement in the lives and workplaces of people in the community.
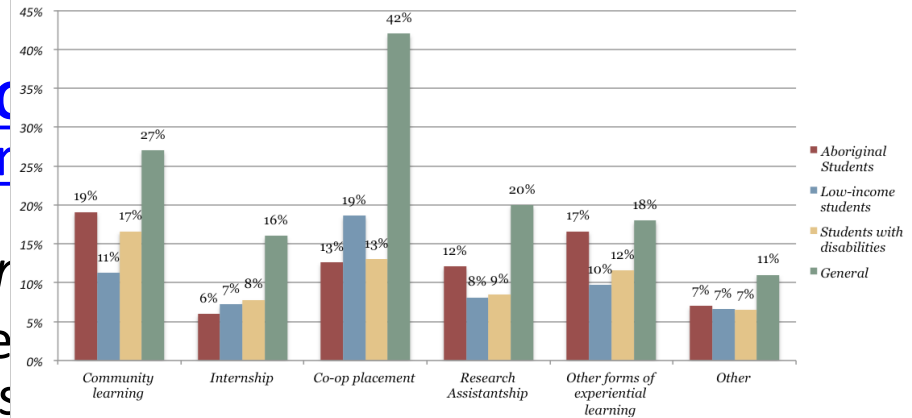
- **[What is the problem for which MOOCs are the solution?](#)**
[Diana Laurillard](#), [ALT Online Newsletter](#), Jun 26, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Diana Laurillard offers the answer to the question in terms of what problems MOOCs *have* solved, which seems to be a bit of an odd way to address a nascent technology. "The problem MOOCs succeed in solving is: to provide free university teaching for highly qualified professionals." Well, yes. And that's the problem the internet had solved by 1990, and the web by 1999. But surely that's not the extent of the problem-solving being does by open online content and services. I have always intended open online learning so address issues of access. Laurillard writes, "by 2015 there will still be 53m children out of school... UNESCO estimates that [we need 1,600,000 teachers](#) to achieve universal primary education." At $10K per teacher, that's an additional $16 billion in salaries; at $100K that's $160 billion. I see no sign anyone is prepared to pay this kind of money. So we need to address access in some other way than simply hiring teachers. Can MOOCs help here? Maybe. As Laurillard says, "If we are to have any hope of reaching our most ambitious educational goal of universal primary education, we have to find innovative ways of teaching." (p.s. - if you charge "even the modest cost of $49" *it's not a MOOC*). (p.p.s. this was posted on the ALT newsletter today; previously posted at IOE London blog [May 14](#)).

- **MOOCS: Expectations and Reality**
Devayani Tirthali, Fiona M. Hollands, Teachers College Columbia University, May 13, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Longish report (211 page PDF) about the use and understanding of MOOCs in an institutional context. "Through interviews with 83 administrators, faculty members, researchers, and other actors from 62 different institutions (see Appendices I, III and VI for details) active in the MOOCspace or more generally in online learning, we observed that colleges and universities have adopted several different stances towards engaging with MOOCs and are using them as vehicles to pursue multiple goals."

- **Who Gets to Graduate?**
  Paul Tough, New York Times, May 27, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- So this is part of what we're up against when we're trying to support a more egalitarian system of education: "whether a student graduates or not seems to depend today almost entirely on just one factor — how much money his or her parents make…. it will always be the case that the kids who have need are going to have been denied a lot of the academic preparation and opportunities for identity formation that the affluent kids have been given." I can speak to that from experience.

- [**A Slew of Studies, Summarized**](#)
  [Doug Lederman](#), [Inside Higher Ed](#), Jun 25, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- The general trend of these three studies reported on in this article is that the cost of higher education isn`t such a barrier to poor people as we thought. The undertone to all three is that they are based on hedges and misleading statistics. The studies show, respectively that: college is still worth it, student aid is harmful, and student debt is overstated. The first result, though, is based on the idea that opportunity cost is lower due to the bad economy. The second blames rising tuition on aid programs. The third is based on a small [biased](#) sample of rich people. The sort of question I ask when I see this is: what's motivating these studies?

- **Are All Experiential Learning C**
  [Ailsa Bristow](), [Ontario Undergr]()
 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Down

- Co-op learning and work place
  authentic learning experiences
  those students who would benefit most from them. This is what is
  not happening, reports the Ontario Undergraduate Student
  Alliance. In general, university participation rates are lower among
  aboriginals, students with disabilities, and the poor. This has a long-
  term impact on unemployment among these groups. And these
  differences are magnified for things like co-op placements or paid
  internships. "Students from marginalized groups are able to secure
  a WIL (Work-Integrated Learning) opportunity it is less likely to be
  in a high-quality paid experience, despite the additional financial
  barriers that students in these groups are more likely to face." Via
  Academica.

Figure 2: Participation in high impact learning experiences by marginialized populations

Legend: Aboriginal Students; Low-income students; Students with disabilities; General

	Aboriginal	Low-income	Disabilities	General
Community learning	19%	11%	17%	27%
Internship	6%	7%	8%	16%
Co-op placement	13%	19%	13%	42%
Research Assistantship	12%	8%	9%	20%
Other forms of experiential learning	17%	10%	12%	18%
Other	7%	7%	7%	11%

- **[More money won't fix need for change in education](#)**
  [Kevin G. Lynch](#), [Globe](#), [Mail](#), Jun 26, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- Kevin G. Lynch, vice-chairman of the BMO Financial Group, writes in the Globe and Mail: "When discussing the challenges facing the education system in Canada, we often seem to accept the false premise that the only problem is funding... This challenge is much more than an incremental program here or some fine-tuning there; it involves a culture change in how we all take more accountability for educational outcomes." It may be true that more money *alone* won't improve our educational system, but it would be wrong to infer that the system can be improved without making the investment up front. As bankers well know, it takes money to save money.

FIGURE 1: Cumulative Percent Change in Higher Ed Costs Per Student Since 2002
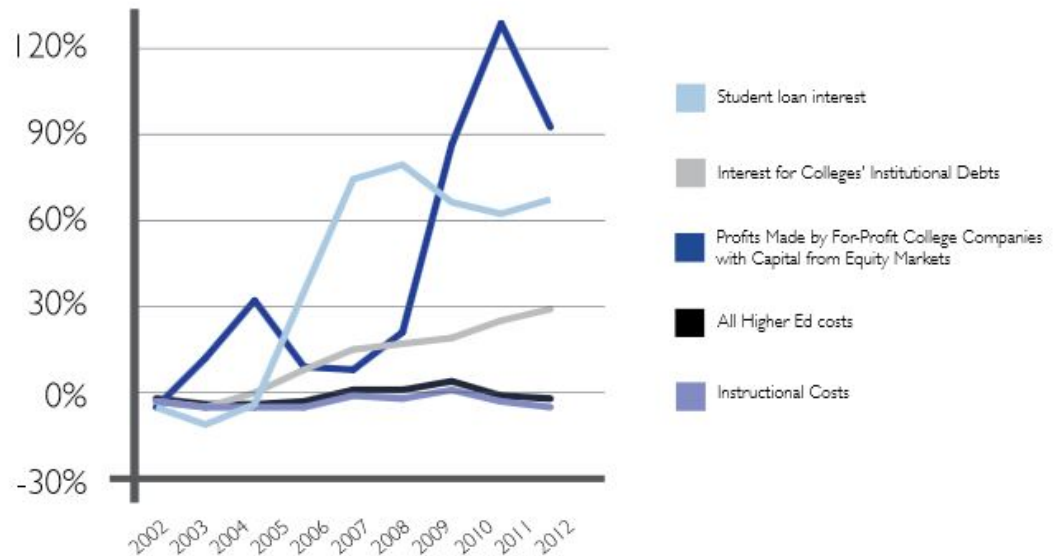
- **Borrowing Against the F[...] Higher Education**
  Charlie Eaton, Cyrus Dio[...] Goldstein, Jacob Habine[...] Culture, Organizations, a[...]
  Commentary by Stephen [...]

- A large part of the impe[...] is the impact of the cost[...] personal level, this is rep[...]ented by the student loan payments that dogged me well into my 40s. But the drain on society is even larger. As George Siemens tweets, quoting from this report, "The largest 15 for-profits [universities] received between 66% and 94% of their revenue from the federal government." Combine this with the fact that they preferentially serve the well-connected and well-to-do, and with the enormous cost of the system as a whole, and you have a mandate for change. That's what this report is about.

- **New Data Suggests the High Costs of Education is Hurting Families**
Jonathan Champagne, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, Jun 09, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- According to this survey from the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, "The high cost of tuition and housing is not only straining students' budgets, but it is also requiring major sacrifices on the part of families." This is consistent with a steady stream of reports on the impact of the cost of education. This in large part explains why there is such a demand for effective open online learning. Related: another initiative to crowdfund university projects and programs, in another crowdfunding silo.

- **[College Libraries Push Back as Publishers Raise Some E-Book Prices](#)**
  [Avi Wolfman-Arent](#), [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#), Jun 27, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- 11 publishers are raising their prices all at the same time. "Publishers insist, however, that there was no conspiracy to raise prices and that the previous cost model for e-books wasn't sustainable. 'We had absolutely no knowledge and we weren't advised by the aggregator at all that other publishers were making a change at the same time,' says Rebecca Seger, director of institutional sales for the Americas at Oxford University Press." Not surprisingly, there is tension and mistrust between academic libraries and publishers.

- **[Universities 'get poor value' from firms](#)**
  [Ian Sample](#), [The Guardian](#), Jun
  Commentary by Stephen Down

- I think we knew this, but the se prevented us from 'knowing' this (in any documented way). But now we have an analysis and "The analysis by a team of economists found that for leading universities, journals published by non-profit organisations were two to 10 times better value than those published by commercial companies, such as Elsevier, Springer, Sage, and Taylor & Francis." I expect the very same is true of learning resources for students as well. Here is [the study](#) the Guardian article is based on (might be behind a paywall where you live, natch).

- **Resignations threat over Taylor &** Paul Jump, Times Higher Educatio *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- Another article that suggests publ academic research, but rather hav outcome. Hence this academic pa published only after threats of mass resignation, and even then, only published with a large disclaimer stating "the accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information." The paper, drawing on an analogy with the music industry, points to excessively high profits taken by academic publishers, suggests that the ineffective Finch Report is mostly the result of industry lobbying, and recommends that academics take a lesson from the Grateful Dead and give their research away, an activity that would not only eliminate publisher profit but result in more, better and cheaper academic research. Here's the article (13 page PDF). Related: Metafilter thread.

- **[Pisa Declaration on Policy Development for Grey Literature Resources](#)**
[Various authors](#), [GreyNet International](#), Jun 25, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- 'Grey literature' is not my favourite term but it will do for now I guess. It includes "research and technical reports, briefings and reviews, evaluations, working papers, conference papers, theses, and multimedia content." In other words, just about every publication related to research that is not a formal academic publication. The Pisa Declaration referred to here is a "call for increased recognition of grey literature's role and value by governments, academics and all stakeholders, particularly its importance for open access." I'm not sure why a declaration is needed for this but I can't say I disagree with it. I wish it didn't feel like marketing for the 'Grey Guide' report. More at [GreyNet](#).

- **WWW-based online education t[...]**
  [Phil Hill](), [e-Literate](), Jun 25, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Though the [World Wide Web]() pub[...] take off until the fall of 1993 and [...] This it became that 1994 marked the start of web-based courses, and hence, 2014 became the 20th anniversary of that event. My first website and first online course (on the logical fallacies) didn't appear until 1995 (gosh! I'm such a newbie) (in the years 1991-93 I was still working with educational MUDs; in the 1980s it was with Bulletin Board Services (BBSs). This post from Phil Hill is mainly a recreation of [this paper by Marc Eisenstadt]() describing the first web-based course, on Cognitive Psychology, offered to 12 students at the Open University. (p.s. this post is also notable for its links to the old [Internet Underground Music Archive]() and to Charles Severance's [Internet History and Technology]() course).

- **[The History of Ed-Tech via Paten](...)** [Audrey Watters](...), [Hack Education](...), *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

- I once did a quick survey of how l to get completely caught up read applications in just one area of ed discovered, several lifetimes. Call is an understatement, by far. But read, picking up nine or so influential patents over the years, from the Skinner apparatus for teaching spelling (1866) to Blackboard's Internet-based education support system and methods (1999).
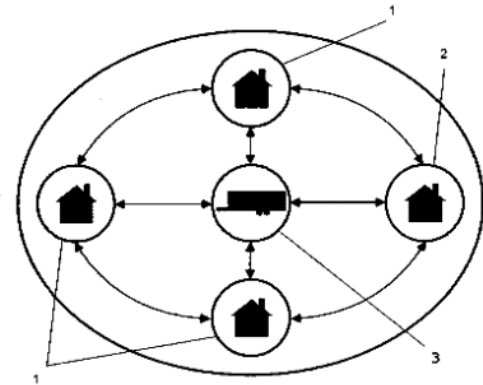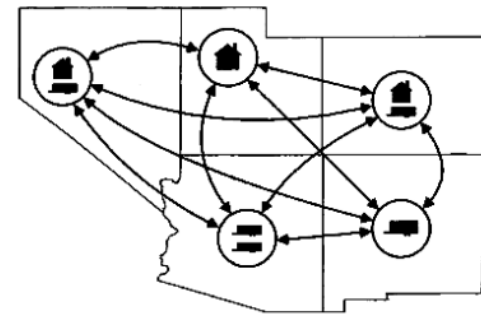
- **Man trademarks Pi, tries to cut out geeky T-shirt designers**
Kevin Poulsen, Wired, Jun 11, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I wish I could say that the headline is a joke, but it appears instead to be an all-too-real example of an IP regime gone off the rails. More power to those people ignoring the law and using PI for their own purposes. Oh yeah, and this whole business of using circles in your designs? Cease and desist, I guess?

- **[Enclosing the public domain: The restriction of public domain books in a digital environment](#)**
  [Alex Clark](#), [Brenda Chawner](#), [First Monday](#), Jun 09, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Picking up a longstanding discussion I've had with people about enclosure, here's a report from First Monday on how commercial publishers make you pay for resources even through they're free and in the public domain. "Using a sample of 100 pre–1890 New Zealand heritage books... of the 50 titles that had been digitized, only three were hosted by repositories that do not restrict any type of subsequent use. Furthermore, 48 percent (24) were subject to access restrictions." While legally readers may have the right to download and repost public domain works, terms of use make this difficult and risky, as policies are applied and penalties imposed without verification. "The widespread application of usage restrictions upon public domain books is characteristic of an online environment where user agreements and terms of service are ubiquitously imposed as a precondition to access content."

- **[DRM and the Challenge of Serving Users](#)**
  [Mitchell](#), [Mozilla Blog](#), May 29, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- One of the reason content companies have been creating their own browsers is to be able to implement in-browser digital rights management (DRM) instead of relying on plug-ins like Flash and Silverlight. Open source browsers, such as Mozilla's Firefox, have no such incentive. However, as the web moves toward built-in DRM, even the open source browsers find themselves having to fall in line. So we move one step closer to the closed web, where you surrender your identity, surrender your choices, and (most likely) pay for the privilege.

- **Digital News Report 2014**
Nic Newman, Reuters, Jun 12, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- The disruptions to news reporting caused by the internet and social media are just beginning, according to this report released by Reuters. Facebook is vital worldwide for news distribution, Twitter in the US, UK and Spain, and WhatsApp in many other parts of the world. Sharing is widespread in the US, Brazil and Spain (though much less so in the UK. So, in related news, we are seeing that the next five years will see a major revenue shift for news agencies. This is especially relevant given the reluctance of pewople to pay for news; "the report finds only a minority of people have paid for digital news in the last year (ranging from 7% in the UK to 11% in the US, 14% in Finland and 22% in Brazil)." As we found here in Moncton last week, a paywall during a crisis looks a lot like profiteering, not service to the community, which has always been the newspaper's core value.

- **Is a 400k salary too much for a university president? Four academics apply to share one lucrative U of Alberta position** As It Happens, CBC News, Jun 10, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- A remarkable protest is being made at the University of Alberta. As the University searches for a new university president at a minimum $400K salary, at least 56 academics and staff have applied, all in groups of four. They write, "We believe that by job-sharing this position, we would be able to do a better job than any one person could do - and the salary is certainly ample enough to meet the needs of all four of us." It does raise the question of when a large salary starts being justified, and just represents greed. See also the Edmonton Journal and Inside Higher Ed. Via Academica.

- **Greewich Connect connects with us on a number of levels**
  Terry Anderson, Virtual Canuck, Apr 27, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- Terry Anderson links to a recent conference paper from the University of Greenwich about an initiative, similar to Athabasca Landing, "designed to induce a variety of open and social programs to the university teaching and learning communities." He reports obstacles similar to those encountered at Athabasca which sometimes "seem intractable." They are:
-
  Resistance manifested itself as both an active form of change blocking and in more passive forms of intransigence
-
  Governance itself became an activity rather than a means to implement activity
-
  Sharing of resources and artifacts happened only on Moodle, which is a closed system
-
  Academic staff felt they had no time to effectively learn about and embed open content
-

-
  Yeah. So much easier to just assign a $200 textbook and be done with it.
- Total: 1609

- **My Last Day as a Professor**
  Priya J. Shah, Office Hours: gender, feminism in everyday life, Jun 10, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- The praise for academia in the next post notwithstanding, there are things it could do so much better, at least in its North American incarnation, and that is in the employment of adjunct (or in Canada, sessional) instructors. I was in that world for a while. "Our marginalization, meager pay and lack of job security, along with the attacks on professors by students and the administration's refusal to back up even tenured professors, all contribute to a culture of paranoia and enmity."

- **Prof. Robert Buckingham fired after cri[...] university plan**
  [CBC News](), May 15, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- It seems to me to be somewhat of an over reaction to fire a professor and ban him from campus for life for the simple act of speaking out against the administration's plan to save money by merging three university departments (medicine, dentistry, and public health) into one. And when the professor is five weeks from retirement, it just seems vindictive. What's key here is that speaking out is being defined as insubordination, and that "everybody is expected to put the good of the whole university ahead of their own interests." Alec Couros comments, "I can barely stand to follow this story. It makes me very angry, and sad for the the University."

- **A Faculty Perspective on Open Textbooks**
  [Rajiv Jhangiani](#), [Psych prof](#), [living the dream](#), Apr 24, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- Thanks to a comment from Clint Lalonde on the [previous item](#), I am alerted to this item, which addresses the reasons professors do not use open textbooks. Here is the list, quoted from the article:
- for many disciplines and courses, there is no open textbook available
- concerns about quality (e.g., comprehensiveness, clarity, currency, etc.)
- no illustrations, charts, or graphics to aid comprehension. No questions or critical thinking exercises embedded. No online learning management system available that students can rely on for formative feedback. And, crucially for many faculty, no testbank
- choice of textbook is sometimes not an individual one
- To me, this is a bit sad. The arguments summed up amount to, "it's easier." Oh my, what did professors do when there weren't publishing companies to do all their work for them. No testbank? Seriously?

- **[What I learned from the Open Textbook Summit](#)**
  [Tony Bates](#), [online learning](#), [distance edcuation resources](#), Apr 24, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- (The retired?) Tony Bates attended the Open Textbook summit and came away with five lessons, including this most important one: "Adoption by faculty and instructors remains a major challenge. Diane Salter from Kwantlen Polytechnic University stated that there needs to be an institutional strategy for open textbooks and open educational resources, to raise awareness and get buy-in from faculty." I've had commentators (eg. Jonathan Rees (who has otherwise been very nice to me)) wonder aloud in the past why I sometimes appear so hostile to professors. Well, this sort of thing gets my goat - the overwhelming evidence that the professors don't care, not about student costs, not about institutional costs, not about anything, apparently, except their role as the leaders of academia.

- **'We Gave It a Year'**
  Carl Straumsheim, Inside Higher Ed, May 01, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I don't see why university administrators could think that "unapologetically" pricing courses at $1400 per credit hour for online learning could possibly work. That is all.

- **[Seeding is believing: McGill launches platform](...)**
[Megan Elizabeth Martin](...), [McGill Repo...](...)
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- McGill University in Montreal has lau... platform to encourage donations. "M... choose specific projects to support – ... speak to them – and watch as their su... our landscape of learning," said Ayes... McGill's Annual Fund. So we're movin... typical evolution in this technology to... dominant player (Kickstarter) to man... style platforms. Next (we can only ho... aggregators, which will help us choos...
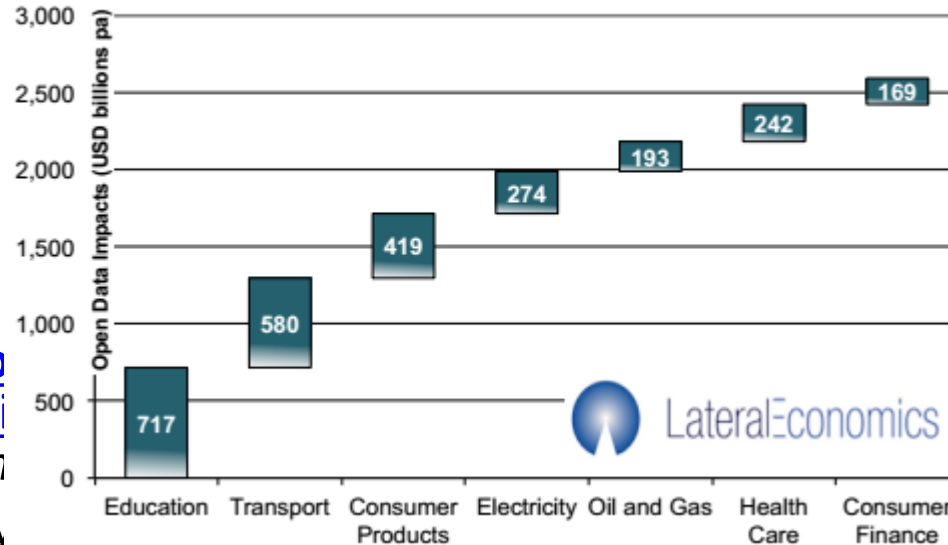
- **[The Subversive Proposal at 20](#)**
[Richard Poynder](#), [Open](#), [Shut?](#), Jun 30, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- It is realluy an idea for its tgime, I think. "Twenty years ago yesterday, cognitive scientist Stevan Harnad [posted a message](#) on a mailing list, a message he headed "A Subversive Proposal".… Today the Subversive Proposal is viewed as one of the seminal texts of the open access movement."

- **[Open Access in India: Q&A with Subbiah Arunachalam](#)** [Richard Poynder](#), [Open](#), [Shut?](#), Jun 10. *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- Credit where credit is due. "Today th[...] with OA advocates," writes Ricahrd Poynder, "But it was not always thus." One of those early open access (OA) advocates in India was Chennai-based information scientist [Subbiah Arunachalam](#). "What drives Arunachalam is a firm belief that open access holds out the promise of a faster and more effective system for creating and sharing new knowledge, one, moreover, that will not discriminate against the developing world in the way the current subscription system does." Good interview and kudos to Poynder for making sure it's on the record.

- **Aligning Repository Networks Meeting 2014** [Various authors](#), [Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR)](#), Apr 28, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- The Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR) has undertaken an initiative to align open access repositories. This post summarizes the results of a meeting directed toward that objective. "t will give the repository community a stronger global voice and raise the visibility of the role of repositories as critical research infrastructure." [14 page PDF](#). See also the [communiqué](#).

Figure 10   Value of open data for the G20 (USD billions pa)

Value of open data for the G20 (USD billions pa)

Open Data Impacts (USD billions pa)

3,000

2,500 — 169

242

2,000 — 193

274

1,500 — 419

1,000 — 580

500 — 717

0

Education Transport Consumer Products Electricity Oil and Gas Health Care Consumer Finance

LateralEconomics

- **The massive impact o[...]nent**
  [Ross Dawson](), [Trends i[...]]
  Commentary by Steph[...]

- People sometimes say[...] deology, and there is a bit of that. But it is driven by economics as well, as the value of open education to governments is in the hundreds of billions. And it's the leading edge of a wider benefit that is valued in the trillions. "The major figure from the report is that potential value from open data to the G20 nations is $2.6 trillion annually, or around 1.1% of GDP over the next 5 years. The major sectors where value accrues from open data policies are Education, Transport, Consumer Products, Electricity, Oil and Gas, Health Care, and Consumer Finance." I see this expense as a needless draining of resources from the public purse to private interests, a type of waste far greater in proportion and impact than inefficiency, and probably second only to corruption and war.

- **The Future is Open**
  [Various authors](), [Creative Commons](),
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Creative Commons has released their annual report as a picture book. I'm not sure what to think of that. Sure, there's text, but the presentation is mostly visual. The main highlight is the release of version 4.0 of the licenses - we are told they are "global licenses" that don't need to be adapted to each jurisdiction. "The new licenses include provisions related to database rights, personality rights, data mining, and other issues beyond the scope of the original CC licenses." But better is the recognition that "CC licenses are a patch, not a fix, for the problems of the copyright system." This is reflected in a [policy statement]() that urges that content be considered "open by default". Controls on reuse should be the exception, not the rule, and in my view, should require special justification. So much of *any* creation is borrowed from others there needs to be substantial justification for locking it in its entirety. I guess I don't mind the picture-book format, but posting credits on every page for each image, even the navigation icons, is distracting. Just build a credits page.

- **Ergo**
[Ergo](#), May 28, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Most philosophy publications are closed-access, so I haven't really kept up, but this week markes the launch of Ergo, an open-access philosophy journal. "*Ergo* is a general, open access philosophy journal accepting submissions on all philosophical topics and from all philosophical traditions. This includes, among other things: history of philosophy, work in both the analytic and continental traditions, as well as formal and empirically informed philosophy." Interestingly, the articles in the initial issue are also being blog-commented in the [Mod Squad](#) group philosophy blog. None of the articles in the first issue really speaks to me, but I'm hopeful that over time that will improve. Via [Certain Doubts](#).

- **Mini-Lectures Using Learning Objects: Bos[ch's] Haywain (1516)**
  [Susan Smith Nash](#), [E-Learning Queen](#), May[...]
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- Janet Clarey [comments](#), "I love this for its simplicity." It is a set of mini-lessons offered by Susan Smith Nash, each one small and self-contained, using learning objects the way (I think) they were intended to be used. She writes, "Animated learning objects that bring together images, audio, and interaction are a perfect place to engage students. Now that many translate to HTML5 and are designed to be responsive so that they play well on tablets and smartphones (and on all platforms) as well as laptops, etc., they're a great way to deliver mini-lectures."

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A new talk sketched daily, by fan Kate Torgovnick May, TED Blog, M
Commentary by Stephen Downes
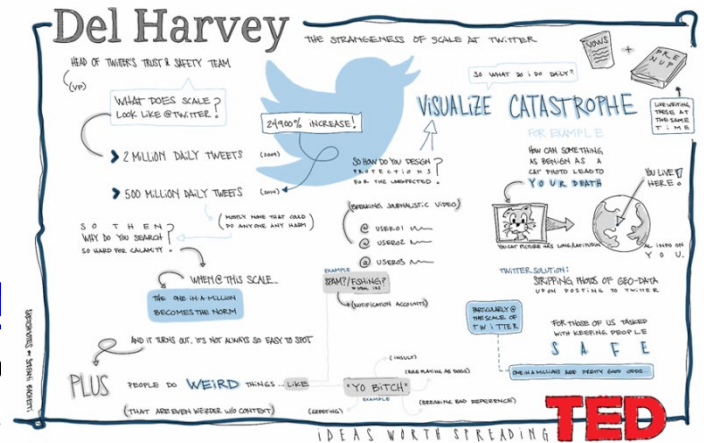
- I actually like this Tumblr feed featuring a sketch of a new TED talk every weekday (at a certain point the author has to run out of TED talks but that will be a while). I think that what really shows up in these diagrams is the essential similarity between TED talks - the compelling story, the one-line message, a few compelling figures or data sets, the emotional strings. And I am realizing, over time - TED is the Upworthy of academia.

- **Open Textbooks Toolkit**
  Various authors, B.C. Campus, Apr 28, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- From BCcampus: "The BCcampus Open Textbook Toolkit is your starting point on how to change education with just one textbook. It provides a list of our open textbooks, information and guidelines for adopting and assigning an open textbook."

- **The Open Virus**
  [Martin Weller](), [The Ed Techie]()
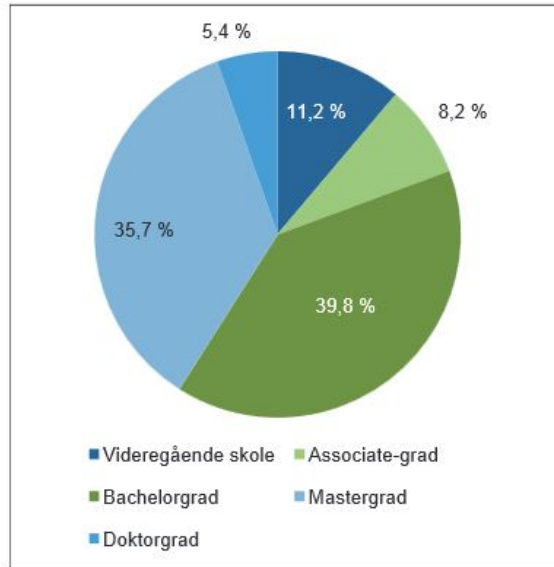 *Commentary by Stephen Dow*
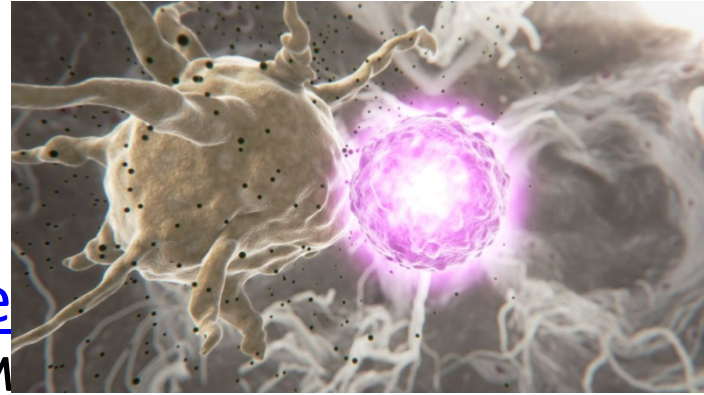
- Though the spread of the open virus is by no means guaranteed, it seems like a natural progression from one domain to the next. "It is no coincidence that many of the MOOC pioneers had also been early adopters of open access, active bloggers, and advocates of open licenses. Creating open courses seemed the next logical step, because they were interested in the possibilities that openness offered and had seen the benefits elsewhere in their practice."
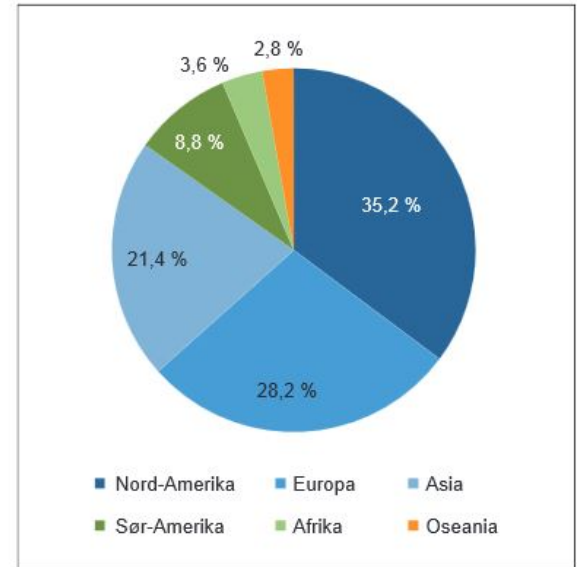
- **The Open Education Consortium**
  Mary Lou Forward, The Open Education Consortium, Apr 28, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- By email I learn today that The OpenCourseWare Consortium has changed its name to The Open Education Consortium. Nice new logo and new website. "This change reflects developments in OER and open education and recognizes that the Consortium has broadened its scope of work over the past several years to include support for many types of open education projects around the world," writes Mary Lou Forward. You can also get the procveedings of the (last) OCWC meetings here.

Figur 7.1 Deltakere på MOOC-tilbud etter høy-este fullførte utdanning, januar 2013. Coursera[1]

Figur 7.2 Deltakere på MOOC-tilbud etter ver-densdel, januar 2013. Coursera[1]

- **Norwegian MO**
  Alastair Creelma
  Commentary by

- For those of you
  Norway has rele
  of MOOCs. It re
  €16-47 million a official, to the coordinated development of
  online education in the country" which would include the
  development of a national MOOC platform, MOOCs that
  lead to course credit, and "inquiry on whether MOOC
  students should qualify for study loans and grants." An
  English version of the report is expected soon; meanwhile,
  this summary provides a good overview in English.

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  [**Online Upstart's Goal: MOOC Lectures That Go Viral**](#)
  [Avi Wolfman-Arent](#), [The Chronicle: Wired Campus Blog](#), Jun 30, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I'm not sure how exactly a company that professionally produces five-minute 'educational videos' with the intent of making them go viral qualifies as "upstart" but I guess in some world anything that is not traditional is an upstart. And ooo, radical: "The course is also piloting a call-and-response model where user response drives content: Mr. Boudreaux will add new videos based on the most common questions he receives from students."

play games with Doc McStuffins

- **Why Disney is pushing further into th**
  Jeremy Dickson, iKids, Apr 28, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- If Disney were a benign entertainer (a
  children I wouldn't be so concerned. But one of the risks of a major
  corporation marketing directly to children is that it becomes the
  vehicle for even more marketing. Surely, for example, the name
  'Doc McStuffins' isn't just coincidentally the name of a certain fast
  food place that also markets to children. This advertising has long-
  term impacts (it is interesting to map the advertising on children's
  'Superman' radio broadcasts in the late 1940s and early 50s to
  values expressed in the 60s). What does Disney market? Princesses
  and rich uncles and an us-versus-them view of the world. And so
  I'm concerned. As are others.

- **[Stanford decides to be Wal-Mart; doesn't anyone care about quality education any more?](#)**
[Roger Schank](#), [Education Outrage](#), Jun 18, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- OK, if this is to be the argument against MOOCs, then universities and their professors are in trouble. Here's the argument: "I am sure, that Stanford itself won't give the stuff they produce to it's own students. No one calls this racism (or classism), but it is education for poor people, just as Wal-Mart is focused on poor people. Stanford students won't eat what Stanford sells to others, but it is selling it like mad to those folks who will never see Palo Alto and will never access a real Stanford education."

-   Let's ask, for a moment, what it would cost to provide a 'Stanford' education for everyone. It costs about [$54.5K per year to attend Stanford](#) as an undergraduate. The world [population for ages 20-24](#) is 596.3M (it's about the same for any 4-year span of people that age). That yields a total cost of $32.5 trillion dollars per year. That's more than the [combined GDPs](#) of the G8 nations, plus China and India. There isn't enough money in the world to give everyone a Stanford education. *That* is why we need cheaper alternatives. Stupid arguments like the one offered here by Roger Schank need not apply.

- **Are MOOCs Just Moneymaking Scams? Providers Challenged To Substantiate Grandiose Claims**
  Keith Button, Campus Technology, May 15, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- So the Campaign for the Future of Higher Education has launched a video and campaign against MOOCs, depicting MOOCs as schemes designed to make money. This follows the release of three working papers last year "questioning the basic positive assumptions about online education." I will admit, Coursera, Udacity and EdX make good targets. But it doesn't make sense to tar all MOOCs (and all online learning) with the same brush. More on this item at Inside Higher Ed, Huffington Post, L.A. Times.

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  If the people at CFHE really want to debate the people behind MOOCs, they should debate George Siemens, Dave Cormier and myself. I for one would stand up and be counted. If they want a real debate, they should give us a call. We're not over-hyped VC-backed straw men you can knock down by citing some overblown rhetoric and fancy videos. We have a couple of decades of smart and steady advances behind us. And we have, I think, a pretty good sense of where we're going in the future, and yes, how the work we're doing with MOOCs and related technology will help provide access to learning for everyone.

- **5 Things Researchers Have Discovered About MOOCs**
  Steve Kolowich, The Chronicle: Wired Campus Blog, Jun 27, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I think we've learned a lot about MOOCs. And as one of the academics gathered during the Texas snowstorm, I think I can say confidently that these five things are not among them. The five:

- If you are isolated, poor, and enamored of the prestigious university offering the MOOC you're taking, you are less likely to complete it.

- Coaching students to have a healthier mindset about learning may not help in a MOOC.

- Paired with the right incentives, MOOCs can help prepare at-risk students for college-level work.

- Discussion forums in MOOCs are healthy places for the few students who use them.

- We still do not know if doing well in MOOCs will help underprivileged learners become upwardly mobile.

- Where does the Chronicle say this nonsense comes from? From an organization that should know better. It's not simply that these statements are false (though no doubt some of them are). It's that they're misplaced and emphasized the wrong things. Note that not one of them has anything to do with whether people *learn*, form *communities*, or *make their lives better*.

- **[Partial Transcript: Richard Levin (new Coursera CEO) on Charlie Rose](#)**
  [Phil Hill](#), [e-Literate](#), Apr 24, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Very lightweight interview with Richard Levin by [Charlie Rose](#), with transcript provided by Phil Hill. Maybe Levin is just being cagey, but it's not clear to me he actually knows what the product, the differentiators and the issues are. Like this: "EdX is open source software, which some of the computer science types like that – it means they can play with it, they can add to the features on their own. But we're developing interfaces that will allow faculty to add features as well." Does he mean modules, apps, APIs (like Coursera just offered)? Does he even know?

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[Study of MOOCs Suggests Dropping the Label 'Dropout'](#)
[Avi Wolfman-Arent](#), [The Chronicle: Wired Campus Blog](#), Jun 23, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I'm not a fan of research papers that ~~you do produce a taxonomy, it shou~~ some such thing. If I were to categor~~characterize them by the impact the~~ uploaders, commenters, subscribers~~these can be quantified by site statis~~ response to [this research report](#) is th~~Chronicle: "The fact that anyone eve~~ clicked on a link on the internet but failed to devote several weeks of their time to the "product" to be a "dropout" should be the news."
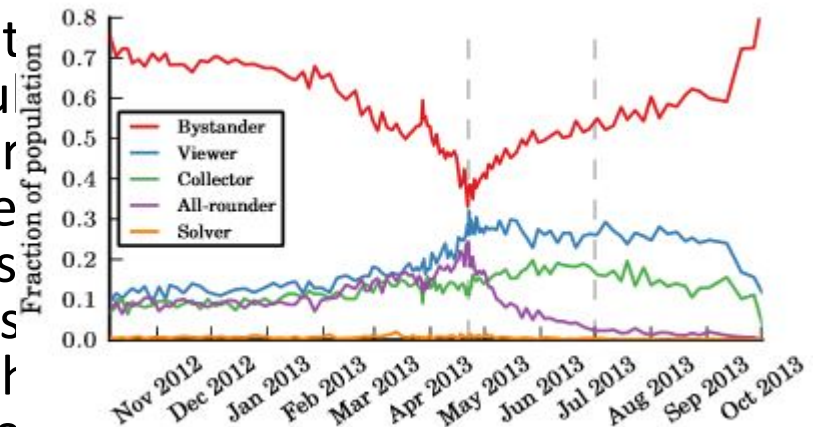
- **[Alexander the MOOC Lan](link)** [Guy M. Rogers](link), [Inside High](link) *Commentary by Stephen D*

- I know, it's just another MO done, but still I can't help p along: "Some critics of MOOCs have pointed to the fact that only a small percentage of those who register for MOOCs routinely 'finish' classes... it is true that about 6% of the students who registered for my class completed the final exam. But the total of 1162 students taking the final exam in this one course is more students than I have taught at Wellesley College over the past ten years."
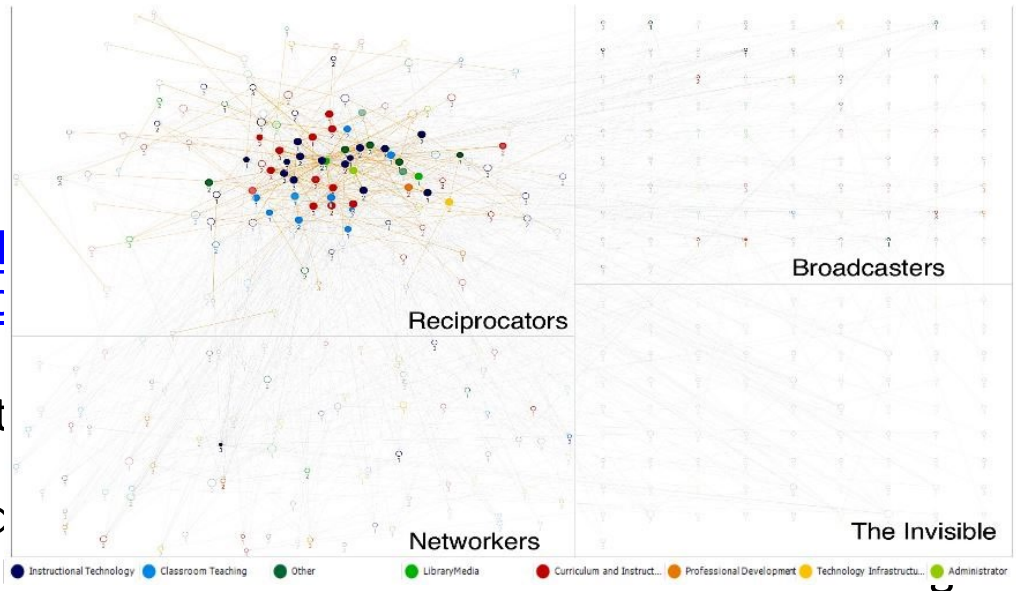
- **[What Harvard and MIT could learn from the University of Phoenix about analytics](#)**
  [Phil Hill](#), [e-Literate](#), Jun 02, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Phil Hill is critical of the new data being released by Harvard and MIT from their edX-based MOOCs. "At first I was eager to explore the data," he writes, "but I am not sure how much useful insight is possible due to how the data was collected... this data only tells us very shallow usage patterns aggregated over the entire course – did they look at courseware, how many video views, how many forum posts, final grade, etc. [and] ignores student goals or any information giving a clue on whether students desired to complete the course, get a good grade, get a certificate, or just sample some material."

- **MOOC Research Initiative: [...]** [George Siemens](), [elearnspac[...]]() *Commentary by Stephen Do[...]*

- George Siemens posts that t[...] are now available. There's a [...] not been peer reviewed and [...] assessment regarding resea[...] a dozen of so of them and find the work would be generally acceptable in academic journals (provided they added a 'literature review' section citing previously published works by the journal's editors and reviewers). The focus of the studies was empirical, ranging from an examination of media coverage to analysis of videos viewed to clickstream analysis to network graphs. But for all that many of the MOOCs studied were pretty similar to traditional courses (there [are]() [exceptions]()) and the surveys produce unsurprising results. (Image: [Kellogg, Booth and Oliver]()) Related: Siemens is [running a MOOC]() about analytics on edX this fall (turncoat! ;)).
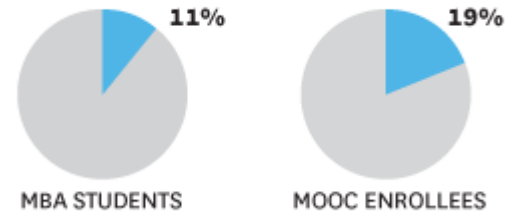
- **MOOCs Won't Replace Busi Diversify Them**
Gayle Christensen, Brandon _____, _____, Harvard Business Review Blogs, Jun 06, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This idea here is that MOOCs are effective advertsing vehicles that will help these schools attract the demographics they want, especially since they have a global reach. Of course, this is true for every agency which launches a MOOC, so if everyone launches MOOCs, it's all a wash.

- **[Conventional Online Higher Education Will Absorb MOOCs, 2 Reports Say](#)** [Steve Kolowich](#), [The Chronicle: Wired Campus Blog](#), May 16, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- I think that the most interesting thing about this headline is that it asserts that there is such a thing as 'conventional online higher education'. Even a few years ago the words would have choked in the Chronicle headline writer's pen. So the two reports are from Center on Higher Education Reform at the American Enterprise Institute, which released the [Bellwether report](#), and Teachers College at Columbia University, which released [a report](#) cited here the other day. That *institutions* will simply absorb MOOCs doesn't surprise me - they have very different goals and ambitions from the rest of us. But ask the question differently, and you get a different answer. Will massive open online learning survive? Almost certainly - part of the new reality institutions must now deal with is that free versions of their course materials (or materials very similar to their course materials) will exist online. And institutions won't absorb that. They can't.

- **Coursera shifts focus from 'impact on learners' to 'reach of universities'**
  [Michael Feldstein](#), [e-Literate](#), Jun 25, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Just to note this, so we don't miss it: "Richard C. Levin, the new chief executive of Coursera [says] the talk of "flipped classrooms" and "blended learning" — weaving MOOCs into classroom experiences — is not mere hype. 'But that is not the big picture,' Levin said in a visit last week to The Washington Post. 'The big picture is this magnifies the reach of universities by two or three orders of magnitude.'" Feldstein comments (cynically?) "It is possible that Levin's focus will *indirectly* improve the learning potential of Coursera's products and services, but it is worth noting a significant change in focus from the largest MOOC provider." See also the [Chronicle's coverage](#) of the same announcement; "esearchers at Columbia University published a [paper](#) noting that many university stakeholders are unclear about why they are investing in MOOCs." Related: [the value of MOOCs](#) to early adopter universities, EDUCAUSE Review.

- **Brilliance struck. We call it Ca...** [obscured] Matt Goodwin, Canvas by Inst... [obscured] *Commentary by Stephen Dow...* [obscured]

- Instructure is launching a new [obscured] - label platform that enables a... [obscured] sity or K-12 school to create a bra... [obscured] ns, according to the blog post, "a... [obscured] e ability to build a marketplace [obscured] s learners the ability to register... [obscured] rt taking courses without all the typical hassle." What I'd like to see from this service is an RSS feed - free courses should be freely syndicated (here's a sample RSS-Events file and the RSS-Events schema is available here). As usual, the announcement comes before the actual product is available, which is always annoying. So is the whole 'accidental invention' analogy, which in this context (and given the existence already of MOOC catalogues) is ridiculous.

- **European Multiple MOOC Aggre...** Various authors, Open Education... r 24, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes
- Worth a look: "EMMA will provide a system for the delivery of free, open, online courses in multiple languages from different European universities to help preserve Europe's rich cultural, educational and linguistic heritage and to promote real cross-cultural and multi-lingual learning."

- **MOOCs' disruption is** [Clayton M. Christense...](#) [Globe](#), May 12, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- What characterizes a bubble isn't the chorus of sceptics. It's thee lack of them. So MOOCs - who have certainly attracted the sceptics - are far from the bubble stage of their existence. So say Clayton M. Christensen and Michelle R. Weise in this op-ed. "Undoubtedly pronouncements over MOOCs' demise are likewise premature. And their potential to disrupt — on price, technology, even pedagogy — in a long-stagnant industry is only just beginning to be seen."

- **The Future Of Online Ed I**... Anya Kamenetz, NPR, May... *Commentary by Stephen D...*

- Short article with what is ... "Trinidad and Tobago. Its g... the creation of a National ... free online learning in par... Coursera." I think we can ignore the bit about the providers - these can change over time, while the idea of a national networks for free learning is something that can endure, and eventually, become entrenched. We've been seeing a number of stories like this, as the proprietors of these providers work their political connections to get national announcements.

DUAL LAYER cMOOC/xMOOC

- **Designing a Dual Layer cMOOC/xMOOC**, Matt Crosslin, EduGeek Journal. *Commentary by Stephen Downes*
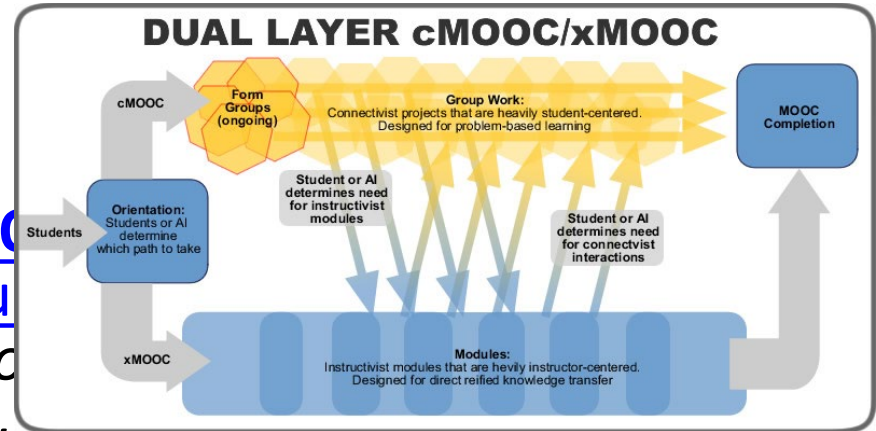
- Honestly, I don't know *why* you'd want to design a 'dual layer cMOOC/xMOOC' - but let's listen to the proposal. "At any time that the learners on the cMOOC track need help (or at some point, when the AI data identifies a need), they can be directed towards the appropriate part of the xMOOC track for help. At any time the learners on the xMOOC track start to get comfortable with the idea of interacting with others (or the AI data identifies this), they can move into the cMOOC track." *Or* - we could just seed the discussion with learning resources on an ongoing basis, as appropriate.

- **[Communal Constructivism and Dual Layer MOOCs](#)**
  [Matt Crosslin](#), [EduGeek Journal](#), Jun 10, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- There's a lot of interesting work being done on open online learning these days (I can barely comprehend it all). This is an example: a project designed to combine the best of an xMOOC and a cMOOC. It sounds simple in practice, but the execution is something different - how do you combine groups and networks (collectives and connectives) in a single environment, especially when the one pushes you toward conformity and the other toward diversity? Here's one possibility: "Communal constructivism is not a new term, but one that is often left out of the discussion (except in a few cases). However, the idea is not that foreign since we often see this idea modeled in Reddit." But is that really distributed, the way a cMOOC would be? At a certain point, the movement to collect people into single-site courses collides with the movement toward things like indieweb and reclaim your domain.

- **Why Design a xMOOC / cMOOC Hybrid? LTCA Theory**
  Matt Crosslin, EduGeek Journal, May 08, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Matt Crosslin follows up an earlier post with an explanation of *why* he thinks it would be a good idea to build a cMOOC/xMOOC hybrid. He writes, "the idea of MOOC layers is really looking at a four pronged approach to the idea of teaching and learning as communicative actions using LTCA theory." This theory, he writes, is being created by Scott Warren at North Texas, based Jurgen Habermas, and breaks learning down in to four majopr activities, some of which are subsumed by xMOOCs and some by cMOOCs. To quote Crosslin at length:

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  "Normative communicative actions are those that communicate knowledge based on past experiences, such as statements in class instructions that lay out expectations for student activities.

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  "Strategic communicative actions are the most familiar educational communicative actions – these occur most often through lectures, textbooks, and other methods where specific reified knowledge is transferred to the learner.

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  "Constative communicative actions are debates, arguments, and discourses that allow learners to make claims and counterclaims. Constative communication is also where social constructivism connects with LTCA theory, as students come to agreement over constructed knowledge through these communicative actions

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  "Dramaturgical communicative actions are those that allow for expression. Learners can reflect or create artifacts that express the knowledge they have gained as well as who that knowledge makes them as a person."

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  For my part, I don't think that taxonomies make good theory. Yes, if we look at the full range of *existing* practice, we see these forms. But what would we see if we looked only at (say) *effective* practice?

FIGURE 4. Learning Ecosystem Goes to Scale

Content–Platforms–Analytics
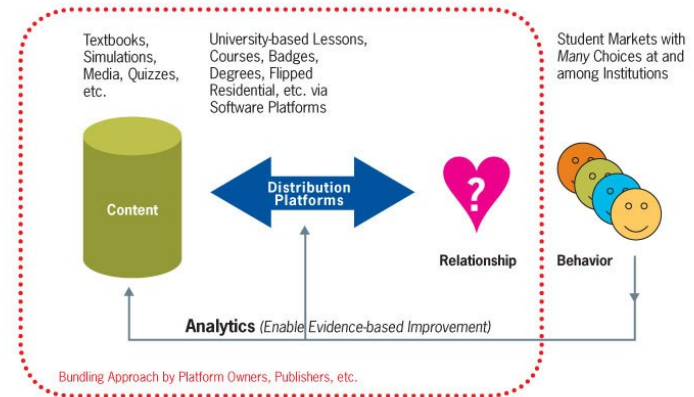
- **Why Unizin is a Threat to edX** Michael Feldstein, e-Literate, May *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- e-Literate a week or so broke a sto the Indiana University designed to, the table" on online learning techr more; it's an oddly personalized look at the initiative: "If you want to understand Unizin, you really have to understand Brad Wheeler.... Unizin has his fingerprints all over it." Well, maybe. "The LMS + MOOC pitch explains why these universities might be interested in a coalition, but it doesn't fully explain the interest in the Learning Object Repository and analytics system." Really? We couldn't understand these without understanding Brad? Anyhow, do ready these articles - the field of education technology is in a rapid state of flux right now.

- **Mesh Networks of People**
  [Alan Levine](), [CogDogBlog](), May 09, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I think that the more you get out and talk with people the more you find these deep mesh networks of people around domains, ideas, disciplines and hobbies. As Alan Levine says, "connections I make, not just PLNing or linking online, just by talking and listening... are gold." What's also interesting - I was just at a meeting this morning where I experienced the same sort of thing - is that these networks recede off into the distance; you can get a grasp of some of those around you, you can see them stretch off into the horizon, but the totality of them all is something you can only partially grasp, and you could spend your life exploring. This is what Levine has been doing over the last few years (and he is thus being afforded a genuinely unique view of the world). And significantly, what he sees - I think (it's what I see, at least) - is that *this* is how human society is structured, and the hierarchies and institutions and more visible elements of society are just an overlay, artificial abstractions, formalisms, artifacts we create, but not ultimately core or significant. Levine has some excellent examples in this post which make it worth a look.

- P.S. see also Levine on [changes to the Flickr API]() and on how Twitter is a [crappy RSS reader]() replacement. "Twitter is no replacement for the ability to quickly scan a reliable set of sources that collect the drops while away."

- **[Disrupting Colonial Mindsets: The Power of Learning Networks](#)** [Catherine McGregor](#), [In Education](#), May 16, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This paper offers an example of "how one particular teacher-learning network—the Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network (AESN) in British Columbia, Canada, offers a powerful example of how teacher learning networks can enable deep and transformational change among participating teachers and leaders." It merges the concept of the community of practice with the need for non-hierarchal and inclusive leadership. From Sachs: "The activist teacher professional creates new spaces for action and debate, and in so doing improves the learning opportunities for all of those who are recipients or providers of education"

- **Stop Blaming Professors**
Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed, Jun 10, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes
- This study makes me wonder what's happening outside campus. In a nutshell, it suggests that interaction with diverse views through engagement with academics causes students to moderate their political views, while interaction with similar views through student groups causes them to radicalize their views. So what happens in, say, a Wall Street brokerage, where everyone has the same political view? Oh yes, there's a lot of indoctrination going on out there, and to point the finger at institutes of higher learning, where it is least likely to occur, has always struck me as absurd.

- [**Principles for Rhizomatic Thinking**](#)
  [Jenny Mackness](#), Jun 27, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- "Deleuze and Guattari (D & G) enumerate 6 approximate characteristics of the rhizome. The principles are: 1. Connections – a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections. 2. Heterogeneity - any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other and must be. 3. Multiplicity – A multiplicity is, in the most basic sense, a complex structure that does not reference a prior unity. Asignifying rupture. If you break a rhizome it can start growing again on its old line or on a new line. 5 & 6. Cartography and decalcomania – the rhizome is like a map and not a tracing."

- **The Basic Framework in the General Sociology of Harrison C. White**
  Reza Azarian, Stockholm University, May 11, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- While writing my posts over the last few days I had occasion, thanks to a tweet, to look up a number of works by and about Harrison White. It's not an understatement to say that a lot of what I say is anticipated years earlier in his work. "Social life is made up of endless chains and multiple overlapping nets, with no clear boundaries. It is long stings .... It is only a messy mesh or, rather, mush. Social reality is a terrain, a typology of networks and chains."

-
  I like what I've seen of White a lot, and it is not surprising to me to read in this interview that he was a friend to Herbert Simon (of Newell and Simon). The major statement of White's thesis can be found in his book Identity and Control. "White replaces person with identity, which, in a distinctively human sense, emerges from frictions and social noise across different levels and disciplines in networks. Likewise he reshapes the notion of goals, maintaining that they merely inhabit sets of stories used to explain agency."

- **Trading routes, bypasses, and risky intersections**
  Gernot Grabher, University of Bonn, May 11, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I found a lot of good stuff in this paper, which I found while looking for a combination of Harrison White and Actor Network Theory. Part I.1 has a nice summary of the history of the distinction between groups and networks. Part II.1 talks about network governance and II.5 talks about informal networks. Part II.1 takes what I consider to be the key network 'turn', from network content to network structure. "Explanations stem from analyses of patterns of relations." III.3 talks about the autonomy of entities in the network, and III.4 talks about strong and weak ties. III.5 ties this explicitly to the 'small worlds' theory. In section IV we see the "promising turns" and a discussion of rhizomes, ANT and related issues. Finally, in section IV.3 Harrison White is presented as a softer alternative to ANT: "following White's path allows us to unlock the actors from the rigid grid of homogenous ties and to place them in the fluid context of an entire spectrum of network domains."

- **Neuroscience's New Toolbox** [image obscures text], [Stephen S. Hall](#), [MIT Technolo...](#) *Commentary by Stephen Dow...*

- Optogenetics is a really cool v[image obscures text] networks. Inset a light-sensiti[image obscures text] then turn on a fibre-opting lig[image obscures text] and watch what happens. The[image obscures text] aggression, but I like what the researcher says about diversity: ""There's no such thing as a generic neuron," says Anderson, who estimates that there may be up to 10,000 distinct classes of neurons in the brain. Even tiny regions of the brain contain a mixture, he says, and these neurons 'often influence behavior in different, opposing directions.'"

- **Bringing mindfulness to the** [text obscured by image] Kate Lunau, MacLean's, Jun 1[text obscured] *Commentary by Stephen Dow[text obscured]*

- I don't think the authors at M[text obscured] raise the criticism that some [text obscured] the practice of meditation is akin to bringing religion into schools) but they nonetheless carry this interesting story about the teaching of meditation (called 'mindfulness', and yoga (called 'stretching')) in schools. I see nothing wrong with it; I was taught several religions in school, including hockey, basketball and football. Ultimately, it has to be left to the students' discretion as to whether to continue the practice, after an appropriate period of instruction. But I have no doubt this is the school's policy.

- **[The psychology of open: On wrestling your inner MOOC](#)** [Mariana Funes](#), [doublemirror](#), May 27, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- You can't be half open, says Mariana Funes, but it's a process, and you can adapt to it. "Work at your own pace, do not let anyone force you into openness online faster than you are ready for it. Ultimately in becoming an open educator your *are* making a choice to relinquish some of your privacy and control of where your work goes in order to share it with others." Good longish post - summary notes for a MOOC presentation - that delves into the experience of being open. Via [Alan Levine](#).

- **BoardThing**
  [BoardThing](), May 27, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- BoardThing looks like an organized person's Pinterest: "Create cards with text or images.Move and arrange cards with collaborators on a shared board. Organize cards into groups.Export your board as HTML, plain text, or outline (OPML)." It's still in private beta; I've asked for an invite and if it proves interesting I'll report back.

- **MOOCopoly: The Game**
  [Alan Levine](), [CogDogBlog](), May 05, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Just for fun (and as part of the Daily Creat[e]... a board game) Alan Levine created this fun [...] "I came across a [Monopoly template in Pho[toshop]]() [...] nd within a 2008 blog post by Brad Frost. Yep, a self hosted blog strikes again. This is quite the template; every element of text on the board is editable; and he even provides fonts. He apologizes a bit for much about how much is left out, but it is cleanly organized into folders within the layers palette, and was super easy to modify." I like how you pay $12 to land on ds106 - whether it has one, two, three or four houses (I guess if there's a hotel the Bava's at a conference).

- **The future of the open Internet is decentralized**
  Joseph Cox, The Daily Dot, May 12, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Many of the recent problems being seen in digital communications - from the cost of acess to the widespread spying to the blocking of services like YouTube and Twitter to the commodification of commercialization of services that used to be free - have resulted from the ongoing re-centralization of the internet, where one or a few services are able to monopolize discourse. This has not resulted (as they say) naturally, but as the result of the deliberate intervention by corporations and governments to make the internet manageable. As a consequence, though, of this clampdown we are seeing the rise of genuinely distributed networks that circumvent attempts at control - things like BitTorrent, Bitcoin, DarkMarket, and now, MaidSafe, which allows users to share bandwidth and processing power to support a distributed and very underground applications network.

- **How the FCC Plans to Save the Internet By Destroying It: An Explainer** Ryan Singel, Medium.com, Apr 26, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Everybody and their dog has already covered the FCC's recent decision to end net neutrality (their feeble objections notwithstanding). It's a U.S. decision but as we know once enshrined into American law a campaign will then follow to entrench it into world trade legislation, requiring countries to pay penalties for lost profits should they attempt to enact net neutrality, as Brazil has done (just as a Canadian company is demanding $200 million from El Salvador over a mine it was not allowed to build). It will destroy the internet as we know it, reducing it to a set of network-provided pablum services. Just like television. Meanwhile, stuff we need (like education) will be reduced to a crawl, unless governments compensate telecoms for not throttling non-profit and public good internet traffic. Via Hack Education.

- **Institute for Open Leadership**
  Open Policy Network, May 26, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Are you good enough for open learning? "Who should apply to be an IOL Fellow? Public and private sector professionals interested in openness and policy with the passion and potential to make a high impact at their institution and/or government through open policy*. Emerging leaders in academia, the arts, cultural institutions, government, scientific labs, and others who are eager to become experts in open licensing."

- **Launch of the Open Policy Network**
  Open Policy Network, May 21, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- The Open Policy Network has now officially launched. Here's their version of open: "we're announcing our first project, the Institute for Open Leadership. Through a weeklong summit with experts, accepted fellows will get hands-on guidance to develop a capstone project for implementation in their organization or institution." You can join the network but you must "support the Guiding Principles and Work Plan", "participate in the OPN email listserv and share information," and "attend monthly strategy/planning conference calls." It's like joining the Kiwanas Club! Anyhow, here is more information and endorsements from Creative Commons, SPARC, CETIS, OERu.

-
  [Open Policy Network](#)
  [Open Policy Network](#), May 14, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Creating Commons is launching new Open Policy Network website. More information [here](#). "The mission of the Open Policy Network is to foster the creation, adoption and implementation of open policies and practices that advance the public good by supporting open policy advocates, organizations and policy makers, connecting open policy opportunities with assistance, and sharing open policy information." They're not getting off to a good start on 'open' by imposing a news embargo, which is why I'm breaking it.

- **Statement about embargo periods**
  Kathleen Shearer, Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR), May 14, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- For a while, supporters of open access have accepted embargo periods as a necessary evil to promote the transition from closed source to open access publications. Embargo periods delay the publication of open versions of paid articles for a period of time. Now they are seeing the cost of that compromise. "Embargo periods dilute the benefits of open access policies and we believe that, if they are adopted, they should be no more than 6 months for the life and physical sciences, 12 months for social sciences and humanities." The coalition of open access repositories that signed the document argues that embargo periods should eventually be eliminated. One wonders about the wisdom of building this compromise into open access policies in the first place.

tetrad of the network era

panopticon — REVERSE into deception

WorldBlu — EXTEND democratic workplaces

pervasive networks

handshake — RETRIEVE cooperation

wirearchy — OBSOLESCE hierarchies

jarche.com

- **A world of pervasive networks** [Harold Jarche](), May 05, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- Harold Jarche applies McLuhan's   of pervasive networks. McLuhan's   'lens') suggests each new technology has the potential to: first, extend a human property, second, obsolesce a previous technology, third, retrieve an older technology, and fourth, have the opposite effect when pushed to its limits. So, viewed from this perspective, pervasive networks can enhance democracy, subvert hierarchy, revive the art of the handshake deal, and result in ubiquitous surveillance.

Beyond Institutions: Personal Learning in a Networked World

For London School of Economics (9th July-Central London)

http://clt.lse.ac.uk/events/NetworkEDGE/networkEDGE-seminar-series-01.php

In a networked world people become less and less dependent on institutional learning begin to and begin to create their own learning. This creates challenges for institutions, but it also creates challenges for students. In the past, personal learning has been represented as a form of autodidacticism where students either read books at random in the library or at best studied programmed education texts and videos. Today personalized learning is supported using adaptive learning and interactive digital resources. Neither offers what we would call a complete learning experience, as we know there is a social and supportive dimension that must be included. The challenge is to design learning systems that are supportive without asserting control, providing access to a wide range of resources from multiple institutions, but in addition, scaffolding frameworks, access to social and professional networks and support though personal and mobile computing devices, devices and tools, and in workplace systems generally. In this talk Stephen Downes discusses developments in a personal learning infrastructure and outlines how professionals, as both teachers and learners, can take advantage of them.

- **Economics students call for shakeup of the way their subject is taught**
  Phillip Inman, The Guardian, May 08, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- The students, I think, understand more than their professors. Economics students are saying that "the dominance of narrow free-market theories at top universities harms the world's ability to confront challenges such as financial stability and climate change" and are calling for a change in how economics is taught. "The crisis has laid bare the latent inadequacies of economic models. These models have failed to make sense of the sorts of extreme macro-economic events, such as crises, recessions and depressions, which matter most to society." Not to mention things like climate change and pervasive surveillance, to name a couple. Here is the students' manifesto. Via Sheri Oberman (thanks!)

- **Three issues with the case for banning laptop**
[Robert Talbert](#), [The Chronicle: Casting Nines](#), Jun 17, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I am often present in meetings and sessions where the request is made that people close their laptops. I don't do it. For me, the laptop is the machine I use to help me think; I engage with the ideas being presented in real-time, and create a record I can search and integrate into later work. So I wasn't persuaded by the anti-laptop argument presented in the Atlantic last week. That said, the response to the article doesn't sway me either. I think that the study (comparing taking notes by typing and by hand) should be rejected as irrelevant. I think the characterization of a laptop as a work or a play tool is irrelevant (for me, my work *is* my play). And the laptop vs the lecture argument sets up a false dilemma.

- [**A Boost for Active Learning**](#) [Doug Lederman](#), [Inside Higher Ed](#), May 14, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- According to Scott Freeman, the metastudy he and his colleagues have published,which is in essence a summary of 225 recent studies, "provides overwhelming evidence that active learning works better than lecture." That may not mean that instructors stop lecturing, he said, "but it shouldn't be about the evidence anymore." Instructivists, over to you.

- **Report: Students Expect Future Universities To Be Accessible, Career-Oriented**
Joshua Bolkan, Campus Technology, Jun 11, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- According to this article, "students expect universities to be more accessible, flexible and focused on jobs, according to a new survey." This report will be reported without criticism (as it is in Campus Technology) but consider the source: "The "2014 Global Survey of Students" compiled responses from more than 20,800 students at 37 institutions in the Laureate network." I would imagine that if they surveyed 20K arts and humanities students at small liberal arts universities, the outcome would be rather different. We have to stop surveying 'university students' (and *especially* students from one particular institution) and start surveying 'people', whether or not they are in this or that institution.

-
CNIE session on campus engagement
D'Arcy Norman, D'Arcy Norman dot net, May 27, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- From the recent CNIE conference D'Arcy Norman shares "some of the campus engagement stuff we did as part of our long LMS replacement project. I tried to stay away from the technology itself, and focus on the engagement process. Full slide deck is available online, and fuller reports describing the engagement and findings are still available online, as well as the GitHub repository of LMS RFP requirements1." I know that the CNIE conference came and went recently - is it me or is this conference beginning to change focus? It was seeming less relevant in recent years but the current one in Kamloops actually seems to be talking about technology and related issues.

-

[The digital degree](#)
[Unattributed](#), [The Economist](#), Jul 01, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- If the Economist says something is good, I begin to worry. And so too with this article touting the destruction of the universities at the hands of the MOOC. The Economist sees the elite universities faring well, with smaller for-profits and even medium-sized public universities bearing the brunt. I'd like to think that open online learning will make the elite universities irrelevant - of course, a lot of things have to happen for that to take place, but we can always hope.

- **Three Trends Worth Watching for Continuing Education Leaders**
Cathy Sandeen, Higher Education Today, May 29, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes
- All three of these trends are very likely, I think. Here's the list:
-
  Tiered service models at universities
-
  Analytics and data-driven management
-
  Alternative credentials
-

-
  To a certain degree, all of these are already present in institutions or in learning technology; what we will probably see over the next few years is widespread adoption.

- **[Bad Day for Bad Patents: Supreme Court Unanimously Strikes Down Abstract Software Patent](#)**
[Daniel Nazer](#), [Vera Ranieri](#), [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#), Jun 20, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Nice news on the patent front. "Essentially, the Court ruled that adding "on a computer" to an abstract idea does not make it patentable. Many thousands of software patents—particularly the vague and overbroad patents so beloved by patent trolls—should be struck down under this standard."

- **Un-Fathom-able: The Hidden Hi**
  [Audrey Watters](#), [Hack Education](#)
  Commentary by Stephen Downe

- Not that we were first - I know w
  offering courses online for four years by the time "the first online class" (at, and according to, MIT) was offered. By 2001, actually, I had left Assiniboine, where we put the General Business Certificate courses online, and had been at the University of Alberta for two years, where we put a municipal government learning and resource portal online. So I can persoanlly attest that the 'history' told by the founders of these new education ventures are works of fiction. This talk by Audrey Watters, by contrast, is not. It's the sober alternative to the hype.

- [**Conditional Release of Course Materials: Assessing Best Practice Recommendations**](#)
[Lawanna S. Fisher](#), [Justin G. Gardner](#), [Thomas M. Brinthaupt](#), [Deana M. Raffo](#), [MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (JOLT)](#), Jul 03, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This is a pretty interesting paper up to the end of page four. It discusses the phenomenon of 'conditional release of material' - that is, showing students course content only after they have reached a certain threshold, such as passing a quiz. The author surveys types of and conditions for conditional release. You can stop reading at the point where you read the statement "Two of the authors surveyed undergraduate students in their courses over two semesters." The data that follows is essentially useless, even discounting the response rate of 38% from the surveys (I don't know why authors feel compelled to write these papers and why journals like JOLT feel compelled to publish them).

- **Learning Designer**
  Various authors, London Knowledge Lab, Apr 29, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- The early-release version of the website is now available. "The Learning Designer suite of tools enables teachers to share their good teaching ideas. It is intended to help a subject teacher see how a particular pedagogic approach can be migrated successfully across different topics. There are sample patterns to browse and edit, or you can design your own from scratch." Via Grainne Conole, who says it was created by Diana Laurillard and others. Interesting to explore.
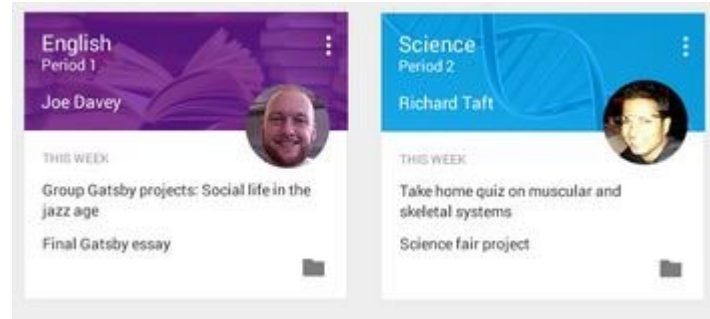
- **Previewing a new Classroom**
  Zach Yeskel, Official Google Canada Blog, May 07, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- Dozens of LMS companies are reexamining their business plans this week after the launch of Google's preview of Classroom, part of the Google Apps for Education suite. According to their official blog, Classroom helps teachers:
-
  help teachers create and collect assignments paperlessly
-
  make announcements, ask questions and comment with students in real time
-
  creates Drive folders for each assignment and for each student. Students can easily see what's due on their Assignments page.
-
-
  Google says it wants the applications to "play well" with others. I'll believe that when I see that.

- **A Goal for Google and Carnegie Mellon´s MOOC Research?**
  Unattributed (UNESCO Chair in e-Learning), Education & Technology for Social Change, Jun 25, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This post summarizes: "Under the Google Focused Research Award program, Carnegie Melon University received a two-year grant for research on and development of MOOCs platforms '*intelligent enough to mimic the traditional classroom experience'*." He then comments, "It remains unclear if the word choice was a mishap or the concept was fuzzy." There has been a lot of back-pedalling but I think the original statement was probably the most accurate expression of the intent, as educational institutions continue to resist any redefinition of learning. See also coverage in the Chronicle: "Unless the MOOCs pay attention to how people actually learn, they will not be able to improve effectiveness, and will end up as just a passing fad." Oooo, burn. I'm sure we all looked at the list of Google funded focused research awards.

- **[Selecting a Learning Management System: Academic Perspective](#)**
  [Clayton R. Wright](#), [Valerie Lopes](#), [T. Craig Montgomerie](#), [Sunday Reju](#), [Seb Schmoller](#), [EDUCAUSE Review](#), Apr 28, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- It's a bit old school, but many institutions are still going through the LMS selection process. This article is a good guide. "This article stresses the importance of involving all stakeholders in the selection process, offers a step-by-step guide to LMS selection, and enables readers to develop a customized list of LMS features that align with their institution's instructional and learning priorities." See also the [appendix](#) containing 305 questions or features to consider during the selection process.

- **BIM and BAD**
  [David T. Jones](#), [The Weblog of (a) David Jones](#), Apr 25, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- I like this acronym - it's not complete, but it's a great start: "BAD is an acronym that captures what I think is missing from the institutional approach to university e-learning

- **B**ricolage – the LMS as Enteprise Systems doesn't allow or cater for bricolage.

- **A**ffordances – resulting in an inability to leverage the affordances of technology to improve learning and teaching.

- **D**istribution – the idea that knowledge about how to improve L&T is distributed and the implications that has for the institutional practice of e-learning."

- This wasn't what we were trying to develop when we developed MOOCs, but if this *had* been the description of what we were trying, it wouldn't have been far off.

- **[How Should I Offer This Course? The Course Delivery Decision Model (CDDM)](#)**
  [Thomas M. Brinthaupt](#), [Maria A. Clayton](#), [Barbara J. Draude](#), [Paula T. Calahan](#),
  [MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (JOLT)](#), Jul 03, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This is not a bad paper though I wish the authors had been more imaginative in their typology of delivery models - the old "in-class, hybrid or online" classification could admit of much more nuance, ranging from pedagogical style (active learning, constructionism, lecture) through to media employed (videos, texts, simulations). There's a *bit* of that in the only substantive diagram of the model, which begins with sets of options for content, activities and feedback. But these seem placed squarely within an instructivist frame, and do not help guide delivery decisions in any substantive manner. I think the discussion is interesting, even though the model suffers from the flaws of models generally: people who understand the model don't need it, while people who need the model don't understand it.

- **LRMI at the Cetis c...**
  Phil Barker, Lorna C...
  Commentary by Ste...

- "What on Earth Cou...
  the name of the firs...
  involvement by CET...n
  of Educational Publ...
  a partial history of metadata initiatives (it doesn't mention the Canadian East-West standards and the AICC specification)(see also What is schema.org? and my blog post on explaining the LRMI alignment object).

-
  Another presentation from Phil Barker explains LRMI - "LRMI/schema.org metadata is deeply embedded in the web to the extent that it is right in the pointy brackets of the HTML code of web pages." There's also a presentation explaining an LRMI implementation by Google custom search. Then "Ben Ryan of Jorum discussed his work in implementing schema.org / LRMI in DSpace." Finally, Phil Barker gives " a short over view of some of the sites that we have found to be using LRMI because they show up in the Custom Search Engine results." Related: video on using schema.org to describe open educational resources.

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  ## [Who is using LRMI metadata?](#)
  [Phil Barket](#), [Sharing](#), [Learning](#), Jun 26, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- You may have heard of LRMI (Learning Resource Metadata Initiative) but you may not know who is using it. This post offers a short selection of sites where it can be found. Despite Barker's qualification ("there are others using LRMI properties in their webpages that I happened not to find (t.b.h. I didn't spend very long looking) ") this seems to me to be a very short list.

- **[Mass Customization of Education by an Institution of HE: What Can We Learn from Industry?](#)**
[Robert Schuwer](#), [Rob Kusters](#), [International Review of Research in Open](#), [Distance Learning (IRRODL)](#), May 05, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes
- So this seems like a good time to restate a distinction I've been using for some time now:
-

  personalized - a common product is adapted for use by an individual
-
  personal - a unique produced is created for and possibly by the individual
-

-

  A similar distinction appears with similar terms. So, for example, a *custom car* is one that was built especially for you, while a customized car is a production-line car with features adjusted to your specification. And so on. That's why I say I am working on 'personal learning' rather than 'personalized learning'.
-
  Why is this important? Because if you're not careful you'll fall into the error made by the authors of this paper as they try to create personal learning in the mould of mass customization (as, they say, it has been practised in other industries for years). So we get a picture of 'customized' learning where you, the learner, are essentially creating a learning design by picking from a menu of customization options. That's fine if you basically wanted to learn the same *way* as everyone else. But what if you wanted to improvise? Sorry, no options for that.

- **["In Over Our Heads" – My Simmons commencement address](#)**
[David Weinberger](#), [Joho the Blog](#), May 16, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- David Weinberger hits the mark with this talk about information overload. We don't feel overloaded by the effects of 1.3 million apple pie recipes or 7.6 million cute cat photos. Why not? Because we're not expected to *master* them. But with information it's different, because there used to be so much less that we *could* master all the information. But not any more. "We're all in over our heads. Forever. This isn't a temporary swim in the deep end of the pool. Being in over our heads is the human condition." But hey - that's a *good* thing.

- **Assembling University learning technologies for an open world: connecting institutional and social networks**
John Hannon, Matthew Riddle, Thomas Ryberg, Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Networked Learning 2014, May 07, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes
- Perhaps this is why I understand traditional academics less and less as time goes by: "many academics still prefer - knowingly or otherwise - to replicate the 'real' in the virtual world, rather than unfetter themselves from tradition and the familiar and create new selves, constructs, relationships and opportunities for engagement." By contrast, I feel myself and my work adapting and growing as technology grows. So do students, which creates a growing challenge to institutions. "The widespread adoption of social media among students brings shared interactional practices that does not match university arrangements for learning. This, we argue, invites reappraisal of the framing of established educational practices and the metaphorical work that precedes it." From the double symposium on Actor Network Theory.
-
  I should add, quoting from the article: "There are three observations or upshots from these cases:
-
  the shift to student self-organisation is consistent with the informal practices and rhetoric of social media, with its continual work of relating (liking, updating) and crafting an identity in a "personalised network"
-
  the mobile practices of informal, self-organised learning challenge the metaphors of bounded (regional) learning spaces
-
  student social media practices overflow the framing of institutional learning environments."
-
-
  It makes me think of the comment in the introduction to the symposium about the templates that "tightly controlled how papers were formatted: the fonts used, margins and spacing and other things.. to stop you from doing some things, including exactly what we are doing here: using a different font, different margins with a different justification..."

- **To Create Change, Leadership Is More Important Than Authority**
  Greg Satell, Harvard Business Review Blogs, Apr 30, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Change the word 'change' to 'learning' and you have a good account of why autonomy, rather than control, is essential in education. "Control is an illusion and always has been an illusion. It is a Hobbesian paradox that we cannot enforce change unless change has already occurred. Higher status—or even a persuasive presentation full of facts—is of limited utility. The lunatics run the asylum, the best we can do as leaders is empower them to run it right."

- **[Designing Learning Tools — Introduction to Some Methodological Thoughts](#)**
[Teemu Leinonen](#), [FLOSSE Posse](#), May 29, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Alex Hayes asked for my comments on this post following my digital research methodologies talk. [Here's what I said](#) about it back in 2010. My response today: I think that what's important here is to understand that the design theories are nothing more than abstractions of the actual process, that they are most useful as descriptions of what was done, as opposed to prescriptions of what should be done, that the design methodologies represent a palatte of possible approaches, and that (as the second principle states) "designers should aim and accept that design is often based on informed guessing."

- **The City and The City: Reflections on the Cetis 2014 Conference**
  [Brian Kelly](#), [UK Web Focus](#), Jun 30, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Summary and reflections on the 2014 CETIS conference that took place in Bolton a couple of weeks ago. Of note, from a talk by Phil Richards, "In the moves towards reducing the range of activities which Jisc works on Phil highlighted a move away from working with standards, and highlighted the NHS as an example of a sector in which large sums of money had been invested in the development of interoperable systems based on open standards which had failed to deliver." Note though that the alternative is not necessarily the employment of proprietary standards. It could be "non-standards based systems, such as "innovative, successful learning technology without standards" such as "[Sugata Mitra's 'hole in the wall' work](#) as an example of successful self-organised learning which we should seek to emulate."

- **Amazing Starling Flocks Are Flying**
  [Brandon Keim](#), [Wired](#), May 21, 201...
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I'm giving a talk on MOOC research... ...on research methods (or the lack o... ...research chaotic systems like MOO... ...are essentially meaningless. Then I... ...flocks of songbirds that act as one...

- I'm still looking into it, but here are some things. This post gives the overview. "The secret lies in the same systems that apply to anything on the cusp of a shift, like snow before an avalanche, where the velocity of one bird affects the velocity of the rest. It is called 'scale-free correlation' and every shift of the murmuration is called a critical transition." [Here's the paper](#). The topic is also [covered by MNN](#), which makes the mechanics clear. "Each bird is actually reacting to the birds nearest to it, that the movement is the result of a series of short-range reactions... one bird's movement only [affects its seven closest neighbors](#). So one bird affects its seven closest neighbors, and each of those neighbors' movements affect their closest seven neighbors and on through the flock."

-
[Great Wildebeest Migration](#)
[Maasai Mara](#), May 21, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Following up on my murmuration post from yesterday, Keith Lyons writes to point me to studies of the Great Wildebeest Migration. "In reality there is no such single entity as 'the migration'. The wildebeest are the migration – there is neither start nor finish to their endless search for food and water, as they circle the Serengeti- Mara ecosystem in a relentless sequence of life and death." What's interesting again is how we talk about this. Averages are not useful. "It is a dynamic process which defies predictions: no two years are ever quite the same."

- **[Editor's Blog Lamarckian Inheritance ...ed to your children](#)**
  [Josh Mitteldorf](#), [Humanity+](#), Apr 28, ...
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I'm still a step away from endorsing t... g, and the background information is well w... the idea of evolution was widely discuss... (including by his grandfather [Erasmu...](#). Unlike Darwin's theory, which suggests that natural selection works through random variation, Lamarckian evolution suggests that lifetime experiences also influence selection. Thus, for example, trauma in one generation results in physical effects over the next few generations. In this post, the evidence that there might actually be something correct in Lamarckian evolution is presented and discussed. Not only is this a fascinating read, it makes clear even (perhaps especially) landmark ideas are the not creation of one individual with one key book far ahead of anyone else, but rather, are the creation of a community over time.

#

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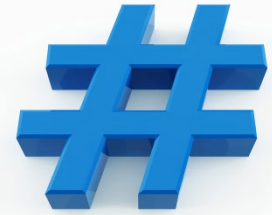
[Another Post about Hashtags. No, Seriously.](#)
[Tressie McMillan Cottom.](#), [tressiemc](#), Apr 23, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

• Insightful post about the role and use of hashtags. It's relevant because of the widespread use of hashtags in learning. Hashtags were (and are) produced not by individuals or corporations, but by communities. Though commonly associated with Twitter, they existed before Twitter monetized them, and would continue to exist even after the company discontinues their use (as some carefully placed 'rumours' have suggested). But in the spirit of 'there is utterly nothing that commerce does not foul' the discussion over hashtags has turned to their exploitation (by news and other content agencies) and they ownership (by the people who really created them but who are missing out on the exploitation). It's actually a pretty common phenomenon; hashtags are just the latest victim. #Jazz #Rap #MOOC

- **Conceptual Connections, once again**
  Matthias Melcher, x28's new Blog, May 09, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Concepts can form networks, says Matthias Melcher. "Words can change each other's subtle nuances, for example when a newer word gradually displaces an older one from a certain meaning, while the older word slowly shifts its connotations, just by being used differently." I don't inherently disagree with this. I was pretty careful in my statement to allow for non-causal changes of state: "can cause or result in..." - and the purpose was precisely allow that networks could be formed by non-physical entities. Concepts may be one such example. Now I have said connections are not just relations between concepts, as Melcher notes here. A concept map isn't the same as a network. But *insofar as concepts* are *dynamic, interacting things* they can and do form networks.

- **Washington Post, New York Times and Mozilla team up for new Web site comment system**
  Paul Farhi, Washington Post, Jun 20, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I want this: "The Washington Post, the New York Times and software developer Mozilla will team up to create digital tools that will make it easier for readers to post comments and photos on news sites and to interact with journalists and each other." People complain about the gRSShopper comment system more than anything else, but I've resisted focusing my energies on developing a centralized system. But this (as compared to the extant Disqus system) might be the ticket. More commentary: "The complicated thing about this is it's going to be a lot of different pieces that need to be interoperable, and not just once, but across the web." Mathew Ingram writes that it "sounds a little like an open-source version of Kinja." More from Poynter, Dave Winer (who argues for a more distributed system), Denovati.

- **Internet Trends 2014**
[Mary Meeker](), [Business Insider](), M
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Mary Meeker's annual state of the
come out and once again it is prob
snapshot of the state of play as you're going to see. My only
complaint is that at 165 slides, it's too short. The trends
won't be a surprise to anyone following the internet closely,
but it's good to have real data to support beliefs about the
rise of mobile, the proliferation of apps, etc. There are also
some unexpected insights, such as "the edge is becoming
more important than the node" in social graphs. Don't miss
this one. Image: [JD Lasica/Flickr]()

- **eLearning Africa's memorable** Various authors, eLearning Africa News, Jun 25, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Nice quick summary of the key messages from the eLearning Africa keynotes, and a quick snapshot of thinking from the conference. For example: "Everyone knows that knowledge is growing at an increasing depth and an increasing breadth, so you need people which can constantly learn and bridge that gap even while they're in their current jobs." **Iyadunni Olubode**, Executive Director, LEAP Africa Ltd/Gte., Nigeria.

- **Three Makes a Movement[?] student voice in ed tech** [Phil Hill](), [e-Literate](), Jun 10[...] *Commentary by Stephen D[...]*

- While I am all in favour of [...] at conferences, I really do[...] constitute the "start" of su[...] simple Google search on "[...] results. Even a search for [Ed Tech student panels]()specifically yields more than 2,000 results. So I think that the trend is well-established; perhaps where it is new is among the 20MM and Branson Foundations of the world (which are often the last places to get it, and the first to claim credit). (Photo: student Rachel Winston, who gave a keynote address at Alt-C last year).

- **The Future of Ed-Tech is a Reclamation Project** [Audrey Watters](#), [Hack Education](#), May 28, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Quite a good talk from Audrey Watters a few days ago in Edmonton. This post is the (sparse) slide deck and the (rich) text transcript. The gist? "We can reclaim the Web and more broadly ed-tech for teaching and learning. But we must reclaim control of the data, content, and knowledge we create. We are not resources to be mined. Learners do not enter our schools and in our libraries to become products for the textbook industry and the testing industry and the technology industry and the ed-tech industry to profit from."

- **Shame on Slideshare and Lessons Learned** Lucy Gray, High Techpectations, Apr 30, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- As readers know, I use Slideshare a lot - I was one of the very first users of the service (there was once a time when most presentations on Slideshare were mine!) and use Slideshare as an integral part of my presentation pages. So something like this is a worry - Lucy Gray saw all of her Slideshare presentations deleted and her account closed without notice or explanation. She has backups (phew!) but it's a major inconvenience. What's concerning is how arbitrary this was. Now I'm thinking seriously about a way to create my own embedded version of my presentations - anyone know how? - and dumping my Slideshare account.

- **How we're on the verge of an am... #indieweb**
  [Ben Werdmuller](#), [Benwerd](#), Jun 03,
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Ben Werdmuller may have a [startup](#) invested in the concept, but his view of an indieweb is sound and something I support (see also, "[domain of one's own](#)"). "The idea is simple: instead of everyone giving all their information to a site like Facebook, they keep it themselves, but still get to communicate easily using all of the great user experience discoveries we've made. You can still share selfies, make friends, listen to music together and share links, but now you do it in a space that's really yours, and that you get to have more control over."

- **Demoting Social Silos to Syndication Endpoints** David Wiley discovers Known and the result is magical. "Known is a publication platform that uses the "POSSE" publication model, where POSSE stands for "Publish (on your) Own Site, Syndicate Elsewhere". .. The POSSE model is just beautiful. It represents everything empowering about the Reclaim and Retain work. In fact, the more I wrapped my head around it, the more excited I got." See more about Known. This is the model - promoted here through everything from indiweb to Diaspora to syndication itself - that we've been taking about here for years. It's the basis for the personal learning environment. It's the basis for mesh networking. Welcome to the future, David. Maybe you want to read this (and this) and we can talk about breaking down the silos and building indie learning. Via Jim Groom.

- **Reclaiming Education**
  [Jim Groom](), [Brian Lamb](), [EDUC]()
  Commentary by Stephen Dow[]

- I guess everybody knows I'm a
  and I really appreciate Jim Gro
  "Starting now. A technology th
  of knowledge resources, insta
  cooperation, and all the powe
  recombination, and computat
  scholarship and for learning."
  article for the link to case stuc
  what's there. See also [Groom']()
  which in turn contains some good videos, including [this one]() from
  Audrey Watters and Kin Lane.
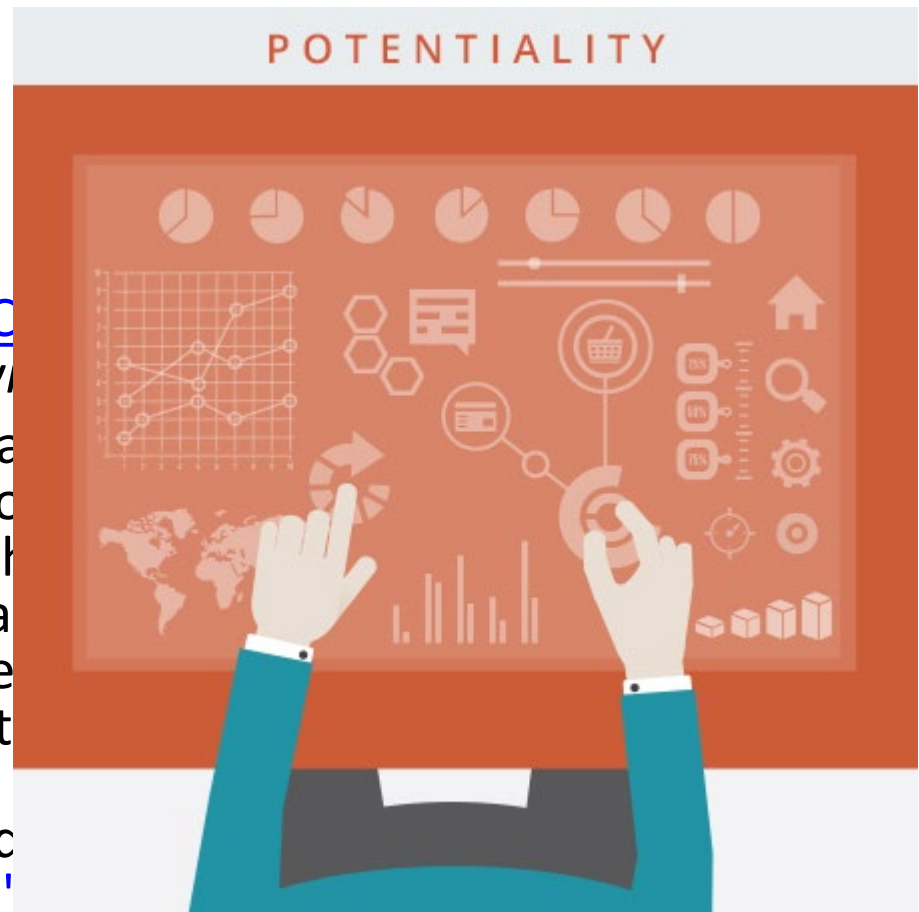
- **Under the Hood c** [Alan Levine](), [CogD]() *Commentary by S*

- Long, technical an) inclined) on how t for your class. It's not an easy read but if you're looking to set something like this up using a WordPress installation, it even has script samples for useful functions (like how to find the RSS feed of a blog given the URL).
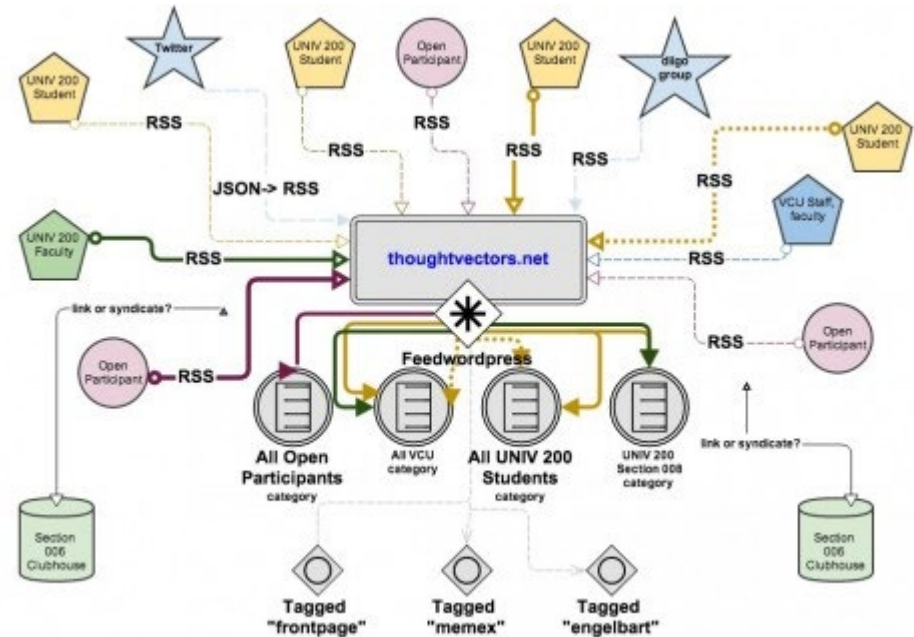
- **Beyond the stack**
  [Mike Loukides](), [O'Reilly Radar](), May 30, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- One of the interesting 'behind the scenes' things about the new MOOC platforms is the way they're built: [distributed computing](). Coursera, for example, [relies]() on Amazon Web Services (AWS). EdX's default distribution [also]() uses AWS. As tghe article states, "A new toolset has grown up to support the development of massively distributed applications. We call this new toolset the Distributed Developer's Stack (DDS)." This article is a good overview of the new paradigm.

- **What is Schema.org?**
  Phil Barker, Lorna M. Ca[...]
  Commentary by Stephe[...]

- Schema.org has been a[...] familiar with it, and nee[...] on a technical level, this is an important read. "Schema.org is a joint initiative of the search engines Google, Bing, Yahoo and Yandex aimed at making it easier to index web pages... This briefing describes schema.org for a technical audience. It is aimed at people who may want to implement schema.org markup in websites or other tools they build but who wish to know more about the technical approach behind schema.org and how to implement it."
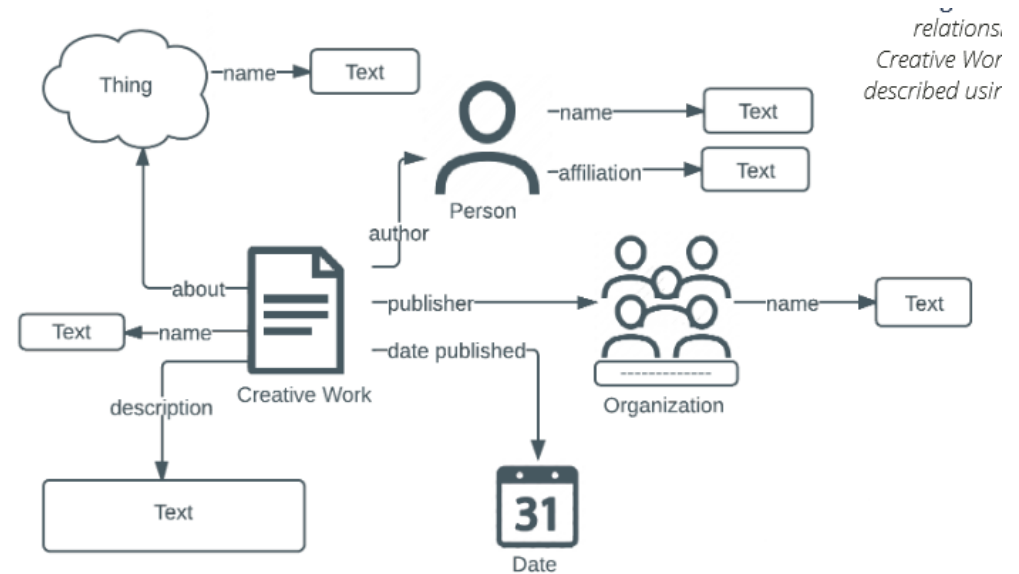
Applications

Bitnami is an app store for server software. Install your favorite applications in your own servers or run them in the cloud. Select one app to get started or learn more about what makes Bitnami special.

Search..

All
Popular
Recently Updated
Infrastructure
Cloud Tools
Accounting
Analytics
Binary Repository
Blog

WordPress — Blog
Joomla! — CMS
Redmine — Bug Tracking
Drupal — CMS
Ametys — CMS
WAMP Stack — Infrastructure

CraftBukkit Minecraft — Games
Moodle — eLearning
Cloud Tools for Google Cloud Platform
Magento — e-Commerce
ProcessWire — CMS
ownCloud — Media sharing

- **Bitnami**
  Bitnami, May 15, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Do

- This is very nice. "Bitnami is
  favorite applications in you
  one app to get started or le
  No, it's not free (of course).
  lived. For your own cloud server you'll need to enter your Amazon Web Service credentials.

- For more on this, see this great post from Jim Groom outlining how he created a Ghost service. He describes how it works: "AWS provides a relatively easy way to install an application like Ghost, which has unique server dependencies, by tapping into Amazon's marketplace of Community Images. These are searchable, virtualized packages that take care of all the server settings for a given application, enabling you to get up and running quickly and easily."

- **Out in the Open: The Tiny Box That Lets You Take Your Data Back From Google**
  [Klint Finley](#), [Wired](#), May 12, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This article is basically a plug for a kickstarter product (pretty much everything in Wired is [native advertising](#) these days) but the concept is sound and a (more affordable) product like this will eventually bei in most homes, "a personal web server preloaded with open source software that lets you run your own web services from your home network–and run them with relative ease."
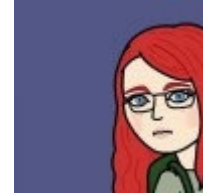
- **[Connectivism: Informing Distance Education Theory, Pedagogy and Research (Critical Review)](#)**
[Kelli Ralph](#), [Technology for Teaching & Learning](#), May 30, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This is a good post reflecting on George Siemens's 2004 Connectivism article, discussing both the theoretical influiences and the points where the paper establishes new ground. It is rife with points of reference to related literature (perhaps overly so; the author's own voice seems lost). But it's definitely worth a read, situating as it does Siemens's paper in historical context. P.S. the author who penned the editor's note cited in the article was Donald G. Perrin.
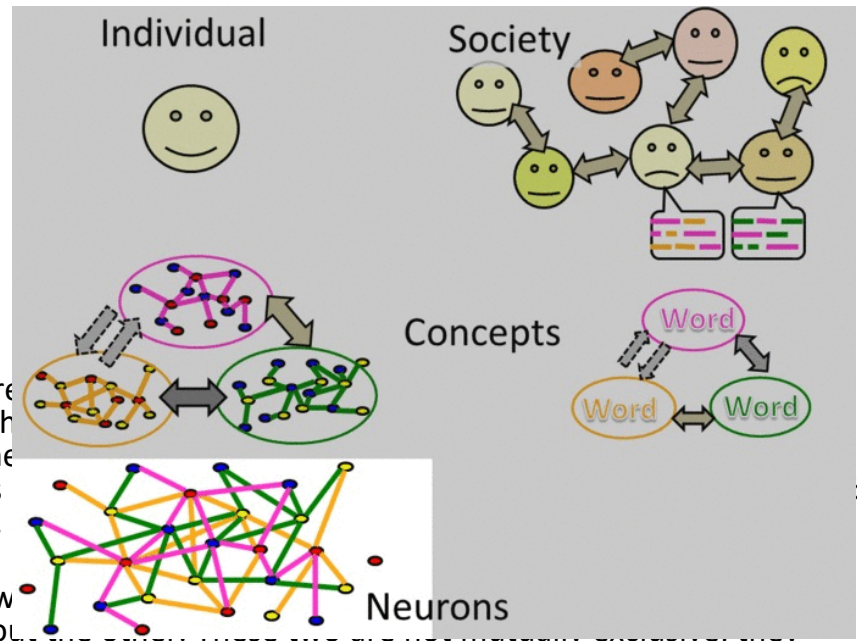
- **Visualizing my understanding of connectivism**
  Matthias Melcher, x28's new Blog, May 01, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Connectivism, as I describe it, suggests that there are
  network is one. A society (or social network) is anoth
  good. But Geoff Cain asks the question: "how are the
  reconcile these two." I would point out that there is
  nice for us if they did, but it's not *a priori* necessary.

- I think there are two answers, which I'll call 'the Dow
  mostly about one and George has talked mostly abou
  might both be true, and (probably) elements of both of them are, as they vary mostly from the perspective of
  point of view as opposed to postulation of a different causal mechanism.

- The Siemens answer is multimodal extension. The networks reach out and integrate with each other. Thus, for
  example, a concept might be contained partially in a human brain but the full extension of the concept might
  extend beyond the network of neurons to include, and interact with (as part of the same network) extra-neural
  entities (like computers, other people, and the like).

- The Downes answer is pattern recognition (yes yes I *know* William Gibson wrote a book of that name, and that
  the concept is widely discussed by others). One network perceives patterns in another network and *interprets* or
  recognizes these patterns *as* something. So, for example, a social network might *recognize* 'genius' in a person via
  the presentation of patterns of behaviour by that person that cause responses typical of recognition of genius in
  society.

-
  Why Connectivism is a Learning Theory
  Geoff Cain, Brainstorm in Progress, May 01, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Yeah, this is kind of how I see it too: "Most of the ﾠ   ﾠ   ﾠ   ﾠ   ﾠ   ﾠ ﾠ v
  theory is not like the old theories." This is asserted
  (David Wiley's concern) of connectivism doesn't m   ﾠe, a
  theory must

-
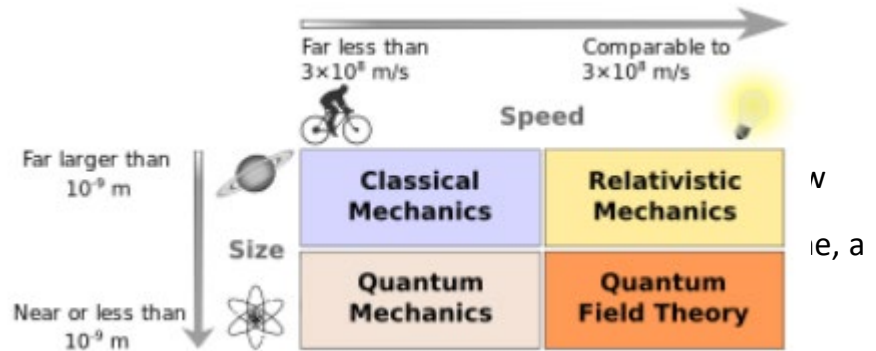
  account for current theories (either through refutation or inclusion)? A theory shouldn't just account for a given phenomena, it should do so in some measurably better way (more complete, elegant, etc.).

-

  sufficiently explain where we are now.

-

  make predictions. Any theory that can't predict anything is basically a conjecture at best.

-

  be subject to testing. Here I would emphasize that the theory should change what we do based on experiment and empirical data.

-

-

  In my experience, Connectivism has met those four conditions." Again - it doesn't matter to me whether or not connectivism is a theory, but these practical concerns - for example, whether ti explains, whether it predicts - are important.

- **Challenges to Research in MOOCs**
[Helene Fournier](), [Rita Kop](), [Guillaume Durand](), [MERLOT Journal of Online Learning](), [MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (JOLT)](), Apr 30, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This is a paper published by my colleagues at NRC describing research on some of the MOOCs we've offered over the years here. "the authors report on an exploratory case study of PLENK, a connectivist-style MOOC, and highlight some of the challenges in the research and analysis process, especially as significant amounts of both quantitative and qualitative data were involved." Because of the lag-time in publication in academic journals, this work seems to me to be talking about older work, but in reality this research is at the forefront of our understanding of massive open online learning.

- **Participants' Perceptions of Learning and Networking in Connectivist MOOCs**
  Mohsen Saadatmand, Kristiina Kumpulainen, MERLOT Journal of Online Learning, MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (JOLT), Apr 30, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I think the authors could have been a bit bolder in their conclusions ("creating networks and developing professional connections through networking technologies are advantages of participating in cMOOCs") but this paper for its own part offers an extensive set of references to primary and secondary MOOC literature from the first wave of discussion and studies (belying those who claim that there has been little or no research done on MOOCs thus far (yes, I still hear that at conferences)).

- **Learner at the Center of a Networked World**
  Various authors, The Aspen Institute, Jun 19, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- According to the prefix, "This report sets forth a vision that stems from the premise that the learner needs to be at the center of novel approaches and innovative learning networks." It identifies a pervasive probllem, the "silos" that make a learner-centered system difficult to implement. Here are their recommendations (abridged):
-
  Redesign learning environments to empower learners to learn any time, any place.
- Enhance the ability of educators to support and guide learners in a networked learning environment.
- Build an infrastructure that will connect all students in all of the places they learn.
- Support the maximum feasible degree of interoperability across learning networks.
- Adopt policies to incorporate digital, media and social-emotional literacies as basic skills for living and learning in the digital age.
- Create Trusted Environments for Learning.
-
-
  Well here's the good news. This is *exactly* what our Learning and Performance Support Systems (LPSS) program is doing here at the National Research Council. I talk more about it here. We are staffed, well into the development process, and identifying partners for projects and collaborative research.

Learner Ownership and Control of Electronic Portfolio Development

Learner Control vs. Organizational Control
Assumption:
Greater Learner Control leads to more Intrinsic Motivation

- **Learner Control in Personal Lear[ning] Cultural Study**
  [Ilona Buchem](), [Gemma Tur Ferrer](), [Literacy](), [Technology](), Jun 03, 201[?]
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- According to the authors, "resear[ch] of PLE has moved beyond computer assisted programs, intelligent tutoring systems and learning management systems towards authentic learning contexts mediated by technology in which the learner may have a greater control of either tangible or intangible elements of a learning environment." This paper develops that research, looking at degrees of perceived personal ownership in cross-cultural settings. The paper is from a special issue of the Journal of Literacy and Technology on personal learning environments.
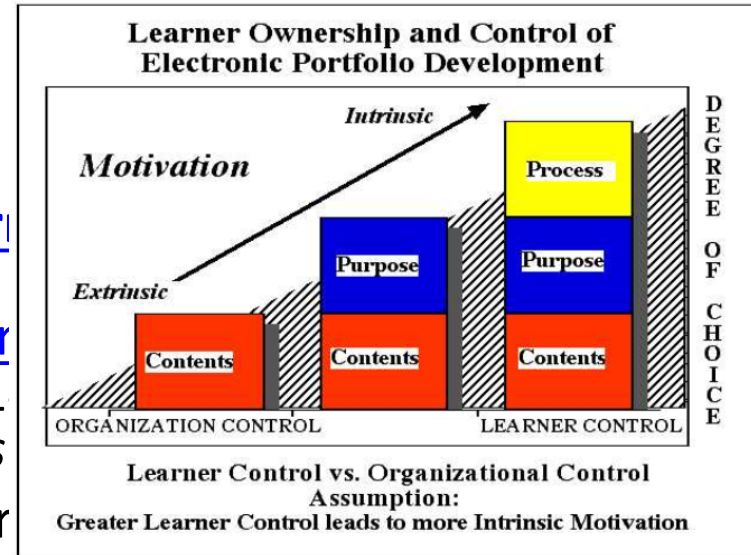
- **The 10 Things You Should Include In Your Website** [Amit Agarwal](), [Digital Inspiration](), Jun 25, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Oh, I *hate* list-based [click-bait]() articles ('listicles') because they're just so much filler. But like a speckled trout I clicked on [this]() one to see if I was on the list of '25 of the Best RSS Feeds for Educators' (spoiler: I'm not) and from that followed a link to *another* listicle, this one on ten things you should include in your website. This is actually a pretty good list, will make your site mobile-friendlier, and I especially like the idea of a [humans.txt]() file.

- **Adapt Learning**
  Adapt Learning, Jun 12, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Interesting effort devoted to, as their website says, "create, as a community, the leading e-learning authoring tool for producing responsive content... to develop a freely available authoring tool for organisations that wish to develop their own responsive e-learning content... [and] to encourage a large, global community of end users and developers." Version 1.1 of their framework has just been released. Interestingly, the code available is all Javascript and Less (CSS). View the demo here. Adapt is an open source project established by City & Guilds Kineo, Learning Pool and Sponge UK.

- **Province, post-secondary institutions develop online tool to help persons with disabilities**
  Press Release, Government of New Brunswick, Jun 04, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This is nice to see. "PSE institutions in New Brunswick have teamed with the provincial government to launch a new website, Supporting Students with Disabilities. It includes training modules for educators, identifies different types of learning difficulties and disabilities, and outlines services provided for students by the institutions."
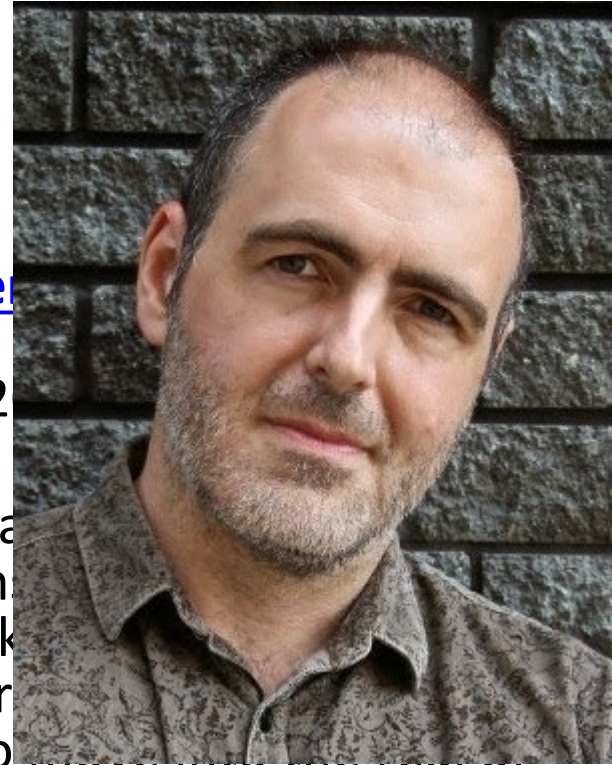
- **[Interview with Steve Pettifer, computer ... of Utopia Documents](#)**
  [Richard Poynder](#), [Open](#), [Shut?](#), Jun 02, 2...
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- As this article notes, "Critics of the PDF a... permits only passive reading. This mean... fully able to exploit the dynamic and link... seems like a small thing - and in the wor... the world of PDF readers is beginning to move into the real of interaction with live data (including tables and references) with [Utopia Documents](#), developed in 2009 and being released as open source software this week. So, for instance, when a document in Utopoa is opened, "a sidebar opens up on the right-hand side and fills with relevant data from external databases and services like [Mendeley](#), [SHERPA/RoMEO](#), and [Wikipedia](#)." This post interviews Utopia developer Steve Pettifer.

The Near Future of Workforce Technology

- **Emerging tech is transforming the w[...]** Dion Hinchcliffe, ZD Net, May 05, 20[...] *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- In this post Dion Hinchcliffe has a ni[...] the process described in the following (probably correct) prediction: "Combine ambient data on just about any physically manufactured object — from car tires and milk cartons to shipping containers and test tubes — with pervasive wearable technologies that constantly present us with dashboards, notifications, analyses, and visualizations of all this data, and you have a workplace that will rapidly turn into a contemporary cybernetic amagamation that was previously only the purview of science fiction." Via Harold Jarche.

- **ProQuest Case Study: Using the Oscillation Principle for Software Development**
[Nancy Dixon](#), [Conversation Matters](#), Jun 11, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This is an interesting and extended look at the software development methodology employed by ProQuest (you may have seen their online maps). They use what Dixon calls the "oscillation principle" meeting three times a year for three days. The rest of the time "team members are in constant communication with each other using various forms of social media. They [Scrum](#)several times a week over [Google Hangout](#) or [Skype](#), hold Hangout meetings between individual members or small groups to address problems, and use [Flowdock](#) as their group chat room." Process matters. In software development, process really matters.

- **[The Construction of Shared Knowledge in Collaborative Problem Solving](#)**
[Stephanie D. Teasley](#), [Jeremy Roschellel](#), [The Conslruction of Shared Knowledge](#), May 20, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- "Collaboration is a coo rdinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem... Cooperative work is accomplished by the division of labour among participants, as an activity where each person is responsible for a portion of the problem solving." What's important in collaboration is the creation of a shared model. "Our perspective has characterised collaboration as a process of constructing and maintaining a Joint Problem Space." See also, Paul Brna, [Models of Collaboration](#).

- **Let's Stop Confusing Cooperation and Teamwork with Collaboration**
  Jesse Lyn Stoner, Seapoint Center, May 21, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Short article with clear useful definitions and which looks at the impact of distance on cooperation and collaboration. The impact on cooperation is clear, from this study: "virtual distance had significant influences on trust, goal clarity and OCB and indirectly influenced innovation and success." But simply moving people to the same place will not impact collaboration (contra Marissa Mayer). "Collaboration is working together to create something new in support of a shared vision. The key points are that is is not an individual effort." True. But is this? "Collaborative leadership is based on respect, trust and the wise use of power. Leaders must be willing to let go of control."

- **[The Evolution of Cooperation](#)**
  [Robert Axelrod](#), May 20, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- From the perspective of game theory, Robert Axelrod asks, "Under what conditions will cooperation emerge in a world of egoists without central authority?" Cooperation can develop even among people with competing agendas (as in, for example, a war). "Cooperation can get started, evolve, and prove stable in situations which otherwise appear extraordinarily unpromising." Axelrod suggests (and I disagree) that cooperation requires conditions of reciprocity among people likely to meet again: "The foundation of cooperation is not really trust, but the durability of the relationship." (I disagree because cooperation can occur altruistically, in a community of strangers).

- **Towards Better Group Work: Seeing the Difference between Cooperation and Collaboration**
  Olga Kozar, English Teaching Forum, May 20, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- "Cooperation can be achieved if all participants do their assigned parts separately and bring their results to the table; collaboration, in contrast, implies direct interaction among individuals to produce a product and involves negotiations, discussions, and accommodating others' perspectives." Olga Kozar, English Teaching Forum (2010). Is collaboration a reasonable goal? Dividing students into groups and telling them to work together is no guarantee that they actually will. Kreijns, Kirschner, and Jochems (2002) also point to "the social-psychological/social dimension of social interaction that is salient in non-task contexts."

- **Learning from Seymou** [Mitchel Resnick](), [Nicho](), [Marvin Minsky](), [MIT M]() *Commentary by Steph*

- Recent MIT Media Lab event on the life and lessons of Seymour Papert, with contributions from Nicholas Negroponte, Alan Kay, and Marvin Minsky and Mitchel Resnick. 61 minute video. There's a [Japanese]() translation. The Media Lab model of "projects and peers and passion and play" grew out of Papert's work, we are told. Mitchel Resnick introduces the panel.

- **With 24 million students, Codecademy revamps its offerings**
Erin Griffith, CNN.com - Money, Apr 24, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- People forget about CodeAcademy when they talk about MOOCs, but it was earlier than most and, with 24 million users, larger than most. It has distanced itself (quite rightly) from the xMOOCs offered at Stanford and elsewhere. "The problem with MOOCs, according to Codecademy founder Zach Sims, is that they simply try to replicate the offline learning experience. The web presents the opportunity to learn in an entirely new way, he says." Quite so. This year it will begin monetizing, not by selling certificates to students, but by matching students with jobs (circumventing the whole certification process entirely). When you stop thinking that you're a university, a world of opportunity opens up to you.

- **New Learning**
  Stephen Downes, Half an Hour, Jun 12, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- A recent post describes "8 Ideas That Will Permanently Break Education As We Know It," by Terry Heick in TeachThought. Sheila Stewart addresses one of these points, the idea that 'parents are the sleeping giants' in education. "Hopefully parents can also work *with* teachers, principals and policymakers," she writes, rather than "redirecting anger." I address the rest. It's a good overview of the ways education is changing, but it subtly misses the point item by item. This post is my response to those items, creating an overview of what might be called New Learning.

- **Coding for journalists: 10 prog**... Paul Bradshaw, Online Journal... *Commentary by Stephen Dow...*

- This article won't teach you ho... involved in any discipline emp... learning - then the language o... language. That's where this ar... the real meaning of such arcan... matter? Because these terms have specific and precise meanings when used by programmers. Take 'objects', for example. To a layperson, a 'learning object' is more or less the same in meaning as, say, a 'learning thing'. But to a programmer, an 'object' is like a template with built-in functions. A 'learning object' is a piece of code that can be customized for specific applications. The implications of this difference shaped our understanding of online learning for a decade.

- **Cape Breton University President Looks Toward Super Univ** [David Wheeler](#), [Cape Breton University](#), Jun 17, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Presentation slides and press release about a talk by Cape B Wheeler. He argues that " future universities will be reward performance in economic development, employability of gr commercialisation of research in addition to more traditional metrics which may have less to do with scientific, social and cultural excellence or economic prosperity." One slide points out that universities have survived since the 16th century "because societies need them."

- It is worth asking at this juncture exactly what it is that societies need. The citizens of Leiden [famously opted](#) for a university as a reward from William of Orange instead of the economic advantage of tax-free status. The citizens of [Tubingen](#) famously rejected industrial development in favour of remaining a university city. The need is to develop a university *as a* university, not an engine to support day-to-day economic development. If we want job creation or economic development we have the private sector to do that; if they won't (and in Canada, increasingly, they won't) we need other measures to address that; converting universities into something they're not is not the answer.

- **Building a Knowmad Society in Ecuador**
  John W. Moravec, Education Futures, May 2...
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I think this is an ambitious plan and wonder ... ...
  follows: "The project seeks to encourage ho... ... ...nge
  and the development of activities that will promote extending learning beyond
  formal education. Nine three-day workshops will cover each regional division of
  Ecuador. An online platform will facilitate further discussion, and the outputs from
  the workshops and online activities will be fed into a data analysis process that will
  inform the creation of a white paper on transforming Ecuadorian education for a
  'knowmadic' society."

-
  Do also read the comment that follows the article. A writer named Khuyana offers,
  "I would like to ensure that these great changes apply to ALL universities in
  Ecuador, not just the 'new and improved' universities like Yachay University or
  IKIAM, as it seems to be so far." It points to the difficulties of aiming at 21st
  century objectives in institutions struggling to meet 20th century standards.

Beyond Assessment: Recognizing Achievement in a Networked World

For ePIC 2014 (11th July, Greenwich)

http://www.epforum.eu/

If formal learning can be thought of as supporting the acquisition of a body of knowledge, informal learning can be characterized as supporting the completion of a task or objective. Formal learning may be seen as 'just in case' while informal learning can be seen as 'just in time'. From the perspective of the learner, the success of informal learning can be seen as immediate and manifest: it supports the completion of the task or objective. But how can informal learning be seen as supporting the first objective: the achievement, over time, of mastery over a field or domain of knowledge. Traditional formal learning employs exams and assignments to test achievement, and often includes process-based metrics, such as attendance time, to ensure a relevant base of experience has been obtained. And contemporary recognition of informal learning employs similar means, deploying testing and interviews to provide what is called 'prior learning assessment'. Today, though, alternative metrics are being deployed. ePortfolios and Open Badges are only the first wave in what will emerge as a wider network-based form of assessment that makes tests and reviews unnecessary. In this talk Stephen Downes will talk about work being done in network-based automated competency development and recognition, the challenges it presents to traditional institutions, and the opportunities created for genuinely autonomous open learning.

- **[Dean at M.I.T. Resigns, Ending a 28-Year Lie](#)**
[Tamar Lewin](#), [New York Times](#), Jun 14, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- My first reaction to this was to laugh. Yes, of course, she should not have misrepresented her credentials. But it turns out that she did not even have an undergraduate degree. What does it say about the need for a university when you can even be a successful as a dean at MIT without having earned a degree? "Ms. Jones had received the institute's highest honor for administrators, the M.I.T. Excellence Award for Leading Change." Sure, you can't (legally) *get* the job without a degree. But it certainly appears that you can *do* the job without one.

- **Are we faking cultural lite[racy]** [...] Anna Maria Tremonti, CBC [...] *Commentary by Stephen D[ownes]*

- I listened to this interestin[g] [...] dental treatment. It featur[...] Moritz of the University of [...] Foundation's web literacy lead Doug Belshaw. The discussion centred around the idea that there is some common core of cultural materials that make a person culturally literate - that is, educated well enough to understand the references in newspapers and magazines, a social Rosetta Stone, as it were. Referring back to E.D. Hirsh's list of listed 5,000 essential concepts and names that 'every American needs to know', this discussion was placed in the context of an article in this week's New York Times on faking cultural literacy. It's interesting to think of culture as a type of language that makes it possible to communicate, but it's a mistake, I think, to confuse knowing a language, which is an extended facility (as in playing a game), with knowing a set of facts, which is a rubrics cube.

- **Scientists, Calculate Your Chances of Success in Academe** Andy Thomason, The Chronicle: The Ticker, Jun 06, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- I can only imagine this program would predict my complete and utter failure as a researcher: "The probability of becoming a principal investigator, according to the researchers behind the article, hinges mostly on three variables: the number of articles, the "impact factor" of the journals in which the articles were published, and the number of papers receiving more citations than the expected number for that journal." The report, of course, was published in a journal. And what it predicts, of course, is success *as someone who publishes in journals*. The actual field of research is much wider than that. More (via Academica): *Science Daily* | *Inside Higher Ed* | PIPredictor.com

- **The MOOC Problem**
Rolin Moe, Hybrid Pedagogy, May 16, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Interetsing article about the appropriation of terms like 'MOOC' and '2.0' to support marketing. The author concludes "MOOCs have been sold not only as an agent to democratize education, but also as a necessity because the real crisis is about employment and not learning." But also, this is worth noting: "in reality the MOOC as a learning system has underperformed traditional models and shows no large-scale cost benefit to education providers. At this point, the MOOC as an instrument is a failure. However, the MOOC as a landscape-altering educational phenomenon is a fascinating success, in large part due to shifting the definition of education away from its historical roots to a skills-based, instrumentally-defined exercise."

- **Spark 249**
  Nora Young, CBC Radio, May 01, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- I'll just pass along these three items from Spark, a Canadian radio program on technology (thanks to Danny for the links):

-

  HR tech: LinkedIn, job boards, and portfolio sites make it easier than ever to look for work. So why does it seem harder than ever to find a job? Communications professor Ilana Gershon discusses her research into technology-driven change in hiring practices. [FULL POST]

-

  Personal education: Today's students leave lots of data trails - from demographic information, to how they read and highlight ebooks, and interact online. Researcher George Siemens explains how analyzing data about the way students learn lets schools customize education. [FULL POST]

-

  We asked the question: If everyone's learning experience is customized, does that mean everyone gets an A? Spark producer Michelle Parise asks the broader Spark community: Should education be personalized so everyone can succeed, or should students be allowed to sink or swim? [FULL POST]

Positively Correlated Vacancy and Unemployment Rates Implies Some Labour Market Mismatch

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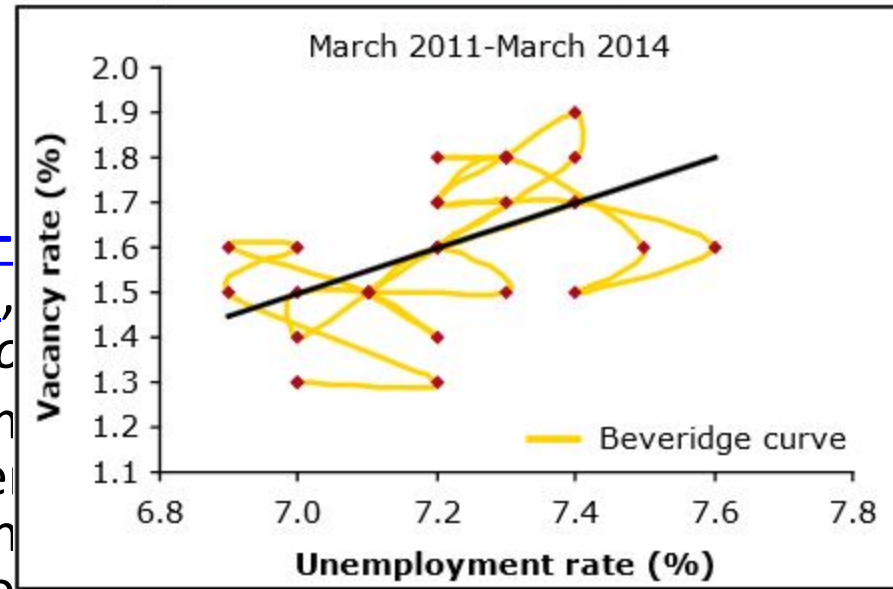
  Canadian Labour Market— Benjamin Tal, Nick Exarhos, *Commentary by Stephen D*

- A report from CIBC reaffirm[...]da. "Large swaths of those une[...] seeking... lower levels of un[...] there are higher levels of jo[...] has failed to hold true in Canada since 2011, with higher vacancies and higher unemployment positively correlated. A disconnect between the types of workers desired and those that are available in the ranks of the unemployed would explain how a growing number of unfilled vacancies could co-exist with a higher level of unemployed—and potentially unemployable—individuals." Via Academica.

- **Employers must start investing in skills training, public policy nudge them along**
  David Munroe, Financial Post, May 14, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I've long considered this sort of item inevitable. The more employers argue that education should focus on skills development for employment needs, the more the onus falls on them to pay for that. So long as tuitions remain high and students pay the brunt of learning costs (not just tuition, but books and resources, time away from work, living expenses and the rest). "There is a troubling correlation between rising calls for PSE institutions to produce work-ready graduates and declining employer spending on training and development," says this article. "With corporate taxes as low as they are in Canada, and the pressing need to improve Canadians' skills, there is no excuse for employers not to invest in training. Canada's competitiveness and well-being depends on it."

- **Skills and Higher Education in Canada**
  Daniel Munro, Canada 2020, Jun 04, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- Interesting and very detailed report from an institute called Canada 2020 on education and skills development. It underlines the importance of education in social and economic development, and focuses on two challenges - excellence, which it defines as "producing the *right* skills" (their emphasis), and equity, which focuses on the distribution of skills. The report makes the following recommendations which line up with these challenges:
-
  Create a National Learning Outcomes Assessment Program
-
  Create a Canadian Council on Skills and Higher Education
-
  Make significant new investments in education and skills for Aboriginal peoples
-
  Identify and support programs to narrow skills and education gaps between men and women
-
  Improve credential recognition and skills training for immigrants.
-

-
  The report was authored by Daniel Munro of the Conference Board of Canada.

What impact did LTIs have on each of the following?
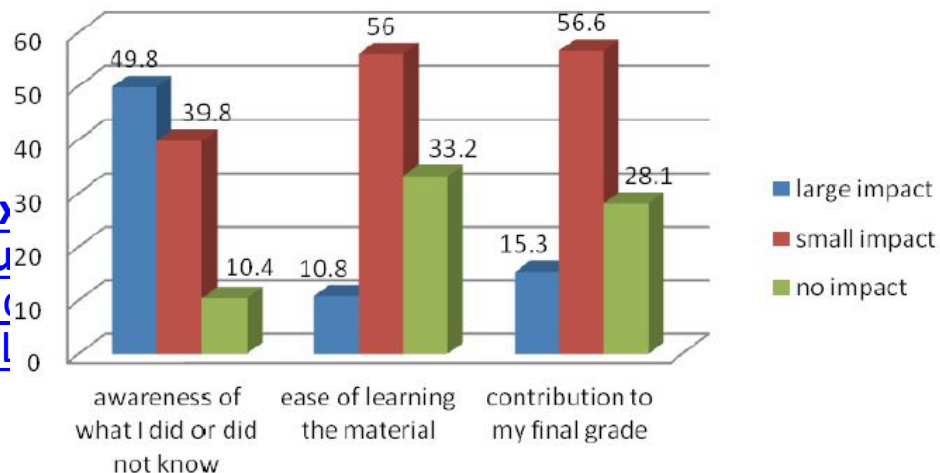
Figure 4 *Student perceptions of the impact of LTIs*

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Learning Task Inventories (LTIs). Ex[...]
Students Develop, Improve and Su[...]
Stephen MacNeil, Eileen Wood, Luc[...]
Collected Essays on Learning, MERL[...]
(JOLT), Jun 19, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- According to this paper, "LTIs are c[...]
tasks students are expected to mas[...]
employment and use of LTIs during an introductory Organic Chemistry I course at
Wilfrid Laurier University and investigates "optimal conditions
for implementation of LTIs." The largest impact seemed to be obtained when LTIs
helped students determine what they did or did not know. LTIs are an internal
Wilfrid Laurier tool, and I wish there was more information or reference to
information describing the nature and structure of LTIs, and how they differ from
learnring objects and/or competences.

- **[Theory of Change in Education](#)**
  [Oliver Quinlan](#), Jun 16, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- So here basically is the basis for instru[...]what you want them to learn, design an experie[...]to learn it, build in some checks that this is happening along the way and has happened by the end. This is [one of the core lessons of teacher education](#), and something all effective teachers master, whilst they may decide to tweak it and experiment later." In this post about change Oliver Quinlan looks how this core idea gets lost as, say, new technology takes centre stage. "I see tweets on a fairly regular basis from educators describing how their school has just bought a set of tablet computers, and only now they are looking for how they can be used for learning outcomes." He proposes a [theory of change](#) model to address this. Fair enough, but my experience is that change brings with it new problems, new things you want to learn, and new opportunities. You can't just bring in new technology to solve old problems.

- **"Not Interested in Being #1:" Shanghai May Ditch PISA**
  Yong Zhao, Jun 02, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- This is interesting, especially in the light of other reports (rumours?) that China as a whole (instead of selected districts) will participate in future PISA tests. According to this item, Shanghai is reconsidering its participation. "One of the shortfalls of Shanghai education masked by its top PISA ranking, Mr. Yi, pointed out, is excessive amount of homework, according to the story.... Their skills and qualities should also be acquired from a variety of activities such as play, online activities, and games instead of merely completing academic assignments or extending homework time."
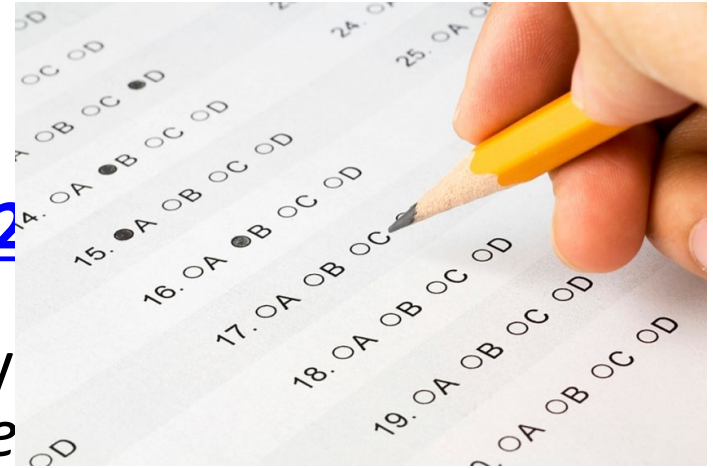
- **[20th Century Assessment In A 2[...] Environment](#)**
  [Terry Heick](#), [TeachThought](#), May [...]
  Commentary by Stephen Downe[...]

- Why is there so much emphasis (still!) on testing? "According to [SmarterBalanced.org](#), the per-student cost for testing is currently around $31 per student. Multiply that by nearly [fifty million students](#), and you've got a big pile of money up for grabs. This makes efforts here grounded as much in business principle as in pedagogy–and a resulting ugly, two-headed affair: money and learning."

Four lessons in adult learning

1. Little is possible without the basics
Strong early education is a prerequisite for effective adult learning. Education systems that teach children early how to learn set students up for more effective learning later in life – in part by instilling a desire to learn. For developed and developing countries alike, the best route to good adult education is investment in good initial education.

2. Skills must be used to be maintained
Even when primary education is of high quality, skills decline in adulthood if they are not used regularly. Greater involvement in reading or number crunching at home or at work appears to correlate with higher overall literacy and numeracy, and may slow the decline of skills as adults age.

3. Countries must take adult education seriously
Nations which perform better in surveys of adult skills have established some type of adult learning infrastructure outside of the formal education system. And an economy which makes proper use of the population's skills also reduces the risk of individuals losing their abilities over time.

4. Technology is helpful in fostering adult learning, but is no panacea
Mobile technology and the internet can remove some obstacles to adult skills education, particularly in the developing world. These and other technologies ease people's access to adult education, but there is little evidence that their use helps individuals actually develop skills.

- **The Learning Curve: Education a** Paul Kielstra, Pearson, Jun 09, 20 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- This is a fairly basic-level report of skills development, focused mos page PDF is available here. While particularly controversial, the language and emphasis is clearly slanted toward a particular perspective. For example, this reflects an emphasis on economic development and skills, as opposed to personal development and learning: "the OECD estimates that half of the economic growth in developed countries in the last decade came from better skills." Or, for example: "The average time spent in school by a country's students and the labour productivity of its workers have been statistically linked." This is true when school is the only option, but it on the verge of being disrupted by open learning. So read the report with caution.

- **Understanding and learning outcomes**
  May 09, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Gardner Campbell examines "the seemingly endless fascination with 'learning outcomes'" and the ingenious idea that "teachers should think about what they believe should happen in the student as a result of the class." But this, he says, leads toward a behaviourist paradigm and away from "the cognitivist turn" that has characterized education in recent years. It leads toward 'specific knowledge'. "Two of the words we must never, ever use are 'understand' and 'appreciate.'" - we are told that these are vague words, when (as Chronicle blogger Robert Talbert says) we should specific words to describe outcomes. Mushy objectives can't be measured. But it's not so much that they're mushy (and here I'm reading into him a bit) but they're *complex*. The paradoxes that seem to abound in learning are actually reflective of the underlying nature of learning. Reading slowly is ineffective, for example, is the goal of reading is to 'have read' - as it seems to be using tools like Spritz to speed-read. Back to Bogost: "Spritz hasn't stepped in to sabotage comprehension, but to formalize and excuse its eradication."

- In my own work, I'm often an eliminativist. I don't like it when people use words as though they were some sort of conceptual black box, as though (say) the story is over when they say that something "fosters understanding." But this eliminativist part of me should be thought of as an attempt to dehumanize learning, it should be seen as an instance of this: "these complexities matter. When confident, simple, plain, orderly advice is given about a complex matter, I hear the sound of the hatchet replaced by the sound of wood snapping as the branch I'm sitting on gives way."

- **Ed tech behaviorism**
  Scott Mcleod, Dangerously Irrelevant, Jun 16, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Although behaviourism has several flavours, it is in general the idea that you can (only) talk about mental phenomena, such as learning and cognition, in terms of behaviour. The mind in behaviourism is treated as a black box, to which we do not have evidentiary access. This for the most part remains the case today, which means that most all educational theory belongs either to the category of (a) continuing to use the black box, or (b) making stuff up that we *think* characterizes cognitive phenomena. That is why technologists continue to employ what we would still call behaviourist methodology. Technology cannot respond to made-up phenomena (like mental 'constructions' or 'intentions') that we can't detect or measure. Nobody's happy with the current situation, but until we get accurate neural mapping, that's what we're left with.

- To see my point, take a look at this account of the 'affective context model', which according to Nick Shackleton-Jones, "explains how learning takes place": "As we experience the world our brains need some way of deciding what to encode and how to encode it, so as to retrieve it in a way which is useful. Our minds solve this problem by encoding information along with its affective context – that is, our affective response to what we experience." This explanation is *filled* with made-up entities - like the brain "needing" to decide, it "encoding" it, it "retrieving" it, even the idea of "information" in our brain, let alone the "affective context" itself - *none* of this can be measured or observed, and that's *why* technologists measure responses rather than (say) 'encodings'.

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  [Biology's Shameful Refusal to Disown the Machine-Organism](#)
  [Stephen L. Talbott](#), [The Nature Institute](#), Apr 27, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- The metaphors we live by shape the expectations we have. But if the metaphor is inappropriate, so are our expectations. Such is the case with the 'body as machine' metaphor, writes Steven Talbott in this excellent essay. Take even something so simple as the 'heart as pump' metaphor. It conjures a single engine pushing blood through a system of pipes. But most circulatory fluid is outside the popes and the whole body contributes to circulation, a process that resembles tidal ebb and flow more than movement through a pipe. In the same way, I would argue, the 'mind as computer' metaphor is equally misleading, representing cognition as a set of individual data stores, when in fact even a simple concept like 'Paris' is more like a wave of interconnected neural activations, an activation that takes place *in the very same body* of water as the next wave (which may be 'plaster' or 'France' or 'Hilton' or whatever).

- **Will competency-based degree programs come to Canada?**
Rosanna Tamburri, University Affairs, Jun 13, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- As Academica summarizes (with helpful links), "An article in *University Affairs* examines the potential for the growth of competency-based education (CBE) programs in Canada. CBE models offer credentials based on demonstrated proficiencies, not on time spent in the classroom." Critics of CBE argue that it seems too much like training and is focused too much on outcomes, not process.

- **[Going All In: How to Make Competency-Based Learning Work](#)**
[Katrina Schwartz](#), [Mind/Shift](#), Jun 16, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Examination of the employment of competency-based learning in New Hampshire and a discussion of the issues around competency-based learning in general. For my own part, I think something like competency-based learning is the way of the future, but not for the reasons suggested. Katrina Schwartz quotes Paul Leather, deputy commissioner of education: "You can't truly do personalized learning and also continue to have common expectations without competencies," Leather said. "They take state standards and put them in the hands of students, teachers and parents and make them real for them." But why, I would wonder, would you have *common* standards. The beauty of competency-based personal learning is that everybody can become competent at *some* thing without the requirement that they become competent in the *same* thing.

- **Productivity Implications of a Shift to Com[petency-based education: An] environmental scan and review of the rele[vant literature]**
  Brian Abner, Oksana Bartosh, Charles Unge[r ..., Higher Education Quality] Council of Ontario, Jun 18, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
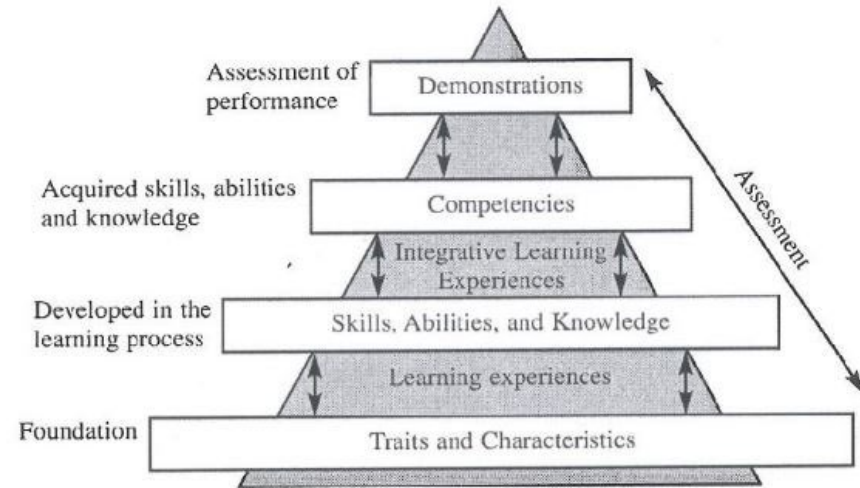
- I think this is true: "There is no systematic, [...] the purported skills from a CBE program tra[...] graduation results or in the labour market." That does not mean that competency-based education is the wrong way to go, say the authors of a report (75 page PDF) from from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), but it does suggest that it should be embraced cautiously. This is pragmatic advice, if only because of the cost of conversion to a competency-based system. And in any case, the value of a CDE-based approach isn't on the embrace of competencies, it's in what the approach enables: standardized resources, personalized education, multiple learning options. Some of these may improve outcomes, but yes, this needs to be shown.

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- **Qualt**
  [Qualt](), Jun 16, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Qualt advertises "Free mobile courses in internationally recognised professional qualifications. Anytime, anywhere." The courses are available for mobile devices only. The first course, which [started]() in May, is based on a professional accounting course. "Qualt are based on courses developed by the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT), Google, the Institute of Direct and Digital Marketing (IDM) and other professional bodies." To date the site has a dozen [courses]() listed.

- **Business School, Disrupted**
  Jerry Useem, New York Times, Ju...
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Good article in the New York Tim...
  Business School, which depends...
  arrival of online learning, which c...
  school's response is to create a n...
  Credential of Readiness, or CORe, which students can take online.
  They have also been dabbling in MOOCs with edX. So what is the
  risk to Harvard Business School that online learning will render it
  irrelevant? I'd say it's substantial. Not that elite students will stop
  needing to establish exclusive connection, which is the primary
  function of HBS. But that they may begin doing it elsewhere.
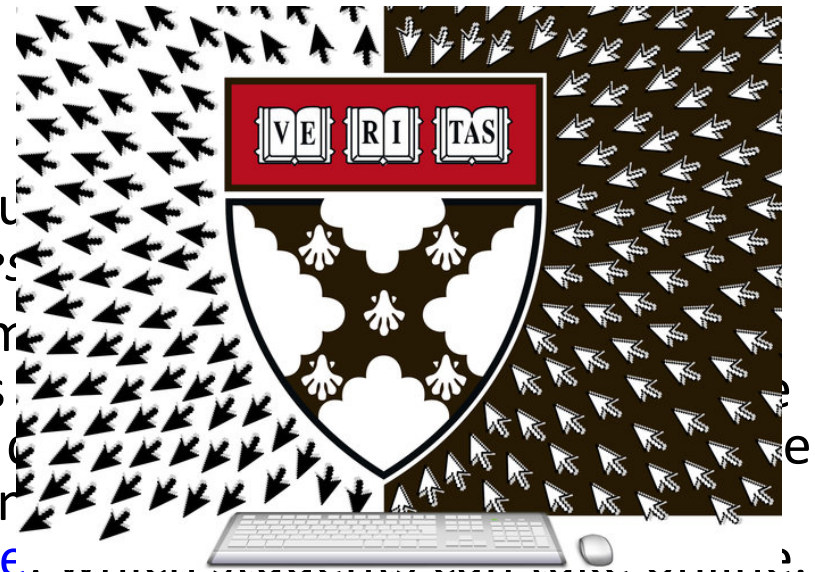
-
ALT issues first Open Badges as part of ocTEL and releases plugin to the community
Unattributed, ALT Online Newsletter, Jun 26, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Nice. "Badges designed and awarded using BadgeOS are now exposed as Open Badges compliant Assertion - Assertions are the DNA of Open Badges. They are data files which describe the badge and identify who it has been awarded to." P.S. The headline writers should note the difference in meaning between saying "issue first badges" and "issue *our* first badges" or "issue *their* first badges." English: it definitely needs to be clear. Related: Alan Levine writes, "But to me badging, nanodegreeing, calculating massive course dropouts remains overweighted on one side of the system."

- **[Announcing nanodegrees: a new type of credential for a modern workforce](#)** [Clarissa Shen](#), [Udacity Blog](#), Jun 18, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- From Udacity: "we introduce credentials built and recognized by industry with clear pathways to jobs. Together with AT&T and an initial funding from AT&T Aspire of more than $1.5 million, we are launching nanodegrees: compact, flexible, and job-focused credentials that are stackable throughout your career."

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  ### Passport for learning
  Alastair Creelman, The corridor of uncertainty, Jun 30, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Interesting proposition: "The holy grail of open learning at the moment is finding a sustainable and reliable model for the validation of non-traditional learning (open courses, MOOCs, practical work experience, self-tuition etc). These forms of learning may be openly documented but have little or no formal credibility when applying to study at a university or applying for a job." I'm not sure I agree. What we want is validation of the *person*, not validation of the learning.

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  Anyhow, the point of this post is to introduce "the project VM-Pass which aims to implement the recognition of virtual mobility and OER-learning through a learning passport." If that sounds a lot like Mozilla badges, it is. But "the key to VM-Pass is the validation process that is based on combination of peer review and crowdsourcing. The passport contains information from the course provider on the certificate the learner has earned with transparent links to all criteria. In addition there is the learner's own profile."

- Total: 335

- **College Credentials by Condé Nast**
  Doug Lederman, Inside Higher Ed, Jun 04, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- Would you trust a college degree issued by Wired Magazine or Architectural Digest? Maybe not, but that's not stopping some colleges from teaming up with Condé Nast to offer degree programs, even Masters'. I can see it now - an MBA from the Vanity Fair déCollage. "Condé Nast writers and editors will contribute subject matter expertise and the publisher will provide some financial backing to the partnerships." I imagine magazine writers will be cheaper to hire than professors, and easier to replace.

- **Achievement Standards Network** Achievement Standards Network, May 15, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- From the website: "The Achievement Standards Network ASN) provides open access to machine-readable representations of learning objectives published by education agencies and organizations including the Common Core State Standards." It was acquired by Desire2Learn last March. Right now the standards are employed in the design of learning materials. But the end-goal is to match assessments to the standards.

- **Learning Locker**
  Ben Betts, High Tech High Touch, Jun 06, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- As the website says, "Learning Locker is the open source Learning Record Store (LRS) for tracking learning data." They've announced the release of version 1.0 - "We're delighted to announce that Learning Locker, the open source LRS has reached Version 1.0 and that our turnkey offering, the Cloud LRS, has now been officially released. Visit the Learning Locker website for details and to sign up for instant access. If you want to inspect LL for yourself before downloading or signing up, you can visit our demo installation to have a play."

- **Jobs Charted by State and Salary**
[Nathan Yau](), [Flowing Data](), Jul 03, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Interesting presentation, sadly using U.S. data only, of every major job category, the size of the population employed in it, and the average salary. What I find noteworthy is that the slider only needs to move between $20K to $180K. It raises the question: who needs more than $180K to live? And why would incomes be higher than that? The vast majority of us earn something within that range. The people who earn more are deriving an unfair advantage from the work the rest of us produce and are distorting marketplace pricing for goods and services (everything from food to health care) the rest of us need to live.

- Total: 162
Enclosure: mlrc7qzkolwhzm0bys0p.png
[[first]] [[previous]] [[next]] [[last]]

- **[The basic understanding, or, fact-](#)** [Dave Ferguson](#), [Dave's Whiteboard](#) *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- I like this post. Not because I agre[e] really think the answer to "do you[ ] demonstrate". But I think there's [a] that knowing is about *doing* rather than some mental state. I've often said, "to know is to recognize" - but recognition isn't a mental state, like a belief or an idea. It is a physical state - quite literally, the organization of connections - which is manifest as a disposition, the propensity to respond appropriately in an authentic environment. To *do*, in other words, rather than to know. Theories and concepts can help associate different perceptual states and make us better recognizers. But they are an *aid* to learning, not the objective.
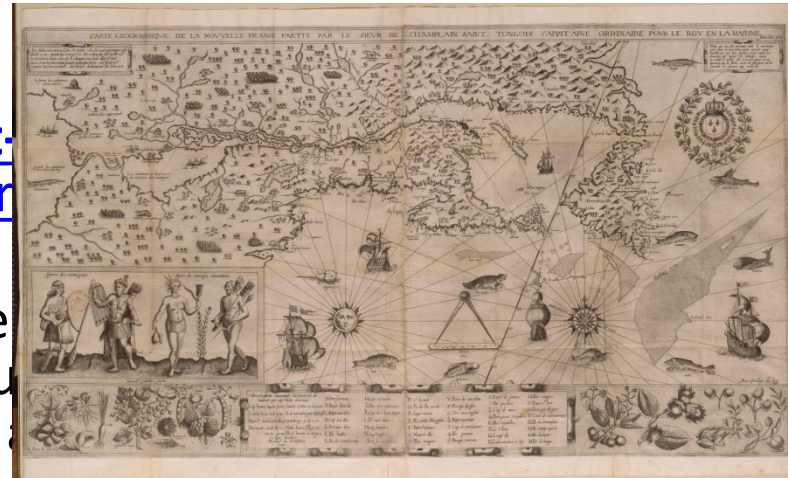
- **The Secret Formula to Becoming an E-Lear**
  [Tom Kuhlmann](), [The Rapid eLearning Blog](), J
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I don't do the same things as described in these examples, because my idea of e-learning is very different, but I do practice something like the (not-so-secret) formula to becoming an e-learning pro:

- e-learning pros practice their craft

- e-learning pros show examples of their work

- e-learning pros share what they do and learn

- As the author says, "I'm not sure why more people don't do this. It's a simple way to build your business and profile in the industry." [Researchers](), for example.

- **Mastering the Internet of Everything** Harold Jarche, Jun 03, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Harold Jarche writes, "Many people are mastering their web browsers, email ar into Web 2.0, using social media to con communities of practice. And now along comes the internet of everything (IoE). How will we be able to master this new network paradigm, or will it master us?" Jarche says it's about finding balance. "We will have to get skilled at constantly lumping data and things together, then filtering and categorizing the changing landscape." I think it's a matter of understanding that when we look at information, we are seeing it from a perspective, with a limited point of view, and appreciating that - the way we appreciate a sunset, instead of complaining that we can't see the whole sky. (This post was not sponsored by Cisco).
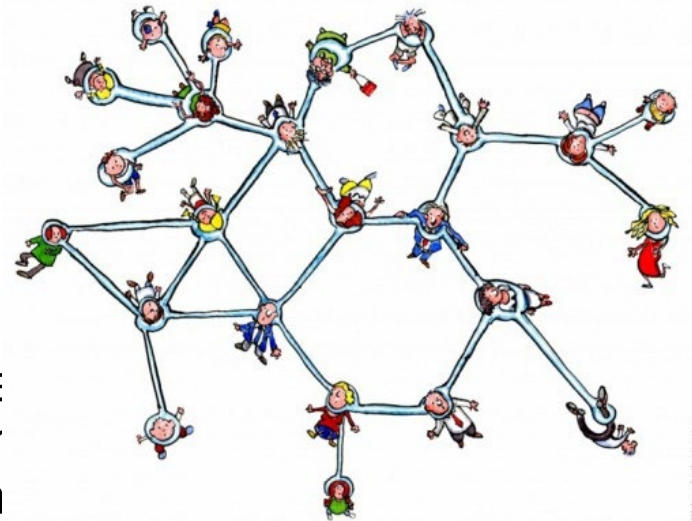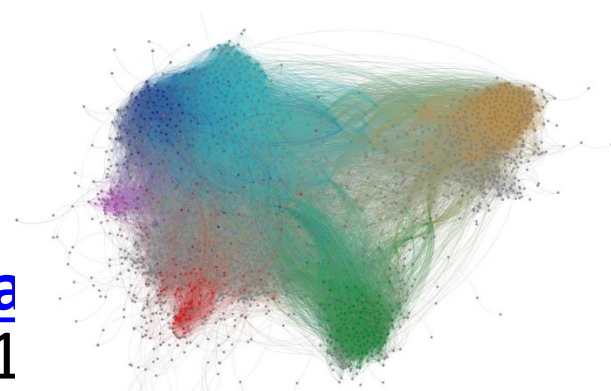
- **Techniques and Tools: How To Visua**[...] [Beth Kanter](), [Beth's Blog](), Apr 27, 201[...]
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I had some fun Sunday afternoon watching the Blue Jays win and playing with some network graphs opf my contacts. Here's my [LinkedIn network]() showing a lot of connections in Latin America, the UK and India (guess I'll have to return there, hm,?), Australia and the U.S. Then, following the [Carvin example](), I used [Netviz]() to analyze my Facebook connections, and and used software called [Gephi]() to produce my [Facebook network map]().

- **Ubiquitous Learning Project Using Life - logging Technology in Japan**
  Noriko Uosaki, Bin Hou, Mengmeng Li, Hiroaki Ogata, Kosuke Mouri, Songran Liu, Educational Technology & Society, May 22, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- You may not think that life-logging and online learning are linked, but if you think of online learning as a ubiquitous services that learns from your every move, you can see how tightly the two may be linked. This paper presents a system called SCROLL (System for Capturing and Reusing of Learning Log). This in turn is based on the LORE model: Log, Organize, Reuse, Evaluate. The current issue of Educational Technology and Society is available as a PDF download or on the web (this link will reset to a new issue in a few months). It's a special issue on "Powering Up: Insights from Distinguished Mobile and Ubiquitous Learning Projects across the World."

- **Writing Instructor, Skeptical of vs. Machine**
[Steve Kolowich](), [The Chronicle]()
Commentary by Stephen Downe
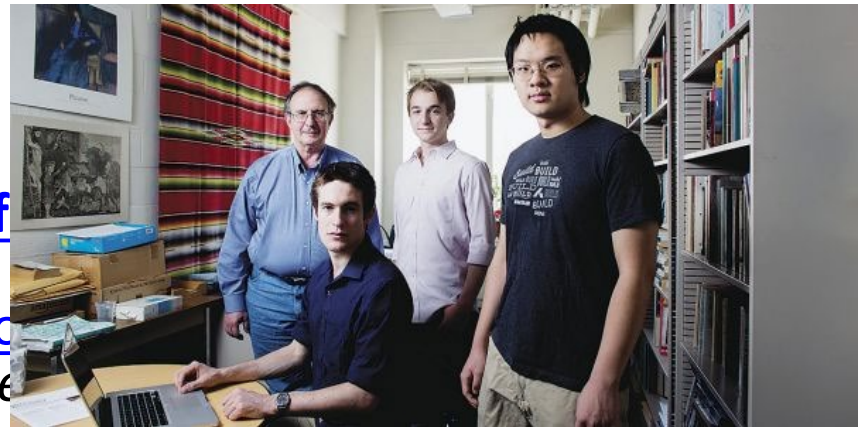
- It's one of those stories the Chronicle loves to print - grizzled gadfly argues against computers in education - but in this case the critic has a point. Les Perelman, who in the past has had [heated]() [exchanges]() with promoters of automated essay grading, has authored a computer program that writes essays composed of gibberish but which score well in automated essay graders. The sentences his program produces are grammatically correct but incoherent. Of course, there's no reason why both sides might not be right - the papers may be gibberish, but the computer programs may be accurately reflecting the grading by human professors, as they're designed to do.

- **"Would you ever say that to me in class?" : Exploring the Implications of Disinhibition for Relationality in Online Teaching and Learning** Ellen Rose, Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Networked Learning 2014, May 11, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This paper confirms the impression that discourse online is much less inhibited than discourse in person. "Interviews with 20 instructors and 20 students from a variety of disciplines revealed that their experiences of connection with, or disconnection from, each other were profoundly influenced by the phenomenon of online disinhibition." What is important about this is that it informs our understanding of the nature of education, whether online or offline. "The terminology of "delivery" … suggests that education is simply a matter of transmitting information effectively; but of course, it is also, importantly, about the formation of relationships between instructors and students."

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[Mean Tweets, Academic Style](#)
[Charlie Tyson](#), [Inside Higher Ed](#), Jun 27, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Professors read Twitter reviews of their courses in thsi video, a take-off on the mean tweets meme. "One professor read a review saying, 'She will mock your aspirations then cackle over the remains of your spirit.' Another comment was: 'Good lecturer, ugly shoes.' The camera panned to take in a row of Crocs." I would never wear Crocs while teaching. I would, however, wear ugly shoes.

- **'Can I Tweet That?'**
  [Colleen Flaherty](), [Inside Higher Ed](), Jun 13, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Summary of a conference session on the issues raised with respect to professors' use of social media. Normal rules of online postings - such as, for example, a disclaimer stating that the views of the professor are not those of the institution - do not work when there are only 140 characters to work with. But such official rules are misplaced to begin with, in my view - does anyone really think that professors (or staff, or whatever) are using their personal accounts to broadcast official policy? And where is the inverse disclaimer - why aren't institutions saying "the views of this institution are not necessarily those of its employees." It's something the Globe and Mail [could have used]() ([via]()). Or the [University of Saskatchewan]().

Powerchord 1: SusLab prototype
from SusLab at the RCA
00:58

- **Introducing Powerchord (Blackbird e**
  [Dan Lockton](), [Architectures](), Apr 25, 2
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- The powerchord is a simple device th
  household as background noises - bir   st,
  the author describes associating the noises with specific appliances: "The
  ['Sound of the Office']() represented twelve hours' electricity use by three
  items of office infrastructure – the kettle, a laser printer, and a gang
  socket for a row of desks – turned into a 30-second MIDI file." I love this
  idea. "It's an exploration of what's possible, or might be useful, in helping
  people develop a different kind of understanding of energy use, and the
  patterns of energy use in daily life – not just based on on numerical
  feedback. If it's design for behaviour change, it's aiming to do so through
  increasing our understanding of, and familiarity with, the systems around
  us, making energy use something we can develop an instinctual feeling
  for."

- **Meet the (Real)** [Don Tapscott](#), [Yo](#) *Commentary by*

- Don Tapscott rid the first few minutes where he recites all the literature saying how bad the network generation is. Then he explains why they're not so bad after all.

- Total: 513

- **[Inquiry Guided Learning Projects for the Development of Critical Thinking in the College Classroom: A pilot study](#)**
[Danielle C Bentley](#), [Collected Essays on Learning](#), Jun 19, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I think that the teaching of critical research is important, though frankly I think it should be taught much earlier than this college-level class in which it is applied. In this paper, a project is described wherein dental hygiene students are put into groups, asked to select a scientific problem to solve, and given the task of researching then presenting the results. I do wonder what body of literature they employed; the paper refers to the 'scientific literature', but if they're searching only journal articles they're not being thorough. I would also want to read more on how they learned "the skills required to properly critique information in the scientific community."

- **How artificial intelligence is about to disrupt higher education** Ollivier Dyens, University Affairs, Apr 30, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This is an almost alarmist artticle describing how AI and big data will combine to perform most educational functions currently performed by humans. "For example, most universities today struggle with mental health issues and with retention and graduation rates. Use Big Data, crush the numbers in specialized AI software, and soon the narrative of why and how mental health issues appear, of why some students persist and some not, will become clear, predictable and operational." If it's any consolation, actually creating systems that perform such tasks will take considerable art and ingenuity, so there will still be work left for us humans to do. But of course our students cannot undertake these future jobs with yesterday's skills.

- **[Looking at Link Between Violent Video Games and Lack of Empathy](#)**
  [Nick Bilton](#), [New York Times](#), Jun 16, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- OK, I'll confess, I watch 'fail' videos on YouTube. If you're not familiar with the genre, it consists generally of people doing things which end badly. Sometimes you just *know* the person felt some pain at the end of it. In my case, at least, there is an empathetic response - I experience an involuntary shudder as though it were *me* about to experience that fall. It's hard to self-monitor, but it *seems* like I'm reacting less over time to these fail videos. Now, I've also played violent video games, but I've never felt that empathy. So - what all this leads me to think is that violent games have no impact on empathy because they never induce it in the first place, but that violent video, which *does* initially cause empathy, might reduce empathy as we gradually become inured to it.

- **LAe-R: A new learning analytics tool in Moodle for assessing students' performance** Ourania Petropoulou, Katerina Kasimatis, Ioannis Dimopoulos, Symeon Retalis, Bulletin of the Technical Committee on Learning Technology, May 16, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*
- This paper summarizes the state of the art in Moodle analytics tools and presents "a new cloud-based assessment tool, called Learning Analytics Enhanced Rubric (LAe-R), which has been developed as a Moodle plug-in (version 2.2+). See the current issue of the Bulletin of the Technical Committee on Learning Technology. Past issues.

- **ALT Members views on Learning Analytics** [Martin Hawksey](), [ALT Online Newsletter](), May 13, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- Interesting set of reflections from the Association for Learning Technology. I liked the distinction between educational data mining, which is focused on "developing methods for exploring the unique types of data that come from educational settings," and learning analytics, which is "the intelligent use of data about learner behaviour." I also liked the concern expressed about "data fishing," though I thought Terry Loane's characterization and critique of positivism was a bit unfair.

- **Contemporary Privacy Theory Contributions to Learning Analytics** Jennifer Heath, Journal of Learning Analytics, May 09, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- According to the abstract, "This paper provides an overview of privacy and considers the potential contribution contemporary privacy theories can make to learning analytics." I personally consider privacy one of the key issues in learning analytics; anyone can mine a big set of data, but how do you do what when you need permission from each person before continuing? I like the 'broad overview of privacy' diagram and the nuance offered, for example, from Nissenbaum: "a right to privacy is neither a right to secrecy nor a right to control but a right to appropriate flow of personal information." Some of the issues are highlighted in two scenarios illustrating four key parameters of privacy: context, actors, attributes and transmission principles. This paper is from the inaugural issue of the Journal of Learning Analytics.

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Study: Teens Are Not Fleeing Facebook
Garett Sloane, AdWeek, Jun 25, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- There's a bit of cheek in this report as it not only debunks an earlier study by Princeton, it also refers back to a Facebook study, using the same methodology, that shows "that Princeton will have only half its current enrollment by 2018, and by 2021 it will have no students at all." The Forrester study makes it clear that "Facebook remains young users' favorite social network. More than three-quarters of online youth use Facebook — twice as many as use Pinterest or Tumblr or Snapchat, and more than use Instagram and WhatApp combined."

- **[Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks](#)**
  [Adam D. I. Kramera](#), [Jamie E. Guillory](#), [Jeffrey T. Hancock](#), [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States](#), Jun 28, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- To borrow from an old quote, it renders quaint normal concerns about research ethics. Facebook is performing experiments to manipulate users' emptions. From the paper: "We show, via a massive (N = 689,003) experiment on Facebook, that emotional states can be transferred to others via emotional contagion, leading people to experience the same emotions without their awareness." Via [William Hughes](#).

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  ## Facebook psychology experiment raises ire
  Staff, Globe, Mail, Jul 02, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- There has been quite a bit of negative reaction to the revelation that Facebook has been experimenting on its users (this, of course, won't stop Facebook from experimenting like this, but it will stop them from publishing the results). Here's what you need to know, according to GigaOm, about the experiments. Here's Facebook's defense. Still, some people (including Audrey Watters) wand to de-Facebook. They'll be on Twitter (do you really think Twitter is any more ethical than Facebook?). But there's no escape. Even if you're gone, you'll be part of Facebook's secret dossier of individuals. "There are no protections against shadow profiling. Just like with so-called "people search" websites, we have no legal mandates with which we can identify and remove our information from their systems."

- **Software with Shou...** [Doug Belshaw](#), Apr... *Commentary by Ste...*

- If you're wondering... you. Which takes u... spaces and private places. I remember [writing about this](#) in 2000, but it wasn't ereally much of an issue back then. But today, with surveillance, clampdowns on public demonstration, and all the rest of it, it is becoming much more so. Doug Belshaw writes: "Public spaces should be public and commonly-owned. Perhaps it's time for governments to stop fawning over billionaires with technical skills and start providing services for all of us. Maybe instead of dismantling the state to allow for private profit, we can use technology to create a more egalitarian and just society." (p.s. don't bother with David Eggers; novelizations are not evidence, and shouldn't be cited as a way "to dig a little deeper").

- **Why I, Too, Killed My LinkedIn Account**
  Luis Suarez, E L U S A, May 07, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- OK, that's just the title, I haven't deleted my LinkedIn account, Luis Suarez has. But my own social media deletions are probably nor far in the future, though. Here's Heather Bussing: "I don't agree to their Terms of Service, and I don't need LinkedIn enough to put up with it." The terms give them permission to sell my information, to control who sees my information and to block competitors. They prohibit me from linking to strangers, from posting information that doesn't belong in a field, and from sharing content from LinkedIn with other services. And we know how arbitrary the company can be. So - yeah. It won't be long before I kill my social network accounts. Once I figure out what I'm doing instead.

- **[Yahoo Ditches "Do Not Track": Lack Of St... Confusing](#)**
  [Marketing Land](#), [Ginny Marvin](#), May 02, 2...
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- So what we have here is a group of compa... Yahoo) creating standards confusion, and ... confusion as a reason not to implement a ... feature. I personally disable tracking at th... Firefox extension (I know a lot of people u... really think it's wise to use a browser provided by an advertising company?) and specifically one called [DoNotTrackMe](#) (there may be better out there) such as [TrackerBlock](#) (which also blocks tracking) or [TrackMeNot](#) (which doesn't block, but instead sends out false information).
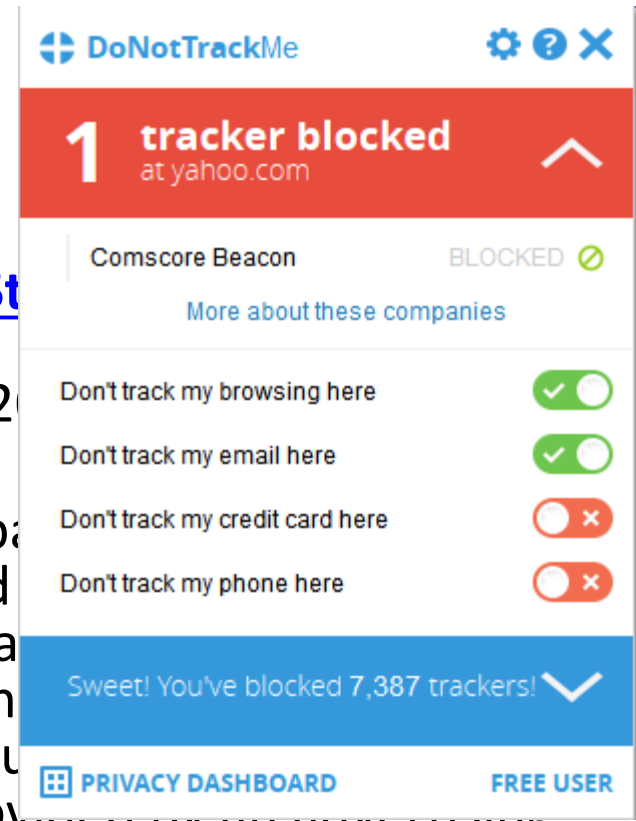
- **Google Halts Scanning of Student Gmail Accounts** Michele Molnar, Education Week, Apr 30, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- Oh how nice: "Google announced Wednesday in a blog post that it has halted the practice of scanning student Gmail accounts for any potential advertising purposes." So now they're no longer behaving like a creepy snoop. If you're a student. However, "Google can change this policy at any time, and, the scanning disclaimer is associated with advertising purposes only. 'There may be other commercial uses that they are exploiting student data for.'"

- **Emailed in Error, UVa Law School's Student GPA Spreadsheet Spreads Fast**
Lawrence Biemiller, The Chronicle: Wired Campus Blog, Jun 07, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This item is disturbing on a couple of levels. The first is the now-normal disclosure of student personal information and records. But even more disturbing is the information being collected and distributed to potential employers: grades, class rankings, political affiliation, work experience, recommenders, even information about where their girlfriends live! Why are they even collecting this information? What impact does sending it out (without the students' knowledge, obviously) to employers? Here's the original story on Above the Law (note there are three pages - look to the lower right for the small 'next page' link).

- **[Gates-funded student data group to shut down](#)** [Carolyn Thompson](#), [Houston Chronicle](#), Apr 23, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes
- A Gates-funded startup is shutting down over privacy and security concerns. "The nonprofit's goal was to give educators a data-based tool to personalize instruction. InBloom, based in Atlanta, offered to store and synthesize student data, such as grades, disciplinary actions and disability records in cloud-based servers."

- **Why Did inBloom Die? A Hard Lesson About Education Privacy**
Daniel Solove, SafeGov, Jul 01, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This article from a couple of months ago is making the rounds, and is well worth a look. As background, "Funded by $100 million from the Gates Foundation, inBloom was a non-profit organization aiming to store student data so that school officials and teachers could use it to learn about their students and how to more effectively teach them." According to the article, "The main instrument of inBloom's death was privacy. Because inBloom involved so much student data, privacy concerns began to swirl about, and eventually turned into a tornado." Is there evidence that providers have learned from this? Not so much.

- **Key Data Residency Requirements Global Organizations Need to Understand** Gerry Grealish, Cloud Computing Journal, Apr 24, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- "Perhaps it is a result of the often discussed 'Snowden Effect,'" writes Gerry Grealish, "but no one can deny that countries and regions are putting some strict guidelines in place to ensure privacy of sensitive data that is moving outside of their borders." This article looks at three such guidelines. Canada has additional guidelines. Businesses and educational services working internationally must take note. You can't just shove all your data into AWS and be compliant.

- **Lecture capture: Privacy, please** Ioanna Opidee, University Business, Ju[ne] ... *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- People who attend the tapings of sitco[ms] don't expect privacy. I don't see why st[udents] lectures at universities should expect t[o ...] Today, when you attend class, the cam[eras ...] (unless it's one of those very small and [...] but even here, no single rule prevails). So this article seems to me a bit knee-jerk - especially later on, as it suggests simply limiting access to class recordings to enrolled students. That said, people more sympathetic to the basic premise will find it to be a useful outline and guide to preserving student privacy in lecture-capture situations.

- **German 'NSA-proof [...] 89 minutes**
  [Russia Today](), Jun 09, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This reflects the increasing trend toward personal privacy as well as suggests the possibility of people hosting internet services in their own homes (something that is not practical with ADSL and earlier internet services, or wireless devices, but becomes feasible with cable and especially fibre-optic connections). "The small team of 23 asked for 100,000 euros in funding ($135,830) to support its products, including a new model of a secure server for small companies, on the German crowdfunding site Seedmatch... In just 89 minutes, the startup raised 750,000 euros (over $1 million), breaking the world crowdfunding speed record registered at Kickstarter."

- **[Do the new anonymous social media apps encourage us to overshare?](#)**
  [Oliver Burkeman](#), [The Guardian](#), Jun 11, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I guess the answer to that question is, "who knows?" What we do know is that there has been a negative response to the Facebook dictum that " The days of you having a different image for your work friends [and] for the other people you know are probably coming to an end… " But there are certainly downsides to anonymity. YikYak, for example, uses geolocation to broadcast anonymous messages to the 500 closest users. "When our identities are concealed, do we automatically degenerate into amoral, foul-mouthed bullies?" Yes. But on the other hand, the [messages at Whisper](#) are riveting. But maybe the response is to create better people, rather than silencing them.

- **The uncodings of ANT: Mobilities of digital data** Terrie Lynn Thompson, Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Networked Learning 2014, May 07, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- One of the best of the bunch from a double symposium, this short paper challenges our understanding of Actor-Network Theory (ANT). Terrie Lynn Thompson writes, "One of the basic tenets of Actor Network Theory (ANT) is to 'follow the actors'." But the 'actors' in a data-driven world are slippery and elusive. "the encoding of data has amplified its mobility, performativity, and generativity: it is distributed, often public, fragmented, and entangled in multiple recursive circulations... data can enact multiple realities simultaneously.... Mol (1999) writes about 'different versions, different performances, different realities, that co-exist in the present.'"

- **The Revolution Will Not Be Monetized**
  Will Bourne, Inc., Jun 11, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- This is becoming an increasingly loud trend. "For years, the internet's biggest players have hoarded your personal data and sold it for billions. Now, a band of angry startups is demanding privacy and aiming to overhaul the social-media business forever." This article introduces us to Wickr, with the slogan, "The Internet is forever. Your private communications don't need to be." It also mentions a number of other "ephemeral chat" tools - Privatext, TigerText, Whisper, Mark Cuban's Cyber Dust, and so on. Another one with good press is Ansa, "an encrypted ephemeral chat app that rolled out this year at South By Southwest and TechCrunch Disrupt."The trick is to legally avoid surveillance. "The companies couldn't comply with a subpoena, because they literally do not have any information. Similarly, there's no point in the Feds' snooping around, because there is no data. It's gone." There's also Omlet, an "open mobile social network." And let's not forget Diaspora, which has a user base of about 200,000.

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  ## [How online 'chatbots' are already tricking you](#)
  [Chris Baraniuk](#), [BBC](#), Jun 11, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- OK, so chatbots that lure people to dating sites or convince bitcoin users to give each other tips are not going to impact most of us. But with as much as 65 percent of online chatter being generated by bots, chances are you've read or interacted with one. Of course, it really depends on how you define 'bot'. I have systems that automatically generate content - if I post a photo on Flickr, it`s automatically tweeted, blogged and Facebooked (when the system is working). OLDaily posts automatically show up on the "OLdairy Twitter account (and maybe my Facebook page; I`m not sure). The MOOC.ca newsletter si automatically generated. Are these bots? Maybe. But they're there because I think people find them useful.

- **New Face of Provincial Iden...** Ian Bailey, BCNET Conferen... *Commentary by Stephen Do...*

- I've tried - I've really tried - ... of this video. Several times, ... how *unenthusiastic* Ian Bailey's voice sounds as he tells us how enthusiastic he is about identity management. I know this is important and that at some point I should view the video - but I'd do almost anything for a transcript right now, so I can avoid that presentation. (See the top of the page for other important presentations from the BCNET Conference 2014 (which I'll view if I can ever get past this one)).

- **Curation: Creatively Filtering Conte** [obscured], [Sue Watters](#), [The Edublogger](#), Jun 17 [obscured]. *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- I think this is a good article and well [obscured] the revival of a disappearing activity [obscured] writing about other people. This of [obscured] y, so it's close to home for me. But I re [obscured] what I do and what others should do. The term 'curation' reflects past practice, as though to legitimize thoroughly contemporary practices by association with the word. Curation suggests that the primary task is selection and filtration, but to me, that's only a small part of what I do; I'm describing *my* practice when I recount the works I've read. As well, the term 'curation' suggests passivity, observation, preservation, and even objectivity. My work is none of these things. I consider myself to be *engaging* with the authors and works I summarize. This is not the same as curation. It's something new, something internet.
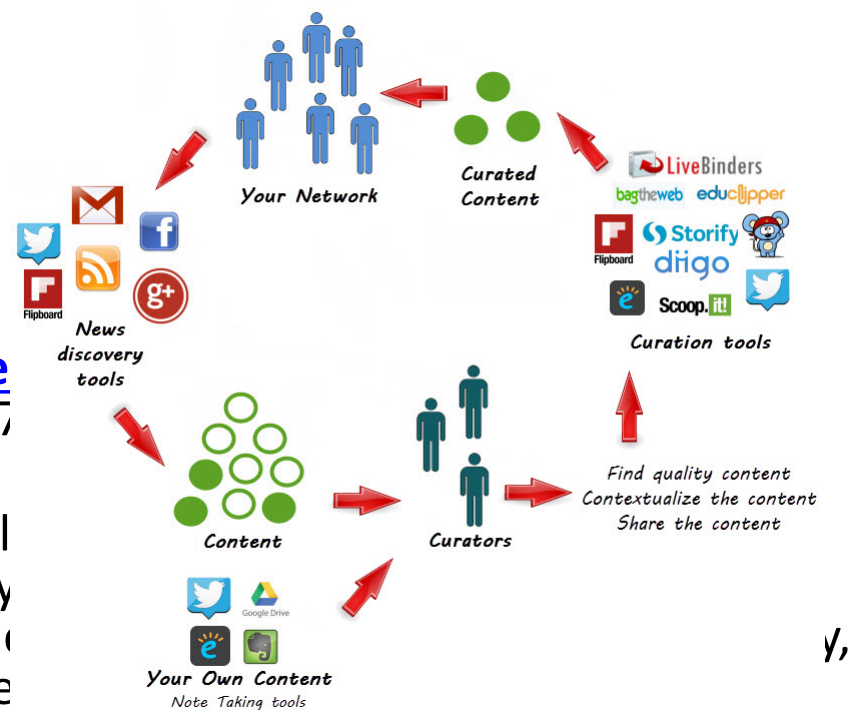
- **Google announces Google Educa[tor Groups,] resource for educators**
  [David Andrade](), [Educational Technology Guy](), Jun 13, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- David Andrade writes, "Yesterday [Google]() announced the launch of [Google Educators Groups](). This is a program made up of communities of educators who can connect with each other to learn, share, and help each other. While it is mainly online, there are real-world meetups and events as well." Of course, educators have been doing all of this before Google Educators Groups - but now Google owns it. Links: [Google+ page](), [Google for Education](), and the [Google Educator Groups]() page itself.

- **Untrusted**
  [Alex Nisnevich](), [Games with]()
  Commentary by Stephen D...

- This is an interesting conce...
  player is presented with a m...
  escape. But to do so, you h...ot
  that defines the maze and ...
  strong emphasis on reading unfamiliar code and
  modifying it through the creative use of a limited set of
  commands, the game helps budding coders to develop
  the core problem solving skills." I'm currently
  pondering level 4. Here's a direct link to the game,
  [Untrusted](). Via [theoret.ca]().

- **MM4: Online Interviews for Active Online Learning with Janet Salmons**
  Janet Salmons, WizIQ / MM4, Jun 09, 2014
  Commentary by Stephen Downes
- I attended this seminar over the weekend on the use of interviews to support learning and had two thoughts that to me are worth recording here:
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  first, it would be interesting to have an online class where the facilitator interviews the participants, rather than invited experts (which is usually the case)
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  second, it seems to me that all interviews, even (perhaps especially) those used in research, should have three participant: interviewer, interviewee, and a third 'audience' or 'observer' person, because it's really impossible to conduct the interview and remember objectively at the same time.
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  Janet Salmons not surprisingly disagreed with me on the second point, which is fair, and focused more on peer-to-peer interview practice for the former, which is also fair (but an activity which I really thinks a model or demonstration to follow).

NASA/DOD **Technology** Readiness Level
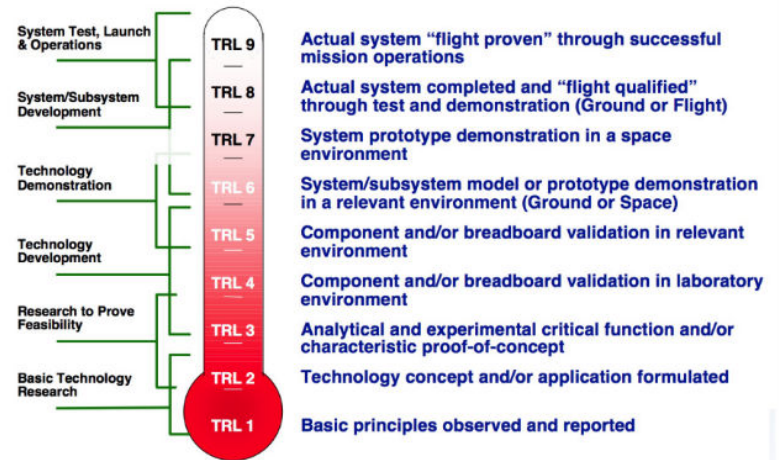
- **How to Know When Your Great I**[...]
  [Tim Kastelle](...), [The Discipline of Inn](...)
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Over the last couple years as I hav[...]
  like business plans the abbreviati[...]
  frequent appearance. It stands fo[...]
  is a scale devised by NASA and the US Department of Defence to
  rank innovations; it ranges from 1 - 'basic principle observed and
  reported' - through to 9 - 'flight tested'. This post also introduces a
  corresponding 'investment readiness level' from [Steve Bank](...) that
  ranges from 1 - 'first-pass canvas' to 9 - 'validated metrics that
  matter'. Anyhow, in my world these days, you can't escape the
  concept of TRL, for better or for worse.