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 are calling for a shakeup of the way their subject is being taught

"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"

Professors meanwhile are still trying to ban laptops from the classroom

- Dan Rockmore: "Our "digital assistants" are platforms for play and socializing"
- The study (comparing taking notes by typing and by hand) should be rejected as irrelevant

Rockmore: http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/elements/2014/06/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom.html
Talbert: http://chronicle.com/blognetwork/castingoutnines/2014/06/13/three-issues-with-the-case-for-banning-laptops

In fact, pretty much anything works better than the lecture method traditional institutions defend

A summary of 225 recent studies, "provides overwhelming evidence that active learning works better than lecture."

http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/05/13/stem-students-fare-better-when-professors-dont-just-lecture-study-finds#sthash.wxiT1GBS.dpbs
Scott Freeman Metastudy: http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2014/05/08/1319030111.full.pdf+html
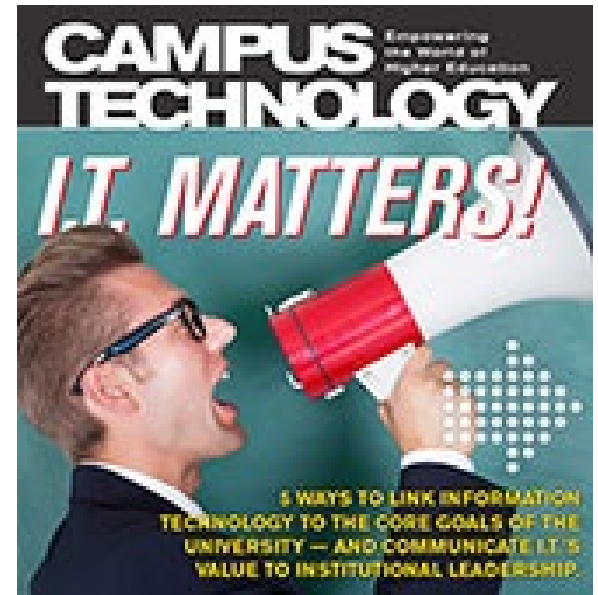
"Everyone knows that knowledge is growing at an increasing depth and an increasing breadth, so you need people which can constantly learn and bridge that gap even while they're in their current jobs." Iyadunni Olubode

http://www.elearning-africa.com/eLA_Newsportal/elearning-africa-keynote-plenary-sessions/

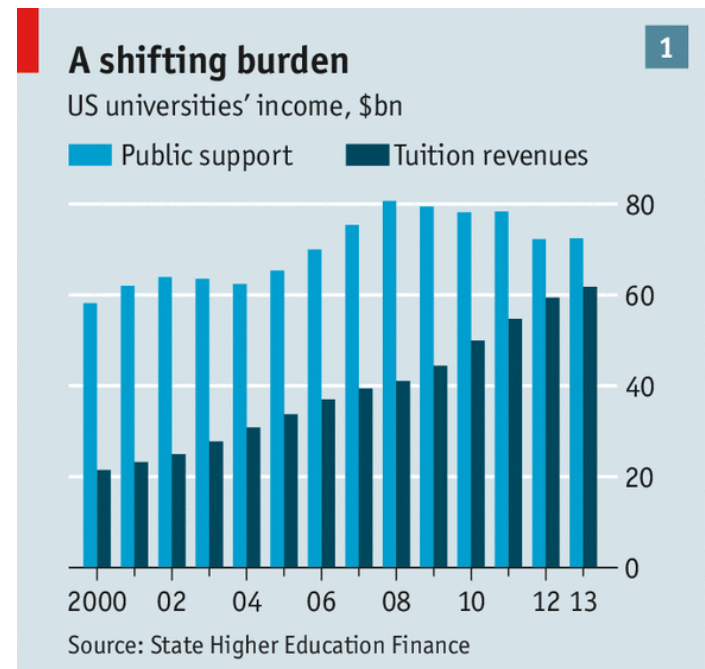# People are looking for learning that is relevant and practical

- "students expect universities to be more accessible, flexible and focused on jobs, according to a new survey."

- Of course, it would help if we surveyed *people* and not just students

http://campustechnology.com/articles/2014/06/09/report-students-expect-future-universities-to-be-flexible-accessible-career-oriented.aspx
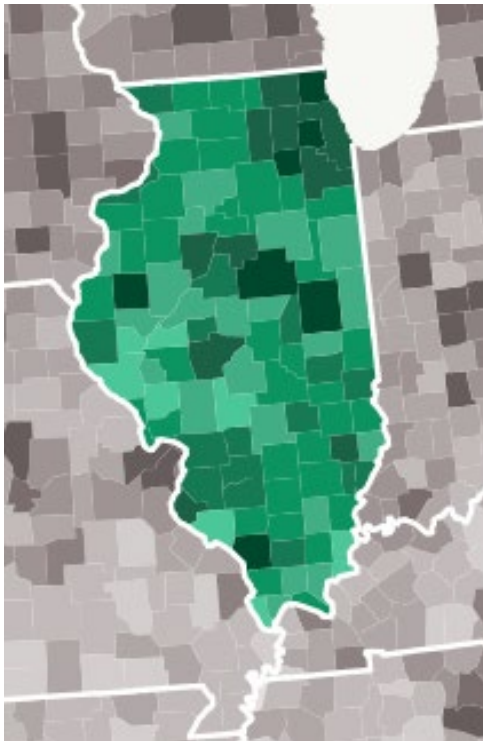
Economists have their own view of what academia needs…

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.

A shifting burden
US universities' income, $bn
Public support   Tuition revenues
Source: State Higher Education Finance

Three trends 'worth watching' in the higher education space:

- Tiered service models at universities

- Analytics and data-driven management

- Alternative credentials

Economics and education – two domains in which *models* prevail

http://higheredtoday.org/2014/05/05/three-trends-worth-watching-for-continuing-education-leaders/
Image: A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education," Lumina Foundation, 2013. Accessed at
http://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger_nation/report/

A model of the workflow process employed to assist LMS selection

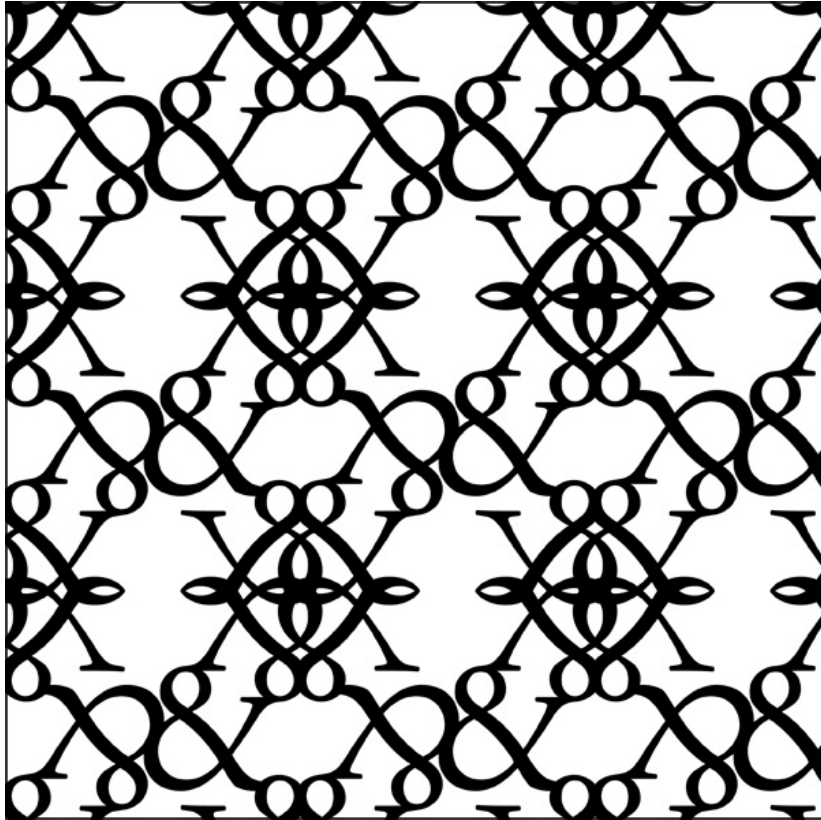http://darcynorman.net/2014/05/16/cnie-session-on-campus-engagement/
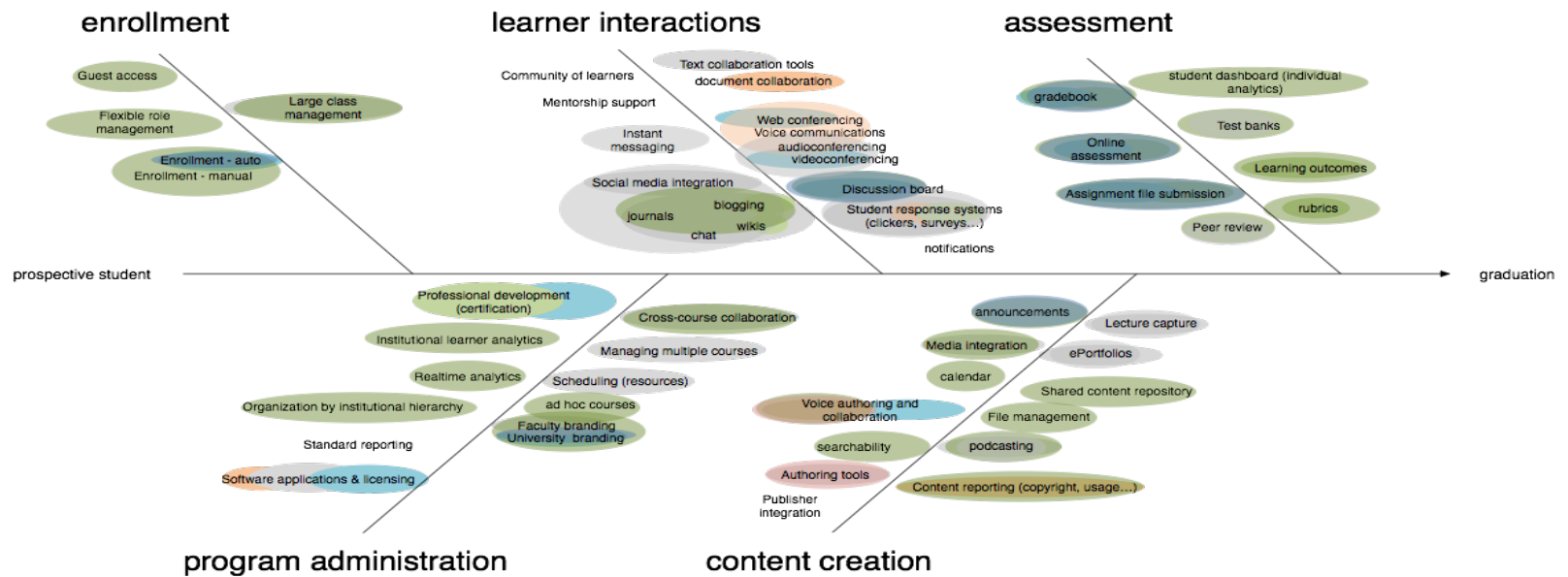
A step-by-step guide to LMS selection; a customized list of LMS features

See also the appendix containing 305 questions or features to consider during the selection process.

http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/selecting-learning-management-system-advice-academic-perspective

Learning design patterns via Grainne Conole

"see how a particular pedagogic approach can be migrated successfully across different topics"

# "Best Practices" for typical learning tasks

For example, the phenomenon of 'conditional release of material' - that is, showing students course content only after they have reached a certain threshold

http://jolt.merlot.org/vol10no2/fisher_0614.pdf
Image: http://www.clarktraining.com/eLearning.php
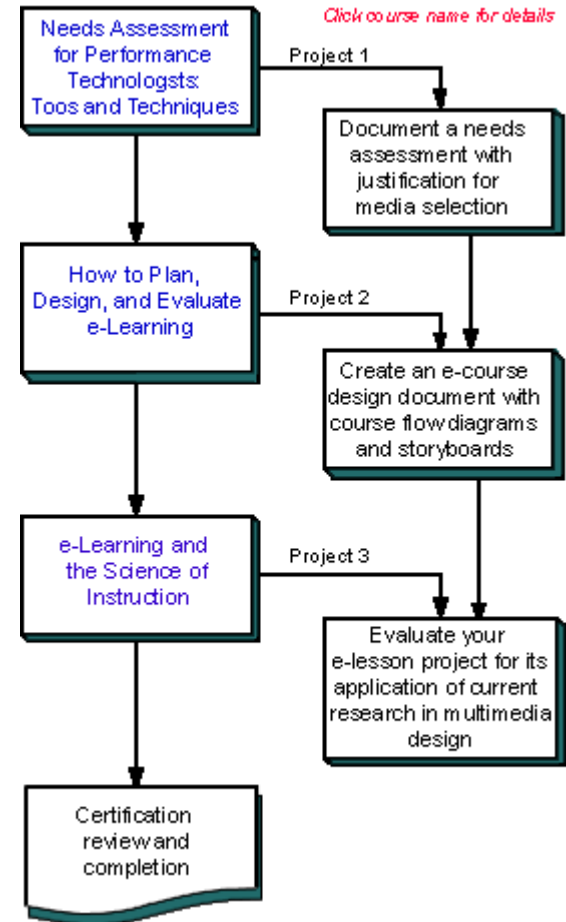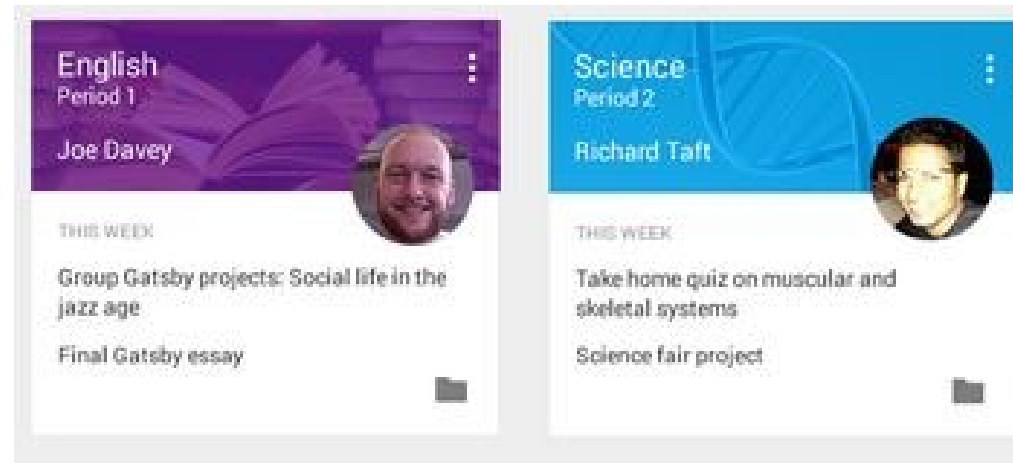
How should I offer this course: the online, hybrid or traditional models…
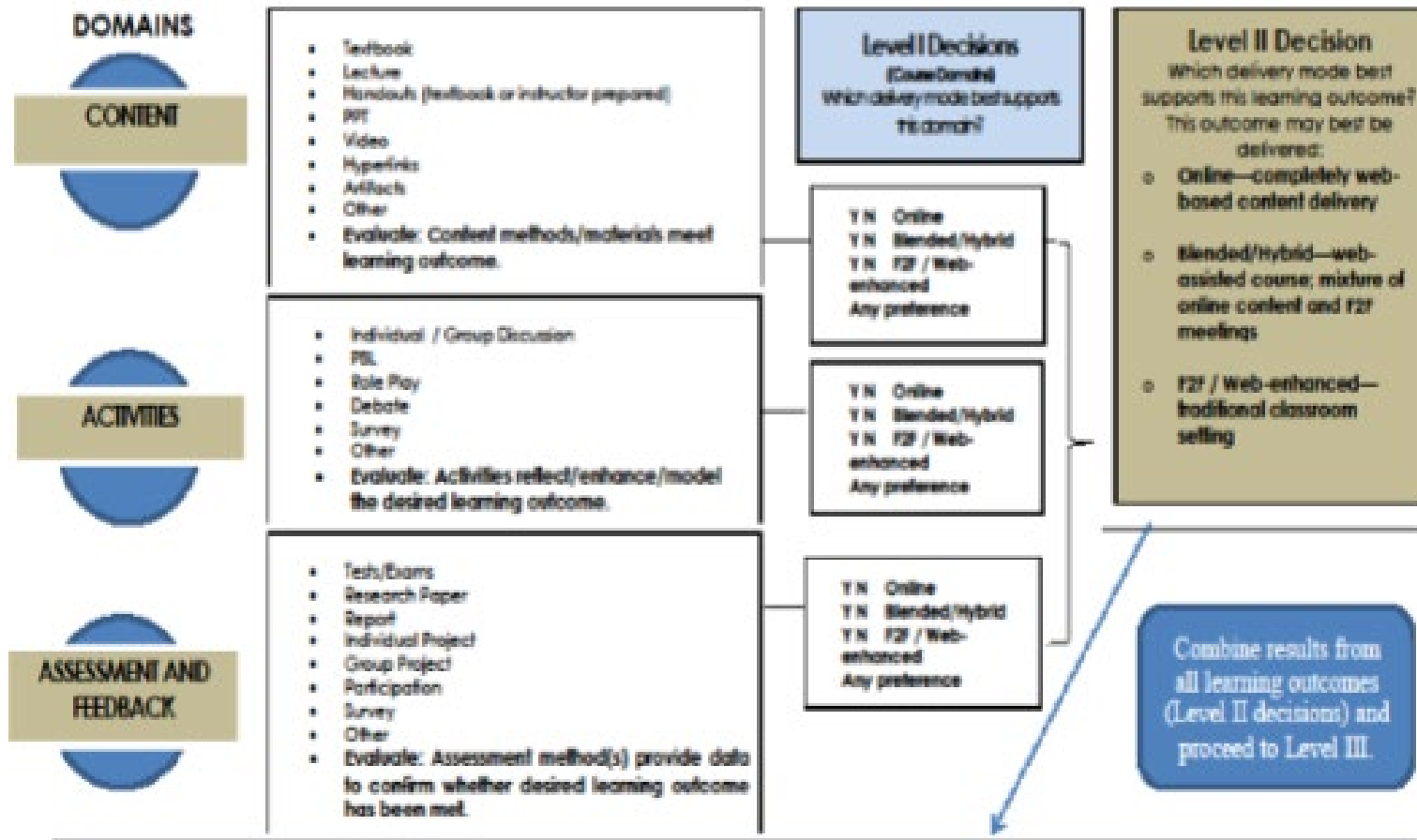
These models are being implemented as educational technology

Dozens of LMS companies are re-examining their business plans this week after the launch of Google's preview of Classroom, part of the Google Apps for Education suite.

http://googleblog.blogspot.ca/2014/05/previewing-new-classroom.html

According to their official blog, Classroom helps teachers:

- help teachers create and collect assignments

- make announcements and ask questions

- create folders for each assignment and for each student.

Image: http://www.google.com/enterprise/apps/education/

With models, the answers are determined before the system or simulation is ever run…

Google Focused Research Awards
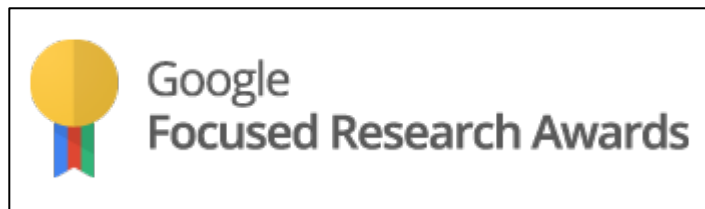
"Carnegie Melon University received a two-year grant for research on and development of MOOCs platforms '*intelligent enough to mimic the traditional classroom experience*'."

http://unescochair.blogs.uoc.edu/blog/2014/06/25/a-goal-for-google-and-carnegie-mellons-mooc-research/

But it's not new just because you've added "on a computer" to some pre-existing model or idea

- The courts have spoken on this

It's not even new on a computer... today's online learning models are yesterday's models with new names
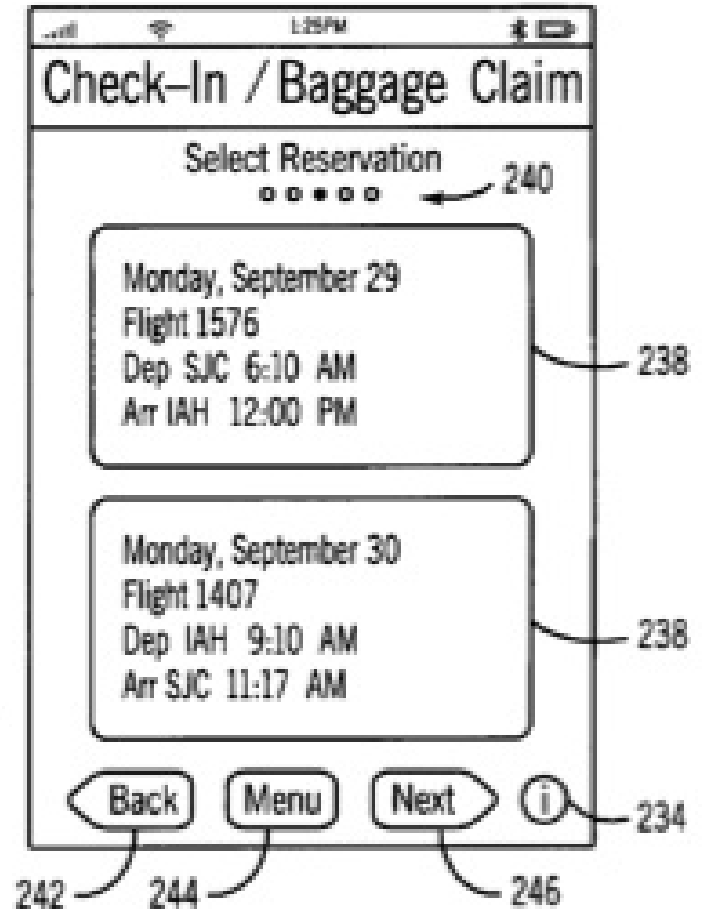
"This isn't simply a matter of forgetting history -- the history of technology or the history of education or the history of ed-tech... It's a rewriting of history" - Watters
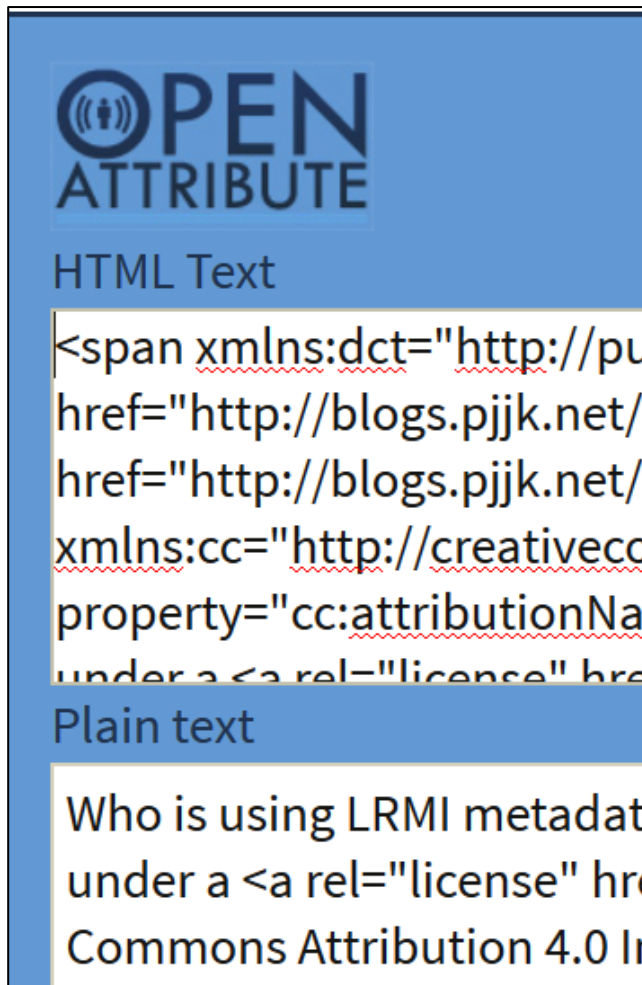
Take, for example, LRMI, a model of learning resources

- You'll recognize AICC, IMS, IEEE-LOM, SCORM, IMS-MLR...

And the results are pretty much what you'd expect

OPEN ATTRIBUTE

HTML Text

```
<span xmlns:dct="http://pu
href="http://blogs.pjjk.net/
href="http://blogs.pjjk.net/
xmlns:cc="http://creativeco
property="cc:attributionNa
under a <a rel="license" hre
```

Plain text

```
Who is using LRMI metadat
under a <a rel="license" hre
Commons Attribution 4.0 In
```

This post offers a short selection of sites where it can be found. Despite Barker's qualification this seems to me to be a very short list.

http://blogs.pjjk.net/phil/who-is-using-lrmi-metadata/

New versions of old models don't produce new results
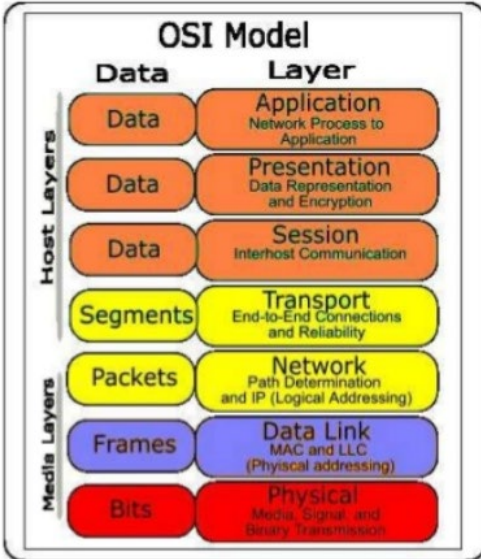
Phil Richards "highlighted the NHS as an example of a sector in which large sums of money had been invested in the development of interoperable systems based on open standards which had failed to deliver."

http://ukwebfocus.wordpress.com/2014/06/30/the-city-and-the-city-reflections-on-the-cetis-2014-conference/

And maybe the 'right model' is to do away with the models altogether

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

What's missing in the standard-based models-based approach is what we used to think of as BAD

- **B**ricolage – the doesn't allow or cater for bricolage.
- **A**ffordances – everage the technology to improve learning and teaching.
- **D**istribution – implications for the institutional practice of e-learning."

http://davidtjones.wordpress.com/2014/03/31/bim-and-bad/

We need to question the presumption that we have too much or that it must be organized a certain way

Weinberger: We don't feel overloaded by the effects of 1.3 million apple pie recipes or 7.6 million cute cat photos. Why not?

http://www.hyperorg.com/blogger/2014/05/11/2b2k-in-over-our-heads-my-simmons-commencement-address/

We're not expected to *master* them. We're expected to pick and choose and apply as needed

Perfect **Apple Pie recipe** from Pillsbury.com
www.pillsbury.com/**recipes**/...**apple-pie**/1... ▾ Pillsbury Company ▾
3 hrs - 230 cal
A classic **apple pie** takes a shortcut with **easy** Pillsbury® unroll-fill refrigerated pie crust.

Apple Pie Recipe - Taste.com.au
www.taste.com.au/**recipes**/5008/**apple+pie** ▾
★★★★★ Rating: 4.5 - 90 reviews
Apple pie recipe - Sift flours and a pinch of salt into a large mixing bowl. Add butter and rub lightly into flour with your fingertips. Lift mixture high above the bowl ...

Scrumptious **Apple Pie recipe** from Betty Crocker
www.bettycrocker.com/**recipes**/...**apple-pie**/a4... ▾ Betty Crocker ▾
2 hrs 20 mins - 480 cal
This **apple pie** is a classic, from the scrumptious filling to the flaky pastry crust. .... of using fresh apples, and you'll shave about half of the prep time off this **recipe**.

That's the difference between *personal* learning and *personalized* learning

'personalized' is off-the-shelf and customized from a menu of options; 'personal' is made to order (and generally made by hand and made by and for oneself)
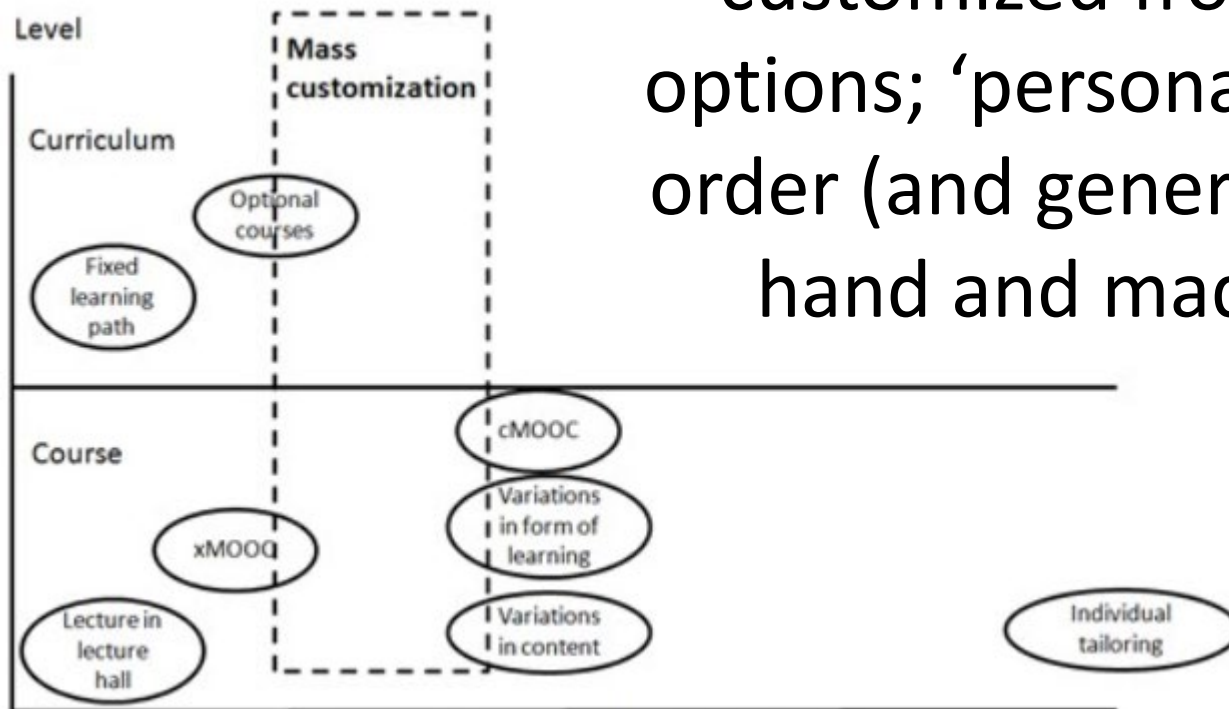
Institutions understand *personalized.* But they don't understand *personal.*

- "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."

Autonomy, rather than control, is essential in education

Satel: 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.

http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/04/to-create-change-leadership-is-more-important-than-authority/

Image: Bill Eatterson http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Watterson

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

- "designers should aim and accept that design is often based on informed guessing."

http://flosse.blogging.fi/2010/12/27/designing-learning-tools-%E2%80%94-introduction-to-some-methodological-thoughts/

The *personal* isn't designed. It is based on self-organization

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.

http://www.wired.com/2010/06/starling-physics/
http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2010/06/11/1005766107.abstract

The great wildebeest migration is a similarly unplanned event

"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…"

There is no single *cause* of events; landmark ideas are created by *societies*, not individuals

Charles Darwin's grandfather, Erasmus, was *also* an evolutionist, as was this man, Jean Baptiste Lamarck.

Hashtags: categorizing using self-organizing networks rather than standard metadata and ontologies
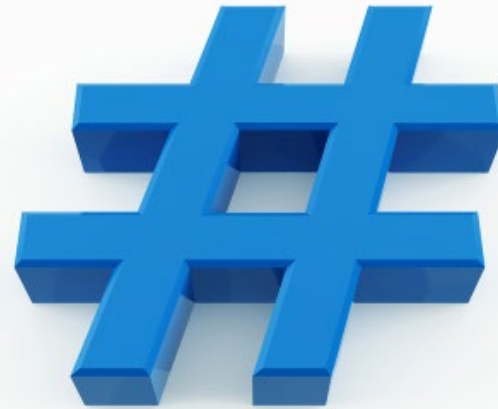
Though commonly associated with Twitter, they existed before Twitter monetized them

http://tressiemc.com/2014/04/23/another-post-about-hashtags-no-seriously/

Hashtag networks can be seen as self-organizing ideas

A concept map isn't the same as a network. But *insofar as concepts* are *dynamic, interacting things* they can and do form networks.

http://x28newblog.wordpress.com/2014/04/25/conceptual-connections-once-again/
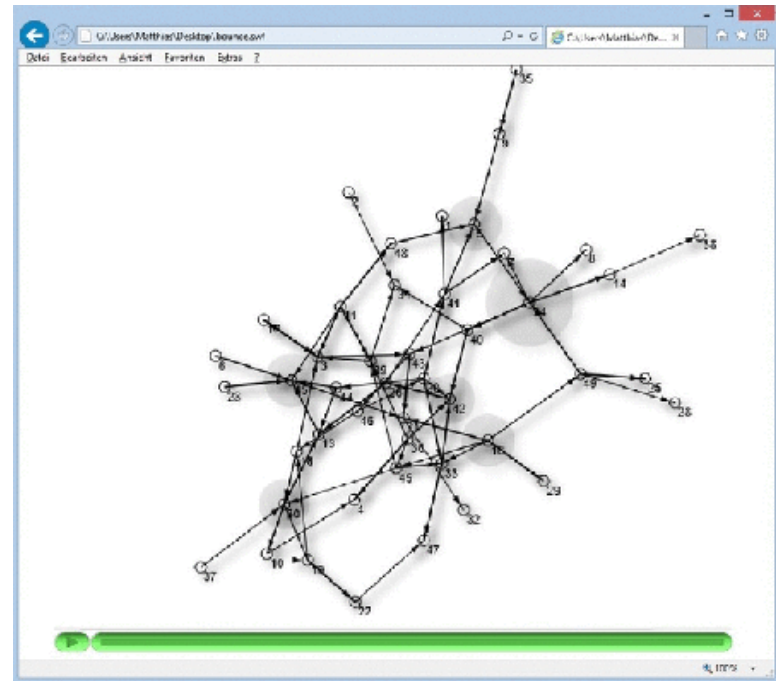
Mary Meeker…

The rise of mobile, the proliferation of apps… "the edge is becoming more important than the node"

http://www.businessinsider.com/mary-meekers-2014-internet-presentation-2014-5

Photo: J.D. Lasica

Students in academia: not the start of a trend, but the continuation of one

Even a search for Ed Tech student panels specifically yields more than 2,000 results. So I think that the trend is well-established;

http://mfeldstein.com/three-makes-movement-branson-creates-youth-panel-student-voice-ed-tech

Photo: student Rachel Winston, who gave a keynote address at Alt-C last year

Watters: the future of ed tech is a reclamation project

"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."

http://www.hackeducation.com/2014/05/22/alberta-digital-learning-forum/
Photo: http://siliconslopes.com/2013/06/instructure-co-founder-apis-in-ed-tech-will-provide-open-dialogue/

We are not resources to be mined. Learners do not enter our schools and in our libraries to become products for the textbook industry

Lucy Gray, who saw all of her Slideshare presentations deleted and her account closed without notice or explanation.

Known

"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."

http://withknown.com/

#indieweb

http://werd.io/2014/how-were-on-the-verge-of-an-amazing-new-open

The silos of today will become the syndication endpoints of tomorrow

- Publish (on your) Own Site, Syndicate Elsewhere". .. The POSSE antimodel - promoted here through everything from #indiweb to Diaspora to app.net to syndication itself - that we've been taking about here for years.

http://opencontent.org/blog/archives/3393
Photo: http://education-portal.com/articles/Interview_with_David_Wiley.html

"Starting now. A technology that allows for limitless reproduction of knowledge resources, instantaneous global sharing and cooperation, and all the powerful benefits of digital manipulation, recombination, and computation…" – Jim Groom
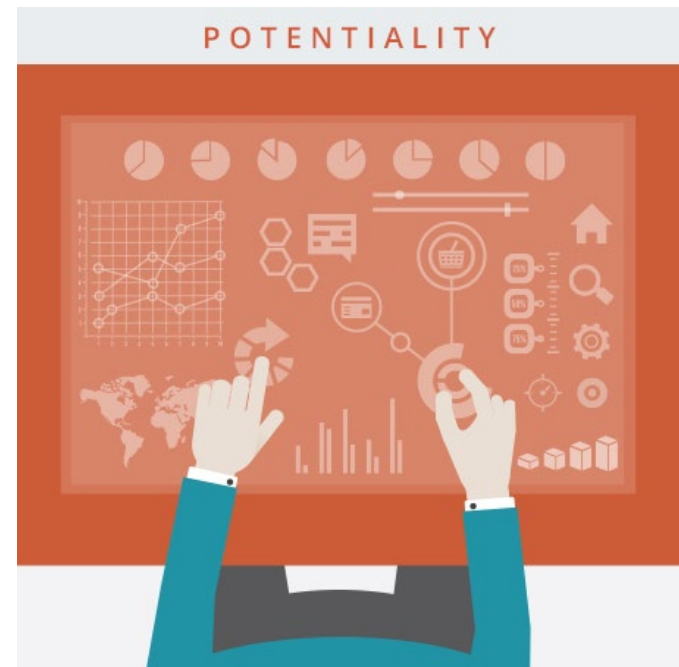
Learning reclaimed is network learning…

For example, Adapt Learning to develop a freely available authoring tool for ~~organisations~~ *people* that wish to develop their own responsive e-learning content..”

That's what we were building when we were building something like this...
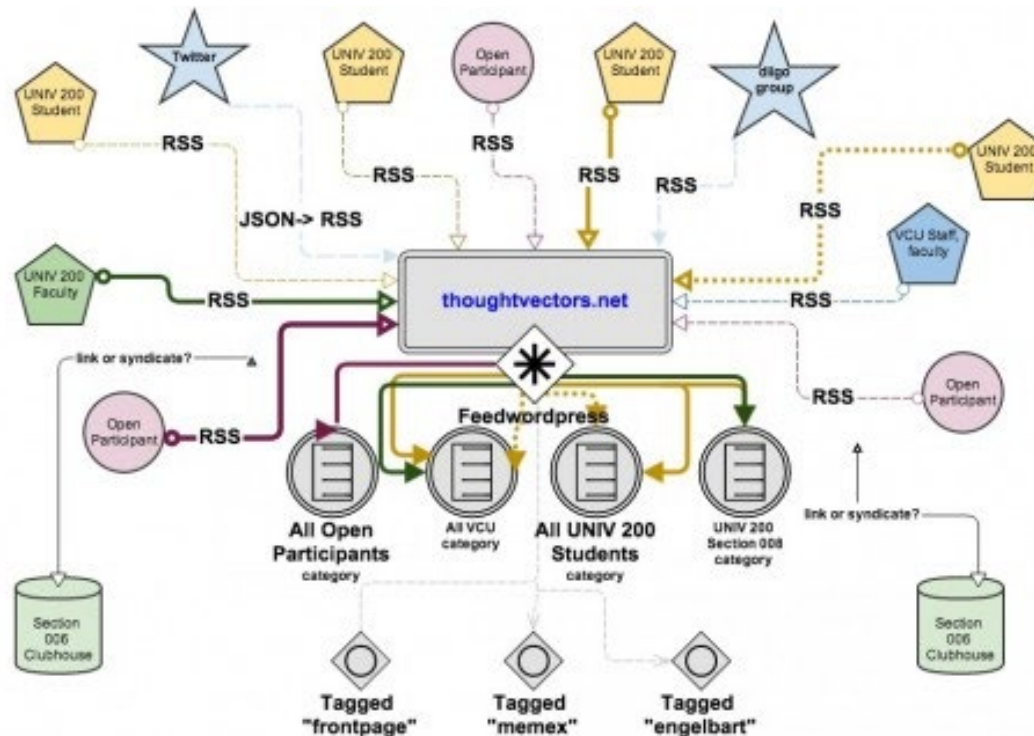
How to set up cMOOC-style website for your class

Some of the technology behind the reclaimed web…

- "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."

http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/washington-post-new-york-times-and-mozilla-team-up-for-new-web-site-comment-system/2014/06/19/fa836e90-f71e-11e3-8aa9-dad2ec039789_story.html

Image: http://blog.wan-ifra.org/2014/06/23/washington-post-and-new-york-times-collaborate-with-mozilla-to-improve-online-comment-cul

Toolset: the Distributed Developer's Stack (DDS)

- they're built on distributed computing. Coursera, for example, relies on Amazon Web Services (AWS).

Schema.org – making it easier for search engines to index tour site

- a joint initiative of the search engines Google, Bing, Yahoo and Yandex
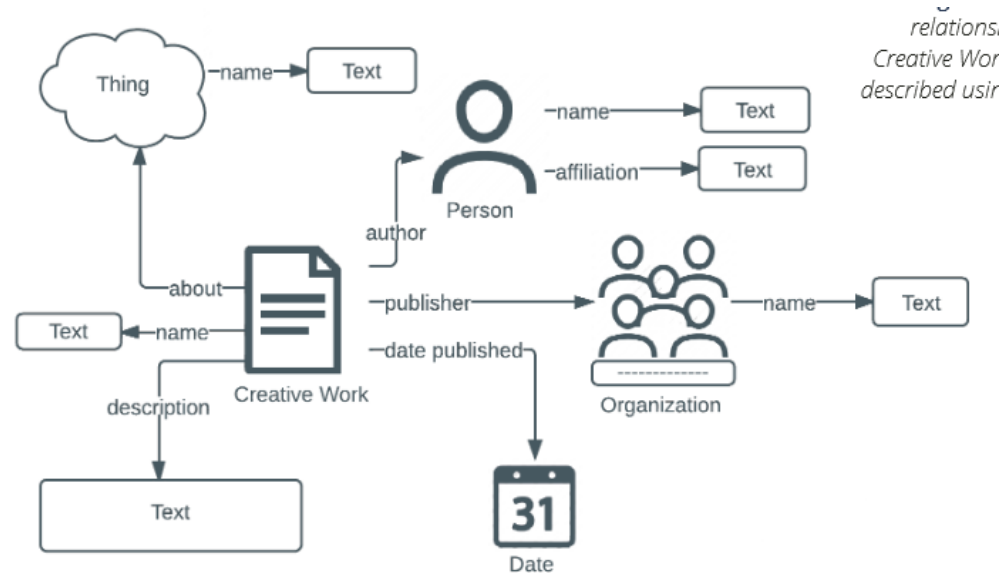
An app store for server software

- Install your favorite applications in your own servers or run them in the cloud.

Take back your data from Google

- "a personal web server preloaded with open source software that lets you run your own web services from your home network."

QR codes, open search, Windows Live tiles, touch icons for mobile and android, RSS autodiscovery, humans.txt – these are features of the modern website

http://www.labnol.org/internet/improve-website-tips/5007/
Image: http://foliowebsites.com/portfolio/modern/
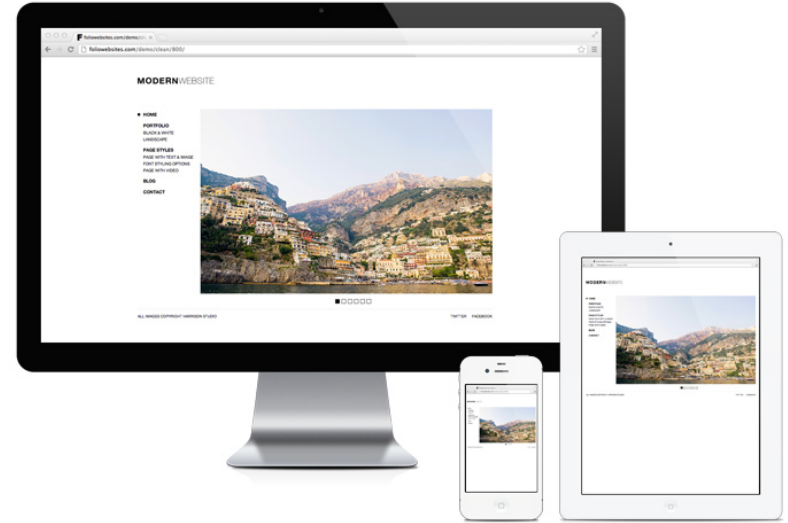
How this changes learning: the theory of connectivism

The Tipping Point + The Social Media Network

CONNECTOR
connects people to each other

MAVEN
connects people through sharing knowledge

SALESMAN
uses knowledge to engage and persuade
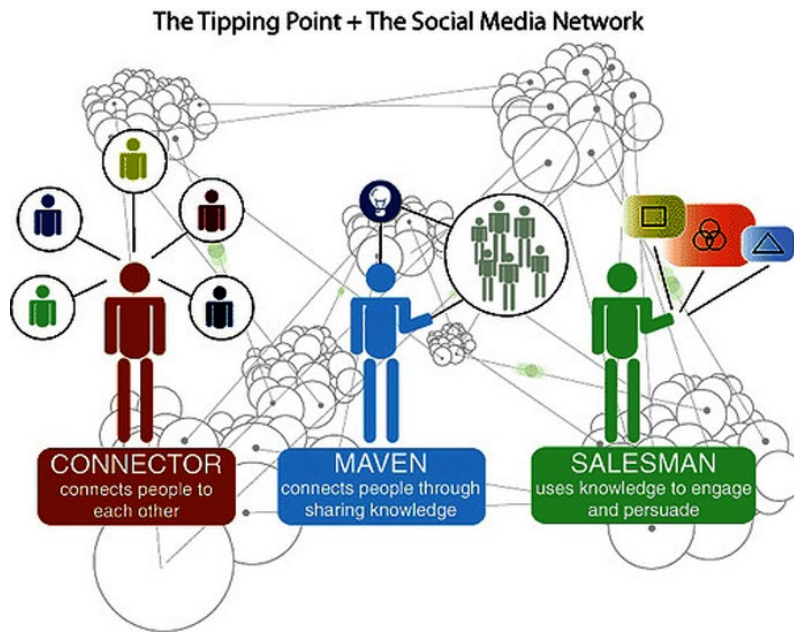
"Connectivism repositions media as a type of content, in that media, as tools of cognitive engagement, have the potential to transform the content of learning."

http://kelliralph.wordpress.com/2014/05/24/connectivism-informing-distance-education-theory-pedagogy-and-research/
Image: http://www.edrev21.com/2012/07/27/150/

What's the connection between social networks and neural networks?

- The Siemens answer is multimodal extension. The networks reach out and integrate with each other.
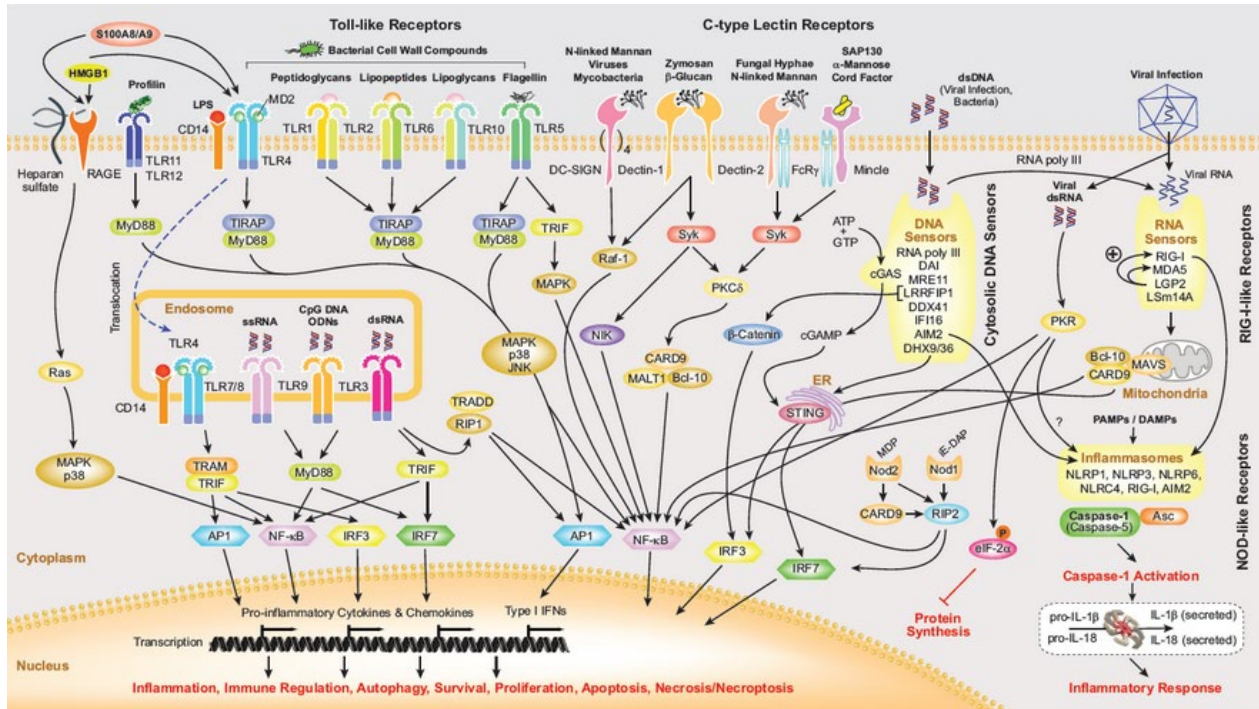
- The Downes answer: pattern recognition. One network perceives patterns in another network and *interprets* or *recognizes* these patterns *as* something.

http://www.journals.elsevier.com/pattern-recognition/

Image: http://www.adipogen.com/media/Catalogs/Pix/Pattern_Recognition_Wallchart_Pix.PNG

Connectivism as a learning theory

Cain writes, "for me, a theory must

- account for current theories

- sufficiently explain where we are now

- make predictions

- be subject to testing."

Connectivism's respose: researching the MOOC

- The MOOC was developed by Siemens and myself to instantiate the principles of connectivism

- Our courses were designed as networks, testing both aspects of our theories

George Siemens (Photo credit: heloukee)

http://jolt.merlot.org/vol10no1/fournier_0314.pdf
http://cain.blogspot.ca/2012/10/moocs-and-connectivist-instructional.html

Participants' perceptions in MOOCs
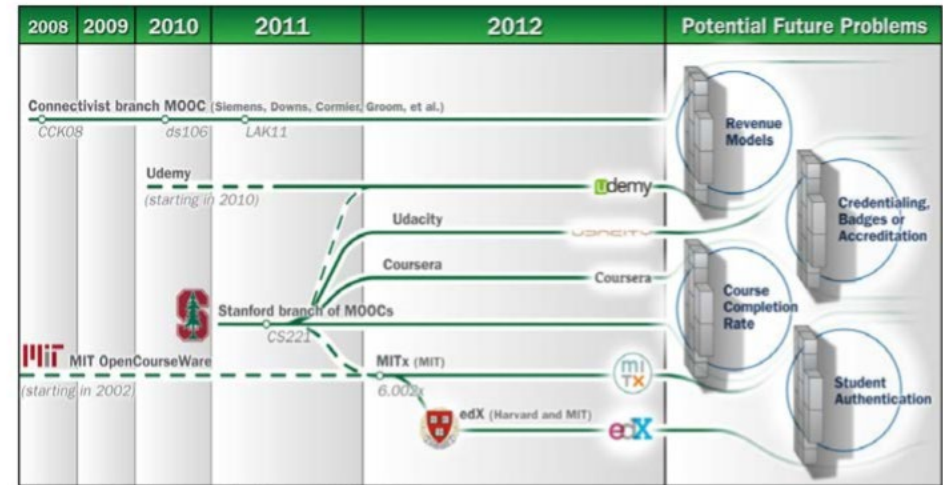
"creating networks and developing professional connections through networking technologies are advantages of participating in cMOOCs"

http://jolt.merlot.org/vol10no1/saadatmand_0314.pdf
Image: http://mfeldstein.com/four-barriers-that-moocs-must-overcome-to-become-sustainable-model/

Where to now? The learner at the centre of the networked world

Aspen Institute:

- empower learners to learn any time, any place

- support and guide learners in a networked learning environment

- interoperability across learning networks

GOVERNMENT

PARENTS

EDUCATORS

SCHOOL DISTRICTS & LEADERS

STUDENTS

FOUNDATIONS

NON PROFITS

BUSINESSES

http://aspeninstitute.fsmdev.com/documents/AspenReportFinalPagesRev.pdf

Learner control has moved beyond computer assisted programs…

Learner Ownership and Control of Electronic Portfolio Development

Motivation
Intrinsic
Extrinsic
Process
Purpose
Purpose
Contents
Contents
Contents
ORGANIZATION CONTROL
LEARNER CONTROL
DEGREE OF CHOICE

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

"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"

Reading and networking will become one and the same thing
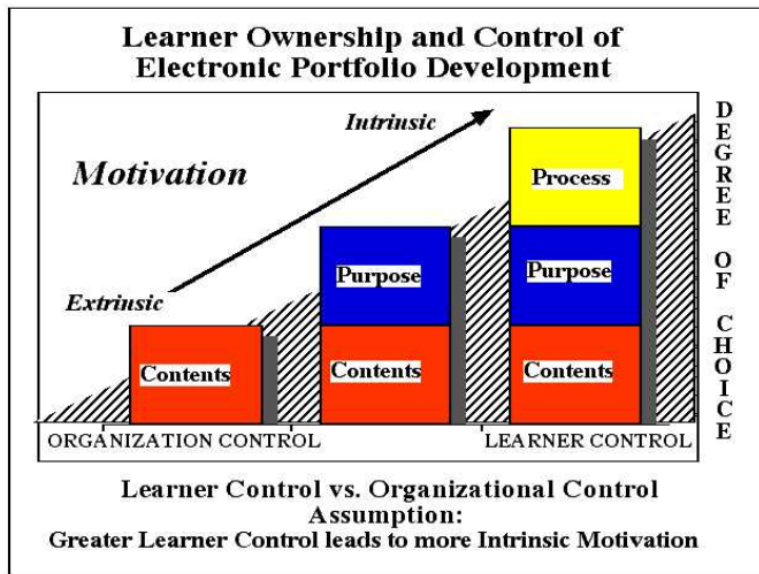
Utopia developer Steve Pettifer

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."

Connective learning technology is already transforming the workplace

The Near Future of Workforce Technology

Internet of Things

data

control

enterprise

(Ultraprivate) Wearable & Embedded Devices

consumption

knowledge flows

workforce

insight, optimization

measure

Quantified Enterprise

3D Scanners & Printers

designs

High scale, richer, more innovative business results

Lightweight & Mobile Collaboration

From http://zdnet.com/blog/hinchcliffe on ZDNet.

"Combine ambient data on just about any physically manufactured object with pervasive wearable technologies that constantly present us with dashboards, notifications, analyses, and visualizations of all this data…"

http://www.zdnet.com/emerging-tech-is-transforming-the-workplace-7000028960/
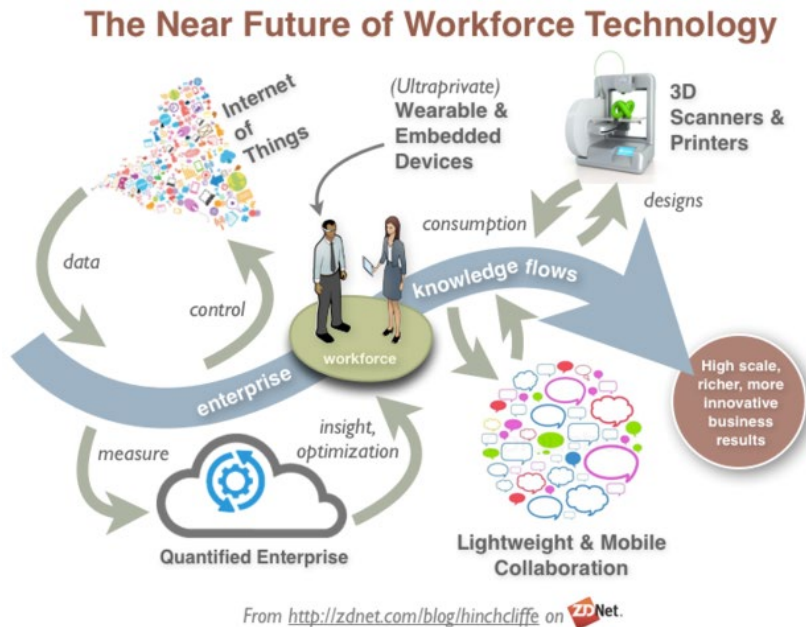
Teams and collaborations will be transformed into networks and cooperatives

- For example, the "oscillation principle" where developers meet three times a year for three days.

- The rest of the time "team members are ... using various forms of social media.

http://www.nancydixonblog.com/2014/05/-proquest-case-study-using-the-oscillation-principle-for-software-development.html

Interactions in a problem space

a) Beginning 6-1   b) End 6-2   c) End 6-4   d) End 6-8
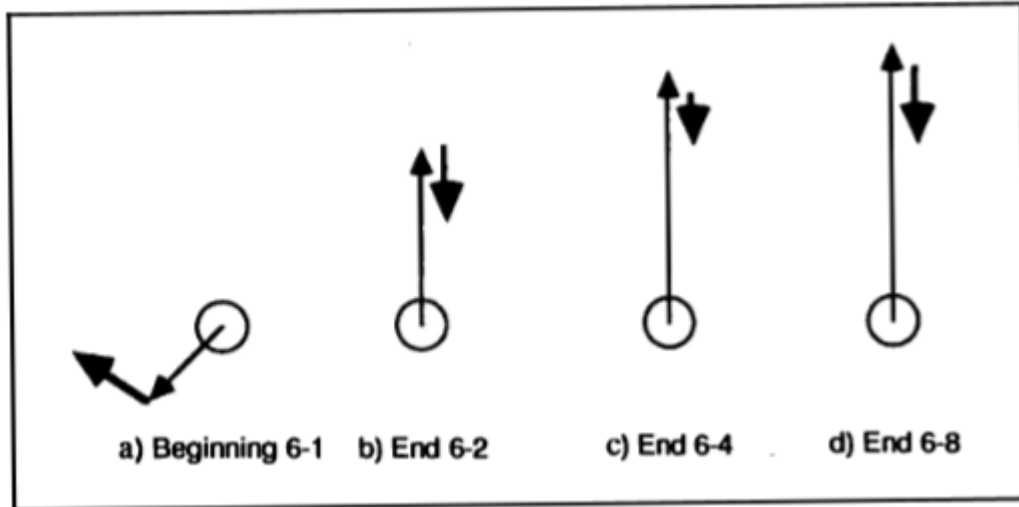
"Cooperative work is accomplished by the division of labour among participants, as an activity where each person is responsible for a portion of the problem solving."

Individuals were asked to identify people whose expertise they knew about but with whom they saw no opportunity to collaborate. The resulting network map illustrates those *potential but missed opportunities.*

Tie = individual is aware of other's expertise but sees no opportunity to collaborate

No tie = individual is not aware of other's expertise or is aware, has already collaborated
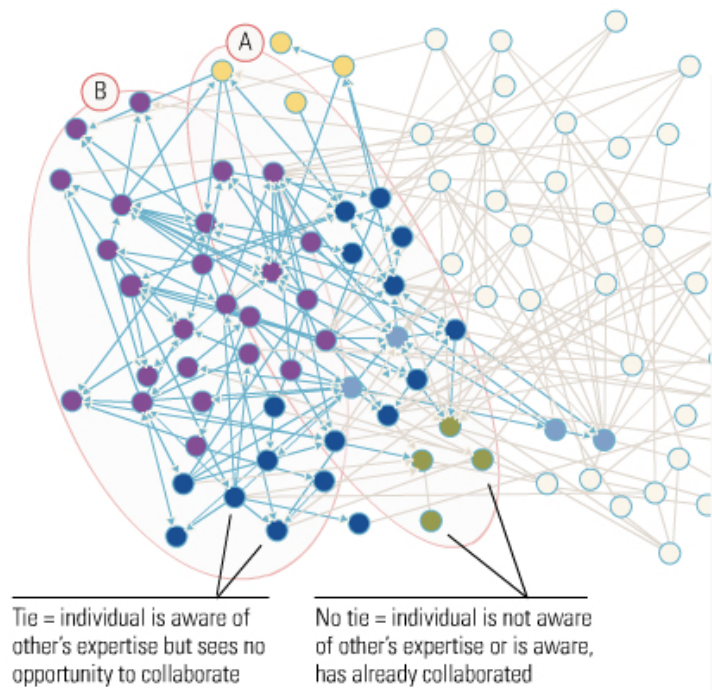
In cooperation, we no longer share models, designs, visions, goals, or objectives

- "virtual distance had significant influences on trust, goal clarity and OCB and indirectly influenced innovation and success."

http://seapointcenter.com/cooperation-teamwork-and-collaboration/

Axelrod: Cooperation does not require centrality, commonality, management, control or even trust

- It requires only a durable relationship… a network infrastructure
- Which is a good thing, because my most useful cooperations are with those I trust least

http://www-ee.stanford.edu/~hellman/Breakthrough/book/pdfs/axelrod.pdf

Cooperation means working with others without all the overhead

"Cooperation can be achieved if all participants do their assigned parts separately and bring their results to the table; collaboration, in contrast … involves negotiations, discussions, and accommodating others' perspectives."

http://www-ee.stanford.edu/~hellman/Breakthrough/book/pdfs/axelrod.pdf

The new skills are network skills

You need to understand the real meaning of such arcania as lists, loops and APIs.

People forget about Codeacademy... 'the other MOOC'

"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."

http://tech.fortune.cnn.com/2014/04/23/with-24-million-students-codecademy-revamps-its-offerings/?section=magazines_fortune

People, passion and play

Nicholas Negroponte, Alan Kay, and Marvin Minsky and Mitchel Resnick

The Media Lab model of "projects and peers and passion and play" grew out of Papert's work

The Superuniversity

- We are being told "future universities will be rewarded by governments for their performance in economic development, employability of graduates, immigration and commercialisation of research."

http://www.cbu.ca/sites/cbu.ca/files/a-university-as-it-might-be.pdf

One slide points out that universities have survived since the 16th century "because societies need them."
 What Is that what we need?

- More designs and models?

- More standards and measurement?

- More centralization and control?

- The same mistakes, repeated again?

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.

http://law.leiden.edu/elmc/lu/leiden-university.html
https://www.uni-tuebingen.de/en/university.html

We are moving beyond institutions… toward a cooperative knowing society based on network knowledge

activities that will promote extending learning beyond formal education.

- **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.

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 lit[...]**
  Anna Maria Tremonti, CBC [...]
  Commentary by Stephen D[...]

- I listened to this interesting [...]
  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

March 2011-March 2014
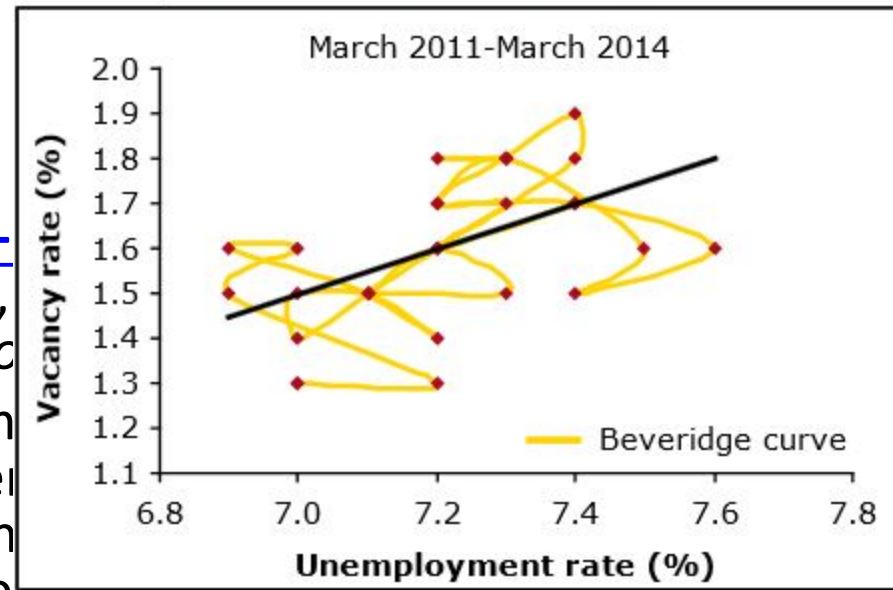
Source: CIBC calculations based on Statistics Canada's tabulations

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

- A report from CIBC reaffirm[...]la. "Large swaths of those uner[...] 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, and 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?
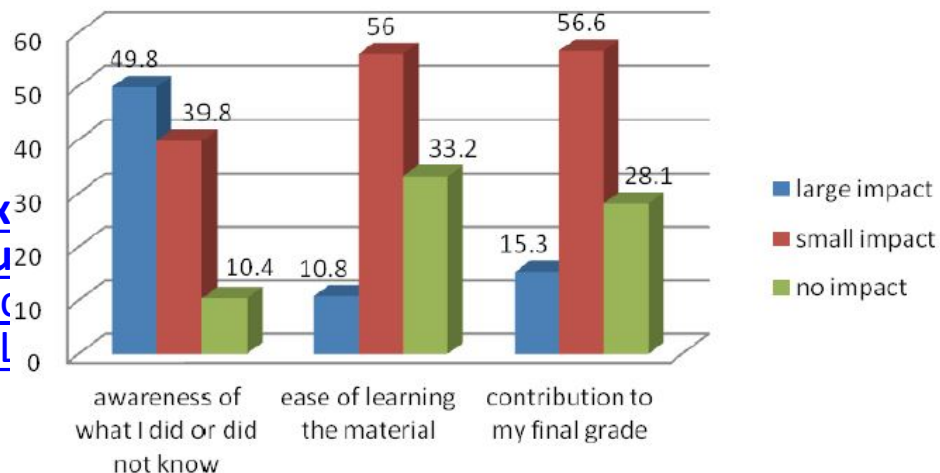
Figure 4 *Student perceptions of the impact of LTIs*

-

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 ch[...]
students are expected to master du[...]
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[...] 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."
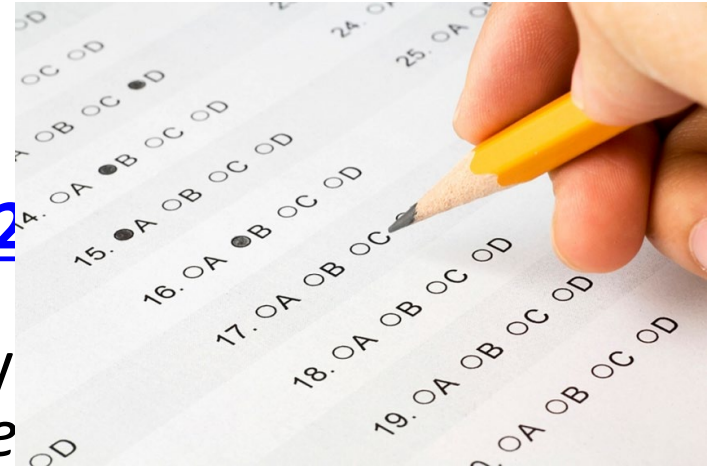
- **20th Century Assessment In A 2[...] Environment**
  [Terry Heick](), [TeachThought](), May [...]
  Commentary by Stephen Downe[...]

- 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

I. 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 o[...] 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'.

-
  [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**
environmental scan and review of the rele
[Brian Abner](), [Oksana Bartosh](), [Charles Unge]()
[Council of Ontario](), Jun 18, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes
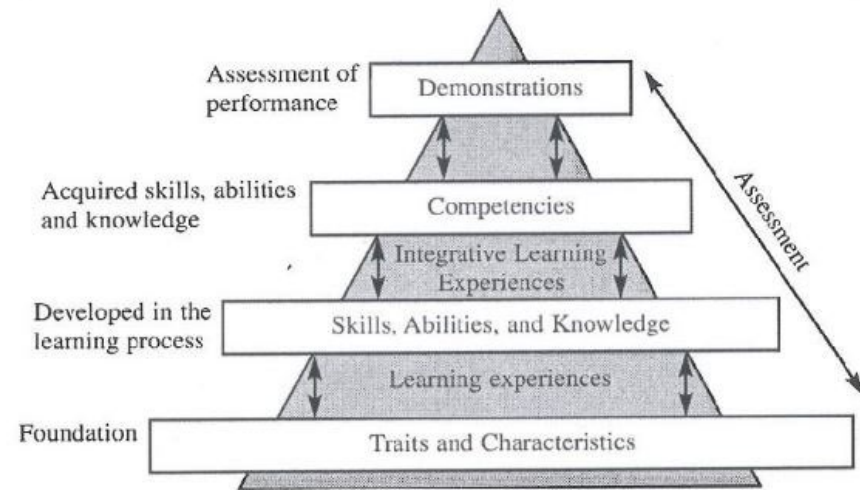
- I think this is true: "There is no systematic, the purported skills from a CBE program tra graduation results or in the labour market." That does not mean that competency-based education is the wrong way to go, say the [authors of a report]() (75 page PDF) from from the Higher Education Quality Council 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.

- **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 [...] school's response is to create a [...] Credential of Readiness, or CORe, [...] 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.
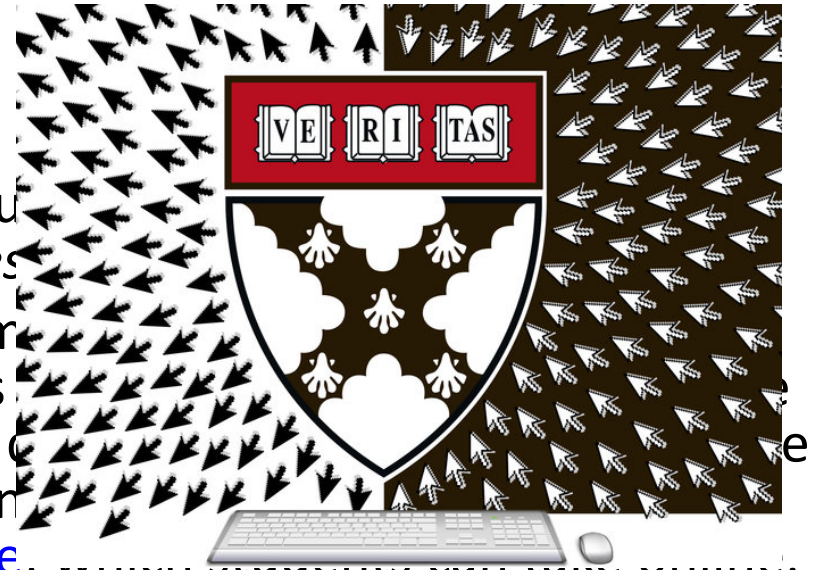
- **ALT issues first Open Badges as part of ocTEL and releases plugin to the community**
Unattributed, ALT Online Newsletter, Jun 26, 2014
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- 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."

-
  ### [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.

-
  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-** [text obscured by image] Dave Ferguson, Dave's Whiteboar [text obscured by image] *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- I like this post. Not because I agre[text obscured] really think the answer to "do you[text obscured] demonstrate". But I think there's a[text obscured] 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.
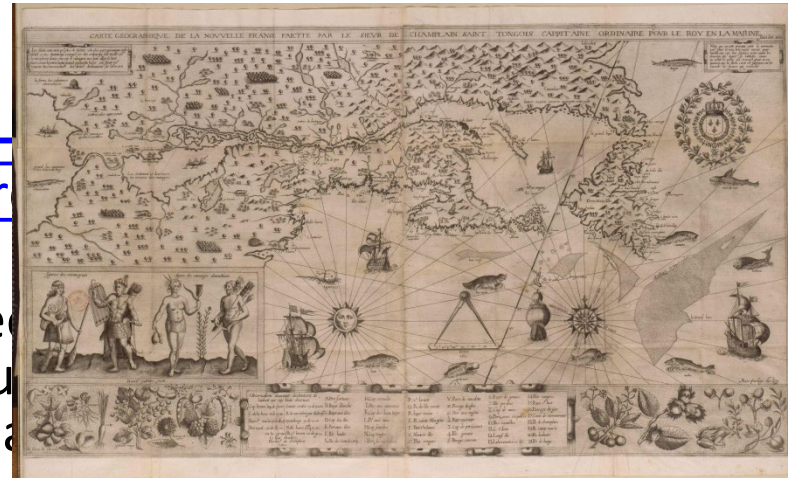
- **The Secret Formula to Becoming an E-Learn[ing]**
  [Tom Kuhlmann](#), [The Rapid eLearning Blog](#), J[…]
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- 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 and getting into Web 2.0, using social media join 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).
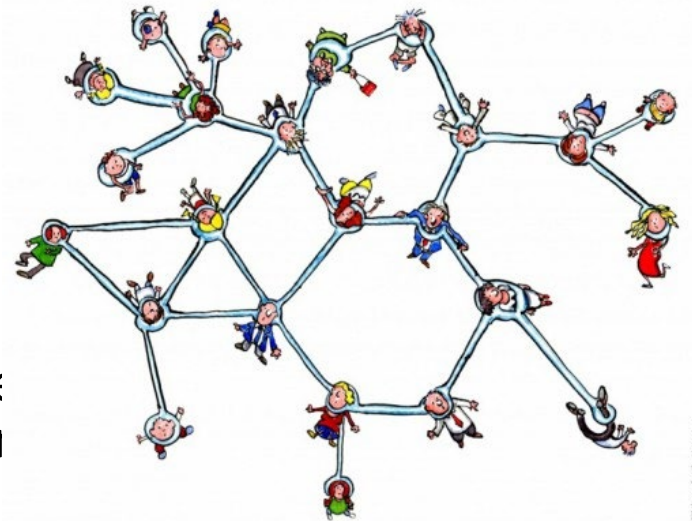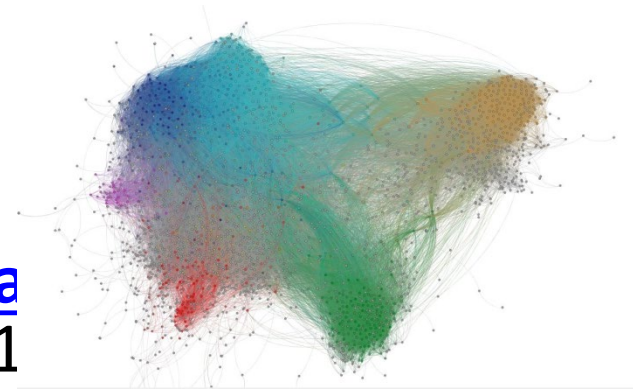
- **[Techniques and Tools: How To Visua](...)** [Beth Kanter](...), [Beth's Blog](...), Apr 27, 201
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- 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 o[...]]()
  Commentary by Stephen Downe[...]
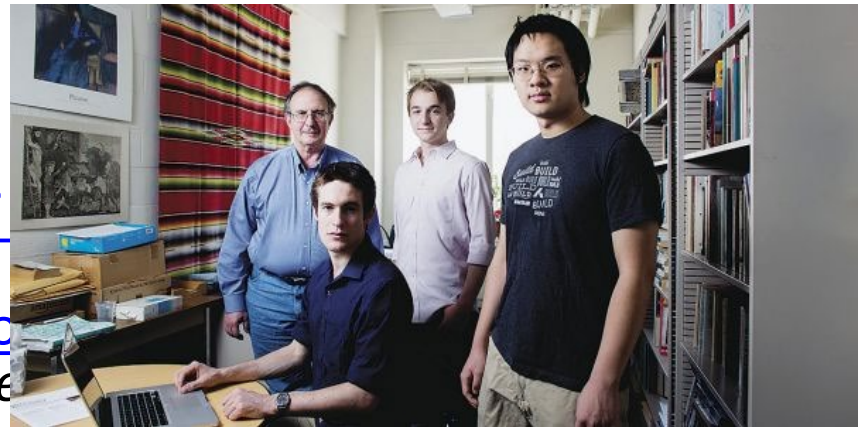
- It's one of those stories the Chronicle loves to print - grizzled gadfly argues against computers in education - but in this case the critic has a point. Les Perelman, who in the past has had [heated]() [exchanges]() with promoters of automated essay grading, has authored a computer program that writes 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."

-
[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]().

- **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... the author describes associating the noises with specific appliances: "The ['Sound of the Office'](https://...) 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)** [obscured] Don Tapscott, Yo[obscured] *Commentary by* [obscured]

- Don Tapscott rid[obscured] the first few min[obscured] 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.

-
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.

-
[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 Sho...** ...
  [Doug Belshaw](), Apr ...
  Commentary by Ste...

- If you're wondering ... ...
  you. Which takes us ... ...
  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 S... Confusing](#)**
[Marketing Land](#), [Ginny Marvin](#), May 02, 2...
Commentary by Stephen Downes

- So what we have here is a group of comp... 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 prov... 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).
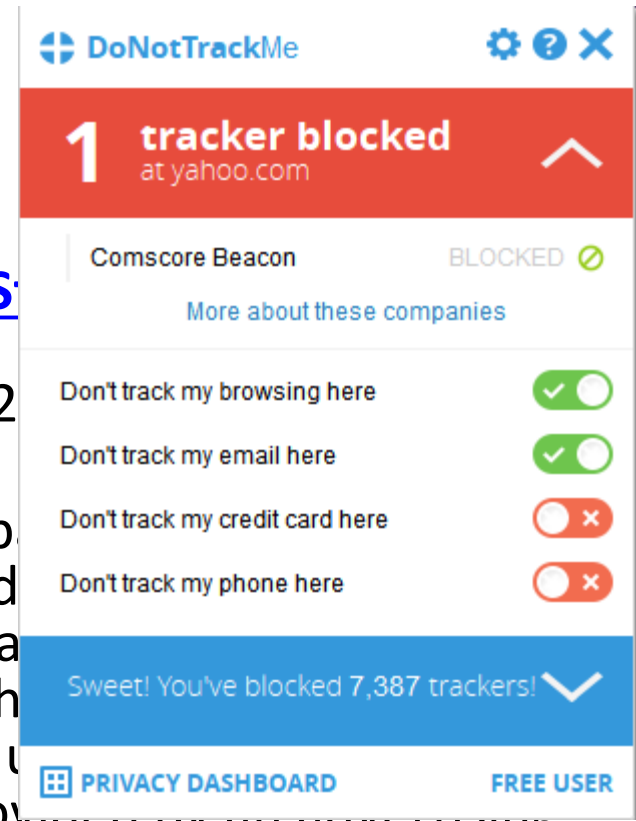
- **Google Halts Scanning of Student Gmail Accounts** Michele Molnar, Education Week, Apr 30, 2014 *Commentary by Stephen Downes*

- 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... *Commentary by Stephen Downes*
- People who attend the tapings of sitco... don't expect privacy. I don't see why st... lectures at universities should expect t... Today, when you attend class, the came... (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-proo[...] 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.

- ## [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 Conferenc[...]](#) *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)).

Your Network

Curated Content

News discovery tools

LiveBinders
bagtheweb educlipper
Storify diigo
Scoop.it!

Curation tools

Content

Curators

Find quality content
Contextualize the content
Share the content

Your Own Content
Note Taking tools
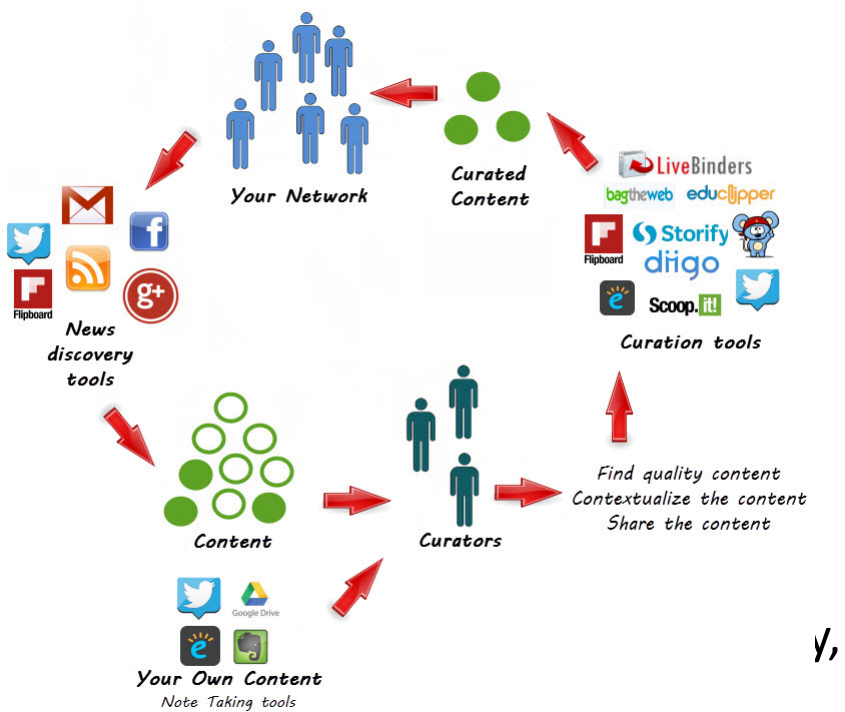
- **Curation: Creatively Filtering Conte**
  Sue Watters, The Edublogger, Jun 17
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- I think this is a good article and well
  the revival of a disappearing activity
  writing about other people. This of e   y,
  so it's close to home for me. But I re
  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 Educator Groups, a 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.

Level 1 solution saved at https://gist.github.com/24d9825a0704c84ebfb9

```javascript
/*******************
 * theLongWayOut.js *
 *******************
 *
 * Well, it looks like they're on to us. The path isn't as
 * clear as I thought it'd be. But no matter - four clever
 * characters should be enough to erase all their tricks.
 */

function startLevel(map) {
    map.placePlayer(7, 5);

    var maze = new ROT.Map.DividedMaze(map.getWidth(), map.getHeight(

    maze.create( function (x, y, mapValue) {

        // don't write maze over player
        if (map.getPlayer().atLocation(x,y)) {
            return 0;
        }

        else if (mapValue === 1) { //0 is empty space 1 is wall
            map.placeObject(x,y, 'block');
        }
        else {
            map.placeObject(x,y,'empty');
        }
    });

    map.placeObject(map.getWidth()-4, map.getHeight()-4, 'block');
    map.placeObject(map.getWidth()-6, map.getHeight()-4, 'block');
    map.placeObject(map.getWidth()-5, map.getHeight()-5, 'block');
    map.placeObject(map.getWidth()-5, map.getHeight()-3, 'block');

    map.placeObject(map.getWidth()-5, map.getHeight()-4, 'exit');
}
```

`^1 API  ^2 Toggle Focus  ^3 Notepad  ^4 Reset  ^5 Execute          ^0 Menu`

- **Untrusted**
  Alex Nisnevich, Games with
  Commentary by Stephen D...

- This is an interesting conce...
  player is presented with a r...
  escape. But to do so, you ha...t
  that defines the maze and e...
  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:
-

  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)
-

  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.
-

-

  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
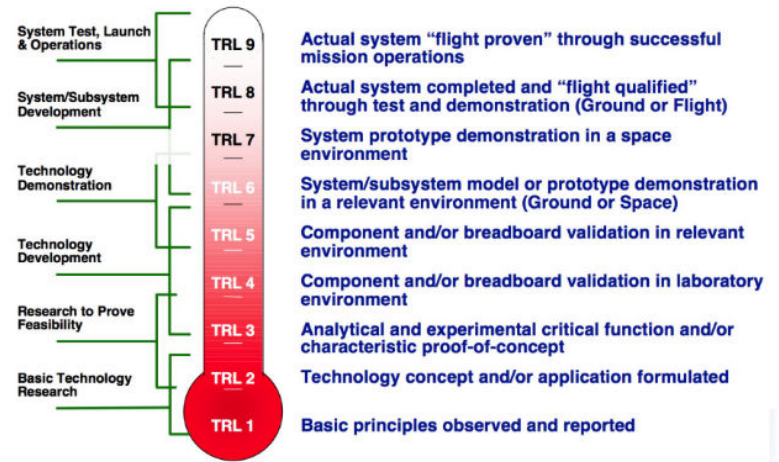
- **How to Know When Your Great I[dea...]**
  [Tim Kastelle](#), [The Discipline of Inn...](#)
  Commentary by Stephen Downes

- Over the last couple years as I hav[e...] like business plans the abbreviati[on...] frequent appearance. It stands fo[r...] 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.