



Your *Instant* Decentralized  
Learning Community

Stephen Downes

INTED2021

March 8, 2021

# Why a Learning Community?

- Can be added to a course, but isn't a course
- Can be created by any self-organizing cohort
- Facilitates functions important to learning:
  - Discussion
  - Help and support
  - Creativity and sharing

- [What is a Professional Learning Community?](#) – Richard DuFour
- [Fully Online Learning Community \(FOLC\) Model](#) - EILab
- [Learning Communities](#) – video, University of Groningen
- [Professional learning networks for teachers](#) – Research paper

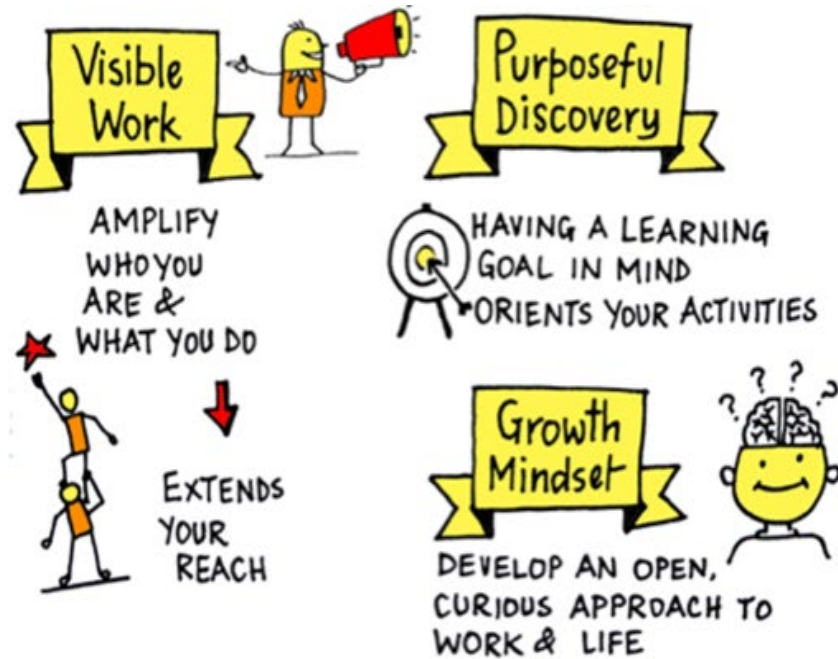
# The Idea: Working Out Loud

## FIVE ELEMENTS of WORKING OUT LOUD

John Stepper

**Relationships**  
ARE AT THE HEART OF WOL  
THE PATH TO KNOWLEDGE IS VIA OTHERS

**Generosity**  
WE ARE WIRED FOR RECIPROCAL ALTRUISM  
THE CURRENCY OF REAL NETWORKING IS GENEROSITY



Sketchnote by: Tanmay Vora | @tnvora | QAspire.com

Image: <https://workingoutloud.com/about-2>

# Why Decentralized?

- Continues to work even if parts break down
- Eliminates bottlenecks and therefore high costs
- Can work with any sized cohort

- [Decentralized Social Networks](#) – Tulane
- [Social Networks Are the Next Big Decentralization Opportunity](#) - CoinDesk
- [Future Learning in an Advanced Decentralized Learning Ecosystem](#) – by me
- [Decentralized Modeling and Decentralized Thinking](#) – Mitch Resnick

# Cooperation, Not Consumption

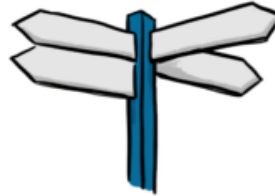
*an architecture of participation*



CLEAR  
MISSION



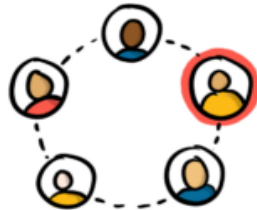
INVITATION TO  
PARTICIPATE



EASY  
ONBOARDING



MODULAR  
APPROACH



STRONG  
LEADERSHIP



WAYS OF  
WORKING OPEN



BACKCHANNELS  
& WATERCOOLERS

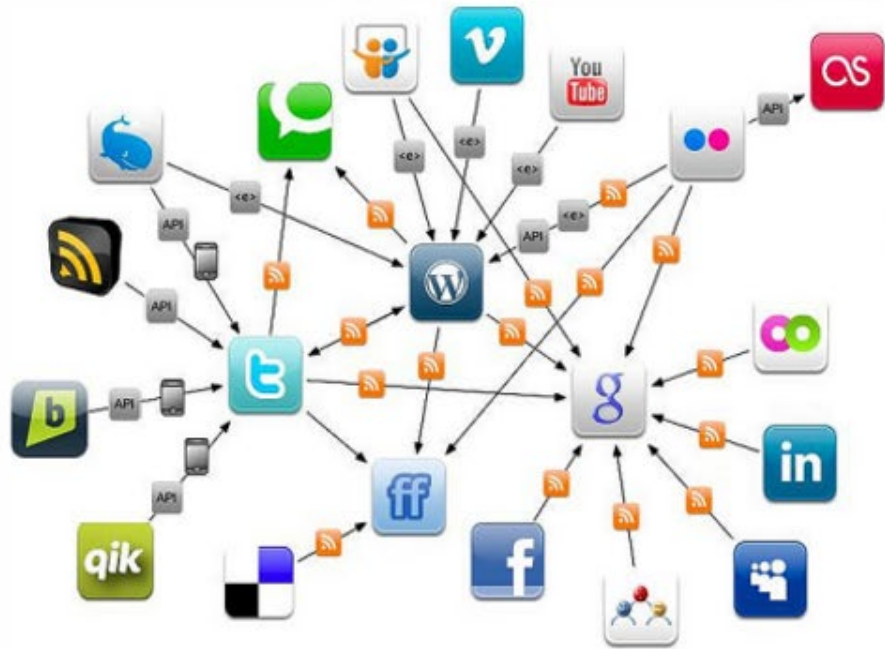


CELEBRATION  
OF MILESTONES



Doug Belshaw - <https://blog.weareopen.coop/howto-create-an-architecture-of-participation-for-your-open-source-project-a38386c69fa5>

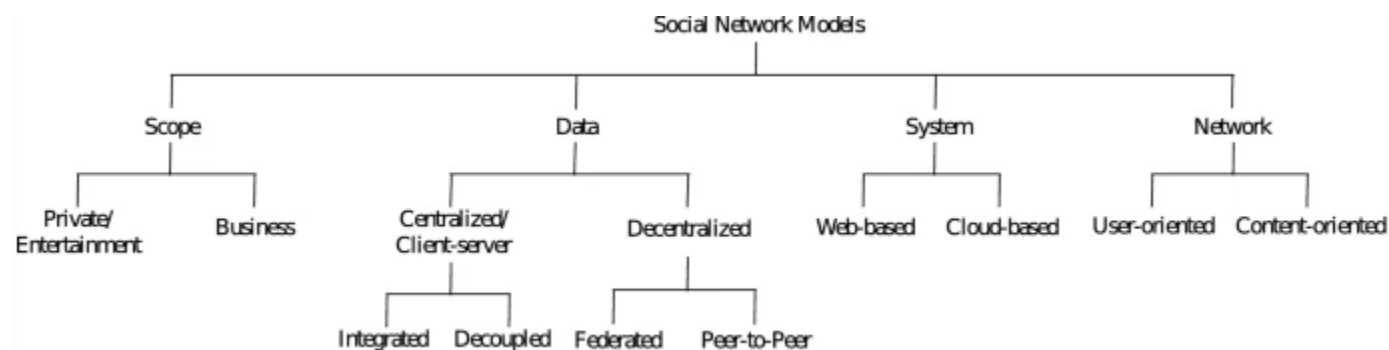
# Personal Learning Environments



Anne Helmond, May 2009

# Why *Instant*?

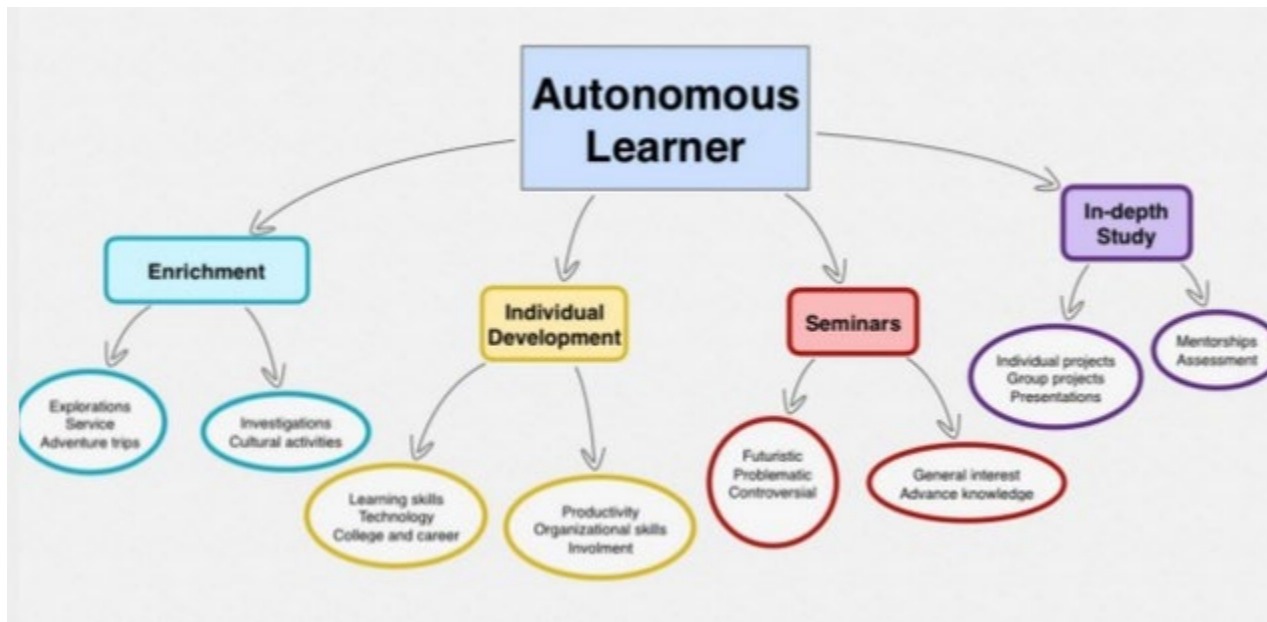
- Let's see what we can do in this hour-and-a-half
- Can we build a decentralized learning network around INTED2021?
- What can we learn from that experience?



- [Praxis and the Indieweb](#) – Daniel Goldsmith
- [Peer-to-Peer-Based Social Networks: A Comprehensive Survey](#) - Masinde & Graffi

# Every Step is *Optional*

- A decentralized learning community is robust
- People can choose their own learning technologies
- This creates the greatest access and affordances



<https://www.slideshare.net/Georgina23/autonomous-learner-38040255/2>



# Email

- It's a good starting point
- Many (most?) people already have email
- It's useful for mailing lists and to register for services

- [Zoho Email](#) - Free personal mail
- [GMail](#) - Google mail service
- [Mail.com](#) - free entry-level tier
- [Outlook](#) - Microsoft's rebranded Hotmail

Resource: [Comparison of email providers](#) - Wikipedia

# Website

- Home for your online community.
- Provide essential information and a way for people to contact you
- Link to other services (email lists, blogs, etc.).
- Don't expect people to visit your website regularly

- [Wix](#) - free websites - [Instructions - [video](#)]
- [Google Sites](#) -- Like the name says
- [Weebly](#) - mostly for e-commerce, but other types of sites also work
- [Wordpress.com](#) - can also be used to create pages and static sites

Resource: [Free Web Hosting Sites](#) - Wikipedia

# Platform Choices...

- Desktop applications (Windows, Apple, Linux)
- Apps (iOS, Android)
- Web applications (Google, Zoho, Microsoft)
- Hosted internet (cPanel, Plesk, [more](#)) e.g. [Reclaim](#), [GoDaddy](#)
- Cloud hosted applications (using e.g. AWS, Azure, Google Cloud)
  
- Considerations: cost, access, convenience

# Bookmarking and Links

- The entire web can be your library
- Doesn't require anyone to download and store resources
- Might be too centralized
- Also, links expire quickly

- [Wakelet](#) - free, no need to be registered to view someone else's collection, collaborative curation
- [Zotero](#) web and desktop bibliography tool with shared groups and discussions.
- [Diigo](#) - bookmarking too - [[hints](#)]
- [Pinboard](#) - social bookmarking

Resource: [Intro to Collaborative Bookmarking](#) (video)

# Hashtags

- We can use commonly accepted words to collect resources of different types
- They work better if we use the # symbol – hence, ‘hashtag’
- Put the hashtag into the text to make it easy to find

- Our conference hashtag:

**#INTED2021**

# Microcontent (aka Social Networking)

- Short form messages, images, video sharing
- Widely used and replaces email for many people
- Often centralized and very public

- [Twitter](#) - use a #hashtag for your community
  - Try [Tweetdeck](#) to more easily follow topics and trends
- [Mastodon](#) - decentralized microcontent - takes a bit of getting used to, but without Twitter's chaos and issues (use [masto.host](#) to set up your own) -- [Instructions: [video](#)]
- [Backchannel Chat](#) - class discussion tool

*•(Note: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and Reddit are additional options, but they're really not appropriate for online courses and events).*

# Let's Get In Touch

The image shows a Twitter profile for INTED2021 (@INTEDconf). The profile is followed by the user. The bio states: "15th annual International Technology, Education and Development Conference (March, 8-10, 2021) #INTED2021". A tweet from the account dated March 5, 2021, is visible, announcing the start of the virtual program and listing various activities like Live Events, Chat Rooms, and Author Talks. Below the tweet is a 3D architectural rendering of a large, modern conference hall with multiple levels, signage for "Attendees", "Live Events", "Author Talks", "Technical Program", "Poster Room", "Networking", and "Author Index".

<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23inted2021>

The image shows a close-up of a Twitter search bar. The search term "#inted2021" is entered. Below the search bar, the text "Search for '#inted2021'" is displayed. Below that, the profile picture and name "INTED2021 @INTEDconf" are visible, indicating that the search results are filtered to show the account.

The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter tweet deck. The search term "#inted2021" is used. The tweet deck displays several tweets related to the conference, including announcements from the LEGO Foundation, Stephen Downes, and other educators. The tweets discuss topics like virtual presentations, learning environments, and the use of technology in education. The interface includes navigation icons on the left and right sides.

<https://tweetdeck.twitter.com/>

# Creating Community vs Finding Community

- Educators often want to set up their own (frequently private) learning community
- This sometimes works but has its drawbacks:
  - May suffer from small scale and few active users
  - Takes people away from tools and places they're already used to
  - Creates silo effects rather than network effects
  - Disappears when the course or conference is finished
- The best tool is the one you're using; the best community is the one you're already in



# Our Community



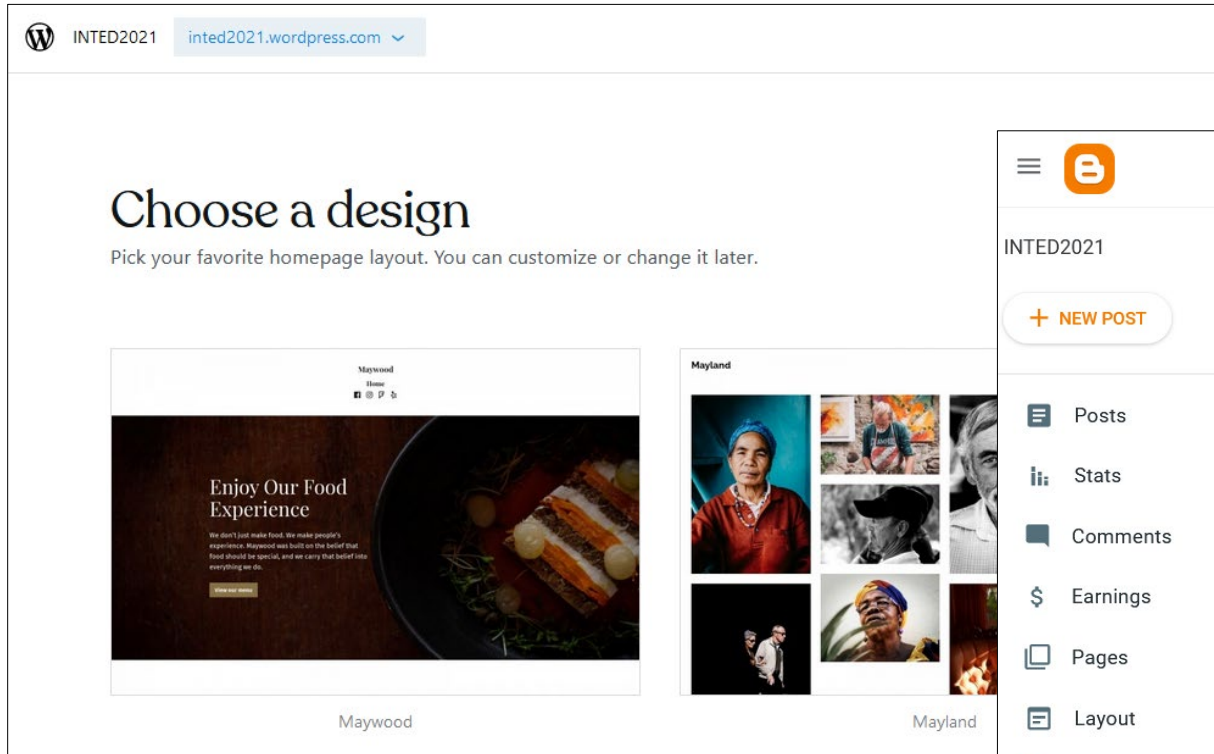
<https://iated.org/concrete3/map.php>

# Blogging

- Online content sorted by date
- Useful for regular columns or postings
- Have an official blog (sometimes called a 'mother blog')
- Also an excellent activity for community members

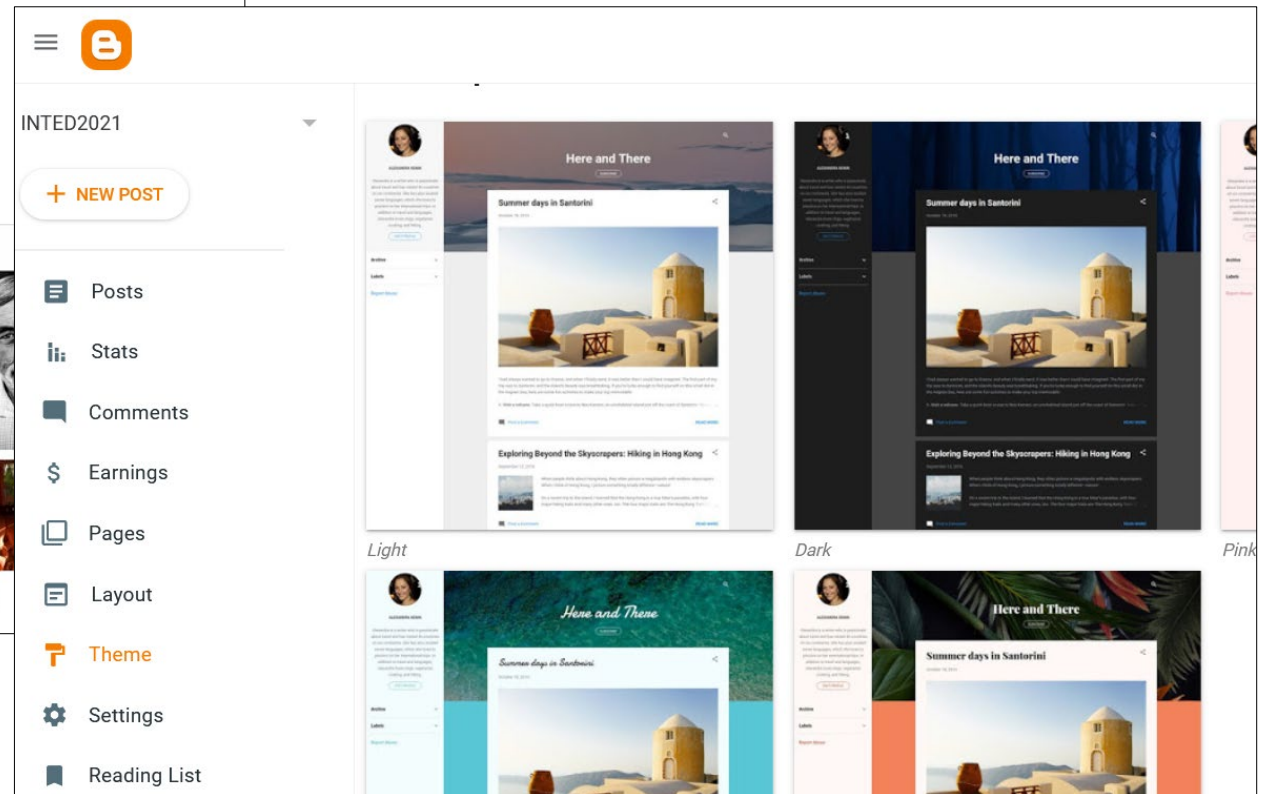
- [EduBlogs](#) - WordPress based, free for education [Instructions: [video](#)]
- [Blogger](#) - still free, still easy [instructions: [video](#)]
- [Medium](#) - a lot of tech blogs use this
- [Tumblr](#) - a lot of art blogs use this
- [WordPress](#) - wordpress.com, [other WordPress hosting](#) sites

# Let's Make a Blog



<https://wordpress.com>

<https://www.blogger.com>



# Lists

- Keep track of email addresses, twitter handles, etc.
- Right now, we want to keep a list of blogs
- There are many complicated ways to do this

- [ListMoz](#) - basic untitled lists each with their own URL

Yeah, that's it – I only found one simple list service

# Collaborative Writing

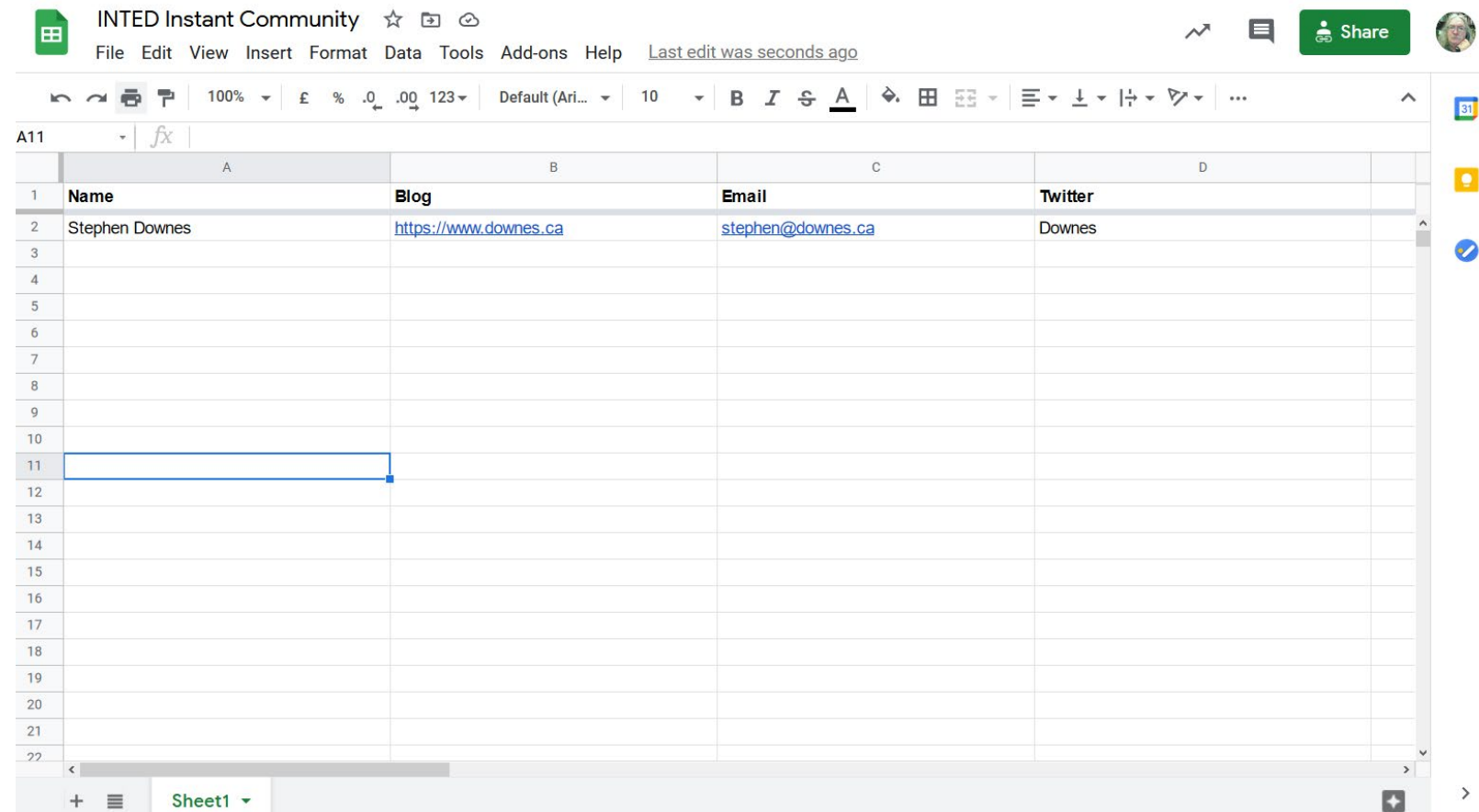
- One document, many writers
- Use it to work together and to collect information
- Example: my technology guide - <http://bit.ly/quicktechguide>

- [Google Docs](#) - 'Share' button to share – [video instructions](#)
- [Riseup Pad](#) – Short-term collaborative documents
- [GitHub.com](#) – code hosting, also hosts websites
- [MeetingWords](#) -- texts must be edited in 7 days or are deleted
- [StackEdit](#), markdown editor

Resource: [Comparison of wiki hosting services](#) - Wikipedia

# Let's Make Some Lists...

<https://www.downes.ca/post/72051/rd>



The screenshot shows a Google Sheets spreadsheet with the following data:

	A	B	C	D
1	Name	Blog	Email	Twitter
2	Stephen Downes	<a href="https://www.downes.ca">https://www.downes.ca</a>	<a href="mailto:stephen@downes.ca">stephen@downes.ca</a>	Downes
3				
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22				


Hey,  
*anybody*  
can make  
a list

# Feed Readers

- Select blogs to read from the list of blogs
- View them altogether in one place
- Search by topic or hashtag

- [Feedly](#) -- click on the + at the left to add new feeds
- [The Old Reader](#) - free tier, 150 subscriptions
- [InoReader](#) - free tier - [[hints](#)]
- [NewsBlur](#) - free tier allows 64 subscriptions
- [Nextcloud](#) - has a 'News' feed reader
- [Feed Informer](#) - free, simple

# Subscribing to Feeds

- Normally you can just use the blog address
- But some services need *feed addresses*
- Look for the RSS icon, or use a feed-address service 

## Common Feed Conversions:

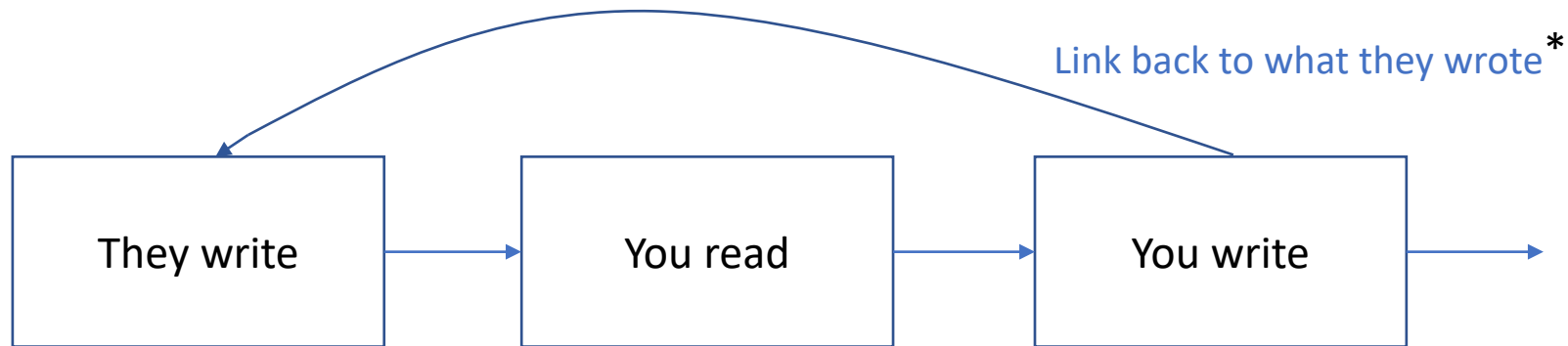
- WordPress: <blog url>/feed
- Blogger: <blog url>/feeds/posts/default

Find an RSS feed address for [almost any site](#)



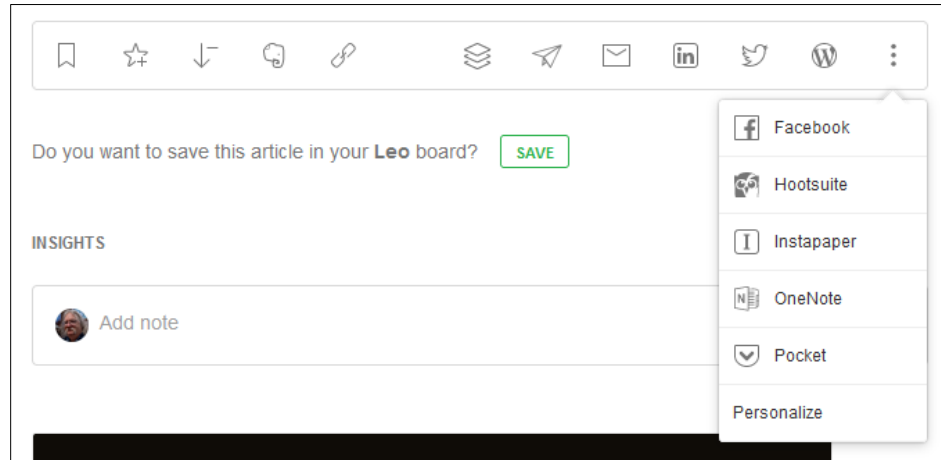
# Reading and Responding

- Responding is the best way to create community
- *A decentralized* community means using your own space
- Everything connects by means of links

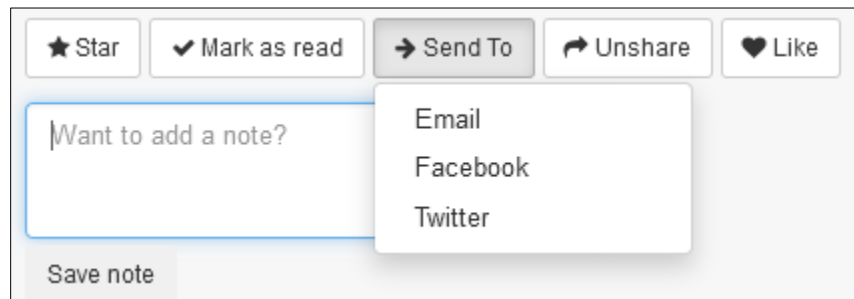


\* The W3C [WebMention](#) protocol is an attempt to automate this

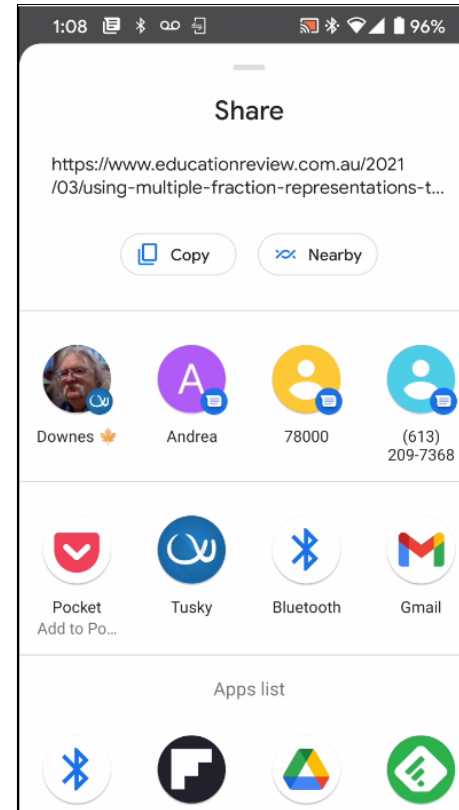
# Ways to Respond - SharingOptions



Feedly



The Old Reader



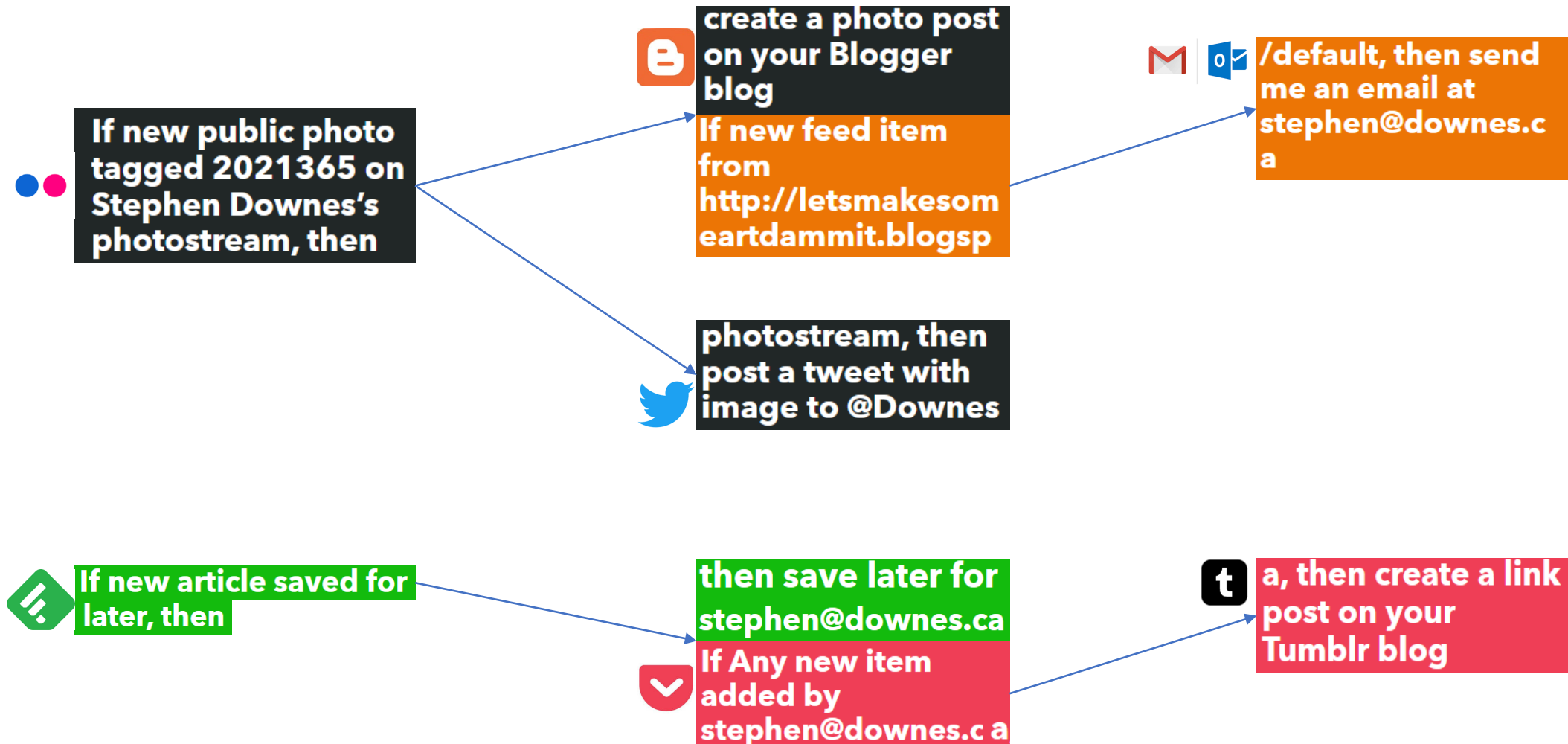
Feedly on my phone

# Conversions

- Transform content from one platform to another
- Some specialized, other generalized
- Not always easy but very convenient
- Sometimes called 'workflow' or 'agent' apps

- [IFTTT](#) – numerous apps and services connected
- [Zapier](#) – very limited free plan
- [dlvr.it](#) – limited free plan
- [Automate.io](#) – focused to business applications
- There are also desktop applications, like Microsoft Flow, or Open Source software to run in the cloud, like [Hugginn](#)

# Some of My Recipes



# How to Respond

1. Show that you understand what they're saying
  - Restate their argument or main point in your own words
  - Offer an example or something from your own experience
2. Add something to what they've contributed

- [The process, in detail](#) – from Hunter College
- [Traps to avoid](#) – like spamming, rambling, nonsense

Eventually, you can *add new things* to the community by responding to things (news, events, commentary) outside your community

# Types of Response

- Add an example of what they're saying
- Offer an explanation for what they're describing
- Argue against something they've said
- Compare what they've said with what someone else has said

- [How to Be Heard](#) – by me
- [How to Write Articles and Essays Quickly and Expertly](#) – also by me

It isn't about getting page views or retweets or likes – it's about whether you've said something worthwhile enough to continue the conversation (but also – it's *OK* if no one responds)

# 32,435 Examples



Stephen Downes

Knowledge, Learning, Community



[\[Previous\]](#)

[Subscribe to OLDaily](#)

[\[Next\]](#)

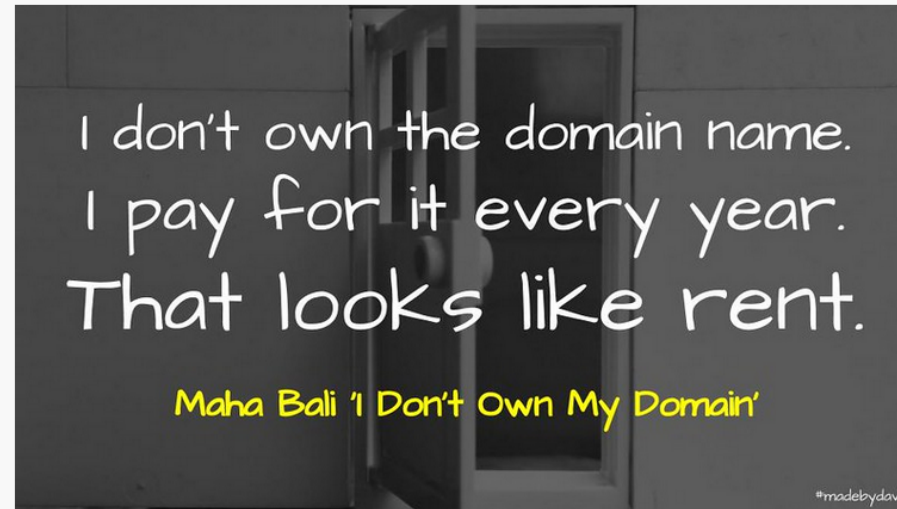
## On Praxis and the Indieweb

Aaron Davis, [Read Write Collect](#), Mar 05, 2021

Commentary by [Stephen Downes](#)

This is a commentary on the [Praxis and the Indieweb](#) post we [covered here](#) last week. Aaron Davis comments "the cost of connecting people has collapsed. However, what is overlooked is that there is still a cost." I don't think anyone has overlooked that, seeing that we're all paying costs for computers and phones, bandwidth, software, and services. We pay with money, with labour (to get access through our employers), and personal information. And yes, our home on the internet, our domain of our own, looks more like rent than ownership. But this is true generally, including for actual homes (try not paying your rent or your taxes or your utility bills and see what happens). It costs money to live in society, and you can't live outside society, and this leaves us all in a perpetual state of need. The hope of the Indieweb is to reduce that need, but the issue isn't cost. Not really. No, the issues are (as I think the original Praxis post said) design and inclusivity.

[\[Direct link\]](#)



Stephen Downes, Casselman, Canada  
[stephen@downes.ca](mailto:stephen@downes.ca)

Copyright 2021

Last Updated: Mar 06, 2021 03:18 a.m.



<https://www.downes.ca/post/72044>

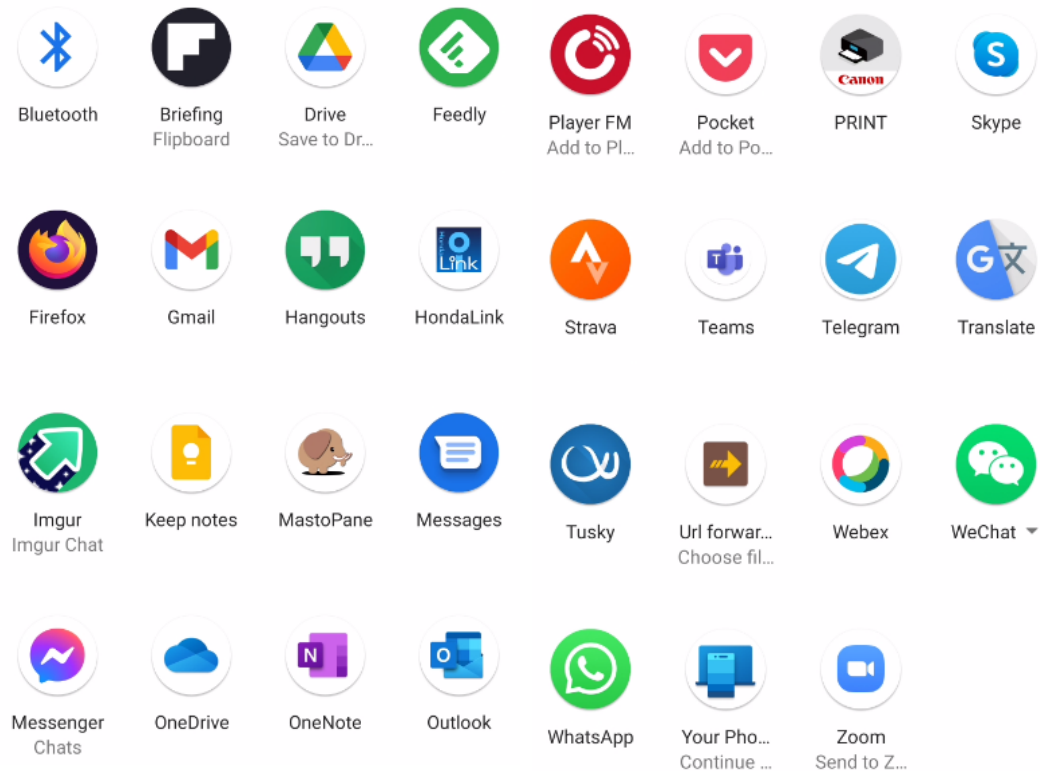
# Wait! Isn't this 20-year Old Technology?

- Well... yes it is
- Most of the newer technology is *centralized*
- And that's a big problem:
  - It's really hard to share our sources and connections
  - We're all stuck using the same recommenders
  - Companies are tracking us and selling data
  - We are constantly fed advertisements and poromotions



# More Than Just Posts

- Today we have a wide range of media we can create



# Photos and Images

- Can serve as a resource in their own right
- Used to illustrate articles, blog posts, slide shows, etc.
- Copyright applies, and use is limited to fair use or fair dealing.

- [Flickr](#) - upload and share photos, create albums and collections, search by tag or license
- [Imgur](#) - upload photos, community votes up or down
- [Deviant Art](#) - Focuses on original art
- [Google Photos](#) - share photos and folders, create link to share

(Note: Instagram is an additional option, but not appropriate for online courses and events).

Resource: Wikipedia list of [photo sharing websites](#)

# Fair Use and Fair Dealing

- Copyrighted content (i.e., not open content) can be reused depending on:
  - the purpose and character of your use – is it transformative? Is it educational, or commentary, or satire?
  - the nature of the copyrighted work – the scope for sharing is more limited for works of fiction and unpublished work
  - the amount and substantiality of the portion used, and
  - the effect of the use upon the potential market.

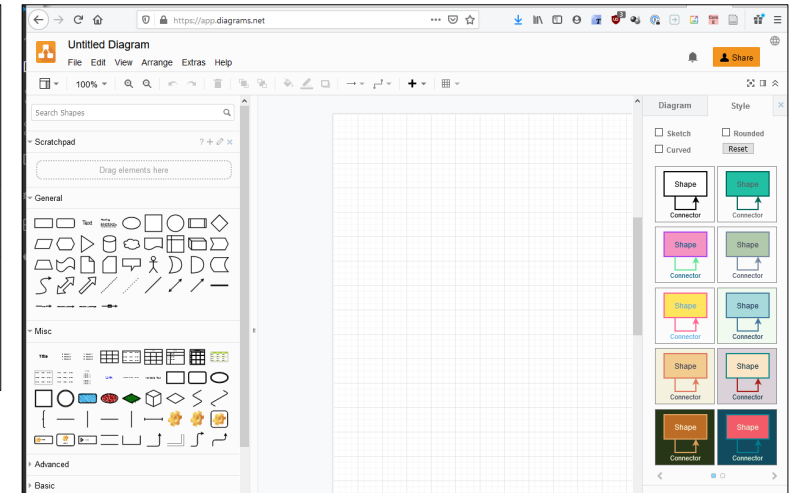
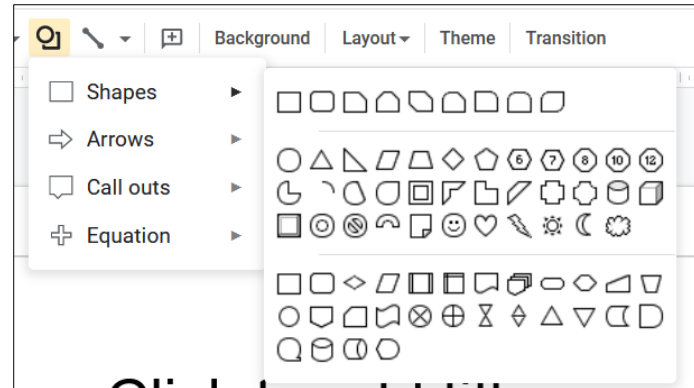
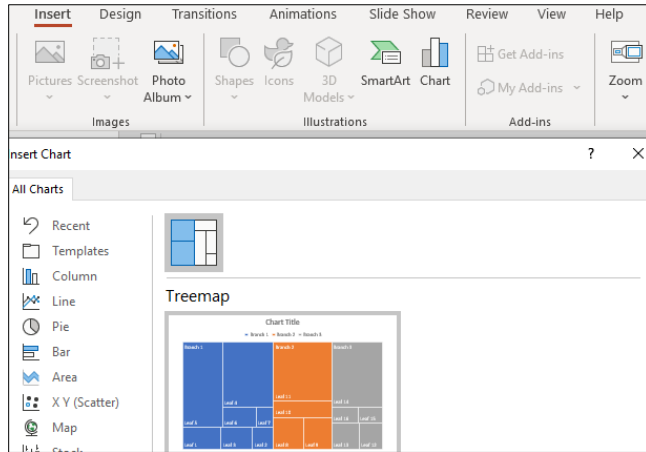
- [Measuring Fair use – The Four Factors](#) – Stanford
- [Fair Dealing and Other copyright exceptions](#) – UK
- [European Copyright Directive](#) – see esp. Section 24
- [Complying With Article 17](#) of the EU Copyright Directive

# Slides and Presentations

- Most online conferencing systems have a mechanism to share slide presentations
- A good medium for live presentations
- Present visual content for people to read at their leisure.

- [Google Slides](#) - part of Google Docs; cloud-based slide hosting
- [Slides.com](#) - cloud editor plus slides hosting
- [Zoho Show](#) - online slide editor, allows collaborative editing
- [Emaze](#) - automated generation, visual effects
- [Prezi](#) - dynamic/non-linear presentations, could customize templates (free or premium)
- [SlideShare.net](#) – large body of shared slide presentations
- [Genial.ly](#) -- interactive content platform - presentations, infographics, dossiers, video presentations, eposters, quizzes [[About](#)]

# Pro Tip: Use Design Tools to Make Images



[app.diagrams.net](https://app.diagrams.net)

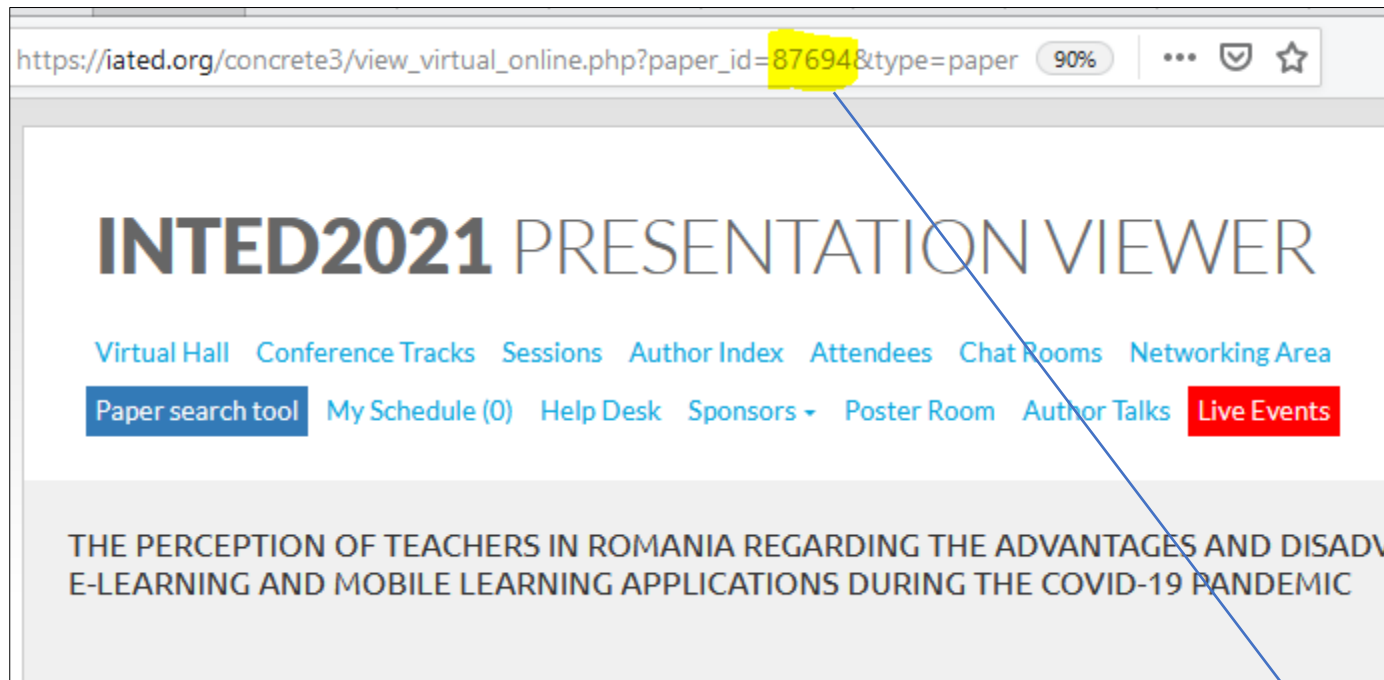
- [Canva](#) -- makes flyers, posters, etc
  - Guides: [Edublogger](#),
- [Padlet](#) -- makes boards, documents, and webpages
- [Piktochart](#) -- presentations, posters, interactions (makes you do a survey when you start, just say "no thanks" to it)
- [Mindmeister](#) -- concept mapping tool with group editing and conversations.
- [Miro](#) -- for collaborative idea generation and visual feedback (formerly RealTimeBoard)
- [Google Slides](#) -- useful for simple diagrams (export to various formats)
- [Visme](#) - create presentations, infographics, documents, videos, graphics
- [LucidChart](#) -- collaborative whiteboard charts - free tier three charts only - [\[Guides\]](#)
- Google Drawing -- useful for simple diagrams
- [Mural](#) -- digital workspace for visual collaboration (like Miro)
- [Genial.ly](#) -- Create presentations, infographics
- [app.diagrams.net](#) - formerly draw.io

I create the diagram using the tool then copy it with a clipping tool

# Slide Content in INTED2021

	<p><b>HARDINESS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE PERIOD OF FORCED DISTANCE LEARNING</b> <i>O.S. Vindeker, L. Sryvkina</i></p>
	<p><b>PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN HOMEWORK OF CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES DURING DISTANCE LEARNING: RELATIONS WITH FEAR OF COVID-19 AND RESILIENCE</b> <i>T. Touloupis</i></p>
	<p><b>MICROSOFT 365: A TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCE DURING THE PANDEMIC</b> <i>A.P. Aires, J. Escola, N. Lopes</i></p>
	<p><b>QUALITY OF ELECTRONIC DISTANCE LEARNING IN BULGARIA IN THE CONDITIONS OF THE PANDEMIC CAUSED BY COVID-19 (RESULTS FROM THE STUDY OF THE OPINION OF FORMER LAST YEAR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS)</b> <i>V. Slavov, K. Yotovska, A. Asenova</i></p>

# Create INTED2021 Session Hashtags



**#INTED2021-87694**

[https://iated.org/concrete3/view\\_virtual\\_online.php?paper\\_id=87694&type=slides](https://iated.org/concrete3/view_virtual_online.php?paper_id=87694&type=slides)

# Scheduling Community Events

- Shared calendars are helpful but not mandatory
- Create your own contents or use others'

- [Google Calendar](#) - subscribe to different calendars; make your own -- [Instructions: [video](#)]
- [Outlook](#) - Microsoft's service also provides calendar functionality
- [Nextcloud](#) - productivity suite featuring built-in calendar
- [Any.do](#) - It's the easiest way to stay organized and get more done
- [Doodle](#) - use a poll to set a meeting time



# Hosting Community Events

- More than ever we have choices
- Don't wait – just start hosting and joining

- [Zoom](#) — software designed exclusively for video conferencing, with breakout rooms
- [Google Hangouts Meet](#) — Part of G Suite - [Instructions: [video](#)] [[TurboMeet](#) - Chrome extension]
- [Microsoft Teams](#) — communication and collaboration platform that's part of Office 365
- [Big Blue Button](#) -- open source conferencing tool [[instructions](#)]
- [Jitsi](#) — free and open source video conferencing with built-in etherpad for collaboration
- [Whereby](#) — WebRTC-based in-browser video conferencing for small groups
- [Skype](#) - one-to-one and group video conferencing
- Cisco [Webex Personal Account](#) (Covid outbreak special only)
- [Discord](#) - free VoIP, text, and video chat, can be used in a browser [[Description](#), [Instructions](#), [tips](#), [Server List](#)]

[Advice: [basics of online meetings](#), [virtual peer assists](#)]

# Recording Live Events

- Capture discussions, demonstrations, events
- Widely used today to broadcast (sometimes live) events, video games, meetings

- [OBS: Open Broadcaster Software](#)
- [YouTube Live](#)
- [Loom](#) -- Guides: [Kathleen Morris](#),
- [Screencastify](#)
- [Screencast-o-matic](#) - Google extension
- [Zoom](#) - record video conferences
- [Twitch](#) - most often used to record games, but is a general purpose tool
- [ShowMe](#) - record whiteboard (on tablet) and large repository
- [Flipgrid](#): Recording and sharing short videos together.

Resource: [Introduction to OBS](#), by me

# All This Can Be Shared in RSS

- In feed reader, submit YouTube channel address
- In SlideShare, use the person's individual page (RSS icon at bottom)
- In general: if it does *not* provide easy content sharing, don't use it

- [How to get an RSS Feed for a YouTube Channel](#) – instructions
- [Get RSS From Twitter](#) – Reddit thread (and lesson why not to depend on centralized services)
- [Four popular ways to use RSS](#) – Zapier

# What's Next?

- A lot of effort is being extended to build decentralized (learning) networks
- They require active participation in order to succeed
- Start today to begin thinking about tomorrow

## Distributed Social Networks

- Opera Unite - <http://mashable.com/2009/06/15/opera-unite/>
- Mozilla OS - <https://www.npmjs.com/package/fxos-web-server>
- Diaspora - <https://www.joindiaspora.com/>
- Solid - "social linked data" - <https://solid.mit.edu/>
- Keybase - <https://keybase.io/>
- InterPlanetary File System (IPFS) - <https://ipfs.io/>
- Mastodon / Fediverse - <https://mastodon.social/>

# Personal Learning Environments

- I have left out a lot in the interests of ‘instant’

- Resource Repository Network (Aggregation) [http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/standards/markup/web-content-syndication/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/standards/markup/web-content-syndication/index_en.htm)
- Personal Cloud – Dropbox, NextCloud, etc. <https://nextcloud.com/>
- Personal Learning Record – Learning Record Store (xAPI) <https://www.adlnet.gov/tla/>
- Personal Learning Assistant like Siri? Alexa?
- Distributed Intelligence – MLaaS <https://www.slideshare.net/KarlSeiler/mlaas-machine-learning-as-a-service>

# Over to You...

- I've given you a nudge, but...
- Only the *community* can create the community
- Are you willing to make the effort to see what *more* INTED can be?
- What will you *contribute* to the community?
- Can you take these experiences back home?

Stephen Downes

<https://www.downes.ca>



# Pre-Talk Checklist

- Log into conference website
- Open Powerpoint and start presentation in 'individual view'
- Start Firefox and remove all excess tabs
- Start Alienware mobile connect
- Turn on OBS and set up screens
- Turn OBS virtual cam
- Join Zoom meeting and test
- Close email and other conferencing tools
- If live streaming, set up YouTube stream
- Start OBS recording, live streaming