

Open Access Learning Environments

Balancing Privacy, Property, and Pedagogy

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Key Points

- There are many ways to deliver online learning content.
- Time of rapid development and change.
- Evolving practices regarding online education, faculty rewards, intellectual property, and privacy.
- Are we considering broader implications of technology choices?

Motivations for Change

Frustration

- Early experiences were open - WebCT was solution for a few years - limitations/overhead - returned to “one man band” - more options.

Pedagogy

- Focus on “learning environments” and “community.”
- Desire to advance skills as an educator.

Philosophy

- Internet and education are tool for democracy.
- Why not teach those who cannot pay tuition?

Open Access - Open Source

Similar Philosophies

- Free, to an extent
- Share code/knowledge
- Who “owns” knowledge?
- Copyright laws stifle creativity
- Wide range of users - rapid development
- Anti-corporate mentality

Closed Access?

- Closed access is created through the use of passwords or other access restrictions.

Why?

- Privacy
- Intellectual Property
- Corporate Education
- Faculty Awareness

Privacy and Open Access

Privacy - Legal Issues

- Student records - password protection is necessary - personal information is limited.
- Privacy - expectations vs. reality.

Pedagogy - Advantages of Open Access?

- Password protected learning environments? Similar to student experiences? Anything like this in the “real” world?
- Is “public learning” different from learning that occurs in the safety of a hidden environment?
- Are we creating educational materials for the entire world?

Property and Open Access

- Value?
- Profit?
- Lecture notes as intellectual property?
- Ownership - University, Department, Professor?
- Share this course - Creative Commons.
- Steal this course!

Corporate Education

- Commerce vs. Education - same copyright issues?
- Corporate Education - “Why would anyone pay for something they can get for free?”
- MIT’s OpenCourseWare - Acknowledges the importance of serving all learners, regardless of enrollment or other status.
- WebCT/Blackboard (Blackweb) - Claiming patent on learning management systems.

Faculty Awareness

- First questions - Cheating, time, and ownership.
- New experiences and demands.
- Eventually - Skills integration and innovation.
- Already feel behind the curve.
- Compensation/Tenure - Rewards system?
- Training - On my own?
- Open or closed - Is this question even asked?

What are you hiding and why?

- Grades?
- Exams?
- Written Assignments?
- Online Communication?
- Lectures?
- Powerpoints?
- Videos/Podcasts?
- Learning Objects?

Potential

- Collaboration
- Rich collection of learning objects/environments
- Evolution in pedagogy
- Learner-centered environments
- Acknowledge value of SoTL
- Peer Review of Teaching

Getting Started

- What can be moved from closed environment?
- Where will I post course content?
- What do I want to accomplish?
- How do today's students learn?
- What tools are available?
- What skills will be needed?

Choices

- Web design - mechanics, organization, options.
- My SQL, cgi, php, scripts - allowed?
- Overcome resistance - “What if everyone wanted to so this?”
- University support vs. outsourcing?
- Domain - hosting - costs?
- Pedagogy - academic freedom - curriculum control - faculty rewards?

Path of Least Resistance?

- Workload - Benefits after initial hurdle.
- Professional development - Has made me a much better educator.
- “Learning” vs. “teaching” environment?
- Pedagogy - What will work best, with these students, my skills, and this subject matter?
- Autonomy/Control - Who answers the pedagogy questions?
- Philosophy of open access to knowledge.
- Belief in power of Internet.

Conclusion

- What are the benefits of open access learning environments?
- Why isn't this question being asked?
- If open access has advantages, can the educator make this choice?
- Blogs, Wikis, social networking, text messaging, IM, Facebook, YouTube, podcasts, RSS, and more.
 - To our students, these tools are taken for granted and are already used for learning. They are using these tools to communicate with and define their world.
 - These tools also happen to be examples of “open” learning experiences.