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2011 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

DENVER, CO MARCH 16–19, 2011

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Introducing Non-Digital Social Gathering Into Instructional Systems Learning Spaces

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NARRATIVE

Think back to when you were in a school classroom--sitting at a desk, listening to lectures, and frantically trying to absorb all the knowledge that your teacher knew. Collaboration with other students was infrequent. Such traditional learning spaces can lead to limited creativity and problem solving (Shute, 2007). Alternatively, imagine learning spaces that draw inspiration from digitally mediated and collaborative practices that mirror those in most professional industries. These practices are marked by participatory, co-creative processes and social engagements that exemplify what contemporary learning scientists have been saying for some time: that learning is not simply individualized, but a *highly social, context-dependent and collaborative achievement* (e.g., Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

Today, virtual environments offer students a wealth of social opportunities to connect with other students, to share ideas about class work, and generally grow personal knowledge and expertise. However, digital collectives too often leave the student alone, in a dorm room or campus nook, and away from real-life interaction. Our position is that we can leverage the positive fea-

tures of digital communities and embody them within what is called a community of practice--i.e., a group of people who share an interest, craft, and/or profession. It is through the process of sharing information and experiences with the group that the members learn deeply from each other, and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally (Lave & Wenger, 1991). At our university, we are focusing on architecting¹ a space for one such community--the Instructional Systems Program. Participants will have ample opportunities to produce and iterate on content endemic to real knowledge/skills of instructional system designers, and collaborate and share their work with a community of peers.

The purpose of this presentation is to examine the notion that designing a collaborative learning space can promote learning and creativity. For instance, exposure to alternative perspectives produces a type of cross-fertilization of ideas that can generate new insights. Setting up the space to accommodate small groups of participants can help to ensure that individual voices and ideas are heard, promote growth of that information, and generally bear out the notion that two heads are better than one. Our goal is to discover factors that en-

hance truly collegial collaboration, instruction, presentation, and conferencing. Daniel Kraft (2009) stated it well: "Imagine a coffee house: you go in, get your coffee and get out. This is what e-mail is doing to communication: you ask for information and you get information. Now imagine you enter the coffee place again: you wait in line; you start a conversation; and you find out that the person next to you has been working on a similar problem that you have to solve and is offering you support. What just happened is typical offline social networking activity. Two people with the same interest (coffee) meet at a place they both like (coffee place) and they build a social network to share (knowledge)."

Teamwork provides a source of stimulation and inventiveness. It is a structural footing for academic learning. Spaces designed and arranged to foster collaboration are conceived well before the placement of bricks, sticks, and wallboard. Careful consideration of the users, thorough analysis of their learning behaviors, and the implementation of proven principles and elements of design can lead to thought-provoking and well-used academic learning spaces.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

1) "Architecting" is a term most often utilized to describe a process of creation and application within the digital realm of software systems analysis and construction. Specific to the poster abstract, Dr. Val Shute and the author utilize the term "architecting" to describe the physical intervention in a built space in the traditional architectural building sense relative to the university's Instructional Systems program. It illustrates the combination of the corporeal 'systems' of humans (students and faculty) and their actual places of learning and teaching with the instructional systems they are designing.

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Introducing Non-Digital Social Gathering Into Instructional Systems Learning Spaces

PRODUCT

Envision learning spaces that draw inspiration from digitally mediated and collaborative practices that mirror those in most professional industries...

- Participatory, co-creative processes
- Social engagements
- Learning as a *highly social, context-dependent and collaborative achievement* (e.g., Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000)

Designing a collaborative learning space can promote scholarship and creativity fostering a type of cross-fertilization of ideas that can generate new insights. Teamwork provides a source of stimulation and inventiveness. It is a structural footing for academic learning.

"Imagine a coffee house: you go in, get your coffee and get out. This is what e-mail is doing to communication: you ask for information and you get information. Now imagine you enter the coffee place again: you wait in line; you start a conversation; and you find out that the person next to you has been working on a similar problem that you have to solve and is offering you support. What just happened is typical offline social networking activity. Two people with the same interest (coffee) meet at a place they both like (coffee place) and they build a social network to share (knowledge) (Kraft, 2009)."

ACCESS

PROBLEM

Our position is that we can leverage the positive features of digital communities and embody them within what is called a community of practice--i.e., a group of people who share an interest, craft, and/or profession. It is through the process of sharing information and experiences with the group that the members learn deeply from each other, and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally (Lave & Wenger, 1991).