

My father was an accountant by trade, who caught on early to the microcomputer trend and continuously upgraded our home computer. Living in northern California also forced our household to join a local cable television co-op to get any signal at all. As a result, we were early adopters of both modern multi-channel media overload and the personal computer revolution. I grew up on Music Television and Turner Broadcasting. I only vaguely remember not having several dozen channels to choose from and feel like a multi-channel native. I also became an early adopter of internetworking and the communications revolution by participating in networked bulletin board systems. These early amateur networks, unlike the academic/military internet of the time, which had yet to hit the mainstream, were much like the internet of today. In this bustling everyman's forum, I was able to interact with adults as a peer, though I was not an adult. There I heard perspectives from afar that were unavailable in my locale. This came at the time of a collapsing cold war; George H.W. Bush's "New World Order"; the North American Free Trade Agreement; and a manufacturing recession that made my region of Michigan confront the global economy in a new way. Born into this particular situation, the information technology, communications and globalization trends influenced my learning and development at an early age, having a profound affect on my worldview and choices.

I multiplex more than one signal while retaining focus on whatever I'm doing. Where Todd Gitlin and many of his sources perceive a deafening cacophony of interruptions, I sense a background noise that forms the rhythm of my days. I am comfortable living Linda Stone's "continuous partial attention." Comfort and calloused senses do not equate with effectiveness directly, and I concede that I have noticed times when my media habits inhibit my abilities. A study in 2005 carried out in Britain found that workers IQ drops 10-points when trying to juggle work with the constant stream of incoming email messages. Furthermore, information, like most sensory stimulation for people, can be addictive. Attempting to take a "Sabbath" like that suggested by Rainie confronts my media and information habit. I am interested in news on a worldwide scale every day, so something is always available and frequently consumed.

However, almost in reaction to the trend towards casual information I have also maintained a long love affair with the paper and ink of books and libraries. Divorced from my computer and television at home, I spent many school days reading from optional books after finishing the assigned work. When confronted with so much trivial talk, yellow journalism, and commercialism it is comforting to delve the depth of thought and distinct voice of an author. I am comfortable with Dr. Wieland's model of a need for seclusion to engage deeply and reflect on works that are well developed. There is a place for reading alone as much as for surfing the hypertext.

I am concerned that between my seclusion when absorbed in a book and my appetite for interaction on the internet leaves me unconnected to my geographically close-by neighbors. In "Bowling Alone" I see mirrored in my own life the trends of frequent uprooting, settling far from the city-center, and existing largely in a virtual reality. Lee Rainie pointed out several ways in which the internet, for those connected, expands the access to information and forms new modes of civic engagement. I think Rainie makes a strong case for people gaining perspective on political issues, but misses the role the internet might play in the increasingly polarized tenor of our politics. Given the self-directed nature of choosing your content on the internet, it is easier to choose messages you agree with. While you can get both sides of the story easily by spending

time on issues that concern you, I fear many people select more of the messages they can agree with, reaffirming and solidifying their positions. Couple this with the ability to connect with like-minded individuals to act in concert across great distances and the birth of internet movements give rise to social issues that may never gain speed without the communications technology.

I think these forms of civic engagement in some ways replace the traditional modes and weaken the argument of Putnam that social capital is in decline. The modern world seems less parochial and provincial, one in which peoples alliances shift frequently to connect along virtual shared interests. I liken this new model to the civic engagement version of Castells' "network society". Putnam presents strong evidence, however that with lesser connection to our community we are less likely to galvanize in response to issues. In the face of the multinationals corporations of Friedman's "flat world" and the shift to reliance on markets to self-regulate further reduces the voice of the citizen. I try to counter this trend by participating in grass-roots efforts, but remain conscious of the fact that the traditional political machinery frequently co-opts these efforts by the like-minded to do their bidding.

My learning choices challenge the commercialization of education that I have witnessed in my career in the online learning industry. Commercialism taints much of the "classroom of one" and Mark Smith's criticism rings particularly true in the online venue. The fact that I interact minimally with a teaching assistant in this course shows both the implementation of a sound format of self-direction and a sound economic delivery model. I seek out my own path by reflecting on my experiential learning, seeking out formal opportunities with integrity, and engaging with others for informal learning, often using the internet to find these opportunities. Globalization and the internet both threaten and facilitate my chosen lifestyle. This course embodies this tension of my learning environment well. It encourages, facilitates my reflection, and provides a flood of information that is prescreened yet eventually links off to the horizon, where I might wander well off course and return to the distraction of the background noise.

I chose to analyze the effectiveness of Inside Teaching's ability to convey teaching practice in their module on "Historic Role Play" in fifth grade. The site is comprehensive and self-linked, with little to lead the reader to stray to other sites. I found the entirely self-contained nature of this site to be somewhat stifling. It seems this site's main claim for credibility is itself. I do not find that this site meets with John Lombardi's concept that scholars should immerse in the chaotic flow of information on the internet and engage with society in the manner of their students. It remains very accessible to the layperson compared with most literature on teaching, yet is also completely disconnected with the public flow of information. I find comfort in well-defined boundaries between serious information and the opinion filled reams of questionable advice by self-proclaimed experts, yet I was unsure on which side of the boundary to place this site.

The website does establish credibility with the depth of resources. It quickly becomes apparent that viewing each piece of content will take considerable time. I suspect that Burbles and Callister might criticize that the site provides too much detail and too much information, such that it is unapproachable to non-teachers. The content itself and the artifacts found in the hyperlinks provide immediate gratification as examples of teaching practice, yet in many ways, the examples seem too pedestrian for teachers and too in-depth for non-teachers. The site does not explicitly state whom the authors had intended as an audience. This leaves the reader to wonder if they are in the wrong place and reinforces doubts about interest in reading further.

Burbles and Callister point out that links themselves provide further context for the material presented and linked. I found that in some cases the links did seem to embody tacit biases and implied something about practice that was not formally stated. For instance, in the planning section the bullets on the right link to videos that point out the importance of student investment, teacher flexibility, and student self-direction. Yet the text does not stress these elements as important to the process. Do the links indicate important elements of practice? Did these emerge as observations of what was important to consider while planning?

In other cases, the links did not seem to imply the structure, which was clearly present. The opening screen shows the links to several areas arrayed in a semi-circle, which to me implied no sequence. It was only later that I noticed that the materials were sequential in an order that matched the timeline in most other places within the site. Burbles and Callister may see this as an advantage since it may immediately encourage the reader to choose the topic that interests them the most. However the Webby Awards would surely criticize the confusion and inconsistency of the navigational elements. On the homepage of the Inside Teaching site one is confronted with undifferentiated pictures. The Webby Awards would surely have appreciated EAD860's conversion of these unlabeled images into an image accompanied by text.

Readers that are analyzing the structure of the hypertext as well as the content, as suggested by Burbles and Callister will notice patterns and an implied order. The site does provide a progressive narrative that leads readers through the process of teaching. Read from beginning to end the main text of the site establishes the elements of teaching practice in a digestible sequence. Along the way, there are hyperlinks that provide

documentation and in-depth analysis by the practitioners. The links present hints to the content that allows the reader to select those that interest them the most while skipping over some. They also follow a pattern in some parts of the site, so the reader can follow links only that show reflection by the teacher or only those that actually show the teacher in action with the students. The brief length of the clips encourages a browse at your own pace approach to the material, not forcing large chunks at the reader that will contain an unanticipated variety of content.

Many sites build credibility by linking to other credible sites or more importantly having other sites link to them. In some sense, this shared authority for denoting the good content provides a sense that previous readers found value in the information. This almost makes Google appear like a collective version of King's Memex as described by Gandel and Katz. Morville explains that in the hypertext world authority is defined and warped by the collective development of "free tagging" between sites. In this regard, the site of Inside Teaching, and the specific example I selected all seem to enjoy many links from other credible sites, even if there are no offsite links once you get there.

The Webby awards imply that overall experience comprises an important element of site quality. The Inside Teaching site I reviewed is greater than the sum of the parts, since collectively the videos and artifacts provide a simulation of witnessing a teacher in practice. The only missing element is the ability to ask questions, but the site makes it seem unnecessary, as if the author anticipated the questions. The site is not interactive in the model the Webby awards imply, I could not leave my own input on the site. However, it does match up well to the dissent of Dr. Weiland to such definitions of interactivity, since it provides the reader flexibility to choose how to experience it and how in-depth the experience should go. It provides enough of the teaching materials that if I were to teach, I could attempt to utilize the plans and artifacts in my practice. Allowing the reader to borrow from the experience of Martha and Beverly, the Inside Teaching site allows the reader to simulate presence at their own pace and select from the content based on self-interest. In this way, the site is a good way for outsiders to get "inside teaching".