

OAT Research Discussion Summary

Spring Arbor University

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Randy Meredith, M. Ed.

*"Web 2.0 Ideas for Educators: A Guide to RSS and More", by Quentin D'Souza*

Summary

While D'Souze's guide is not technically a research article, it provides an excellent starting point for discussion on the application of Web 2.0 applications to teaching and learning in higher education.

The number of Web 2.0 applications freely available to educators is unknown, but likely numbers in the thousands, if not more. This guide focuses primarily on Web 2.0 tools and services that contributed to the rise of Web 2.0. This includes RSS (Really Simple Syndication), blogs, social bookmarking, wikis, and podcasting. RSS syndication plays the most prominent role in the guide. D'Souze views RSS as the "glue" which connects various Web 2.0 tools, providing automation and efficiency in managing and assessing student work, as well as group projects.

In addition to the suite of applications mentioned above, the author provides brief overviews of additional Web 2.0 applications such as video sharing (e.g. YouTube, Jumpcut, etc.), e-portfolios, RSS aggregators, collaborative documents (e.g. Google Docs, Zohowriter, etc.), collaborative spread sheets (e.g. Google spread sheets, Numsum, etc.), to-do list managers (e.g. 43 Things, Ta-da lists, etc.), online note taking (e.g. Notemesh, Mynoteit, etc.), online presentations (e.g. Gliffy, Mayomi, Google Presentations, etc.), online calendars,

and newsgroups. The guide is written from the view of a K-12 educator, but provides plenty of ideas for use of the tools discussed in a higher education setting.

### Commentary

Our discussion revolved around the practical and cultural challenges facing higher education faculty who may want to integrate Web 2.0 tools into their courses. Issues that topped the list of challenges included: faculty work load, selecting the appropriate Web 2.0 tool, student privacy, and assessment.

A major obstacle to faculty adoption of any new technology is the associated learning curve as well as the perceived return on investment of their time and effort. Part of the core mission of our department is to help and support faculty in developing proficiency with new tools and offering guidance in the appropriate application of the tool to the teaching and learning process. We generally agree that simpler is better, and would encourage faculty to use only the tools that provide the greatest benefit to student learning outcomes, and that do not require unreasonable effort to manage. It may be beneficial for faculty if we develop a taxonomy of Web 2.0 tools, connecting the tool to categories of learning strategies, or cognitive outcomes (ala Bloom's).

By law universities are required to protect student privacy, and the use of Web 2.0 tools on the internet will require careful planning and development of "rules" guiding how students refer to themselves, and each other in the online environment. This can be easily accomplished by providing clear, written instructions for online writing and interaction, and employing students, or student groups to monitor and report/enforce communication guidelines. It may be possible to make conformity to communication guidelines part of the overall assessment process for each assignment.

Assessing work performed using Web 2.0 tools may present a challenge when the work performed goes beyond a typical individual writing assignment. For example, creating a wiki, or group assignments using a collaborative tool, or integrating images or video into a creative assignment. Development of a rubric for more complex assignments represents a fair amount of pre-course time and effort by the instructor. If there is one major omission in D'Souze's guide, it is in the area of assessment. He provides no indication of the types of learning outcomes addressed by each tool, nor and discussion of the implications of assessment work load or methodology.

In spite of this omission, the guide does provide instructors with valuable information on how the tools work, and how individuals can set up each of the tools for personal experimentation.

R. M.

D'Souze, Q. (n.d.). Web 2.0 ideas for educators: A guide to RSS and more. Retrieved October 1, 2008 from <http://www.teachinghacks.com/files/100ideasWeb2educators.pdf>