

Challenges for Collections in New Collaborative Teaching and Learning Environments: Does Grey Literature Fill a Void?

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Abstract

Academic institutions around the globe are introducing and launching bold new teaching initiatives that utilize technologies in the classroom and for remote teaching. The emphasis on distance learning is but one example of this. However, the focus of this paper is to explore the collaborative nature of teaching, learning and studying where faculty and students have to be aware of access to information and the new course management and bibliographic software options to share information while promoting collaborative and group work. The disciplines of business/management and engineering were at the forefront of such work. But, the increasing use of evidence-based management, project design, and case studies common in medicine and other applied fields suggests that more changes in classroom teaching styles are forthcoming. This paper suggests that information needs may be more complex in the future. Grey literature and content found in nontraditional collections such as in repositories, in databases and on courseware platforms will be more prevalent. Influencing commercial products in this direction is common but organizing library collections to lend to such a variety of teaching practices will be an ongoing challenge in a more technology focused learning environment where teaching and learning is done in small groups.

Two primary case studies will be used to demonstrate how faculty are relying differently on content in classroom teaching. One, a medical informatics course, will be described where evidence-based principles are the foundation and how post-graduate medical students use information resources to manage a patient-care case; and the second example will be an undergraduate engineering project design course, where students have to research, plan, design and construct a product. In both of these examples collaborative group work is the teaching method.

The conclusions of this paper will demonstrate that technology is what lends to a collaborative course having a theory, research, writing and evaluation component and where students must form teams or groups. The information needs that are now required include the ability to integrate technology to research, capture, evaluate, document, present, and archive the process of the course and to create the product or final assignment. Utilizing resources such as grey literature contribute to the successes of these case studies.

From the preface of *Everything and Nothing: Deconstructing Evidence-Based Practice*, the late critic and philosopher, Jacques Derrida, writes, "Here is what I wrote, then read, and what I am writing that you are going to read. After which you will again be able to take possession of this preface which in sum you have not yet begun to read, even though, once having read it, you will already have anticipated everything that follows and thus you might just as well dispense with reading the rest."¹ This sets my stage.

Introduction:

A recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* by market researcher Daniel Yankelovich entitled "Ferment and Change: Higher Education in 2015" offers his speculation about what higher education will look like a decade from now. He identifies five trends, which he qualifies "will radically transform higher education in the coming years." Those trends, converging with one another are pressure points for institutions of higher learning. He concludes that if taken seriously and together they pose an enormous challenge that if neglected, will mean serious trouble for higher education and the United States."² These trends I surmise have great global relevance and consequences not only for the US but generations of students worldwide. They are:

1. Changing life cycles as our nation's population ages
2. America's growing vulnerability in science and technology
3. The need to understand other cultures and languages
4. Increasing challenges to higher education's commitment to social mobility
5. Public support for other ways of knowing³

Compounding these challenges is the mystery of what strategy will be employed to remedy the landscape and suggest some productive resolutions and whether we are equipped to assess when progress has been made in each of these areas. There is not a university or academic institution with which I am familiar that is not in the throes of self-examination - how to make a college education more relevant and prepare a generation of leaders in a wide range of fields in this complex era of extremes - the haves and have nots, the digital divide, the social, political, religious and economic pandemics facing the world.