

LMS and E-learning 2.0. A Second Life for E-learning

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Abstract: E-learning 2.0 is a consequence of evolving into Web 2.0. Therefore we can say that Web 2.0 is defined as the "read-write" web which provides all the services and applications to allow individuals to co-create content, collaborate and share it with others that supports user-generated content, that is content created by "users", rather than specialist authors or publishers using a variety of affordable technologies like blogs, podcasts and wikis. E-learning 2.0 is about creating and sharing information and knowledge with others and is about using blogs, wikis, social bookmarking and social networks within an educational or training context to support a new collaborative approach to learning.

Keywords: Web 2.0, E-Learning 2.0, Social Learning, Blogging, LMS, Download generation

E-learning as we know it has been around for ten years or so. During that time, it has emerged from being a radical idea – the effectiveness of which was yet to be proven – to something that is widely regarded as mainstream. It's the core to numerous business plans and a service offered by most colleges and universities.

And now, e-learning is evolving with the World Wide Web from **Web 1.0** to **Web 2.0** as a whole and it's changing to a degree significant enough to warrant a new name: E-learning 2.0.

Web 1.0	Web 2.0
read-only web	read-write web
content publishing	user-generated content
	social software

Fig. 1 - **Web 1.0** versus **Web 2.0**

Web 1.0

- is defined as the "read-only web", that is **content** produced by an expert author and **published** on the web to be read by consumers.

Web 2.0

- is defined as the "read-write" web; it provides all the services and applications to allow individuals to co-create content, collaborate and share it with others.
- supports **user-generated content**, that is content created by "users", rather

than specialist authors or publishers using a variety of affordable technologies like blogs, podcasts and wikis.

- encourages the social aspect of the Web, e.g. through the use of **social media** like social bookmarking tools and social networks.

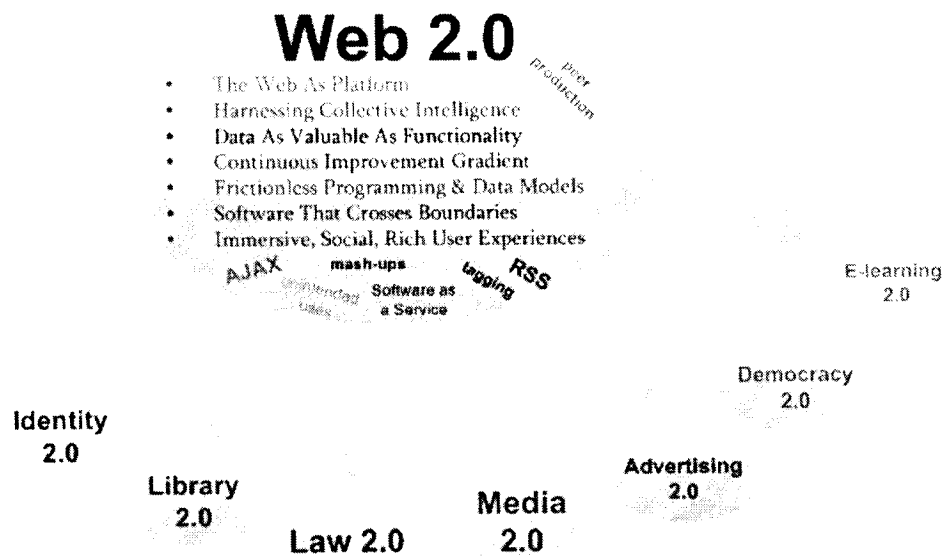


Fig. 2 - Web 2.0 Distribution

E-Learning 1.0	E-Learning 2.0
online courses	sharing information and knowledge
	collaborative learning social learning
CONTENT	PEOPLE

Fig. 3 E-Learning 1.0 versus E-Learning 2.0

E-Learning 1.0

- was the early days of e-learning when it was all about delivering content, primarily in the form of online courses and produced by experts, i.e. teachers or subject matter experts

E-Learning 2.0

- is about **creating and sharing information and knowledge** with others.
- is about using blogs, wikis, social bookmarking and social networks within an educational or training context to support a new **collaborative approach to learning**.

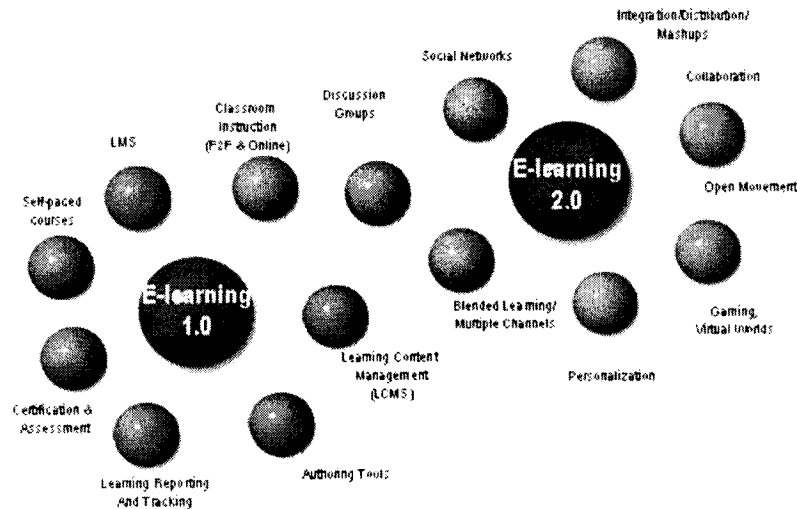


Fig. 4 - E-Learning 1.0 components versus E-Learning 2.0 components

If you could only use one word to describe Web 1.0/E-Learning 1.0 and one to describe Web 2.0/E-Learning 2.0, they would be **CONTENT** and **PEOPLE**. This is the reasons why E-Learning 2.0 is often referred to as **Social Learning**.

In the world of e-learning, the closest thing to a social network is a community

of practice, articulated and promoted by people such as Etienne Wenger in the 1990s. According to Wenger, a community of practice is characterized by "a shared domain of interest" where "members interact and learn together" and "develop a shared repertoire of resources."

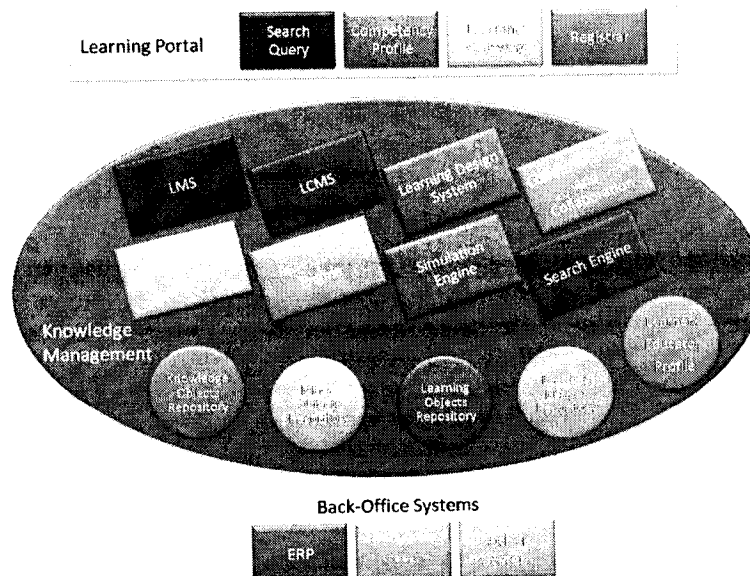


Fig. 5 - E-Learning Portal

For the most part, though, what constituted “community” in online learning were artificial and often contrived “discussions” supported by learning management systems. These communities were typically limited to a given group of learners, such as a university class, had a fixed start and end-point, and while substantially better than nothing, rarely approached Wenger’s theory.

That’s not to say no communities of practice were forming. There were some attempts to foster them, as for example MuniMall, directed toward the municipal governance sector, and PEGGasus, directed toward engineers and geophysicists. Moreover, as commentator Erin Brewer has noted, places on the Internet like Yahoo! Groups have become a locus for community learning activities. But in general, the uptake has been slow, and the support from traditional institutions almost nonexistent.

Educators began to notice something different happening when they began to use tools like wikis and blogs in the classroom a couple of years ago. All of a sudden, instead of discussing pre-assigned topics with their classmates, students found themselves discussing a wide range of topics with peers worldwide. In a very short time, blogs were used for a wide variety of purposes in education; an educational bloggers’ network formed and by this year thousands of teachers were encouraging their students to blog.

Blogging is very different from traditionally assigned learning content. It is much less formal. It is written from a personal point of view, in a personal voice. Students’ blog posts are often about something from their own range of interests, rather than on a course topic or assigned project. More importantly, what happens when students blog, and read reach others’ blogs, is that a network of interactions forms—much like a social network, and much like Wenger’s community of practice

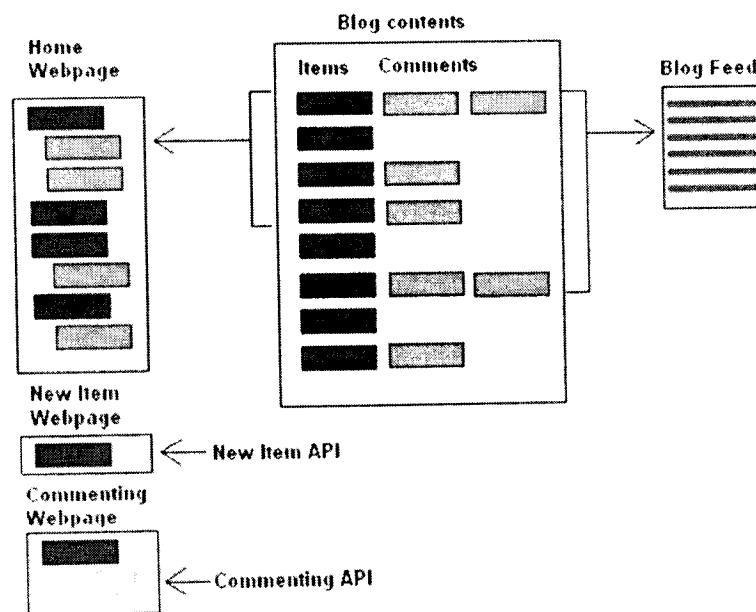


Fig. 6 - Blog components

It's not just blogging. Educators have also taken an interest in podcasting. Some have started broadcasting, such as at McMaster, where engineering professors now host an online show.

"We're talking to the download generation," said Peter Smith. "Why not have the option to download information about education and careers the same way you can download music? It untethers content from the Web and lets students access us at their convenience."

What happens when online learning ceases to be like a medium, and becomes more like a platform? What happens when online learning software ceases to be a type of content-consumption tool, where learning is "delivered," and becomes more like a content-authoring tool, where learning is created? The model of e-learning as being a type of content, produced by publishers, organized and structured into courses, and consumed by students, is turned on its head. Insofar as there is content, it is used rather than read—and is, in any case, more likely to be produced by students than courseware authors. And insofar as there is structure, it is more likely to resemble a language or a conversation rather than a book or a manual.

The e-learning application, therefore, begins to look very much like a blogging tool. It represents one node in a web of content, connected to other nodes and content creation services used by other students. It becomes, not an institutional or corporate application, but a personal learning center, where content is reused and remixed according to the student's own needs and interests. It becomes, indeed, not a single application, but a

collection of interoperating applications—an environment rather than a system.

It also begins to look like a personal portfolio tool. The idea here is that students will have their own personal place to create and showcase their own work. Some e-portfolio applications, such as ELGC, have already been created. IMS Global has put together an e-portfolio specification. "The portfolio can provide an opportunity to demonstrate one's ability to collect, organize, interpret and reflect on documents and sources of information. It is also a tool for continuing professional development, encouraging individuals to take responsibility for and demonstrate the results of their own learning".

This approach to learning means that learning content is created and distributed in a very different manner. Rather than being composed, organized and packaged, e-learning content is syndicated, much like a blog post or podcast. It is aggregated by students, using their own personal RSS reader or some similar application. From there, it is remixed and repurposed with the student's own individual application in mind, the finished product being fed forward to become fodder for some other student's reading and use.

Of course, there is no reason to expect that this form of learning would be restricted to the workplace. Learning integrates into every aspect of our lives, from daily household chores to arts and culture. Learning and living, it could be said, will eventually merge.

The challenge will not be in how to learn, but in how to use learning to create something more, to communicate..

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