
Introduction

Invitation to Participate in the Dialogue

Let's just start with this: there's a certain amount of irony in publishing a book of collected blog posts that can be freely found online. In fact, when the idea was first broached about a year ago, I have to admit I was a bit skeptical. What would be the point? But after thinking about it and testing the concept out with a number of educators as I traveled around last fall, I came around to the idea. Why?

A couple of reasons, really. First, regardless of the myriad ways to get information these days, people still like books, whether paper or digital. They like the idea that someone has taken the time and put in the effort to collect, consider, and synthesize ideas about the world and share them in a form that's easy to consume. It's true, as I make the case in some of the posts included here, that today we can write our own texts, compile our own curriculum if you will, and depend less on others to supply the information we need to learn. But it's also true that at least for the time being, many still value the idea that others are willing to do that for them. It's how they prefer to learn.

But second, and I think even more important, despite the best efforts of a growing community of educators espousing these ideas over the last decade, a large segment of the education population still has not been introduced to the profound shifts that social web technologies like blogs are undergoing as related to learning. Frankly, I've been amazed that now, even in 2011, I still meet large groups of people who, while they may have heard of Web 2.0 and may use Facebook or Twitter, still don't fully understand the implications of these tools for each of us as learners.

My hope is that this collection will meet some of those folks where they are, so to speak, and that it will frame a number of important questions and subsequent conversations that we need to be having about the changes we're witnessing in the world due to social media specifically as it applies to education. If a book of collected blog posts can do that, great . . . regardless of the irony.

Aside from having two children, blogging has no doubt been the most transformative thing that's happened to me in my life. When I first started weblogg-ed way (www.weblogg-ed.com) back in 2001, I never would have dreamed that it

2 Learning on the Blog

would turn out the way it has. It's connected me to people all over the world, people with whom I share a deep passion for education and technology and the potentials that go with them. My blogging has waned a bit the last couple of years for a variety of reasons, but it's still a place where I go on a regular basis to try to make sense of the world and to offer up mostly unfinished ideas to an audience that has been willing to tell me what it thinks almost 20,000 times over the years. It's been an amazing journey of learning, and I'm sincerely humbled by it on more levels than I can articulate.

The posts selected here, presented in their original form, represent some of the most discussed, most debated, and most fun pieces from the last six years or so. I tried to include some that still had relevance in the conversation today and some intended to make you think deeply about your own learning at this most interesting and challenging moment. For each group, I've added a short introduction to frame the larger themes and the salient questions. I hope you find them useful, and I hope these posts will lead to more questions and more conversations both online and off.

I want to thank my editor at Corwin, Hudson Perigo, for suggesting the idea and for her gentle prodding to move it toward completion. And I want to thank all of you who have read my blog over the years; you have made it what it is.

Finally, I've decided to donate all of my after-tax proceeds from the sale of this book to support technology initiatives for schools that need them the most. Once a year, I'll detail those efforts on my blog, the first installment of which will come in May of 2012. I've reaped more than enough rewards from these posts in their online form; hopefully, they'll help some deserving kids make their own forays into the blogosphere in meaningful ways.

Enjoy!