

SCIL Works 2008 Poster Session

Using Constructivism in the Everything is Miscellaneous Environment

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“The miscellaneous order is.....changing how we think the world itself is organized and—perhaps more important—who we think has the authority to tell us so” ~David Weinberger, ***Everything is Miscellaneous***

Organization of online research material has for years mimicked the organization of print material: subject headings, thesauri, folders, etc. The popularity of Google has made it clear that these organizational attempts are not embraced by users of the Internet no matter what their age or educational level.

Initially, much online learning was designed to replicate the classroom experience. Course management programs have “chat” and “discussion groups.” Many online courses seek ways to encourage group work and suggest ways to force group interaction.

Librarians traditionally emphasize the organization of information for information retrieval. Despite our efforts in tutorials and classes, our students gravitate to the tools which allow them to search for information using their own language and offer the simplest path.

Problem

Designing one shots and developing an online class to teach research skills to students who disregard the organizational structures of traditional research tools in a developing online environment which has a “miscellaneous” approach to information organization.

How to solve the problem

Use that old standby—constructivism. I have been seeking ways to allow students to “construct” knowledge of search methods, discover the vocabulary of academic disciplines, and apply that knowledge to academic indexes and databases as well as Google. Examples are drawn from Malcolm Gladwell—The Tipping Point, chapter about Blues Clues and enhancing “stickiness,”

And David Weinberger’s ***Everything is Miscellaneous***

What can I give participants to take away?

1. A list of learning objectives and outcomes that can be used in any subject in any research environment.
2. Tips on how to give up control of the learning experiences of students.
3. Examples from Ralph Wolff --Using the Accreditation Process to Transform the Mission of the Library and from Weinberger’s ***Everything is Miscellaneous***.

Who are the stakeholders and what is the impact on Information Literacy Programs?

Librarians as stakeholders will need to rethink the fundamental ways that we attempt to teach research skills because the online environment allows searches to be chaotic, but still satisfactory and productive to students, who are also stakeholders.