

## Web-centric or Hybrid Learning Environments?

### The McGraw-Hill Ryerson Teaching, Learning and Technology Conference Series

Carleton University  
Ottawa, Ontario

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## Session Learning Objectives/Outcomes

- Describe a “Web-centric” learning environment.
- Provide examples of “Web-centric” learning environments.
- List advantages and limitations of a “Web-centric” learning environment.
- Describe a “hybrid” learning environment.
- Provide examples of “hybrid” learning environments.

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2

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## Session Learning Objectives/Outcomes

- List advantages and limitations of a “hybrid” learning environment.
- Make decisions as to the suitability of a “Web-centric” or “Hybrid” learning environment for a particular teaching/learning context or situation.

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3

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## ec-centric

*n.*

One that deviates markedly from an established norm, especially a person of odd or unconventional behavior.

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4

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“... a college's purpose is not to transfer knowledge but to create environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves, to make students members of communities of learners that make discoveries and solve problems.”

(Barr & Tagg, 1995, p.15)

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5

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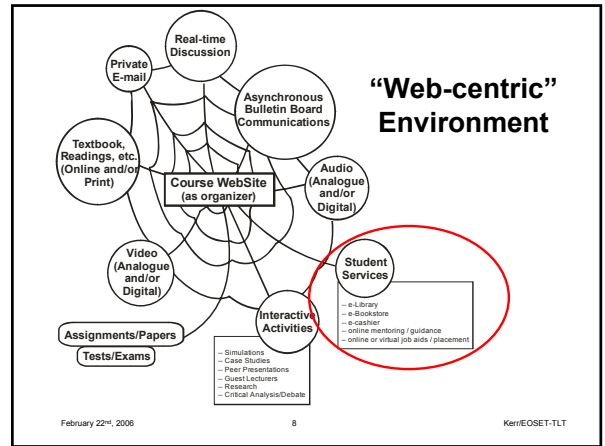
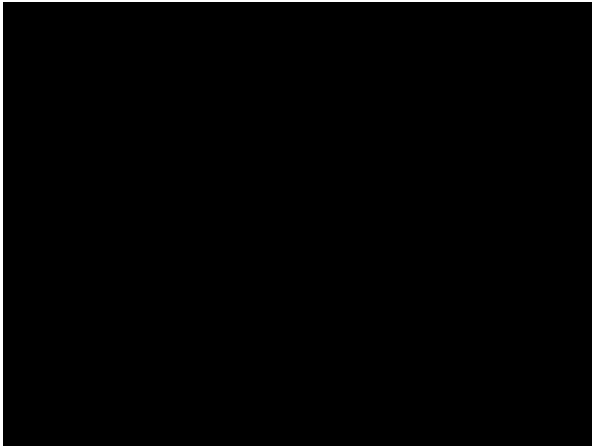
## Teaching vs. Learning

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide/deliver instruction</li><li>• Transfer knowledge from faculty to students</li><li>• Offer courses and programs</li><li>• Improve the quality of instruction</li><li>• Achieve access for diverse students</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Produce learning</li><li>• Elicit student discovery and knowledge construction</li><li>• Create powerful learning environments</li><li>• Improve the quality of learning</li><li>• Achieve success for diverse students</li></ul> |
|---|---|

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6

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## Web-centric Learning Environments

### How do they work?

- Focus is on the overall experience and a “packaged,” learner-specific **learning environment** (e.g., portal)
- Web is literally at the center and inter-woven throughout every component

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“...a learner-centred approach that integrates a number of technologies to enable both real-time and asynchronous activities. It is based on a blending of appropriate technologies with aspects of open learning systems and distance education. The approach provides the flexibility to customise learning environments to meet the need of diverse student populations, while providing high quality and cost-effective learning.”

(University of North Carolina)

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## Web-centric Learning Environments

### Advantages

- Increased flexibility and options (Institutional, Instructor, Learner)
  - independent of time and space
  - self-paced
- Potential for more learner empowerment and motivation (more personal, more portable)
- Increased access to learners and facilitators (global scale)
- No ties to traditional timeframes (potential to be more responsive)
- Cheaper to deliver

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## Web-centric Learning Environments

### Advantages (cont.'d)

- Increased communications
  - greater potential for one-to-one communications with Instructor and/or peers
  - increased communications can lead to more formative feedback
  - potential for more collaboration, and in theory, a stronger cohort
- More topic-based (as opposed to being organized around classes)
- Greater opportunity to venture beyond the course itself

February 22nd, 2006 12 KerrEOSET-TLT

## Web-centric Learning Environments

### Limitations

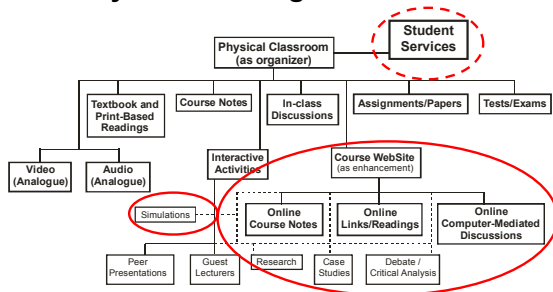
- Technical hurdles
  - learning the technology may interfere with learning the content itself
  - greater learner support may be required (at least initially)
- Higher learner motivation and individual time management skill required
- Potential for Instructor to become somewhat reclusive or elusive
- The non-traditional environment makes it difficult to understand roles, responsibilities, and expectations

## Web-centric Learning Environments

### Limitations (cont.'d)

- Potential for loss of social learning and/or difficulty in producing effective cohort over short-term
- Increased time requirement (Instructor and Learner)
- Higher cost associated with development ~~and~~ **maintenance** (Instructor/Institution)
- Higher cost associated with access (Learner)
- Greater opportunity to venture beyond the course itself \*

## Hybrid Learning Environment



## Hybrid Learning Environments

### How do they work?

- Focus is more on the course and the specific Instructor
- More traditional form of Resource-Based Instruction
- Physical classroom is the focal point and pathway to learning



vs.



Teaching by 'pouring in'

Experiential Learning

## Hybrid Learning Environments

### Advantages

- Increased credibility (both institutional and societal)
- Better chance of meeting holistic social needs/contact
- Minimal change in instructor/teacher role
- Better suited to a variety of learning styles (i.e., more options)
- Less potential for attrition (less isolation)

## Hybrid Learning Environments

### Limitations

- Tends to be more course-based (or focused)
- Web is just another tool...an add-on
- Still tied to preset, formal timeframes (pacing)
- Less suited to learning at a distance
- Not necessarily instant access to resources and LORs
- Limited integration of "just-in-time" resources and/or tools

## Hybrid Learning Environments

### Limitations (cont.'d)

- Simply the environment itself (inflexibility)
- Classroom education can in many ways be wasteful and might not meet learner needs (e.g., teaching squash)
- Switching modes may cause some confusion

## The Better Model?

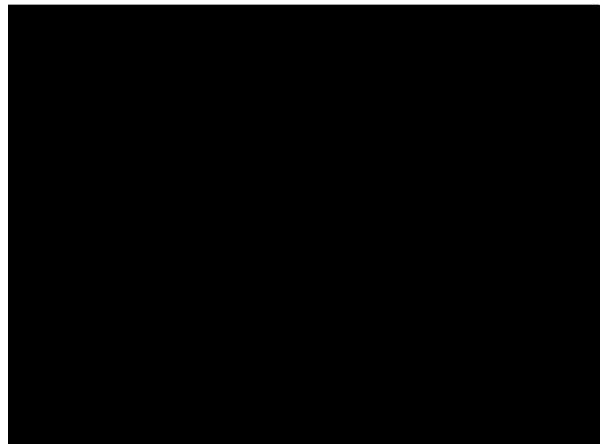
- The traditional environment was perceived as one where intelligent people could be brought together in a learning-centered environment to talk and discuss issues of importance. An environment like this could only promote scholarly ideas and thinking?
- "Web-centric" is definitely a learning environment, and the social aspect may be improving, but the social dynamic is still preferred in something less "Web-centric".

## Recommendations

- Think, think...think...
  - Why you want to use the Web and associated learning technologies for your teaching/learning
  - How you will or can incorporate learning technologies into your educational environment
- Venture beyond just courses...
  - learning repositories
  - libraries
  - student services
  - administration
  - virtual tours
  - glossaries
  - job aids / placement
  - mentoring / guidance
  - marketing
  - alumni
  - continuing professional development

## Recommendations (cont.'d)

- Set technology standards.
- Build a process and basic framework for course design and delivery (LMS)
- Develop instructional development model (faculty, staff, and students)
- Consider and plan for assessment strategies
- Consider approaches for practical vs. theoretical teaching and learning
- Technical support (student and faculty)
- Have back-up plans for everything



*"If learning comes too easily, something isn't quite right. Just like when, after a good workout in the gym, one feels that one has accomplished one's goal only if one leaves the gym exhausted, dripping with sweat and perhaps with sore muscles...so the best learning comes with effort!"*

- Stanivukovic (2000)

**Thank-you!**

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