

Educational Technology Conference Day 1: Opening Address

Dr. John Mitterer from Brock University delivered the keynote presentation to kick off the conference. Professor Mitterer delivered a very engaging and informative keynote presentation in which he focused on the effective use of technology in university teaching. He identified four goals for his talk:

- To frame teaching as form of communication
- Focus on pedagogy
- Contextualize technology in service of pedagogy
- Not tools themselves, but way that we use them. Rhetoric of media/tool use

He provide a five step process to getting up to speed in terms of teaching effectively with technology which I think could be taken at an institutional level as well as an individual teacher/professor level:

1. Theorize your teaching as a form of communication
2. Articulate your pedagogical stance
3. Reflect on the technologies/tools/media available to you
4. Develop a rhetoric of your technologies
5. Relax. Try it and refine it.

My notes are posted here, but I have not attempted to recreate the lecture. I will link to Professor Mitterer's powerpoint as soon as he posts it. There were some real gems in this address. Something that really interested me, was Professor Mitterer's depiction of the computer is a "metamachine" or "metamedium". The example he gave was that the computer is actually an e-mailing machine, word processing machine, presentation machine, etc. The computer is such that one can essentially transform a computer into these different machines. It is essentially a machine for making machines. That is why it is not like chalk. Chalk has a fixed number of uses. Anything that can be thought of precisely enough, can be modeled using a computer.

Notes from Keynote Presentation by Dr. John Mitterer, Brock University
Teaching, Communication and the Effective Use of Educational Media/Tools

- Recommended reading: "Blink: The power of thinking without thinking". Talks about "thin slicing": showed 20 second clips of profs lecturing. Had people rate clips and corresponded to end of year evaluation. Make evaluations quickly.
- Four goals
 - To frame teaching as form of communication
 - Focus on pedagogy
 - Contextualize technology in service of pedagogy
 - Not tools themselves, but way that we use them. Rhetoric of media/tool use
- Most professors focus on content, not on students. Conflict between Platonists who say we focus on truth, while sophists focus on communication.

- By focusing on message, not audience, many profs blame students who ‘don’t get it’.
- Personalize yourself to students without pandering: to them. Plays music, photo slide show.
- Often forget that message is more than content. Is also the medium (MacLuhan).
- ***Teaching is a form of communication***
- Lev Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development – space between what student can do on her own and what she needs you to do for her. I believe this notion to be a restatement of the Socratic method.
- The ZPD is the ‘construction zone’ where learning occurs. Teaching ‘scaffolds’ the student, who must do the constructing. ‘guide on the side’, not ‘sage on the stage’.
- Want to encourage reflection and all other forms of active processing. Students who are actively processing will be much more able to learn.
- Most powerful educational environments ever to evolve are those based on apprenticeship. Eg: pottery.
- Mitterer has been trying to model this in psych class.
- Features:
 - Socially situated workplace
 - Multiple levels of expertise, from the master down to the lowliest apprentice
 - Inspectable intermediate, as well as final, work steps
 - Socially valued work
- Using peer review feature of turnitin.com.
- Using wikis to create value-added work.
- Cognitive apprenticeship is the application of the principles of apprenticeship to the learning of cognitive skills.
- Ursula Franklin: “Technology is a way of doing things”
- Eg: a university course is a technology. The lecture is a technology.
- *Technologies are tools are media*
- The computer is a “metamachine” or “metamedium”. eg: and e-mailing machine, word processing machine, presentation machine. Essentially transform computer into these different machines. A machine for making machines. That is why it is not like chalk. Chalk has a fixed number of uses. Anything can be thought of precisely enough, can be modeled using a computer.
- Digital offers a “swiss army knife of the mind”
- “best practices” implies that for a tool, there is a best use. But, what might constitute a best practice for me, might not for you. Just an example.
- What’s so bad about powerpoint? Edward Tufte: <http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/powerpoint>
- MS says 30 million powerpoint presentations every day
- Peter norvig created powerpoint presentation of Gettysburg Address.
- Detecting plagiarism or fostering academic integrity: turnitin.com.
- Academicintegrity.org advocates using turnitin.com as a means to teach academic integrity.

- Turnitin.com has a peer review feature where they shuffle off papers to other students in class. Teaches how to critically read others' writing.
- Podcasting just recording voice. What would benefit be of this? Must think not just of technology, but of what value would be.
- Wikis: jim giles (2005). Special report: internet encyclopedias go head to head. Nature 438 (December 15), 900-901.
- Going to create a psych wiki. Will post it and link it to other entries in the wiki. Will read, critique and improve other wikis. Creating knowledge environment with classes.
- How to get there:
 - a. Theorize your teaching as a form of communication
 - b. Articulate your pedagogical stance
 - c. Reflect on the technologies/tools/media available to you
 - d. Develop a rhetoric of your technologies
 - e. Relax. Try it and refine it.