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Educational Report for 5373 Web Design Project

Ken Muessig

College of Education

University of Arkansas

Abstract

The Web 2.0 Educational Resource Web site was designed to be a World Wide Web (after here referred to as Web) site aimed at educators who were interested in what Web 2.0 technologies are and how they could assist the educational goal in the classroom. This Web site introduces some current Web technologies, the functions performed, and especially methods to help instructors connect to students through these technologies by offering a richer educational experience. The Educational Technology standards of design and utilization were used in the design of this Web site. An educational reflection upon the project explains new knowledge gained and established learning theories reinforced.

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Project Description

The Web 2.0 Project Web site is designed to be an educational resource for educators wanting to learn about and use new Web technologies. The primary intention of the Web site is to provide information, guidance, and suggestions for ways to incorporate certain Web 2.0 technologies into the classroom. The emphasis is on enhancing the classroom, not suggesting replacements for current established methods, such as lecture.

Many instructors have a general concept of Web 2.0 but want to know more, and they want to know how to incorporate it into the classroom, but only if it can be used to connect with their students in a meaningful way. The idea is that using tools with which students are already familiar might bring the students into the subject matter more deeply. Many Web 2.0 applications are based in the concept that many users can collaborate and communicate to produce something much larger than they could on their own, and educators know that teamwork is a great, constructivist educational tool.

The project Web site has one page for each general topic with a brief definition, suggestions for use in a classroom, links to examples, and links to free services.

Program Identification

The Web 2.0 Web site project is chosen for inclusion based on two elements: design and utilization. The design of the Web site uses methods that are consistent

with all current Section 508 requirements (Thatcher, 2009), and it validates against the XHTML and CSS standards as defined by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). The W3C defines the specifications and guidelines that the World Wide Web (WWW) is built upon (About W3C, 2009).

Additional design elements that are considered best practices include a consistently located navigation menu, a search function located prominently at the top, a readily available site map, and a link back to the home page on every sub-page. Not only was a search function implemented, the entire Web site was coded to be search engine friendly by using descriptive page titles, meta keywords, and navigation menus arranged as HTML lists (Wallace, 2005).

The standard of utilization was also showcased in the Web 2.0 project. The goal of the Web site was dissemination of media related knowledge. There are brief definitions, links to detailed definitions, embedded explanatory videos, example screenshots, and suggestions for use in the classroom. The existing policies of the Americans with Disabilities Act guided the construction of the Web site. By doing so, I ensured that the utilization of the Web site would not present barriers to anyone wishing to know more about the subject.

Educational Reflection

Every technologist must devote a portion of time to learning about new trends and technology that will affect their job. The evolution of Web design is no exception. An example is the move towards PNGs for graphics instead of GIFs. PNGs offer clearer and crisper transparencies and are becoming more popular; however,

Web designers know that older Web browsers, such as Internet Explorer 6, do not recognize the transparencies in PNGs (PNG Files Do Not, 2007). So in order to create a Web site that will function and look the same across many versions of different Web browsers, the designer must innovate while considering backwards-compatibility. This type of challenge is ever-present in different forms and must be accounted for.

Since this project was created as a support site, it had to be easy to navigate and searchable. Additionally, the Web site should provide enough information to be useful, but not so much as to be confusing, and most importantly it should only showcase Web 2.0 applications that can aid in the educational purpose and give ideas for incorporation into the classroom. What good is a tool with an unknown purpose?

In the future, I would like to perform a more thoughtful evaluation of the tools suggested. Although I am acquainted with most and regularly use a few, a multi-point criteria review of each tool would be helpful to the user in making a decision on whether or not to implement it into curriculum. Some tools may be easier to use for different age groups, also there would be different accessibility issues with some.

This course increased my ability to examine and dissect a Web site based on the criteria of usability, accessibility, design fundamentals, validation of code, and best practices. Additionally, preparing the content and gathering the suggestions for

classroom use has reinforced the idea that whenever technology is brought into the classroom, it should serve the educational purpose.

References

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