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Technology Literacy Test Reveals Student Deficiencies

Educational Testing Service's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Literacy Assessment "uses scenario-based tasks to measure both cognitive and technical skills . . . and assesses individual student proficiency." Institutions that were early adopters of the test are finding that it reveals student deficiencies in critical areas. "Of 10,000 high school and college students asked to evaluate a set of Web sites last fall, nearly half could not correctly judge which was the most objective, reliable and timely, according to preliminary results of a digital-literacy assessment." ["Students Don't Know Much Beyond Google," by Leila Fadel; *Star-Telegram*, July 27, 2006; <http://www.dfw.com/mld/dfw/15134538.htm>]

While college students may be competent Google searchers, many lack skills for evaluating online resources and are unaware of other digital resources, such as library databases, that could provide more reliable content. The test's results indicate the need for more formal training for students at all levels to acquire the skills they need to critically evaluate online resources.

For more information on the ICT, go to

<http://www.ets.org/portal/site/ets/menuitem.435c0b5cc7bd0ae7015d9510c3921509>.

Playing Games

Several recently-published articles discuss the role of game playing as tools for education or social engagement.

"Simulations, Games, and Learning"

By Diana Oblinger

EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, May 2006

<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI3004.pdf>

"Today's games are complex, take up to 100 hours, require collaboration with others, and involve developing values, insights, and new knowledge. They are immersive virtual worlds that are augmented by a more complex external environment that involves communities of practice, the buying and selling of game items, blogs, and developer communities. In many ways, games have become complex learning systems."

"Digital Game-Based Learning: It's Not Just the Digital Natives Who Are Restless"

By Richard Van Eck

EDUCAUSE Review, vol. 41, no. 2, March/April 2006, pp. 16–30.

<http://www.educause.edu/apps/er/erm06/erm0620.asp>

According to the author, "The combined weight of three factors has resulted in widespread public interest in games as learning tools." These factors are (1) "ongoing research conducted by DGBL [digital game-based learning] proponents;" (2) "today's 'Net Generation,' or 'digital natives,' who have become disengaged with traditional instruction;" and (3) "the increased popularity of games. . . nearly as many digital games were sold as there are people in the United States (248 million games vs. 293.6 million residents.)"

"Scavenger Hunt Enhances Students' Utilization of Blackboard"

By Dianne C. Jones

Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, vol. 2, no. 2, June 2006

http://jolt.merlot.org/Vol2_No2_Jones.htm

"The use of the Scavenger Hunt game has made the use of a web-based course management system, like Blackboard, less threatening for students and has significantly reduced the need for additional instructor time to deal with technology-related issues throughout the course."

"Where Everybody Knows Your (Screen) Name: Online Games as 'Third Places'"

By Constance Steinkuehler and Dmitri Williams

Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, vol. 11, issue 4, 2006

<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue4/steinkuehler.html>

The authors studied how massively multiplayer online games (MMOs) provide a means for establishing informal social relationships beyond the workplace and home.

(This issue has other articles related to games and play. Link to other articles at

[http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue4/.](http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue4/))

Sloan Semester Archives

The "Sloan Semester" was an initiative by Sloan-C member institutions to provide free online courses to college and university students whose studies were impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. In twenty-one days a "virtual" institution was set up to provide "more than 1,350 courses from over 150 institutions in 38 states available to over 1,750 students, utilizing over 4,000 'seats' in online courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels." The Sloan Semester Archives website includes "includes links to an archived version of the Sloan Semester Catalog, a case study of the project, data about participants and lessons learned." The archives are available at <http://www.sloan-c.org/sloansemerster/index.asp>.

Sloan-C is a consortium of institutions and organizations committed "to help learning organizations continually improve quality, scale, and breadth of their online programs according to their own distinctive missions, so that education will become a part of everyday life, accessible and affordable for anyone, anywhere, at any time, in a wide variety of disciplines." Sloan-C is funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. For more information go to <http://www.aln.org/>.

Obstacles to Educational Use of Digital Material

"The Digital Learning Challenge: Obstacles to Educational Uses of Copyrighted Material in the Digital Age" reports on a year-long study, conducted by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, to "explore whether innovative educational uses of digital technology were hampered by the restrictions of copyright." Four serious obstacles were identified in the study:

-- "Unclear or inadequate copyright law relating to crucial provisions such as fair use and educational use;"

-- "Extensive adoption of 'digital rights management' technology to lock up content;"

-- "Practical difficulties obtaining rights to use content when licenses are necessary;" and

-- "Undue caution by gatekeepers such as publishers or educational administrators."

The complete report can be download at no cost at

http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=923465.

The Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School is a "research program founded to explore cyberspace, share in its study, and help pioneer its development. For more information, contact Berkman Center for Internet & Society, Harvard Law School, 23 Everett Street, Second Floor, Cambridge, MA 02138 USA; tel: 617-495-7547; fax: 617-495-7641; email: cyber@law.harvard.edu; Web: <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/>.

Papers on Digital Collections

This month's issue of *First Monday* is devoted to selected papers from "Inspiring Discovery: Unlocking Collections -- WebWise 2006," the seventh annual conference on libraries and museums in the digital world held in February. Of particular interest is "Scholarship and Academic Libraries (and their kin) in the World of Google," the conference's keynote address given by Paul N. Courant. The author has placed the paper in the public domain so it can be freely shared with colleagues. This and other conference papers are available at http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_8/.

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Recommended Reading

"Recommended Reading" lists items that have been recommended to me or that *Infobits* readers have found particularly interesting and/or useful, including books, articles, and websites published by Infobits subscribers. Send your recommendations to kotlas@email.unc.edu for possible inclusion in this column.

"Perspective: Teen's Warning on the Gospel of Wikipedia"

By Soumya Srinagesh

CNET News.com, August 11, 2006

[http://news.com.com/2010-1038_3-6104446.html?
part=rss&tag=6104446&subj=news](http://news.com.com/2010-1038_3-6104446.html?part=rss&tag=6104446&subj=news)

"Yes, teachers and parents constantly remind students to think twice before relying on certain online sources, but it's easy for a student in a rush to forget that Wikipedia belongs in the category of unverified information rather than credible information--especially because its format is one of a traditional encyclopedia. Which isn't to say Wikipedia's a bad thing."

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