Quebec Information Technology
Promoting Competence, Culture and Citizenship
Companion Text to accompany Presentation 513 at the 2016 AQPC Symposium

An Anecdote about my Current Article on NewsActivist in *Pédagogie collégiale*

Appearing in Pédagogie collégiale, the peer-reviewed academic journal of the AQPC, this month is an article written by myself. The article was originally written in English and translated into French only after having been accepted by the English Editorial Committee (EEC) of Pédagogie collégiale.

Although not the main theme of my presentation, I would like to strongly encourage my colleagues to submit papers in English to *Pédagogie collégiale*. Although they will not be published in the review for the most part in their original language, they will be published online in the now [vastly improved English website of the AQPC](). I intend to distribute offprints of my article in both English and French to attendees, as the subject of this article forms an important part of my current presentation.

First, since all presentations should start with an amusing anecdote, I will start with a personal experience. For my current article, *The Importance of an Audience*, I had to submit my original text to the EEC. My article originally included considerably more information than what finally made it into the final version. I was quite fascinated by how certain phenomena in academia are indicators of other phenomena. Some of this material will be touched upon in this presentation. The review committee (dare I say rightly) cut a lot out of the original text, to stay focused on NewsActivist's utility to the AQPC readership.

Stéphanie Carle, the editor of Pédagogie collégiale chairs both linguistic editorial committees. Although her English is quite good, she is definitely more comfortable in French. My article, accepted by my colleagues in the EEC, was then translated into French. Stéphanie at that point reread the material *dans sa langue maternelle* and edited the French version with a lot of passion. She brought in material from the NewsActivist website and clarified the article's flow of logic.

When I read Stéphanie's changes, I realized that the modified French article was an improvement on mine, and that logically, the final English version should be created as a version of the edited French. Translating the French text into English proved to be an excellent method to proofread the French as well. The article you have in your hands therefore is Stephanie's version of my reality– definitely a case of two minds working better than one!

The Importance of an Audience

Below is a slightly modified version of the abstract of the article:

NewsActivist is a global educational network designed by and for teachers and students in order to get users to participate in civic action through thinking and writing, hence the name: *NewsActivist*. It is a platform that allows the formation of a community of learners that can evolve along a spectrum from private to public. This article portrays how the teacher/developer of the platform adapted it to meet the pedagogical needs of his colleagues among a wide range of disciplines covering sociological, ethical, commercial, media, environmental, cultural, educational or international issues, to name a few.

Technology is no longer an adjunct to pedagogy; it has become an inseparable part of it.

The NewsActivist site was developed as an open global network of student writers[1]. Perhaps because it was developed within a postsecondary institution, it evolved to meet the needs of teachers across a wider spectrum.

The initial motivation behind the website was a need for a platform that teachers in service-learning courses could use to enable and motivate students to meet course requirements for community involvement. The platform was initially developed as an adjunct to a course, and once it began functioning, its utility as a motivator for student involvement was evident. As the creator of the site was focused on academic success rather than economic gain, the initial funding to develop the site came principally from the educational institution of the site's teacher/developer[2]. Success was measured in teachers convinced to use the site as well as students posting comments and articles tagged using a taxonomy based on designations of non-profit activities for organizations recognized by the United States.[3]

In 2013, NewsActivist was included in part of grant submitted to the Entente Canada Quebec by myself. I proposed using the network structure of the site to help second language business students develop business plans. Because of NewsActivist's service organization I insisted that my students make business plans for ethical enterprises[4]. The NewsActivist network of first language speakers provided real interactions with native speakers and increased student enthusiasm.

Funding for second language speakers was predicated on the initial teacher/developer Gabriel Flacks being available to make modifications to NewsActivist to accommodate the needs of second language learners. Much of the current use of the original feature of *friends* on the NewsActivist site is a byproduct of this collaboration.

At this point, one has to ask at what point in time cegep teachers started developing their own online platforms to meet the needs of their students. Whether or not I realized it at the time, I was modifying my pedagogy to conform to the reality of the information technology that I was about to use and modifying the NewsActivist platform to conform to the reality of the pedagogy that I was using. Technology is no longer an adjunct to pedagogy; it has become an inseparable part of it.

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[1] Page 1519 Gabriel Flacks and Lynn Reid, *NewsActivist.com: Reconsidering Community Engagement with Web 2.0, Proceedings of INTCESS14 – International Conference on Education and Social Sciences Proceedings 3-5 February 2014 Istanbul Turkey*
[2] Page 1524 Gabriel Flacks and Lynn Reid, ibid
[3] Page 1521 Gabriel Flacks and Lynn Reid, ibid
[4] Page 39 Norman Spatz, *Utiliser les technologies de l'information pour gérer les niveaux mixtes en classe* Pédagogie Coiiégiale Vol 27, No 3 Printemps 2014

The teacher is neither the sage on the stage or the guide on the side, but the guide sitting right in the middle of all the action.

The educational online press is increasingly covering teachers who have developed their own software or platforms. Browsing the pages of Profweb, the Quebec government's online website for IT integration in the Quebec college network, one comes across numerous teachers who are software developers as well. A quick visit to Profweb produces the articles in the following table about Quebec teachers who have created their own information technology. There are more!

A Selection of Stories about Teacher/Developers on Profweb

Teacher/Developer	Software/Platform	Article Title	Date
Shelagh Robinson	The Mirror Read app	Learner Based Teaching	May 6, 2014
Diana Bruno	A lexicon for hospitality students	Foodservice French and English: a lexicon for hospitality students	March 9, 2014
Avery Rueb	*Prêt à négocier*	Gaming in a Second Language Classroom	January 12, 2014
Cheryl Jenkins	The Missing Link in the Quebec Economy	Turning Macroeconomics Around	October 6, 2013
Angie Stevens	English for Tourism Wiki	In Search of a Successful Second Act	September 22, 2013
Alexandre Vovan	Mobile Applications	Why develop a mobile application?	March 24, 2013
Nicholas Walker	The Virtual Writing Tutor	The Virtual Writing Tutor	January 13, 2013
Nathaniel Lasry	Problem-based Learning	The World-wide Impact of Problem-based Learning	March 15, 2011
David Adley	One Note – Personal Configuration	Creating a Personal Digital Learning Environment	March 6, 2011
Pooyan Haghighat	Rappin' Calc	Rappin' Calc on YouTub	February 21, 2011
Jan Warnke	Geographic Information System	Geography and Exploration: IT Location Basics in the College Curriculum	December 1, 2010
Eifion Pritchard	ESL Blues	Easy Learning with ESL Blues	September 26, 2010
Melvin Shantz	Intelligent CALL, with Moodle and Regex,	Migrating from WebCT to Moodle with Regular Expressions	April 25, 2010
Roger Haughey	Sonic Truths	Hard truths – Sonic and Otherwise	March 28, 2010

Teachers are becoming responsible for defining the information and communication environment that their students are supposed to use in their classes.

In a recent Profweb review of the NMC Horizon Report for Higher Education, Ryan W Moon makes the following point:

> I was also curious about their views on how technology is changing student expectations of the teaching profession. Ms. Koster stated that students are very tech-savvy, noting a marked change in the last 6 years. However, she feels that students require additional training on the educational applications of technology, so that their use of mobile devices, computers, social media, and the like, are more purposeful. Ms. Koster also stresses that it is important to live up to student expectations. If you require students to have a laptop or mobile device but don't adequately integrate the technology into your class, your students will be disillusioned at best, or downright upset. Ms. Forssman agreed with Ms. Koster on this point, stating that it all comes down to the professional development of Teachers. We must be able to articulate learning outcomes and expectations and use technology judiciously to enhance the learning.
>
> Ryan W. Moon[5]

If you tease out an implication of this statement within the context of the article in which it appears, it is that not only is the teacher becoming the 'guide on the side' as opposed to the 'sage on the stage', but that the teacher is being asked to construct the IT environment that the student is to use to accomplish class goals. As seen in the example of NewsActivist and the many other teacher created environments covered in Profweb, teachers are responding to this challenge not uniquely by choosing what is provided to them but are acquiring the technical know-how to produce a learning environment on their own which aspires to more perfectly meet the pedagogical needs of their students.

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As the professions of teaching and IT developer increasingly overlap, a multitude of other questions arise.

- What will be the role of the Educational Materials Publisher?
- What is the role of government in creating a local IT culture?
- Is this local IT culture likely to form at the provincial level in the Canadian context?

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[5] Moon, Ryan W., *The Oracles of Ed. Tech Have Spoken: The 2015 Horizon Report is Now On-line.* February 22, 2015 Consulted online at: http://www.profweb.ca/en/publications/articles/the-oracles-of-ed-tech-have-spoken-the-2015-horizon-report-is-now-on-line