Using Technology to Break Free from the Classroom's Constraints

A Conversation

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"Law teachers do it in the classroom"

Or at least "classroom teachers" do

Listen to how we speak of our work with students:

- "When we go back to the classroom ..."

- "Insights about what works in the classroom ..."

Since that is where we teach that must be where and when students learn

- Look at the titles for the sessions about students - e.g., "student preconceptions in the classroom"

- Consider the class meeting's use as a unit of measure - "one class on ..." "three credit hours"

With apologies to John Bransford,

 "For U.S. law teachers, the classroom -- i.e., scheduled thrice weekly meetings with the students in a group -- is as water to the fish."

If so, Jack and I are here in the role of frogs

Both of us have been engaged in teaching law without use of classroom meetings by means of computer technology.

Like the young frog we're here to report on what we've experienced "out of the water."

Our report

- The what and why of it

- The how of it

- Some preliminary observations about these adventures (attempting to use the framework of HPL)

- Other evident gains, challenges, consequences

The LII's On-Line Courses 2000-2001

What?
- Two upperclass electives (copyright law, social security law)
- Seven participating schools
- 100 students (fall term), 60 students (spring term)
Why?

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How?

- Hypermedia presentation =>
- Integrated computer-based exercises =>
- Paced, asynchronous discussion in a Web conference, with prior student submissions =>   =>
- Four mandatory problems with swift "generic feedback" =>

The LII's On-Line Courses 2000-2001

Fully assembled

   - Sequence of topics =>

   - Standard cycle for each topic =>

   - Paced but self-paced in several important respects =>

   - Lots of individual feedback ("formative assessment") before the final exam

Some Observations

From my students
- Convenience
- Control of time and amount of repetition
- Feedback and exchange

Of my own
- Appreciate having inhuman patience, the ability to track and respond to individual students, and an opportunity to be a more reflective responder

Questions? Reactions?