

The Stories That Documents Tell:
Changing Technology Options from Blackboard,
Webfuse and the Content Management System at
Central Queensland University

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Introduction

- Part of a broader project investigating educational technologies (particularly course management systems) at CQU.
- Focus on the stories that documents can tell about such technologies.
- Submitted paper deals with Blackboard, Web fuse and the content management system; we focus here on Blackboard.

Method

- Hermeneutic method (emphasis on documents as printed and virtual texts).
- Focus on “the social life of documents” (Brown & Duguid, 1995).
- Two key elements:
 - social interactions
 - negotiated meanings.

Method

- “We need to see the way documents have served not simply to write, but also to underwrite social interactions; not simply to communicate, but also to coordinate social practices” (Brown & Duguid, 1995, p. 2).
- “...shared documents within communities are in many ways simply the grounds for a fight, merely the pre-text for agreement. Providing a shared context for constructing meaning, documents are the beginning rather than the end of the process of negotiation” (Brown & Duguid, 1995, p. 5).

Method

- “Documents are not, then, independent. Like biological organisms, every document is always related to some other” (Brown & Duguid, 1995, p. 5).
- “The French sociologist Bruno Latour points out that a primary characteristic of documents is their mobility (the other is their mutability). Documents quickly pass beyond the reach and protection of their maker and have to fend for themselves” (Brown & Duguid, 1995, p. 7).

Method

- “In passing between communities, documents play an important role, bringing people from different groups together to negotiate and coordinate common practices. Such negotiations are particularly significant in institutions, such as bureaucracies and corporations [or universities], that comprise many different communities [or subcultures]” (Brown & Duguid, 1995, p. 8).

Method

- Brown and Duguid (1995) largely optimistic about the enduring utility of documents and about social interactions and negotiated meaning contributing to and constructing communities.
- Also important to view documents as sites of struggle for meaning and voice: as opportunities for counternarratives, yet also as the means of replicating dominant voices and speaking positions.

Engaging with changing technology options at CQU

- The methodological power and utility of portraying “the social life of documents”.
- CQU should incorporate the widest possible range of assumptions and ideas into its policies and procedures relating to teaching and learning.

Engaging with changing technology options at CQU

- The writers of documents have situated power and hence a responsibility to consider and make explicit alternative viewpoints.
- Following Laurillard (2002), the stories told by documents help to explicate multiple assumptions about student learning and developing effective strategies for the effective use of educational strategies.

Thankyou foryour timeand
attention