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Using Visual Mind Mapping to Design Academic Courses: Transitioning from Text-Based Planning Documents to Course Design Maps

Rob L. Wood
Franklin University

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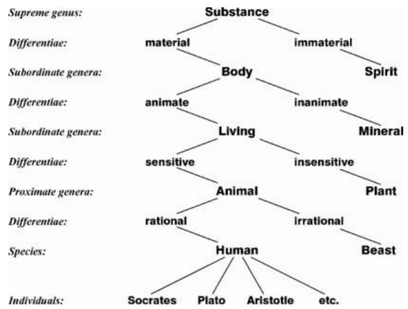
Dr. Rob L. Wood, Instructional Designer/Faculty
International Institute for Innovative Instruction, Franklin University

LEGAL PADS & OTHER PAPERS

The adage “A picture is worth a thousand words” (circa 1921) represents the concept that images can convey complex ideas and information more efficiently, and more effectively, than linear text alone. By contrast, much of the practice of instructional design remains bound to its “textual roots” from the 1940s. Today, most instructional design products, such as planning documents, remain text-based. The author’s instructional design practice remained textually-based for over 20 years, until his research and subsequent adoption of mind mapping, a visual method of designing complex academic courses.

ORIGINS OF MIND MAPPING

The principles of mind mapping are quite old. According to Grubb & Gee (2013) Porphyry of Tyros, a noted Greek philosopher of the 3rd century, probably created what we might today call a *mind map* illustrating Aristotle’s categories. A modern reconstruction of a similar diagram appears below. Other notable “mind mappers” include Paganini, Sir Isaac Newton, John Bunyan, Charles Darwin, and Walt Disney.



Grubb, R., & Gee, V. (2013). Roots of visual mapping. Retrieved from http://www.mind-mapping.org/blog/mapping-history/roots-of-visual-mapping/

CREATING COURSE DESIGN MAPS

Beginning in 2012, the author began researching the applications of mind mapping to the instructional design process. The result was a fundamental shift from producing text-based instructional design planning documents to producing visual “course design maps” using a mind mapping software package.

After experimenting with several mind mapping tools, the author settled on XMind, a free mind mapping software tool to develop “course design maps”. Each map is unique and visually illustrates the design of an academic course. Each design map also serves as documentation for assessment purposes. The completed design map also serves as a guide for implementing the course in the Franklin University LMS.

The visual component of XMind is only one of its strengths. For example, the software also includes tools that facilitate document storage and retrieval via internal relative links as well as a hyperlinks to web-based resources.

Mind mapping is a rapid-prototyping tool that is also consistent with the principles of the Successive Approximation Model (SAM), recently adopted by the International Institute for Innovative Instruction at Franklin University. Course design maps are iterative, collaborative, and efficient visual plans that facilitate course designs more readily than text-based methods.

HCM 762 DESIGN MAP (WEEK 1)