VCU

Graduate Research Posters   Graduate School

2015

The Tools that Matter: Assessing Online Resources

Valeriana Colon
Virginia Commonwealth University, colonv@vcu.edu

THE TOOLS THAT MATTER
ASSESSING ONLINE RESOURCES
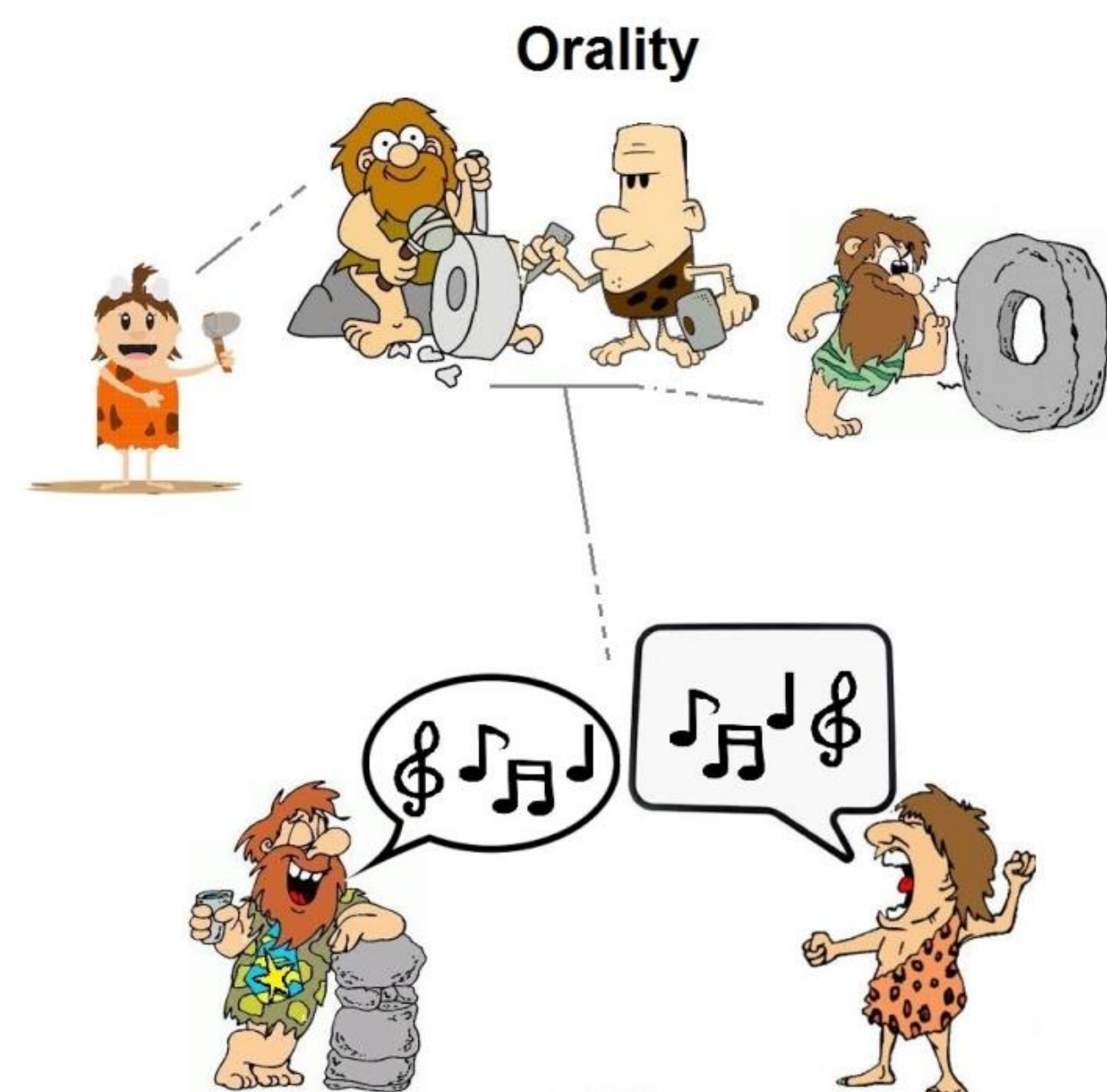
Orality

Oral, written, and online modalities have diversified the learning environment. Orality gives people the ability to share, build, and apply knowledge socially. Learning orally is in the moment, contextualized by the environment, very interpersonal, and dependent on memory.
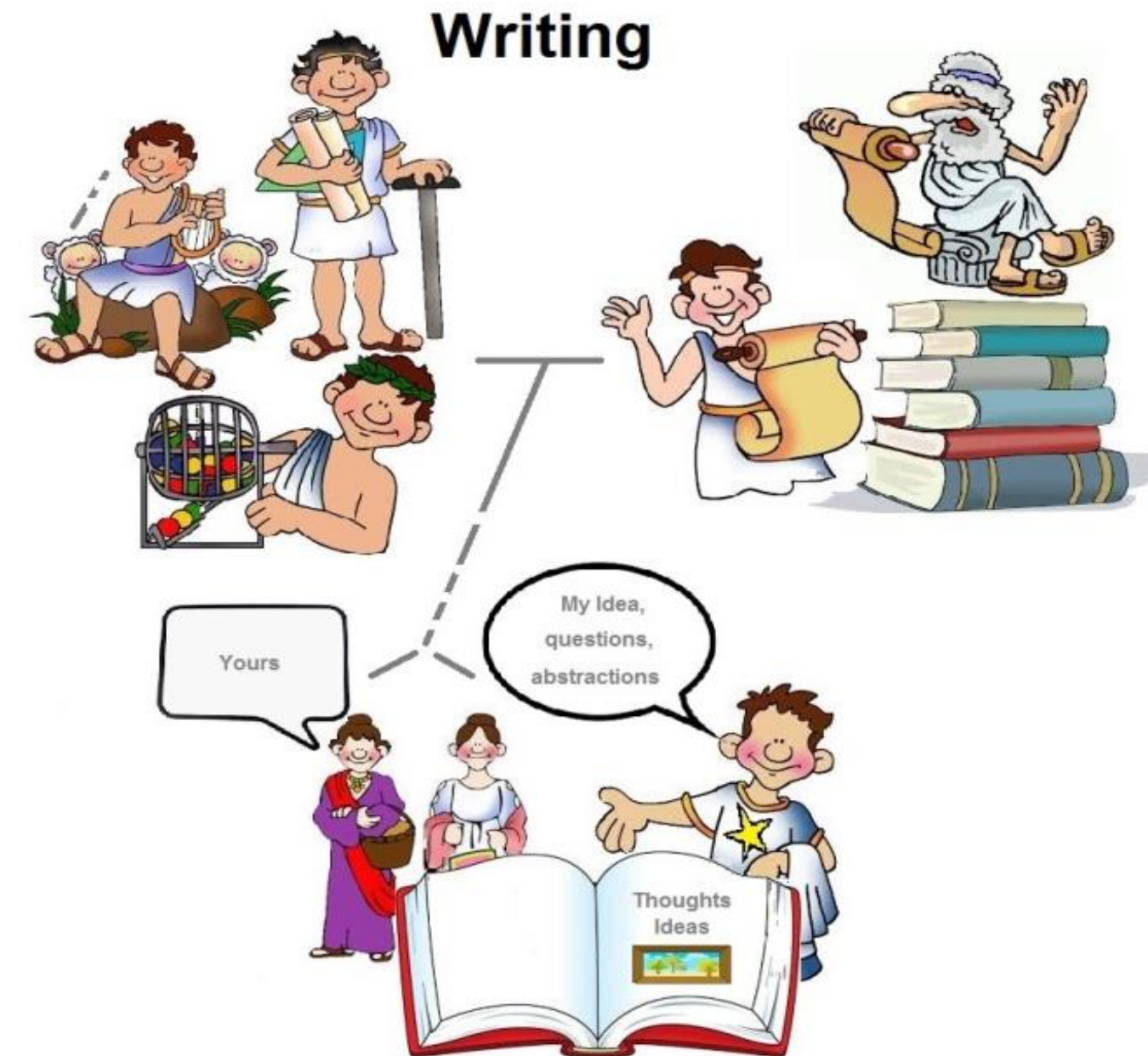
Writing

Writing is a technological advancement which lessens the dependency on memory and person-to-person interactions; enabling society to transmit thought and culture over time and place. Thanks to writing, revisiting, classifying, sequential ordering, and editing words happens with greater ease.
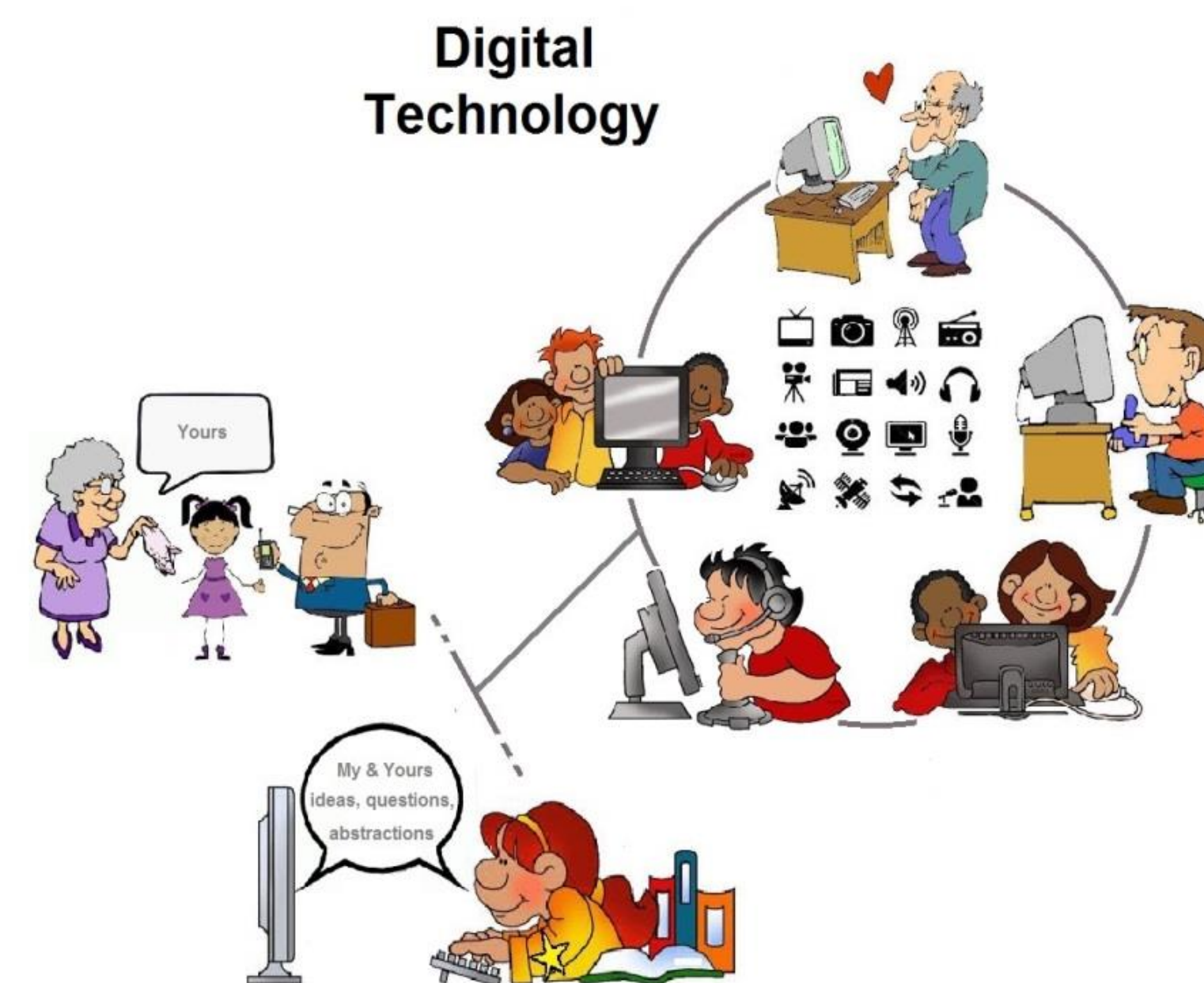
Digital Technology

Online technology is an advancement on both the spoken and written word, combining the modes in new ways; quickly and dramatically expanding its social nature; and storing information through time, place, and now space.

Assessment Element: Relevance to Students' Needs
Methods: Web logs, single-question surveys, and focus groups

Assessment Element: Connection to Academic Concepts
Methods: Technology affordances, multiple-choice tests, simulations, comments, and product-based assessments

Assessment Element: Freedom / Self-directedness
Methods: Access rates, surveys, and self-assessments

Assessment Element: Organization / Usability
Methods: Surveys and checklists

Assessment Element: Collaborative and Social
Methods: Comments, emails, and other student contributions

Assessment Element: Accuracy and Credibility
Methods: Rubrics and checklists

Assessment Element: Cost Effectiveness
Methods: Rubrics and checklists

Abstract

Presenter: Valeriana Colón

In the age of technology, educators are encouraged to incorporate online resources into their teaching, but the impact of these resources on learning is rarely considered. To create a foundation for assessment, this poster highlights theories and research on how students learn across oral, written, and online modes of communication. It then introduces methods of assessing various elements of online resources and suggests an implementation approach to enhance the use of resources.

Select References

Coiro, J. (2009). Rethinking online reading assessment. *Educational Leadership, 66,* 59-63.

Ehlers, U. (2013). *Open Learning Cultures A Guide to Quality, Evaluation, and Assessment for Future Learning.* Dordrecht: Springer.

Gee, J. (2012) The old and the new in the new digital literacies. *The Educational Forum*, 76(4), 418-420

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Methods

The exploration into the assessment of online resource tools was taken in two parts. First, a look back on theories and research on how people transmit, retain, and transform information across oral, written, and online modes of communication to create a foundation for assessment. The second part of the exploration looked at current trends in assessment methods as noted in scholarly literature. With very little published on the assessment of online resource tools specifically, the review was expanded to include best practices for the assessment of online classes and electronic platforms.

This exploration is a very broad overview of theories and research- not intended to go into much depth on any particular aspect, but to encourage educators to reflect on how to use online resources meaningfully. It is essential that educators take the time to assess online resources, making implicit considerations explicit. The assessment elements and methods should be framed to accurately represent the educator and the school's beliefs and values. Through continual assessment, educators can enhance student learning by effectively leveraging online resources.

Results

Whether orally, written or online, reflection and discourse contributes to the interpretation of information. Interpretation, making sense, organizing, and acting on experience, is at the core of learning. As the underlying assumptions used to interpret experiences are challenged, bringing to light varying ideas, values, and beliefs, one learns. Interaction is essential to critical thinking, and connecting knowledge to practice; without which experience is a form of consumption lacking deeper understanding and the development of skills. Each mode requires different skills to be effective and is culturally framed. Regardless of the mode, one thing does not change: **what it takes to learn**.

Online resources are conducive to learning when they are :

- relevant to students' needs
- connected to academic concepts
- designed to encourage self-directedness
- organized
- collaborative and social
- accurate and creditable
- cost effective

http://goo.gl/1bGYnE

Implementation

The time dedicated to assessment should be proportionate to how one intends to use the resource. A two-minute video should not be reviewed to the same extent as a countywide resource that comes at considerable financial cost.

Step 1: Remember the purpose for assessment is to improve student outcomes.

Step 2: Consider a culturally and institutionally supported description of assessment elements.

Step 3: Briefly check through the elements that the resource addresses.*

Step 4: Depending on the resource's use, complexity, and cost, one should look at each or a selection of the assessment elements in greater depth, using a coordinating assessment method.

*An online resource does not need to cover all of these elements to be considered a "good resource". Unless the teaching is taking place completely online, these resources are imbedded in instruction. Any element that is missing can be incorporated into the greater lesson.