

November 2007

Harnessing Online Communities for Educational Practice

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Recommended Citation

Dunn, Randall S., "Harnessing Online Communities for Educational Practice" (2007). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. Paper 61.
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Harnessing Online Communities for Educational Practice

A Presentation Made to the
Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) Washington, DC
Educator's Convention
By Randall Dunn.
November 20, 2007





elements of online community





history of online community

- Collaboration and Research as Beginnings
 - Sputnik event in 1957
 - United States formed ARPA (Advanced Research Projects Agency) under the Department of Defense
 - four participating universities
 - agency's purpose - to progress the U.S.'s leadership in science and military-related technology
 - “l-o- (crash) . . .”





history of online community

- Collaboration and Research as Beginnings
 - 1970s and 1980s, ARPANET expanded, transformed, and morphed into web of networks connected as a community of host computers
 - activity on these networks focused on academic research and government-related activities.





history of online community

- Virtual Homesteading of the 1980s
 - latter half of the 1980s - rogue networks tapped into the power of networking — as an indirect result of 1960s radicalism and free access — and began making their foothold in the form of virtual communities.
 - *Free nets* allowed many participants free (or near free) access via modem technology to communities of subscribers and shared community-related information.
 - Howard Rheingold describes one of these remotely-based, connected societies in his book *Virtual Community*.
 - Dead-Heads and Medical Questions



history of online community

- Virtual Homesteading of the 1980s
 - Three networks in the 1970s to some 50,000 in the mid-1990s
 - by 1985, the “Internet was already well established as a technology supporting a broad community of researchers and developers, and was beginning to be used by other communities for daily computer communications.”





history of online community

- Commercialization of 1990s
 - The communities of the late 1980s and the early 1990s began to grow and the common "consumer" found the online world to be useful. In 1991 the WWW (World Wide Web) and other technologies that created the framework for Internet growth were released.
 - October 1990 - Tim Berners-Lee - Chose "World Wide Web" as a name for the hypertext development project (over Information Mesh, Mine of Information, and Information Mine)
 - Oldest original web page - <http://www.w3.org/History/19921103-hypertext/hypertext/WWW/Link.html> (1990)
 - April 1993 - Date on the declaration by CERN's directors that WWW technology would be freely usable by anyone, with no fees being payable to CERN. A milestone document.



early growth

Results Summary

Month	# of Web sites	% .com sites	Hosts* per Web server
Jun-93	130	1.5	13,000 (3,846)
Dec-93	623	4.6	3,475 (963)
Jun-94	2,738	13.5	1,095 (255)
Dec-94	10,022	18.3	451 (99)
Jun-95	23,500	31.3	270 (46)
Jan-96	100,000	50	94 (17)
Jun-96	230,000 (est)	68	41
Jan-97	650,000 (est)	62.6	NA



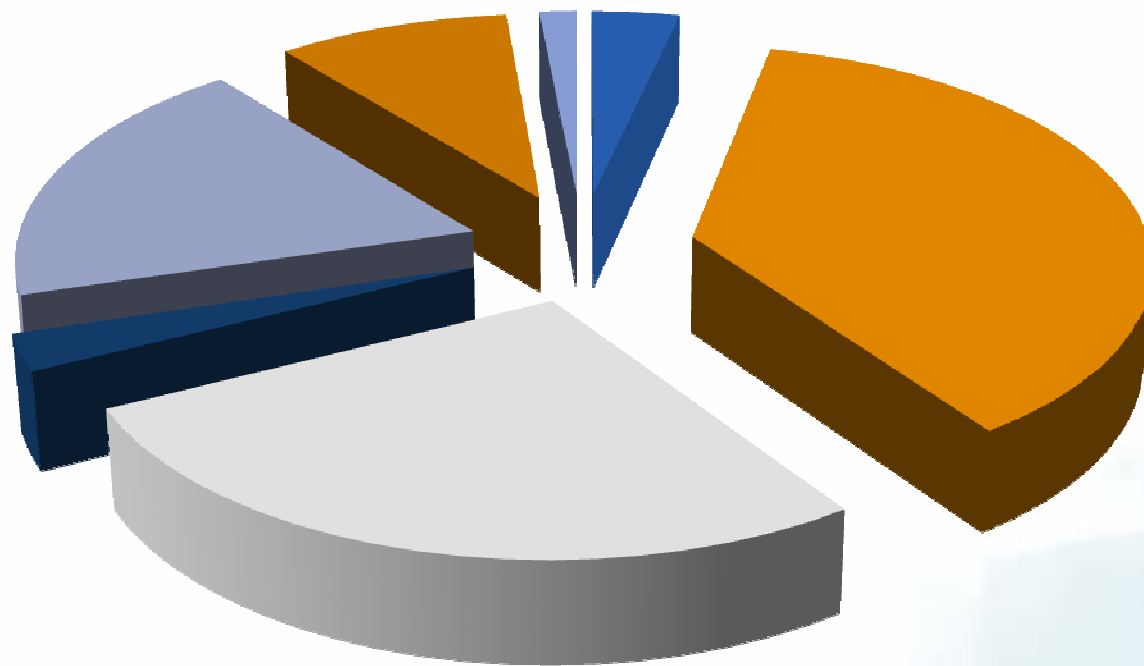
users on the web

	# USERS	% World	SOURCE
December, 1995	16 millions	0.40%	IDC
December, 1996	36 millions	0.90%	IDC
December, 1997	70 millions	1.70%	IDC
December, 1998	147 millions	3.60%	C.I.Almanac
December, 1999	248 millions	4.10%	Nua Ltd.
December, 2000	361 millions	5.80%	Internet World Stats
August, 2001	513 millions	8.60%	Nua Ltd.
September, 2002	587 millions	9.40%	Internet World Stats
September, 2003	677 millions	10.60%	Internet World Stats
October, 2004	812 millions	12.70%	Internet World Stats
September, 2005	957 millions	14.90%	Internet World Stats
September, 2006	1,066 millions	16.40%	Internet World Stats
Sept, 2007	1,245 millions	18.90%	Internet World Stats



graphically . . . usage

% Usage



- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- Middle East
- North America
- Latin America/Caribbean
- Oceania / Australia

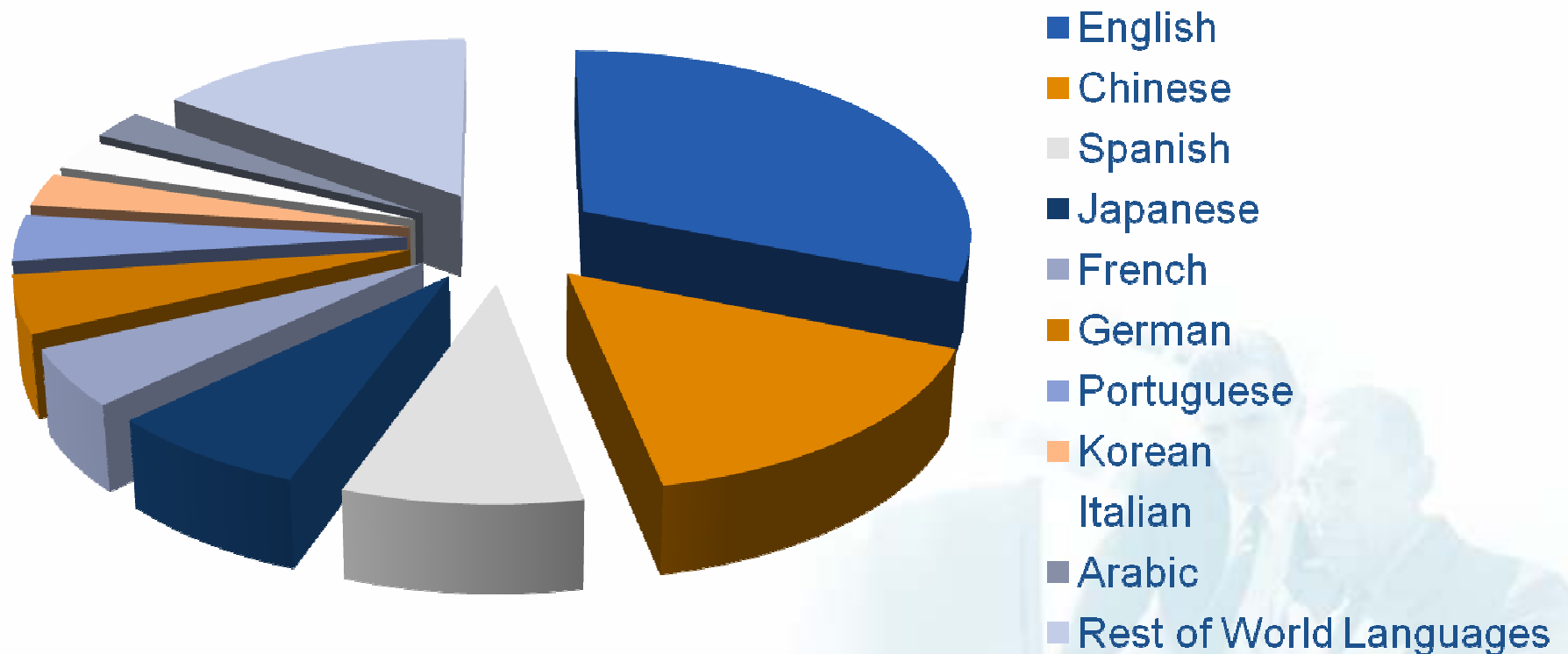


Internet Usage – September 2007

World Regions	Population	Population	Internet Usage,	% Population	Usage	Usage Growth
	(2007 Est.)	% of World	Latest Data	(Penetration)	% of World	2000-2007
Africa	933,448,292	14.20%	43,995,700	4.70%	3.50%	874.60%
Asia	3,712,527,624	56.50%	459,476,825	12.40%	36.90%	302.00%
Europe	809,624,686	12.30%	337,878,613	41.70%	27.20%	221.50%
Middle East	193,452,727	2.90%	33,510,500	17.30%	2.70%	920.20%
North America	334,538,018	5.10%	234,788,864	70.20%	18.90%	117.20%
Latin America/Caribbean	556,606,627	8.50%	115,759,709	20.80%	9.30%	540.70%
Oceania / Australia	34,468,443	0.50%	19,039,390	55.20%	1.50%	149.90%
WORLD TOTAL	6,574,666,417	100.00%	1,244,449,601	18.90%	100.00%	244.70%

languages on the Web

% Internet Users



languages on the web

Languages	% Internet Users	By Language	Use by Language	Growth	Est. World Population
English	31.20%	365,893,996	17.90%	157.70%	2,042,963,129
Chinese	15.70%	184,001,513	13.60%	469.60%	1,351,737,925
Spanish	8.70%	101,539,204	22.90%	311.40%	442,525,601
Japanese	7.40%	86,300,000	67.10%	83.30%	128,646,345
French	5.00%	59,207,849	15.30%	385.40%	387,820,873
German	5.00%	58,981,592	61.10%	112.90%	96,488,326
Portuguese	4.00%	47,326,760	20.20%	524.70%	234,099,347
Korean	2.90%	34,120,000	45.60%	79.20%	74,811,368
Italian	2.70%	31,481,928	52.90%	138.50%	59,546,696
Arabic	2.50%	28,782,300	8.50%	940.50%	340,548,157
TOP TEN LANGUAGES	85.00%	997,635,142	19.30%	203.70%	5,159,187,766
Rest of World Languages	15.00%	175,474,783	12.40%	440.30%	1,415,478,651
WORLD TOTAL	100.00%	1,173,109,925	17.80%	225.00%	6,574,666,417



history of online community

- Return to Roots in 2000s (Web 2.0)
 - Rejection of commercialization
 - Return to “pure” collaborative environments
 - Setting up for Web 3.0 (a web without pages)





foundational thoughts

- Start with identification of need
 - Do we have current issues with connectedness and community?
 - Do we have professional and pedagogical needs with regard to connectedness and community?



a note on “place”

- Robert Putnam and *Bowling Alone*
- Ray Oldenburg's *Third Place*
- The Internet filling that gap? (or making it wider?)





results of research

- Looked at whether teachers formed informal communities online (virtual teacher's lounges)
- The setting . . . A (naturally forming) forum
- The 10% vs. 90%
- What are teachers gathering online? – following the 10/90 split
- Who are the 10%?
- SENCo Failures (and offline failures by Grossman)
- Arlington successes



purposes of use

- Professional Connectedness
 - Communities of Practice (Etienne Wenger)
 - Near and Far (the art of sharing with strangers) – battling cow pasture syndrome
 - Virtual Teacher's Lounge (informal social support)
 - Portal pages (NetVibes.com)
- Pedagogical Uses
 - Instructional Sharing
 - Student Connectedness



Facebook (general social networking)

- Connected via “networks” (Lynchburg, VA, Liberty University, James Madison University, University of Bath)
- Apps are developed by third parties (compare favorite movies, “poking,” virtual fish tanks, Blackboard tie-ins) – a middle school girl’s dream
- Becomes a central repository of social information (has somewhat replaced MySpace (for some))
- Organizations, politicians, events, alumni relations, etc
- Some college courses being developed just in programming to Facebook (commercialization)

AtoZTeacherStuff (teacher-created “stuff”)

- <http://www.atozteacherstuff.com/>
- Started by a teacher .
- Provides (free)
 - Lessons
 - Articles
 - Instructional Ideas
 - Materials

The screenshot shows the homepage of AtoZTeacherStuff. At the top, there are advertisements for 'Classroom Fundraising Made Simple' and 'Popcorn parents.com'. Below the ads is a navigation menu with links for home, themes, lessons, tips, articles, discuss, store, printables, subjects, tools, and search. The main content area includes a 'WELCOME to A to Z Teacher Stuff' message, a 'POPULAR PAGES for TEACHERS' section with links to 'Word Shapes Worksheet Generator', 'Word Search Maker', 'Handwriting Worksheet Generator', 'Leveled Books Database', and 'Science Experiments', and a 'Theme Resource Pages' section with links for 'November • December • January', 'Thanksgiving • Childrens Book Week', and 'Veterans Day • Native Americans Ocean • Space • All'. There is also a 'Word Wall Cards' section and a 'Store atozteacherstuff.com' section.



AtoZTeacherStuff (Forums)

- **Announcements**
 - Forum Guidelines & Tips
 - Introductions
- **TeacherChat Forums**
 - General Education
 - Preschool
 - Kindergarten
 - Elementary Education
 - Secondary Education
 - Teacher Timeout
 - Chitchat
 - Games
- **Connecting Classrooms**
 - Classroom Penpals
 - Postcard Exchanges
 - Other Projects
- **TeacherChat Special Interest Forums**
 - Behavior Management
 - Montessori
 - New Teachers
 - Special Education
 - Student and Preservice Teachers
 - Substitute Teachers
 - Homeschool
- **Examinations for Teachers**
 - Basic Skills Tests
 - Multiple Subject Tests
 - Single Subject Tests
 - National Board Certification
 - Other Tests
- **Prayer Requests/ Inspirational**
 - Prayer Request Forum

Tapped In (Text-Based Virtual Environment)

- www.tappedin.org
- Roots in MMPORG (Massively-Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Game) – Think D&D
- “Rooms”
- Discussions (although largely inactive)
- Email ListServe for topics, etc.





EPN (Podcasting)

- Professional Philosophy & ICT 272 Strictly ICT 24

- Student & Class Podcasts
 - Elementary Grades 83
 - Middle School 58
 - Secondary School 54

- Subject Specific Podcasts
 - Computer/Tech. Skills 112
 - Dance Education 10
 - English Language Arts 137
 - Healthful Living 82
 - Information Skills 36
 - Mathematics 10
 - Music Education 66
 - Science 84
 - Second Languages 95
 - Social Studies 99
 - Theatre Arts Education 31
 - Visual Arts Education 35
 - Career Development 43
 - Current Events 70
 - Miscellaneous 163



<http://www.epnweb.org/>

“We are a multicast society of speakers and listeners, listeners and speakers, teaching and learning in a life and time of change.”

Second Life (Virtual Worlds)

- <http://www.simteach.com>



abcnews.com



blogs.zdnet.com



Second Life (Virtual Worlds)

- <http://www.simteach.com>
- Has become a research interest, although little has been published; See some interest in educational value although little has been proven 😊
- Offers free spaces for applying college courses
- Can buy island for educational endeavors
- *There is also available*
- Has become largely commercial





TeacherTube and YouTube (Social Networking via Media)



- <http://www.teachertube.com/channels.php>
- Many subjects . . .
Some very good content . . .
- Dangers of reliability





Microsoft SharePoint



- Document collaboration
- Discussions (on document and on just about anything else)
- Portal capabilities (personalized and subscribed content based on meta information) – pulling vs. pushing content
- Subscribe to users/searches, etc



Illuminate vRoom

- <http://www.illuminate.com/>
- The future of classrooms?
- Connecting international and neighbors
- Price is a huge issue
- Others
 - Wimba
 - Microsoft Communicator
 - WebEX



Future Trends

- Web 2.0 and evolving social connectedness (think collaboration)
- Web 3.0 and evolving data-based web environments
- Virtual Reality
- Community-Based Gaming
- What about these questions:
 - Considering the language evolution online, what is going to be happening (Chinese characters are now in URLs)?
 - Looking at exponential increases and power increases, how will this impact our ability to globally and locally connect?



Educational Gaming??

- Neverwinter Nights and Modding . . .
 - Commercial add-ons
 - Teacher modded games
 - Student modded games
 - Can focus on process and content
- Others will follow





Connecting Students?

- WebQuests
- Collaborative Tools
- Connecting Classrooms (Video-Conferencing)
- Email pen-pals
- Blogging
- Discussion forums (asynchronous)
- Chat (synchronous)
- Online gaming