

Exploring the possibilities of using social networking sites in online learning

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Abstract

This roundtable discussion will focus on the educational possibilities of social networking websites. While focusing specifically the uses of various tools available in the Facebook platform, this discussion will highlight an in-progress study on student views of the possible educational applications of the Facebook social networking platform. The discussion will also highlight some of the strengths and weaknesses of currently available tools targeting higher education learning environments.

Overview

The nature of online activity prevalent among most undergraduate students is continually changing and often focuses on communication and socializing (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Jones, 2002). While the websites and web services used by college students may vary, one of the most common sites used frequently is Facebook. Among the services available to Facebook users is the ability to create and participate in simple games, facilitate communication among a group of users, and other capabilities relating to higher education. It will be the focus of this roundtable discussion to consider the possibilities of how the various features of Facebook and other social networking sites might be used in the context of a higher education course.

This primary focus of this roundtable discussion will be on an in-progress study in which undergraduate students were asked about the possible uses of the Facebook social networking platform in higher education. Additionally, a survey will be administered to collect data concerning student response to the use of Facebook games in the context of a higher education course. Development of the survey instruments is currently underway and will be implemented in the course during the fall, 2008 academic term.

References

- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The Benefits of Facebook "Friends:" Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites. *Journal of Computer Mediate Communication*, 12(4), 1143-1168.
- Jones, S. (2002). The Internet goes to college: How students are living in the future with today's technology [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 4/13/2008, from http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_College_Report.pdf