Brief Paper Proposal

How could Web 2.0 be shaping web-assisted learning?
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Since Web 2.0 was first coined in 2004 (Graham, 2005), this practice of version-numbering has attempted to reflect the real and imagined evolution of many other physical and online territories (e.g., eLearning 2.0; Enterprise 2.0; Library 2.0). Yet, there is little agreement on how best to define the unique characteristics that warrant this nomenclatural practice.

The earliest attempts to delineate the technologies and services defined as Web 2.0 tended to be broadly inclusive. One of the best example is Angermeier's (2005) famous bubble map which itemizes (with links to corresponding Wikipedia articles) nearly 60 technology, service and functional characteristics. More recent attempts have focused on a much smaller list that tend to emphasize mainly the social dimensions of these elements (see Anderson, 2007).

This presentation will begin with a description of four key dimensions of Web 2.0. It will then explore these dimensions in relation to the current practices and types of online and web-based tools used in higher education settings. For example, it is quite common to find one of two commercial Course Management Systems (CMS) deployed at today's universities (Blackboard and WebCT). The students, we would argue, learn that this institutional approach to web-assisted learning tends to be very enterprise-biased -- that this management-heavy, controlled use of web resources is more about distribution and administration of learning content than about collaborative and social interaction. As instructors, we must also be concerned about how our choice of online tools shape the student's mental models of learning.

Universities need to provide students with an experience of innovative Web 2.0 services. Students are already conversant with the social networks created through Facebook, YouTube, and MySpace communities, and should find a web environment at universities that is familiar, not one that is top-down, administration-centric.

The paper will conclude by proposing a simple model for understanding the
roles of both learner and instructor, and the possible ways that the Web 2.0 environment impacts the activities of communication, collaboration, creation and assessment.

References