



Technology and Learning

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The Evolution of the Digital Coursepack

By Joshua Kim October 28, 2010 9:15 pm EDT

Digital coursepacks have the ability to incorporate content that today is available only through the learning management system (LMS). The iPad is a great platform to develop coursepack specific apps, ones that can facilitate the efficient consumption and navigation of course content and deliverables.

A well designed iPad coursepack app would offer a superior reading experience for text (articles, chapters or instructor created content), while also integrating multimedia. The next step is annotation, sharing, and community functions. Coursepack vendors are moving beyond their traditional roles of clearing copyrights and offering Web or print coursepacks. They are moving into creating platforms that support and mirror the entire narrative of a course, from instructor generated content to multimedia..

This content on a digital coursepack can include:

- Learning outcomes for each class module.
- Articles.
- Web content.
- Book chapters.
- Video of captured lectures/ presentations (synced audio, slides and sometimes video).
- Assignments by week.
- Information on course projects.
- Curricular videos, animations and learning objects.
- Screencasts and tutorials.

(What am I missing? Assessments? Simulations?)

The course content can be arranged in narrative format, with metadata surrounding each piece of content. Students can utilize their digital coursepack to understand the narrative flow of the course, a map of all the curriculum and deliverables.

Digital coursepacks are different from the LMS, as the main purpose is to consume content as opposed to interact and collaborate with other students. The LMS, conversely, should become more social, and evolve to facilitate the rapid authoring and sharing of content.

A digital coursepack is primarily about consumption, and should be one option in a menu of coursepack formats that includes: print (whole paper coursepacks delivered from a print-on-demand order), the ability to print individual content pieces, browser based access, offline application access, and mobile device versions. For mobile I'd include a Kindle version and perhaps other formats (such as Android or Blackberry).

The point is to allow the student to select the format and device that she wants to consume the course content on.

I know of 3 vendors in the marketplace who are moving in this direction, Symtext, XanEDU, and Study.Net. (In terms of supporting multimedia within their traditional content clearance and multi-platform (print, Web, iPad etc.) coursepack models. Am I missing any players in the digital coursepack field?

Do you have any experience with digital coursepacks? Do you think this method of delivering course content has potential to grow? Will Blackboard buy into this business, as the digital coursepack has the potential to threaten their mobile play?