

iPhone to iPad - Where to now?

Editorial

From iPhone to iPad: what we have learned and what we are about to learn

by

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In 2007, shortly after the release of the iPhone, I wrote: "The modern rite of connectivity is mobile, and the cellphone appears to have become the most relevant device for undergraduates. The indoor wireline desktop and the carry-on size notebook model of accessing education is not ghosting away, but the micro-screen mobile is likely to become the device of choice for accessing online courses." The challenge for content experts and designers is to determine how best to attract, retain, and, most importantly, educate, the on-demand digerati. (1)

What have we discovered after almost 6 years, and what are we and our students encountering?

In 2007, I had thought: "The pulling-in aesthetic of the micro-screen along with the act of accessing is enough to envelop the instructor and the learner in a unique relation. The psychological power of being at-use means there is no need for the designer to worry about the device user being distracted, they never are; although many text and drive they really cannot because one cannot pay attention to everything at the same time, which is not the definition of multitasking." (2)

Noticeably, in 2013 we can do all that I envisioned in 2007 and more, so much more in fact that it might be too much. Distraction, it turns out, is indeed *the prevalent enemy* we are continuously battling in a war for the attention of the mobile always-on learner.

That starting point must be rethought in the never-gone (LCD) light of experience

Now we can do it all on our smartphones, and, not unlike the movie Avatar, almost anything "technological" can be done: reality can be augmented, everything can arrive on our student's mobile device. The question we must, paradoxically, slow down and address quickly is: what is the effect on the ability to teach and the capacity to learn?

I had thought "e-Personality" (3), the force of well crafted content taught by a talented, companionable online teacher would be a sufficient starting point to break through the fourth screen and reach the learner, but no one could have predicted the 100,000 plus Apps which compete on the same screen at the same time (the icons are always there), continuously tugging at the attention of. That starting point must be revised.

What have we discovered? We have realized that screen reading, of any sort (our mini-screen is not alone), is not compatible with the deep reading required for learning.

I have also found, by way of example, that answers to essay assignments which have been written on and are sent to me from a smartphone contain the same sorts of errors that an onground window-gazer would make, and now we find that we can't be sure if our mobile students are able to learn in this distracted bubble.

Now with the iPad, much has been enlarged.

Can we turn this around? Can we lead the mobile digeratti back to the stability required for learning?

The answer is yes, and my next editorial will suggest a number of design and instructional methods.

- (1)Chepya, P., *Community College Enterprise*, Vol. 13, No.2, Fall 2007
- (2)*Ibid*, p.62
- (3)Chepya, P., *Educause Quarterly*, Vol.28, No.3, August 2005

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