

# Where's the Learning in (Micro)-Learning Content?

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# Learning Content as “Learning Objects”

- Any entity, digital or non-digital which can be used, re-used and referenced during technology-supported learning
- e.g. multimedia content, instructional content, instructional software... in a wider sense...learning objectives, persons, organizations, or events
- “if everything is a learning object, then nothing is a learning object” (D. Merrill)

# Technical e-learning Standards & Specs

- SCORM: "a pedagogically neutral means for designers and implementers of instruction to aggregate learning resources for the purpose of delivering a desired learning experience."
- *IMS Learning design: pedagogically neutral "notation" for learning processes & environments*

# Where's the Learning in LO's and Standards?

- If these are germane to all types of learning, then in what way are they about learning?
- Would they not then work to support many more kinds of of human activity:
  - Learning objects → information resources
  - Learning design → process design
  - Content packaging → for all content

# Between Everything & Nothing

- Look to existing *genres* and the practices associated with them
- Genre: “an intersection of several phenomena in a context of use, its study has spanned many disciplines and areas of praxis, from the arts to metadata schemes.”
- A gestalt of form, content & purpose

# Genre

- Includes “the notion of social acceptance; that is, a document is of a particular genre to the extent that it is recognized as such within a given discourse community.” (Kwasnik & Crowston, 2005)
- Rely on them heavily to talk about entertainment, work products & much more.

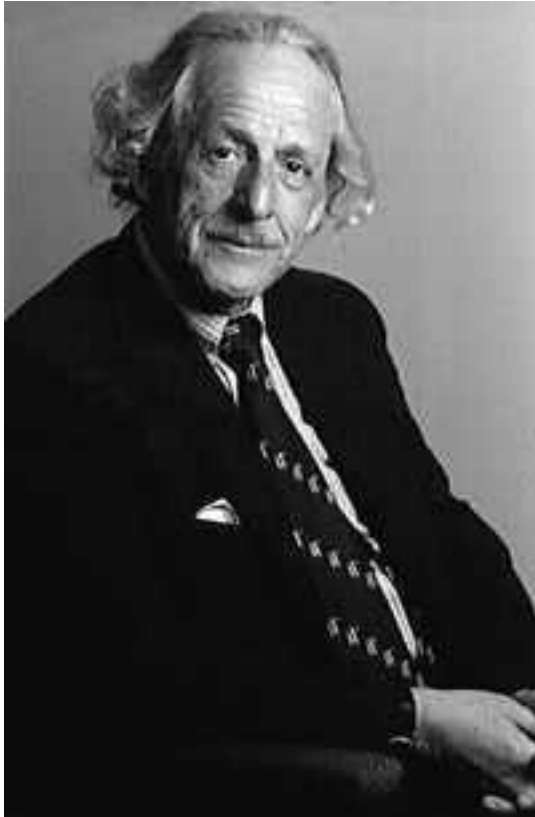
# Genres: Digital & Microcontent

- A stabilizing force; provides for familiarity in a shifting & vast landscape of communicative choices
- A shortcut to identifying and participating in communication; via templates, consensual constraints
- Crossed or mutated from print to digital:
  - Web/print page; letter/memo to email or bulletin board message
  - Citation to link/bookmark; Diary entry to Blog entry

# Genres: Digital & Microcontent

- Changes the development of content types and the standards that support them:
  - From technical to consensus-building & community formation
- Explicitly use (modified) genres as design metaphors
- Recognize their stability & persistence

# Citation



- Microcontent pioneer?
- Eugene Garfield, founder of the “citation index & the field of “citation analysis”
- Relies on footnotes & references
- Powerful means of analysis, evaluation and information management

# Citation

- Metadata provided: date, title, location, citation creator, bibliography (keywords)
- Generic precursor is clear
- Citeulike, del.icio.us
- “Bookmark list” as a generic context is ambiguous
- Community consensus is still developing

# Entry/Message

- Metadata: author, title, date.
- Generic understanding of email/postings (e.g.):
  - Closure/ overture; discontinuation/ continuation of writing
  - I/you, here/there, now/then (Altman, 1982)
- Context of and relationships to other micro-content entities as paramount
- Does it have pedagogical value as microcontent?
- **See: Genre Analysis of Weblogs (Herring et al)**

# Objects and Standards

- Need standards to support these types of information and communication in terms of their generic identity and stability
- Develop new approaches to content from their consensual, generic roots, as well as in terms of computational architectures and models

# Conclusions

- Genres are for particular purposes; standards supporting them will be pedagogically committed, not neutral
- Microcontent + context = potential educational value
- Genre analysis allows for an approach to design and use that emphasizes community and consensus over technology