

Bridget Hall

## Personal Learning Environment Assignment

When trying to select what my personal learning environment was, I couldn't decide. It was all a jumble. My mind went 50 different ways, and then 50 other ways. And that is when I figured it out.

Much like the first few sentences of this blogpost, I am unorganized, all over the place completely. I buy folders only to set them on the footstool under my television. And so I decided that my personal learning environment had to be the most unorganized of the things used for organizing that I had: my backpack (or messenger bag now – graduate school has allowed me on this level I suppose). So I will start from the outside and work my way in.

I have four pockets on the outer sides of my messenger bag. They contain things like pens, paper clips, notecards and random trash that I forgot to throw away. These items may seem trivial and small, but regarding the way I learn things, they are invaluable. I remember things by writing and re-reading. Pens are my constant companion. I do believe that I have three in each bag I carry, mainly because I have forgotten about the previous two. I write notes, scribbles, important facts, lyrics to songs I want to remember, websites...the list could go on and on. The fact of the matter is, that without my pens, and of course something to write on (notecards for instance – how handy they are already in the pockets!) I would not learn efficiently. I would not remember. I would not remind myself. Because those are the pains of being unorganized, my mind wanders to the next great thing that I want to write down.

So how do I keep these things all together? Those side pockets on the outside of my messenger bag are not nearly big enough for folders, obviously, so I use paper clips. Simple as that. I'm deeply sorry if you were disappointed by this explanation.

Well, since I now own a messenger bag as I have toted before, there are very few pockets to go through, but I will continue on with the second and largest of the three. In this pocket lives the holy grail of papers that I am not sure where they came from or when I will need them. Remember that paragraph about paperclips a little bit ago? Where I clipped it short (pun intended)? Well there may be a little bit more to that explanation than I let on. See, folders and I have a past, we don't get along. They would rip apart, papers would fall out and inconsequently by the end of every year I would hate the color blue. Why? Because my science folder was always blue...and well, I didn't get along with science either. But connecting this back to my PLE, in short, this is what works for me. Chaos. I shove the paper that the teacher gives to me in my bag because I know it will be there when I look for it. I won't have left it on my desk in a folder, I will have remembered it there in my bag, slightly ripped and a bit more crinkled than when it came to me, but I will remember. I'll recognize what it looks like and the main points because I put it in my bag and my bag is the first place I look for things.

Continuing on into the labyrinth of this massive pocket, one may stumble upon one of two computers. On study days it is usually a Sony and on serious days it is a Mac. The Mac is new, so welcome to the family you big silver dude, you. I'll start with veteran though, the Sony. On this guy I use things like Gmail, UOregon email, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Skype, YouTube and various news outlets. The Gmail and UOregon email I use to keep in contact and up to date. They keep me connected to the outside as well as my immediate world of people. They also do a really good job of collecting spam...who knew.

Facebook is my most used social media outlet. Here is where I keep up with and interact with new and old friends. I check and see how everyone is doing and rejoice in new life events! I also follow the Omaha World Herald, my hometown newspaper, to keep up to date with what is going on and what I might be missing while out West. This description can also be used for Instagram and Pinterest although they are slightly different platforms. YouTube though...YouTube is my jam. Because I have not integrated into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and still buy CDs and have never download any music ever, I use YouTube as my go to for my favorite music. I create playlists and then hunt for the next best mellow indie rocker that I haven't heard of yet. NPR has a great YouTube channel to follow (as well as Facebook page) when I task myself with a mission such as this.

This computer also contains all of my documents and homework assignments from my first year of undergrad until now. These documents are not just homework though, they contain ideas, poems, and songs and so on. Being my personal computer I suppose that we have formed a sort of trusting relationship. It understands that I have too many folders and unrecognizable file names, and it still stays with me. Because if worse comes to worse, it presents me with the search tool and then all is right in the world.

Now onto the Mac. I mentioned the Mac was new, this is because I received it for my GRF with ChinaVine. I work on this computer, updating social media, searching for the next thing in Chinese culture I can share with world and working through organizational documents. In a sense, this computer has opened up a whole new door for me learning-wise. I get to research about a culture that I have not studied in-depth before and it something that I am really enjoying. But since the Mac is new, I am still getting used to its keyboard...I mean we can't all be perfect.

My notebook is also residing in this never-ending pocket. It is where I do all of my course note-taking. I rarely if ever take notes for class down on a computer. If I have said it once, I have said it a million times, when I write, I remember!

One last thing that has a permanent place in that second pocket and is quite contradictory to this whole blogpost is my planner. You heard that right, my p-l-a-n-n-e-r. But I promise I haven't turned on you, all you self-identifying scatterbrains! As I mentioned earlier though, I do need to remember, and to remember I write down. This planners contains meetings, events, assignments, phone numbers, names, two notepads I use for note taking and sketching and...you guessed it, a pen! My planner is where I occasionally collect and trap those thoughts that run rampant so they might eventually turn into something else.

Our tour has reached its final pocket, the back one, the pocket I have to twist my arm around in some unearthly way to get out what I need. In this pocket lay two things. The first are all of the pamphlets and flyers that I am given and pick up around campus and at events. I keep these in my bag, because even though many people might not think it, they come in handy. Those flyers are sometimes those little bits of information that I am able to use to complete or add to a thought or project. They sit in my bag because the person who gave them to me thought they were important and that deserves some sort of recognition. The second are my earphones. I am not normally the type of person who walks around campus emanating teen angst with my oversized headphones, but because I have a job where a lot of my time is spent at the computer as well as my innate joy for music in general, I make sure I have them when I know I will be in a place that they are suited for. Music helps me in my creative process, it

inspires me, and although I cannot read with my headphones in (distractions my dear Watson), they do help me discover and create.

So there it is, my personal learning environment in a nutshell, or perhaps a messenger bag. There is much more that I believe I use and learn from, but a bag is what I take with me. It's what I use to help collect my otherwise messy thoughts and make sense out of them, so when I might take something complete out of my bag, someone else will have the wish to slide it into theirs, crumpled or not.