

My Personal Learning Environment

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I tend to think of my personal learning environment as being the world because I absorb information from many different sources in every setting, but that is rather broad. I narrowed the focus to how I access the world and came to the conclusion that my personal learning environment is my desk in my apartment. It is a mess, but an organized mess, and is covered in an array of personal and educational materials. On it can be seen a partial roll of quarters for laundry, pictures of my family and me, cards they have sent, learning materials I use for the class I teach as a Graduate Teaching Fellow, a mug that I bought at the Getty that I use regularly, and that plastic container on the right actually belongs to a friend back East. I forgot to return it to his kitchen this past summer. But, inside of it are three small buttons I made for him and plan on giving him because he is a button collector.

Naturally, in the center of all of this is my MacBook, and I would be distraught and face academic ruin if something were to happen to it that would result in a loss of all of the work I've done that I've not backed up. It, in addition to my iPhone (pictured in the infographic), it is one of two portals that keep me in touch with my friends around the world whom I otherwise would not stay in touch with. I have friends in India, Italy, Canada, Singapore, Turkey, and throughout the US. This is why there is a globe in the center of the infographic and it is covered in lines that are suggestive of the virtual network keeping us all instantaneously connected and informed.

Much of my learning occurs through news my friends' post – about themselves and news they find interesting – as well as organizations I follow on Facebook, which is why that logo is at the very top of the world. The group of logos on the left consists of organizations based here in the US, and the three in the lower right corner, Al Jazeera, The Guardian, and the BBC, are based abroad. To be more accurate, The Guardian and BBC are British and Al Jazeera has an American bureau, but its parent affiliate is in the Middle Eastern country of Qatar. It's nice to see US and world news from a “foreign” perspective because it shows how the US is perceived and what other countries think is relevant.

Looking at the group on the left, there are seven logos in addition to Facebook representing sources of current events knowledge for me. They are NPR, The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Associated Press, YouTube, Yahoo (email), and Gmail. I include email because I am on organizational listservs and also receive news from friends and family that way. The picture of an iPhone is included because I have all of these apps on it so I can access these sources when not at my computer. It is also how I talk with my family and friends directly. Pinterest is where I go for interior design and recipe ideas; Amazon is a source for books, movies, and documentaries; and the University of Oregon 'O' is there because I am constantly accessing the university library (both virtually and physically), my UO email and blackboard as well as other class sites to facilitate my learning.

When I speak of the importance of learning what “the news” is, I’m speaking of news in a sense that covers more than the latest headlines. I want to know about discoveries in astronomy, archeology, and other sciences, how communities are rebuilding themselves post-industrial/modern age, politics, music, and progressive social commentary. I also want to know the news as people share it in their own words, video uploads, and pictures in addition to what major news outlets report.

In conclusion, my personal learning environment is the world as much as I can access it virtually and physically. I do think that the virtual learning environment has been more a source for my own personal knowledge growth than the classroom ever was growing up. However, I do keep in mind that at the end of it all, I am the one filtering the knowledge and I can never truly know what an experience is like unless I encounter it myself.