

The Need for New Tools To Connect Learning [Design] to Collective Knowledge Building

Core issues facing [design] education

- **Rising costs and falling enrollment;**
meager fund-raising and empty endowments.
- **Schools are top-heavy and badly managed;**
in many cases: governed by non-designers.
- **They are conservative and slow-to-change;**
cut off from industry and innovation.

What's worse...

- Schools exploit precarious gig workers; hiring “adjuncts” without offering benefits.
- Some faculty do not believe design can be taught — i.e., they believe useful knowledge is “particular”.
- Research and publishing are not a central part of design culture; design schools have little history of leadership or knowledge building.

And if that weren't enough,
***we all* face an epochal shift in technologies.**

**Let's pivot from education
to
the foundations of learning.**

We might agree
that
critical thinking
is
both a goal *and* a means
of learning.

In addition
to
critical thinking
—
design is defined
by
critical making.

Critical making requires **critique**.

theory > activity > reflection >

Thinking and critique are *mediated*—

bound up in language,

in conversation,

and in the other communications technologies.

Changes in communications technologies also change our thinking and critique.

Oral culture was replaced by hand writing.

Hand writing was replaced by printing.

Printing has been replaced by the web.

Reading [the web] has been replaced by search.

Search has been replaced by AI.

Just ask Claude whatever you need to know!?

i.e., “Live by the Claude; die by the Claude.”

Many young people now believe that **reading books and articles is no longer central** — or even necessary for learning.

In a world where the main tools and systems for collective knowledge-building have been books and articles...

Discussions about the future of learning must also ask:

What will replace books and articles?

In other words:

**How might we improve
the tools and systems we use
for collective knowledge-building?**

Will Wikipedia survive?

What comes after Notion and Obsidian?

Personal vector databases?

Collaborative knowledge graphs?

Agentic interns and coaches?

Designers of new tools and systems
must also keep in mind:

How might we foster play and curiosity?

Special thanks to
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Presentation posted at
presentations.dubberly.com/new_learning_tools.pdf

Appendix

Work history

1986 - 1994, Apple
Creative Director

1995 - 1999, Netscape
Vice President of Design

2000 - present, Dubberly Design Office
Co-founder

Selected clients:

Abbott, Accenture, Allstate, Amazon, CNN, Daikin, Google, Gallup
IBM, J&J, Lilly, National Geographic, Nikon, Palm, Samsung, Sun, Visa

Teaching history

47 courses, ~1,000 students

1990 - 1991, Art Center, Computer Graphics
Founding Chair

1992 - 1996, San Jose State, Graphic Design
Information Design, Interface

2002 - 2007, Stanford, CS HCI
Cybernetics + Systems

2013 - 2026, CCA, IxD BFA+MDes,
Systems Design

2023 - present, UC Berkeley, MDes Program,
Design Frameworks

References

Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, (1964).

Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, (1982).

Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, (1985).