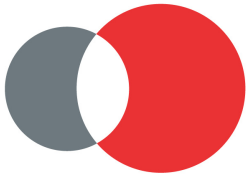




The Internet is emerging as the major communication, education, and entertainment vehicle of our time. Advantaging its potential to deliver content and messages is crucial to the success of any contemporary enterprise. The following 8 discussion points represent tendencies for the web over the next five years. These tendencies will begin to set expectations for the character of all leisure time experiences both virtual and real and will pressure all educational institutions to react.

1. **The Web is becoming a space not a page.** Web sites will be increasingly architectural spaces that users will enter and navigate virtually. Moving through the space in the same manner they would proceed through an exhibition, office, classroom, or store, they will be immersed in a dynamic, three-dimensional space. As they interact with these virtual spaces they will be able to intuitively click on objects in that space to dig deeper and deeper into integrated data bases associated with these virtual objects.
2. **Web Navigation is becoming intuitive, not linear.** Entering a virtual office, store, exhibition, or room, all the digital doors, drawers, furniture, equipment, specimens, images, desk materials will be “hot”. For instance, as the cursor passes over a door labeled “Library” the doorknob will turn, the door will swing open revealing shelves of books. Each book’s title will indicate what data base or site destination will be accessed by clicking on that book. Or when a cursor passes over the picture on the wall of a group of employees, each one’s name and title will pop-up activating streaming video showing what services that employee provides for clients. These dimensional, interactive, and intuitive webby navigational systems will replace the pull down menus and tables of content borrowed from the print media.
3. **Web objects are file folders not individual items.** On Amazon.com users do not take a single book off the shelf, as in the real book store; rather, they open an entire file on that book with references, links, other related texts, reviews, etc. Similarly, when any virtual object is “taken” off its web shelf, a virtual file on that item including audio, video, frequently asked questions and related data links are instantaneously made accessible. Related objects will appear in thumbnail images, a web circle will be offered allowing immediate access to other related web sites.
4. **The Web is choice-centered, customizable and personalizable.** Increasingly, web sites will have a smart front-end software that will recognize consumers when they enter, will know their interests and past interactions, cueing them to relevant new things on the site that match their interests. A frequently asked questions page would allow visitors to submit their personal question to the site and get an e-mail answer within 48 hours. They also would be able to view the most



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frequently asked questions in their domain of content interest and choose questions from the list that interested them, discovering answers and links to continue their inquiry throughout the site and on partners sites. While viewing a live, streaming-video lecture by content experts, key words in his or her presentation will prompt related images and content to appear in a sidebar area. Viewers can choose to follow those cues and investigate that particular aspect of the lecture at their own pace and depth, returning to the live talk after investigating the interest area high-lighted by the side bar data. Web Museum visitors will collect objects from multiple virtual museums to create their own collections and exhibitions inviting friends to their personal e-openings. Increasingly, this customizability and individualized experience will become the norm and expectation for all leisure time activities whether on web or in the community.

5. **The Web is interconnected and seamlessly searchable.** By developing a rich site intimately interconnected to partners' data bases and web sites combined with a powerful front-end search engine, users will be able to type in questions, key words, relevant concepts and the site will seamlessly connect them to content that fits their particular needs. For instance, if a student needs to do a project on sharks, not only would that key word alert her to all the shark related material on the interconnected sites, it would also assist her to refine her search, negotiating more focused research questions, refining the request until it fits both her project needs but also matching her project with available data bases and content residing on the sites.
6. **The Web is becoming an interactive, open-ended, social space not a passive, closed, media space.** Increasingly the public square is being replaced by the private screen of the computer; serious public discourse and debate over vital social issues is happening on-line. Much of the social activity that used to happen in cafes, auditoriums, union halls, public gathering spaces of all sorts is being replaced by chat rooms, blogs, MUD rooms, and asynchronous web sites. Web users will be invited to meet the experts live in chat rooms to discuss research and issues in real time. Others will participate in a debate with strings of comments made by policy makers, scientists, educators, or ordinary citizens asynchronously. Structured symposia, debates, lectures will be followed by open ended responses, questions, and discourse and themed or issue-specific chat rooms developed to discuss related content and issues. Unlike television, lectures, or exhibitions, the Web allows for give and take, interaction, active user response, and instantaneous critique. Conversational networks form around shared interest and issues and information can be thematically packaged and repackaged to fit the needs of targeted individuals or groups.
7. **The Web is immediate and cumulative.** Unlike other media, the web can be inexpensively updated and altered daily. New content accumulates and informs old as the depth of data gathers over time. Unlike other media, the Web instantly collapses space and time. Content that could not fit into physical media or publications is



immediately available to be launched on Web. Users from all over the world can simultaneously access the web without the barriers of space and time. As new science or interpretation emerges, it can immediately be launched on web, making it the most up-to-date resource for reliable, high-quality content or illegitimate tripe. There is a rising crisis of authority and legitimacy over uncontrolled distribution of web content without adequate attribution.

8. **The Web is evolving from interactive space towards play space.** Play and gaming are natural and motivating ways for humans to learn. The digital game, as a form, has adapted to each emerging technology platform from Ipods to cell phones to laptop computers. Harnessing the unique capability of games to serve serious learning purposes is a natural direction for the web. Gaming will move from a playful distraction to a serious modality for learning and consumer decision-making; political, economic, or environmental. Several countries have already launched cyberbudgets to let citizens play at balancing the national budget. Consumer sites increasingly go beyond mere interactivity and encourage buyers to participate in role-playing and simulation games before making their commitment to buy a car, book a hotel, or take a vacation. Identity is a slippery concept on the web with users often having multiple screen names and personae to suit different roles and needs. On the positive side, the consumer/decision-maker can play different roles and assume different identities to experiment with and experience multiple points of view before making economic, political, or social decisions. In this sense, play is becoming a meaningful and substantial modality on the web in multiple manifestations from educational to commercial.

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