Susan Capestro
WholeMusicLessons.com
susan@WholeMusicLessons.com

Opine, Define and Assign Online: Creating Blogs, Wikis, and Forums
National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy 2009
Chicago, IL, July 30, 2:00, Magnolia C

To readers: These are my detailed notes from this presentation. I hope they will be helpful in rounding out the information on the slides. They are simply my notes, and as such, are unedited. So, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at the email address above.

Know the editorial Structure: Traditional, is top down.
Web content: in social sites, is bottom up.

**Know the difference between content that you put up,
and content that is EMERGENT.**

You can put up content, and hope people visit, congregate, form a community, but you really can't artificially do that. You have to let it emerge.

That's why Whole Octave began as my site, then became a community (because I wanted to begin to used interactive, collaborative tools). Eventually, another more natural community grew out of that, so now that is the community, and it is called WholeMusicLessons.com. We have let it EMERGE.

WholeMusiclessons.com ("WML") is an online community, driven not only by interest, but also by some structured stuff:
 • there are modules teachers and students can download and learn from
 • there's actual content members come to and pay for
 • and because they're there, they might want to communicate with each other.

Building the community there made more sense. It strengthens members' relationships with me, the founder, and with each other. The content is compelling enough, and captures the eyeballs of people who are enthusiasts for the materials on the site, which help integrate jazz/pop with traditional keyboard repertoire. The material naturally flows from the community.

IDEALLY, SOCIAL NETWORKING REINFORCES WHAT YOU'RE DOING WITH A WEB SITE.
INSTEAD OF CREATING AN ARTIFICIAL COMMUNITY, IT ACTUALLY STRENGTHENS WHAT YOU'RE OFFERING.

 • web 2.0 is about participation, collaboration, openness, transparency
 • it suggests not just community but an open, sharing, engaged community.
 • It's as much about you engaging your audience as it is them engaging each other.
 • The more you do to enhance the experience, and give them opportunities to participate in whatever way, it reinforces the site.

Know the difference between:

STATIC CONTENT - usually text that is just there, stuff you can read
INTERACTIVE CONTENT - you read, watch, listen, comment, and generally do things with it. Interact with it.

SHOW INTERACTIVE WEBSITE - the design thingy...http://www.phylotaxis.com

INTERACTIVITY...
As a member, a person can also share...say, after they have downloaded a module, and used it. I can help them develop their own modules around the stuff, which then could be shared with other members.

PTO - parent teacher associations - they started because the PTA was too hierarchical, top down. PTO today - online magazine - provides ways to share amongst themselves things they learned. Gives tips and tricks they get from that community.

There should be enough material there of value from day one, enough opportunity to produce and share stuff...share their experience of trying to do this and that... and what they learned.
It provides an added value... unless they publish a book, there's no way to share what they've learned
WholeMusicLessons.com provides an infrastructure for this, for members sharing what has worked for them around my ideas.

MORE DISTINGUISHING DIFFERENCES

BLOG - If you've got a blog with commenting, and you pose some idea, and people comment, it's often easier for people to use than a forum. The blogging model is easier for someone who's not fully invested in spending a lot of time. They drive by, leave a comment, and they're done.

With blogging, there's there is some sort of dialogue going on...you're starting a conversation, and asking for comments. Not like a lesson where you might be asking for feedback. It's ideas in a dialogue that adds value.

You propose something controversial or whatever...**the objective is to start a conversation.**You can use a blog just to push info out, **but that's really not what a blog is**. (You can do that with just articles on your site.) Once you have ideas up, and dialogue going on, then the next step is...blogs are only useful unless you get a whole community of people involved in it, so that's where putting the RSS, aggregated feeds up come in...and doing things so that people can find your blog becomes a part of bringing traffic to your site, but also a way of giving your blog a life, making it possible for new people to join the conversation.

It's not like a lesson, because you don't have the organizational capabilities in a blog. I put up an article, it's an idea, then I got some comments...it has a life of its own, it could be instructional, but there's not a good way to then organize the blog...into chapters, etc. It's too free form for that. You can relate whatever's in the blog discussion to whatever is going on in the curriculum, that doesn't mean they have to be in the same place and use the same tool.

A wiki has the advantage of: you can have more organization. pedagogically - then you can allow people to add, comment correct, whatever, but fundamental structure is still that of a **BOOK. ORGANIZED INFO.** a repository for organized information.

disorganized is blog - LITTLE SPLATTER OF THIS, THAT, etc. only may have currency for a short period of time. maybe it *relates* to *a chapter in the wiki*... it may lead you back...and, stuff that becomes shaped enough MAY eventually become it's something you create a chapter in the wiki on...but it may only have currency for a specific period of time, it's just a thought you're putting out there. it may lead you to, if stuff becomes shaped enough, this would make a good chapter for the book. I could organize this material so it becomes curriculum. It has to pass that threshold. (Everything is not a lesson.)

When you go to zdnet, and look at diff blogs on diff topics, cell phones, stuff on this, that, they're all about: "I'm going to try it out and write about it." other people write, this is what I discovered.**As I discover some new thing i'm going to try out, I put it in the blog.** the blog is over time. You start, people comment, you add to it, there's a dialogue going on, and then at some point, it may suggest a second article...to crystallize all of that, where you say, these people said this, then I went and checked it out, and here's what I found.

Also, to allow other authors to say, I discovered this thing...or... in the process of learning to play the piano, I discovered this wierd connection with yoga, and I just want to share that with people...how breathing has helped me to control my anxieties so I can perform better. that's not so much about the curriculum as it is people sharing their experiences. People love to see their own stuff. I bought my new computer and I want to tell you what it took me to get it all set up. That's a blog article.

...diary notion...not a deep thought, that took 6 months to write and got just perfect, but rather just something in a couple of paragraphs... not a lot of editing

"my five favorites"

the difference between BLOG and NEWS

A news article in context of a site like this, is not Russia declares war, but it needs to be something that's newsworthy. Like it might be you're announcing - some new activity or event. that's news. News has a different kind of an authoritative, fact driven, nature to it. Its the new, vs the op ed page. Think of a newspaper. (You don't expect the front page of a newspaper to be all opinion.)

A BLOG is much more like the op ed section, opinions.
There's no debate about the news. There can be a debate about what you put in the blog.
WML - they tell stories with the blogging tool. Individual members could have their own blog. There's also an aggregate blog.
They deal with things such as experiences with performance, dealing with nerves, etc. constantly butting up against your own self consciousness. better public speaker, manager, huge benefits...connection between self consciousness and nervousness and your fx iveness....things like that. Studio stories, tech articles, etc.

WIKIS

WIKI - is the right tool if you want versioning control. A wiki is organized like a book. People can collaborate writing it.

If it really is the best way to present curriculum material, maybe that's what you're using the wiki for, and all the other stuff is handled directly in articles.

But again, what are they contributing, how are they contributing, what is it that they're putting in the wiki; is it stuff that becomes like an encyclopedia, or is it just more blog type stuff?
info about piano and keyboard related stuff...may be perfectly valid way to use the wiki, if you want them to be able to collaboratively edit, and change stuff and change them back...

If it's something like...I want to buy an electronic keyboard...sort of...
At wikipedia, if you're looking for stuff like that, it's usually embedded in a larger article. If you've got an article about keyboards, that defines what a keyboard is, what the difference is between this kind of keyboard and that, it's an article, real authoritative kind of info, and then there may be things like related links that go to related resources having to do with the entry.

For instance, the Wikipedia FTP (file transfer protocol) article has the history of it, what the protocol is, and how you use it, and then underneath that, it has "here are the most widely used tools," click here, they tell you about Filezilla, it's the most downloaded application on the web, and there's a link to it, and there may be some commercial stuff, and there might be a link to those sites,

So...in our context, the article itself isn't focused on how do i buy an electric keyboard so much, as much as "here is all the info about keyboards."

Ask: What's the nature of the stuff? Is it something that really requires a lot of back and forth and maintaining and stuff, or is something that's pretty static, and once you put it together, it stays there?

Or, is it opinion, that's not going to be able to be resolved to the point of authority?

Descriptions of methods of teaching:
The middle C approach
The multi key approach
Can include history, description, and a list of books that use it.

Or, ways teachers use keyboards:
Something where you're going to have an expanding...when something new happens, somebody's got a new method you want them to add to the thing, that sounds like a wiki.
On the other hand, if it's just something someone tried out, that belongs in a blog, not a wiki.

Not duplicating what's already out there:
Info about a composer who wrote a lot of piano music...but if that already exists, you can make links to their wiki. Here is stuff you want to check out if you're looking at Beethoven: there's a wikipedia article on Beethoven. **THERE'S SOME BOOKS ON AMAZON.** Why would you create unique content about Beethoven?

THERE ARE fine distinctions between what belongs where...

FORUM - Very tricky. People put them up, and then nobody goes there. It depends on your community, if people are willing to participate in a forum. Some people resist forums; it's too much, and they don't want to do it. If they have to navigate to the forums, create a profile, there's more time involved...there's an organization to it...topic threads...find the right one by searching for what you're looking for, so you don't create something already discussed. BUT is great organizing principle for classes. You set up a forum for a particular class, then class members participate.

Also useful for tech support. Set up different forums for bugs, new features, very targeted and focused. When you do general things, a blog is better. Application for it has to be well defined. Have moderators for every topic. Very time intensive.

Tools:
MediaWiki is what Wikipedia is built on. COMPLEX.
Another good one is...

SHOW ALL TOOLS

CALENDAR
A CALENDAR can also be an interactive organizing principle.
If content is EVENT DRIVEN, you use a calendar. Group activities, conferences, recitals, are all events. A calendar of events with reinforcement in a blog style layout is good for that.
Consider: what is the life cycle of the event?
Before it, you're telling people about it, it's in a calendar, or an entry in some sort of event list. Notifying them about it, and maybe you provide a link to the venue.
Afterwards, you can blog about it.
A CALENDAR CAN FUNCTION LIKE A BLOGROLL. The events I recommend is at the WholeMusicLessons.com calendar. I drive members and visitors to stuff I think is good, just like a blogroll.

Concerts, conferences, student events, member events, recitals, webinars, broadcasts...

MOODLE
Moodle - you can integrate it
if you really have curriculum you deliver with testing, that sounds more like a good Moodle use...

For questions, email me: susan@WholeMusicLessons.com.
Susan Capestro, WholeMusicLessons.com