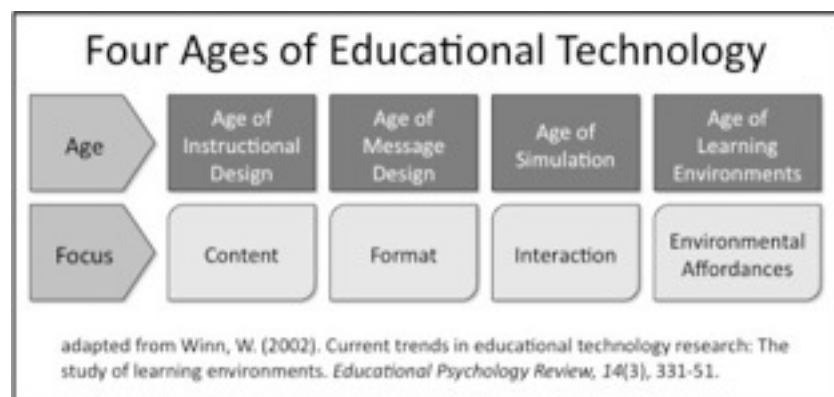


Quality of Educational Technology

I have been fortunate throughout my teaching career to work with and utilize technology on a daily basis in my classroom. Each student has had access to a computer and industry standard software tools. The challenging part has been to keep students motivated and not distracted with the Internet and playing games.

One lesson I designed that stands above all was a capstone project highlighting everything the students learned throughout the year in my Webmastering course. This project was titled, "*The Real WebWorld - a new adventure in webmastering.*" This was my first opportunity to create a WebQuest and it was intended to draw on the knowledge and skills students acquired throughout the year. The objective was to provide a real world experience as part of a web design company creating a web site for a fictional client. The first objective for each group would be to create a name and logo to brand their web design company. Students would work collaboratively in groups of 4 and each student would have a special role in the project. Roles would be assigned by the team based on the strengths of each student. This collaboration was to drive student creativity and provide students opportunities to learn from their group members working on a common objective. Adobe Web Design Software, Microsoft Word, along with Adobe Acrobat would be used to design, create, and implement the project offering students an affordance to the purpose and appearance of the client's web site.

The age of simulation (from the Four Ages of Educational Technology) was represented for *The Real WebWorld* web project with a focus on interaction (Winn, 2002) as the students had to work as a team to accomplish the final objective for the fictional client. Students would make their own decisions about an appropriate design and content for the client. The team's objective was to work together problem-solving through the design process (writing content, developing the design, and communicating ideas). The final project would reflect the work of the team.



Winn (2002) reinforces how important authentic environments are to the learning process. Students have been going to school to learn without any correlation to the real world and the environmental affordances businesses use to be successful. One method to compliment the authentic environment would be to provide opportunities for students to connect with actual communication/media professionals through web conferencing. This would introduce another means of technology into the instruction without having to leave the classroom. Students would be able to ask questions to the design professional about projects and difficulties they encounter in the real world.

Instructional design so often gets overlooked and designers do not plan for oversight or problems the end user may encounter. In the book *The Design of Everyday Things* Norman (Norman, 2002, p. 9-11), the affordances of our physical surroundings and how we interact with our surroundings is analyzed. How we perceive the function of our surroundings is the result of good or bad design. The psychology of how everyday things function has allowed me the opportunity to look at my own instructional design and evaluate if I am providing a clear understanding of the objectives and the tasks for students. So many times I get shortsighted and frustrated when students do not or cannot grasp a concept or task with the instructions I provided. Norman (2002, p. 13) reaffirmed my need to observe my own work and correct any instructional problems I have created for students. I have students explore bad web site designs to get a better understanding of both good and bad websites. I think we as educators should step back at times to evaluate if it is our lack of quality instructional design that might be impeding students progress. I definitely enjoyed the lessons I learned from *The Design of Everyday Things* and will be observing the many different affordances I encounter everyday.

References:

Norman, D. (2002). *The design of everyday things*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Winn. W. (2002). Current trends in educational technology research: The study of learning environments. *Educational Psychology Review*, 14(3), 331-51.