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Why Curation Will Transform Education and Learning: 10 Key Reasons

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Content curation will play a major role both in the way we "teach" and in the way we educate ourselves on any topic. When and where it will be adopted, it will deeply affect many key aspects of the educational ecosystem.

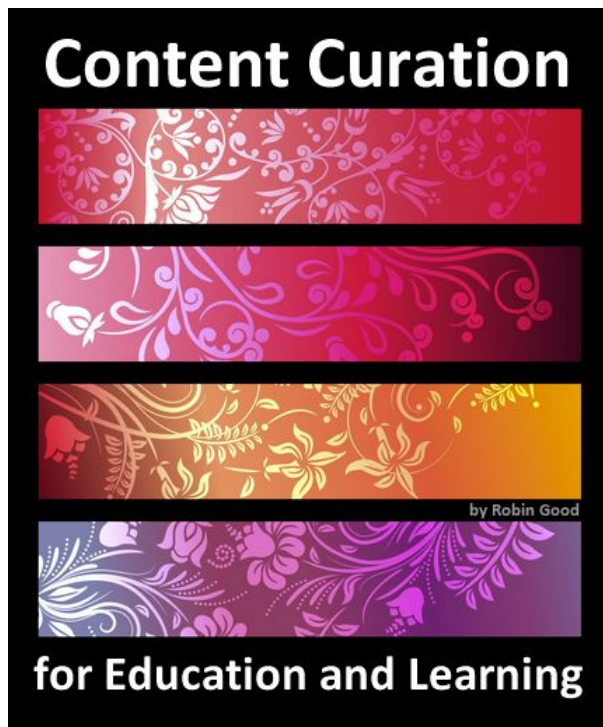


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This article, builds up over my recent presentation on Content Curation for Education that I delivered at [Emerge2012](#) virtual conference.

In that presentation I claimed that the adoption of "curation approaches" will directly affect the way competences are taught, how textbooks are put together, how students are going to learn about a subject, and more than anything, the value that can be generated for "others" through a [personal learning path](#).

If we learn not by memorizing facts, but by collaborating with others in the creation of a meaningful collection-explanations of specific topics/issues/events then, for the first time in history, we can enrich planetary knowledge each time we take on a new learning task.

And it's already happening.

Yes, we are only at the very early stages, but, in my humble opinion, there are enough signs and indications that this is not going to be something marginal.

In this article I outline ten key factors, already at work, which, among others, will very likely pave the way for a much greater and rapid adoption of curation practices in the educational / academic world.

These factors are:

1. An Overwhelming Abundance of Information Which Begg To Be Organized
2. A Growing Number of "Open" Teaching / Learning Content Hubs
3. Constantly Changing Information
4. Real-World Info Is Not Held Inside Silos
5. Fast-Food Info Consumption in Decline
6. Job Market Changing - New Skills Needed
7. Alternative Certification Systems Emerging
8. Teachers Can Curate Their Textbooks
9. Educational Marketplace Open to Thousands of Competitors
10. Demand for Trusted Guidance

Here all the details:

The Educational / Learning Climate Is Ready for Massive Change

There is a growing number of key trends that are both rapidly revolutionizing the world of education as we know it and opening up opportunities to review and upgrade the role and scope of many of its existing institutions, (as the likeliness that they are going to soon become obsolete and unsustainable, is right in front of anyone's eyes).

[George Siemens](#), in his recent Open Letter to Canadian Universities, sums them up well:

"I'm concerned that the ossification of higher education institutions, and a complete failure to build capacity for adaptation, will produce a bonanza for educational technology startups at the expense of the university's role in society.

The current generation of leaders are overseeing the large-scale dismantling of the public university. Piecemeal outsourcing, growing prominence of adjuncts, and tendering key functions of the university (online course development), are creating a context where the university will no longer be able to direct its own fate.

And it's just starting.

Add cloud computing, mobile devices, open educational resources, increased profile of universities in developing regions of the world, global competition for international students, edtech startups, greater VC interest in the education sector, reduced federal and provincial funding, changes in the federal research mandate toward commercialization, online learning, and massive open online courses ([MOOCs](#)) and we have a climate that is ripe for massive change.

"



Source: George Siemens [Open Letter to Canadian Universities - George Siemens](#)

Ten Key Reasons That Make Curation Important for Education and Learning



Navigable presentation-map of this article, including links and references - to view it just click the image above or follow this link: <http://bit.ly/Curation-for-Education-map> - This presentation-map was created to support my presentation-workshop on [Curation for Education during the Emerge2012](#) virtual conference.

1) An Overwhelming Abundance of Information Which Begg To Be Organized

The goal is not (and probably it never was) to learn or memorize all of the information available out there. It's just too much even if we focus only on the very essence of it. The goal is to learn how to learn, to know where to look for something and to be able to identify which parts of all the information available are most relevant to learn or achieve a certain goal or objective.

This is why new [digital literacy skills](#) are of such great importance. They provide the mental tools for individuals to be able to evaluate, assess, filter and organize information in more effective ways than they have done until today.

The ability to think critically and to be able to "*see*" and "*construct*" up alternative "*views*" of any issue, problem or field of interest are of the essence for those interested in learning how to make sense of the world.

Content curation embodies these research, investigative and sense-making traits.



Duration: 21':58" - The Purpose of Education - Noam Chomski - a great explanation of what is the real purpose of education

2) A Growing Number of "*Open*" and Freely Accessible Teaching/Learning Content Hubs

The rise of [Open Content](#) initiatives and "*open repositories*" provides fresh opportunities to create new value from a fast-growing mass of available educational content.

The number of "*open*" learning opportunities is growing so large that learners will soon need some guidance in selecting the most appropriate course, instructor, approach and institution to achieve their goals most effectively.

Here's a few references to the rising number of free, open educational resources out there:

- [Khan Academy](#)
- [Open Courses everywhere](#)
 - [OER](#)
 - [Open Content](#)
 - [MIT-X](#)
 - [EDX](#)
- [Directory of of Tools for Storing Open Educational Resources](#)

3) From a Static, Unchanging World of Information To a Constantly Changing One

As the quantity of accessible information rapidly increases both in volume and complexity and many old concepts are being replaced at an ever increasing rate by new ideas, it is important that:

- a) Some of us dedicate their efforts to [find, identify, monitor and update which are the most relevant "information sources"](#), hubs or curators in every possible area of interest. Search engines and traditional media do not presently provide this information, while being strongly influenced by "*brands*" and commercial interests.
- b) [We equip our youth and ourselves with appropriate mental tools to be able to carry out such tasks](#). Some of these would certainly include online searching, research, critical thinking, comparative analysis, evaluation and verification of alternative sources, classification and labeling, questioning, summarizing and synthesis skills (among others).

The content curator utilizes these above-mentioned skills and approach to achieve his objectives. This is why curation skills are likely to become key characterizing traits of future teachers / guides, and why the adoption of curation approaches inside any learning curriculum will rapidly transform our present assumptions about how we teach and learn most effectively.

4) Real-World Information Is Not Held Inside Silos Like Academic Institutions Pretend

While the academic world, from elementary schools to universities is basically organized around subjects, the "*real world*" is a complex web of situations in which the "*fields*" we studied for so long but separately in school, are all deeply and constantly intertwined.

[From the New York Times](#): "...Mr. Zimmer warned against viewing the workplace as a "collection of buckets or isolated specializations," and he emphasized the interconnectedness of different fields and skills."

Curation fits in as a more appropriate approach to learning and to prepare for real-world work challenges, by allowing learners to construct meaning by having to research and to understand and to create new relationships between different information-elements.

By studying a topic through the creation of specific knowledge-artifacts such as collections, learning guides and data visualizations instead of through the memorization of lots of information separate information units, allows not only for discovering the true relationships between apparently distinct issues, but also for the discovery and comprehension of a topic from multiple complementary viewpoints.

5) Fast-Food Information Consumption In Rapid Decline - Curation Is the New Search

[Google has lost its "mojo"](#). Search results have become increasingly unsatisfactory as they are often polluted by irrelevant, commercially-driven results or by large brands which Google likes to favor over small, independent and - hard to verify - information sources.

Google itself has long realized this and has been hard-working to significantly improve its search results.

To do so it has introduced the [Google Panda and Penguin algorithms](#) which have been designed to clean up search results from low-quality, thin and spammy content. Results so far, at least from my personal viewpoint, have not been impressive.

Recently Google has also announced the introduction of the [Knowledge Graph](#) in its search results, with the specific goal of providing greater "meaning" and "context" to its increasingly less useful search results.

Overall, my perception is that there is a growing number of people who want to move away from fast-food information access, too heavily-driven by commercial/advertising interests (a-la-Google), and onto user-driven, quality and comprehensive curated info-hubs managed by trusted people / organizations.

Linear text results sorted by secret algorithms do not seem to provide anymore valuable quality answers and explanations to many of the queries directed at learning more about a subject.

[It should be us, those who search, to establish how we want to slice and dice information results](#) according to our specific needs. But lacking for now the technology and interfaces to do so at the individual level, most have started to rely on topic-specific trusted expert guides who can provide much better suggestions and pointers than Google own secret algorithm.

In other words, researchers, educators and guides prefer to refer to trusted "curators" of specific information areas rather than to rely on Google-style secret and commercially-driven algorithms.

See also: [Content curation and the Future of Search](#)

6) The Job Market is Rapidly Changing

Outside of traditional "professionals" as doctors and engineers, companies recruiting new people are looking more for "skills and experience" than for degrees and certificates.

Fact: (in the US) 17 million college graduates have jobs that do not require a college degree.
(Source: [InsideHigherEd](#))

That's "over 30 percent of the working college graduates in the U.S."

The value of traditional [CVs](#) and resumes is rapidly fading as the value of educational certifications and degrees in the workplace is gradually diminishing. Check this short video clip to get a better idea of what is happening: [Epic 2020](#)

"The diploma serves as a screening device that allows businesses to narrow down the applicant pool quickly and almost without cost to the employer, but with a huge financial cost to the individual earning the diploma (often at least \$100,000), and to society at large in the form of public subsidies."

(Source: [InsidehigherEd](#))

"...diplomas are a highly expensive and inefficient screening device used by employers who are afraid to test potential employee skills..."

(Source: [InsideHigherEd](#))

It's the method that doesn't work anymore. Certifications and diplomas prove little about a person skills and abilities in the real world.

Today, the job marketplace requires people who can "think". People who can come up with creative solutions to unexpected problems, people who are prepared to be continuously challenged by new discoveries and innovations but who can discern which are relevant and immediately useful for their goals, and people who can recognize patterns and relationships across industries and disciplines to help them find new and better ways to achieve their objectives.

Content curation offers a practical and immediately usable approach to help new learners train themselves in developing such very skills.

7) Alternative Certification Systems Are Emerging: Open Badges

An increasing number of alternatives to academic-based traditional certification systems are emerging.

These non-academic new certification systems have the power to dent into universities dearest asset: [the lock between content being taught and the test/assessments](#) that are supposed to certify a student competence on it.

These alternative certification systems are likely to provide alternative means for many individuals to demonstrate and be valued for their skills without a need to attend academic courses, to pay expensive tuition fees, to purchase new textbooks, and to pay for exam/certification costs.

As you have probably read elsewhere, tuition costs for certified academic programs are at an all-time high while [the true value of these courses on the job market keeps decreasing rapidly](#).

"...the piles of student loans are due largely to the fact that the cost of a college degree has been going up much faster than people's incomes. And that has raised the specter that we might be living through a "**higher-education bubble**," in which Americans are irrationally borrowing money to spend more on college than it's actually worth.

We've just endured two huge bubbles, which sent the value of stocks and then homes to ridiculous levels, so the theory isn't implausible. Of course, a college-education bubble wouldn't look exactly like a typical asset bubble, because you can't flip a college degree the way you can flip a stock, or even a home.

But what bubble believers are really saying is that young people today are radically overestimating the economic value of going to college, and that many of them would be better off doing something else with their time and money.

"

Source: [New Yorker](#)

Check also: [What's a Diploma Worth](#)

Can curation help traditional academic / educational institutions save themselves from this? I doubt it, as only a handful of these institutions have actually acknowledged and recognized these changes taking place, and as these transformations are taking place at a much faster rate than institutions own traditional change-pace.

But, as the few who have already moved on to ride such deep changes (instead of being run over by them), these institutions could better manage their future sustainability by rapidly upgrading their role and function to where they can still provide a valuable and in-demand service to both society and individuals.

Here a few simple ideas.

Move from teaching and certifying to:

- a) **curating talent** - breed new talent by providing motivated learners with the ideal conditions to study, research and develop new ideas.
- b) **curating educational resources** for a specific area of interest / language / region / by creating and maintaining highly qualified "*learning paths*", and providing assistance, specialized training and resources, to those in specific need of it.
- c) **curating human guides, training future curators** - by cultivating and supporting the development of skilled information-guides and coaches that possess the skills of a curator and those of a great story-teller.

See also: [Open Badges](#)

8) Teachers and Professors Can Now Curate Their Own Textbooks

"...teachers can (and should) take control of their courses by creating their own interactive textbooks"

(Source: [PLPNetwork](#))

Whether liked or not by most academic institutions, this is already another outstanding fact: both inside and outside academic walls teachers and professors, as well as independent trainers, are now starting to curate their own textbooks by leveraging both the incredible amount of "*open*" educational materials available online as well as a growing number of tools / services that makes it possible and easy for them to do so.

There is no more need for a few academic publishing houses to maintain a monopoly on the content of whatsoever course programme, as the best textbooks and learning *curricula* will not be anymore those authored by one author, but those "*curated*" with the best content from many experts.

Academic and independent teaching curators will design new textbook and teaching curriculums / learning paths. They will do so by selecting and pulling together the best and most relevant material in a variety of formats and configurations to satisfy the needs of many different "*audiences*".

These individuals will create also great collections of exercises, case studies, real-world examples, people's profiles and toolkits to further facilitate the exploration and learning of such topics.

See also: [OpenStax College](#)

[Mc Graw-Hill Create](#)

9) Educational Marketplace Open to Thousands of Competitors

Today there is an abundance of free and affordable digital tools, web services and apps to create, find, edit and publish courses, tutorials, guides on any topic.

There are now [tens of learning marketplaces](#) and platforms that allow anyone to offer and sell courses online. From [WiziQ](#) to [Udemy](#) the number of alternative services making it possible for anyone to deliver a "*professional*" course is rapidly increasing.

Today, anyone can become both a "*resource*", a supplier of content as well as a curator / editor / publisher of new curated content resources such as book collections, expert guides, curated and annotated lists of resources, examples, or templates galleries.

How are traditional, large and small educational institutions going to compete with this myriad of new learning providers?

There is a way.

As learning and educational content will become overabundant and ubiquitous, individuals and organizations who will be able to be the first to gain authority and reputation in identifying, selecting and organizing the best and most appropriate free / open courses for anyone specific needs, will be the ones in high-demand and worth spending money into.

Someone will need to collect, organize and make-sense of this vast amount of "open" learning courses and educational materials, by creating "*curated learning paths*" for specific audiences and needs.

To curate the fast-growing amount of learning and educational resources available out there, may be one of the most appealing and cost-effective opportunities that traditional academic and training institutions may have at this point.

Educational institutions key advantage in this respect is their already established authority and credit and their established reach into the community or territory where they operate. On the other hand, small non -academic organizations may move into this space much more rapidly and efficiently than most traditional academic institutions will be willing to afford.

See also: [Online learning marketplaces and teaching platforms](#)

10) Growing Demand for Trusted Guidance Over Learning Content and Curricula

Finding and selecting quality open educational resources. This is where the opportunity lies.

When the educational offer becomes so broad there is a growing need to find relevant and reliable resources.

Take also into consideration that physical classrooms will inevitably lose much of their appeal and usefulness relative to distributed, synch and asynchronous and collaborative learning activities at a distance, where people of all ages, creeds and experience-levels can learn together and from each other (es: [MOOCS](#)).

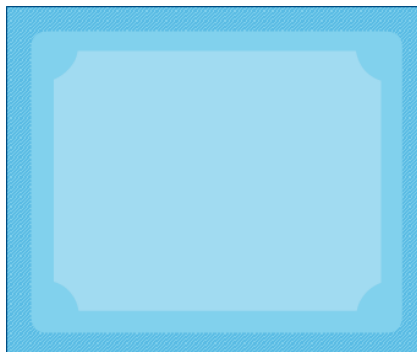
Traditional academic institutions may indeed become trusted curators and guides to the greater universe of information out there, while specializing their efforts for a set of specific areas, needs and communities of interests.

With such abundance and variety (in quality) of educational materials, learners will soon express a growing demand for trusted guides to help them in selecting quality learning guides, sources, hubs and more than anything, curated learning paths and toolkits to explore and learn deeper about a specific topic.

This is where the opportunity for both sides lies.

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Originally written by [Robin Good](#) and first published on [MasterNewMedia](#). **Robin Good** -



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