

Personal and Collaborative Publishing (PCP): Facilitating the Advancement of Online Communication and Expression within a University

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<http://radio.weblogs.com/0120501/>

What is PCP?

PCP is the system by which an individual or a group of individuals can simply own and publish to a web space. Often referred to as 'weblogs' (as the original use of these technologies was to 'log' an individuals journey around the 'web' - recording sites visited and comments on them) these technologies are now used in a number of ways. These include:

Individual Online Voices: Professional and personal expression and communication. For example: <http://radio.weblogs.com/0120501/> (My 'weblog')

Collaborative 'SIG' spaces: These can deal with any subject and allow for sharing and discussion. For example: <http://www.corante.com/many/> ('Corante: Many to Many')

Educational Tools: PCP is used by teachers in many ways, including sharing material and provoking / hosting discussion. Also with learners it has been used for reflective journaling, sharing experiences, and as an expressive voice. For example: <http://anvil.gsu.edu/technotes/> (Details many ways weblogs (PCP) can and are being used in educational contexts)

Knowledge Management & Communication: PCP has been used widely for the purposes of sharing research (for example: <http://radio.weblogs.com/0110772/>) facilitating expression and communication throughout a university (<http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/>), simple archiving of knowledge and in many business contexts <http://www.jupiterevents.com/blog/spring03/>

E-Zines: These vary from themed e-zines (for example, <http://www.xplana.com>) to wide ranging public forums (for example, <http://slashdot.org>)

Some common features of PCP are:

- Each post is the unedited, authentic 'voice' of the writer
- Each post is given a time/date stamp and a unique URL
- Posts are usually displayed with the most recent at the top of the page
- Each post can and often do have a title, content, links within it, a 'discussion' option, 'trackback' identifying related posts and other features
- Posts are automatically archived using a calendar retrieval system
- PCP websites often have RSS feeds for simple syndication

(More detail can be found at this site: <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/whatMakesAWeblogAWeblog>)

PCP is rapidly becoming a major web technology and associated technologies and trends such as RSS 'news' feeds (which allow users to 'subscribe' to websites and aggregate new content in an 'inbox' manner - which can then be reposted on the aggregators PCP tool, go to http://www.eevl.ac.uk/rss_primer/ for an overview) and the evolution of 'the living web' and 'knowledge networks' have led to

widespread growth of and investment in PCP by, among others, Google (<http://new.blogger.com/home.pyra>) and AOL (<http://tinyurl.com/ljwv>).

What are the unique benefits of PCP?

PCP is unique in that it allows for communication and expression in a way that has not previously been possible.

This is due to two significant differences offered by PCP:

The Medium

As Marshal McLuhan wrote 'The Medium is the Message'. PCP is a new medium and hence can offer new communication possibilities.

A current examination of forms of communication and expressions can result in lists like the below:

Communication: Conversations (f2f & telephone), Email, Egroups
Expression: Journals, Conferences, Meetings

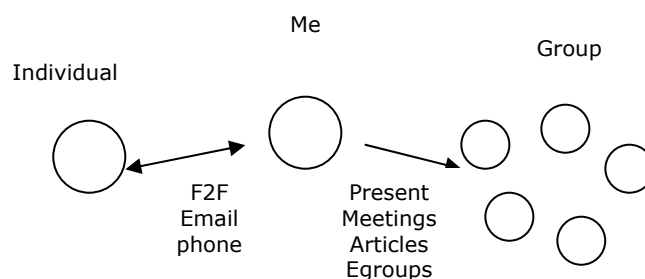
PCP, however, does not fit into any of these areas. As PCP is very much the independent voice of the writer(s) involved, much of the 'formality' and 'constraints' of formal expression are reduced. Consequently, a more authentic, more frequent and more open form of expression is often apparent. Conversely, while new technologies (email, egroups, IM etc.) have often promoted a very informal style of writing, PCP is a conscious publication to a potentially worldwide audience and consequently the 'tone' is very different with ideas and comment often much better thought out than in, for example, a newsgroup.

Further to this, PCP allows for a powerful communication experience in terms of ownership. Every post and comment is recorded and authenticated. Whereas a conversation on a discussion board is a very detached experience, a conversation taking place between PCP sites (as often happens) is much more similar to a conversation taking place face-to-face, each writer writes from his/her personal space (or comments on their correspondent's space) and retains ownership of their expression. Indeed, users can craft, design and subvert their PCP environments to reflect and project themselves.

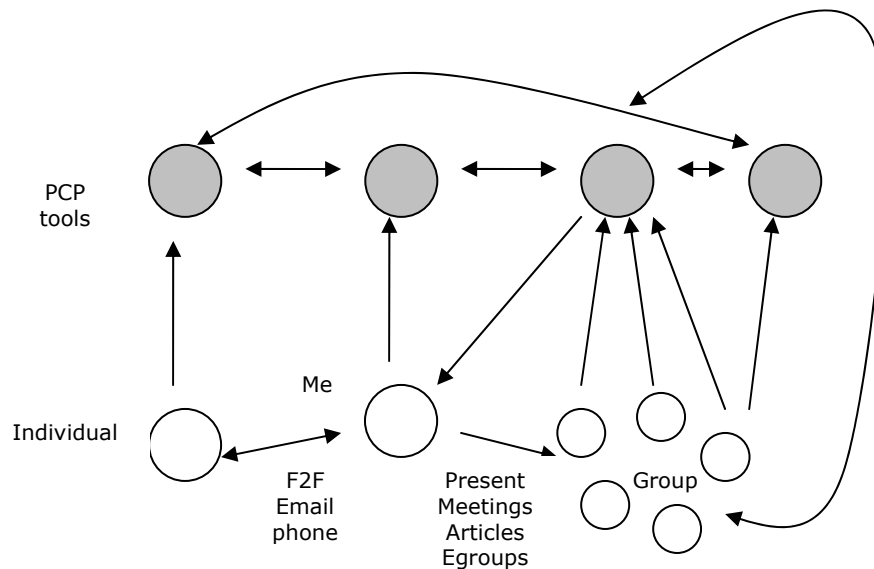
Knowledge Networks

On a simple and yet significant level PCP allows users to express themselves to and communicate effectively with a worldwide community of people in similar fields (this is especially valuable in academia).

In more complex terms PCP revolutionizes the way in which we are able to communicate with each other. For example, using the above list I might be able to communicate and express to the following individual and group as illustrated below:



However, with PCP I am able to communicate and express myself in a way which allows for much greater degrees of understanding, a far more effective 'knowledge network', a greater degree of authenticity and enhanced social and professional dynamics:



For example, I might publish to my PCP tool regarding something the group is involved in, a member of the group may then read this and respond to it in the collaborative group PCP tool which we may then continue to discuss through our PCP tools. This is asynchronous and, of course, not constrained by distance allowing for effective expression and communication dynamics to take place both between individuals, large groups of people and between different groups regardless of time, location and the usual constraints of current mediums of communication and expression.

More thoughts on this and the effect of PCP tools in a broad sense can be found at the following sites:

My initial thoughts on communication and expression:
<http://radio.weblogs.com/0120501/2003/08/25.html#a329>

Sebastien Paquet - Personal knowledge publishing and its uses in research
<http://pkp.notlong.com>

Sebastian Fielder - Personal Webpublishing as a reflective conversational tool for self-organized learning
[http://seblogging.cognitivearchitects.com/stories/storyReader\\$963#0](http://seblogging.cognitivearchitects.com/stories/storyReader$963#0)

Meg Hourihan - What We're Doing When We Blog
<http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/javascript/2002/06/13/megnutf.html>

How can PCP take a university forward?

There are a number of ways in which a university can utilize PCP to significantly advance online communication and expression and inherent within that, teaching and learning.

These are just a few possibilities:

Reflective Journals: Each learner is able to use a corporate PCP tool to create and maintain their own online reflective journal. This is able to be shared with teachers, peers and the world (should they choose to, it can also be 'secured' to allow only 'password' access). The value of reflective journals is well recorded and the motivation inherent in audience, sharing, ownership, empathising and the medium in questions has been widely noted. For a small hosting fee learners could retain the use of the service after they have graduated.

Current Resources: Many academic subjects now rely on constantly changing and developing materials and resources. A teacher can subscribe to the RSS feeds of a number of websites, various email groups and the like and collate current resources (most of which are now solely online or available online). They are then able to share these resources with learners immediately by publishing them on their PCP tool (in the manner of a weblog). Further to this, learners are then able to discuss the material / ideas presented using the interaction features present in virtually all PCP tools. There are many examples of this occurring online, perhaps most notably in the educational technology field:

<http://www.downes.ca/news/OLDaily.htm>. This is also possible in an automated form: http://www.downes.ca/cgi-bin/xml/edu_rss.cgi

Uncovering the Hidden University: Universities are full of amazing teachers and amazing learners. These are, however, either hidden within offices and classrooms or behind authenticated web environments. PCP tools will enable both academics and learners to shine and connect with the worldwide academic community in a very visible manner, as the Berkman Centre for the Internet and Society at Harvard Law has found with their 'Weblogs at Harvard' project: <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/>

Enabling More Effective Communication and Collaboration: As illustrated above, PCP tools allow for alternative and effective forms of communication and knowledge networks. This can be applied to great effect in areas as diverse as project management, corporate leadership, student activities and academic endeavours.

Knowledge Management: A clearly identified use of PCP tools has been as personal and organizational knowledge management devices. The use of multiple categories, automated usable archiving and discrete URL links has, in many ways, seen PCP tools grow into online filing cabinets with far greater functionality.

Risk Management Tools: If required an academic could easily rely solely of a standard PCP tool in order to conduct a course online. With the exception of complex functionality relating to authentication, student tracking and the creation of MCQ tests (all of which are secondary or, indeed, arguably undesirable components of a virtual learning environment) all relevant requirements (content management, communication tools etc.) can be simply provided through most PCP tools.

Course Webpages: Should a teacher want to have a course website in addition to their presence in WebCT, PCP tools are designed so that creation of 'live' web material of a high standard is extremely simple.