TECH1502 Introduction to Community Media

Being Social & Collaborative

Contents

1   Introduction - Collective Intelligence

According to Pierre Levy "we need to promote organisational cultures and technical environments conductive to transparency, flexible reorganisation of skill networks and continuous collaborative creation of immediately usable knowledge" (Levy, 2013, p. 104).

"This community develops, shares and uses knowledge in a way that is reflexive, or self-aware, and which is able to think about its own forms of organisation an modelling. As Levy describes this, "the work of self-modelling that allows the community to synthetically represent itself to itself its own emergent cognitive processes." This means that an organisation has to think about how it thinks, and what it expects to get from different types of thinking.

1.1   Collective Awareness

Levy explains that "whether we are producing useful documents, clarifying or improving shared symbolic structures, spreading the most effective methods and practices or raising individual and collective awareness of the emergent cognition for the community, we will almost always find ourselves confronted with the problem of explicating implicit knowledge and processes." What Levy suggests, then, is that an organisation has to look at the way that it supports conversation and the sharing of tacit knowledge, as much as the way that it shares formal and previously established knowledge.

Levy believes that "we need to promote organisational and technical environments conductive to transparency, flexible reorganisation of skill networks and continuous collaborative creation of immediately usable knowledge." This means fostering a dialogue within an organisation that is trusting and allows people to comprehend the differences between knowledge that is explicit and clear, and knowledge that is implicit and emergent.

1.2   Inherited Social Knowledge

Levy argues that as individuals we inherit the benefits of the collective knowledge of our society, such as the institutions and the tools that are used to give shape and order to social life. Schools, civic institutions, the media, and so on, are all examples of this inherited field of knowledge, as we do not create them anew, but inherit them and add to them or change them as we engage with them. Alternatively, according to Levy, we also inherit 'distributed processes of problem solving, decision making and knowledge accumulation'.

These processes have emerged from the conversations and interactions that take place in society. Levy suggests that in a democracy, as well as recognising individual forms of intelligence we are also able to recognise collective forms of intelligence as contributors participate in these decision-making process and the collaborative production processes of an open society. A society that allows people to make a contribution of their own free will, rather than being forced or having a sense of discipline imposed on them.

1.3   Open Source Collaboration

Levy gives the example of the Open Source movement as one in which work is based on free collaboration between programmers and designers who share a common desire to exchange ideas, knowledge and techniques in the production of software. Levy cites Wikipedia as an example in which 'authors, readers and editors exchange roles to further the dissemination of knowledge', and are therefore a 'striking example of the power of collective intelligence emerging from a civilised creative conversation'. Levy believes that collective thinking opens-up more space for individual

critical thinking, rather than imposing a form of standardisation and conformity because we have a moral obligation to enrich and return knowledge back to our community for the common good. As Levy argues, 'collective intelligence can only be productive by combining or coordinating unique elements and facilitating dialogue, and not by levelling differences or silencing dissenters'.

1.4   Knowledge Producers

Knowledge producers are therefore required to understand and to manage their activities in the digital environment in ways that cope with the varied and abundant flows of knowledge that are around us. All that can be known can't be learnt by any single person, so according to Levy, we have to learn ways to control how we attend to information, how we define and order our priorities and how we develop an effective level of competence in the know-how that we think we will need. A wiki is therefore a useful place for us to develop our skills as knowledge producers in that we can use a wiki to organise, share, technically support, reorganise and collaborate with others who are interested in similar forms of knowledge. Wikis can be thought of as a 'collective memory' in which the implicit and local know-how that is embedded in our conversations is transformed.

2   Web 2.0 - Collaboration Tools

2.1   Mass Collaboration

Howard Rheingold outlines how "mass collaboration has transformed not only the way people use the internet but also how information is found" (Rheingold, 2012, p. 148). According to Rheingold it is now common that information, systems and media are now designed, produced and shared collaboratively within virtual communities.

Rheingold suggests that the "knowledgeable digital citizen ought to know how virtual communities, wikis, and other varieties of mass collaboration work – and how to join in the fun" (Rheingold, 2012, p. 148). Mass collaboration is seen by Rheingold as a way of conducting the business of human endeavour in a way that is more effective, more engaging and more widespread.

While Rheingold suggests that "competition is still important," he suggests that it is likewise becoming increasingly important to "make room for what we now know about cooperative arrangements and complex interdependencies in ecosystems, economies and societies" (Rheingold, 2012, p. 149).

2.2   Technologies of Cooperation

According to Rheingold virtual communities are "technologies of cooperation" (Rheingold, 2012, p. 151) that enable people to collaborate more effectively because they are able to coordinate, share and give attention to their common goals. As Rheingold describes, "collaborators develop and agree on common goals, share responsibility and work together to achieve those goals, and contribute to resources to the effort" (Rheingold, 2012, p. 154).

Rheingold describes Elinor Ostrom's principles of collaborative participation in virtual communities

that override "basic social dilemmas by constructing systems of norms and self-policing social contract" between collaborators (Rheingold, 2012, p. 152).

2.3   Self-Governing Groups

A self-governing group, according to Ostrom is one that takes account of several emergent design issues:

1.   Groups boundaries are clearly defined.
2.   Rules governing the use of collective goods are well matched to local needs and conditions.
3.   Most individuals affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules.
4.   The right of community members to devise their own rules is respected by external authorities.
5.   A system for monitoring member's behaviour exists; the community members themselves undertake this monitoring.
6.   A graduated system of sanctions is used.
7.   Community members have access to low-cost conflict resolution mechanisms.
8.   For common pool resources that are parts of larger systems: appropriation, provision, monitoring, enforcement, conflict resolution, and governance activities are organised in multiple layers of nested enterprises" (Rheingold, 2012, p. 152).

According to Rheingold, knowing the difference between the terms "coordination, cooperation and collaboration" is essential to develop working strategies for collective action (Rheingold, 2012, p. 153).

3   Crowds & Aggregation

3.1   Group Intelligence

Collective intelligence is shared or group intelligence that emerges from the collaboration, collective efforts, and competition of many individuals and appears in consensus decision making. The term appears in sociobiology, political science and in context of mass peer review and crowdsourcing applications. It may involve consensus, social capital and formalisms such as voting systems, social media and other means of quantifying mass activity. Collective IQ is a measure of collective intelligence, although it is often used interchangeably with the term collective intelligence. Collective intelligence has also been attributed to bacteria and animals.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_intelligence

3.2   Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing is a specific sourcing model in which organizations use contributions from Internet users to obtain needed services or ideas. Crowdsourcing was coined in 2005 as a portmanteau of crowd and outsourcing. This mode of sourcing to divide work between participants to achieve a cumulative result was already successful before the digital age (i.e., "offline"). Crowdsourcing is distinguished from outsourcing in that the work can come from an undefined public (instead of

being commissioned from a specific, named group) and in that crowdsourcing includes a mix of bottom-up and top-down processes https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crowdsourcing

3.3   Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is an activity through which knowledge (namely, information, skills, or expertise) is exchanged among people, friends, families, communities (for example, Wikipedia), or organizations. Organizations have recognized that knowledge constitutes a valuable intangible asset for creating and sustaining competitive advantages. Knowledge sharing activities are generally supported by knowledge management systems. However, technology constitutes only one of the many factors that affect the sharing of knowledge in organizations, such as organizational culture, trust, and incentives. The sharing of knowledge constitutes a major challenge in the field of knowledge management because some employees tend to resist sharing their knowledge with the rest of the organization. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge_sharing

3.4   Wikis: Enabling Effective Knowledge Sharing Across the Organization

Wikis are a relatively simple and compelling addition to the collaborative options currently available. "Wiki" is currently one of the most popular new buzz terms in business discussions. Unfortunately it is also one of the most incomprehensible for many people. But what are wikis, are they important, what benefits do they provide and are they being used successfully within large corporations? A wiki is an online tool that allows users to update and publish content collaboratively. Anyone who has access can edit the content, using a very simple tool and an ordinary web browser. Wiki usage is known as 'collaborative authoring'. http://www.informationweek.com/software/information-management/wikis-enabling-effective-knowledge-sharing-across-the-organization/d/d-id/1038866?

3.5   Applying Wikis to Knowledge Sharing and Creation

As organizations are increasingly moving towards geographically dispersed and virtual forms of collaboration, knowledge sharing through social software such as wikis, is widely acknowledged as an important area of research and practice. Wikis are systems of interlinked Web pages that allow users to easily create and edit content. They represent an open-source technology for knowledge, focusing on its incremental creation and enhancement, and on multi-user participation. http://www.slideshare.net/miiak/applying-wikis-to-knowledge-sharing-and-creation-2007

4   Wiki Tools

4.1   Wiki Collaboration

"A collaborative working environment (CWE) supports people, such as e-professionals, in their individual and cooperative work. Research in CWE involves focusing on organizational, technical, and social issues" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaborative_working_environment

4.2   Wikis as a Collaborative Tool

A wiki is a collaborative online Web tool that can help Extension professionals work more effectively. Wikis are useful for collaborating over long distances and can serve as a repository for materials shared among a virtual team. Specifically, wikis provide online space for editing and storing

documents, maintaining schedules, posting Web links, storing email announcements, and conferencing capabilities. Wikis reduce the need for mail and phone charges to collaborate with other group members and provide a stable place for document storage that is accessible from any computer with Internet access, at any location, at any time. They allow for customization of a collaborative workspace that resides online in a place where all invited members, or the public, can access stored materials. https://joe.org/joe/2011december/tt4.php

4.3   Using Wikis for Learning and Collaboration

A wiki is a collaborative web site that collects and organizes content, created and revised by its users. The most well-known example is Wikipedia. Wikis are a way to grow a knowledge base around a particular content area, be it best practices in a particular field or how to use a specific piece of software. Some organizations allow any registered user to contribute; others limit contributors to a particular department or group. http://theelearningcoach.com/elearning2-0/using-wikis-for-elearning/

According to Jason Mittell "wikis have become one of the hallmarks tools of the participatory Internet" (Mittell, 2013, p. 35). A wiki is a good examples of an electronic tool that allows people to manage knowledge within an organisation because it is based on collaboration, sharing and co-development, rather than delineated expert knowledge that is maintained through internal processes of hierarchal endorsement, such as professional qualifications and roles.

A wiki offers emergent knowledge communities the opportunity to share and to collaborate in the formation of knowledge, and to regulate the flow of personal information as well as the flow of formal information. A wiki, according to Mittell is "never fixed or static" (Mittell, 2013, p. 37), as it is based on "complex system [that] emerges out of decentralised individual participation" (Mittell, 2013, p. 37).

5   Wiki Principles

Jason Mittell defines the principles of wikis as being characterised by a sense of Freedom, Transparency, Fluidity, Emergence and Collective Intelligence.

5.1   Freedom

Wikis are therefore open to a wide range of uses beyond traditional forms of knowledge organisation, and they can be used for collaborative authoring, projects, organising documents or sharing information. Wikis are non-hierarchical and are open to different contributors to create and post entries. Readers of wikis are free to navigate the pages via hyperlinks, key word searches, random pages, and so on, without a defined 'route' through the wiki (i.e. a contents page).

5.2   Transparency

Wikis show and track what changes have been made to an entry and by who. As a community of

users this is non-hierarchical and promotes non-hierarchical working based around the discussion components of the wiki that allow contributors to edit, re-edit and compare different versions of an entry while posting. Any contributor can make and edit an entry, without a 'hierarchy' enforcing an editorial policy. If there is a dispute then it is discussed in an open manner. Wikis trace and show the work that went into producing them.

5.3   Fluidity

Wikis are easy to display content that can be read on a wide range of browsers. Wikis can be edited and updated easily, while linked to different pages, sources of content or external media files. Pages in a wiki are always changing and being updated. Contributors then 'watch' a page to see if it is added to or amended by other contributors.

5.4   Emergence

Wikis are not organised centrally, and they are not planned. They rely instead on the posting of entries by participants who decide between themselves which entries should be made. The reader is free to navigate a wiki in a similar manner. The principles that shape the wiki are decided on by the users who form the community of interest based around the subjects and the topics covered. Disputes are managed through a process of resolution and compromise, which looks to other sources of information as a point of expression in an ongoing debate.

5.5   Collective Intelligence

Wikis allow for the tracking and discussion of ongoing projects. In this way wikis open up the possibility that we can manage a project by pooling the collective resources and knowledge of the different user's active in the project. So, rather than relying on a centralised management authority to validate the knowledge demonstrated in a wiki, the users and the readers of a wiki are able to discuss and add comments and suggestions for improvements, and to mark instances of information that is yet to be verified for later updates. In this way a wiki is said to be able to exceed the capabilities of the individual and produce a wider-ranging model of knowledge that draws on a cognitively diverse range of sources.

5.6   Platform of Participation

Wikis can be used, according to Mittell, as an "effective platform for encouraging participation for [people] to pool their expertise." They can do this with a relative degree of anonymity that helps to promote a less hierarchical view of status among contributors, as experts receive the same visible status as casual users.

6   Communities of Practice

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope. In a nutshell: Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/

6.1   Situated Learning

A community of practice (CoP) is a group of people who share a craft and/or a profession. The concept was first proposed by cognitive anthropologist Jean Lave and educational theorist Etienne Wenger in their 1991 book Situated Learning (Lave & Wenger 1991). Wenger then significantly expanded on the concept in his 1998 book Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_practice

The idea that learning involves a deepening process of participation in a community of practice has gained significant ground in recent years. Communities of practice have also become an important focus within organizational development and have considerable value when thinking about working with groups. In this article we outline the theory and practice of such communities, and examine some of issues and questions for informal educators and those concerned with lifelong learning. http://infed.org/mobi/jean-lave-etienne-wenger-and-communities-of-practice/

7   Virtual Communities

Howard Rheingold states that "communication media can make it possible for individual behaviours to add up to collective value by making it easy or affordable for people to do things together that

used to be difficult or costly" (Rheingold, 2012, p. 112).

The ability to participate in online social activity is made possible when we understand the "cultural landscape" of information and communication technology, according to Rheingold, and not just the technological practicalities of communication.

https://www.ted.com/talks/howard_rheingold_on_collaboration

7.1   Participatory Culture

Rheingold cites how Henry Jenkins has sought to redefine the way that we think about participatory culture, and lists the principles for access and success as:

1. Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement.
2. Strong support for creating and sharing creations with others.
3. Some type of informal membership whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices.
4. Members who believe that their contribution matters
5. Members who feel some degree of social connection with one another (Rheingold, 2012, p. 113).

In order to enact and to secure value from this approach to social collaboration, Rheingold suggests that we have to think about digital participatory literacy skills, such as persuasion, curation, discussion, and self-presentation in order to engage with others in a social exchange of participation. Knowing the how and why we enact different participatory practices, according to Rheingold, is vital if we are to develop the skills to take part in online communities.

7.2   People Power?

As Rheingold points out, "participatory culture is one in which a significant portion of the population, not just a small professional guild, can participate in the production of cultural materials ranging from encyclopaedia entries to videos watched by millions. And it is a culture populated by people who believe they have some degree of power" (Rheingold, 2012, p. 115).

People use digital media, according to Rheingold, to form "interest driven communities" in which they "hang out and share media online" that are of mutual interest (Rheingold, 2012, p. 118). Media in these communities is shared with a sense of "social currency" based on the "creation, exchange, collaboration, and critique of media created by participants" (Rheingold, 2012, p. 119).

7.3   Social Exchange

Rheingold outlines several principles of good social exchange and content curation that will enhance participation and collaboration:

- Use subject matter expertise.

- Be relevant.
- Match the trust that your collaborators put in you.

7.4 Cycle of Curation

This means developing a "cycle of curation" that is able to:

- Identify a niche and focussing on a speciality to distinguish yourself.
- Select your sources carefully, identifying them properly.
- Establish a search framework to monitor the information that is being shared about your specialist subject.
- Reach out and connect with other passionate collaborators who share your passion.
- Aggregate content and filter feeds for the least useful content.
- Be selective about the stories that you share.
- Verify the information – don't let crap through.
- Edit and summarise, with proper care to your references.
- Contextualise your information.
- Give some spin so you point to why it is relevant.
- Title it properly so it can be found.
- Credit the people who prompt or inspire you.
- Organise your content with well-chosen tags.
- Keep your content updated.
- Disclose your purpose and explain why you are passionate about a topic.
- Syndicate your content by letting people know how to share it via RSS.
- Encourage and make feedback easy.
- Monitor your content by using the data and analytic tools that are available.
- Refine and improve your content based on the shared interactions with your users.

8 Collaborative Production

According to Jenkins, Ford & Green, "under a broadcast paradigm, distribution is almost inseparable from promotion." This is because "both mechanisms ensure that a commercially produced product grabs the attention of the most broadly defined audience possible" (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013, p. 230).

By contrast, according to Jenkins, Ford & Green, "the circulation of independent films, games, music, and comics typically demands participatory mechanisms to compensate for the lack of promotional budget" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 230).

8.1 Independent Production

This means that independent media producers have to develop communication strategies that "court niche and subcultural communities" that are "imagined to have a strong affinity with the genre or message" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 230). In a sense, and according to Jenkins, Ford and

Green, this means that creators of independent media hope to promote their work with like-minded others.

The new model of sharing and participation, according to Jenkins, Ford and Green, is in contrast to the older model of media consumption, in which audiences were forced to pay for content, despite the enjoyment and pleasure that they got from it. This is a form of "coercion and extortion" that ensures that everyone pays for content regardless of what they get from its use.

8.2 Sharing Models

In the new sharing model of media circulation audiences are encouraged to pay for what they value, which implies a high level of trust on the part of the content producers, and thereby breaking with the tradition model of media consumption. Instead media producers are able to experiment more freely with content that is free or selective.

The impact of the web has therefore resulted in a parallel system that runs alongside the mainstream marketplace approach, which, according to Jenkins, Ford & Green, hints at "new modes of production, alternative genres of content, and new relationships between producers and audiences" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 232).

Producers who operate in this independent field of media circulation and sharing, according to Jenkins, Ford and Green, have to consider how they can get noticed, and to do this they have to listen how their "material spreads" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 236).

"SEAGULLS! (Stop It Now)" -- A Bad Lip Reading of The Empire Strikes Back

https://youtu.be/U9t-slLl30E

8.3 Rise of the Amateur

As Jenkins, Ford & Green point out, while the traditional model of media content production is "structured around major publishers, with independent and alternative publishers constructed as an alternative, things are much fuzzier online, where amateur and semi-professional artists appear alongside those who are more commercial and professionally accomplished" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 237).

In the mass-media model, content is often shared because it is relatively ubiquitous and widely available and is designed to support a wide range of conversations with a wide variety of people. In the niche and independent field of media production, on the other hand, media content spreads, according to Jenkins, Ford & Green, "because it helps people communicate their more particular interests and sensibilities, to distinguish themselves from most others" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 242).

8.4 Fan Involvement

This model goes further, according to Jenkins, Ford & Green, as independent media producers embrace their audience, fan networks and followers as co-collaborators who are encouraged to get involved "at each step of the production, distribution, and promotion" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 254).

By encouraging community forms of fundraising and co-production media producers are increasingly able to tap into the emerging "collaborative circulation models" that offer potential supporters the opportunity to "shape the distribution and exhibition" of work that is being produced (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 254).

9   Summary

The benefit of collaborative and collective action, according to Rheingold, is that because people are able to coordinate, share, and pay attention to their common goals, they are able to create "something that none of the collaborating parties could have benefited from without collaboration." This is because "collaborators develop and agree on common goals, share responsibility and work together to achieve those goals, and contribute resources to the effort" (Rheingold, 2012, p. 154).

10   References

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