

Beyond the NetLab

how to involve the community producers

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The *laptops for all* project

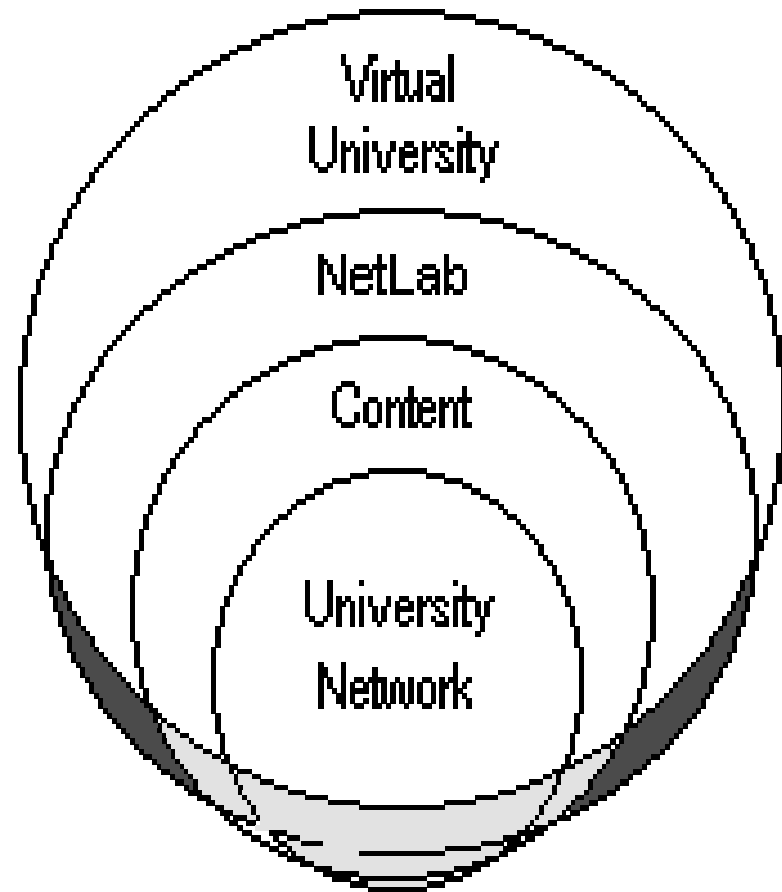
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- start in 1995/96, repeated in 1996/97 and 1997/98
- the laptop as a pre-requisite for entry university
 - minimal specs for freshman, including software
 - for many, its their first owned machine!
- University develop a local area network
 - entry points: classrooms / libraries / social spaces
- multiple operation environments and a complete set of Intranet/Internet network facilities
 - there's a 1 to 8 ratio of entry points to laptop owners

The NetLab concept

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- network infrastructure, content oriented
- links computer resources
- experimental education lab
- entry points to virtual campus
- prototype for a local information society
- emphasis interpersonal communication among students



The NetLab potential

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- offer a local interaction engine;
- people-centered and not technology oriented;
- strong reinforcement on mobility;
- designed to enhance the involvement between students and university by sharing of technology investments
- permit reallocate the tools use for information manipulation from classrooms to all spaces in campus

The killer application of the 90s is people

Pavel Curtis

Get the potential users involved

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- teachers have a crucial role in the technology adoption with research results reporting a strong correlation between *curricular relevance* and *teacher interest*
- a proposal for teachers involvement
 - start using ICT in the development of their own learning materials;
 - take advantage of the laptop and network in their own classes;
 - use the network to communicate with students and other teachers;
 - become publishers and permanent developers of on-line material.

Technologies

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- need for a strong support to be effective
- area of fast change and great setup costs
- four questions arise when dealing with ICT to harness the NetLab:
 - connections: how can computers intelligently connect information seekers to sources?
 - utility: how can information access be complete, correct (precision), timely, transparent, authorised and secure?
 - system evolution: what architectures can best leverage rapidly changing information environments?
 - collaboration: how can groups of people and computers co-operate effectively over distributed networks?

Results - teachers side

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- most of the teachers who use Web facilities tend to post information as a complement to the more traditional media, because this:
 - means to learn other skills (technical ones)
 - requires a different kind of institution support
 - represents an enormous time investment, not normally considered as a pay work to the institution.
- we consider the laptops use in classroom as a gradual evolution force to the teaching activities, but just in the long run

Conclusion remarks - teachers

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- need for better tools to support information and teaching materials as some form of technological scripts similar to the ones encountered in textbooks
- before the use of "*compubooks*" or "*digitalToolBooks*" be seen as a potential resource to the teachers activities, some specialised work force (like publishers do in books) need to produce specific materials
- it seems that still a point stays the same: **the teachers are largely facilitators and performers, not creators**

Conclusion remarks - students

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- the laptop presence in classroom, change the power relationships between teacher and students
 - the teacher provide guidance but do not control the sequence of events that take place;
 - the relation one to many, between teacher and students is now a many to many relationship, where students interact and the teacher acts as a regulator;
- the differences between students involvement (and results) become even more visible

Virtual environments in higher education

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- design a clear framework to be used by all potential users
- provide technological support
- produce content and reuse, reuse, reuse!
- keep it simple and add functionality just by demand
- more people, different people, the better!
- publishers and creators must have some sort of benefit
- less differences between the teacher and student roles

any phenomena

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- the amount of information available about *anything*, *anywhere* and *anytime*, accessed from *everywhere* in huge amounts makes impossible to *anyone* to maintain a global knowledge, even in a restricted area, on an individual basis
- information society means a society where interaction (co-operation) is predominantly digital based?
- share, participate and produce will be dominant activities when passing from *stock-knowledge* to *flow-knowledge*

To do list

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- explore the NetLab environment
- develop a Java based platform to generate content containers
- explore the *any phenomena* to develop context generators, based in CSCW concepts and information visualisation techniques
- expanding NetLab concepts to use on DLT situations (contexts?)

the CEREM group is open to participate into joint projects with other R&D groups

Last minute points...

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The NEED as a base for everything
(the “*no free lunch*” issue)

GLOBAL context, LOCAL focus

Wisdom is socially constructed

Web stuff

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- Web references for education, learning and training:

http://www.ufp.pt/staf/lmbg/edu_pointers.htm