**Weaving and Texturing**

This is the foundation of sense-making, of utilizing the various affordances of blogging technology to make meaningful connections to other sources. The act of connecting to other resources and explaining the context (how it was found, and what led you to choose the content, and link to it), as well explain the potential significance of the content for others, embeds the blogger into a web of connections, so that one is both blogging for self, as well as considering the wider potential audiences. The extent to which one can successfully weave personally meaningful content into one’s own posts can be best assessed by an individual blogger using what I would refer to as the “tether test”:

The tether test idea was inspired while I was addressing a question at an ETUG workshop about how relevant an online archive was to the students several semesters later, or to the writers, years after they had participated in the discussions, graduated from the program, and had moved on. I suggested that the truest test of the significance of the post archive to individual learners was how well these posts retained relevance and significance to those who composed them, how well the posts were created by their owners to capture sufficient detail so that the owner (as well as others) could re-capture the essence of the content and re-start or continue the sense-making activity despite the intervening months or years the post lay dormant.

Oftentimes, I look back at the posts I have written, and wonder where I can follow up again on the links I refer to in this post, or get back to the sources that I visited before. I lack the signposts and notice the gaps and the missing details that might have aided me to continue on with my learning. I am thus sometimes frustrated at having forgotten or having neglected to add more clues to my way-making activity. I wonder also to what extent I could now (some time after I first posted) make further updates to the post with more context to help me re-trace my steps. Regrettably, these posts stand alone, isolated, disconnected forever from the concerns I had when I first composed the post. There are too many holes in the personal memory to gather he threads together to make the post more coherent. Instead, I am left to wonder what led me to be inspired at that moment, what other ideas and resources were connected to this post. It leads me to try to re-double my efforts not to leave posts un-tethered, no longer tied to the personal context that brought them into being. A post written months or years before that is limited in usefulness in the present moment provides me great lessons for self-improvement.

Blogging that involves weaving and texturing requires bloggers to actively play a number of roles for multiple audiences at once: one needs to blog as a chronicler, recorder, scribe, and biographer for the self in the moment, for the future selves, and for other selves. Seldom are we aware of this need to consider the potential significance of effective weaving and texturing. One needs to involve oneself fully in the decision-making processes, and this self-aware sharing can be intended for a pause-point one can turn back and review to monitor and track progress; however, it can also aid others to follow one’s own past thinking and struggles. These posts act as time capsules, or compositions, which summarize, evaluate, or paraphrase content, embed links from various sources, and add quotes, footnotes, and citations from one’s own and others’ posts, articles, web sites, podcasts, presentations, photos, files, videos, comments, and other multi-media content.

**Suggested Extended Blogging Activities**

**Chronicling**

The chronicling process involves a cycle of reading others' blogs, filtering, synthesizing and sense-making. It is an example of how one can comfortably blog in the open by sharing one's thoughts and ideas and processes of idea capture.

I think that using (edu)blogs for **chronicling** is an important aspect of formal academic blogging. For me, this process of reporting and commenting on conferences and seminars involves jotting down notes, collecting short voice narrations, preparing and conducting short impromptu interviews with participants and presenters during coffee breaks and lunchtime, collecting and reflecting on **backchannel** Twitter commentary during presentations, and doing a post-conference blog post reviewing the archived presentations.

This reporting process takes several weeks, and leads to numerous posts, podcasts and uploaded files. I upload the raw notes, outlines, scanned images of conference notes, and voice notes to a sandbox part of my edublog, a more private *"holding space".*  I tag these for my private use, deciding on how to **pile** the posts together for easier retrieval, and categorizing them as separate artefacts that I might re-visit and re-use at some later time. I add *meta-narrative*, and add *context cues*, so I can remember the context of the isolated tidbits and info-scraps.

I then begin **weaving** the content together as a narrative, linking and embedding the pieces into a series of posts. I am always looking for ways to tag and categorize these posts, and often check out the *Tag Clouds* of other edubloggers, to compare my tagging strategies with theirs. How did they do their tagging? What are they posting about? What data streams and info-scraps are they weaving into their narrative? What sources are they quoting, citing, or drawing from?

**Assessment of Chronicle Blogs**

*Why Rubrics Don’t Work*

This is a controversial statement, but I think that one cannot limit the nature of blogging to one key requirement: *To what extent can the posting help the blogger?*

I can’t see how a writing tool such as a blog can be assessed like an essay or article – the posts are open-ended, are in constant flux, are intended to be changed, updated, and improved upon. How can a post provide comprehensive insights, complex understanding, and a focused and creative viewpoint? It is through the process of blogging one gradually acquires these skills, through trial and error. The posts may or may not generate discussion or invite comments from others. There may not be any intended audience, primarily because the blogger might have mixed intentions, and blog in different ways at different times. The post might end up with inconsistencies and shifting, often contradictory, perspectives. The blogger’s voice often shifts over time, and sometimes may be a borrowed, or rehearsed, mask. The blogger may be trying on different ideas for size. In effect, the blogger’s position to the subject may be altered, thanks to others’ feedback, or transformative shifts in one’s frames of meaning can change gradually…this might not be at first apparent to the blogger through week-to-week activity, but be obvious upon comparison of earlier posts composed years ago and more recent posts composed recently. Organizational structure shifts when one attempts to try out new ways of expression, demonstrating a process of development as one traverses various creative phases. Using timeliness and frequency as elements for assessment are ridiculous ways to assess blogging – one learner chooses to blog monthly; others blogs weekly or monthly; others blog when inspired to do so. Still other bloggers experience spurts of activity, followed by latent periods of inactivity. English teachers are more preoccupied with mechanics than needed; bloggers would like to aim for a more coherent presentation of ideas; however, learners can learn more about mechanics over time when given plenty of practice, encouragement, guidance, and constructive feedback. Grammar, capitalization, punctuation and spelling are all important. Blogging provides learners with effective practice to observe and apply the use of mechanics in their own writing. I think it is crucial for learners to incorporate details about personal context related to data gathering, way-making, and sense-making. Adding hyperlinks, embedding multimedia content, quoting and citing sources, incorporating and addressing others’ comments, and appending to one’s earlier posts with updates, are crucial elements necessary for effective blogging.

*Digital Footprints*

*In this extended blogging activity, learners* engage in a dialogue with another blogger, in which each come up with a set of five questions about any topic of mutual interest. They then answer these questions, and invite the feedback of their blogging partner. Both sets of questions and the responses are added to the same post. Then, the pair reads and revises each others’ replies. The bloggers wait four to six weeks, and then re-visit the same posts to again add notes and further comments, and reply to each other’s annotations and updates.

*Tapestries*

Individual bloggers select a topic of interest to investigate and explore in depth, drawing on a wide range of authoritative sources. They record their progress in a series of blog posts, documenting their emotional experiences of independently seeking resources. They can identify strategies, challenges, successes, eureka moments and frustrations. They then return to a select number of posts and critically examine them again to record their motivations for shifting their narrative tone, voice, and register. The blogger speculates which audiences were being addressed, and attempts to identify one’s intentions for meaning-making. In addition, bloggers add a layer of meaning over top the original post, using meta-commenting, and adding highlighted text, colours, and fonts. The learners engage in three different sets of revisions, adding multiple layers of revisions and commenting and meta-narratives.