

Interactive comment on “Web 2.0 collaboration tools to support student research in hydrology – an opinion” by A. Pathirana et al.

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Received and published: 29 May 2012

We thank Dr. Venkatesh Merwade for reviewing this manuscript. Each of his comments are addressed below

1. Wiki solution vs. "Social Networks":

Students and faculty alike use social networking tools like google docs (file sharing), facebook (networking) and twitter (messaging). An important advantage of using such off-the-shelf solutions is the low-entry barrier to the students as many of them are already familiar with such services. It is indeed possible to provide some of the (technical) facilities provided by the Wiki system using these tools,

though there may not be a single tool that can provide all the important roles of the Wiki. However, bigger concerns include the (perceived and real) issues to do with privacy, difficulty in providing a coherent access control and the complete lack of integration. These issues are not impossible to overcome and there are already many studies on in using social networks for education (e.g. Ozkan, 2008, Roblyer, 2010, among others).

2. Computational requirements:

The technical requirements of maintaining the system have been minimal. We performed upgrades to the Wiki software and the LAMP-stack (Linux operating system, Apache HTTP Server, MySQL database software and PHP language) approximately once a year, due to security concerns. Other than that there was no technical burden running the system during the five year period. Due to the non-public nature of the solution, security concerns are also not nearly as high as public web services.

3. Isn't allowing anyone to change anything risky? : While this may sound as a risky policy, it becomes a manageable one for two reasons: The robust version control system in Mediawiki provides the means of any user to see and restore any version of a document that is online. For example, if student A uploads her thesis and student B 'overwrites' that by uploading some unrelated document, then any user of the system can 'recover' the old document just by a few mouse clicks. During the reported five year period, not a single incident of vandalism happened. There were several unintended incidents of overwriting documents, but these were immediately corrected by a user.

We will scrutinize the paper for grammatical and typographical mistakes.

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References

- Roblyer, M., McDaniel, M., Webb, M. (2010). Findings on Facebook in higher education: A comparison of college faculty and student uses and perceptions of social networking sites. . . . and Higher Education.
- Ozkan, B. (2008). Social networking tools for teacher education. TECHNOLOGY AND TEACHER EDUCATION.
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Interactive comment on Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., 9, 2541, 2012.

HESSD

9, C1835–C1837, 2012

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