Use and Abuse of Reusable Learning Objects
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Abstract

The term Learning Object, first popularized by Wayne Hodgins in 1994 when he named the CedMA working group “Learning Architectures, APIs and Learning Objects”, has become the Holy Grail of content creation and aggregation in the computer-mediated learning field. The terms Learning Objects (LOs) and Reusable Learning Objects are frequently employed in uncritical ways, thereby reducing them to mere slogans. The serious lack of conceptual clarity and reflection is evident in the multitude of definitions and uses of LOs. The objectives of this paper are to assess current definitions of the term Learning Object, to articulate the foundational principles for developing a concept of LOs, and to provide a methodology and broad set of guidelines for creating LOs.

The terms Learning Objects (LOs) and Reusable Learning Objects are frequently employed in uncritical ways, thereby reducing them to mere slogans. The serious lack of conceptual clarity and reflection is evident in the multitude of definitions and uses of LOs. Existing content repositories arbitrarily classify and categorize digital content as Reusable Learning Objects (RLOs). For example, the Center for International Education at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee (http://www.uw-igs.org/search/index.asp) classifies interactive maps, lectures, a population clock, course modules, and other objects, all under the category of Global Studies Learning Objects. Learning objects offer a new conceptualization of the learning process: rather than the traditional “several hour chunk”, they provide smaller, self-contained, re-usable units of learning.[4]. They will typically have a number of different components, which range from descriptive data to information about rights and educational level. At their core, however, will be instructional content, practice, and assessment. A key issue is the use of metadata. ^ Polsani, P. (2003), “Use and abuse of reusable learning objects”, ^ a b Beck, Robert J., “What Are Learning Objects?”, Learning Objects, Center for International Education, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, retrieved 2008-04-29. ^ Learning Technology Standards Committee 2002, p. 45. Reusable Learning Objects (RLOs) are based on a new way of thinking about learning and provide a digital educational resource that can be reused, scaled and shared from a central online repository in the support of instruction and learning. Each RLO supports a single learning objective. They vary in size, scope and level of granularity ranging from small chunks of instruction to a series of combined resources to provide a more complex learning experience.

2. Purpose and Benefits of Reusable Learning Objects
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