

PLE Narrative

Initially it took me some time to narrow down how I wanted to map my PLE out. After a couple strikes I thought I would really try to settle on something that truly represented who I was as a person. Theatre is a very important part of my life and one of the defining characteristics of who I am as a person. So, with that in mind, I decided to design my PLE in the form of a Playbill.

My PLE was “cast” using five different groups of “learning,” as it were. The first group cast was the Virtual Learning Environment. This environment is comprised of the applications and software I use to interact with knowledge and learning in a digital space. Within this sphere of influence I have my organizational tools like Gmail and Google Drive (which I use to organize my assignments), the software I use to create such as Microsoft Office, Photoshop and Illustrator and the discovery tools I use like Google and Wikipedia. We interact with software and digital media so frequently that it can seem so commonplace we do not even realize the role it is playing in our lives. Since the digital space is often the first point of contact in learning I have chosen to list it first as a representation of surface level learning and interaction.

The second space within my PLE’s cast is Structured Learning. Whenever I seek to gain a more structured atmosphere for learning I turn to institutions. Institutions like my undergraduate alma mater, University of Texas-Arlington and my current graduate school at the University of Oregon. Universities provide a unique experience when it comes to learning in the sense that they are incubators. While in the university system one has widespread access to resources you wouldn’t have otherwise. Whenever I seek structure, a place to garner higher learning, and an in depth instruction with my learning environment I turn to my universities.

We have our teachers, we have our applications, but we also have our peers. Social Learning is incredibly important in this day and age and whether we realize it or not, our peers play an integral role in our learning. As examples of how I connect with my peers I included Facebook, Twitter and Reddit. We live in an unprecedented age where we can reach our friends and family with the click of a button. Communication takes seconds instead of hours or days. We are always connected with our peers and have instant access to their knowledge to compare ideas, collaborate, and share with. Most important in my social circle is my family. I am incredibly close with my family and they always provide with a healthy environment to bounce ideas off of them, seek advice, or to simply talk to them. My social learning environment begins first with them and then expands outwards towards my peers and colleagues.

It is important to take breaks from learning and working on occasion. We must engage in fun, distractions and escapist activities. It is healthy to engage in these distractions to recharge. Frequently I take breaks by reading books, playing the occasional video game, board games with my peers, or watching my favorite sports teams. All of these things bring me a degree of enjoyment in my life and allow to take a break from the rat race of life before jumping back in. It is incredibly important to take time for yourself in the madness of everyday life. If we do not, we risk burnout and can become jaded. These escapist activities are important pieces of my PLE because they allow me to break away from it all, have some mindless distractions and fun and then return to the daily grind no worse for wear.

Last, but certainly not least, comes the area of my PLE that provides me with enrichment in my life. These things provide me with a sense of fulfillment and make me feel as though life is

moving on the right track. Chief among these is Theatre. I have always loved theatre and when I am acting or engaging in the theatre industry I feel immense joy. I need my creative outlet and without it I would feel lost. I love the intimacy of theatre and the ability to share stories and connections with my community through performance. In addition to theatre, the things that bring me fulfillment are working out/fitness, and the great outdoors. Lifting weights allow me blow off steam and relieve stress. Health is very important to me and improving my quality of life through lifting and fitness, in simple terms, just plain feels good. With the outdoors, I love to hike, climb, camp, etc. Nature is my escape space. Whenever things feel too crowded or too overwhelming I take a minute in solitude with a hike, or a campout and process it all. By being outdoors I can take some time to self-evaluate and decompress. By taking these sojourns, I can consolidate and process my learning by gaining perspective before returning to the real world and tackling everything head on with renewed vigor.