



Alan's Buffet for ISS Institute

Below are descriptions for sessions that I will aim to serve, upon request. Nothing served is “canned” and are always adaptable, customizable to your appetites, even in the moment. My aim is to organize activities where those present are more participant than audience. There will be doing. And... I firmly believe in having some fun at all costs. With no joy in what we do, how can we engage others?

As a general overview I also believe strongly in the value of sharing materials openly from my own web site, and all of mine will be available at <http://cog.dog/roo> (this is a bit of a nod to [an Australian national tour I did almost exactly 10 years ago](#)).

Open sharing does not mean giving everything away, but I hope to show that having a common place, a “Box of Not So Magic Tricks”, where participants in activities “show their work” in a way that online networks extend benefits beyond those in the room.

Finally, I do not serve technical solutions or fixes that are sprinkled on teaching. Owning a shiny, high tech hammer does not make me a good carpenter. Teaching is a craft, a mix of what a person brings as experience, skills, enthusiasm, and anything I might suggest is nothing more than a possibility for people to try and consider.

Workshop 1: Finding the Affordances of Digital Media, Even the Silly Ones

We can do much to improve our digital teaching by just adding images to words, not as decoration, but for demonstrating examples, by introducing metaphors. What can we do with the things we see often used “to be funny” in social spaces, meme images and animated GIFs, in a meaningful way for learning? We can also find some use of the practice of improv with random photos to improve our individual and group communication skills and creative potential.

The simple addition of text and images as a Meme image is meant to trigger a reaction, an expression of an emotion. Can we trigger thinking? Can we use these same media forms to explore multiple perspectives? And likewise, the animated GIF of cat pounding on a computer keyboard might make us smile, but the media form of a “short form” repeated video / animation can be used to demonstrate a process, slowing down or speeding up time, observing something in nature not visible to the naked eye. We will both expand our ideas to what is possible and practice making our own memes and GIFs.

We will also explore potential of perhaps the least used form of shareable media- sound. We can document experiences, share understanding, bring an understanding to an environment through something as simple as recording audio.

Workshop 2: Show Your Work!

From a learner's perspective, assessment is a passive process- we are assessed *by* an institution, organization, teacher through a simplistic (and often gamed) mechanism of examinations. In this workshop, we will explore what the possibilities are for learners to assert what they have learned, accomplished, can do in a more active sense. For background, we will review this concept as written in works by Jane Bozarth for the workplace and Austin Kleon for creative practices.

Explore the potential for documenting one's work and practice where it happens, using mobile devices to record audio and video reflections, or to collect and submit data. Reflective portfolio practices can also be implemented through many means, even a simple public blogging platform. And we will experiment with networked collection devices (PirateBox and RoboBox) that can even set up ways to collect digital data when a network connection is not present.

Workshop 3: What Works in Stories? Beyond Telling, Let's do Storymaking

If I say "Storytelling", you can conjure the metaphors- cave paintings, campfires, parents reading books. Often it suggests a mode of entertainment. Like most, I have my own internal conversation-- "I'm not a storyteller" but I can create compelling narratives in teaching that do not give away the plot in the opening objectives.

Rather than defining, constraining storytelling, I share my experiences of creating digital stories and teaching to others of what "works" in formats we know well -- books, movies, popular culture. Learn to deploy these elements hands on, with suggestions how you can think of it as more than just a magic spice you sprinkle on your work. A hook of interest, the shape of a narrative, a character to care about, suspension of belief, using less, media metaphors are story techniques that you can integrate into your work as educators.

We will explore storymaking with images, using principles of improv to enhance public speaking, a magic StoryBox, and deploying popular forms of media considered silly (memes and GIFs) for more more meaningful use.

Workshop 4: Implications of Being Online: The Good, The Bad, and the Us

Out of its adolescence, the internet has grown from a fringe activity of nerds and geeks to something that most people interact with daily, most of it outside of school. What should we be worried about now? What are the considerations of tracking, advertising, surveillance? What are we inviting when we move to have students learn online?

At the same time, setting up “safe” systems do not equip learners for understanding when they are outside these places, which is... most of their time. And what do we lose by trying to fence off the open internet? We will find our own place within this space through the model of Visitors and Residents (and discard the false premise of Digital Natives and Immigrants)

Understanding digital identity means that for all the good that can come from being online, there are dark sides of it such as an experience I have had first hand-- catfishing. or every unfortunate possibility there is room for amazing things to happen.

Workshop 5: What the SPLOT? (Advanced Workshop)

The idea for Simplest Possible Learning Online Tools (<http://splot.ca>) was to create single purpose online learning tools that do not necessarily require creation of accounts. The first suite of them was developed at Thompson Rivers University in British Columbia as tools develop atop the Wordpress platform for creating tools to compare images, create a shared image pool, create a shared pool of sounds, to publish rich media online, or to host daily challenges.

The idea is to use the most popular open source web publishing tool (Wordpress) to do more than blogging, and provide in a format that individuals might set up with a web hosting account. But they have also been used in institutional settings, where via Wordpress multisite, copies of tools can be readily issued for teachers to use with minimal training.

In this workshop we will explore and set up not only SPLOTs, but simple Wordpress landing pages in an environment where people can test drive these tools without dealing with the nuts and bolts of the technical setup (see for example <https://connectedcourses.stateu.org>).
