

# Copyright in the Digital Medium

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### Introduction

The intersection of rhetoric and design is what attracted me towards this class. Design can lend itself to many purposes. Another class I'm taking this semester is Design for Online learning. Right from the beginning of the semester, I found the possibility of intersection of rhetoric, design and pedagogy really exciting.

This multi-faceted interaction between design, pedagogy and rhetoric is the basic premise on which I decided to create this project. It would draw from rhetorical theories in the digital media while simultaneously teaching, drawing from various educational psychology theories, especially Constructivism (social and individual).

### Theories

Constructivism is one of the basic theories behind this object/ environment. "[Constructivism is] a vast and wooly area in contemporary psychology, epistemology and education" (Von Glasersfeld, 1997). The emphasis is on "the learner's contribution to meaning and learning through both individual and social activity" (Bruning, Schraw, & Ronning, 1999). The former is known as Psychological/ Individual Constructivism and the latter is called Social Psychology.

The first part of the object/ environment (see Design) is based on Individual constructivism. This deals with how "individuals build up certain elements of their cognitive or emotional apparatus" (Phillips, 1997).

The user can build her/his own structure of the content, thus constructing "their own cognitive structures as they interpret their experiences in particular learning situations" (Woolfolk, 2000).

A direct consequence of this design would be the creation of a complex, non-linear navigation; not just in terms of hyperlinks, but the conception of a meta-navigation of sorts. This can lead to interesting rhetorical possibilities as the non-linearity of the system now increases by a factor of two.

The second part (see design) draws strongly from theories of Social Constructivism. "Social interaction, cultural tools and activity shape individual development" (Woolfolk [on Vygotsky's idea], 2000). "By participating in a broad range of activities with others, learners appropriate the outcomes produced by working together" (Woolfolk, 2000). "They acquire new strategies and knowledge of the world and culture" (Palincsar, 1998).

From a rhetorical perspective, users can create flowcharts from existing symbols and (possibly) create their own symbols. This will enable formation of interesting visual debates wherein users not only discuss their views, but also create relationships and linkages between various posts.

## Design

The learning object/ environment would have two sections:

1. Teach Copyright laws and the concept of Intellectual property.
2. Visual debates.

## Part I: Copyright laws

I was inspired by two learning objects I'd seen sometime back. One was [www.easehistory.com](http://www.easehistory.com), a learning object that teaches U.S election campaign issues and their historical content through campaign ads. The other is an interactive constitution (<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/constitution/>) tutorial. The common design aspect in both these objects is that they view the same content from different perspectives.

Easehistory uses election campaign clips as the base item. The user could reach a particular clip by browsing through different dimensions like year, candidate, nature of ad's, issues, themes etc. The interactive constitution uses articles, topics and Supreme Court cases for navigation.

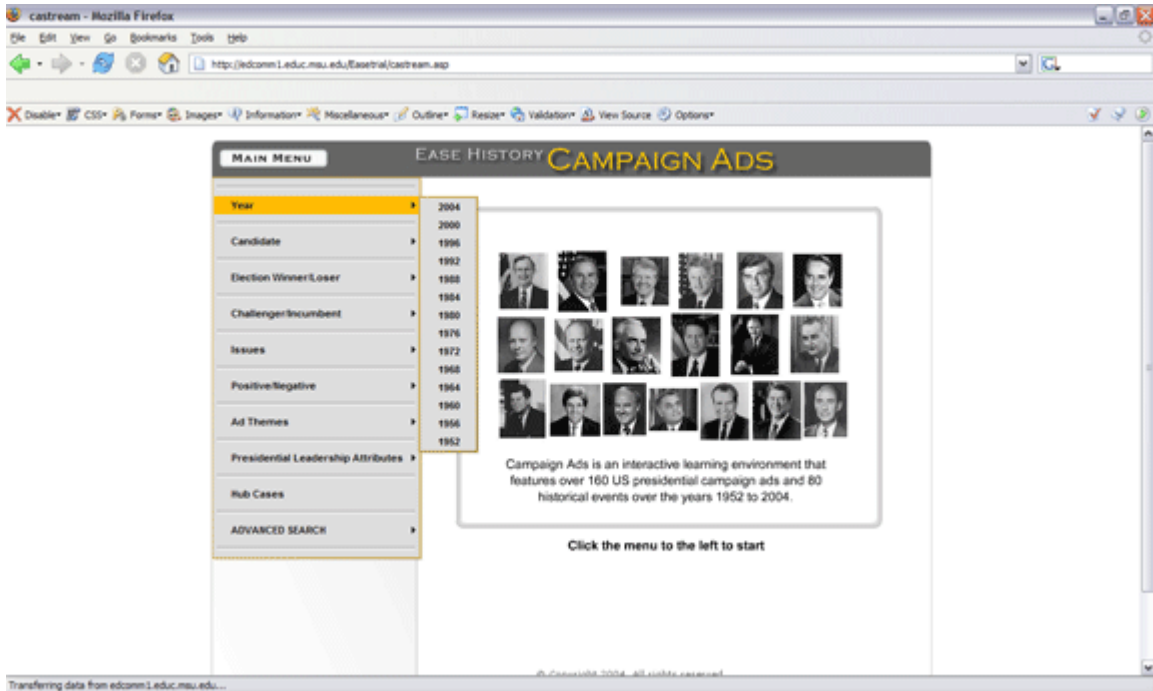


Figure 1: Screenshot of Easehistory



Figure 2: Screen shot of Interactive constitution

The major limitation with these two objects is that they allow navigation of only one dimension at a time. The Easehistory object has an advanced search option wherein the user could choose multiple dimensions at the

same time. For example, the user could search campaign clips for the candidate who lost the election in 1996 (2 dimensions) and so. Nevertheless, this is not built as a part of the main navigation.

My aim is to build navigation through multiple dimensions as a part of the main navigation. My first step was to identify the various dimensions for the content. To achieve this, I initially came up with a diagram that would describe the flow of information.

### Data Flow & dimensions

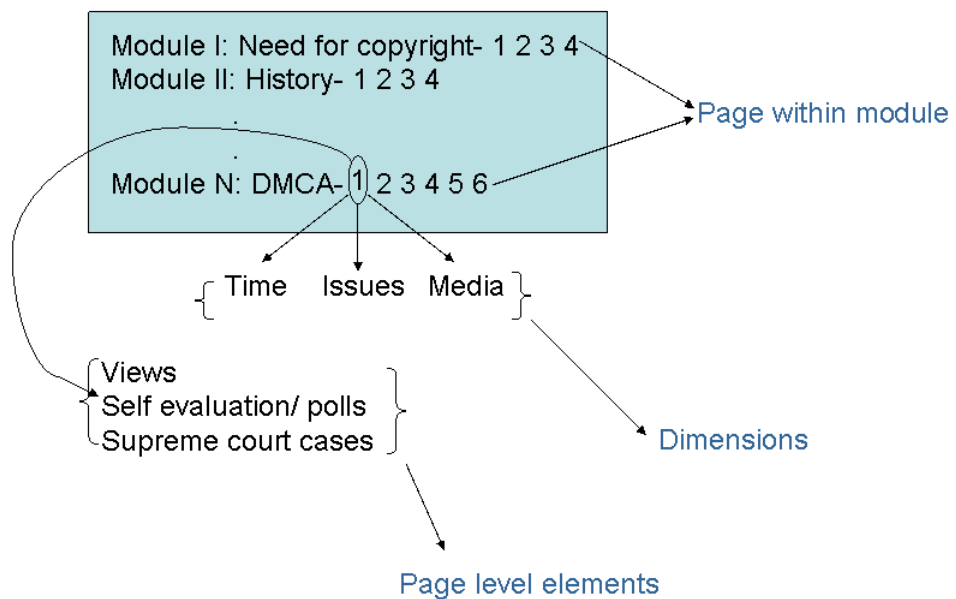


Figure 3

Four dimensions are thus identified:

1. Modules
2. Time
3. Issues
4. Media

The next step was to identify different ways to represent multi-dimensional data. Here are some of the possibilities:

## Representing Dimensions

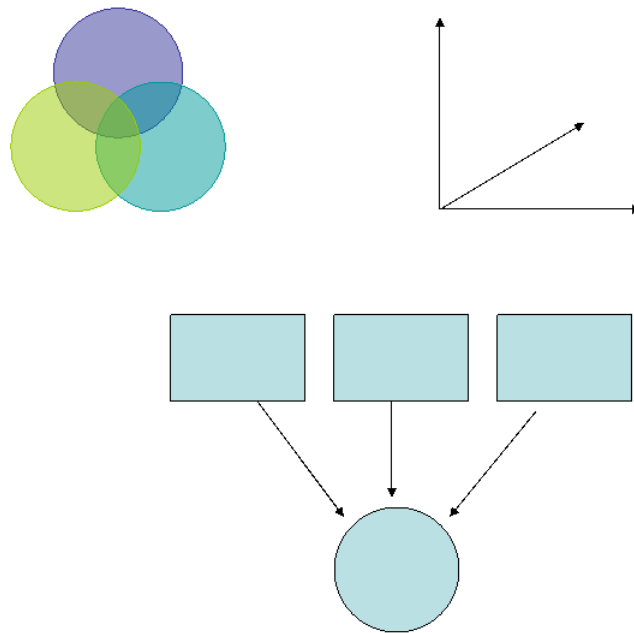


Figure 4

I decided to go with the bottom most one. The major limitation with Venn diagrams and dimensional graphs is that representing more than three dimensions makes the interface clunky. The third one provides a robust and flexible way to include more than three dimensions. I will continue to explore other possibilities in the coming weeks.

Below is the diagram that explains the working of the interface:

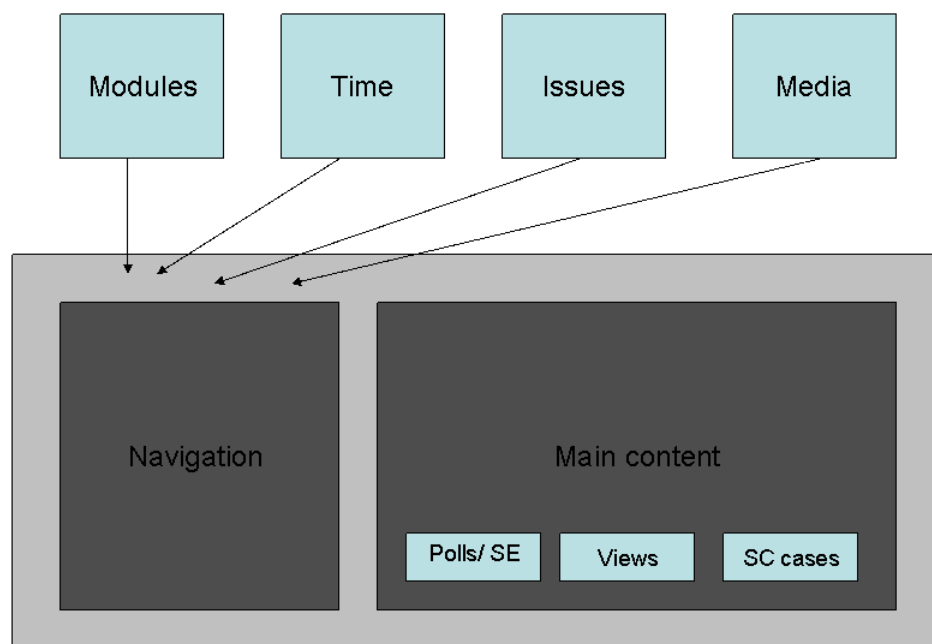


Figure 5

The user can choose from any combination of the dimensions. For example, if module I is History of copyright and module II is DMCA, the user can find topics related to music (media) within DMCA (module). Another example would be to find topics related to the history of copyright (module) that deals with unauthorized public performances (issue).

Once the user chooses the dimensions, the navigation menu would appear and s/he can reach the content by clicking on the menus. On the main content page there will be options for:

1. Self-evaluation
2. Views (of the left, right and center)
3. Supreme Court cases.

The user can also scroll directly to a linear list of these three page level elements.

## Part II: Visual debates

(I will design this as an independent study next semester. Critical framework will be drafted in the final report).