

April 2, 2006

Here's this week's roundup of recent news with regards to what's up and what matters in technology, education, and culture.

This week saw more than a fair amount of focus placed on Web-based video and social networking. In terms of the video scene, upstart YouTube is definitely the current leader of the pack. Everyone was buzzing about the 13-month-old company at this week's Digital Hollywood conference in Santa Monica, and YouTube has seen the number of viewings on the site shoot up from 3 million a day to 30 million since the Web site's December launch. There's still no firm business plan for the site but that hasn't stopped pundits from predicting mega financial success for YouTube. If you want to see an indication of that company's impact, look at the pressure being put on the much older Web-video company, Atom. That company has launched new features on its AddictingClips Web site that it hopes will draw more users and close the gap with YouTube.

Further over in the mainstream social networking world, MySpace continues to be large. The popular site has accumulated 67 million members since its launch in 2004, and is currently growing by an average of 250,000 new members daily. In spite of that success, MySpace owner, News Corp., continues to look for new acquisitions that will augment current offerings. Opportunities include photo and video sharing as well as other exchange technologies available for subscribers. Another popular social networking site, Facebook, announced this week that it is definitely for sale. Its owners are expecting \$2 billion, but that's too much according to writer/analyst Om Malik, who reports that Facebook has actually lost approximately 2 million users in the last five months. Finally, the Korean site Cyworld is getting ready to make its U.S. debut. The successful Asian concept should add some healthy pressure to the already heated competition.

Last week was also a nostalgic one as we celebrated 30 years of Apple products and 10 years since the release of the first Palm Pilot. Both of these companies and their products represent the very best in product innovation and flexibility in times of change.

And speaking of innovations, there were some pretty interesting things going on with AJAX last week. Two weeks ago we saw the launch of ajaxWrite and in the first six days after its launch more than 500,000 documents were created using the program. This week the same group launched ajaxSketch, an object-oriented drawing program suitable for creating flow charts, org charts, simple diagrams, and maps. According to the guy behind this effort, Michael Robertson, the group plans to keep launching free, AJAX-based productivity tools every week. You can check out this activity at ajaxlaunch.com. And if you thought AJAX was just a cool scripting language for creating nice Web-based productivity apps, check out Hive7. It's a new social networking site driven by avatars and chat. This seems to be an evolution of Habbo Hotel and exists somewhere between a regular browser and a fully-immersive site like Second Life. And speaking of Second Life, the game's publisher Linden Labs received an additional \$11 million in funding last week.

In the product space, Microsoft forged on in spite recent problems with Vista. This week it announced its plans to put Hotmail on the desktop and made commitments to keep up the innovation and the pressure on its upstart competitors like Google. In other product news, Nokia released a report this week that is bullish on cell phones. According to the Finnish company, the mobile device market will grow more than 15% compared to sales in 2005. Not all product news was positive, however. Sony's much-hyped UMD format that launched with the PSP has fallen flat and will likely be dropped by retailers and Hollywood studios.

In the edublogging space this past week, there were a couple of major memes that garnered attention. The biggest topic of the week was on the value and promise of blogging and podcasting in education. Dave Cormier wrote about the first wave of Read/Write Web activities, their real impact, and what might

come next. Darren Kuropatwa tackled the complex subject of teaching and learning strategies and how to do the best job of reaching all learners in a class with different methods or styles of instruction. Blogs are important, he says, but far from the only solution. Clarence Fisher also has a poignant post on these lines as he reflects on the pros and cons of blogging and podcasting with his students.

This week also saw continued posts on high stakes testing and NCLB. Lanny Arvan's post is definitely worth reading as he tries to address NCLB from a different angle. Finally, with the most recent issue of *Wired* magazine, games are in the air. Check out the post by David Warlick on how we can borrow from video games to create better methods for interaction and sharing in education.

Well, that's this week's roundup. That's what's up and that's what really matters! Don't forget to check out our daily updates posted each morning on *XplanaZine*.

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