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Ed-tech guru shares his expertise
Blogger extraordinaire Ray Schroeder has taught about emerging technologies to college students -- and officials -- for 30 years
By Dennis Carter, Assistant Editor

Primary Topic Channel: Technologies , Tech Leadership

Ray Schroeder was blogging before it was cool. And as one of the top technology officials at the University of Illinois at Springfield, Schroeder hasn't slowed down, writing more than 25,000 entries on 49 blogs since 2001.

After teaching classes on emerging technologies since the late 1970s, Schroeder founded the university's Office of Technology-Enhanced Learning at Illinois in 1997.

Blogging consumes at least two hours of Schroeder's typical work day, and he says keeping up with the latest educational technology trends is a key part of his job.

"I enjoy doing it, and what keeps me going is hearing from people who read the blogs and tell me how important it is to them to get those updates," said Schroeder, 59, a visiting scholar in online learning at the University of Southern Maine, where officials are developing a blended learning program. "I [blog] in order to share important information with the broader community ... and to keep our faculty members informed."

Maintaining a blog in the late 1990s, Schroeder said, elicited confused reactions from most people who asked him about his everyday work at the university.

"I told people I had a blog, and they laughed and thought the name was pretty funny," he said. But once blogging entered the national lexicon and millions took to the internet with their opinions, faculty members and former students subscribed to many of Schroeder's blogs' RSS feeds, getting updated posts at least once a day.

Schroeder, Illinois' director for online learning research, said his course material in the late 1970s focused on cellular radio and how it might one day influence the way people use phones. Three decades later, Schroeder says higher education soon will feel the impact of miniature projectors--about the size of a cell phone--called Pico projectors. The product ranges in price from $250 to $350, and Schroeder said it could become a critical tool in the movement toward mobile learning.

"With [a projector] in a tiny phone size, it'll be a big step toward ubiquitous, or everywhere, computing," he said.

Schroeder's most recent blogging has included an exploration of how colleges and universities are being hit hard by the current recession. Two blogs--New Realities in Higher Education and Teaching in a Recession--track the latest in campus budget cuts and offer advice to educators forced to teach courses with fewer resources. On the Teaching in a Recession blog, for example, Schroeder links to Wikibooks, a free library of educational textbooks.

Schroeder said he never blogs on a topic without poring through peer-reviewed articles and dozens of publications and web sites that track the latest trends in how technology is used in the classroom and lecture hall. Staying ahead of the next wave of technology has become a calling card for Schroeder during his years as a premier education official at the

University of Illinois.

"It's part of this exciting time that we're living in," he said. "I've found it to be just a pretty exciting ride."

Links:

University of Illinois at Springfield

Teaching in a Recession blog

New Realities in Higher Education blog

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