



Cappuccino U

A new way of
learning and working

Jerome Martin, Spotted Cow Press

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Introduction



Stephen Leacock

[http://epe.lac-bac.](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/nlc-bnc/stephen_leacock-ef/1997/leaw.htm)

[gc.ca/100/200/301/nlc-bnc/](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/nlc-bnc/stephen_leacock-ef/1997/leaw.htm)

[stephen_leacock-ef/1997/leaw.htm](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/nlc-bnc/stephen_leacock-ef/1997/leaw.htm)

If I were founding a university I would begin with a smoking room; next a dormitory; and then a decent reading room and a library. After that, if I still had more money that I couldn't use, I would hire a professor and get some text books.

Stephen Leacock

I spend part of my working days in coffee shops with my laptop – sometimes alone, sometimes with friends and colleagues. Wi-Fi in these locations allows me to access the latest knowledge on any subject, to take formal or informal classes, and to correspond with colleagues and with people I've never met in person. Never in history has knowledge been so accessible to so many people for such small costs.

This e-book is about a new style of learning in which innovative people have combined new information technology with traditional ways of learning to develop a new, personally-driven approach to learning. It happens predominantly in “the third place,” a location that is neither home nor office. The third place is usually a coffee house, one which is designed to serve this particular audience.

People gather in their favourite third places to work, relax, visit and learn. They work independently and in groups. Some of them use computers which may or may not be linked to the web. Some are taking courses online; others are writing books like this one.

This is Cappuccino U.

What is Cappuccino U?



Ray Oldenburg (<http://www.pps.org/info/placemakingtools/placemakers/roldenburg>) discussed The Third Place in his book *The Great Good Place* (1989).

Cappuccino U is a metaphor for a new approach to learning based on community, networking, self-study, distance education, and technology. While it is usually focused on The Third Place – coffee shops, libraries, hotels, and other locations where we might work and meet with other people, or be alone in a crowd.

The Third Place is also a neutral place: the people who meet and work together come as equals. We often find round tables in coffee shops, not formal square ones. We are not meeting in someone's office where he or she sits at a desk (a power position) and we sit in chairs facing the desk. We are not meeting in board rooms where, again, certain people assume power positions and chair meetings. We have come as equals: and we've bought our own coffee.

Cappuccino U is your university, your learning facility; you are in control of it and your learning. The campus is your local coffee shop or any other comfortable place where you can meet colleagues and mentors, and where you can access the web. It's a movement, not an institution. People are moving away from traditional educational institutions for their day-to-day needs of updating, networking and learning. Traditional learning institutions cannot meet the educational needs of everyone at all times.

Cappuccino U – remember that this is a metaphor for what you do – offers mentorship, small group learning and seminars, solitary learning, distance education, e-books, the possibility of formal degrees, the opportunity for asynchronous learning. It connects you to vast opportunities for learning and networking.

There are three possibilities for this approach to education: informal group learning, informal individual learning, and directed individual learning administered by an institution, in some cases for credit.

Education and learning

We learn, first, because we are curious and, second, because learning is essential to survival and progress. Early in our lives we learn from our parents and other people around us; later some of our learning comes from formal schooling but, again, much of it comes from our friends and colleagues and from society.

Information technology has provided us with new opportunities for learning through the electronic media and the internet but most of us and most of our learning institutions have been slow to take full advantage of it.

Gabriel Zaid said in *So Many Books: Reading and Publishing in an Age of Abundance* that education is really conversation (and vice versa).

In North America, traditional formal education – primary, secondary and post-secondary – does not include much conversation; instead, we have used and continue to use the lecture system as the primary teaching tool. We may justify continuing this top-down approach to learning because of high student-to-teacher ratios, but we know that communication is an exchange of information and knowledge and that we learn best by methods other than memorizing lecture notes.



So Many Books: Reading
and Publishing in an Age of
Abundance

http://pauldrybooks.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=PDB&Product_Code=169

How can people learn in this Third Place?

Drop by your nearest upscale coffee shop and observe the people around you. Some are looking at a draft proposal for a project. Others sit by themselves, working on their laptops and sipping cappuccini or non-fat lattes. Some are reading, some are writing, and some are enjoying having other people around them without having to carry on conversations. People bring energy with them wherever they go, and at Cappuccino U that energy is probably very positive.

Cappuccino U is people using high-end coffee shops as their Third Place. They go there to network, to learn, to study, to write and to meet with their peers and others. These people are mostly knowledge workers, creative folks, who are finding new ways to work and to learn. For many of them Cappuccino U is part of their virtual office.

Cappuccino U can also be a library, particularly a library which has internet access (including wireless), space to work, and open areas where one can drink coffee and chat with friends and colleagues. Libraries, bookstores, community centres can be other versions of The Third Place.

Cappuccino U is a new way of learning and working: meet with your colleagues and brainstorm a problem or opportunity; use your laptop or iPhone to find the information and knowledge you need to accomplish a task or to create a new concept; take a course online and do the assignments while you sip coffee; and learn and create what you need when you need it.

Your Third Place and your Cappuccino U office can be anywhere and in as many diverse places as you want it to be. Cappuccino U is about taking responsibility for our own learning and understanding the tremendous opportunities that lie within our reach.

Classes with your coffee



Oprah's Book Club
[http://www.oprah.com/
entity/oprahbookclub](http://www.oprah.com/entity/oprahbookclub)

I took a course on William Faulkner in 2005. I didn't plan to take this course but my son, who teaches Canadian literature at the University of Vermont, sent me a package of three of Faulkner's books for my birthday and suggested that I check the Oprah site. The package of books – *As I Lay Dying*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *Light in August* – was described as The 2005 Summer Selection for Oprah's Book Club.

I soon learned that Oprah has not only a book club but a classroom as well. By joining her book club (at no cost to me) I found that I had access to lectures about Faulkner and the books. I and thousands of other students were told that the lectures would be available over the summer. We were asked to read the books in the order I listed them and were informed by e-mail when a new lecture was available on the web.

The lectures were given by Faulkner scholars who were very knowledgeable and enthusiastic. We could listen to the lectures as many times as we wanted and could also participate in discussion groups – and we could ask questions of the experts.

We read and watched the video lectures. I was captivated by the subject matter and the method of delivery. I learned at my own pace. I read in my home, in my back yard, and in coffee shops. I watched the lectures in my home office although I could have watched them with headphones at any location that had internet access.

My class in Faulkner was free, asynchronous and accessible. It's the sort of course that I had hoped would be offered by my local educational institutions – or other universities or colleges. Since 2005 Oprah has featured a variety of books and has continued to provide in-depth discussions for participants in her book club.

Free, online courses are examples of the resources available to independent Cappuccino U learners. We can learn when we want, where we want (and, yes, we need some access to the web for courses like this).

iTunes U links to an abundance of free courses and lecturers from some of the best universities in the world.

Workgroups and seminars at Cappuccino U

Early one Friday morning last summer I settled into one of my favourite outdoor tables at one of my cappuccino haunts with a good friend and colleague. We have worked together for twenty years and continue to produce work that is always better than what we did last year.

While we spend some of our time talking about our families and gardens we always learn something from each other. We're also part of a larger network, a network we have built over those twenty years; it sustains us and will continue to do so if we nurture and care for it. Often our meetings include other colleagues, especially when we are working on a joint project.

Eight women sat down at a table near us, each with a cup of coffee or tea. They began speaking French. An older woman took charge of the conversation, gently correcting pronunciation when required and helping with vocabulary. This was apparently a weekly gathering for women who wanted to improve or retain their knowledge of French. It could have been described as a seminar in a very pleasant locale – a fine opportunity to learn a second or third language.

I've since discovered many opportunities to learn French and other languages by downloading courses – usually free – to my computer, iPod and iPhone.

Continuing education

Some people feel that they have an education because when they were 22 they received a Bachelor's degree, or they received a PhD when they were 28 (or, more likely these days, 38).

However, education is not acquired through vaccination or some sort of anointment. We learn daily – or we have the opportunity to do so. Continuing education, be it formal or informal, is essential to our growth as individuals.

If our formal education has been successful we will have been vaccinated with a curiosity virus and will continue to look for new knowledge, not just because it is useful to us but because we have an insatiable desire to learn and become better at what we do.

Until recently, most continuing education courses have been offered only in classroom settings. These have been very useful for those able to participate, but many people are not able to take time from their jobs or their home lives to attend courses. Some universities and other institutions are now offering courses through distance delivery, although relatively few universities have addressed these opportunities.

The traditional education system cannot be expected to provide learning for everyone, everywhere, all of the time. Knowledge is growing so quickly in so many fields that educators cannot always remain current in their fields. Furthermore, there are new fields of study developing. Many of us are working in areas and fields which were not developed when we went to university.

We need just-in-time learning to meet our needs. For example, you may need to use a particular software to deal with a problem or opportunity. There is no reason to learn to use that software until you need to. If you learn to use it a year before you need it you will have forgotten much of what you have learned, and a new, improved version will likely have been released during that year: or new software may have been developed.

We need what we need when we need it.

Your virtual office connects you with the world

Knowledge workers, independent or otherwise, can now take their offices with them, anywhere, anytime. We no longer need to be tied to a desk and an office but, rather, can work in a virtual office using laptops and smart phones.

My wife's favourite virtual office is on the beach at Carmel. Every day (or at least every visit to the beach) she uses whatever log that has washed up the night before for a desk. She brings work with her, or else simply sits, relaxes and plans activities.

Cappuccino U provides a virtual office. Simply find a Third Place with wireless or other connections and you can check your e-mail, download files and send documents to others in your organization.

Some universities have embraced technology and now provide virtual offices for their students in dormitories, dining rooms and coffee shops on campus: they have wired their campuses so that students can use their laptops or iPods anywhere.

Free access to course materials



Massachusetts Institute of
Technology (MIT)

<http://ocw.mit.edu>

Major English Novels

[http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/
literature/21l-471-major-
english-novels-spring-
2009/#description](http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/literature/21l-471-major-english-novels-spring-2009/#description)

World Lecture Hall

[http://wlh.webhost.utexas.
edu/index.cfm](http://wlh.webhost.utexas.edu/index.cfm)

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has created OpenCourseWare (OCW), with the help of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The purpose of OCW is to provide course material for almost all undergraduate and graduate courses free to anyone, anywhere, anytime by making it available on their website.

The course material supplied by OCW usually includes notes, assignments, and references. For example, the 2009 course *Major English Novels* includes all course materials, including audio and video files. While there is no charge for these materials, visitors who download them are asked to consider making a contribution to MIT OpenCourseWare if they feel that the resources are valuable to them. While one cannot earn credit from MIT for reading the material and doing the assignments one can learn a lot about the subject of the course by doing just that.

World Lecture Hall lists a variety of free distance education courses.

You can sit in an internet café (Cappuccino U) and learn about environmental politics and policy in the USA by accessing this course on your laptop, iPod or iPhone. It's free, although you may have to pay for your access to the web.

Taking courses for credit

There are many opportunities for cooperation and sharing of courses and programs among institutions. For example, students in Alberta, Canada, could take courses in oceanography from a university in Australia and Australian students could take courses on the boreal forest from an institution in northern Alberta.

Carry your books on your hard drive

Children in primary and secondary school walk past my house each day carrying what I refer to as Mt. Everest backpacks. In some cases the backpack is half the height of the child and from the effort expended might be half his or her weight as well.

One of the joys of education is finding the perfect book that explains just what we were looking for; another is finding books or articles that deal with new ideas or subjects, books that we encountered unexpectedly, or perhaps were recommended to us.

I was sitting in a coffee shop, one of my Cappuccino U campuses, writing material for a website. I'm not doing this very well. I recalled being told about a book by Nick Usborne entitled Net Words: Creating High-Impact Online Copy. I phoned my local bookstore and found that they did not have it in stock but they could order it for me and would be here in perhaps two weeks. But I needed it immediately. Instead of waiting I went to an online bookstore and ordered the e-book version of this book. It arrived on my computer as a e-book in PDF (Adobe's Portable Document Format) minutes after I placed my order and paid for it with my credit card.

It looks just like a book on my screen, with the same fonts and format as the original. But, in this case, it's far more useful to me than the paper copy would be. First, it's always with me when I'm carrying my laptop (which is almost always). Second, I can search for key words. I can also scan from one section to another far faster than I can flip pages – and I can scroll through other parts of the book very quickly. This book is – in either hard copy or electronic copy – a very functional, business book.

Most people have never seen or read an electronic book, but most have the same opinion of them: ‘I don’t want to read a computer; I want to curl up in front of the fire with a good novel.’ However, most people who see or try an electronic book can see some advantages in using knowledge on the screen rather than the page. However, how can one evaluate something you’ve never seen?

I love fine paper books. I love the feel of them, the smell of them and I love to have them in my home (and I own thousands of them). However, I no longer want to buy and store information and knowledge on everything, and I am running out of room to store paper books. I shall continue to buy very fine, collectible books, but I shall also buy and use electronic books on my computer and phone.

Use podcasting for information, knowledge and courses



Podcasting

<http://www.apple.com/itunes/podcasts>

iTunes

<http://www.apple.com/itunes>

iTunes U

<http://www.apple.com/education/itunes-u/>

Podcasting involves putting audio files on the web which can then be downloaded and used on one’s computer, iPod or any other MP3 player.

There are hundreds of thousands of podcasts available on virtually every subject. Many are commentaries, discussions of news and personal logs, but some are courses in a variety of subjects. Use iTunes to find and play podcasts. If you produce your own podcasts, iTunes will help others find them.

Using the idea of Cappuccino U

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543 Howard Street, 5th Floor,
San Francisco, CA 94105
USA

We now have a multitude of opportunities to learn through our own efforts using a combination of new technology and traditional approaches to learning, neither of which has to happen at a formal institution. The idea of Cappuccino U can also be used effectively within institutions, both in formal undergraduate and graduate programs and in continuing education programs.

What do you want to learn? Do you have the time and money to attend traditional classes? Are you self-motivated with respect to learning? These are some of the questions to consider when deciding how you will gain the knowledge that you want.

I loved almost everything about attending University at a time when campuses were not crowded, students had money to attend classes without working in the evenings or afternoons, and we had time to sit with other students and professors and talk about what we were learning and about life in general.

However, the idea and the practice of Cappuccino U has been a major factor in helping me to learn new concepts and to remain current in the fields in which I work – most of which are not related to the subjects I studied at University.

I hope that the idea of Cappuccino U is of value to you. Use it, enjoy it: and please send me a note about how it has worked for you.

– *Jerome Martin*

Jerome Martin is a publisher, photographer, and writer in Edmonton, Alberta.



Send me a note:
JMartin@spottedcowpress.ca