Chapter 1
ELATEwiki:
Evolving an E-Learning Faculty Wiki

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ABSTRACT

A small team at Kansas State University worked to plan, create and launch an e-learning wiki to support faculty in their work. The advantages of the wiki technology—with its technological affordances of wide access and dissemination, digital content archival, multimedia expressiveness, remote collaboration, subscribability, and the reversibility of postings –appealed to this team. Even initially, there seemed to be opportunities for building novice and professional capacities in e-learning through the co-creation and sharing of information, problem-solving, and virtual community building. This chapter describes the research literature and pedagogical theories on wikis. It addresses the team's efforts in exploring and then building the wiki site. Additionally, this explains the team's rationales in terms of the intellectual property policies, the work to create accessibility, the wiki's fortuitous naming, the seeding of the wiki with contents, its low-key branding strategy, and the publicity plan for a "hard launch" of the ELATEwiki to the Wikisphere. This also describes the datamining techniques used to track use of the site and how those affect the site's continuing evolution. Finally, this chapter will provide perspectives on the work of a wiki-master in a peer-to-peer, collaborative, and open wiki.

ELATE: EVOLVING AN E-LEARNING FACULTY WIKI

A wiki used to develop particular subject matter works as a socio-technical space. The open hypertext affordances of wiki technologies enhance intercommunications and collaborative editing, but to succeed, the participants must bring their good will and expertise; the people are the ones who create and maintain the community. The users sustain wikis with continuous addition and refinement of digital information and contents. This case study discusses the creation and deployment of wiki technology in higher education to support e-learning

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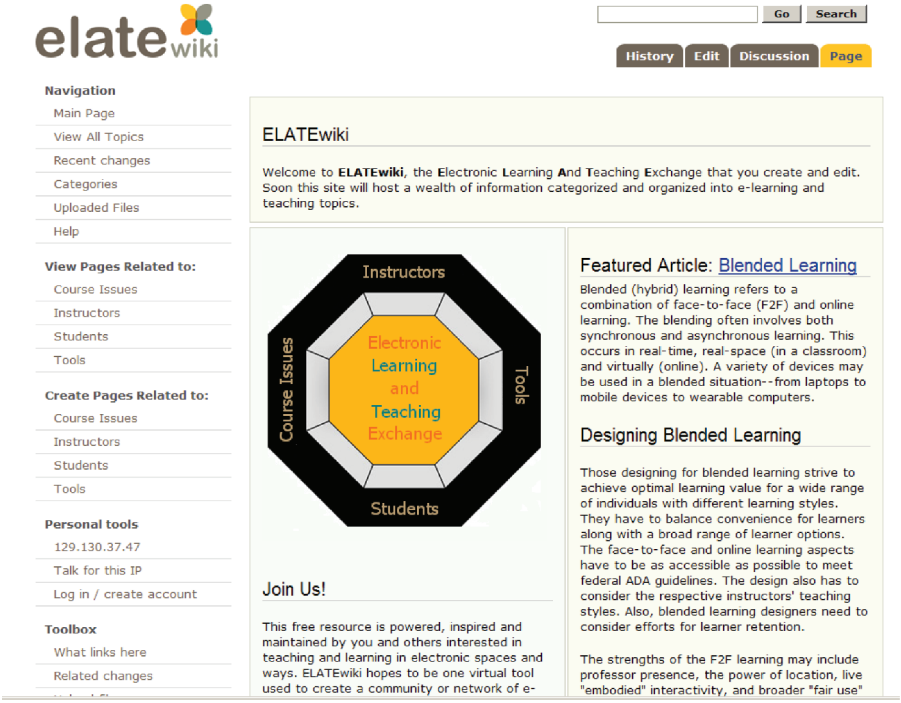
Figure 1. A screenshot of the ELATEwiki



faculty, administrators, staff, and learners. The name of ELATEwiki stands for "E-Learning and Teaching Exchange".

INTRODUCTION

The conversation began at the Division of Continuing Education (DCE) at Kansas State University (K-State) among members of the Distance Education Leadership group to support e-learning faculty members. This group had worked to launch a digital newsletter and to create a social site for both e-learning faculty and learners. Although ample on-campus teaching exchanges already existed, it became apparent that more was needed, particularly for those in geographically dispersed locations. The group decided to explore the use of a wiki to support those engaged in e-learning both on and off the K-State campuses. The exploration was conducted over several months, and then the project went dormant for half a year. Interest in this "thought experiment" was renewed at the end of Dec. 2008, and the project received modest funding and high-level political support on the campus shortly thereafter. ELATEwiki launched in early Mar. 2009.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Initially, the team conducted an environmental scan to see if there was an existing wiki that would fulfill the needs at the campus. They found some that dealt with e-learning technologies; they explored others that were designed for particular universities, subject areas, and courses. They found some that dealt with education in general but not any that dealt with the breadth of issues in e-learning. They also probed some electronic publications and blogs. If such a shared space existed stably in the Wikisphere, the Web 2.0 ap-