

Toward an Intellectual Common for Agricultural Education

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This manuscript provides the expanded text that formed the basis for the 2009 Distinguished Lecture presented at the annual conference of the American Association for Agricultural Education. Commons have existed in various forms as long as humankind has struggled for survival. In a very real sense, our hunter-gather ancestors stepped into a common every time they went forth to seek sustenance. As civilization developed, governments established more formal commons for public gatherings and for trading. Adam Smith's vision of a free market economy is effectively that of an economic common unfettered by excessive regulation. In the past few decades, the Internet has developed into a massive and pervasive cyber-common. In the past few years the concept of the academic or intellectual common has started to develop. The author examines the concept of the common from historical and modern perspectives and proposes an intellectual common for university-level agricultural education under the management of AAAE.

Being invited to present the “Mystery Speech” is one of the most intimidating professional tasks I have ever faced. I am deeply honored and humbled to stand before you today. To prepare my remarks, I examined the distinguished lectures for the past decade looking for guidance and inspiration. In his distinguished lecture in 2004, Richard Carter recalled Ira Dickerson's 1984 distinguished lecture in which he reminded us that the tradition of the Mystery Speaker goes back at least to H. E. Bradford in 1930 (as cited in Carter, 2005). If those numbers are correct, that would make this the 80th such presentation. Sometimes the mystery speaker has taken the opportunity to reflect on a lifetime of accumulated experience and by means of that reflection to harvest wisdom that might be helpful to the rest of us. Dave William's (2003) touching examination of the “footprints in the sand” of agricultural education in 2002 provided lessons he had accumulated over a long and illustrious career. That is a worthwhile effort because, as John Dewey (as cited in Clark, n.d.) taught us, we learn from reflecting on experience rather than from experience itself. Some mystery speakers have offered scholarly presentations that have added to the body of

knowledge for the profession, such as Vern Luft's (2004) important examination of accountability in education. Still others have examined the state of the profession and offered suggestions for future directions or solutions to current problems. An example of that was Gary Moore's (2006) provocative presentation when he asked members of the American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE) who is driving the agricultural education pickup truck and urged us to take on a stronger leadership role in school-based agricultural education. Following Gary's metaphor, he challenged AAAE to move from the middle seat to the driver's seat.

My tack will be the latter one with just a hint of scholarship. I propose to examine one aspect of where we are as a professional organization and to offer a few suggestions that we might consider to positively affect future practice in agricultural education at the university level. I entitle this presentation “Toward an Intellectual Common for Agricultural Education.”

Role of Professional Organizations

Discussing the roles of professional organizations, Thomas (1997) posited that “such

groups are a means by which individuals try to distinguish themselves from the masses by aligning with a group that behaves differently and then adhering to the standards of that group” in a process she referred to as “collective individualism” (§ 1). As an exception to the normalizing influence that is more typical of professional organizations, Thomas pointed to the role of professional organizations in influencing the research agendas of the professions they represent as a means of affecting practice. We can see that later role reflected clearly in the effect that the National Research Agenda for Agricultural Education and Communication developed under Ed Osborne’s leadership (Osborne, n.d.) is having on research efforts in our profession.

In a case study of institutional change, Greenwood, Suddaby, and Hinings (2002) wrote that “professional associations are commonly understood as agents of reproduction rather than of change” (p 73). They found that professional associations typically tend to reproduce prevailing practices by creating and following routines that institutionalize stability in association activities. On the contrary they also found that, given the right situation, associations can contribute in meaningful ways to organizational and professional change by providing a forum and a mechanism for directed discourse aimed at re-thinking the role of the profession and the practice of its members.

According to our constitution’s mission statement (American Association for Agricultural Education, 2004), “AAAE is dedicated to studying, applying, and promoting teaching and learning processes in agriculture” (§ 1). Among other goals, the Constitution posits that we will accomplish that mission by “serving as an advocate for the improvement of teaching and learning in agriculture” and by “providing opportunities to communicate the results of research and other scholarly activities” (§ 2). As our goals would imply, we routinely commit significant organizational resources to create and sustain mechanisms for our members to present and publish research to share results. Just as critically, most of us understand that a tacit goal of our efforts is to support promotion and tenure for our junior members and emerging leaders. Promoting the dissemination of scholarship, improving professional practice, and promoting the careers of its members are perfectly

legitimate functions for a professional organization such as AAAE. It is to further all three of those goals that I will suggest an expanded role for AAAE as what I will refer to as “the keeper of the common” for agricultural education.

Conceptualizing “The Common:” More Easily Said than Done

What does this have to do with an intellectual common for agricultural education? Ideally we should begin with a general definition of “the common,” but, as Shakespeare said in Hamlet, “ay, there’s the rub.” There is no generally accepted definition of a “common.” OnTheCommons.org describes it as follows:

The commons are the things that we inherit and create jointly, and that will (hopefully) last for generations to come. The commons consists of gifts of nature such as air, oceans and wildlife as well as shared social creations such as libraries, public spaces, scientific research and creative works (On the Commons, 2009, § 2).

In a broad sense, we can trace the existence of what we generally refer to as “the common” to the earliest stages of human history when our hunter gatherer forebears harvested food and shelter from an open landscape with no official boundaries or legal claims of ownership. The landscape was open for anyone to use and access was limited only by territoriality assertions based on tradition and strength. For those of us old enough to have seen Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*, one of the themes of the movie was that the dawn of human invention revolved around the necessity to secure access to a watering hole – what was effectively a water common. The watering hole was in an open area and appeared to have adequate water for all comers. Rather than sharing, one tribe of pre-humans laid territorial claim to exclusive access to the water source by means of force. The need of a second tribe to secure access to the water led to the invention of the first tool, in the case of the actors in the very bad ape costumes in the movie, a weapon (Dirks, n.d.). If Kubrick’s vision has a fundamental lesson that is relevant to today’s discussion, it must be that unlimited access to a common resource may not always

work in the absence of some form of management. The ape with the weapon tool effectively became the “keeper” of the water common on behalf of his clan.

Through the ages, rulers, governments, and other agencies such as churches have established any number of different kinds of common areas and assumed responsibility for providing, maintaining, and managing those areas for the use of the specific populations. The Boston Common comes to mind as a recreational common (City of Boston, n.d.) but analogous areas can be found in the ruins of ancient cities throughout the world. A notable example from the ancient world is the open area, or Comitium, which made up part of the early Roman Forum and which was used as a political common for public meetings by the citizens of ancient Rome (Sandano, n.d.). Certainly, many other examples could be found easily throughout history.

Our current understanding of the concept of the common is probably only a few centuries old. In one of the more influential books ever published, Adam Smith (1776) expounded on the mechanisms of political economics in the Western world. In essence, Smith argued that most national wealth and, indeed, most individual wealth are founded on the principle of the informed pursuit of self-interest on the part of the individual. In one particularly germane passage, Smith wrote,

The natural effort of every individual to better his own condition, when suffered to exert itself with freedom and security is so powerful a principle that it is alone, and without any assistance, not only capable of carrying on the society to wealth and prosperity, but of surmounting a hundred impertinent obstructions with which the folly of human laws too often incumbers [sic] its operations; though the effect of these obstructions is always more or less either to encroach upon its freedom, or to diminish its security. (1776, ¶ IV.5.82)

Smith’s thesis has come to be known as free market economics. In a very real sense, Smith was talking about an economic common, although he did not use that word and probably did not think in those terms.

Almost two centuries later, in his retiring presidential address to the Pacific Division of

the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Garrett Hardin (1968) provided a watershed examination of what a common can and cannot do. In his now famous presentation and later article, Hardin examined what he called *The Tragedy of the Commons*. Essentially, his thesis is that a freely accessible common of any kind simply does not work in the long run for any population, including humans. Hardin’s focus in his presentation was on human population control, but his argument has been used over the past four decades to apply to the myriad of constraints with which we must deal in a finite world, given infinite human appetite for more of everything. Clearly Hardin was not referring to an economic common or a recreational common, but I believe that his thesis pertains to the kind of intellectual common to which I refer tonight.

In a very real sense, the Internet developed as a great electronic common. Indeed, the unregulated and open access to information of all kinds characterizes the Internet and at this point in time, it serves as what may well be the ultimate common. To test that assertion, as I wrote this paragraph, I conducted an Internet search using Google™ for the key word “commons” and found approximately 243 million hits. The fifth hit on the first page led me to <http://flickr.com/commons>. I suspect that many of you are familiar with Flickr™ but I need that web site to illustrate a point.

According to Wikipedia™, Flickr™ is a web site operated by Yahoo™ that hosts images and videos to which users may add (upload) and from which users may take (download) primarily photographic images relatively freely. On its web site, among other services Flickr™ offers a graphic common to which images can be uploaded and downloaded with free access. Wikipedia™ is a well-known information common. Wikipedia™ indicates that, as of November, 2008, Flickr™ hosted 3 billion images (Flickr, 2009).

This semester I taught a course entitled EDUC 5440, *Curriculum and Instruction* for non education majors. In one of the classes we discussed the important learning theories that have affected teaching. I located a video clip of B.F. Skinner discussing operant conditioning on YouTube™ (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_ctJqjlrHA). The students and I were able to discuss pros and cons of Skinner’s thinking in a

way that would have been impossible without that clip. I cannot even imagine how many clips have been shown on YouTube™, a different kind of media common or how many wall postings have been made on Facebook™ a popular social networking common.

Thus, we see that “common” can refer to not only a place, but an economic, intellectual, social, or even electronic construct. The essence of a common is that all interested players can contribute to or take from the common with some freedom. It is that very freedom of access that makes a common.

A Keeper of the Commons

What we have learned from millennia of experience is that a common is most effective when a set of rules is enforced by some group or agency that creates and manages the common. We have seen over and over in the two centuries since publication of Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* that totally unrestricted access to the economic common, just as to the watering hole in Stanley Kubrick’s vision of the dawn of humankind, leads inexorably to predictable problems of excess and misuse. The Comitium in the Roman Forum served its purpose well and safely for centuries because the Roman government designed it for a specific purpose, maintained, it, and provided security for it. The Boston Common is peaceful and beautiful because the City of Boston designed, maintains, and provides security for it. Flickr™ and Wikipedia™ and YouTube™ and Facebook™ serve as effective commons because each was purposefully designed and is managed by a central group of individuals who have the final say regarding what is and what is not acceptable usage – in effect each of these groups is a “keeper of the common.”

Academic Commons

As the Internet exploded in the 1990s many of us developed course web sites for our students and, for all practical purposes, created an unwieldy but useful agricultural education academic commons. I built my first course web sites using simple HTML coding. I am not a computer programmer by training so those first web sites were pretty rough as you might expect. As web authoring software started to appear

many more of us started creating course web sites and they began to look a bit more professional. I remember finding course web sites posted by fellow agricultural education professors and used their PowerPoint sets and handouts to either modify for my own use or even to use directly in my classes, with credit to the original authors of course. A few of our colleagues still maintain public Web sites on which complete course material sets are maintained and available for open access (e.g. Chris Townsend’s (2009) undergraduate leadership course web site located at <http://aled.tamu.edu/340/default.asp>).

Some years after many of us had started to provide online course web sites our respective universities entered the game with course management systems such as Blackboard™. Many course web sites are still available to the public online but they are sporadic and generally can be found only by keyword search or links embedded in other web sites. Sadly, once our institutions went to systems such as Blackboard™, we could no longer access the course materials of our peers as readily as we could earlier in the Internet age. The online course management systems made web support of instruction much more effective but essentially ushered in an academic isolationist era.

Since the early part of this decade, a number of groups have begun a widespread effort to move toward establishing what has been variously referred to as intellectual commons, academic commons, and open access digital libraries. In April, 2003, an international conference of leading biomedical researchers was held at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Chevy Chase Maryland. The meeting produced a consensus agreement on a definition of open access publishing and an agenda to promote open access publishing of medical science research. Peter Suber posted the resulting “Bethesda Statement,” on open access publication. According to Suber (2003) the Bethesda Statement defines an open access publication as one that meets the following two conditions:

The author(s) and copyright holder(s) grant(s) to all users a free, irrevocable, worldwide, perpetual right of access to, and a license to copy, use, distribute, transmit

and display the work publicly and to make and distribute derivative works, in any digital medium for any responsible purpose, subject to proper attribution of authorship, as well as the right to make small numbers of printed copies for their personal use.

A complete version of the work and all supplemental materials, including a copy of the permission as stated above, in a suitable standard electronic format is deposited immediately upon initial publication in at least one online repository that is supported by an academic institution, scholarly society, government agency, or other well-established organization that seeks to enable open access, unrestricted distribution, interoperability, and long-term archiving. (pp. 1–2)

Coleman (n.d.) described what she called commons-based digital libraries (CBDL). According to her, a CBDL is a global, trusted collection of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary digital information. She envisioned large scale data systems that provide open access for users but tightly controlled data entry regimes to make available closely managed resources that would have been at one time found in the library's stacks but that are now available digitally via the Internet. As we all know, our libraries are moving in that direction and most of the "library" research done by our graduate students and faculty is done electronically.

In an ethnographic analysis, Nonini (2006) likened an intellectual common to a gift economy. He concluded that in an intellectual common, participants both take knowledge from the common and provide knowledge to it as a matter of course. His contention is that the gift of intellectual property in the form of knowledge creates a debt on the part of the receiver and that repaying that debt requires a gift in exchange. This seems to stand in direct contradiction to the capitalist exchange system as Adam Smith described it. Nevertheless, Nonini concluded that when the gift of scientific knowledge results in acknowledgement by the recipient of the contributions of the giver, the exchange of gifts satisfies both parties. In essence his thesis is two-fold. First, for an intellectual common to work, users are expected to deposit knowledge into the common as well as use it to receive

knowledge. Within that framework three conditions must be met. First the giver must provide knowledge pieces without copyright restriction or expectation of fee. Second, the receiver must use the knowledge without claiming it as his or her own and must acknowledge the giver, i.e., cite the source of the knowledge. Third, the intellectual common must be "placed within the social and historical context that constitutes the field of power within which it operates and be found to be non-exploitative with respect to the rest of global society" (Nonini, 2006, ¶12).

In a 2004 conference on scholarly communications as a commons, Suber (2004) outlined a vision for an intellectual common based largely on open access literature. According to Suber,

Open access (OA) is free online access. OA literature is not only free of charge to everyone with an internet connection, but free of most copyright and licensing restrictions.... It depends on authors who freely consent to distribution of their works without payment, typically because their salaries are paid by their employers rather than by royalties from commercial publishers.

...OA literature is free of charge for readers and users, but not for producers. The producers require revenue or subsidies. OA owes its origin and part of its deep appeal to the fact that publishing to the internet permits both wider dissemination and lower costs than any previous form of publishing. This revolutionary conjunction is too good to pass up. But even low costs must be recovered if OA is to be sustainable. (pp. 1–2)

Of particular interest to this discussion, Suber (2004) posited that there are two general forms of intellectual common that will be relevant to the present discussion. The first is open-access repositories or archives and the second is open-access peer-reviewed journals. In my judgment, this implicitly includes research proceedings.

A corollary development that followed this 2004 meeting was the formation of an International Association for the Study of the Commons. That group subsequently created an

International Journal of the Commons that embodies many of Suber's concepts (International Association for the Study of the Commons, n.d.).

The Journal web site is substantively similar to the *Journal of Agricultural Education* web site, except that the following open access statement of assumptions is clearly posted:

Access to all the articles published by the International Journal of the Commons is free for all! For authors, this means access to an important but oftentimes untapped readership – readers from the South [*ed. note: apparently refers to universities in developing countries which are generally located in the Southern Hemisphere*] where universities often do not have the resources to pay for expensive journal subscriptions. Imagine what it means to have your work read not only by those residing within the walls of western universities, but by people all over the world. (International Journal of the Commons, n.d., ¶ 3)

In a remarkably forward thinking example of the open access approach to academic commons, Massachusetts Institution of Technology instituted an open courseware program in 2001 under which all of the course materials for that institution would eventually be made available online to anyone. In the first year only 50 courses were posted but by May of 2009 1,890 courses were online (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, n.d.). I have sampled several of the courses at the MIT site and found syllabi, handouts, links to online reading assignments, and other items reminiscent of my own courses posted on Blackboard™. The MIT professors are clearly not intimidated by public transparency because spelling errors and other mistakes are common on the materials I reviewed – again reminiscent of my own courses on Blackboard™.

Agricultural Education's Intellectual Common

Our Traditional Common

Now let us turn our attention to the matter at hand: AAEA and agricultural education's intellectual common. Quite literally, AAEA and its predecessors and allied organizations have

served as agricultural education's intellectual common for many years. In my view, there have been two sections of that traditional common.

First, was our physical common. Just as the citizens of Rome gathered freely in the Comitium to discuss issues of the day, members of our profession have gathered in Louisville this week (May 19–22, 2009) to discuss the issues that pertain to agricultural education today. As our predecessors have done for almost a century, at this meeting we are gathered in our intellectual common and each of us is free to contribute to and take from the common whatever we find useful.

Second was our printed common. Part of our published common consisted of the *Journal of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture* (JAATEA), now the *Journal of Agricultural Education* (JAE), and the *Agricultural Education Magazine*. Those were available to a relatively limited audience in our private collections and in libraries worldwide that purchased subscriptions.

The other part of our published common consisted of research proceedings and other documents that our organization maintained on behalf of the profession. I attended my first meeting of the National Agricultural Education Research Meeting (NAERM) in December of 1978 at the annual meeting of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture (AATEA). To that meeting, presenters brought 3-hole punched, stapled copies of their papers. The NAERM Secretary brought front and back covers printed on heavy card stock paper, a title page, and a box of Acco binder clasps. A group of volunteers assembled the proceedings into book form using the clasps, and each registrant was able to take home a copy of the assembled NAERM Proceedings for the year. I believe that the 1996 AAEA Eastern Regional Research Conference was the first agricultural education research meeting for which all paper submissions and peer-reviews were conducted online and for which the proceedings were provided to attendees in electronic copy. I still have the 3-1/2" diskette containing the 1996 *Proceedings*, but as you might assume, I have no disk reader for that media so only the paper copy is now accessible and only the people who attended that meeting received copies. Thus we can see that the printed common for our research papers has been very limited.

The nature of the agricultural education intellectual common has changed drastically over the years. Beginning in the 1960s, national and regional research conference proceedings were submitted to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) for archiving on microform. In the form of microfiche, the proceedings were made available in libraries throughout the world and in some places these microfiche copies of the NAERM proceedings are still available today. In the 1990s the proceedings were converted to CD format and subsequently to more direct, online format.

Our Contemporary Common

Not many years ago the profession finally voted to put the *Journal* online. I hope that some of you will remember that was a controversial step at the time because there was a fear that if *JAE* were available online, there might be no reason for institutions or even individuals to subscribe to it. Nevertheless, each step has taken our intellectual common closer to Suber's (2003, 2006) vision of open access.

Also, some years ago, AAAE began publishing the proceedings of our research conferences online. That too has also been quite controversial because of concerns about academic integrity and plagiarism. The question of whether papers in online proceedings are precluded from subsequent publication in a journal is well beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, in preparing this manuscript I communicated that concern to Peter Hirtle, the Cornell University Library Intellectual Property Officer. Mr. Hirtle had this reaction:

...this is not so much a copyright question as a matter of professional practice, which varies greatly by field. For example, in many subject areas posting the papers as part of an online proceedings would not constitute prior publication and the paper could easily be submitted to a journal. In high-energy physics, for example, it is almost expected that authors will post papers to ArXiv prior to submitting them to a journal.... You would know best the practices of journals in your field, but in general, there are many, many academic areas that would not feel that posting to online proceedings precludes subsequent

journal submission (Peter Hirtle, personal communication, April 30, 2009).

I will not pursue this question further here, but I am no longer convinced that posting a paper in the *AAAE Research Conference Proceedings* and then submitting the same research to *JAE* is a problem. I now believe that an editorial declaration in the proceedings document indicating that the authors are expected and encouraged to further develop the papers and submit revised versions for publication in appropriate journals would provide ample justification for that next step.

Expanding Our Common

What is missing? The content that the MIT open course site made available starting in 2001 is much like the content that was starting to become available, albeit in a very haphazard way, on our agricultural education course web sites prior to the advent of university-sponsored, centrally-managed course sites in the 1990s.

I believe that an expanded intellectual common for university-level agricultural education is needed. Our expanded intellectual common could take the form of a web site managed by AAAE with limited access for posting but full open access for use following the definitions posited by Suber (2003, 2004). I suggest that the AAAE Intellectual Common be based on a gift exchange model as described by Nonini (2006). I envision that some components of the common might be structured for peer review but that the entire common would be password protected and moderated for submissions but open to everyone for access and use. I propose that a Committee of the Common be established to design the site and the rules for posting. That committee would effectively become our "Keeper of the Common."

There are many ways we might organize the content of the site. I will use the metaphor of a farmers' market. I will assume that we have all seen and used farmers' markets so no explanation is needed. One way to organize our common might be by discipline-based categories. If we think of the entry page as our farmers' market, we would expect to see a series of stalls. One stall might be intended for those of us who specialize in teacher preparation. Our members who specialize in extension or leadership, or communications, or other areas of

scholarship might have their own stalls. One or more general interest stalls for areas such as research and advocacy should be provided. Graphically, that marketplace might take the form of a page with a button for each stall.

Following the marketplace metaphor, within each stall there might be shelves or boxes based on special interests. In the Teacher Education stall, I can envision shelves for Course Materials, PowerPoint™ sets, Guest Lectures (narrated PowerPoint™ sets), Video Clips, and perhaps more.

Items on the Shelves

Program Planning

Entering the market, I might go to the Teacher Education stall and onto the Course Materials shelf I might place the syllabus for my course on Program Planning. On that shelf I might expect to find Beth Wilson's NC State syllabus for *AEE 529, Curriculum Development in Agricultural and Extension Education* (Wilson, 2009). Beth's course description is available online but the full course syllabus was not available when I conducted the search for this presentation. I might also find Jon Ramsey's Oklahoma State syllabus for *AGED 3203, Planning the Community Program in Agricultural Education* (Ramsey, n.d.). Again, the course description is posted on the web site but I was unable to locate the syllabus and handouts for the course.

Two implicit assumptions would guide the exchanges taking place on the courses shelf in the teacher education stall — as well as all of the shelves in all of the stalls. The first assumption would be that Beth, John and I, like all of the users would grant open access rights to our syllabi under the Bethesda Statement protocols (Suber 2004) and the second assumption is that the entire process would be based on the Nonini (2006) exchange economy principles. Thus, with appropriate citation of sources I could freely use ideas from Jon's and Beth's courses and in turn they could use my syllabus in the same way without fear of copyright or intellectual property rights requirements. Essentially we would be exchanging gifts.

Video Clip

A potential doctoral student asked me recently for suggestions for potential

dissertations. I referred her to the National Research Agenda (Osborne, n.d.), suggesting that she read that document before we began serious discussions. Suppose Ed Osborne were to record a 30 minute video clip on the National Research Agenda to explain the origin of the idea, how it was funded, how the committee was formed, and his vision for how the Agenda should be used. Imagine how much more powerful it would be for that potential student to view the presentation then study the document itself. Ed would probably be willing to record a video clip like that if the Committee of the Common asked him to do so.

Guest Lecture

Michael Retallick at Iowa State taught *AgEdS 550, Foundations of Agricultural Education* (Retallick, 2007) during fall semester, 2007. Imagine how powerful it would have been if Mike had been able to invite Gary Moore into his class as a guest speaker for 15 minutes to discuss the history of the farm project approach and how that relates to our contemporary Supervised Agricultural Experience program. I believe that Gary would be willing to develop a 15– minute narrated PowerPoint and place it on the Guest Speaker shelf in the Teacher Education stall if he were asked by the Committee.

Recorded Workshop

In December 2000, I presented the retiring presidential address to the American Vocational Education Research Association on creating and evaluating theoretical frameworks for quantitative research. That presentation could easily have been recorded as a narrated PowerPoint but it is effectively lost today. In one of the AAAE Conference Workshops this week in Louisville, Neil Knobloch made a masterful presentation on theoretical frameworks that went far beyond my meager efforts. Why should only the people who attended the workshop see Neil's presentation? We recorded that presentation with the intention of placing it on the AAAE web site. The appropriate location for that video recording would be the Guest Speaker shelf in the Research Stall. Next year, when you are advising a graduate student about her thesis, you could invite Neil to explain to the student what a theoretical framework looks like and how it should relate to the rest of the thesis.

Others

Travis Park probably knows more about reading and literacy strategies than anybody else in our profession. Invite him to serve as a guest speaker in your teaching methods class to discuss KWL techniques within the context of agriculture. Your methods students will be very grateful. Invite Jim Leising to visit your state Agriculture in the Classroom Advisory committee meeting to explain the Ag Literacy Benchmarks study that is still being used 15 years later as the basis for much of what we do in the agricultural literacy community.

Conclusion

Much of what I have suggested is already possible and in fact part of it is already in place today. The major disadvantage is that the pieces

are scattered in cyber space and available only through haphazard searches. An intellectual common for agricultural education would assemble the pieces in one electronic location. It would encourage sharing by establishing a gift economy among scholars. The Committee of the Common could seek suggestions and invite specific contributions that might not otherwise be offered.

What is the next step? If the idea of an open access site for exchange of all forms of scholarship for agricultural education appeals to you, a Committee of the Common would be needed. I have suggested one structure and one set of guiding principles but other, better frameworks are surely available. The possibilities are endless. I leave the rest to your imagination.

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