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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2pg011wt>

Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 33(33)

ISSN

1069-7977

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Publication Date

2011

Peer reviewed

Visualizing the persistence of conversations within a student co-blogging community

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Abstract: Students in a cognitive/computer science class posted blog entries at the rate of two per week and commented on each other's contributions. The co-blogging work of the students provided the opportunity to reflect upon and discuss the course materials and lectures and thereby develop their understanding of the topics and themes of the course. The discussion of certain topics continued throughout the semester, with students referencing earlier posts, examples, arguments, and explanations as the "conversation" progressed. This poster presents a visualization that depicts the flow of ideas within the online community over the semester. Key notions of the analysis are seeding, anchoring, and persistence: conversations of new material were seeded with earlier blog content, prior posts and comments anchored the discourse, and "common" understanding was mediated by persistent external representations.