



What is a Wiki?

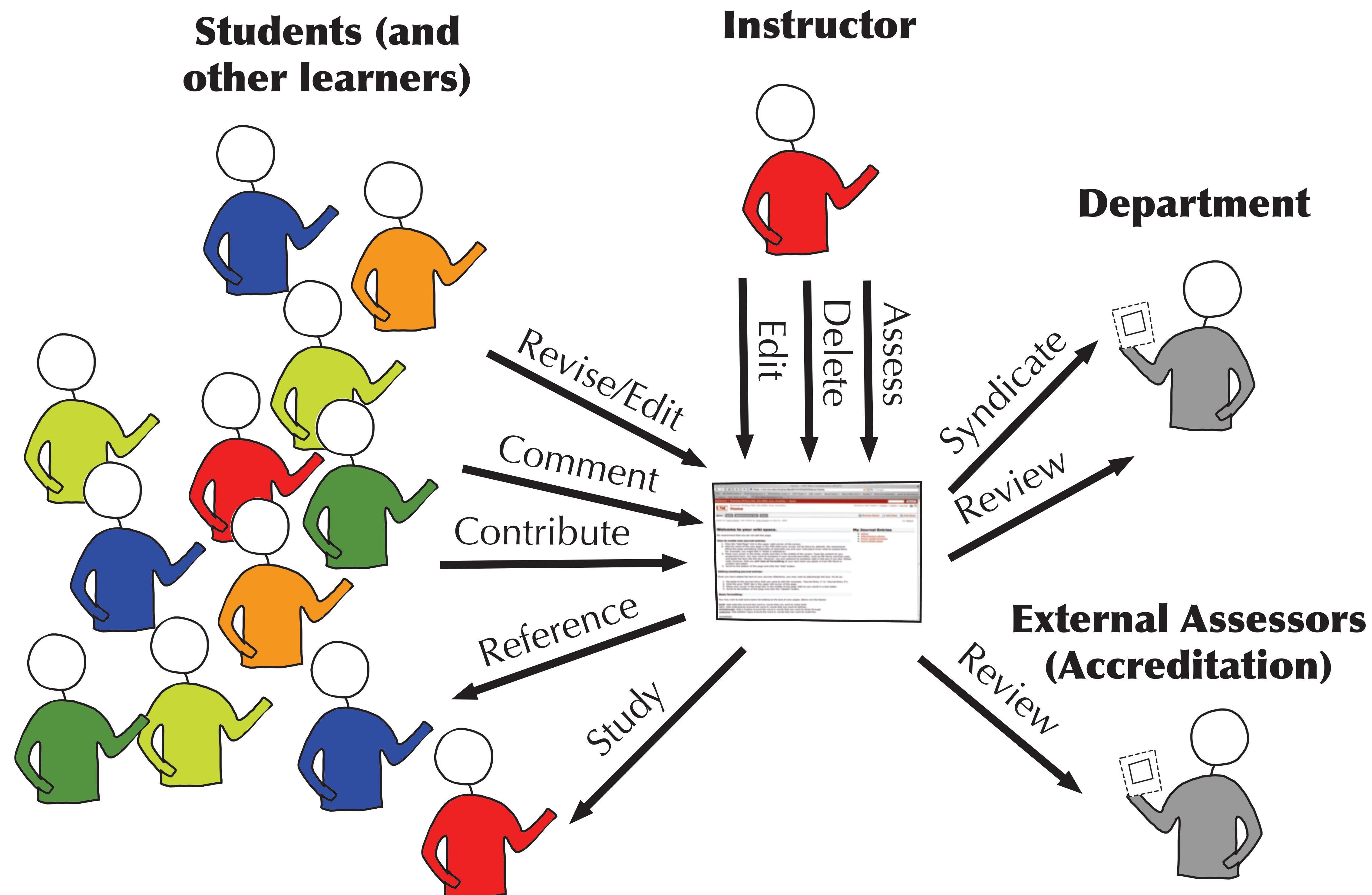
The wiki (pronounced wee-kee) is a tool which holds great promise for online collaboration. Wikis are Web sites that can be edited directly from a browser like Internet Explorer, Firefox, Netscape, or Safari. Because you can create new pages by clicking buttons and typing content like you would in a text editor like Microsoft Word, wikis make publishing and sharing content on the Web very easy.

In the traditional use of wikis, all members of the wiki had full rights to add, edit, and delete every Web page on the site. While this is sometimes useful, having different types of authoring and editing permissions for different users is sometimes also beneficial. Increasingly, wiki tools are offering the ability to add users who can view, add, edit, and delete pages, or any subset of those privileges.

Features of Our Space

USC has invested in a wiki tool called Confluence. While there are many excellent tools on the market, we liked Confluence because, in addition to standard wiki features allowing users to add, edit, and delete pages in the system, it had the following features:

- Fine-grained permissions that can be set per space, per individual.
- Support for groups and group rights.
- LDAP/Shibboleth integration.
- A space-wide blog.
- A comments feature on each page.
- Attachments on each page.
- Versioning for pages and attachments.
- Simplistic syndication into and out of the space (RSS), making integration with other social software trivial (del.icio.us, citeulike, flickr).





Our Pilots

In the fall of 2005, the CST sponsored a series of pilot projects in Confluence. Below we outline some of these projects. We encourage you to visit the Web site for the projects to see how they were implemented in the space.

Use 1 Student Journaling



Instructors want students to journal for a number of reasons: to demonstrate writing proficiency, to expose understanding (and misunderstanding) of conceptual knowledge (such as in Just-in-Time Teaching exercises), and to engage in meta-cognitive reflection, to name a few. The wiki allows students to journal for their own benefit, or for peer or instructor review.

Use 2 Personal Portfolios

By enabling students to collect and organize digital assets such as course notes, images, Web resources, and PowerPoint slides, the wiki can help learners to organize materials and make connections between and among those assets.

Use 3 Collaborative Knowledge Base

In the more classic use of a wiki, groups can use the environment to create a shared knowledge base of information. This can be used to allow students to develop a project in small groups, to work on a small piece of a larger class project, or even to have students themselves create and maintain the course Web site.

Use 8 Inter-term Project Management



In production classes such as those in computer science and architecture programs, some projects span multiple terms or even multiple years. The wiki can be used to manage projects over time, even as the individual students (and even instructors) change.



Use 7 Syndicating/Aggregating Web Resources

As part of the greater family of social software, wikis allow users both to pull in resources from other sources on the Web, and to push content out from the wiki into other spaces. Examples of types of resources that one might want to include would be channels from news sites (the international RSS feed from the New York Times), blogs, other wikis, or collaborative or personal feeds in Web-based social networking tools such as del.icio.us or flickr.



Use 6 Conference and Colloquia Web Site/Coordination

Many departments, schools, and scholarly centers at the university have academic conferences and colloquia. By allowing presenters and attendees access to add and edit content, the conference wiki can serve as a resource before, during, and after the event itself. The wiki can also be used by conference administrators as a means of organizing the event.



Use 4 Research Coordination and Collaboration

The wiki allows multiple collaborators who are separated by physical space to collect ideas, papers, timelines, datasets, documents, and study results into a collective digital space. Researchers can also use the space to store draft files for their papers: MS Word, LaTeX, or even writing directly into the Web pages of the wiki. Additionally, funders and junior researchers can be given "read only" access to all or certain parts of the space.



Use 5 Curricular and Cross-Disciplinary Coordination

As departments become increasingly creative in their efforts to accommodate more students in a distributed/blended learning environment, curricular coordination among faculty and T.A.s gets increasingly important. The wiki allows for departmental personnel, instructors, and teaching assistants to organize common course assets, such as syllabi, office hours, and assessments, without having an endless email chain or difficult to schedule face-to-face meetings.

