

April 30, 2006

Here's this week's roundup of recent news with regards to what's up and what matters in technology, education, and culture.

In the technology world this week, all of the big companies continued scrambling to bolster their position in the Web 2.0 and media wars of the new Internet economy. And, in case you've been getting sucked in by all the hype of late, you only have to monitor the global news vibes to be reminded that, when all is said and done, there are only five global Web companies that matter -- Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, AOL, and eBay.

Microsoft's problem is that many people still don't see it as a dominant Web player despite its best efforts to change those impressions. This week the Redmond company made waves with its new Web-based e-mail solution, Live Mail. Live Mail will replace Hotmail over time and is supposed to make Microsoft more competitive with Google and Yahoo. It features multiple-pane views, better spam filters, drag and drop capabilities, and 2 gigabytes of space. In other words, it's just a me-too play at this stage.

But you have to give Microsoft credit for trying. A good example of its overtime propaganda efforts include Friday's announcement that it is teaming up with the New York Times to debut a new way of reading digital newspapers. The software, packaged with the new Windows Vista OS allows readers to download an electronic version of the newspaper and view it on a portable device. Microsoft's ability to forge partnerships with media companies trying to extend the online popularity of their products will likely make Microsoft the biggest player in this space over the next 12 months. Bad news for companies like Zinio and Adobe.

Of course, Microsoft isn't the only one of the Big Five who was active this week. AOL made noise with financial blogs. Its joint blog network with partner Weblogs.com is a collection of individual blogs, each dedicated to a widely held public company. The blogs, which provide independent analysis, news coverage and commentary, are accessible directly or through [AOL Money & Finance](#). Yahoo was also busy as it began leveraging new acquisition Meedio to launch Yahoo Go, a new DVR solution that is designed to compete with Microsoft's Media Center. Surely we'll be seeing and hearing about Google's new DVR solution shortly? Finally, eBay announced a new service this week -- eBay Express. This new eBay site allows users to make fixed-price purchases and features mostly new items. This is a smart move by eBay as it tries to extend itself into the more traditional retail space.

Important technology news not related to the Big Five includes Facebook's attempt to move into the corporate space. The social networking company has selected ten companies and one not-for-profit to begin this new chapter of connecting. Most vulnerable companies if this effort succeeds? LinkedIn, HotJobs, and Monster. Also of note this week are reports from the Sony camp that the Japanese company will once again introduce a mobile music device that is designed to take away market share from Apple's iPod. Haven't we heard this at least twice before? This type of market missing is definitely one of the reasons Sony is not one of the Big Five companies.

In the Edublogging world, the event of the week was the panel on [Blogs, Wikis, MMORPGs, and YASNS: Shaking Up Traditional Education](#) at the Milken Institute. Participating on the panel were George Siemens, Will Richardson, David Weinberger, Liz Lawley, Adrian Chan, and Doug Thomas. George and Will have excellent blogs on the session.

Finally, Clarence Fisher has been blogging with his students all year and has a great post reflecting on the experience and on things he will do differently next year.

Well, that's this week's roundup. That's what's up and that's what really matters! Don't forget to check out our daily updates posted each morning on *XplanaZine*.

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