

Mob Rule Learning: Camps, Unconferences, and Trashing the Talking Head

Michelle Boule

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Mobs have the collective knowledge and power to do anything, to be anything, to teach anything, to learn anything, and to solve anything. We cannot ignore this power forever. The force of it can change the world, if we set it free.

Michelle Boule is a self-described 'Geek Librarian' from Texas who was named a 2008 *Library Journal* Mover and Shaker. A keen observer of and participant in culture, technology, and learning, she has compiled a thoughtful book that is part history, part practical manual, and part manifesto about the state and transmission of knowledge in our changing world. The heart of her thesis is that "(t)he collective knowledge of the crowd is always greater than the knowledge of one learned individual" and that the widespread application of new technologies is transforming how and what we know, as well as where and with whom we share and create it. The result is a rapid democratization of knowledge and learning that is changing our lives.

Boule uses her analysis to suggest improvements to two common means of transmitting knowledge: professional conferences and continuing education. Calling for "unconferences," where everyone participates and contributes via technologies such as Twitter, Wikis, and other tools, she illustrates how instant accessibility to information is "trashing the talking head," and making possible unprecedented improvements in education. Drawing upon interviews, case studies, and personal experience, she offers suggestions on how to apply multiple technological tools and approaches including "Changing the Rules of Learning," "Creating Your Own Knowledge Ecosystem," "Planting, Caring For and Feeding Your Mob," and "Best Practices For Encouraging a Self-Educating Mob."

Reading beyond the potentially off-putting title reveals Boule's inherently hopeful message to those who wish to improve current systems: "Successful mobs are started because an individual or small group decides it wants to do something different or be something better. Countries are formed this way. Problems are solved this way. Organizations are made better this way. New communities are planned this way. Decide to do something different and be better. Share what you know and help others to lead."

In this noteworthy work, Boule invites us to thoughtfully join the revolution already in progress.

PAMELA HARRIS KAISER (November 2, 2011)

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