The Empire Strikes Back

The 21st Century Shift
From Publisher to Knowledge and Learning Resource Center

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Forces at Work

- The digitization of everything
  - Content really does become king
- Societal forces and values
  - Mass education vs. elite education
  - A retreat into research
  - Increasing need for reliable and trustworthy sources
- Intellectual property practices favor ongoing privatization of IP and protection of IP rights holders.
- Unlike the railroads, the publishers finally wake up to realize they are in the KM and education business
- Mainstream colleges and universities are incapable of moving quickly, losing key revenue and positioning opportunities
Forces at Work

- Economics of undergraduate education shift
  - Cottage-industry style of curriculum management and course development under pressure from government funders
  - Employers play larger role in curriculum planning and management
  - Voucher-ized funding for higher education dominates
  - For-profits land the super stars

- E-Learning gets quite good
  - Broadband widely available
  - Course authoring tools get easy and sophisticated
  - Hollywood-style production values enter the scene
Pressures to Change

- E portfolio and voucher put the student in charge making HE a true consumer good
- Technology for a reconceived approach to digital asset management gets real
- Commercial interests continue to dominate the shape of IP law
- E-learning and curriculum management breakthroughs make mass customization of HE possible
  - Amazing learning objects
  - Global network of tutors
Making the shift happen

- Concentration of the means of production
  - World class curriculum design tied to the key global employers
  - State of the art studios for producing learning objects, simulations, models, games, animations, etc.
  - Applied cognitive and learning science organizations for R&D
  - Global “deals” with channel owners (e.g. cable operators)
Making the Shift Happen

- Concentration of the means of production
  - Learning centers that feature state-of-the-art classroom technologies
  - Contracts with academic super stars lending cache, e.g. economics 101 with Samuelson, intro to genetics with Francis Crick
    - Contracts span rights to published works, use of name, classroom appearances, endorsements of curricula, etc.
Making IT Happen

If the previous slides constitute an “action plan” or an investment plan, which of society’s institutions is most likely to step forward?
So What Can You Conclude?

- John Sack is right (sort of)
  - Dissatisfaction with the status quo will lead to experimentation with alternative models/channels. Who can afford to experiment “at scale”?
  - New players shifting attention and value from traditional publishers. True. Traditional publishers will likely fail. This does not mean that authors or universities will fill these niches.
  - New technical vs. traditional frameworks collide. This is true. In moments of such wrenching change, concentrated effort generally is need and generally prevails.
  - While at the same time established brands are gaining strength amid chaos. Brands WILL dominate the elite market, but no one owns the mass market. This is the battleground.
  - Forces acting orthogonally are unlikely to remain in a stable balance. This is true. Governance, competitive muddle, regulation, tenure, and culture conspire to put traditional suppliers, including colleges and universities at a disadvantage.