With the Turn of a Wrench and the Click of a Mouse: A Case Study of Online Learning Practices of HVAC Professionals and Homeowners

Selected Text and Images From a Discussion forum thread on: http://www.heatinghelp.com/forum
An online community devoted to old and new hot water/steam heating systems.

Method: Discourse Analysis

Initial Posting
“Hi there! First post but I have been a wallcrawler for quite some time, especially as I was planning out a re-working of my heating system in my 110 y/o home. Very appreciative of the knowledge and sharing that happens on this site!”

Part of initial posting by “nfiorito”

Response:
“I understand your reasoning behind using the mixing valve... but you've taken an approach that's not gonna give satisfactory results... If you're not familiar with these concepts, then I would recommend John Siegenthaler's book on Modern Hydronics...”

Response from “Ironman”

Follow Up:
“Thanks so much for the responses, guys, definitely appreciated! I obviously am new to this area of plumbing/heating but have really tried to wrap my head around the concepts.”

Response from “nfiorito”

What Do Threads Like This Demonstrate?

- Learning is socially mediated; capable peers help one another to understand the “texts” they encounter (text documents, photos, diagrams, physical objects, etc.).

- Knowledge is constructed through social practices, interactions, and dialogue.

- Literacy is not autonomous; It occurs in a social context & it is used for purposes that the community values.

Implications

- LIS professionals should be mindful that useful knowledge/information can be found not just in things (books, etc.), but also in community dialogue and the personal experiences of community members.

- Information literacy instruction in technical/vocational schools, for instance, should acknowledge the modes of professional communication, learning, and information seeking common to specific trades.

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“You can read all the textbooks and listen to all the records, but you have to play with musicians that are better than you.” “Stan Getz

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