

327d The Merlot Database: Peer-Reviewed Online Learning Objects

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The Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching (MERLOT, www.merlot.org) database allows engineering educators to use online, interactive instructional modules in their courses without investing excessive time to develop them, search for them, or screen them for suitability. First, MERLOT provides links to free, public domain, online learning objects (course notes, tutorial programs, demonstration and interactive applets, online mini-courses) for engineering coursework. Second, MERLOT provides links to free, public domain, online pedagogical tools such as learning preferences surveys and guidance on constructing rubrics, writing course outcomes, and planning learning activities at all levels from Knowledge and Application to Synthesis and Evaluation. Finally, MERLOT provides a forum for the peer-review of online learning objects and pedagogical tools, thus giving an external measure of their value which is normally lacking for teaching activities. MERLOT-catalogued tools cover a wide range of disciplines at the university level, not just engineering.

Anyone can nominate an online object or tool to be catalogued by MERLOT. New links then go through “triage” by the relevant editorial board to prioritize them for peer-review. Priority goes to the most promising sites, because the goal is to highlight outstanding sites. However, sites appear in the MERLOT listings immediately after submission. Peer reviewers work in teams of two, including one member of the relevant editorial board. Volunteer peer reviewers are always in demand. In addition, the links in MERLOT are automatically tested on a regular basis. In the case of a “dead” link, the MERLOT staff attempt to relocate the site independently and to contact the author for assistance in repairing the link. If both efforts fail, the link is removed.

This presentation will survey the chemical engineering content in the MERLOT database, explain how the database content grows and is verified, and describe the MERLOT peer review process. Attendees are invited to participate in MERLOT at all three levels: using resources, contributing resources, and reviewing resources. Chemical engineering educators who develop online content may wish to use MERLOT to obtain independent, external review of their work, thus documenting its value.