As it relates to Clark, my role as an Instructional Designer gains validity. It doesn’t matter what media I use, it is I who will make the difference. While I may not entirely buy what Clark is saying, I do believe that there are many factors that play into what makes learning happen, not the least of which is a well-designed curriculum with stated outcomes. In this case, learning of concept and transfer of the expected skills, knowledge, and/or attributes back to the workplace is the ultimate goal.

In the case of the teacher in Clark’s role of analogy discussion and specifically, the slice-of-pie analogy, I too must know the target audience (in the case of WBT, the end user) and present key concepts and principles that are “easily digestible”. I try as much as possible to make associations between things that are familiar and new learning I am trying to impart whether an online lesson, or in classroom.

Admittedly, some assumptions have to be made in certain cases: That specific terms mean the same things to most people (in the assigned context), and that the learner can conceptualize within the context of other terms to assimilate the representation of the lesson as it was meant to be received. But once again, these design assumptions occur regardless of media used to impart the lesson.

The media used is largely a matter of economics for me. Sometimes I can “afford” the time of trainers and associates, “afford” the classroom space, “afford” the length of training. Often I cannot. So the decision to use certain technologies can be driven purely by financial benefits. Do I feel as if I cut corners by using a computer versus that of an overhead projector? Do I feel the lesson is more valuable on CD-ROM than it would be in a manual? The answer is “no” on both counts.

My answer is much like Clark, “use what you got”. I am reminded in watching the first episode of “The Apprentice” (back when I still had time to watch TV) of the assignment Donald Trump gave the prospective employees. He told them, “Find a corner and sell lemonade.” Think about that for a second, the “contestants” are Harvard graduates, restaurateurs, real estate, finance, and corporate hot shots who live on healthy doses of streaming video, CDs, DVD’s, and the internet. One of the richest men in America tells them to “go sell lemonade”. Ingredients: lemon, ice, water, sugar. He wanted to see if they could go “back to basics” and still make it. Were they savvy enough to be un-savvy?

My long-winded point was that in order to have a profit (transfer of learning back at the workplace), one has to be able to use different media (machinery, manual labor) and come up with the same result of sweet tasting lemonade (a solid lesson). Different media can help with how quickly the product gets to market. The ingredients will be virtually the same (some additives and preservatives included at times), but the basics of lemon, sugar and water are at the top of the ingredient list. That is what makes the difference really: The ripeness and
sweetness of the lemons, the amount of sugar in relation to the amount of water and lemons. It doesn’t really matter whether it’s done by hand or by machine. It’s what goes into it that counts and where I spend most of my time as an instructional designer.