

WILLINGNESS TO RETURN TO DIGITAL LEARNING RESOURCES:
INFORMATION ENVIRONMENTS OF STUDENTS
FOLLOWING ONLINE COURSE COMPLETION

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ABSTRACT

Due to the fact that many universities have now moved considerably beyond brick-and-mortar walls and into the realm of online learning, the idea of learning “anywhere, anything, anytime” is truly becoming more of a reality. It is now suggested that universities could move beyond the clock and calendar boundary associated with a traditional course by providing ongoing access to the learning materials after the course is completed.

This study used a mixed-methods research design that combined qualitative (in-depth interviews) and quantitative (survey; access log analysis) methods at two higher education institutions in order to inductively develop an understanding of the characteristics of the information environment and the influence of the environment and information quality on willingness to return to digital learning resources upon completion of an online course.

The findings of this study suggest that in an established environment for willingness to return (EWR), learners have the willingness and even an expectation to return to digital learning resources following course completion. This study also seems to indicate that in an emerging EWR learners are likely to return to resources even when they do not remember the resources available from an online course if they are provided access to return, are reminded of the availability of resources, and have a need for these resources. However, it is not clear how the characteristics of the information environment or perceptions of quality influence willingness to return. Further study is needed to better define perceptions of information quality, understand the influence of the information environment, and determine other influences on willingness to return.