

Part Four Life...

Whether our insights are established through campfires, watering holes, caves, or (more likely) a combination of the three, we don't really know what we know until we have tried to apply it. The application of knowledge, what I will call Life, is an essential component of the learning process. My guess is that, like me, you may have seen a demonstration of a task that made wonderful sense until you tried to do it yourself. At that point, you realized that there was something missing from your knowledge. Had you not attempted the task, you might never have known that you really didn't have the skill you thought you had. This is one reason there is much to be said for "just in time" instead of "just in case" learning. Much of our school curriculum seems devoted to having us learn things just in case we will someday need to know them. Yet, when we learn something in anticipation of its immediate use, we not only reinforce our understanding, we increase the likelihood that what we have learned will not be readily forgotten.

A modern example...

In my line of work, I spend a great amount of time attending professional conferences. These gatherings bring together experts who share their insights with large audiences over a period of two or three days. Over the course of the conference, one can see examples of all four learning metaphors in action.