

With the Turn of a Wrench and the Click of a Mouse: A Case Study of Online Learning

Practices of HVAC Professionals and Homeowners

<http://www.heatinghelp.com/>



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 “nflorito”

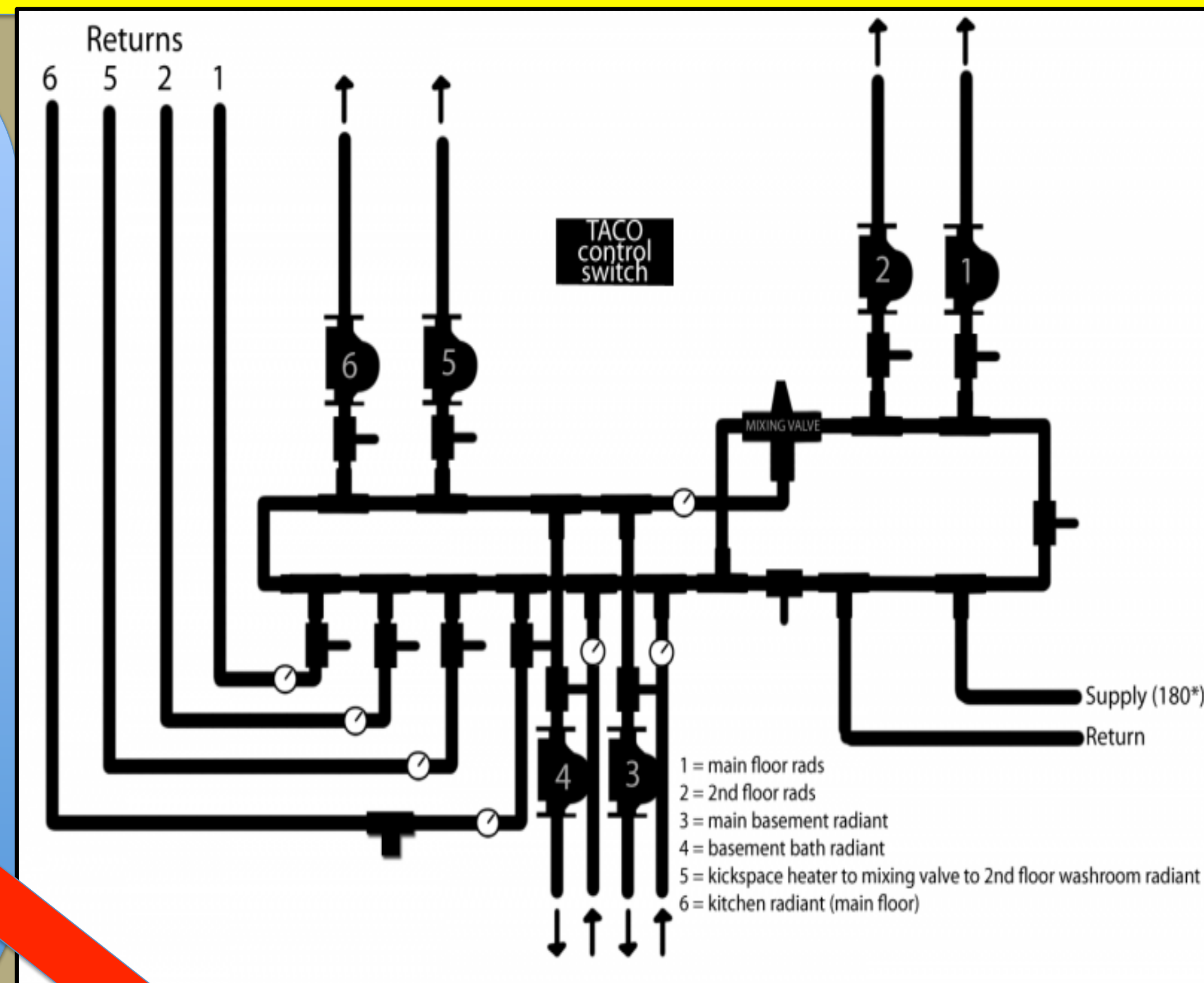


Diagram and photo posted to the thread by “nflorito”



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.

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.”

Reply from “nflorito”

Text and Image Source:

<http://www.heatinghelp.com/forum-thread/143847/Bobcat-boiler-Rad-Radiant-System-mixing-valve-issues>

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”

“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

Quote posted to the forum by “Robert O’Brien” in a post titled “I’ve always found better musicians here!”

Source:

<http://www.heatinghelp.com/forum-thread/145731/Ive-always-found-better-musicians-here>

Radiator Image Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Household_radiator.jpg#filelinks

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