



# Enhancing Learner Progression (ELP2) Newsletter - Retrospective Issue

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University of Bradford, University of Leeds, LeedsMet University

## CHANGE IN TECHNOLOGY

### Areas of Pilots and Use Cases

- *Supporting mentoring with web 2.0 tools*
- *Working with community groups using web 2.0*
- *Web 2.0 for distance learners*
- *Digital storytelling*
- *Helping progression into and through HE using web 2.0*
- *Web 2.0 for widening participation to HE*

We all know that the pace of change in technology is fast and this is certainly something we have noticed on the project. We started using Google groups to create online communities as this featured file upload, discussion and wiki functions. However, it was not the greatest user experience and was not always reliable. Now with the rise of white-label social networking sites, like Ning, the user has almost

limitless potential to create and control her own online communities. With the ability to add any widget to your social network, personal homepages and increased mobile integration, the web is starting to live up to its promises! The project has worked extensively with web 2.0 tools and technologies with different user groups and we are more than happy to share our knowledge.

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## THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY!

Several ideas have been drafted as part of the project but not all have been turned into operational realities. The following factors are those that we have encountered as useful lessons to bear in mind:

- Students not enthusiastic about the use of social networking sites for educational purposes.
- Part-time tutors on casual contracts struggle to undertake extra training on the use of technology.
- Key staff have already used social tools and had been unimpressed with

the outcomes. One manager noted, "We have a message board attached to our website but nobody makes any comments."

- Concerns about the time required to moderate online social areas.

Staff engagement and perceptions were vital in moving ideas forward and where projects have been successful key personnel have been able to look beyond the technological aspects and see the social and individual learner benefits of utilising web 2.0 tools.

## SHARING STORIES TO ENGAGE IN REFLECTION

Last November 230 medical students created and shared their own digital stories. As part of their Professional and Personal Development (PPD) Integrated Core Unit (ICU) students were required to use pictures to describe their emotions before, during and after their first patient visit. A sub-group of 12 students were provided with PDAs to use to take pictures to upload directly to their personal blog area.

All students were encouraged to use the institutional blogging area "LeedsBlogs" to share their pictures and entries and the stories were presented to tutor groups using PowerPoint. It was hoped that the use of visual technologies would engage students in reflective learning and that the use of web 2.0 tools would facilitate the sharing of artefacts and

encourage collaboration.

Evaluation results have revealed:

- That the process of creating digital stories creates an environment in which a disorientating dilemma can occur, in some cases leading to a transformative learning experience
- That students pay more attention when listening to other students' stories than they would to standard text-based presentations.
- The technology was familiar and easy to use

The use of digital stories will continue in 2008/09 and both first and second year students will create and share stories to engage in the reflective process.

A Vision of Students Today



"I'd never used a social network type site before I used Facebook. I'm emailing more. I'm using Google and search engines a lot more. Also looking for flights. I do a lot more shopping online than I have ever done. That has definitely increased in the last year." Claire

## THE ALL PERVASIVE WEB

In the life of the project, it has become noticeable that the web and computer use has increased greatly, particularly for older students and staff. At the start, we often found that staff limited their IT use to doing what they needed for their job and the web was not a source of entertainment. However, Claire illustrates how far things have changed as over the last year she has become an avid user of Facebook, online shopping and generally using the web for entertainment.

This is also true for the community groups we have worked with. The driver seems

to be coming from providing the Internet for children's education. Leeds Social Services have provided laptops for foster carers and ELP2 have helped in the training of carers in how young people use the Internet.

Parents are also reporting that they are more likely to buy their own laptops to help their children, as well as for the general benefit of the family. We have worked closely with a number of groups of parents to build their confidence in using the Internet and helping them become more able to work with their children in getting the best out of the Internet.

Handover books from my library



Top class for my library

academic writing study skills

## DIGITAL TYPOLOGY

Today's learners come to University with very different prior experiences and technological skills. They also come with diverse expectations and assumptions about how, where and when technology may be used within their course. Descriptions of learners have tended to focus on whether or not they are the 'digital natives', whereas in fact learners now represent vastly different demographics within an ever-changing heterogeneous community. Research as part of ELP2 and other projects at Bradford has led to the development of a

typology of digital learners which recognises these diverse backgrounds in a simple model.

### Digital Experienced:

For this group, technology is a major part of everyday life and they are comfortable with using different applications simultaneously and collaboratively. However, whilst their initial reaction to e-activities might be positive, the institution needs to be careful to address their needs for flexibility and personalisation.

### Digital Inexperienced:

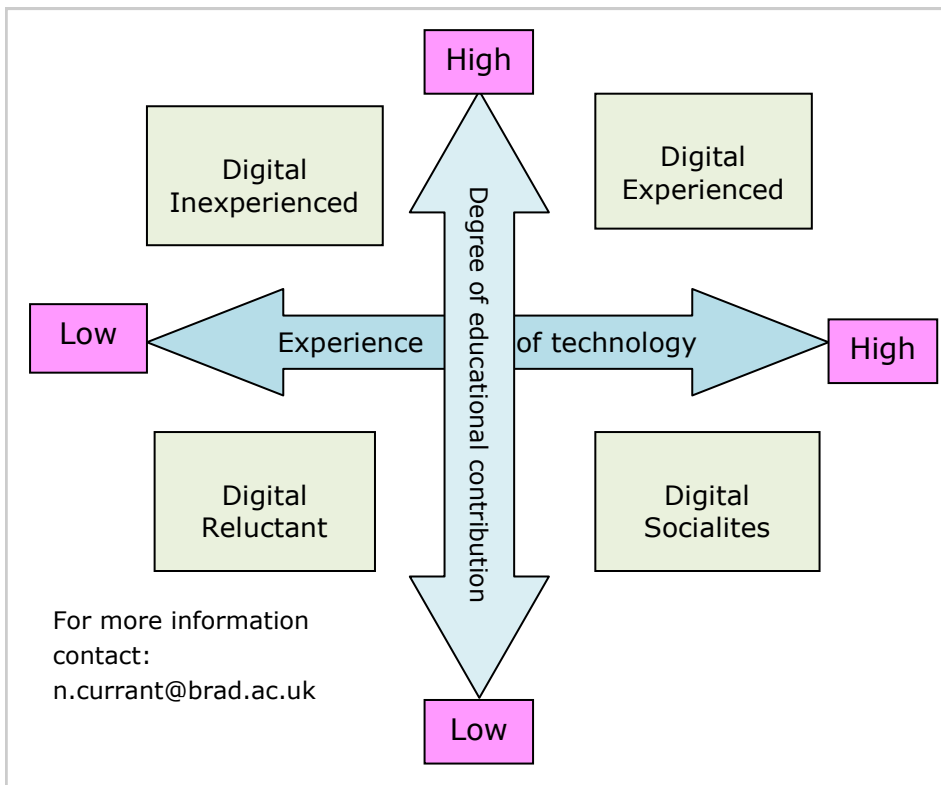
The 'digitally inexperienced' are willing to try using technology within an educational setting but lack the skills and experience to do so. They may be very enthusiastic about their learning and keen to engage with different approaches, but their lack of technological expertise is a barrier to their engagement.

### Digital Socialites:

These are the 'Generation Y' learners who have grown up with technology but tend to use it for entertainment. They prefer face-to-face educational settings over e-learning. They pose a challenge to course leaders in terms of engaging them in the e-learning process and capturing their imagination for using technology within an educational context. This group of learners divide formal and informal uses of technology and don't see links between what they do at home and socially and what they need to do at University.

### Digital Reluctant:

These learners are not confident or experienced with technology. Their limited experience of technology means they cannot see the potential educational benefits. These learners might be considered 'dependent' learners. They are unlikely to use technology within an educational context as they lack the skills and confidence in order to be able to engage effectively.



## PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

**2007**

**JISC RSC Northern Conference: e-Portfolio - Weighing the Evidence:** "Careers Guidance and e-portfolios: Bringing the two Together"

**The MEDEV HEA Subject Centre Workshop:** "[Using social software to enhance the student learning experience in medical, dental and veterinary education.](#)"

**ALT-FE practitioners conference:** ['Putting Another 'E' Into Guidance!'](#)

**Association of Learning Technology Conference (ALT-C):** "[Students aren't prepared for web 2.0 learning, are they?](#)" and "[Digital Storytelling](#)"

**JISC Regional Support Centre (Yorkshire-Humber) e-learning conference:** [Personalised learning, "How far has web 2.0 enabled personalisation?"](#) The project is featured in the summer 2007 edition of the RSC-YH exchange magazine.

**Strategies for Student Retention (The STAR Conference),** "Online support for student transition."

**JISC Innovating E-learning Online Conference,** "[Mariam's Story](#)"

*This is not an exhaustive list of all publications and further publications will be coming later in 2008.*

**2008**

**CRA e-journal - On Reflection:** "Web 2.0 Implications for learning."

**JISC RSC-YH e-learning conference:** "[From paper to e-portfolio: the meeoric progression of a University skills tool](#)"

"Catching Their Confidence" in Cook, T & Rush-ton, B (eds) **Improving student retention**, Taylor Francis [forthcoming]

**SOLSTICE Conference:** "[How many virtual learning spaces do students need?](#)"

**CRA Seminar - PDP and Web 2.0 - Opportunity for Partnership?** "[From PDP to CDP?](#)"

**European First Year Experience Conference Proceedings:** "Defining Generation Y: towards a new typology of digital learners."

**University of Brighton Pathfinder Workshop:** [Encouraging student discussion, analysis and reflection online.](#)

**MEDEV Conference on ePortfolios, personalised learning and identity in healthcare education:** "[If we build it will they come and more importantly will they stay?](#)"

**JISC-RSC YH e-learning in HE symposium:** [Who Needs a V.L.E.?](#)

**University of Leeds L & T Conference:** "[Reflective learning for the Net Generation of students: the digital storytelling approach](#)"

Enhancing Learner Progression through Personalized Learning Environments (ELP2) project

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ELP 2 is a [JISC](#) funded project which continues the work in ELP and extends it beyond; using a wider range of learners and a wider range of online learning tools which focus on social networking.

ELP2 will investigate and identify solutions to the issues and challenges that arise in providing a personalised learning experience which meets the needs of individual learners in a range of settings in their lifelong learning journey. The project will explore these issues through the implementation of e-Portfolios, web logs (blogs) and other social software to support widening participation and developing skills essential to successful lifelong learning.

Visit us at [www.elp.ac.uk](http://www.elp.ac.uk)