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The world’s leading provider of specialist imagery Science Photo Library (SPL) is launching a new stock footage collection in response to the global media trend of increasing use of motion.

For more than 25 years, the UK based and independently owned Science Photo Library has built a reputation as the leading source of stock images specialising in science, medicine, technology and the natural world. The new Motion collection will cover all the subjects SPL is known for in still photography, and represent the best science footage from around the world.

Head of SPL Motion Ben Jones said about the new footage collection: “The video clips range from the ocean floor to the edge of space, from nanorobots to aerial citiescapes. We reveal the world in ultra high speed, show the beauty of time-lapse sequences and display events beyond the reach of the human eye.”

Managing Director of SPL Giancarlo Zuccotto added: “This is a good time to launch a Motion collection, as the increasing diversity of digital products expands the market. It has been estimated that by 2012 the global footage market will exceed the traditional stills market. We are delighted to be able to work with so many exclusive specialist footage contributors, and trust that the unique nature of our collection will appeal to a broad range of clients.”

Science Photo Library (SPL) is the world’s leading provider of science photos, covering all aspects of science, health & medicine, space exploration & astronomy, technology & industry, earth science, satellite imagery, and nature & wildlife. The breadth and range of the topics covered, and the quality of the images in the collection, make Science Photo Library an unrivalled resource for all aspects of science.

Potential users can search online by registering on the website at http://www.sciencephoto.com. This enables access to over 100,000 images, lightboxes and online ordering. High-resolution files can be downloaded directly.

Clients can also take advantage of an in-house research service. This is available during office hours, and is provided by experienced image researchers. The telephone and fax numbers below will reach them.

The service also permits clients to preview results of in-house searches online before deciding on purchases. Images can be provided as digital files or transparencies. Clients outside the UK should contact the International Sales Department, which can organise searches.

Contact The Science Photo Library at: 327-329 Harrow Road, London W9 3RB. Tel: 020 7432 1100 Fax: 020 7286 8668

More Changes for TechXtra

A number of improvements have been made to TechXtra, the free service provided by Heriot-Watt University. TechXtra can be used to find articles, books, the best websites, the latest industry news, job announcements, technical reports, technical data, full text eprints, the latest research, thesis & dissertations, teaching and learning resources and more, in engineering, mathematics and computing.

Full text indicators have been added to search results pages, in order to show the likely availability of full text.

Establishing exactly whether the full text of digital resources is available to users, who may be accessing the resources from various locations and in different ways, is not always a straightforward task. The approach varies from database to database, and can also be influenced by institutional or personal subscriptions. However, TechXtra search results now include indicators incorporating a key, which uses a traffic-light metaphor, to provide an indication of the likely availability of full text.

The speed of some database searches has also been improved. Searching the ARROW Discovery Service, covering Australian research outputs, including theses, preprints, postprints, journal articles, book chapters, music recordings and pictures, is now much faster and more up-to-date. Full text of items is available.

Searching the CISTI database, from the Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information, should now also be much faster, thanks to a migration from Z39.50 to SRU.

Full text availability of results in CISTI is dependent on subscription or purchase.

The RAM (Recent Advances in Manufacturing) database is again being updated. RAM is a database of bibliographic information for manufacturing and related areas, incorporating cross-search of RAM from the TechXtra home page.

OneStep Jobs and OneStep Industry News services have been expanded, and include several new sources giving details of latest job announcements. Some of the existing feeds have also been improved. OneStep Jobs now contains details of thousands of the latest job vacancies in engineering, maths and computing. All job vacancies are searchable from the OneStep Jobs home page, including the new sources.

OneStep Industry News also includes some new sources, and has been made easier to use. This resource now contains thousands of the latest news items from over 100 different sources.

Publicity has also been improved. TechXtra has been featured via a post of Ten science search engines, on spinesless? the Heriot-Watt University Library blog. This has produced a good response.

There is also a new TechXtra SRU service, which should be good for developers who want to embed or reuse techxtra search results.

As usual, there are some new free magazine subscriptions available via TechXtra. These include HRW, which provides comprehensive coverage of the Hydroelectric Industry Worldwide, and Diesel Progress.

TechXtra plans to add more sources to the TechXtra cross-search. This searches over 4 million items from 31 collections, and there are some interesting and useful new collections lined up. Roddy McLeod’s blog at http://techstanaeae.wordpress.com is the best place to look for information on current developments in TechXtra.

New Release of Computer Science Portal io-port.net

FIZ Karlsruhe now offers its computer science portal io-port.net, which was launched for the first time three years ago, (www.io-port.net). Free of charge with a new database interface and numerous new search functions.

FIZ Karlsruhe produces the database with its partners Gesellschaft für Informatik (GI) e.V., University of Trier, Springer-Verlag GmbH and the IEEE Computer Society.

io-port.net is a free database covering more than one million computer science publications.

Documents from different sources are offered, in a standardised format, through one common search interface (duplicates have been removed):

- Compustore produced by FIZ Karlsruhe
- DBLP (Digital Bibliography & Library Project) offered by the University of Trier
- LNI (Lecture Notes in Informatics) and other publications by Gesellschaft für Informatik (GI) e.V.
- IEEE Computer Society Digital Library
- LNCS (Lecture Notes in Computer Science) by Springer-Verlag GmbH

The database covers the time range from 1931 to the present. This makes it the most comprehensive source of data on the historical development of computer science.

The database also contains bibliographical meta data, links to electronic full-texts and, for most of the references, article summaries or abstracts written by leading scientists.

The new search interface enables both intuitive access and more refined searches using search fields. A specific search language is available for any complex searches. The data are thoroughly edited so that Open URL functions can be integrated.

More information is available from: FIZ Karlsruhe (www.fiz-karlsruhe.de) has been developing and providing high-quality services for information transfer and knowledge management in research. Its main activities are the operation of the online service STN International which focuses on science and patent information and is operated together with Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS), and the development of the KnowEis product line offering e-Science resources for web-based scientific work.

FIZ Karlsruhe also produces databases and information services and provides scientific portals, mainly in mathematics, computer science, energy and crystallography.

Primary literature can be ordered through the full-text broker service FIZ AutoDoc.

FIZ Karlsruhe is a member of the Leibniz Association (WGL) which consists of 86 re-search and service institutions and three associate members.

The Leibniz institutes’ fields of activity include natural sciences, engineering, environmental sciences, business and social sciences, territorial planning and building research, and the humanities. The institutes handle strategic and subject-oriented issues of public interest, and are therefore jointly sponsored by the German Federal Government and the German Federal States.
OU Course for Information Workers

The Evolving Information Professional

The Open University has launched a new course – The Evolving Information Professional. It is designed to raise awareness and develop an understanding of the issues and challenges facing libraries, archives and information services.

Covering the needs of computer-literate, and increasingly independent, learners used to free access to information

Data from a Sophos online poll, with 709 respondents, held in February 2009.

...emphasise the following:

Building on the different perspectives of four information professionals (a health information worker, an assistant librarian in a Public Library, an archivist and an academic library manager), the course identifies the characteristics of the present-day environment in which information workers operate, and one of the emphases is on the needs of the present generation of computer-literate, and increasingly independent, learners who are used to free access to information.

Aspects of the costing and marketing of information services are also considered.

About 30 hours of study will be involved, and this will include the use of web-based information, self assessment and a range of active learning experiences.

Various techniques will ensure that there is a strong work-based emphasis. No formal qualifications are required, but some work experience in the field is assumed. For more information go to: http://www3.open.ac.uk/courses/bnp/12.8/7C01G7067.

E-Safety Guidance and Protection to Schools

New research, announced on the 14th July 2009, reveals that approximately 10% of harmful multimedia content on school computers remains undetected by systems relying on keyword, or phrase-based, monitoring to protect children.

Conducted by forensic experts and ex-police officers at E-Safe Education (http://www.esafeeducation.co.uk/), this research underpins a need for more effective e-safety guidance and advice for young people. The UK’s first company to offer real-time forensic monitoring as a managed service is urging schools and parents to engage with students and help them understand this important issue.

Based upon data from over 30,000 students, content identified by E-Safe Education’s pornography and extreme image management includes pornographic or highly inappropriate imagery originating from cameras and mobile phones, video media such as CDs or DVDs, and images downloaded from unmonitored devices.

Combined with proactive behavioural monitoring and USB management, E-Safe Education works to protect students against many other serious issues, from predator grooming, cyberbullying, racism and radicalisation to drugs, gambling and even suicide.

E-Safe Education’s advanced threat detection libraries are updated monthly by forensic experts working on recently completed child protection cases, providing reassurance that new words, phrases or techniques are identified and incorporated into the protection systems.

Much more than a monitoring tool, the e-safe education system helps schools to enforce their Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), and encourages behavioural change by educating both students and teachers in the responsible use of Information and Communications Technology.

By providing teacher-created pop-up messages in response to inappropriate actions online, the system engages students in e-safety, explaining why their actions are inappropriate and directing them to information which explains the issue in more detail.

E-Safe Education aims to relieve schools of the burden of, and the potential liabilities associated with, forensically monitoring ICT usage. It also helps schools to meet the new safeguarding requirements set out by Ofsted for September 2009.

Most important, pastoral staff are free to focus on intervention and support. The system can be used to monitor both local PC-based activity and network usage across Internet Service Providers, Regional Broadband Grids, Local Authorities, schools and public libraries, as well as protecting children from inappropriate content at home.

Trained in the latest detection techniques by The Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP), experts at E-Safe Education work to identify the level of risk each incident or transgression by a student or teacher represents, and provides appropriate advice to schools 24-hours of discovery. By delivering this service off-site, e-safe education protects education staff who are responsible for intervention from exposure to the highly graphic, explicit, and potentially damaging, material which is often identified.

Implementing E-Safe Education’s managed services means that schools can provide safe access to a plethora of online and localised content while its usage by students is monitored professionally.

Google Book Search Bibliography

Google Book Search, the revolutionary means of accessing non-copyright material, or books for which Google has reached rights agreements with authors, has now been running, for some of the time in secret, since 2002. From early discussions with one of the pioneers of digitisation, the ground-breaking University of Michigan Library, the project has grown to embrace a number of further partnerships and product enhancements.

Innovations in Searching, browsing, borrowing from local libraries and purchasing are now possible, as are browsing by location, retrieving selected passages of text, and creating a personal library. Go to http://books.google.com.

To commemorate his 20th anniversary as a digital publisher, Charles Bailey has released the Google Book Search Bibliography. Version 4 (see A Brief Look Back at Twenty-
Rainforest Imagery Shows Glory and Destruction

An independent study, published recently by e-learning provider IMC (UK) Learning Ltd, revealed that although 74% of universities have virtual learning environments (VLE) to support teaching and learning, only 14% of lecturers publish their recorded lectures on them.

The survey, entitled Examining e-Learning in Higher Education: Perceptions and Reality, asked 125 academic and operational staff in universities, business schools and university colleges for their views on e-learning, how it is currently used within universities, and the perceptions of its benefits and shortfalls.

The research found that, even though a large percentage said their university had a VLE, very few use it to its full effect. Only 16% of the whole sample recorded their lectures, with 14% publishing these on a VLE for students to access at a later date.

In addition, almost three in ten (only 29%) of those who use e-learning frequently, or always, add questions or documents to their lectures; and only 15% frequently or always post-edit lectures and content, despite 48% acknowledging that e-learning is popular with students. DirkThissen, managing director at IMC (UK) Learning commented:

"Using e-learning to support face-to-face courses can enhance the learning experience of students. Producing content by recording lectures and post-editing or adding documents and questions will add value to the material and can be used to populate a VLE effectively."

When asked which elements of e-learning respondents found the most useful, 31% commented on the automatic transcription of recorded data, with the same number stating that the combination of video, audio and annotation proved most useful to them.

Slightly fewer (29%) highlighted the variety of output formats. Smaller numbers pointed to ‘one-click’ publishing on a VLE (19%) and full text search in published recordings (17%) as useful when recording lectures.

The high number of universities which have a VLE indicates clearly that e-learning is on the agenda at higher education institutions. The issue is how much e-learning is used by lecturers as part of their teaching and learning programmes.

It is also clear, from the research, that e-learning is reasonably popular among both students and academics. Despite this, academic staff do not necessarily recognise the productivity and cost saving benefits of e-learning.

Rapid authoring tools, for example, provide lecturers with a means to record, edit and add documents to their lectures quickly and easily in order to enhance the learning experience of their students.

There may be a number of reasons for this, as the research suggests. Academics do not necessarily accept that e-learning technologies represent resource saving in terms of time, effort or money.

For some lecturers, the reverse is true: creating effective e-learning materials can be more demanding than traditional teaching methods.

Concern was also expressed about the potentially negative effects of the lack of personal interaction, and the deterioration in traditional study skills such as note-taking and listening to lectures properly, as well as the possible deterrentious impact on attendance at conventional lectures. A pdf of the report is available for downloading. Go to http://www.im-c.de/en/company/press/press-releases.

Webjunction Social Networking

Webjunction (http://www.webjunction.org/technology/) has produced a guide to social networking and web tools in a library context. Wikis, photo – and video-sharing sites, blogs, tagging, and social networking sites are covered. The site contains examples of the type of web tools available, and provides some ideas on how these tools can be used. There are links to groups involved in this area, as well as pages covering basic computer skills and support, hardware and software, security, the construction and development of websites, and much more. They also publish a list of important web tools relevant to information services. These include:

- Blogs for Libraries: What are blogs? Should libraries care?
- Innovation Tools: An overview of web 2.0 – online collaboration tools and concepts
- 23 Things Summit: A webinar on the 23 Things approach to online collaboration tools
- Social Software and the Rural Library: A webinar on using blogs, wikis, IM and more in small or isolated libraries, with Quick Links to related resources
- Tagging: Best practices for tagging content
- Get Flick-tastic! Online photo-sharing sites
- Introduction to Chat Online and instant messaging: time saver or time waster?
- Mobile Instant Messaging Meets Social Networking: Twitter – A Beginner’s Guide: A primer on the latest trend in online social communication tools
- Online Discussions: The various forms on online communications are covered
- U R the Best: Community Building through Blogging, Chat, Using online chat to talk to patrons
- What is RSS and How to Use It: RSS is just another term for online news feed
- Blog the Web with RSS: Is it Really Simple Syndication? How RSS and blogs work together
- RSS-to-Email Keeps You Connected to the Action: How RSS and Email can work together
For the first time, system applications, including Finder, Mail, Calendar, DVD Player and Safari, are 64-bit, and Snow Leopard’s support for 64-bit processors makes use of large amounts of memory, increases performance, and improves security while staying compatible with 32-bit applications.

Grand Central Dispatch (GCD) provides a revolutionary new way for software to take advantage of more memory, faster cores, and more powerful graphics cards. GCD is integrated throughout Snow Leopard, from new system-wide APIs to high-level frameworks and programming language extensions, improving responsiveness across the entire system. OpenCL, a C-based standard, allows developers to tap into a powerful pool of engine power of the graphics processing unit for tasks which go beyond graphics.

Podcast Producer 2 includes the new Podcast Composer application, which automates the entire production process, making it easy to create podcasts with a customised, consistent look and feel. With just a few clicks, Podcast Composer creates a workflow to add titles, transitions and effects, save to a desired format and share to wikis, blogs, iTunes®, iTunes U, Final Cut® Server or the new Podcast Library.

The new Mobile Access Server is a convenient, easy way for iPhone and Mac users to access secured network services from corporate websites, online applications, email, calendars and contacts. Without requiring additional software, Mobile Access Server provides strong encryption and authentication between the user’s iPhone or Mac and a private network.

Additional new features in Snow Leopard Server include:
- WiFi Server 2, which improves its online collaboration features, including the ability to view wiki content on iPhone and preview attachments with Quick Look on any mobile device.
- the new Address Book Server, based on the CardDAV open standard, which provides a central location for users to store address and personal contacts across multiple Macs and synchronised with an Intel-based Mac and within the Mac Server Set with iLife® ‘09 and iWork® ‘09.

The Mac OS X Snow Leopard® Upgrade package is available to all customers who purchase a new Mac system from Apple or an Apple Authorised Reseller between June 8th, 2009 and December 28th, 2009.

Users must request their Up-To-date upgrade within 90 days of purchase, or by December 28th, 2009, whichever comes first. For more information, visit the Mac OS X Snow Leopard® Upgrade Support page at http://www.apple.com/macosx/snowleopard/upgrade.

Performance tests were conducted by Apple in May 2009, and compared pre-release Mac OS X Snow Leopard v10.6 with shipping Mac OS X Leopard v10.5.7 using Apple’s MacBook® 2.0 GHz systems with 2GB of RAM and NVIDIA GeForce 9400M (256MB) and shipping generation (Mac®) 2.5 GHz systems with 2GB of RAM and NVIDIA GeForce 9400M (256MB). Apple also compared 64-bit Safari 4 to 32-bit Safari 4 on prerelease Mac OS X Snow Leopard v10.6.

Performance will vary based on system configuration, network connection and other factors. All testing was carried out on an iMac 2.93 GHz, 2GB RAM, with Mac OS X Snow Leopard Server, with 2GB of RAM. JavaScript benchmark based on the SunSpider JavaScript Performance test.

The new version has other popular features, such as Top Sites, Full History Search and Cover Flow. Top Sites offers a visual preview of frequently visited and favourite pages. Full History Search searches through titles, web addresses and the complete text of recently viewed pages. Cover Flow® tips through web history or bookmarks. Other innovative features include Smart Address Fields for automatically completing web addresses from an easy to read list of suggestions; Search Fields, for fine tune searches with recommendations from Google Suggest or a list of recent searches; and Full Page Zoom, for a closer look at any website without degrading the quality of the site’s layout and text.

Safari 4 includes HTML5 support for offline technologies, and support for advanced CSS Effects. This supports an entirely new class of web applications with rich media, graphics and fonts. It is the first browser to pass the Web Standards Project’s Acid3 test, ensuring CSS, JavaScript, XML and SVG standards which are specifically designed for dynamic web applications.
Without a doubt, the use of technology economically which can be of transistors on a chip which can be economically produced doubles roughly every two years, has held good for over 40 years and shows no signs of weakening. So how is the capability of the IT systems we use will continue to increase while costs decrease.

Second, in the developed world at least (and increasingly everywhere – remember, by 2007 there were 2.5 billion mobile phones in use worldwide) ownership of one or more connected devices, such as a mobile phone, PC, or games console is becoming the norm, with a wider range of services and systems accessible to users via the Internet, rather than locally. To quote Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google: "You’re always online, every device can see every application, and the applications are stored in the cloud."

Third, an increasingly large volume of content is available free online. Of course its quality varies wildly, but as citizens we know often the first place we look to find something is on the Web, rather than in a place, in a book, or directly from an expert. Hence there is increasing scope for informal learning. There is also increasing scope for distinction, and for the free flow of falsehoods as well as truths. Thus, for learners on formal courses, there is a growing ability to control their own learning rather than be spoonfed.

The challenges we now face are first to ensure that we build on past gains, share good practice, and ensure the spread of precisely those innovations which are scalable and of value. Also, we need to develop a research culture which informs, and is informed by, practice, and a culture of practice which uses research evidence. Finally, we must not forget that, to quote Professor Dylan William, Deputy Director of the Institute of Education: "Learners create learning. Teachers create conditions under which learning can take place."

The architectural shift is changing those conditions for good: if we take account of this, then schools, colleges, and universities will serve their learners well."

The Association for Learning Technology is a professional and scholarly association which brings together all those with an interest in the use of learning technology. It has over 200 organisations and 500 individuals in membership. The 2009 ALT-C conference, with the title "In Dreams Begins Responsibility" – Choice, Evidence, and Change, will take place at University Place, University of Manchester, UK from 8-10 September 2009.

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...if we take account of this, then schools, colleges and universities will serve their users well.

The keynote speakers are:

• Martin Bean, Vice-Chancellor Designate of the Open University, formerly General Manager for product management, marketing and business development for the Worldwide Education Products Group at Microsoft; Michael Wescott, Associate Professor of Information Technology at Kansas State University, USA and researcher in new media, particularly with Terry Anderson, Professor/Canada Research Chair in Distance Education at Athabasca University, Canada. He teaches and advises on the Masters of Distance Education program at Athabasca University, and researches on distance education and e-learning.

Vanessa Pittard and Richard Nosse are co-chairs, and contributors, for the 2010 conference. Vanessa, Director of e-strategy at BECTA (the Government agency promoting the use of information and communications technology) will speak on the BECTA strategy – Harnessing Technology; Next Generation Learning 2008–14. Richard is Professor of Mathematics Education at the Institute of Education, University of London and co-director of the London Knowledge Lab. He will provide an update on the Economic and Social Research Council and Physical Sciences Research Council’s Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) research programme – with the outcomes and implications of these projects began in September 2008. For more information visit: http://www.alt.ac.uk/altc2009 or alternatively email admin@alt.ac.uk

The committee identifies group space as the area where learning and teaching could be supported.

Again unsurprisingly, the committee also found that current practice in HE/FE was heavily influenced by practice in schools, and students faced some difficulty in adapting to the idea that social learning applications could also be used successfully in a pedagogic context.

Current practice in Higher Education reflects a broad, but uneven and "unsystematic" Higher Education in a Web 2.0 World development, which was "bottom-up", and relied on the enthusiasm and energy of individuals.

This tends to reflect the position in other areas of institutional activity, such as administration, student support, advertising and marketing.

The infrastructure (broadband) is expensive and uncertain, but lacks planning, and the digital divide and the strengthening of the skills base appeared to be the most critical and urgent issues, with the impetus for change coming from the students. A notable and thought-provoking conclusion was that:

"The world they [students] encounter in higher education has been constructed [as]... hierarchical, substantially introvert, guarded, careful, precise and measured."

This is a remarkable indictment. Students, on the other hand:

"have a strong sense of communities of interest linked in their own web spaces,... a disposition to share and participate. It has also led them to an impatience – a preference for quick answers – and to a casual approach to evaluating information and attributing it and also to copyright and legal constraints. They aren’t demanding different approaches; rather they are making such adaptations as are necessary for the time it takes to gain their qualifications. Effectively, they are managing a disjuncture, and the situation is feeding the natural inertia of any established system... They are effectively on the cusp of change."

While the report is of undoubted value, some of it is an exercise in stating the obvious (e.g. the emergence of communities of interests and networks, and the discrete categorisation into personal spaces, group space and publishing space). To be honest, it is difficult to imagine what else did they expect.

In another way, the document tends to reflect one of the fundamental weaknesses in the general area of digitisation, which is expert-level knowledge being deployed without adequate understanding of the limitations of the technology and willingness to use the technology. In spite of this observation, the committee found that Web 2.0 technologies were being widely adopted from the beginning of secondary education onwards.

While this is so, there was still a desire for face-to-face contact, and the need to harmonise this with the technological environment was noted.

Within the broad group of users found by the committee, there is, unsurprisingly, a clear development of “communities of interest linked in their own web spaces,... a disposition to share and participate. It has also led them to an impatience – a preference for quick answers – and to a casual approach to evaluating information and attributing it and also to copyright and legal constraints. They aren’t demanding different approaches; rather they are making such adaptations as are necessary for the time it takes to gain their qualifications. Effectively, they are managing a disjuncture, and the situation is feeding the natural inertia of any established system... They are effectively on the cusp of change."

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While this is so, there was still a desire for face-to-face contact, and the need to harmonise this with the technological environment was noted.

Within the broad group of users found by the committee, there is, unsurprisingly, a clear development of “communities of interest linked in their own web spaces,... a disposition to share and participate. It has also led them to an impatience – a preference for quick answers – and to a casual approach to evaluating information and attributing it and also to copyright and legal constraints. They aren’t demanding different approaches; rather they are making such adaptations as are necessary for the time it takes to gain their qualifications. Effectively, they are managing a disjuncture, and the situation is feeding the natural inertia of any established system... They are effectively on the cusp of change."

While the report is of undoubted value, some of it is an exercise in stating the obvious (e.g. the emergence of communities of interests and networks, and the discrete categorisation into personal spaces, group space and publishing space). To be honest, it is difficult to imagine what else did they expect.

Peter Brophy’s “Narrative-Based Practice” concen­trates on the way theory and practice. It encompasses the uses and abuses of narrative, the theories underpinning narratives and knowledge practice, the application of narrative-based practice (NBP) in modern institutions, and even offers some practical suggestions for ac­tiv­ities which help develop NBP skills. Peter Brophy’s own knowledge of the literature of the discipline central to an understanding of narrative is broad and deep, but he also articulates the core ideas, often complicated and abstract, in what is a very understandable prose style. In short, Peter Brophy is a great storyteller.

The book starts with a description, and a critique, of evidence-based practice (EBP). Brophy argues that EBP gives us a starting point “but it poses the question of how to build on its successes in order to encompass and indeed focus upon a more holistic and person-centred practice” (p.15). This is where narrative comes in.

Brophy’s book is very well structured: first, he positions his NBP within its epistemological world-view. This then allows him to explore the nature of narrative, and the methodological practices appropriate to the study of narrative. In Chapter 2, post-positivist epistemology is real interaction theories and their associated methods are described. These are difficult topics to explain, but Brophy’s writing is always clear and easy to understand. Chapter 3 introduces theories of narrative drawn from philosophers of lan­guage, literary theorists, sem­ioticians and social psychologists. Brophy synthesises ideas derived from the work of many significant, canonical writers including Genette, Barthes, Lyotard, Wittgenstein and Ricoeur, and produces a rich, meaty chapter which introduces acknowledge­ing the limitations and the ways in which they can be diluted or abused in practice – so he warns that the ideal of the reflective practitioner too often end­ups as “a mechanistic record of experience” (p.64). This ability to cast a cold eye on practice permeates the book.

I enjoyed Chapter 3, as narrative is very central to my scholarly interests, but perhaps my favourite chapter is Chapter 4 on knowledge and Knowledge Manage­ment. This begins with a description of the Data-Information-Knowledge model (DIK) and the Data-Information-Knowledge-Wis­dom (DIKW) model. I have always been uneasy with these models, and with what seems to me to be their too-easy absorp­tion just into the KM field. I was just a little bit concerned, therefore, around page 70, where the models are described, and ref­erence is made to writers such as Van der Merwe. Happily, they followed a sub-section entitled Epistemological Perspectives, in which the concept of knowledge as justi­fied true belief is explored. The placement was just right. The models are first presented, then their limitations are examined. I recommend this chapter as part of any university research module or postgraduate programme.

In it Brophy discusses knowledge, truth and wisdom, illustrating the discussion with quotations from Descartes, amongst others. The chapter includes a discussion of tacit knowledge – a slippery concept – and the discipline of Knowledge Management. This is an excellent overall view of the central theoretical issues.

Chapters 6 and 7 are concerned with narrative in practice. Chapter 6 discusses narrative in virtual worlds, exploring social networking sites, collaborative authoring, and computer games. A sub-section explores the notion of presence in virtual worlds. Chapter 7 explores narrative in organisations, asking what kinds of stories people in organisations tell about themselves, and exploring how narrative can be used for social participation and resolving conflict.

Brophy discusses narrative and leadership, strategy, product design and identity, to create a common under­standing of the goals of the organisation. He warns that corporate and professional storytelling can be dangerous (p. 129) because “it is very easy to misuse the power of narrative to convey falsehoods, to promote products and service with messages which exaggerate and embel­lish the real properties of what is on offer” (p. 129). We need an eth­ical framework within which to develop stories. We need concepts such as professional integrity, responsibility, and truth. It is these con­cepts which Brophy turns to in the final chapter of the book, a chapter which, like all the others, combines discussion of narrative theory and anecdotes, exploring the benefits of NBP alongside intelligent and clear-sighted critique.

Peter Brophy is the master storyteller throughout. His deep, scholarly knowledge worn lightly, with a humane wisdom mediated through a friendly, personal authorial voice. The story is entirely in keeping with the content. This means that this book is not only extremely rich in information, it is also very readable. I would strongly recommend Narrative- Based Practice whether your interests are philosophical or practical. Even the bibliography is excellent, and itself is a frame­work for an education.
Managing Electronic Resources focuses on two challenges currently facing libraries: the rapidly increasing number of resources delivered electronically, and the impact of web services. It is an in-depth look at the limitations of current Integrated Library Systems (or, as they are known in the UK, Library Management Systems) and the response of catalogue software to these challenges – such as the complications arising out of the need to manage parallel systems (link resolvers, electronic resource management systems, jumlist sites) – as well as new tools which are beginning to be used to address the need for integration. Labour-intensive systems based on a single-system approach (the catalogue) are no longer sustainable or adequate for the range of resources and services now expected by library users, but where do we go from here?

In this sense, the book is aimed at library managers and others involved in working with library systems or in negotiating with vendors, but it would equally benefit anyone involved in the administration of electronic resources in libraries and also those staff who are interested in information systems.

What strikes the reader about this book is its broad scope. The title itself suggests the enormity of the task which Webster has decided to take on.

The ultimate goal of the library systems at the centre of this, and I think we would all agree with Webster here, is to grant users the ability to travel seamlessly from all vendors, and other service providers, in managing electronic resources. “Silk-busying” is also a recurring topic, and Webster is adept at identifying the ways a fragmented approach to library resource information causes problems. A commonplace example of information silos is the use of independent databases, all with their own search interfaces, that is still central to electronic resource management in many libraries.

Webster adopts quite a didactic tone. I lost count of the number of times he began a sentence with “What libraries need” or “Libraries must…” I find it hard to believe that librarians are working with library service delivery is not aware of these challenges.

The solutions are neither simple, nor are they necessarily forthcoming – relying, as they do, on vendor support. Libraries are grappling with the massive changes – such as in how serials are delivered – as well as the effects of rapidly increasing user expectations. Collections are no longer static. Vendors are developing and subscriptions change, it is clear that conventional manual cataloguing procedures are no longer appropriate.

While libraries are dependent on the same books lamenting the end of librarianship as we know it are not exactly rare at the moment, this is one of the few which brings with it a depth of knowledge of the systems and technological issues which libraries are dealing with. Managing Electronic Resources outlines the problems, and suggests ways forward which the library sector will need to build upon ultimately.

Kate Lomax on Managing Electronic Resources

There are two challenges: Increasing electronic resources and the impact of web services

Vendors and databases, duplication of effort and data is inevitable. Webster rightly identifies the need for improved methods of data-sharing between vendors, publishers and libraries.

Standards such as OAI and the Information Exchange Protocol, and Z39.50, give rise to the hope that libraries are dealing with this issue. However, inconsistency in the implementation of standards, for reasons such as the complexity of the standard itself, or a negative impact on innovation, remains a problem.

Non-system factors (skills shortages, funding pressures, and user behaviour) are mentioned, but usually only in passing. The real strength of the book is in coverage of the underlying systems.

It will also complement recent publications which focus on user behaviour. The chapter on innovative interfaces is a highlight, covering, in detail, new developments such as the LibX toolbar and the Umlaut linking application.

Despite being impressed by the number of topics and technologies covered by the book, I cannot help but notice some omissions. For example, while Open Office rates a mention, Open Source LMS solutions are not explored in the detail I expected, and the Blacklight OPAC is not mentioned at all. Similarly, on Management and other business processes are referred to, but newer browser-based solutions such as Zotero are not.

While e-books are afforded the occasional mention, the book was perhaps published on the cusp of the growing interest in portable ebook readers and so this passes without a mention. SOPAC (Social OPAC), LibraryThing (see review on page 84 of this issue) and other online catalogues have had an impact on the public library sector, which perhaps explains their omission here.

But these are just some of the many innovations which have an impact on electronic resource management, and in a way it is heartening that it is impossible to cover them all.

A major strength of the book is Webster’s knowledge of technologies such as federated search and other related developments, topics he has previously written about in publications such as Library Journal and Internet Reference Services Quarterly.

Readers who are battling with this relatively new functionality will find that this title explains technical developments and even offers some practical solutions. Similarly, technical explanations of new tools such as a LibX and Umlaut are useful and concise. Structurally, the book is something of a mixed bag. The chapter divisions are not clearcut, and involve some overlap.

Occasionally, the structure suddenly changes to incorporate comments from one of Webster’s colleagues and Q&A interviews with the people behind the XC Project and LibX developers.

While this temporarily disrupts the flow of the book, it does allow Webster to delve further into some of the specific details of the technology.

It is true that books lamenting the end of librarianship as we know it are not exactly rare at the moment, this is one of the few which bring with it a depth of knowledge of the systems and technological issues which libraries are dealing with. Managing Electronic Resources outlines the problems, and suggests ways forward, which the library sector will need to build upon ultimately.

While reading of these challenges and demands can be draining, this is a necessary starting point in the development process, and for challenging vendors to be part of this. As this book attests, there are already many exciting developments underway in the world of library systems.

“Libraries need to...” I find it hard to believe that the implementation of standards, for reasons such as the complexity of the standard itself, or a negative impact on innovation, remains a problem.

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While reading of these challenges and demands can be draining, this is a necessary starting point in the development process, and for challenging vendors to be part of this. As this book attests, there are already many exciting developments underway in the world of library systems.

This book is essential reading for staff in Higher Education Learning Support. Each chapter brings a little more clarity to the issues of how and why transformation is necessary, and provides a specific example of best practice. This is a most invaluable and reassuring handbook for anyone working in our ever-changing Higher Education environment.”

Leo Appleton reviews a key text on learning support models in Higher Education and gives it five stars


There have been many political and organisational drivers which have led to the changes which the UK Higher Education sector has experienced over the last decade. In short, the ways in which teaching, learning and research are delivered within our universities has been transformed, and all aspects of learning support and student support have had to change with them.

These changes in learning support sometimes appear to be reactive, almost as if the university-wide strategy has been implemented with no input from the strategic direction of its key support services. In many instances, however, this is not the case, and this book brings together a selection of case studies from the UK, Europe and beyond, recording how huge changes and transformations have been made to library, information and learning support services in a well informed and strategic manner.

For someone currently involved in delivering strategic change through transforming learning support models, including the use of space and the way staff work, this has proved a very useful publication.

The scene is well set by the editor, providing a brief overview of the context, and how she came to compile a book of this nature through the completion of her own PhD. The contributors are largely UK – and Australia-based, but between them provide a rich array of varied experiences. Each case study provides an insight into how a particular transformation has been achieved at a specific institution, and these are presented in three separate sections within the book.

The first section is entitled Transformation through Strategy, Policy and organisation, and addresses the changing profiles of learners. Les Watson’s opening chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges.
Having acknowledged this change in culture, the book develops to provide a holistic and integrated approach across the organization. This should embrace all the support services, with a central role for the library, information and support services.

Section one covers the redesign of learning support, and includes case studies on integrated and converged student services in particular university settings. The latter part of the section focuses on the Centre for Inquiry-based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences (CILASS), as an illustration of this.

Overall, this volume is a rich selection of informative case studies. Each illustrates a different approach to learning support delivery, with library and information services at the forefront. While the contributions are global and diverse, they have one thing in common: All the chapters address the need for HE library and information services to be active and sustainable models of collaborative working which are required to counteract the trend towards a more isolated, often commercial, model of service delivery.

As a Higher Education learning support practitioner, I am aware of the rapid changes taking place in the world of libraries and information services. The importance of ensuring that the information delivery in the library and information services in a converged context is demonstrated, and will be responsible for the sustainability of our services within Higher Education. This is essential reading for anyone working in Higher Education Learning Support. Each chapter brings a little more clarity to the issues of how to deliver such a system, and provides a specific example of best practice. This is valuable handbook for anyone working in HE.

Leo Appletong, Planning and Business Manager for Learning and Information Services, Liverpool John Moores University

LibraryThing is a prominent social cataloguing web application for storing and sharing personal library catalogues and book lists. It was developed by web designer and publisher Tim Spalding, and went live on August 29th, 2005. By its first anniversary in August 2006, LibraryThing had attracted more than 73,000 registered users who had catalogued 5.1 million individual books, and this figure represented nearly 1.2 million unique works. By May 2008 they had exceeded 400,000 users and 27 million books.

Free to individuals, the application allows users to register up to 200 books. Beyond that limit, or for commercial or group use, an annual subscription fee or one-time lifetime fee is charged.

Online bookseller AbeBooks bought a 40% share in LibraryThing in May 2006, for an undisclosed sum. In January 2009, Cambridge Information Group acquired a minority stake in the company, and their subsidiary Bowker became the official distributor to libraries. It is important to be aware that Amazon owns AbeBooks, and so subscribers will ask or demand, is "how reliable and comprehensive is the cataloguing information?" The short answer is very good – particularly if the data comes from national bibliographies such as the British Library. LibraryThing takes subsets of data and copies them into a template. The bibliographic description typically contains: Author (and other contributors), title, place of publication, publisher, date, pagination, ISBN, LC Classification, Dewey, Library of Congress Subject Headings (or other headings used by libraries) and Language. In addition, there is provision to write a review, give star ratings and add tags (of which more later).

One of the first questions which librarians will ask, and it is important to realise that this is not necessarily what the majority of subscribers will ask or demand, is "how reliable and comprehensive is the cataloguing information?" The short answer is very good – particularly if the data comes from national bibliographies such as the British Library. LibraryThing takes subsets of data and copies them into a template. The bibliographic description typically contains: Author (and other contributors), title, place of publication, publisher, date, pagination, ISBN, LC Classification, Dewey, Library of Congress Subject Headings (or other headings used by libraries) and Language. In addition, there is provision to write a review, give star ratings and add tags (of which more later).

The summary, when it appears, is brief, and often merely a repetition of the title. This brevity can be unhelpful. I added The Complete Stories Of Richard Yates to my library, but the entry does not tell you that this is a compilation of two previously published collections of short stories, each with its own title, plus a collection of previously unpublished stories. Readers taking their information from Amazon.com, and most will, should realise that the bibliographic information is only as accurate as the details supplied by the authors, distributors, and publishers. I checked for a forthcoming publication of which I am co-editor, and was taken aback to find that the bibliographic entry was entirely erroneous – the book was attributed to a different set of editors. The mistake originated in information supplied by the book’s distributor.

The capacity to add tags (keywords) to books already read is a feature of LibraryThing and highlights the issues surrounding metadata. The latter part of the book deals with the application of research-based teaching and learning principles in practice. Case studies and examples illustrate how multi-professional teams are formed, and how they operate. The Edge Hill case study demonstrates how librarian leadership is illustrated by an overview of their framework for a multi-professional team working within a University setting.

This third section also discusses the importance of practitioner research in the development of holistic learning support practice. The final chapter focuses on the centrality of thinking behind the whole changes to these have led to a focus on the student: in the Higher Education world, and how Watson emphasises how this has been the driving force for all. The service which has become increasingly important. The integration of physical and virtual environment is addressed through the experiences of the University of the Highlands and Islands, where the library is regarded as a vital part of the learning environment. If widening participation is also covered towards the end of the section.

The library, and the Russian State Library. This is valuable handbook for anyone interested in the cataloguing of libraries, and develops. It is important to be aware that Amazon owns AbeBooks, and so subscribers will ask or demand, is "how reliable and comprehensive is the cataloguing information?" The short answer is very good – particularly if the data comes from national bibliographies such as the British Library. LibraryThing takes subsets of data and copies them into a template. The bibliographic description typically contains: Author (and other contributors), title, place of publication, publisher, date, pagination, ISBN, LC Classification, Dewey, Library of Congress Subject Headings (or other headings used by libraries) and Language.
Magix Xtreme Photostory

Magix Xtreme Photostory on CD & DVD 8 is a suite of software which allows users to import and move images, add effects, text, and music, and output to PC, TV, or online. It permits convenient management and presentation by imposing erudite classification and hierarchies.

The ethos of LibraryThing is minimal structure: all information is equally valid, enter simple words to triumph over the officials (read librarians) who impose their rules and hamper access to knowledge by imposing erudite classification and hierarchies.


References

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Magix Xtreme Photostory is available from UK suppliers, and can be downloaded from https://comercio.softonic.com for £20.19 inclusive.

For additional information on MAGIX Movie Edit Pro 15 Plus, visit the MAGIX website at www.magix.de.

Magix Movie Edit Pro 15 Plus is a very solid upgrade and is very reasonably priced, especially in the package offered. It is one of the few pieces of good software for which a printed manual is provided – two, in fact, in the box and also available as PDFs. This is an excellent product and one that I do not hesitate to recommend.
Technology Roundup

Kevin Curran

The Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) (http://www.copyright.com/) have produced a short introductory video explaining how copyright works. The video is available free of charge as along as it is used for educational purposes. It can be viewed online (see http://66.151.191.157/) and a downloadable file is available at http://66.151.191.157/license-the-video.htm. The content is clear and succinct.

In general, these results suggest that following accessibility guidelines and standards, using technologies that support high levels of accessibility, and providing users with options is of the highest importance. The wide range of user responses makes it difficult to provide definitive recommendations for many things. It may also be interpreted that some things (such as relatively insignificant differences in alternative text or the wording of the “skip” link) really don’t have much of an impact on screen reader users. On the other hand, the survey also indicates a very strong favorability toward headings and a very high level of difficulty with Flash content.

WebAIM is an initiative of the Utah State University Center for Persons with Disabilities. The JAWS software package shown here is popular worldwide. JAWS® for Windows® works with a PC, and has a speech synthesizer, which means that screen information can be read out. Braille displays are also supported, and a training tutorial is part of the package. Go to: www.techno-vision.co.uk/JAWS.htm.

As developers, we sometimes view screen reader accessibility as JAWS or Window Eyes or VoiceOver (or whatever) compatibility. This survey emphasizes that screen reader accessibility is about real people - and people that have diverse abilities and preferences. As developers, we must do our best to accommodate the needs of this diverse group.

Copyright Video

From the Copyright Clearance Center

Copyright Video

University of Utah Investigates Screen Reader Software

WebAIM have conducted a survey of screen reader software users. Running between December 2008 and January 2009, the survey examined the attitudes of screen reader software users towards the ease of use of various websites. The exercise produced over 1100 valid responses. What follows is a sample of the quantitative results, and a few observations. More in-depth analysis and documentation are available at http://webaim.org/projects/screenreadersurvey/.

A number of issues raised concerned websites which respondents would like to visit, but which are avoided because of accessibility problems. Flash-based sites, shopping sites Amazon and Facebook featured in the responses, with a high proportion of users citing Amazon as a favourite site, with only 46 people identifying it as a site they would avoid.

YouTube also had a strong response in favour – twice the number of screen reader users indicating it as a favourite site rather than one they would avoid.

Of the top 10 sites, only Facebook was listed more often as a site which users avoided rather than used. Many participants also commented on the nature of difficult web sites by reference to general site types, such as flash-based, or travel, or airline sites.

For the top 10 sites most referred to in the survey, positive responses were logged over three times as often as negative responses.

The most significant conclusion to be made was that there is no typical screen reader software user. It seems that screen reader accessibility is about real people, with diverse abilities and preferences when it comes to web searching.

In general, these results suggest, unsurprisingly, that following accessibility guidelines and standards, and using technologies which support high levels of accessibility, and providing users with options, are of the highest importance in ensuring accessibility. The composition of the population of the survey was also of interest:

- 89.7% of respondents indicated that a screen reader was always used, because of disability
- 3.8% indicated use of the time because of disability
- 1.2% used screen readers often, but not because of a disability which required the use of a reader
- 5.3% used a screen reader occasionally to perform accessibility tests.

In terms of the proficient use of screen readers, 41% of respondents rated themselves as advanced, 32% as intermediate, 17% as expert and 9% as beginners.

Screen reader usage involved one of four types of software: JAWS (74%), Windows Eyes (23%), NVDA (8%), and VoiceOver (6%). The use of other types was reported, but this was statistically insignificant.

Hardware devices were predominantly desktops, for 78% of respondents. 54% also reported laptop use, and 12% used screen readers on mobile phones. BrailleNote, PacMate, PDA and other devices were also mentioned.

Browsers were overwhelmingly Internet Explorer 6 or 7, with 39% on Firefox. The use of site maps was not high, and as far as text-only versions of websites are concerned, it was not seen to draw any conclusions, with the researchers observing that text-only versions are always used by many and never used by many. As such, it is very difficult to interpret the value they have for screen reader users.

More proficient screen reader users were much less likely to use text-only versions than less proficient users.

This may suggest that proficient users employ sufficient techniques to render the main version acceptable to them. Or it may suggest that proficient users do not gain value in using text-only versions, which are often less than optimal.

The inconvenience of pop-up windows depended, again not surprisingly, on the degree of expertise of the user, with the level of inconvenience decreasing as users gained proficiency.

Of interest, there was a surprising level of ignorance concerning the use of Web2.0 applications, with researchers concluding that the majority of respondents might not have possessed sufficient understanding of the area under investigation.

More specifically, only 59% of screen users expressed a preference for alternative text. Images used to enhance the mood or feel of a web page also made it impossible for the researchers to recommend an alt text strategy which web designers and editors should follow.

According to the report, one of the most significant findings was that Flash was found to be difficult to use by over 70% of screen reader users.

Of particular note to information services is the finding that Flash is found to be difficult to use by over 70% of screen reader users.

As developers, we sometimes view screen reader accessibility as JAWS or Window Eyes or VoiceOver (or whatever) compatibility. This survey emphasizes that screen reader accessibility is about real people - and people that have diverse abilities and preferences. As developers, we must do our best to accommodate the needs of this diverse group.
With the launch of DukeMobile 1.1, the Duke University Libraries now offer the most comprehensive university digital image collection – covering women’s history, early American sheet music, Duke history and other topics. The libraries will add new collections regularly as they become available.

“Making these collections available for the iPhone and similar devices is important not only to extend access to Duke’s collections, but also as a milestone in the evolution of academic libraries from traditional print repositories to institutions that embrace new technology for sharing their rich resources with broader audiences.”

The DukeMobile Version 1.1 suite of apps also includes an expanded schedule of courses and improvements to the campus map.

Duke’s Office of Information Technology and Office of Public Affairs and Government Relations have developed DukeMobile in partnership with TemblyClever Design, a California-based web services company.


Users of other wireless devices with browsers compatible with WAP 1.0 and 2.0 protocols should point their browsers to http://m.duke.edu.

A brief YouTube video describing the new gateway to the collections is available at http://www.youtube.com/user/DukeUnivLibraries. Further information can be found at http://library.duke.edu/blog/digital-collections-theres-an-app-for-that/.

With the launch of DukeMobile 1.1, the Duke University Libraries now offer the most comprehensive university digital image collection specifically formatted for an iPhone or iTouch device.

It includes thousands of photographs and other artifacts, which range from early beer advertisements to materials on San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury scene in the 1960s. Scholars and students who once had to travel to museums or libraries to view collections of historic images can now do so by clicking on their mobile devices instead.

Although a growing number of scholarly institutions offer images and other material online, Duke is the first to offer collection access which takes advantage of the iPhone's design, navigation and other features.

Duke University Libraries offers mobile users digital materials from 20 collections – about 30,000 images overall – covering women’s history, early American sheet music, Duke history and other topics. The libraries will add new collections regularly as they become available.

“Making these collections available for the iPhone and similar devices is important not only to extend access to Duke’s collections, but also as a milestone in the evolution of academic libraries from traditional print repositories to institutions that embrace new technology for sharing their rich resources with broader audiences.”

Mobile learning is rapidly growing from a set of research projects into worldwide deployment of services for classrooms, field trips, workplace training, tourism and informal education.

Major projects have developed generic platforms for mobile learning, and explored the opportunities for supporting the continuity of technology-mediated learning across locations and life transitions. Smaller projects have often tried out new pedagogical approaches, and investigated how learning on portable devices is intertwined with learners’ everyday lives, personal interests and individual learning needs.

Mobile learning, or m-learning, includes learning with handheld devices, learning across locations (with a combination of portable and fixed technologies), and learning in a mobile society. The development embraces a number of aspects. It includes the design of the technologies, and the evaluation of mobile learning techniques in whatever context they are employed. The context, pedagogy and theory of mobile learning are also considered. Innovative architectures are part of the area of reference, and there is a particular application to assis-
tive and inclusive learning. Content management and delivery via mobile devices are an obvious area of interest, as are collaborative and social learning. There are applications of mobile learning to lifelong learning, and to blended learning through both mobile and fixed technologies.

Support for contextual learning (ie home/ university/workplace/other) uses awareness of learners’ locations, movements, social contacts, or context-specific requirements, to enable delivery, or the capture of appropriate content, and to facilitate context-specific interactions.

Agnes Kukulska-Hulme is Professor of Learning Technology and Communication at The Open University’s Institute of Educational Technology, and she explained:

“In the early days, mobile activities were designed by researchers and teachers, and offered to students as a top-down activity. The technology involved was very sophisti-
cated, and it was used in a very controlled environment.

This is changing now, and adult learners in particular are driving use to support their own independent learning. They are increas-
ingly making connections for themselves between their learning and their workplace, and we’re seeing a growing blur between formal and informal learning. Learner-initiat-
ed activity is on the increase, so that in the future there will be more balance between teacher-led and learner-led activity. This is uncharted territory – we’re not yet sure how we will interact with mobile technology in the future.

Mobile devices are currently most popular for activities concentrating on the learner, where learners generate content, such as by gathering evidence of learning, or photos or data, and sharing it with others or putting it in their eportfolio. This is not being done on a widespread basis, because of the practical problem of where to put this data; it’s a big challenge for universities in terms of changing and adapting their systems and outlook to cater for this new digital data and evidence.”

Agnes is particularly interested in the ways in which courses can obtain more input from learners, in order to move from the top-down model.

“We’re getting more feedback about learners’ needs, such as their study materials and how these relate to their work environment, so that we can capture this “in the moment feedback” and pass it to teaching staff and refine materials accordingly.”

In 2007-08, Agnes initiated a project in which The Open University gave mobile equipment to staff, so that they could test learning on handheld devices. Academic staff often have older mobile phones, and can find it hard to envisage what is possible now. This project helped to open the eyes of teaching and support staff, and to bridge the gap between what they think is possible with their early generation devices, and what is possible with the latest generation of devices such as smartphones.

Some became very enthusiastic, largely as a result of their own circumstances. For example, a staff member who commuted could see the need, and relate to learners who needed mobile access.

Staff who were deskbound, on the other hand, found it difficult to see the possibilities.
"We need to let people try things out. Most staff have access to up-to-date PCs through work, but mobile phones tend to be personally owned and there is often a wide gap between the capabilities of staff and student mobiles. The project also included clubs where staff could get together for informal learning opportunities, to share ideas, and to work together on ways of using mobiles in their curriculum programme."

Agnes' research revealed curriculum areas where mobile technology is proving much more popular than others. The health and social care faculty of trainee doctors and nurses finds that mobile learning fits well with their requirements, as students are constantly moving around between practice settings and the learning environment, while, at the same time, reflecting on practice. In language learning, mobiles are being used in surprising ways in the classroom. "The beauty of mobile devices is that they offer continuous access and can work across different settings, meaning that students aren’t constrained by access to a desk or PC."

Tribal and NIACE’s experience also shows that mobile devices can be powerful in language learning. They joined forces to address the English language needs of migrant workers.

Commissioned by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA), Tribal conducted research into the skills levels of migrant workers. This involved 470 learners across six sites and several focus groups. M-learning proved to be a powerful tool for developing language skills. Content was created to cover seven different work sectors such as construction, manufacturing, transport and aviation. The materials were designed specifically to support migrant workers in achieving ESOL for work qualifications.

Two new functions were also developed: a dialogue tool and glossary, which allows the learner to listen, record and play back words. Materials may be used by employers, skills brokers, union learning representatives and others who may facilitate learning.

The learning materials are also available for free download via the QIA Excellence Gateway, offering migrant workers the opportunity to take charge of their personal development. Agnes added:

"Science students, particularly school pupils, are also exploring mobile devices in areas such as geography field trips – where they can gather data and share it with others – or trips to museums where they can photograph exhibits, bring back information and work on it in school. This sort of pedagogical model is immediately understood by teachers, pupils and parents, and is proving popular."

UK company WildKnowledge produces software to enable learners to collect data in the field, via mobile devices, for use in the classroom or home. Initially used mainly by school pupils, its use is increasing in the higher education sector, for example for supporting field trips and obtaining GPS-related data. When the software was first tested in 2004, investigators assessed whether devices fitted with GPS and interactive keys would provide a more engaging way of identifying, recording, wildlife. After testing the software with over 1,000 users, huge increases in ability and motivation were achieved with teacher and student alike.

Mike Sharples is Professor of Learning Sciences and Director of the Learning Sciences Research Institute at the University of Nottingham. LSRI is a centre of excellence for research in the learning sciences and technological innovation. Mike is also President of the International Association for Mobile Learning, a support and development organisation for researchers and practitioners in m-learning. He said:

"Mobile devices are being used in two main ways. First to support learning through iphones, ipods and so on. Second, to connect formal and informal learning across locations. It first became popular in schools but is now taking off in universities through tools such as podcasting.

SMS messaging and mobile devices providing increased student interaction in lectures. Students attending universities now bring their own devices, typically laptops, and, particularly over the last two years, have not only come to expect course material to be accessible via their laptops, but also that the university network will support their laptops.

Their social and work lives are also blending through mobile devices – they move seamlessly from carrying out research online to chatting with their friends on social networking sites."

The UK is a world leader in mobile learning, and the first international conference on the subject – mLearn – was held in the UK in 2002. The MCBLeam project started eight years ago, following a project involving, and funded by, bodies such as JISC, Becta and MoLeNET. These provided a huge boost to research into mobile learning.

The UK-led Handheld Learning Conference now attracts around 1,200 delegates from around the world. Dave Pickersgill, Project Manager, Business Gateway at Sheffield College, is responsible for the college’s £300k mobile learning project funded by MoLeNET.

The MoLeNET project, led by the Learning and Skills Network (LSN), is certainly the largest, and most diverse, UK-based implementation of mobile learning. This may also be true world-wide.

The Learning and Skills Council, and consortia led by Further Education colleges, have together invested well over £10 million in MoLeNET. The college received £300,000 to be invested in equipment, and purchased a range of devices and software which included smartphones, Nintendo DS, PSPs (PlayStation portables), digital cameras, notebooks and digital pens, amounting to over 1,000 mobile devices and accessories in total.

Technical support was required to support the devices, so the college has also recruited two staff dedicated to the mobiles. Dave continued:

"There is a raft of ways to use new technology, and a myriad of new and interesting ideas prompted by the new equipment. The devices will be used particularly with students on vocational courses, such as those on apprenticeships or in workplace settings such as dental nurses.

Equipment such as smartphones and headcameras will be ideal for students to gather evidence of animal husbandry or hairdressing.

Gathering evidence in this way will also save staff time, as it is possible to reduce the number of visits to workplace settings, and instead view digital video or photographs gathered by the students. The learners will undoubtedly find innovative ways of using devices which we can’t even envisage, and lecturers are also suggesting ways to use the equipment. People’s imagination is getting hold of them and taking off. We’re using our learning management system, Moodle, as a repository for people’s experiences with mobile devices. So far about 50 members of staff have participated."

On some courses, every student will be issued with a mobile device, whilst other curriculum areas may have some equipment, such as head cameras, on rotation.

It is predicted that, in the next 5-10 years, the amount of equipment the college owns will be reduced, and that student-owned devices will increase in numbers.

For this to happen, connectivity will be key. At the moment students are unable to obtain access to the college network via their own devices, and certain websites are blocked due to the college’s web filtering systems necessary because of the number of 16-19 year-olds on courses.

Equipment such as the Nintendo DS is being used in surprising ways in the classroom. Up to 16 can be distributed through the class, and used wirelessly to key questions which the lecturer and the whole class can see in real time, without interruption to the flow of the lecture. Text walls are also now gaining in popularity. The use of these devices requires students to have a specific number, so that lecturers can view the queries and comments on a website-based text wall.

SMS is also being used by lecturers, because of the brevity it brings to communication. It can be used, for example, if a text needs to be summarised. This is one area where the UK and Europe has an advantage over the United States. It is comparatively easy to obtain access to mobile phone networks and to exchange information across networks. Text messaging has been available to UK teenagers for 15 years, but in the US it is much more difficult to send messages between networks, and this has slowed down the rate of progress.

It is not just the educational sector which is embracing mobile technology for learning. Geoff Slade, Software Director of Tribal, commented that blending more conventional learning with mobile phones, PDAs and handhelds enables people to experience flexible learning. This extends the use of ICT beyond the classroom. Meaning benefits all types of learners, from primary schools, secondary schools and FE colleges, to universities and..."
also to employers.

The EC-funded BLOOM (Bite-sized Learning Opportunities On Mobiles) project has enthusiastically embraced m-learning in order to address the current skills deficit in the passenger, transport and logistics sector. This is an area where employees are often not able to take opportunities for personal development because of irregular shift patterns and long distance travel.

As the lead partner in BLOOM, UK-based mobile-learning expert Tribal is providing pedagogical and technological expertise.

Tribal has customised various learning content aimed at basic skills, job-specific and language learning skills. The content has also been translated into several languages.

Mike Sharples concluded that the key issues in mobile learning at the moment include:

- Learning across contexts. An example is learning which might begin in a lecture, and then continue at home or while the learner is mobile.
- Accessing the right learning content and services wherever the learner happens to be – at home before a lecture to preview lecture notes, or the mobile use of revision materials via mobile phones.
- Collaborative learning: M-learning is also applied to group learning activities outside formal learning times, or for large group collaborations where mass experiments are carried out. This might be in the form of a study group on an enquiry learning project, or a collaborative critique of a paper.
- Increasing access to information from mobile devices such as informal sources (YouTube is an example), or semi-formal such as podcasts, or formal such as course notes.

The Association for Learning Technology's peer-reviewed journal, ALT-J, is producing a special issue on mobile and contextual learning in 2009.

Mobile learning research and practice includes evaluation of mobile learning in any combination of classrooms, homes, workplaces, heritage locations, museums and learning centres, and outdoors; design of mobile, pervasive, and contextual technologies for learning; theories of mobile learning mediated by technology; pedagogical or philosophical underpinnings of mobile learning; innovative architectures for mobile learning systems; inclusive and assistive mobile learning; content management and delivery for learning on mobile devices; collaborative and social mobile learning; blended learning with mobile and fixed technologies; personal mobile technology to support lifelong and life-wide learning; ambient and immersive environments for learning.

For more information visit http://www.alt.ac.uk/alt_j.html.


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The Association for Learning Technology is a professional and scholarly association which brings together all those with an interest in the use of learning technology. Their 2009 ALT-C conference will focus on “In dreams begins responsibility” - choice, evidence, and change”, and will take place at University Place, University of Manchester, UK from 8-10 September 2009. For more information visit www.alt.ac.uk