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## ALISS QUARTERLY

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest edition of ALISS Quarterly. It has been published by ALISS (Association of Librarians and Information Professionals in the Social Sciences) .

This issue arose out of our recent interest in the emerging issue of Web 2.0 and libraries. For the past few months we have been highlighting key papers and materials on our website at <http://www.alissnet.org.uk>. A few recently found gems include:

**Transformational Technologies: Practical uses for Web 2.0 in the library environment.** This seminar was held in Glasgow on the 2nd of November 2007 . It focused on what technologies are available for the librarian to exploit and use in their everyday work, to reach and engage the user. View Dave Patten's Slide Share presentation which focused specifically on ways in which web 2.0 technology can be harnessed to improve the Library OPAC. <http://www.slideshare.net/daveyp/glasgow-transformational-technologies/>

It includes examples of innovative use from the University of Huddersfield.

**Caught up in Web 2.0? Practical implementations and creative solutions for librarians and publishers** . This event was organised by the UK Serials Group in November 2007. A number of the slides can be viewed from the main web site at: <http://www.uksg.org/event/web20>

These include:

A snapshot of UK library and educational use of Second Life

Andy Powell, Head of Development, Eduserv Foundation, Eduserv . I especially like this one. If you haven't visited second life (like me) it provides a basic introduction and then reviews issues relating to it and research libraries.

**Building Academic Library 2.0** a useful collection of webcasts from a recent us conference. UC Berkeley November 2nd 2007

try the webcast from Meredith Farkas (celebrated for her work on 5 weeks to a social library).. [http://webcast.berkeley.edu/event\\_details.php?webcastid=21207&p=1&ipp=15&category=](http://webcast.berkeley.edu/event_details.php?webcastid=21207&p=1&ipp=15&category=)

Note before she begins speaking there are about 10 minutes of introductions. keep going, as it is worth it! She refers to library web 2.0 as a state of mind requiring constant re-evaluation, an organisational culture that encourages

constant learning. Having faith in the users to allow them to be partners in developing the future of our libraries. It also shows a number of useful case studies of the use of web 2.0 by US libraries. What is key about them is that the libraries are moving to where the users are and then attracting them to the library website.

Being innovative and exploring new ways of presenting library information is what this issue is all about. It contains contributions from COPAC, Intute and the Open University which discuss the way in which they are trying to harness the new technology to communicate with their users in innovative ways. The issue then moves on to focus upon examples of blogs and wikis from the University of Northampton and Coventry and Warwick universities, examining in more detail ways in which they are developing them as a means of communication with and support for library users. Finally the issue concludes with a personal comment from Angela Newton of Leeds University which considers the challenges of user education to the Google generation.

Remember that you can keep up to date with ALISS news by subscribing to our free electronic mailing list LIS\_SOCIAL SCIENCE at <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/LIS-SOCIALSCIENCE.html>. Have you seen our new website at: <http://www.alissnet.org.uk>

The aim is to create an up to date news service for Social Science Librarians. In addition to providing free access to group news and an online archive of papers and presentations from our events; it will also contain a social science news section; spotlighting new developments; websites and publisher news; and an ALISS Recommendations section where we will recommend online articles and offer links to interesting websites and resources which we have found!

We hope you enjoy the issue!

Heather Dawson.  
ALISS Secretary

## WEB 2.0 - HELP OR HYPE? – SOCIAL SOFTWARES AND THEIR VALUE TO LIBRARIES

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### Introduction

Over the summer of 2007, as Service Innovation Officer at the University of Warwick Library, I was asked to write a report on Web 2.0 technologies, and I spent some time investigating different technologies and social softwares. The only way to explore these social softwares is to use them. Make friends on them, install applications, get content and try to use them to their limits. I investigated a number of different technologies all labelled as "Web 2.0", and the ones with most potential for libraries are discussed here.

### Facebook

Facebook is a true social software. It is a place online where individual people create profiles to give out information about themselves, and where many people interact with messages that are both public and private. Facebook enables people to play games and share trivial communication in a way that keeps them in touch with far more of their friends and contacts than they might otherwise have done. Which is pretty much what other sites like MySpace, Bebo, Ning and even LinkedIn do, to some extent or another. But Facebook seems to have the highest profile in the academic sector, perhaps because it grew out of networks based around Universities.

Facebook is used by students: it's their space, they use it how they want to, and if we try to get involved then we're in danger of just looking a bit silly. However, there were more than nineteen thousand members on the University of Warwick network within Facebook, as of December 2007, which is about four thousand more than when I first investigated in July. With so many students on Facebook, are we missing out if we don't try anything? And are there ways that we can use Facebook professionally?

I registered for a Facebook account with my work e-mail address. That means that I can be part of the University of Warwick network, so I can see what our students are doing and I can be seen by them. I've made "friends" on Facebook with some of my colleagues, and with other library and information professionals I've networked with. A Facebook friend is someone who can see information about you. This information appears on your profile page (that is the page with information about you), but also in their news feeds on their

home page. My Facebook home page tells me news about my Facebook friends: when they change their profile pictures, when photos of them are uploaded, when they change their status lines, when they install new applications and so on.

One feature of Facebook is the status line. You can edit it as often as you like. It starts with "Jenny is..." and then you fill in the rest. One day I filled it in with "going on Second Life this afternoon" and I got a message from another librarian who was planning to investigate Second Life, so we were able to arrange to meet in Second Life, and we learnt far more about Second Life by exploring together than either of us would have alone. Similarly, I have found out about other librarians' interests from their status updates on Facebook, so it can serve a purpose for our professional networking.

Another feature of Facebook is the Group: I set one up with a colleague, and invited contacts across my institution to join. We use it to arrange a visit to the pub after work on a Friday from time to time, and to discuss tips on using Facebook itself. It is useful in facilitating informal networking, but it's not especially active. I had thought that the Events feature might be useful as a way of inviting people to workshops and professional events, but that would require more of my target audience to be members of Facebook. Lots of students are members of Facebook, and there have been attempts to set up Groups as places where students discuss their academic work, to varying degrees of success. Certainly active groups like this would be a place where a librarian could attempt to offer advice to students, but monitoring the existence of such groups is an extra burden of effort, and presumably the students are using Facebook and not the University discussion forums precisely because they don't want official involvement.

It wasn't long before my real life friends found me and befriended me on Facebook. And then photos of me started to be uploaded by my friends, and tagged with my name. So I began to investigate the privacy settings, and created a category of friends who don't get to see everything about me on Facebook, in order that my professional contacts are not getting photos of me drinking cocktails in their news feeds! Even though I try to control what information there is out there about me, my real life friends are getting news about my repositories conferences and my professional interests, and for that reason I think it would be easier for anyone just starting with Facebook to create a personal account and a professional one, and keep the two separate.

There are actually quite a lot of settings that you can edit on Facebook, both to control what you say about yourself to your networks and your friends and so that you can control what type of news you want to hear about: photos of

your friends or status updates, and which of your friends it is more important to you to hear news about than others. There are lots of tips that I have learnt about how to manage your information intake on Facebook, and the information output about you: this is a kind of information skill.

But what about creating a library profile on Facebook? Well, lots of libraries have done it, and apparently those who have actively promoted their account have had some success with making friends and using their account as a way to contact students. I found that out through Ning, another social software.<sup>1</sup> At the time that I investigated Facebook, the terms and conditions prohibited me from signing up for an account on behalf of an organisation, so I was not keen to create an account on behalf of my library. One pitfall of an official account is that you may need to have a number of staff nominated to maintain it, and those who make friends with such profiles don't actually know who is able to then see information about them. I heard of a cautionary tale where one member of staff learnt something personal about another member of staff because she had been given the login details of the official account, which the other person had made "friends" with on Facebook.

There are other ways of getting your library into Facebook. I experimented with creating an advertisement on the marketplace in Facebook. "Free: Library Resources" with a link to the library's home page. It didn't lead to anyone following that link in the first month of my having created it. I also experimented with the "Librarian" application that can be installed onto any individual's profile. I installed it on mine, of course, and other library staff did, too. I'm set up as the official contact, should anyone have an enquiry, but I've not received one! Other libraries have written their own applications, so that catalogue search boxes can be installed onto Facebook profiles, such as The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

A University of Michigan survey<sup>2</sup> indicated that Facebook users do not want to contact their librarian through Facebook. Only 1 out of 200 respondents said that they would prefer to contact their library through Facebook. It is important to note that the Facebook poll that they used to carry out this survey only allows one option to be chosen: more users might have selected Facebook had there been the option to choose multiple methods of contacting the library. Most respondents (59%) prefer to contact their library in person.

So Facebook might be an interesting software with some potential for professional networking but its certainly not a quick and easy way to get in touch with your students, nor is it necessarily the best way to get in touch

1 <http://library20.ning.com/>

2 Online at: <http://userslib.com/?p=74>

with your students. Knowing about Facebook certainly helps you to be in a position to help your students become aware of their online profile and helps you to understand their interactions with each other. We're not missing out by not actively participating, yet, however:

### RSS feeds

RSS feeds have been around for a long time, but have taken off in the Web 2.0 arena, which is all about the sharing of content. RSS feeds are essentially a way to package updates about the content of a resource (eg a web page, a blog, a catalogue) in order to incorporate it into another web page or blog or resource. They are especially useful for sharing the content of a blog with others, and useful for those who wish to keep up-to-date (eg researchers) when they use tools known as RSS feed readers/aggregators. RSS feed readers such as Bloglines<sup>3</sup> and Google Reader<sup>4</sup> amalgamate the feeds from a number of blogs, websites, etc that the user subscribes to, enabling the user to watch just one page, thus saving time.

You can tell if a website has an RSS feed by looking out for an icon or text telling you that it has one: often an orange logo is used. Libraries are creating such feeds through their websites and blogs, and also are advising researchers about how to use feed readers and how to find feeds in their subject areas. RSS feeds are increasingly offered by databases, repositories and library catalogues in the same way that e-mail alerts work, and are potentially very useful information resources, both for librarians to use for our own professional awareness, and for us to advise others on how to use.

One feature of RSS feeds that I learnt the hard way is that it is very difficult to search for RSS feeds to subscribe to. There are directories such as Technorati's directory of blogs, through which you will find RSS feeds. But feeds are very much the kind of thing that you come across and add to your own personal collection, rather than the kind of thing you can start a collection of instantly.

Another pitfall of RSS feeds is that you may feel that you have to read everything that you subscribe to in your aggregator: you don't! They aren't like e-mails, personally addressed to you, for your attention. RSS feeds are more like a newspaper that arrives at your door every day. Some days, you just won't have time to read it at all, and it's OK to put it straight in the recycling pile! And there will be many articles that you won't read any more than the headlines of in your feeds.

3 Online at: <http://www.bloglines.com>

4 Online at: <http://www.google.com/reader/view/>

### Delicio.us

Just as Facebook is only one social networking software amongst many, Delicio.us is only one social bookmarking software amongst many. Another one I've used a lot of is now called Faves.com, although it was once known as Blue Dot.com. Some people will be used to using one such bookmarking software, whilst others will be used to using another, but generally you can import and export your collections between the different softwares.

What they all basically do is allow you to build up a collection of websites, just like your bookmarks or favourites on your web browser, but which is hosted online and is therefore accessible to you from anywhere you are online, rather than only accessible from your profile as your browser bookmarks are. And they're better than your browser for another key reason: rather than you filing the websites into folders, you give them keyword tags to retrieve them by, which means that you can assign more than one tag to each website, to help you to find them again from amongst your collection. I've got over 200 websites tagged in my Delicio.us account now, and I never could manage that many in my Explorer favourites as efficiently.

In Delicio.us, I can assign tags like "Web\_2.0" and "to\_read" and "Facebook" to the websites and blog entries that I come across. As I tag a new page, Delicio.us even suggests tags that others have used, or that it thinks might apply from my previously used tags. I can then find those websites again by searching my own collection for tags or combinations of tags.

I can also build a network on Delicio.us of like-minded people, so that I can search their collections for the same tags, too. Although I can add items to my collection that are private, just for me and no-one else to see, so people in my Network might also be hiding things from me! I can even open my search out to everyone's public material on Delicio.us, and use it as a resource discovery tool. Of course, lots of people will be tagging with "Web2.0" rather than "Web\_2.0" so I'm probably going to miss a lot if I only use Delicio.us for searching.

There's also a Facebook application for Delicio.us, so I can display on my Facebook profile the tags that I am using most frequently, and the websites that I have recently tagged. I can put such information into the news feed that goes out to my Facebook friends' home pages.

Similar tagging facilities are increasingly being added to Library Management Systems, allowing students to add keyword tags to books for their own reference, and

Intute<sup>5</sup> has a "MyIntute" function that also allows users to add tags to the websites that it indexes.

It is the social aspect of the tagging in Delicious and other such social bookmarking technologies that has enormous potential, in my view. It is something that students could use to recommend resources to each other in study groups, and that librarians and academics could also use to recommend websites to such groups. Faves.com allows you to comment on resources in other peoples' collections, which is proving to be very handy in my latest role, working on a JISC project, where my programme manager has seen what I have tagged and commented that I might like to get in touch with someone who can help me with that particular interest.

### Second Life

This is a virtual world online, and it gets a mention here only because I investigated it and it was fun! I think that if our students are in Second Life for their studies, then we as librarians could and should have some presence in there too. But there is a big hurdle to getting started as a Second Life resident that I just would not expect our library users to overcome, purely in order to use library services. Just learning to walk and talk can take a long time, and becoming confident at flying, teleporting, meeting new people who weirdly change into hedgehogs is something that is not really going to help anyone find the information they need. Unless, of course, they need information about Second Life. In which case there are some librarians in Second Life who are blazing a trail that others of us can follow. Visit Info Island in Second Life, and you will get plenty of help from friendly librarians.

### Conclusion

It seems to me that there are enormous, practical applications for the Web 2.0 and social softwares available to us. These are just a few that give you a very basic flavour of their capabilities. There is much more for us to explore. We should update our users about how to find and use RSS feeds (especially those relating to search alerts on our databases, especially to researchers); we should advise students about how their Facebook profiles and online activities reflect on them and others and we should investigate further the possibilities of social bookmarking softwares for sharing information about quality information resources. Some libraries are already doing these very things, and we can learn from their experiences using social networking software too.

5 Online at: <http://www.intute.ac.uk/>

## THE CONTINUING ADVENTURES OF LASSIE.

*Jane Secker, LSE Centre for Learning Technology*

In the October 2007 issue of ALISS Quarterly we reported briefly on the LASSIE (Libraries and Social Software in Education) Project. Led by LSE's Centre for Learning Technology and the Institute of Education, this short project has been exploring how social software might enhance the distance learners' experience of libraries. The project Steering Group includes the University of London Research Library Services, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Open University and colleagues from the Library and Archives at LSE. LASSIE is due to complete in January 2008 and will publish several reports and case studies on the project website

(<http://clt.lse.ac.uk/Projects/LASSIE.php>) which should be of wider interest to the library community about the application of social software. In addition to an extensive literature review, LASSIE undertook five case studies which involved exploring a specific type of social software in more detail, and where possible getting feedback from distance learners about how it impacted on their learning. This short paper will provide an overview of the work to date and some of our findings.

### The literature review

At the outset of the project it was agreed the project would undertake a detailed literature review to gain a snapshot of social software initiatives in the library community. Our research found that the phenomena known sometimes as 'web 2.0' has received a lot of publicity in the mainstream media recently. In addition the library world is full of people exploring how social software might be used to enhance their services. However, at the outset of the project the team felt it was important to provide some definitions for the library community of terms such as Library 2.0, which are being used with increased frequency. For this reason we conducted a detailed literature review which examines different types of social software (e.g. blogs, wiki's, RSS feeds and social bookmarking tools) and provides examples of how libraries are using these tools and services. The draft literature review (Secker, 2007) is available on the project website and the updated literature review will be available in January 2008.

LASSIE found that librarians have become keen bloggers and in the US (and to a lesser extent in the UK) libraries are using blogs for news information and to reach out to their users. See for example Madison-Jefferson County Public

library (<http://mjcpl.org/>), and Kansas State University library blogs (<http://ksulib.typepad.com/>). A great example of a UK university using blogs is closer to home at the University of Worcester, where they launched ILS Matters (<http://www2.worc.ac.uk/wordpress/>) to raise the profile of library services to students. Worcester are also using blogs to reach out to their academic staff and for internal communication purposes amongst library staff. We felt blogging was of particular interest and decided to focus one of the case studies on the role of blogging in libraries. This was partly based on our own experiences of running a blog for the duration of the project. The LASSIE project blog (<http://elearning.lse.ac.uk/blogs/socialsoftware/>) has proved to be a great way of documenting the progress of the project, of reflecting on what we've been doing and also on publicising the project. We've developed a solid readership over the past nine months and hope to continue using the blog in the future.

Another very important technology that we have explored in the LASSIE project is RSS or Really Simple Syndication. RSS underpins many web 2.0 technologies and is a dialect of XML. Put simply, it is a machine-readable language, much like HTML, designed to provide a framework in which information can be contained. An RSS document provides a set of items, each of which has a title, a description and a link to an online resource. A series of items, almost always provided in some kind of chronological order, makes up a feed. News information is particularly useful when provided in RSS format, as rather than a reader having to visit a website to see what's new, by subscribing to a feed, one can be continuously kept updated. Libraries in the US in particular, are encouraging their users to subscribe to a variety of RSS feeds to keep up to date with library news, the latest acquisitions to the library catalogue and new electronic resources. For example, MIT Libraries maintain a list of RSS feeds (<http://libraries.mit.edu/help/rss/feeds.html>) available from their site. Meanwhile, closer to home London School of Economics and Political Science, have developed a Training portal (<http://www.training.lse.ac.uk/>) which uses RSS technology to pull together training events from around the institution. The RSS feed has also been incorporated into the VLE, Moodle and the institutional portal to provide a list of upcoming training events for staff and students.

Another increasingly common application of social software in the library setting has been considered more revolutionary in some quarters. The inclusion of 'user generated content' (such as ratings, book reviews and user comments) into the catalogue has been implemented in several libraries. See for example Hennepin County Library (<http://catalog.hclib.org/>) and the University

of Huddersfield (<http://webcat.hud.ac.uk/>) which are now allowing students to rate books. Huddersfield also use features similar to those employed by Amazon, which suggest titles to borrowers, based on the user data. So for example, the catalogue now includes the feature 'users who borrowed this book, also borrowed...'. Arguably, this initiative gives the user a better experience when using the catalogue, making it more similar to the online shopping experience they are invariably more familiar with.

### The case studies

Over the past few months the LASSIE team has carried out a number of five case studies to explore how particular tools might enhance the learning experience of real distance learning students. The first case study on blogging has been mentioned above, however as part of the project a citing and referencing screencast was developed by the team. Using the Camtasia software, a training session with audio and screen capture was prepared. A menu system allows students to pick and choose how they access the material. They can view the presentation from start to finish, but are free to jump about using the menu. Feedback has been gathered from students on the role of online training or 'podcasts' in delivering training and in general students would like more online support, but they would still like to be able to attend face to face classes. The resource is available on the Library website at LSE: [http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/inskr/citing\\_referencing.htm](http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/inskr/citing_referencing.htm)

Another case study has been exploring the social bookmarking tool [del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us/) (<http://del.icio.us/>) to collect useful resources for the project, but also as a way of directing students to web based resources. Several institutions in the US but also in Australia have developed web based subject guides using [del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us). The tools is extremely flexible and can be incorporated into your own website very easily. Queensland University of Technology have an excellent example of how this can be used by library subject specialists to direct students to relevant resources. See:

<http://www.library.qut.edu.au/subjectpath/internetresourcesforci.jsp> for more details. Members of the project team also used this tool with different groups of students and have collected some initial feedback about its value.

A case study was also undertaken to explore whether traditional reading lists can be improved using social software. The project team explored the use of four online reading list or book list systems including: CiteUlike (<http://www.citeulike.org/>) H2O Playlists (<http://h2obeta.law.harvard.edu/home.do>) LibraryThing (<http://www.librarything.com>) and Bibsonomy (<http://www.bibsonomy.org/>) to



present reading list information to students on a University of London distance learning course. A final case study will also look at the role of the social networking site Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/>) as a tool for librarians and for library services. This case study is largely literature based, although draws on experiences of project team members who have joined Facebook.

### Conclusion

LASSIE will now continue her adventures until January 2007 when a final report will be made available from the project website. The project has provided the team with a wealth of valuable experience and knowledge about social software. In addition, the real life examples of using social software with students and the feedback that we have gathered, provides timely evidence for the library community of the way forward, as many considering whether or how to use social software. The Project Steering Group will be meeting for a final review of LASSIE in February 2008 and hope that what they have learnt can continue to be disseminated through presentations and ideally some hands-on training events for librarians.

### References

Secker, Jane (2007) Libraries, Social Software and distance learners: draft literature review, July 2007. Available at: [http://clt.lse.ac.uk/Projects/LASSIE\\_lit\\_review\\_draft.pdf](http://clt.lse.ac.uk/Projects/LASSIE_lit_review_draft.pdf)

## MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS: THE REFLECTIONS OF MAGGIE KOHIME, A VIRTUAL LIBRARIAN IN SECOND LIFE

Lyn Parker  
University of Sheffield

### Introduction

Second Life (SL) is a 3D virtual environment, established by Linden Lab or Linden Research Inc to give it its full title, in 2003<sup>1</sup>. It is not the only 3D virtual world being investigated by educators for its facility to support learning and teaching but it is probably the best known and most widely used. Indeed, according to Wikipedia<sup>2</sup> over 20 million accounts have been set up globally since its launch. Linden Lab gives the figure as "over 11,396,083 (and growing)". However only about 1.5m of these have been active in the last 6 months, it is not clear how many people have more than one avatar and the numbers logged in at any one time is nearer 40,000-50,000<sup>3</sup>. Registering for an account in SL is free, you can set up any number of accounts, represented by different avatars (an avatar is a computer user's representation of themselves), whose appearance can be altered as much as and as often as you like. However to own land costs real money, translated into Linden dollars, the currency of SL.

Maggie Kohime (Lyn Parker in Second Life) was born on 26th April 2007. When registering your avatar you have to pick from a list of available surnames but can choose any first name you like such as Dragonslayer, Intellagirl, or standard names such as Maggie, so long as it has not already been used. As the Development Librarian at the University of Sheffield it is my role to investigate new technologies and their potential to support library services. I also am involved with our VLE (WebCT) or MOLE (My Online Learning Environment) as it is known within the university portal. Amongst other project work, I develop and support online interactive tutorials through WebCT to embed information literacy (IL) in the curriculum and liaise with academics to provide suitable activities and assessment of IL so that we can fulfil our goal that a Sheffield graduate is information literate.<sup>4</sup> There was a

- 1 Linden Research Inc. (2007) What is Second Life? Available from: <http://secondlife.com/whats/> Accessed 14th December 2007.
- 2 Second Life entry in Wikipedia Available from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second\\_Life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Life) Accessed 14th December 2007.
- 3 Linden Research Inc. (2007) Second Life: Economic Statistics available from: [http://secondlife.com/whats/economy\\_stats.php](http://secondlife.com/whats/economy_stats.php) Accessed 14th December 2007.
- 4 University of Sheffield (2007) Shaping Our Learning Teaching & Assessment Future. Available from: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/04/83/65/TLSU%20report2.pdf> Accessed 14th December 2007.



growing interest at the University in the potential of Second Life, given the Gartner Report statement "80% of active internet users will have a 'second life' by 2011"<sup>5</sup>, although most people who had avatars were only dabbling in it initially. My progress initially was slow. I visited lots of places in SL including the Sistine Chapel, the Heart Murmur Sim and the Spaceflight Museum and searched under universities, campus and libraries to find out what other educational institutions were doing. Although I could see the potential of 3D environments in teaching design, whether fashion or architecture, health or business, I was still pondering where library services fitted into this 'brave new world' and whether it offered librarians the potential to do anything differently or just adapt resources and services we were already offering elsewhere. I also had concerns about how students would react to courses held in SL, what support they would need in terms of induction, technology and security.

### Issues

The range of challenges, issues and concerns which need to be considered before introducing SL to students is considerable. Second Life requires a fairly powerful PC with at least broadband access and a good graphics card<sup>6</sup>. It will not run on a wireless connection and is not yet available on the university's managed desktop for all students. I can use it at work on my university machine but as yet am struggling to install it on my home PC or use a university laptop with my home modem. The software is updated frequently and can take a while for revisions to settle down, often crashing the user out at inopportune moments. Given that the majority of use is by Americans, and therefore in the evening for me, I either have to stay at work to participate or catch up through chat logs. The learning curve to functioning proficiently in SL, walking around without falling over or bumping into things, flying and social niceties like waving or laughing, is relatively steep, although potentially easier for gamers and the net generation. All avatars have to go through Orientation Island and learn how to move around by walking, flying or teleporting, change their appearance, communicate and record their activities. However, course developers need to consider carefully what activities they build for their students so that they engage them and see the educational benefits of the environment rather than as another social networking area where they can hang out with their friends. Scalability may be an issue as only so many avatars can inhabit individual areas at any one time. From a security

5 Gartner (2007) Gartner Says 80 Percent of Active Internet Users Will Have A "Second Life" in the Virtual World by the End of 2011 Available from: <http://www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=503861> Accessed 14th December 2007

6 Second Life (2007) Systems requirements Available from: <http://secondlife.com/corporate/sysreqs.php> Accessed 18th December 2007

perspective, students need to be aware of potential risks, although Linden Labs banned gambling in July 2007, and, as with any social networking tool, they need to learn how to protect their identity and learn how to evaluate other people's authenticity and credentials. Communication can be by chat, instant messaging or Voice. Voice is a relatively new feature, requires additional equipment such as a headset with a microphone and a sound card for the PC or Mac, something that not all our university machines have as standard.

### Involvement with Department of Information Studies

Then in May 2007, I attended the Eduserv Foundation Symposium, Virtual Worlds, Real Learning? The Symposium was organised by Andy Powell from Eduserv and conducted both in Real Life and in Second Life. Although billed as any virtual world, it discussed mainly Second Life and its relevance and applicability to learning.<sup>7,8</sup> Various initiatives were described and explained the benefits and potential issues surrounding the use of Second Life were explored. I found the day fascinating but more importantly met up with Sheila Webber from the Department of Information Studies (DIS) at the University of Sheffield and discovered not only what other librarians were doing in Second Life but also what was happening within my own institution and Sheila's plans to investigate SL's potential for information literacy research. Various reports and papers on Second Life were also published over the summer, adding to my knowledge and interest.<sup>9,10,11</sup>

In July, Sheila applied to Eduserv for temporary office space on Eduserv Island in order to set up the Centre for Information Literacy Research. This was launched on 3rd August.<sup>12</sup> Sheila has been hosting a series of discussions in the Centre for Information Literacy Research within Second Life and I have been able to lead in-world seminars focusing on my questions:

7 Eduserv Foundation (2007) Eduserv Foundation Symposium Presentations. Available from: <http://www.eduserv.org.uk/foundation/symposium/2007/presentations/> Accessed 14th December 2007.

8 Walk, Paul (2007) Eduserv Foundation Symposium 2007: Virtual Worlds, Real Learning? Ariadne Issue 52 Available from: <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue52/eduserv-rpl/> Accessed 14th December 2007.

9 Feshcherin, M. & Lattemann, C. (2007) User acceptance of virtual worlds: an explorative study about Second Life. Available from: <http://www.fetscherin.com/UserAcceptanceVirtualWorlds.htm> Accessed 18th December 2007.

10 Grassian, e. & Trueman, R.B. (2007) Stumbling, bumbling, teleporting and flying ... librarian avatars in Second Life. Reference Services Review 35 (1), 84-89

11 Kirremuir, J. (2007) A July 2007 'snapshot' of UK Higher and Further Education Developments in Second Life. Available from: <http://www.eduserv.org.uk/upload/foundation/s/uksnapshot072007/final.pdf> Accessed 18th December 2007.

12 Adventures of Yoshikawa (2007) Launch! Available from: <http://adventuresofyoshikawa.blogspot.com/2007/08/launch.html> Accessed 18th December 2007.

- Appearance within Second Life; is it important and how does it affect how you behave? How should librarians therefore be presenting themselves in Second Life? Do we need to label ourselves and how do we ensure privacy and confidentiality as we start to develop an academic virtual world?
  - What role should librarians be taking in Second Life? What library services do we need in the virtual world? Do we need to replicate the Real World or do things differently and if so, what and how?
- Sheila keeps a blog of her adventures in Second Life<sup>13</sup> where she reports on various events and the discussions have also been logged and are available from <http://sleeds.org/chatlog?c=124>, <http://sleeds.org/chatlog?c=125> and <http://sleeds.org/chatlog?c=152>
- Holding and chairing virtual seminars is interesting in itself, when considering protocol and how much time to spend on introductions when conversing with avatars, keeping a track of what has been said if parallel discussions start up and summarising the main points. Definitely an art in itself!

### CILASS project

Sheila Webber then made a bid to CILASS, the Centre for Inquiry Based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sheffield, to buy a SL island (called Infolit iSchool) for a year, for IBL and information literacy activities. She is using it initially with level one BSc Information Management students. Although part of the net generation, none of the students had used a 3D virtual world before and certainly not Second Life (given that it is 18+ only). Various activities had been designed for them to complete and I and another librarian from St Andrews have been helping Sheila support them in world. As part of a class assignment they have undertaken critical incident interviews with each other in SL, with tutors acting as observers, and compared that with interviewing people in Real Life. They have set up interviews with SL residents about a time when the SL resident had an information need relating to a SL activity and asked them to compare SL behaviour with Real Life information behaviour models and research. Students have learnt how to log their discussion and then analyse the transcripts in relation to RL information behaviour models.

I see the CILASS project as an opportunity to explore Second Life more fully, particularly in its application to learning and teaching and to test different library models of support with 'real students'. I am interested in what assistance students need in using a virtual 3D world, around the technology itself and information literacy. The present search tools are not very sophisticated and there is a definite need to be able to evaluate sites, avatars and information.

<sup>13</sup> Adventures of Yoshikawa (2007) Available from: <http://adventuresofyoshikawa.blogspot.com/> Accessed 18th December 2007

Sheila considers SL as "a new learning and teaching space: more like a classroom than a website – but one where you (and the students) can redesign and rebuild the classroom overnight, and have tutorials sitting on the beach if you want."<sup>14</sup>

### Library services in Second Life

Librarians are already in Second Life in considerable numbers; providing reference services, offering tours, building libraries, linking to digital collections and web pages and sharing information. Are these activities different to our RL activities? What scope does the environment give us to enable us to do things differently? One of the advantages of Second Life is the opportunity to interact with people from around the world within a collaborative environment and explore these issues together. There are already over 40 libraries in Second Life, mainly in Cybrary City on Second Life's Info Island, a purpose built space for libraries to showcase their resources and develop the skills needed to provide library services within this 3D environment. Grouping of the libraries together rather than positioning them with their institution allows more networking and sharing of expertise to take place. University College Dublin was the first Irish library in Second Life and their Second Life branch is included on their web pages with details of their services: a "reader survey, query box service, e-mail service, access to web-based resources and blogs, presentations and some e-books"<sup>15</sup>.

We now have space on Infolit iSchool to create our own library. It already has a name, The Wilf Saunders Library, after the founding Director of the Department of Information Studies who died this year. But, what sort of library should we create? Should we replicate a branch library in the real world or create something different? The argument for replicating your RL buildings online is to offer users some familiarity with the environment. However, this can also lead to dissatisfaction as functionality is so different and systems do not operate in the same way. It certainly seems an opportunity to try out new things and I am now busy learning how to create tools and furniture, find where to buy in library goods and how to copy others' ideas, whilst acknowledging my sources obviously!

### Conclusion

I can only repeat that I have ended up with more questions than answers. Second Life has been compared to the Internet in the 1990s, a testing ground for new ideas and ways of networking. The communication aspect is really important and has enormous potential. There is a role for information literacy in helping users know how the search functions and where certain kinds of resources, whether goods, people or places, can be found; a new role for librarians or a trivial pursuit? This particular librarian is still investigating and exploring and open to the possibilities.

<sup>14</sup> Webber, S. (2007) Second Life: CILASS Newsletter Issue 1 (To be published Dec. 2007)

<sup>15</sup> University College, Dublin (2007) Branch Libraries Available from: [http://www.ucd.ie/library/about/branch\\_libraries/index.html](http://www.ucd.ie/library/about/branch_libraries/index.html) Accessed 14th December 2007.

## IS THE WEB 2.0 PRICE WORTH PAYING? LEARNING FROM ECONOMICS

*Paul Ayres*

*Research Officer, Intute: Social Sciences*

Is the concept of Web 2.0 relevant to a service like Intute? How can a quality-controlled service like Intute cope with the wild, wild web that everything 2.0 presents? And what can be learnt from subject communities about engaging with users, that can ensure information services are available and used where people actually want them? Let's find out.

### Is Web 2.0 a useful concept?

Three years on from the first appearance of the term Web 2.0, people still can't agree what it actually means. The technical fundamentals of the web have not changed, perhaps meaning that the web part of Web 2.0 is redundant. Wikis, blogs and social networking websites all existed long before they started to be called Web 2.0 sites. The key change that seems to have taken place is that people now expect to interact with information online. Instead of Web 2.0, perhaps we are in a world of Information 2.0, which could be defined as:

"where users expect to create, edit, mashup, annotate, comment on, aggregate and otherwise interact with information from one or more online sources"

This seems to be the lesson from writers such as Robin Murray [1], who try to draw the lessons of everything 2.0 into the library and information world. Murray uses the model of Synthesise, Specialise, Mobilise to reform how library services should be delivered to users. So for example, in a higher education context, this might mean:

- Synthesise - bring together the various information sources / services a library or information service provides access to via a cross-search tool like Metalib
- Specialise - use expertise to get the most out of them with keyword searches for topics that deliver results from all relevant sources
- Mobilise - get the end results out to users, in contexts where they will encounter them and find them useful, on a course website or in a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

In the 1.0 world, the user would have had to go to the library website, search each database in turn, perhaps search again for those references in the physical library and then bring this information into their work which was being done elsewhere.

The way people work has changed and Lorcan Dempsey [2] has written extensively on how the network is now the work environment. He has taken the Synthesise, Specialise, Mobilise model and shown how it needs to fit in with the flow of how people now work online.

In the 2.0 world, the user may not even be aware of the origin of their set of search results, but as they click through to the full text, annotate the results themselves and incorporate them directly into their work, possibly from their web browser - the information has to be where the users are or it won't get used.

### What does this mean for a service like Intute?

The Synthesise, Specialise, Mobilise model is an interesting one for a service like Intute. By evaluating, selecting and cataloguing the best of the web, Intute is trying to synthesise the key online sources for the academic community.

Specialisation comes from providing keywords and classifications that bring meaningful search results to the end user, whether they choose to browse or search our data. But mobilising our content in places that users will find it, is certainly the 2.0 challenge for Intute.

The last year has seen a massive increase in the number of ways in which users can access Intute data. From a simple link or search box on a web page, via technical options such as using cross-searching or even incorporating part or all of the catalogue into web services and applications, integrating Intute comes in many flavours.

However, that is not all. One of the ways in which Intute is encouraging users to interact with our data is via the MyIntute service. This performs the basic functions of any personalisation service, allowing users to sign up for email updates for the subjects they are interested in. But it also allows users to collect, bookmark and tag any set of Intute records or searches, bring in bookmarked sites from outside Intute and export this data into webpages, VLEs and elsewhere. In the near future, MyIntute users will also be able to comment on and rate individual resources as well.

This means that Intute data can be found in a wide variety of contexts and in places where people actually use it. However, many of these arenas are closed parts of the web, to a greater or lesser degree. They may be formally closed, such as behind a password protected institutional VLE or just technically closed, where someone has embedded some Intute search results in a web page they have hand crafted. The next part of the challenge is surfacing Intute data in truly open parts of the web, which means engaging with and contributing to third party websites.

## What can we learn from subject communities?

The Economics Network is a subject centre of the Higher Education Academy, and is perhaps a model of how to engage with third party websites to mobilise your existing resources and get the best out of other services as well. Of course, to the Economics Network, Intute is a third party website, which means that they use resources from the Intute: Economics section in their website, contribute their expertise to the Internet Economist online tutorial and collaborate on content projects, such as the Economics in Action blog or podcasts from the Royal Economic Society conference.

While the Economics Network is kind enough to describe Intute services as "outstandingly embeddable", they also do a good job of embedding their information and expertise in other sites. Martin Poulter [3] has described this as working in "the real Information Environment", where they make use of distributed websites to engage a number of online communities.

In practical terms this means enhancing existing Wikipedia articles, but also providing links back to your own resources, where relevant, so that the Economics Network site receives more visitors via Wikipedia, than from the Higher Education Academy. Surface content you have generated at conferences, by recording videos and making them available via YouTube or Google Video, so that they can be seen by a global audience and not just by those who could make it to a physical meeting. Rather than create a book catalogue yourself, take relevant records from Amazon and enhance them by mashing them up with full text previews available from Google Books.

This has led Intute: Social Sciences and the Economics Network, to think about new ways of presenting information, with slides from the recent Developments in Economics Education conference being made available via SlideShare [4]. However, just having a set of PowerPoint slides can leave the user without a context, so an audio file, synched with the slides was included to provide a more engaging experience. This reuses an existing piece of content, brings it to the attention of a wider audience and provides a learning object that has been embedded in other websites, as well as, downloaded for other presentations.

## What does this all mean?

If Web 2.0 is a meaningless marketing phrase, what are the real lessons of this changing paradigm of user interaction with information? Some of them can be quite shocking. If mobilising your content and services in other contexts is increasingly important, then your website will become less important. If your videos are on YouTube, your presentations on SlideShare, your expertise in Wikipedia - how do you assess the impact of your work? This will mean the

demise of the "website hit" as a measure of success and perhaps the rise of those who make a splash over many websites. Library and information professionals will need to take their traditional skills of synthesising information sources, providing specialist guidance to users and mobilise them in new contexts.

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## Links

Integrating Intute  
<http://www.intute.ac.uk/integration/>

How Libraries are Integrating Intute  
<http://del.icio.us/angejoyce/integration>

MyIntute  
<http://www.intute.ac.uk/myintute/>

Economics Network  
<http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/>

Economics Network: YouTube channel  
<http://www.youtube.com/economicsnetwork>

## BRINGING COPAC TO THE USER: SEARCH WIDGETS AND OUR EXPERIENCES WITH FACEBOOK

*Jennifer McNally & Shirley Cousins, Copac service*

### Copac in the Web 2.0 world

Copac is a nationally accessible catalogue, with details of materials in many major UK and Irish academic and specialist libraries, plus the UK National Libraries. Copac is primarily aimed at the academic community, but it provides a free service to researchers of all kinds.

For Copac, an important issue in moving into the Web 2.0 environment is supporting diverse ways of accessing and re-using the data. We want to make Copac records as widely available as possible, enhancing awareness of the wide range of materials accessible within our contributing libraries.

### Bringing Copac to the user

#### Variety of interfaces

In creating Copac we exploit a range of standards to make the records available outside the service. Many users access Copac via the Web interface, but increasing numbers are using the Z39.50 interface. We also have OpenURL and SRU interfaces. In general these are exploited by other services, for example to allow searching of Copac within the local library catalogue. However we are now moving to making Copac available more widely to the end-user through the provision of simple interface 'widgets'.

Widgets are independent pieces of code that can be incorporated into other applications. You can download search widgets from our Interfaces page to incorporate searching Copac into your own preferred working environment. So we now have Author, Title, and Keyword search widgets that you can incorporate into Firefox 2 and Internet Explorer 7 allowing you to search Copac from the search bar of your browser, just as you might use Google or Yahoo. We have also created a search widget for use in Facebook as a first venture into the world of social networking.

### Copac on Facebook

Facebook is a social networking site, founded in 2004, originally only available to college students but made accessible to anyone with a valid e-mail address in Sept 2006. It now has over 55 million active users and there have been on average 250,000 new registrations each day since January 2007. In May 2007 Facebook opened up their platform to allow any users to create their own

applications for use within the site. Since then over 7000 applications have been built, 100 new applications are added everyday and more than 80% of users have used at least one application built on the platform.

A number of American libraries have created applications for searching their OPACs, for example, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and Hennepin County Library. UIUC posted the code they had used to create the application that inspired us, along with a blog post from Brian Kelly, to try creating an application for searching Copac. Our feeling was that the application would be a good promotional tool rather than used for serious research from within Facebook. In particular it could reach users who might not hear about Copac through traditional channels such as information literacy sessions. However, we also wanted to include useful functionality for users who did want to use it to search. It seemed as though an application would be quick to build and so a low risk way to explore the potential of using Facebook to reach users.

We based the application on the code posted by UIUC and adapting it was fairly straightforward. The UIUC application was written in PHP so we continued using this. A number of languages can be used to create applications including PHP, Ruby and Java but most documentation relates to PHP. The majority of information is on the Facebook Developers Wiki rather than the official developer pages. A lot of information can also be found on the developer forums and Google is also very useful!

To create the visible box that will display on the profile you can choose to use iframes or FBML. FBML is "an evolved subset of HTML with some elements removed, and others which have been added that are specific to Facebook". We chose to use FBML as again there seemed to be more documentation for this and applications created using only iframes cannot be displayed on the profile, instead you have to visit a separate page to use them.

The main problem we've found is in updating the application once a user has added it. Facebook caches the FBML when it is added to a profile so that profiles load as quickly as possible. This means that if you make any changes to your code it will not automatically change in your users' profiles. Once the application was complete we didn't anticipate needing to update it but Facebook pushes new code each week that can change how the application displays and works. Only one of these changes has affected the Copac application but it did take some time to amend the code. In order to update the code automatically it is necessary to create a database and capture all of your user ids – you can then create a script to cycle through all of these user

ids and update the FBML on each profile. For the time being, the option we've chosen for Copac is to require users to visit the canvas page (which is reached by selecting the icon on the left of the profile), which then updates the FBML in the profile.

Facebook provides some statistics about the use of the applications – the total number of users who have added the application, the number of active users who've used the application in the last 24 hours, number of times the application has been added and removed. At the time of writing the application has 154 users and 5 active users and the number of users is going up, though recent search figures have gone down. Due to the Facebook privacy policy you cannot see who has added your application, the only information you can collect is the numerical user id. We've also been able to get some statistics from our web server for the number of searches carried out from the Facebook search widget, shown in table 1.

Table 1. Searches originating from the Facebook search widget

| Aug<br>85 | Sept<br>86 | Oct<br>77 | Nov<br>52 |
|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|

As the average number of searches each month on Copac is about 350,000 this is obviously a very small proportion of the searches but it is interesting to see that it is being used, bearing in mind that the intended purpose was as a marketing tool. The promotion of the application has been low key with only an announcement on the Copac blog although it can also be found through the application directory in Facebook. Applications spread virally within Facebook as on logging into Facebook users are presented with a 'News Feed' of activity from their friends, including any application that have been added. Therefore, once one person adds the application then everyone in their network of friends will be alerted to the existence of it. The search widget also displays on the users profile so whenever anyone visits the profile they will see the application.

### More search widgets

We are planning to develop further search widgets, for example for inclusion in personal Home pages such as Netvibes. However we are also interested in the new OpenSocial API, as it may enable us to create search widgets that are usable across a range of environments. This would mean we don't have to create a whole set of widgets, with potential maintenance issues, whilst the user will not be presented with long lists of options to choose from, with the possibility that we've not got anything that will work in their favourite environment.

### Search updates via RSS

If there is an area on which you find you are doing regular searches then you can get Copac to automatically supply you with updates via your RSS reader. When you've done a search on Copac you can use the RSS link on the Brief record display or the History screen to establish that search as an RSS feed. Your RSS news reader will check Copac periodically and every time the search results change the records will be sent to you automatically. For ongoing interests this pushes the information out to the searcher rather than requiring them to come to Copac. Use of the RSS search update is gradually increasing, again with very limited promotion.

### Keeping users informed

We've recently replaced the Copac news web page with our News blog to bring details of service developments to a wider audience. As well as making more attractive news pages the blog allows you to set up an RSS feed to keep in touch with service developments as they occur. This again has the benefit of pushing information out to service users rather than assuming they will see the news when they come to us. This has proved useful, with people picking up on blog entries and distributing the information more widely.

### Forthcoming

In the near future we hope to explore ways of integrating Copac with other related services such as Zetoc. We are also planning to exploit Web 2.0 technologies to support the processes of both finding and gaining access to materials through Copac.

An integral part of these developments is ensuring that we make Copac accessible wherever and whenever required as part of the searchers' own preferred working environment. Creating a range of search widgets is a 'low cost' mechanism for us to do this, bringing Copac to the user rather than always expecting them to come to us.

For more information you can contact us at the Copac helpdesk [copac@mimas.ac.uk](mailto:copac@mimas.ac.uk)

### Acknowledgement

Copac is a MIMAS service, funded by JISC. It gives access to records supplied by members of CURL, plus an increasing range of other academic and specialist libraries.



## References

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- iii Copac Interfaces page <http://copac.ac.uk/interfaces/> [accessed 5th Dec 2007]
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- xiv Copac News: Copac in Facebook, 21st August 2007 [http://copac.ac.uk/blog/2007/08/copac-in-facebook\\_21.html](http://copac.ac.uk/blog/2007/08/copac-in-facebook_21.html) [accessed 26 Nov 2007]
- xv Netvibes <http://www.netvibes.com/> [accessed 5th Dec 2007]
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- xvii The BBC has a good explanation of RSS feeds with links to a range of RSS readers <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/help/rss/3223484.stm> [accessed 5th Dec 2007]
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## OPEN LIBRARY 2.0 – UPDATING THE LIBRARY WEBSITE AT THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

*Susan Eales, Electronic Services Development Manager, and Mariano Rico, Open Library 2.0 Project Manager, the Library and Learning Resources Centre, The Open University, Milton Keynes.*

### Introduction

The Open University Library has been providing a service for students for a few years. Before this time it was considered that course packs contained all the information that time-poor students were likely to need and any additional requirements could be met by visits to local public libraries or nearby academic libraries.

Advances in ubiquitous network technology, the rapid increase of online resources and changes in course content and structure to include more project-based study, have all led to an increase in use of and expectations from the Open Library, the OU Library's website and digital library service.

### The Challenge

In 2004 and 2005, evaluation studies of Open Library were carried out. The conclusions from these studies were consistent and clear. They highlighted and stressed the need for a task-oriented and jargon-free site, easier navigation and access to academic journals and databases, personalisation features and a database-driven site that could provide information more dynamically. Focus groups and a survey were also carried out during this time. These brought to light the problems faced by library users, especially OU students, due to the complexity of the site which had grown organically since its inception to around 4000 pages.

### The Opportunity

In 2006, two large, university-wide projects began at the OU – the implementation of an open source virtual learning environment (VLE), and a new enterprise content management system (ECM). Both these projects provided the opportunity of embedding Library services within these new environments. However, in order to achieve this, further technical developments to the website were required as well as investigation into the provision of Web and Web-based services.

Furthermore, a literature review and benchmarking exercise led to the conclusion that the development of VWeb 2.0 services would allow the OU Library to mobilise and incorporate its services to customers who are



increasingly operating in web based digital environments such as MySpace, Delicious, Google personalised and YouTube.

The project was begun in 2006 and, because of its ambition to implement new Web and Web-based services, it was called Open Library 2.0.

### The Solution

For the underpinning technology, it was decided to customise an existing database driven system that had been developed within another OU department rather than develop a new system. Although some staff development for the Library technical staff was needed, this proved to be quite a simple task and allowed more attention to be paid to the development of the web pages and creation of new features for the site. A development server was installed in the Library so that the OU's central computing services team did not have to support this activity.

As well as creating new dynamic pages that would take full advantage of the database-driven technology, everyone agreed that the static content for the pages should be completely rewritten. At this point, it was decided that Library staff should be given full rein to author the content themselves in a wiki-type fashion that would help to encourage ownership of the new site and, of course, wikis are also considered to be Web 2.0 tools. This proved to be the most time consuming aspect of the project as all found it quite a challenge to learn to write succinctly and in a style that is expected on the Web. Guidelines were produced, and training sessions provided. A great deal of one to one support was also provided to ensure that the amount of text was kept to a minimum. This activity also provided the opportunity to rethink existing processes and procedures and how our services are presented which required a great deal of discussion. In the end, 40 members of Library staff have been involved in writing content for the new site, and the number of pages has been reduced by around 90%.

The main contributor to the reduction in number of pages in the new site was the implementation of a new service allowing customers to browse online resources by subject. This service dynamically brings together resources held in the Library catalogue, SFX and the OU Library's database of recommended websites and displays results on one page, thereby reducing duplication. Resources are given subject headings from a selection of 300 which have been agreed by the subject librarians and mapped to the Joint Access Coding System (JACS) national standard.

We felt it very important to get the design of the homepage right. Working with the OU Communications and Branding team, we chose a bright orange

colour that was untypical of Library websites and would hopefully stimulate and excite customers. We looked at and tried to copy the style and layout of commercial shopping websites rather than other library sites, in order to ensure that the site was task-oriented and jargon free, which was the main requirement of our customers. We have increased the number of images, and commissioned a range of new photographs to give the site a fresh appeal. We have also introduced RSS feeds, including our news items on the homepage.

In order to provide a taster of what is to come and to give some of our more technically able customers some services to explore, we have introduced a "Library 2.0 toolbox" section of the website. We aim to add to this section of the site some home grown and external Web 2.0 tools and technologies and obtain feedback on which are most useful and should be developed into OU Library services in the future.

In collaboration with the University of Athabasca, Canada, we have developed a prototype version of the Library website for mobile devices.

### Stumbling Blocks

As with all large, ambitious projects, there have been some stumbling blocks. Half way into the project, there was concern across the university about the amount of technical resource available for the VLE and ECM projects, which were top priority. This resulted in a new business case for Open Library 2.0 being requested in order for the project to be allowed to continue. Because of this and the additional time required to rewrite the static content and implement SFX, the project was delayed by 3 months and many of the new features, including Web services, were postponed to a later phase 2 project.

Unfortunately, our Library catalogue, Voyager, does not allow us to provide some of the Web 2.0 type features that we had hoped to offer; for example, comments, reviews and tagging, and we are currently embarking on writing a 5-year systems strategy which includes a review of our Library Management System.

In addition, our aspirations for personalisation of the site have been restricted by the limitations of the OU's single access management system. However, we are working with the computing services department to provide more granular options for personalisation in the future.

Another stumbling block which turned into an opportunity was the take over of Endeavour by Ex Libris which meant that we had to migrate from our existing openURL resolver, Linkfinder Plus, to SFX. The decision was made to incorporate this implementation into the Open Library 2.0 project. Whilst this put added pressure on the project team and other members of Library staff, it

meant that we could launch the new website with an award-winning ejournals management system and openURL resolver.

Despite these issues, we feel that the project so far has been a success, many Library staff have been involved and we have a new Library website of which they feel extremely proud.

### Statistics and Feedback

The new site was launched in October 2007. Since this date, we have seen our usage rise significantly. We now consistently have 2,700 unique visitors per day and have seen directional queries to our helpdesk reduce by a substantial number. Feedback has shown that people seem to either love or hate the homepage colour, which means that it is provocative, which we see as a good thing.

### Keeping Up the Good Work

Of course, the creation of a website is not a one-off piece of work. The success of our new site depends on keeping it up to date and not slipping back into old ways of writing and allowing the number of pages to creep up again. In order to manage the maintenance of the site, an Editorial Group has been set up, made up of representatives from across the OU Library. Procedures and processes have been put into place for regular monitoring and updating of the site as well as for changing the structure and adding new pages. By doing this, we hope to continue with the wiki-style approach to writing, editing and updating content.

### The Future

For phase 2 of Open Library 2.0, beginning in December 2007, we have set up a number of sub-projects that will result in new features and enhancements to the website. Through these sub-projects, we aim to introduce some multimedia content, some customisation features and new services for researchers, more Library services for mobile devices and new Web and Web-based services that are made available in other OU web spaces as well as external web spaces. Furthermore, we will be implementing a new federated search system early in 2008, using 360 Search from Proquest Serials Solutions.

## SHUSH! THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON'S LIBRARY BLOG

*Joanne Wade, Academic Librarian,  
The University of Northampton*

### Introduction

SHUSH! is the Information Services Library Blog at the University of Northampton (<http://library.northampton.ac.uk/blog/>). Whilst the title is deliberately tongue-in-cheek, the content of the blog fills an educational role by providing a platform for information professionals at the University to share their knowledge and skills. This article describes how SHUSH was implemented at the library, how it is being used by librarians with particular focus on the 'current assignments' feature and some of the issues that have been encountered to date.

### The development of the blog

Library staff at the University of Northampton were keen to exploit the new wave of Web 2.0 technologies that were quickly becoming available a couple of years ago. With the availability of free software (we used WordPress) and someone keen and capable to develop a blog in the library, this seemed to be a simple and logical starting point.

As soon as it was launched in 2006, librarians were encouraged to populate SHUSH with absolutely anything that could be construed as information worth knowing about. With such a broad remit, there has rarely been a time when such information has dried up, although the blog itself has been neglected at times as other work has taken priority. For ease of navigation, each blog entry is assigned a category and these headings have been kept to a minimum. The categories currently available are: current assignments, web discoveries, library updated, news and views, out and about, subject support, tools and tricks and general.

### How librarians use the blog

In a surprisingly short space of time, staff found their comfort zones in terms of writing content for SHUSH. While some people prefer writing lengthy opinion pieces, others opt for practical search tips that consist of no more than a few sentences. SHUSH even seems to have brought out the creative and imaginative side in some librarians: 'Who actually opens their junk mail', 'Librarians mugged', 'Calling all shoe fetishists', 'Smoke and letters' and 'A kick in the credibles' are just some of the attention-grabbing headlines that have made an appearance.

### Support for assignments

For many years the library has provided support for assignments through the Virtual Librarian web tool (<http://library.northampton.ac.uk/help/index.php?view=vl>). Virtual Librarian offers students a remote way of contacting staff in the library and accessing a set of interactive assignment guides. Although enquiries will only be responded to during regular opening times, queries may be posted at the point of need and the guides may be accessed anytime, without the need for a login.

It was decided to integrate Virtual Librarian with the blog to make adding entries more intuitive than the old system, which was not being fully utilised as a resource. Any entries now added to the blog under 'current assignments' automatically appear in Virtual Librarian as well.

### Benefits of the 'current assignments' feature

The current assignments feature serves a number of purposes. One of the key benefits for the library is that Academic Librarians can be seen to be proactive in terms of the support they provide for students.

Many of the online guides have been prepared from an assignment brief and, wherever possible, these are obtained from tutors in advance if the need for library support is anticipated. In the days before the blog, Virtual Librarian was promoted to academics within Boards of Studies and, as a consequence, there are a few tutors who place regular requests for guides that will help their students with forthcoming assessments or examinations. If the tutor does not provide the details, the assignment brief can usually be obtained from the university's VLE. A copy of the assignment may even be directly taken from a student at the enquiry desk if the librarian perceives it to be a good idea to extend support to other students.

The current assignments feature is especially helpful at times when there are high volumes of enquiries from students undertaking the same assignment. The availability of an interactive guide to show to students can alleviate pressure at the enquiry desk, especially if the librarian on duty does not specialise in the subject. Even if the librarian does have expertise in the subject, it saves a good deal of repetition. A recent example of this is when students used the enquiry desk to find out about the various library systems available, during welcome week at the start of the autumn term. It transpired that a large cohort of students undertaking an Information Sciences module were set a task requiring them, as users of the library, to familiarise themselves with the systems. The object of the task was for students to actually experience using the systems, although they seem to have misunderstood what was being asked of them.

Using input from the library's Systems Manager it was possible to put together a guide to the various systems that would give the students a starting point rather than an answer. The guide encouraged the students to test out the different systems, including the self-service machines and the library catalogue.

The online assignment guides can also be a suitable accompaniment to information skills workshops or lectures. It is often more sensible to direct students to the blog or Virtual Librarian in the session rather than giving out endless handouts. Students may access these handouts after the session. The can be beneficial to those who missed the workshop for whatever reason. The guides can be adapted for almost any purpose, contain as much or as little information as is required and provide hyperlinks to relevant online resources.

### Issues to date

One of the main issues with the blog is in keeping the content interesting and up to date. Whilst it is important to maintain the currency of any information service, one of the problems we have found is that unless information is being continually added, a 'current assignments' entry often ends up at the top of the page. Although the assignment guides are useful, there are only relevant to a particular group of students. The system does not allow you to pick and choose which items are listed first and new posts are automatically dropped at the top of the page. Therefore, it is necessary to keep adding new content to refresh the blog as often as possible.

It is important that librarians do not simply reiterate what is in the news or on the BBC Website. The starting point for any blog entry may well be a news article or something heard on the radio, but putting it all together in a package that makes it relevant and accessible to individuals in higher education requires deeper consideration.

Feedback about the information resources and services is another important area for librarians. Although only Information Services staff can add content to SHUSH, there is a facility for readers to add comments to individual entries. To date there have been 116 posts and 97 comments contained within 8 of the categories. Some of the posts have received one-off comments while others have evidently sparked discussion amongst their readers. Aside from the specific comments from users, feedback from information professionals at other institutions has been positive, which is encouraging for librarians who have contributed to the blog. As far as blogs go, SHUSH is beginning to be recognised as an invaluable tool for sharing knowledge and skills. It therefore comes as no surprise that one of its main user groups are, in fact, librarians.

## REF IT, BLOG IT! USING BLOGS TO SUPPORT REFERENCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

*Hannah Perkins Coventry University  
Simon Speight University of Warwick*

It seems that every professional journal is filled with discussion of Web 2.0. Whilst some of the available technologies may prove useful for library users, they can require a great deal of time and energy to get them established. To compound the problem, it can be difficult to find concrete evidence of their value to students. With this in mind, Coventry and Warwick universities decided to trial one aspect of the technology - blogs - as a means of offering user support for referencing software. This seemed an obvious starting point, as blogging was already established and popular with students. This article will examine the background to this approach and some of the issues which need to be considered.

### Background to the blogs

The use of a blog to assist users of the RefWorks software at Warwick University was introduced in late 2005,<sup>1</sup> with an EndNote blog following in 2007.<sup>2</sup> Coventry began its own EndNote blog in 2006.<sup>3</sup>

Although Coventry and Warwick took a very similar approach, the mechanics of setting up the blogs were quite different. Warwick already had an in-house blog system, which was popular with students for personal blogging and was also used by some tutors as part of their courses. This made setting up the blog a relatively easy process, with many of the most useful blog features (tagging, search facility, ability to upload files etc.) already in place.

Coventry, on the other hand, was faced with the problem of identifying a suitable third party host. It was important to choose a host which was free, allowed the author to retain overall control of the blog and its contents, and also permitted a reasonable degree of customisation. Equally, it was necessary to consider the nature of other blogs on the site. It would not do a great deal to enhance Coventry's reputation, if the other blogs all dealt with "trivial", or even offensive, matters. Discussions were held with colleagues to identify a suitable platform and the blog was registered.

1 <http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/refworks>

2 <http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/endnoteweb>

3 <http://covennoteblog.blogspot.com>

### Blog basics

The scope of the blogs was defined in a fairly narrow sense. Whilst more traditional support, in the form of Frequently Asked Questions, workbooks and tutorials was already available, the blogs offered the opportunity to provide an alternative means of support, particularly for off-campus users. They were created as a forum for news updates and technical hints and tips - things which would not necessarily appear in FAQs. Over time, the entries have effectively become the equivalent of a technical knowledge base, which users can consult when they encounter specific issues or problems, or which colleagues can use to answer questions from their own students.

### Blogs, blogs, glorious blogs!

Once set up, it was important that people were made aware of the blogs. Although, as mentioned, the blogs serve an important function as a knowledge base, they are also a valuable promotional tool to attract new users. The blogs were mentioned in relevant training materials and face-to-face sessions. Links were also created on the Library webpages. For the original RefWorks blog, an email was sent out to all registered RefWorks users, giving them the URL. Unfortunately, this level of personalisation is not possible in EndNote.

A lesson learned early on was the importance of adding new content to the blogs on a regular basis. To encourage repeat visits at least one new post was added each week. After a while, this becomes second nature, but it is important to remember that a blog should be a living thing and not be allowed to stagnate.

Since part of the rationale behind the setting up of the blogs was to assess the technology as a support tool, it was critical to be able to extract usage data. Where blogs are used as an interactive forum, user comments on entries can often provide a means of measuring the suitability of the medium. However, given that these blogs were intended to impart information, rather than prompt discussion, this was unlikely to provide an effective feedback mechanism. The blogs were registered with Google Analytics which is able to provide reasonably detailed usage statistics, including visitor numbers and trends.

As expected, initial usage figures were low, with a small core of regular viewers, many of whom were Library staff looking for answers to questions from students. However, as the promotional activities continued, the number of hits began to grow to a reasonable level, making it clear that the blogs were providing a useful support service.

An interesting, and unanticipated knock-on effect was the amount of attention the blogs attracted from outside Coventry and Warwick. Data from Google

Analytics suggested that students from other higher education institutions worldwide had discovered the blogs and were using them to support their own use of the software. Regular hits began to come in from Australia, the USA, Eastern Europe and Asia. As such, the blogs were not only providing a useful service, but also acting as a marketing and promotional tool for the two university libraries. Warwick's original RefWorks blog was even referenced in that student favourite – Wikipedia!<sup>4</sup>

The use of blogs to support students is clearly of interest to many in the library profession. The blogs were referenced in the *Ingenta Connect* newsletter, *EyetoEye*.<sup>5</sup> Coventry were also approached by *Adept Scientific* (the UK distributors of *EndNote*) for an article in their newsletter.<sup>6</sup> From small beginnings, the blogs began to take on a life of their own.

### Was it all worth it?

Occasionally, viewing the Google Analytics figures can be a little dispiriting. Often it can look as if everyone in the world values your blog, except your target audience. In reality, however, anecdotal evidence suggests that at least some of those readers are genuine students of the institutions, registered as distance learners. As such, the blogs offer them an invaluable level of assistance, which it might otherwise be difficult for them to obtain.

Although experiences at both Coventry and Warwick have been mostly positive, it is clear that blogs would not be appropriate in every situation. Below are some things you might want to consider when deciding whether a blog is right for you and your students.

### Six good things about blogs

- Once an entry is created, similar enquiries can be dealt with simply by emailing students the precise URL containing the answer – a big time saver – or students can find the answer for themselves.
- Proper use of tags provides students with an easy way of finding potentially useful entries.
- It's easy to add content to your blog. Many things that you initially think of you will dismiss as "too trivial". Post them anyway – the chances are they will be useful to someone, somewhere!
- Low maintenance. Even if your blog is only of interest to a minority of users, the setup and maintenance costs are relatively low (taking on average less than 30 minutes of your time each week).

4 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RefWorks>

5 <http://eyetoeye.ingenta.com/library/issue22/insight-blogs.htm>

6 <ftp://ftp.adeptsience.co.uk/pub/EndNote/ENblog.pdf>

- It can act as a useful reminder for you – it's easy to forget things if you've not been asked the question for a while. Searching through blog entries is far easier than searching your email archive
- Concerns that the blog entries might just duplicate FAQs proved unfounded. It quickly became clear that they were complementary, allowing posts which contained useful information, but which were perhaps too detailed for an FAQ.

### Three not so good things about blogs

- Initial use of the blog can be dispiritingly low.
- It's not always a good use of a supposedly interactive medium. The Coventry and Warwick blogs mainly give information and attract few comments.
- It can be difficult to decide how to pitch your blog. They are meant to be chatty and informal, but this may not always be appropriate in an academic setting.

### Conclusion

Overall, the blogs for both Coventry and Warwick have proved surprisingly worthwhile. From small beginnings, they have gradually expanded and now regularly attract a respectable number of viewers. Some have even set up RSS feeds to be notified when a new entry is posted.

This is a very specialised use of blogs, which is clearly fulfilling a need. However, we remain unconvinced that their wholesale use within the information profession is desirable. Users seem to value blogs targeted towards specific resources, rather than more general library blogs. For example, the Business and Economics Team at Warwick have also experimented with the use of a blog to pass on information to their students,<sup>7</sup> and usage of this is noticeably lower than the *EndNote* blog. Our experience suggests that students are less likely to use a blog which is more general in tone; the chances are (initially at least), they will come looking for an answer to a specific question.

In general terms, though, given how easy blogs are to set up and the relatively low cost implications, our advice would be to give it a go. If it doesn't work, you've lost nothing. If it does, the benefits to your students and your institutions will far outweigh the costs.

7 <http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/busteamenquiries/>





Before we went live we seeded Your Archives with over 500 articles to indicate the type of information that would be suitable. Most of this information came from the reading room memoranda, but others included several Research Guides, transcriptions of documents, and enhanced catalogue descriptions. We also created a series of categories to help users browse articles. These were initially based on the categories used in TNAs Global Search function but because this is a user-generated site it was not long before contributors created their own.

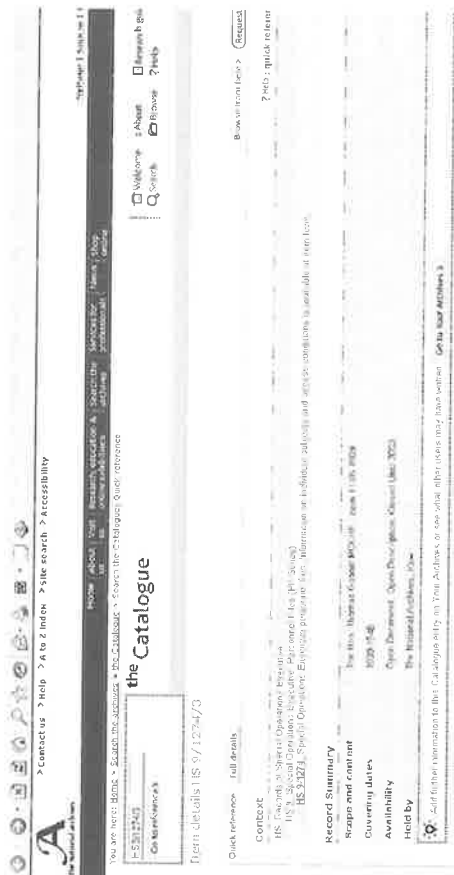
### What can you do on Your Archives?

There is a simple search box where you can search the content of articles, or you can also browse articles by category, for example for Probate transcripts or the First World War (both of these have been created by users). If there isn't an article you can create one after first registering; you can also amend existing articles to correct historical or typographical errors, or to expand the descriptions. This aspect challenges traditional forms of authorship in that anyone can create or alter content. Some people find this uncomfortable in that their 'work' can be changed, but there is an audit function under the 'History' tab where you can see all edits. Unlike encyclopaedias or printed articles a wiki article does not need to be complete and some staff and researchers have been using Your Archives as a workbook to add brief information as they work through documents or while compiling information on people or events.

There are now over 2000 articles, of which about 700 were uploaded from existing staff resources such as the memoranda. These articles include transcriptions of wills, translations of Latin inquisitions post mortem, short biographies of people and ships, expanded document descriptions, information on organisations, and information on archive projects. The emphasis is to build upon TNAs archival databases but as long as the article has a bearing on British history and contains, or is likely to contain, archival sources we accept it. It is not a discussion forum although there are articles (under 'Talk' pages) where contributors discuss or ask for further information about documents, people and events. Unless it is obvious that only TNA can answer the question, for example questions on policy, we leave it up to the users to help each other.

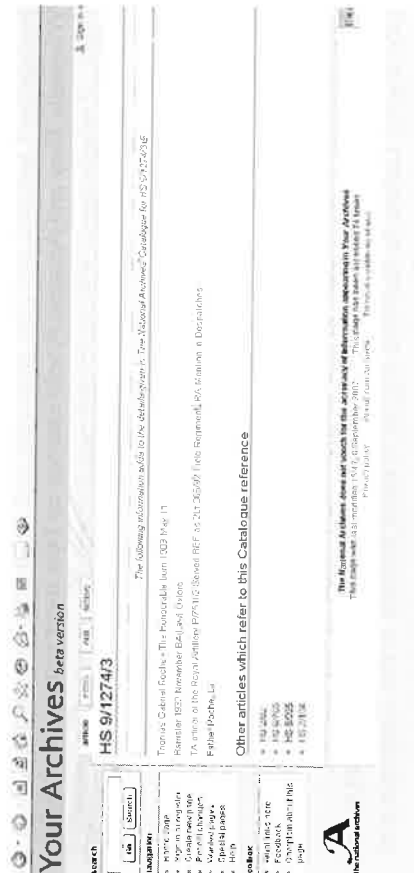
### Challenges

We were particularly concerned about spam and how people may use Your Archives for advertising or other inappropriate use. To manage spam all contributors have to register and part of the registration process involves filling in a 'captcha' box – a randomly generated image which can't be read by computers or software.



[Screenshot of the Catalogue for HS 9/1274/3 showing the link to Your Archives.]

We have given the Catalogue prominence and have developed functionality and templates so that references to TNA documents in articles are recognised and link to an auto-generated 'Catalogue-link' page. This 'Catalogue-link' page has a reciprocal link back to the Catalogue so that researchers can see the Catalogue details to order the document to see onsite or to request copies. On these pages we also made visible the MediaWiki toolbox 'What links here' function showing other articles which also refer to that document reference.



[Screenshot of HS 9/1274/3, which contains additional information to the Catalogue description for this document together with links to other articles which cross-refer to this document.]



We decided against pre-moderating as we felt this would deter people from contributing and make an assumption that we had validated the content. Instead, we post-moderate articles to ensure that they do not breach the terms and conditions, for example containing personal information or material in copyright, and that they are relevant. We check links to websites and language to ensure that it is appropriate. In the case of language the content must be in English, unless it is a transcription of a document. We recognise that many historical terms are now considered offensive and derogatory but we will keep those if they are in context, and we have created a template to bring this to the attention of users. We will delete inappropriate material. We occasionally correct titles, for example to standardise the names of Royal Navy ships or to create links to the National Register of Archives. We do not correct formatting unless it has gone completely awry for example improving tables, and we do not correct content as we may not have the expertise to do this.

So far we have got the balance right, but if necessary there is the facility to delete users, block IP addresses, and protect articles from further edits. The user-base is still quite small – there are over 4000 registered people but only a couple of dozen regularly contribute. Researchers are gradually becoming aware of Your Archives but we need to improve our communications, we also need to increase the number of articles and are currently planning projects we can work with communities to develop further. Lastly we need to do housekeeping because the articles have come from a wide variety of sources there is quite a lot of duplication, some articles are extremely long and many do not contain any referencing and we are developing series of templates which are used to highlight articles to be merged, split, or referenced, etc.

Your Archives is still new but already there is a nucleus of material which shows the value of this exciting resource that enables anyone to share their knowledge of Britain's rich archival heritage and reuse historical information in a way that has not previously been possible.

## E-LEARNING: AN IMMIGRATION CRISIS?

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At 3 1/2 Jamie hasn't quite got the hang of a mouse yet, his double clicking technique needs a bit more honing, but he's definitely interested in the family computer, and has even (with quite a bit of help from Mum), had a look at his house using Google Earth. Like most under 5's, using a computer and the internet is a normal part of play and the learning process. A casual glance at the CBeebies message board also shows that the UK is brimming with parents swapping stories and advice on how their children are getting to grips with the online world around them.

Ofsted inspections of nursery schools regularly mention ICT provision and use, from which it could be concluded that for many children in the UK, their first use of computers occurs at around 3-5 years of age. A quick straw poll of my office tells me that our age of first use of a computer varies wildly between under 10 and over 20, and that our first introduction took place within a school or university environment, often playing games or experimenting with code. All this however, is set to change. The home computer was once a rarity in the UK, but if its current popularity continues it will become as ubiquitous and indispensable as the washing machine within a very short space of time. In 2007 for example, around 15 million UK homes were equipped with a computer, a rapid rise from 2006 of 1 million (National Statistics, 2007).

Computers have been a part of primary and secondary school furniture for more than 20 years now, and access to computers in schools has steadily improved. The number of pupils per computer in primary schools for example, has halved since 2000 (Becta, 2007). The use of virtual learning environments (VLE) is also becoming widespread, particularly since the publication of the Government's Harnessing Technology strategy document in 2005 (Becta, 2007). A glance at the popular website Teachers.TV, reveals a plethora of advice on selecting, purchasing and using your VLE, in fact there are even more programmes available on this website about ICT than there are on behavioural issues (Teachers.TV, 2007).

With primary and secondary schools making greater use of 'e' and blended learning, how might the expectations of incoming University students change

over the coming years? Can digital immigrants create good e-learning experiences for the digital natives applying to University? (Prensky, 2001) And how can we make sure that those experiences are pedagogically sound and sufficiently engaging? Gilly Salmon is Professor of E-learning & Learning Technologies at the University of Leicester, and an advocate of simple, low-cost e-learning (or 'e-tivities').

"Combining new ideas about computer mediated technologies and well-loved theories of learning and teaching results in fantastic possibilities but they need a little human time and energy to get them to work. High quality interaction, full participation and reflection do not happen simply by providing the technology." (Salmon, 2004)

Having access to technology is clearly not enough to make effective e-learning happen, and although universities are technologically rich, it is also true that more creative use could be made of that technology by those engaged in designing and delivering learning and teaching activities. It would be a rare university that could not find examples of cynicism, mistrust and dislike of e-learning amongst teaching staff, and whilst this is often only visible in a minority of dissenters, it makes the job of keeping up with the expectations of incoming students all the more difficult.

The barriers to teaching staff creating their own e-learning are many and varied, time and a lack of skills being two of the most commonly cited (and valid) reasons. One tried and tested method of spreading good practice in this area is through supporting e-learning champions; make their materials visible and reusable and thus give a strong institutional lead on moving learning and teaching beyond the lecture theatre. The rewards for such innovation can be rich, and one only has to look at the list of National Teaching Fellowship projects to see examples of teaching staff actively shaping the future of learning and teaching through technology. (HEA, 2007)

Even more inspiration can be found by taking a peek at the Futurelab website, a cauldron of amazing ideas and originality whose aim is to "...develop innovative resources and practices that support new approaches to learning for the 21st century." (Futurelab, 2007) Current Futurelab projects include: Newton, a mobile gaming initiative helping children learn about Physics using a mobile phone anytime, anywhere, and Fizzies, a clever project which exploits the popularity of virtual pets to engage 10 and 11 year olds in learning more about healthy eating and regular exercise.

Although the innovations of our National Teaching Fellows and organisations like Futurelab are far from revolutionising the e-learning experience of all our

current undergraduates, with firm institutional strategic vision and planning, and a lot of resource sharing and enthusiasm, perhaps Jamie will find that his first forays into learning online at university are just as exciting as his first experience of Google Earth 14 ½ years earlier.

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