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Collaborative CoVE Projects for Digital Design Teaching and Learning

The Batley School of Art & Design CoVE in Digital Design is a catalyst for collaboration between local schools, colleges and the creative industries. The digital CoVE bridges a regional skills gap in learning and teaching digital imaging technology. The paper discusses two aspects of current FE learning and teaching development. Firstly, the way in which the CoVE digital resource has impacted on the level 2 and 3 student learning experience within the college. Secondly, a case study outlines the fashion and digital textiles design collaboration between London College of Fashion, Chesterfield College and Batley School of Art & Design CoVE's. The case study provides details of the CoVE project setup and illustrates student and academic experiences during the project.

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1. CoVE: what is it and what does it do?

1.1 What is a Centre of Vocational Excellence?

The 'Centre of Vocational Excellence' (CoVE) initiative was announced by the Secretary of State in November 2000 to enhance and develop excellent vocational provision focused on meeting the skills needs of employers locally, regionally and nationally. In December 2001, colleges were invited to submit proposals for the devlelopment of CoVE's which demonstrated existing good practice, addressed regional skills gaps,and included proposals for the involvement of schools,colleges and employers. The bid from Batley School of Art & Design, Dewsbury College,was one of three approved across West Yorkshire in the first round, and the only art and design related bid to be successful.

1.1.2 The Batley School of Art & Design CoVE

The Batley School of Art & Design CoVE in Digital Design provides a new state of the art digital resource which builds on our extensive experience of digital imaging technology and encourages its integration into a wide range of art and design disciplines. Establishing a digital design unit within the School of Art & Design, that is non-course specific has provided a valuable and well used resource availble to all level 2 and level 3 learners within the school. The digital CoVE also provides a focus for formal teaching of digital design and also offers a drop-in facility with technical support to all levels of learner.

The under-pinning ethos within the CoVE enables students to explore the overlaps between the different formats and technologies within digital imaging to produce exciting and innovative solutions. Encouraging open acess to digital/DV camera equipment, software tools and printing, puts high end digital technology in the hands of the students at a much earlier stage than was previously possible. As a result of the CoVE in the school, the diversity of creative work produced within level 2 and 3 can now be taken much further within digital imaging; high resoultion scanning, 2D /3D manipulation and animation, or artwork can simply be recorded and printed to a professional standard for presentation in portfolios and exhibitions.

Through the CoVE and the School's Northern Centre for Digital Imaging, a range of short courses specifically designed to meet industry needs for the digital design sector has also been developed. These courses include training programmes in a range of software packages and bespoke introduction packages to digital imaging and photography. Epson Uk, are major sponsors of the digital design CoVE and provide significant expertise, and technical support through our collaborative research and development relationship.

2. CoVE colleges collaborative project

2.1 Initiative for the Project

The LSDA CoVE Specialist Development group has provided the forum for an exchange of ideas from which this collaborative initiative has evolved. The fact that respective CoVE colleges,(digital design at Batley School of Art & Design, design practice at Chesterfield College, Fashion design at London College of Fashion) all provide FE fashion and textiles courses, created a unique opportunity to focus a shared learning and teaching project around fashion and digital design specialisms within each college.

2.1.1 Aims of the project

• to increase awareness of digital technology in fashion and clothing design education

• to develop shared learning experiences in fashion and digital textiles design

• to encourarage wider participation in learning and teaching through CoVE's

• to create more opportunities in FE using high quality CAD/CAM CoVE facilities

2.2 Visits to the CoVE colleges

Initially, staff from the CoVE and FE Fashion/Clothing courses visited each of the other colleges. These visits were extremely positive, as in small groups staff were able to observe student work, discuss teaching and learning methods and share ideas on the development of the fashion project.

2.2.1 Planning and Digital Workshop at Batley School of Art & Design CoVE

Participants from the CoVE's and ND Fashion courses at London College of Fashion, Chesterfield College and Batley School of Art & Design will meet at the BSA&D to finalise a schedule for the project, this also creates further opportunities to share learning and teaching skills within the group. The suggested programme for the planning day is as follows:

•Introduction to Batley School of Art & Design CoVE- Peter Lowe (BSA&D)

•Introduction to Blackboard e-learning tool - Paul Turner (LCF)

•Introduction to London Institute Virtual Gallery -Julia Gaimster (LCF)

•3D cloth animation and virtual catwalk developments-Andrew Taylor (BSA&D) Nathan Smith (Ch)

•Development of shared ND project brief - ND FC teams

2.3 Shared shirt design project proposal

The project brief is for Year 2 National Diploma fashion students from each college to develop designs for mens or womens shirts with printed detail in an individual college led curriculum project. The project will happen in several stages:

2.3.1 Project briefing Days at London College of Fashion

A two day visit to LCF by students from BSA&D and Chesterfield Colleges will include:

• Dissemination of the shirt design project brief to all groups
• Visit to SMR - Simulated Manufacturing Resource at London Institute Curtain Rd site
• Student fashion party
•Opportunities to visit exhibitions/galleries/shops

2.3.2 Collaboration through the e-learning software tool - Blackboard

A successful collaborative project at LCF[1] had used the Blackboard Community Portal System. After viewing this site the project team decided that a virtual medium would be a logical extension of the teaching and learning environment, to enable Student/staff interaction and feedback during the fashion project. The Blackboard Community Portal System features a highly customizable community portal environment that unifies academics, commerce, communities, and administrative services online through one integrated interface.[2] The students final designs will be displayed within a designated Blackboard community and also on the the London Institute Virtual Gallery.[3]

2.2.3 Application of CoVE facilities

During the project CoVEs in each college will support student production of shirts at all stages (real and virtual). Students will have access to the following CoVE funded digital resources at all three colleges:

•CADAssyst, 2D digitiser, 3D Microscribe digitiser, 2D and 3D graphics software.

•Digital textile printing of all shirt fabrics at Batley School of Art & Design CoVE

• London Institute Rootstein Hopkins Space will be used to exhibit shirts in end of year fashion preview.

•3D Cloth animation and Virtual catwalk show will be used to visualise 3D digtial shirt outcomes in the fashion preview at London Institiute Rootstein Hopkins Space

3. Outcomes of the project

•To create creative opportunities in fashion design learning through access to digital technology

•Developing FE college collaborations through CoVE devlopment projects.

•To develop greater student/academic professional awareness through networking between Institutions

References:

[1] http://itrdu1.linst.ac.uk/kyle/commonroom2.htm

[2] http://products.blackboard.com/

[3] http://itrdu1.linst.ac.uk/kyle/commonroom2.htm