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How social media is transforming learning, teaching and research dialogues

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How social media is transforming learning, teaching and research dialogues

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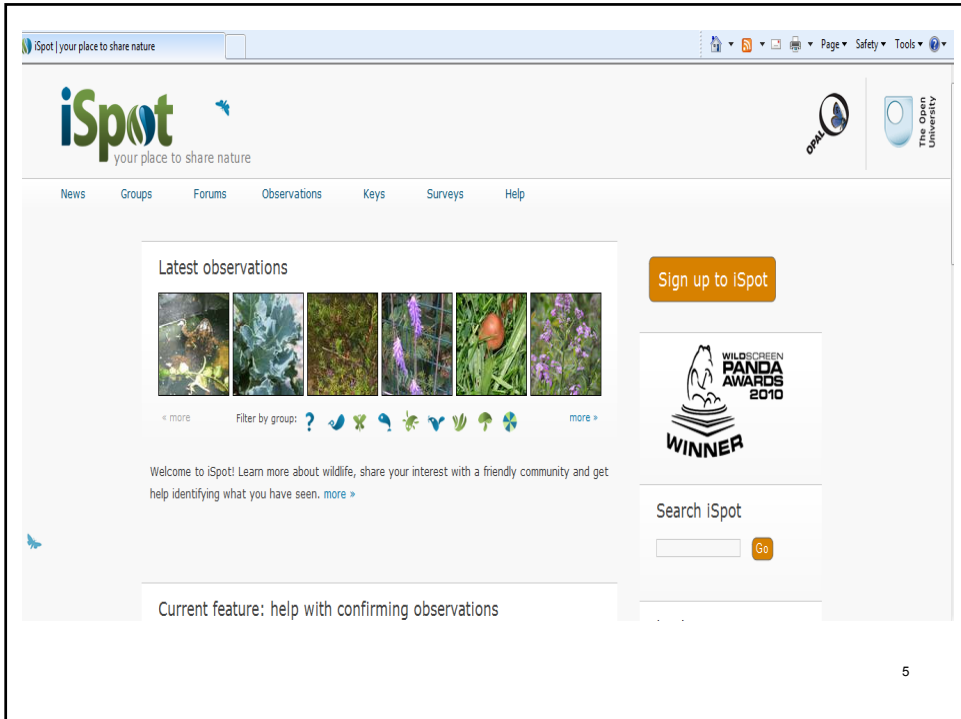
In this talk

- What is distinctive about social media technologies?
- What have been the implications for?
 - students
 - educators
 - institutions, and
 - researchers
- What are the challenges ahead?



Social media, Social software, Web 2.0

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying 'http://www.tenpencepiece.net/blog/dd303-notes/'. The page title is 'DD303 Notes - Just One More Ten Pence Piece'. The main content area features a large image of a rocky coastline. Below the image, the text reads 'DD303 Notes' followed by an 'Important!' notice. The page is organized into several sections: 'Open University DD303 - Revision Notes Index (2010)', 'Part 1 - Perceptual processes', 'Part 2 - Concepts and language', 'Part 3 - Memory', 'Part 4 - Thinking', 'Part 5 - Challenges, themes and issues', and 'Methods Book'. On the right side, there are sections for 'RECENT COMMENTS', 'POPULAR RAMBLINGS', and 'OU BLOGGERS'. The browser's address bar and search engine (Google) are visible at the top.



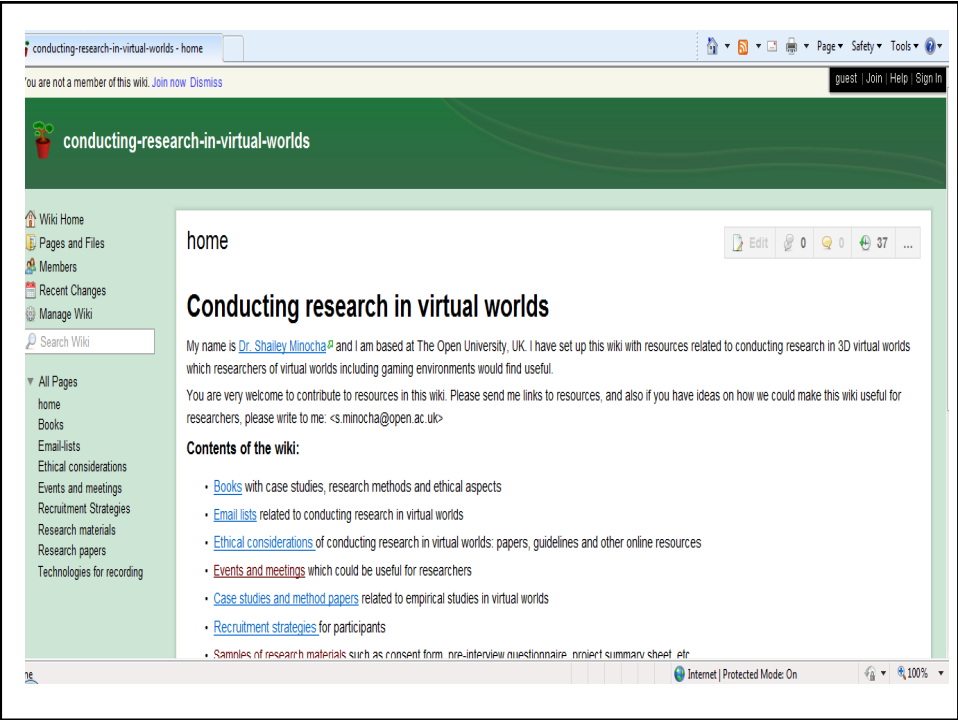
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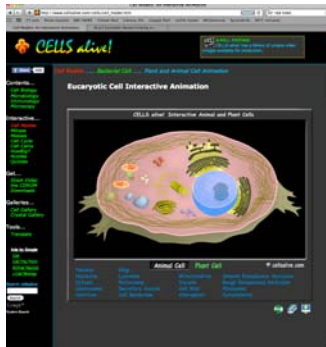
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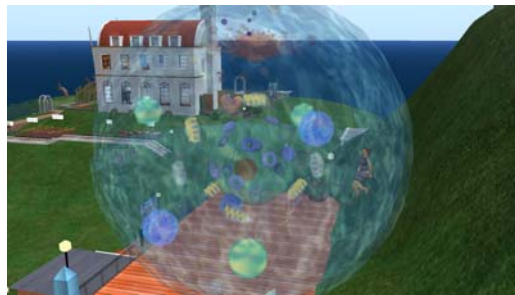


Learn through 3D simulations



Learning about an animal cell from a website

Immersive learning by moving around in the cell and its organelles



Practise real-life scenarios through role-playing



Learn about trauma management
Get acquainted with the surgical
equipment and the environment



Explore unrealistic scenarios



Explore situations and places which may not be feasible or too cumbersome to arrange in real-life
Experience marine life virtually and at a close distance by taking a tour in a submarine



Studying underwater marine life

Blending physical spaces, 2D and 3D virtual environments



<p>socialisation</p> <p><i>tacit to tacit</i></p> <p><i>socialisation in Second Life: introductions, tours; face-to-face meetings</i></p>	<p>externalisation</p> <p><i>tacit to explicit</i></p> <p><i>course activity in Second Life, or in a classroom setting</i></p>
<p>internalisation</p> <p><i>explicit to tacit</i></p> <p><i>reflection-on-learning in forums or in Second Life or listening to podcasts</i></p>	<p>combination</p> <p><i>explicit to explicit</i></p> <p><i>connecting ideas, discussions in wikis, blogs, forums</i></p>

Shailey Minocha and Dave Roberts (2008). *Laying the Groundwork for Socialisation and Knowledge Construction within 3D Virtual Worlds*, *ALT-J, special issue on 'Learning and Teaching in Immersive Virtual Worlds'*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 181-196.

Characteristics of social software use



- opened up possibilities for educators, students and researchers
- triggered creativity and innovation
- helped to bridge geographical distances
- facilitated global partnerships in teaching, learning and research
- encouraged public engagement

Other implications of social software use



- face-to-face interactions are fewer now
- sensitised us to ethical issues, about privacy, anonymity
- personal and professional profiles, social etiquette
- made us aware about how we manage our social and intellectual capital
- made us more aware of where and how our resources in the online domain are being stored and who can access them



Impact on students



Effects on students' learning, skills development and employability

- collaborative learning; critical reviewing
- reflective learning
- peer-to-peer learning and teaching
- gaining transferable skills
 - reflective practitioner
 - online communication skills
 - team working in a globally distributed environments
 - an online 'portable' portfolio: collation of ideas and resources



Concerns **for/about students**

- conflict: learning vs. technology
- diverse mental models, experiences and expectations
- group-working: ownership, assessment
- interacting with tools in the public domain
- dialogues and resources may be unsubstantiated
- their perceptions of the educator
- can distract from deep reflection and cause information overload as individuals respond to frequent interruptions
- employers and prospective collaborators look at the social media profiles of the candidates



Impact on **educators**

Educator's roles



- pedagogical design
- technical: installation, on-going support
- training and imparting digital literacy
 - *digital literacy* is the skills, knowledge and understanding that enables critical, creative, discerning and safe practices when engaging with digital technologies in all areas of life
- facilitation and mentoring

19

Implications for educators



- are able to intervene early; student retention
- teaching interactively rather than broadcasting
- conducting 'evaluations' of student experience and are taking a multi-disciplinary perspective
- able to provide a multi-media and a multi-modal experience to suit different student needs
- the rise of the concept of 'digital or social scholarship': *is the practice in which the use of social tools is an integral part of the research and publishing process, [and is characterized by] openness, conversation, collaboration, access, sharing and transparent revision (Cohen, 2007)*

Cohen, L. (2007) *Social scholarship on the rise*, Blog entry posted to *Library 2.0: an academic's perspective*
http://liblogs.albany.edu/library20/2007/04/social_scholarship_on_the_rise.html [accessed 19th July 2012]

Issues for the educators



- managing diverse needs of students
- not always possible to transfer the initiative to another context or discipline and assume that it will 'work'
- learning activity design
- assessment design
- performing the role of a facilitator or mentor
- their workload
- managing diverse stakeholder relationships

Impact on institutions





Institution's perspective

- tools can help to overcome geographical distance
- student retention
- image building: alumni community
- contribute to employability by showcasing work



Concerns of institutions

- tension between the virtual learning environment and the tools in the public domain: control, reliability, firewall
- concerns about support from external organisations
- resource implications
- how to get the 'balance' right between adopters and non-adopters
- appropriateness of the content being posted in the public domain
- how to 'teach' digital professionalism



Success factors



Pedagogical, technological and social factors that influence student experience

- pivotal success factor: the educator
- situating the technology within the learning
- clarifying the role of the technology to the students
- ensuring usability of the technology
- providing user guidance and social norms, etiquette
- designing for socialisation in on-line collaborations



Impact on researchers



Implications for researchers

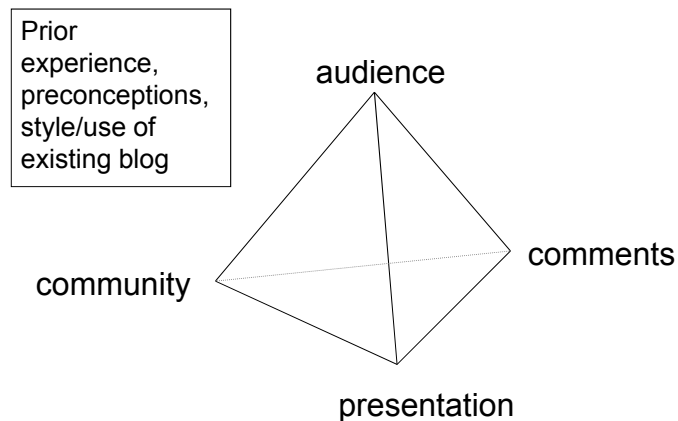
- Using a variety of technologies to support research dialogues
 - formal dialogue with supervisors
 - informal interactions with peers and supervisors
 - document sharing and storage
 - space for reflection; working with ideas and the process
 - engaging with the community
 - keeping themselves informed

Issues for the researchers



- choice of the social media tools
- is it worth the time and effort
- ethical, moral or legal issues of interactions
- creating a researcher's profile
- how to maintain professional boundaries
- who is the audience
- who owns the data in the cloud

Framework to guide blogging



Lucinda Kerawalla, Shailey Minocha, Gill Kirkup and Grainne Conole (2008). An Empirically-Grounded Framework to Guide Blogging in Higher Education, Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, special issue on Web 2.0 technologies, pp. 31-42.

30



Challenges and further research



Challenges

- how to get educators involved?
- how to sustain these initiatives?
- how to derive generic outcomes for transferability of the initiatives?
- learning analytics and the associated issues
- implementation and evaluation by educational researchers or educators

Evaluation of social software initiatives



- resource-intensive
 - planning and running the initiative
 - cycle of feedback and change has to be built
- even the researcher may not have the full grasp of the technology, its characteristics, and how it can be used
- combination of technologies may be required or may be in use
- ethical considerations may be 'unique'

Research agenda for the future



- changing role of the educator: content-creator to curator; increased focus on facilitation; sense-making
- impact on face-to-face learning
- design of learning spaces: physical learning spaces, 2D and 3D spaces
- 3D virtual environments: STEM education
- learning analytics

For further dialogues



- Shailey's contact details

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- Papers and reports on social software, wikis, blogs and 3D virtual worlds on Open Research Online (repository)

<http://oro.open.ac.uk/view/person/sm577.html>