

'Preach What You Practise' Teaching and Learning Best Practice

Workshop Report

The title of this workshop was a thoughtful call to share effective teaching practices with colleagues across the Midlands, and a range of institutions were indeed represented amongst both speakers and delegates. September is a busy month in preparing for the new academic year, but one delegate noted, *"I really enjoyed yesterday. We have enrolment week next week, so lots to do, so was in two minds as to whether attending was the best use of my time during a rather frantic period. However, I found it inspiring and now feel fully reinvigorated for the new year ahead."*

The aim of this report is to give colleagues a flavour of the event and provide detail/links to material discussed by speakers on the day. Presentation files and handouts from the day can be found within the list in the right margin of the eLibrary resource page that accompanies this report.

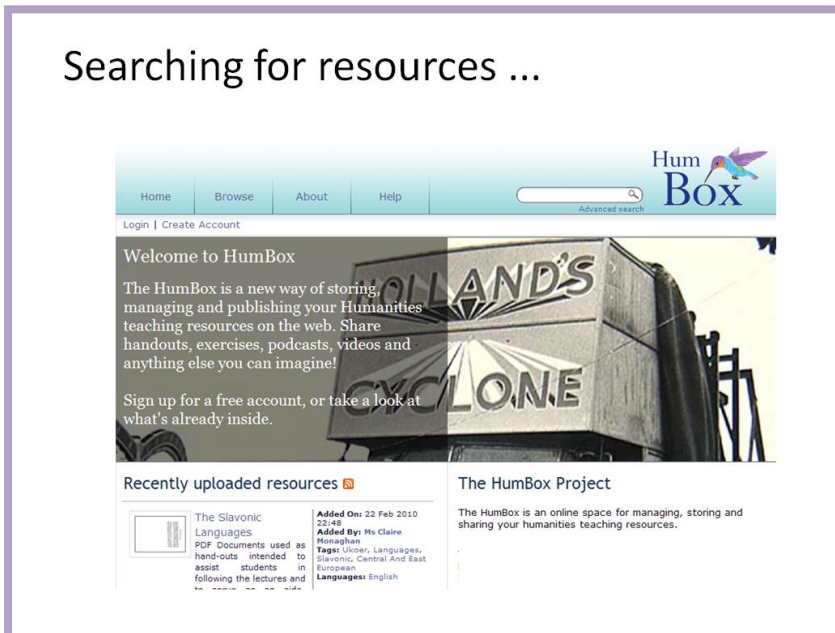
The History Subject Centre would like to thank Richard Hawkins (convenor of the Midlands Network of Historians) and Bill Miller and Marios Hadjianastasis from the University of Birmingham for organising the event. The feedback from delegates was very positive, the only remarks of exception related to the time allocated to sessions, as people wanted to engage even more with the topics and open up further discussion. 100% of the feedback received noted an interest in attending future events, and found the day a useful forum for collaborating and networking with colleagues: important considerations in the Subject Centre's focus on supporting our discipline and individual academics.

Carl Chinn opened the event with a very engaging talk about his background and how, without even realising it, we grow and absorb the history and community around us, and form a sense of identity and local understanding. Local oral histories are important, and Carl encouraged the inclusion of local stories in teaching, to engage students in the value of history around them: to open their minds to their own histories. We were also reminded of the importance of enthusiasm in teaching. As the country's first self-employed historian, on the enterprise allowance scheme, Carl drifted into teaching, but it soon became as important as his research – a real passion. This final comment is central to a project being supported by the Subject Centre this year: the History Passion Project. What makes a university historian into a passionate teacher? What difference does passion make to our students anyway? If you would like to know more, or get involved please visit: <http://www.historysubjectcentre.ac.uk/research/gwi>

Lisa Lavender went on to give details of the HumBox project, in which the message is not just preach what you practise, but share what you practise. Along with other humanities Subject Centres, history was part of a JISC-funded project which has produced a website of free teaching resources for use across the humanities: a repository that is continuing to grow successfully beyond the life of the project. Lisa gave details about the website's main features, the types of resources on offer and how colleagues can get involved themselves in

using, depositing and reviewing material: an aspect that has proved important in giving academic context and confidence to the resources.

Searching for resources ...



If you would like to find out more about the presentation, the powerpoint slides are available from the eLibrary page for this report. Or please visit the HumBox site at:

<http://www.humbox.ac.uk>

Jolene Debert's interests in inter-disciplinary collaboration and student-led teaching underpinned her talk on 'Choose Your Own Adventure'. Jolene has developed large lectures where the students decide, from a number of options, what they will learn as the lecture progresses, stimulating direct engagement. This technique has been developed using the 'Turning Point' online voting system (<http://www.turningtechnologies.co.uk/>) and inserting powerpoint hyperlinks: allowing new or existing lecture presentations to be enhanced. The objective has been to encourage students to understand the need to prioritise types of information, engage with the material and synthesize a large amount of information. The method has achieved its objectives, with increased discussion and debate in lectures reflecting the higher level of engagement.

Many delegates expressed a desire to try out this style of lecture after experiencing 'choice' first hand in Jolene's effective and engaging presentation.

Colleagues may be interested to see another example of how 'Turning Point' has been used within a teaching context to engage students directly and enhance assessment and feedback results. Filippo Nereo's work on blended-learning techniques resulted in him becoming the first recipient of the History Recognition Scheme award, and can be viewed in the Subject Centre's eLibrary:

http://www.historysubjectcentre.ac.uk/elibrary/internal/cs_nereo_recognition_scheme_2010xx

Richard Hawkins and Harvey Woolf discussed the important topic of assessment. Forming another strand of the 'History Graduates with Impact' project, their survey this year of the assessment practices of workplace learning provision will consider the diversity in assessment within history for the first time. 31% of the 114 HEI history degree programmes offer WPL, and it is an area that will no doubt come under greater scrutiny in the present climate.

Richard and Harvey raised some interesting issues for consideration on both the graduate employability agenda and assessment: involving delegates directly in group discussions of how assessment methods can most effectively meet the History benchmark statement outcomes in WPL.

The presentation file and handout used in their talk can be found on the eLibrary page for this resource: providing detailed background information about the project and some very useful notes on good teaching and assessment practices in WPL. Further details about the project can be found on the Graduates with Impact site at:

<http://www.historysubjectcentre.ac.uk/research/gwi/>

Chris Szejnmann outlined the (un)enviable position he was in last year at Loughborough, in re-establishing a History programme, which involved rethinking the study and teaching of the subject. Starting from scratch, the possibilities of using learning technologies were huge, and have indeed been utilised in the new programme, but Chris noted the important point that technology should be used well: the pedagogy of teaching and learning should not come second to technical capabilities.

Loughborough University

background: Loughborough, History, ICT & e-learning

- History at Loughborough
- revolutionary developments in ICT and e-learning

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Edited by Helen Bartham and Rhona Stepp

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Teaching DIGITAL NATIVES

PARTNERING FOR REAL LEARNING

FOREWORD BY STEPHEN HEPPLE

MARC PRENSKY

With this in mind, Chris shared some examples of technology that have been incorporated effectively, such as lecture capturing, SMS texting to students, and video presentations and feedback. Delegates were also able to try out the 'Turning Point' system noted in Jolene's work earlier: questioned on internet usage in the UK and our thoughts on the use of technology.

Student feedback certainly reflects that the overall engagement, assessment and feedback objectives at Loughborough have been met, and learning technologies have played their part. Chris's final thought-provoking comments related to broadcast learning versus interactive learning: 'developments in ICT and e-learning will require me to reinvent myself as a teacher, professor, or educator'.

Further details can be found in the presentation file that accompanied this talk, on the eLibrary page for this resource.

In the final presentation of the day, Marcus Collins discussed historiography and how history is studied in schools: is it good preparation for HE? Whilst appreciating that in a competitive, grade-hunt environment where only a small percentage of A level students will go on to a history degree, Marcus raised very interesting questions about new and traditional histories. Within his teaching he has asked new students to analyse (historiographically) the history they studied at school. He discovered that they felt they had tended to 'progress' from 'traditional' to 'new' history as they went through school: any historiographical approach was included too little and too late. Quotes from the students make interesting reading (in the examples below), and can be found in the powerpoint presentation that accompanied Marcus' talk on the workshops eLibrary resource page.

- Throughout my school life, history was taught in its traditional sense as designed by Ranke ...
- Throughout my time at school I have only been taught traditional history, under the impression that this is the only way to study history. Only by coming to university have I encountered new history.
- I suppose the studies I performed at A level were traditional history. Focusing on the 'great men' of the time, and the 'politics', but there is more to life than that, and there is more to History than that.
- I overwhelmingly studied history from a 'traditional' viewpoint with very little 'new' history that I can remember. The focus of the history was virtually always on the big events from the period and very rarely focused on the social effects and changes.
- Prior to studying on this programme, much of the history that I had learnt at school was built around simply knowing the facts, figures and statistics of a particular historical event ...