

Abstracts for Parallel Workshop Sessions

Morning Sessions

PG201

'A really wicked place': involving students and evolving ideas

Carolyn Roberts

When University of Gloucestershire students were consulted on their visions of ideal spaces for learning, one said that he envisaged a 'wicked place'. Others wanted areas that were 'cool', 'awesome' or themed 'like Starbucks'. Most academic staff, by contrast, were far more conservative in their aspirations.

'Wicked' problems for researchers and practitioners in environmental disciplines (Rittel and Webber, 1973) are those characterised by five or six key traits, including

- Poorly formulated and complex issues, involving physical environmental and social elements
- Competing value systems
- Ambiguous terminology
- A multiplicity of actors or stakeholders
- Spatial and temporal interdependency
- An absence of a clear end point for any resolution

Whilst this framework is more characteristically used for consideration of issues such as human-induced climate change or water resource management, it provides an interesting insight into the design and evolution of social learning spaces. The workshop will explore a case study of the development of the Centre for Active Learning, one of the UK's network of Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs). It will focus particularly on capturing and utilising students' views at various stages of the process from initial thoughts on design, through to users of the space twelve to eighteen months later.

Using the 'wicked problem' framework, participants in the workshop will be invited to share their ideas of how the views of students can be utilised effectively, and balanced against those of other stakeholders, as spaces are developed and transformed.

PG202

A case study of technology supported collaborative learning

**Heather Thornton
Jon Alltree**

HEFCE capital was used to develop a high-tech learning room to support and evaluate collaborative learning. The room includes two teacher screens and four student areas, each equipped with an interactive whiteboard and dedicated room furniture to support collaborative learning. The technology enables any group's work to be displayed on any output screen, enabling sharing and peer learning. The case study will discuss the experiences of a group of third year Physiotherapy students, drawing on teacher observations and student data. Issues will include the quality of student engagement, the level of cooperative and collaborative learning, gender differences and the relationship of this classroom learning to their use of virtual learning spaces.

This workshop will fall under the innovative design theme. In the workshop we will share our experiences and give opportunity for participants to experience a simulated exercise that mirrors some of the student activity. This will form the basis of a group discussion of the value of technology enhanced collaborative learning spaces.

Aims

- To discuss the genesis and realisation of a high technology learning room, designed around the needs of collaborative learners
- To discuss our experiences of this implementation in one particular group of students

PG203

The Design of Social Learning Spaces for the 21st Century

**Toni Kelly
Simon Steiner**

The University of Birmingham received JISC funding to undertake a study into how learning technologies influence the design of physical learning spaces, providing the opportunity to study current usage, design processes and future trends on how social learning space designs were changing.

Birmingham was already developing new learning spaces strategies, which highlighted the importance of providing space and learning technologies that would inspire, attract and support modern learners and teachers.

This session will briefly outline key findings from the JISC Survey, describe examples of good practice in the use of learning technologies within learning spaces and how these influenced the strategy for learning space design at the University. There will be examples of new and innovative learning spaces at Birmingham, showing how they contribute to enhancing learning quality and an opportunity to view a short film where staff and students at Birmingham discuss their own experiences with and within the new environments

From this outline and introduction of examples, workshop attendees will break into small groups and use the example of an existing space to explore, through the use of play, the design process, subsequent phases in the development of new learning spaces, and conclude with a plenary discussion of ways in which we can satisfy the needs of future learners, without losing sight of the needs of current learners.

W208

Anxious Interactions?

**Jos Boys
Chris Mitchell**

Collaborative networking tools such as blogs, wikis and message boards have become popular in supplementing, and in some cases supplanting, the traditional face-to-face mode of academic discussion. Each of these tools relies on the student engaging fully and fairly within an online space to collaboratively create debate and build a sense of community. This workshop examines the emerging social conventions of these tools for learning and investigates what factors may hinder or enable successful engagement.

Both workshop leaders have used online social forums as part of the teaching and learning of arts and design students: Jos with Interior Architecture students at the University of Brighton (using Blogger) and Chris with cross-disciplinary groups at the RCA (using Moodle). We found similar challenges in encouraging student engagement, which relate to a range of complex anxieties about identity, exposure, language, authority, culture and expectations. We want to explore how the 'standard' sets of conventions by which we attempt to interact face-to-face or online - socially or educationally - can collide in these new spaces and to discuss what kinds of new 'conventions' need to be developed.

This workshop asks, through a set of interactive exercises, what are the anxieties we feel when asked to communicate in Web 2.0 environments? How can we analyse the factors which might encourage or allay anxiety in participants (based on research to date)? And what kinds of rules should these spaces have to enable them to create a safe and creative sense of community for all participants?

Afternoon Sessions

PG201

'Posh and comfortable': What do students really think of their learning spaces?

**Liz Aspden
Paul Helm
Joel Keserton**

Our institution, in common with many others in Higher Education (HE), is engaged in an extensive programme of redevelopment and new build. We are tasked with creating spaces that meet the needs of our increasingly diverse learning and teaching community, and which embody the University's commitment to its core beliefs. Using the example of one such space, being created within a new extension to the University's main Learning Centre, this workshop will:

- review the external and institutional factors that are influencing its development, and how these factors are shaping our understanding of the relationships between real/virtual and formal/informal spaces;
- explore the various mechanisms for ensuring the learner voice is reflected in our plans;
- engage participants in an active exploration and interpretation exercise using written and photographic data generated through our research;
- openly review lessons learned while enabling culture change and innovation, and;
- share mechanisms for overcoming (or negotiating!) barriers along the way.

PG202

Organic or artificial: fostering learning communities at an urban university and building communities for different user populations

Pat Christie
Regina Everitt

The Learning Zone, a flexible social learning space created as part of the University Student Hub in 2006, provides traditional resources alongside new technology in an environment that empowers *students* to decide how to use the space and encourages a culture of peer support. We have thereby created a space that supports an *organic* approach to fostering learning communities.

The Learning Zone aspires also to provide a neutral environment where students can gather from all the University's six colleges to form new learning communities, complementing their college communities. This has proved challenging for University of the Arts London, an urban multi-site university. By identifying the factors that influence students' decisions to visit the Learning Zone, we aim to determine whether we need to adopt a more directive approach and hence *artificially* foster new learning communities.

This workshop will explore different approaches to building learning communities that have the potential to enrich the student experience. Various student profiles will be used as case studies: these might include international students, students studying the same subject, and part-time students. Attendees will consider from the perspective of one of these profiles:

- What motivates students to visit the Learning Zone?
- What organic or artificial approaches can be deployed to foster learning communities?
- How do staff encourage students to develop these communities without undermining the facility's philosophy of being a student-led learning space?
- What are the implications for the quality and range of facilities provided?
- How do these findings extend to disciplines outside art & design?

PG203

Creative use of learning spaces to encourage independent and collaborative learning

**Maja Jankowska
Andrea Raiker**

Review of the literature has shown that learning spaces have an effect on learners' motivation to explore, experience and discover (De Bono, 1986; Alexi Marmot Associates, 2005; Knapp and Hall, 2006). The current national personalised learning agenda (2020 Review Group, 2006) and the university's review of its curriculum (CRe8, 2007) have firmly shifted the delivery of academic study from the traditional mode of transmissive teaching to that of collaborative and social-cognitive learning (Vygotsky, 1987 trans.; Bruner, 1996). The university intends to take advantage of the burgeoning skills, knowledge and understanding information technology achieved by students emerging from secondary education (Becta, 2007 online) to bridge the formal, creative and social aspects of learning. A 'wall-less classroom' has been established via the VLE Blackboard which hosts such functionality as blogs, wikis, voiceover software and e-portfolios. Underpinned by sound pedagogical principles, the establishment of a range of learning spaces is central to the university's long-term strategy to increase student achievement, increase retention, and maximise employability.

This workshop will introduce participants to the different spaces and their varying resources created at the Luton and Bedford campuses of the university to encourage autonomous independent and collaborative learning. Findings of the presenters' research into student preferences of learning spaces, including students expressing their views on video, will be disseminated. Participants will then be invited to consider which of the learning spaces would meet their teaching styles and how they might use them creatively to meet their course outcomes.

W208

Innovative learning spaces for enterprise education: building student engagement with learning through space

Vicky Harte

Jim Stewart

This workshop will focus in brief on the main findings from an evaluation at the Institute for Enterprise of three new innovative learning spaces designed to offer non-traditional learning opportunities for students and staff to experience and widen their approaches to new forms of 'assessment, learning and teaching' in the teaching methods of enterprise education. The spaces are being evaluated to see how they are being used, whether they are having any impact, and whether they are adding value.

In addition, brief findings will be disseminated from an on-going Teaching Quality and Enhancement Fund bid secured to design and develop a programme of staff development to enhance the quality of delivery and teaching methods in innovative learning spaces. This bid was submitted as a consequence of the evaluation to address the issue of under-utilisation related to staff confidence and the ambiguous flexibility of the spaces. The projects are related and will feed into each other from time to time but are running independently.

Flexible and social learning spaces are required to enable students to explore and challenge entrepreneurship, as well as supporting teaching staff in their teaching methods and the capacity to open up entrepreneurial modes of learning (Gibb, 2002). However, the main emphasis on any learning space, whether traditional or non-traditional, is the learning outcomes of the students and what the physical environment inputs to learning (Temple, 2007).

Three random groups will be formed, with each group having a different question to answer related to the two projects briefly described above, with enterprise education in mind.