

**Information services in the 21st Century
Library management and technology
Middlemash 2009
MMIT conference on mobile learning**

welcome



Multimedia Information and Technology is a journal I've read and respected for many years so I was thrilled to be appointed Managing Editor.

Lyndon Pugh, outgoing Editor, has created an interesting, well-read and professional journal. We will seek to maintain those high standards going forward whilst also responding to comments from readers. I hope you will complete the survey on page 27 and look forward to hearing from you with ideas for the journal, whether it's feedback on the new look, suggestions for topics we should cover or proposals for articles you'd like to submit.

Warm regards,

Catherine Dhanjal, Managing Editor
catherine.dhanjal@theansweruk.com

We will be carrying out a survey of MMIT Group members to ascertain views on current membership benefits and key topics of interest to ensure that we're meeting your needs as closely as we can.

A recent introduction is our new events sub-committee which will be working on arranging regional-based multimedia and information technology workshops, seminars and conferences. We have also appointed a new Web Editor, Kate Lomax, and set up a blog and Twitter account to help us to communicate better with Group members and journal readers (more on back cover). ■

MmIT is published quarterly by the Multimedia Information & Technology Group of Cilip, and appears in print and electronic formats in February, May, August and November.

Copy deadlines are the first of the month preceding publication.



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news

University of Leicester's new Graduate School Media Zoo teems with technological wildlife

The University of Leicester has opened a new Graduate School Media Zoo: the new home of 'technological wildlife' at the University includes e-readers, podcasting equipment and Second Life. The interactive research space transforms the Graduate School Reading Room in the award-winning David Wilson Library. It provides the opportunity for young researchers to experiment with new technologies for academic networking and collaboration, research presentation and dissemination, which will play a pivotal role in future research culture. Academics of the future will be able to develop their skills at the cutting edge of research technology in an accessible and supported environment.

Malcolm Noble, a PhD student at the Centre for Urban History, commented: "Web 2.0 is increasingly important in higher education, and it is vital that students and staff alike are conversant with the technologies involved. Not only will the Media Zoo provide an invaluable



Left to right, Professor of Elearning and Learning Technologies Gilly Salmon, Executive Secretary of JISC Malcolm Read, Director of Library Services Louise Jones and Graduate Dean Professor Sarah Hainsworth

resource for postgraduate research at the University, but it will also equip students with useful skills transferable outside academia."

The Graduate School Media Zoo builds on the acclaimed Media Zoo for academics (described in the *Guardian* as a 'cutting edge research laboratory') provided by the University's Beyond Distance Research Alliance (BDRA), and has been a collaborative venture between the David Wilson Library and BDRA, with support from the University of Leicester Graduate School. The Zoo has both a

physical and an online presence accessible to postgraduate students. An interactive research area within the new Graduate School Reading Room in the David Wilson Library consists of dedicated workstations on which students can access Media Zoo services, as well as a 'sandpit' containing new devices and technological platforms.

For further information about the Graduate School Media Zoo, contact Louise Jones on 0116 252 2034 or lj14@le.ac.uk

New conference on public service delivery to tackle innovation in learning

Organised by ISG Scotland Committee member Liz McGettigan, Edge 2010 is a major conference devoted to 21st Century public service delivery

Speakers are tackling how to innovate for digital inclusion, learning and e-government. New approaches to the regeneration of cities will be presented and exploration of how virtual libraries, along with information services, are revolutionising local authorities. Delegates will learn about innovative practices, hear the latest ideas, share success stories and meet colleagues from around the globe as speakers cover topics such as information

production in the digital age; libraries as engines for literacy and education; and emerging technologies such as gaming for learning and work. Keynote speakers include Susan Benton of American Urban Libraries Committee; Michael Porter, America's 'libraryman'; Nigel Ironside, Governor of Saughton Prison on the refurbished library; and Martyn Wade of the National Library of Scotland.

February 25 – 26 2010 at Edinburgh Castle.
edge2010.wordpress.com/

Also in Scotland, the ISG Scotland Annual Lecture will be delivered on Thursday 4 February by John Davitt. A report on the lecture will be carried in the Spring 2010 issue of *Refer* journal at the end of February.



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Mobile Learning: what exactly is it?

**Report by
Jon Fletcher
(Liaison Librarian,
Nottingham Trent
University) with
input from Catherine
Dhanjal on MMIT's
mobile learning
conference at
Aston University,
21 September 2009**



Jon Trinder's presentation included a slide showing how mobile devices have changed beyond all recognition in around 25 years. (c) jont@ninelocks.com



spend on a learning activity and (b) the more engaged and motivated people are in it then the more successful it will be. The more learning can be personalised to your own needs and interests, the greater the chance of success. To achieve this we need to have a variety of ways of learning and teaching

"As library and information professionals, we are continually being asked to support 'mobile learning'. But what exactly does that mean? Who are these mobile learners? What do they do? What do they need us to do?"

Hot on the heels of other recent Mobile Learning¹ (m-learning) events, MMIT's event examined what m-learning is and how library and information professionals can implement it. Several experts had useful recommendations to offer following a brief welcome from Leo Appleton (event organiser).

Mike Sharples (University of Nottingham) talked about historical and current developments. With learning via personal devices now a known factor, an interesting emerging trend is that of 'ambient learning', which utilises mobile device functions such as augmented reality/geotagging tools (cf. Mashable: 2009) to interactively provide information to users who point their phones at particular locations. "We've moved from the second phase of mobile learning where the learner is mobile," declared Mike. "We're now entering the third phase: ambient learning where technology-enabled group learning and location-based learning become the norm." Embedded information (cf. the Wikitude AR Travel Guide: 2008) could just as easily be provided about a library as they can a "beautiful viewpoint looking down on Salzburg", and libraries can use these features to deliver future tour information to patrons.

Discussing more immediate concerns, Mike related how there have been few comparative studies to date comparing the mobile learning experience with that of other teaching styles – this remains a somewhat untested area. However, perhaps the most relevant response thus far (looking at online learning)² found that a mix of face-to-face and blended learning seemed to best suit learners, and that mixing activities provides the chance to learn skills unmatched by any single approach.

Mike's speech showed that (a) the longer people

so the 'mixed economy' of blended learning will be here for some time to come. The technologies (and the seamlessness of the way in which you can move between activities) will change, but the fundamental properties of what makes successful learning will remain. Practitioners have the difficult task of ensuring they harness the most successful technologies.

This suggests that m-learning certainly has a place in the future educational world, providing as it can (through personal handsets, etc.) the chance for learners to approach tasks in their own style, share them quickly with others (including instructors) for comment and then engage in activities to see if a consensus can be reached (cf. Group Scribbles: 2009). Perhaps this is 'audience participation' at its best?

With more and more library users 'going mobile', it's time that we thought about doing the same

Before the break, Martin Bazley (online experience consultant) related some interesting tales of cross-sectoral uses of m-learning; it was useful to see how this has been applied in heritage circles, and to be reminded that the user experience is enhanced when audiences are engaged. More of an overview approach was taken by Jon Trinder (University of Glasgow), who related a brief history of m-learning and various tools used to deliver it, running through failures and successes. Ultimately, as he points out, 'a device works if it works for you'. He also picked up on how difficult it can be to evaluate this – learners often use these devices outside of the instructor's gaze, and feedback can be hard to collect through encouragement. There are certainly considerations to be borne in mind before making devices and services available:

- Is special software needed on user devices?
- Do you have suitable materials to deliver on it?
- How will you transfer the materials?
- Do the materials provided need to be available in other forms?

Certainly the world is a changing place, as evinced by universities such as Glasgow Caledonian making Second Life offerings strategic priorities (tying in with a rise in popularity for Second Life on mobile phones). With mobile phones with built-in projectors (McKeegan: 2009) now being released, there is much that educational facilities can offer to students. QR codes also seem set to make a splash as smartphone usage catches on and a greater number of users have access to these – with Pepsi using these in recent advertising campaigns, the opportunity to transmit data straight to a user's

handset with less effort than taking a photo has massive implications for those in the business of information provision.

Jon Traxler (University of Wolverhampton) developed a somewhat similar theme to his semi-namesake above, with a call to 'stop just thinking about the technology and get things integrated'. M-learning is not just about the technology, and few projects in this field had – on a basic analysis – an explicit pedagogy, epistemology, or ethical stance; this is very necessary, with m-security (educating users about the dangers they can face by freely making information available) being a key facet. Mobile devices are often fixed and are not upgradeable (they can become obsolete quickly), and those running trials are reminded that they should consider what happens when the funding for trials runs out (will devices still be used?) and how the expectations of making things available for users' own devices can be managed (i.e. what support is needed?). Like many other commentators, he sees the question being whether device-specific tools will win the day or whether the web will host the tools needed on a generic level.

The post-lunch session saw the turn of Melissa Highton from the University of Oxford, who drew attention to the podcasts being made available through the Oxford Colleges (cf. the Open Spires [JISC: 2009a] project) and with collaborators (the Steeple: 2009 project). The University has already produced over 500 free audio and video podcasts which are free to download via iTunes, www.podcasts.ox.ac.uk, or from a mobile device at <http://m.ox.ac.uk>. She said, "A great number of our academics at Oxford are podcasting enthusiasts – it helps them to publish and communicate information more widely and they feel it's an entirely appropriate medium for disseminating their work."

The podcasts are a mix of public lectures and interviews with leading academics, including many which will be of interest to a business audience (e.g. Fiona Reid's *Building a Business: Entrepreneurship and the Ideal Business Plan* and Jonathan Zittain's *Internet Governance and Regulation: The Future of the Internet – and How to Stop It*). The podcasts have been so successful that they have had two in the Top 10 downloads from iTunes U. Melissa's insights into achieving 'tipping point' where the majority of academics are keen to podcast involves allowing a 'DIY' feeling and ethos, so academics are free to ensure their own quality and style whilst IT services provides the technical expertise and legal sign off.

She also described the current Erehwon project (JISC: 2009b), looking at how institutions can work with mobile access and geolocating Oxford resources (e.g. finding the nearest copy of a book in the nearest library from your position). They have mapped the locations of 1300 places in Oxford and

researched how this can fit into mobile learning. For example, Erehwon allows students to find out where the nearest copy of a book is in the 100 University libraries at their disposal. They can also find out immediately if the copy is in stock, the opening hours and if they have permission to borrow from that library. Walking and cycling routes are provided along with time estimates. Melissa concluded, "We're moving towards ambient learning where the very air at Oxford is learning-enhanced."

Beware of lumping younger users into a 'digital native' ghetto

Finally, Andy Black from BECTA gave a quick glimpse into the near future, which is provided weekly on BECTA's website for emerging technologies (BECTA: 2009). Going into QR codes again amongst other devices, he warned against using mass generalisations such as 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants', which builds projects up to fail by assuming that younger users will be able to use any technology thrown at them; an alternative distinction is that of 'residents' and 'visitors' (White: 2008), which is a very good analogy.

Overall, this conference was a very interesting insight into m-learning from some of the key exponents in the UK, and provided a useful grounding to use in future library projects. With more and more library users 'going mobile', it's time that we thought about doing the same. ■

Presentations can be viewed on MMIT's blog: mmitblog.wordpress.com

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¹ For a definition of mobile learning, see MOBILEarn's *Guidelines for Learning/Teaching/Tutoring in a Mobile Environment*, 2003. To give a rather more pithy definition, event speaker Jon Traxler related that "Mobile learning is elearning gone for a walk".

² Means et al., *Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning*: 2009.

and finally...

MMIT now blogs and twitches



The MMIT website is undergoing some changes, so we have launched a new Wordpress blog to allow for better collaboration and easier updating. 2010 will also see the return of the factsheets on the main website.

The blog is at mmitblog.wordpress.com and will focus on technological developments and related news in the library and information sector. Comments and submissions are welcome and you can subscribe by email or RSS. This blog is a work in progress so please get in touch if you have feedback.



We are also on Twitter where you can keep up-to-date with Group and journal developments: www.twitter.com/multimediait



Contact us!

Call for articles

Articles, news, case studies, books and products for review on the subject of multimedia, ICT, information technology and digital libraries, are welcomed and approaches should be made to the Managing Editor.

Call for images

I would like to build up a bank of images for use in the journal. If you have colourful, captivating or compelling images which illustrate your organisation, work or multimedia in use, please email 300 dpi JPEGs together with information on the image's content to me.

Advertising

Advertising packages are also available – please contact me for a copy of our detailed media pack.



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For all enquiries, please contact the Managing Editor at catherine.dhanjal@theansweruk.com or on 01883 650434.

New events sub-committee



MMIT now has an events sub-committee. The sub-committee will continue to be responsible for MMIT's annual conference, as well as the MMIT-

sponsored workshops at the biannual Umbrella conference. The committee is also seeking to work with other groups (e.g. CILIP branches or other Library and Information special interest groups) to organise and develop more regional-based multimedia and information technology workshops, seminars and conferences. If you are interested in working or collaborating with MMIT in the events area, please contact Leo Appleton (l.appleton1@jmu.ac.uk). ■

See pages 22-23 for MMIT's conference on mobile learning



flantoons



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