

The impact of learner experience research

Dr. Rhona Sharpe
OCSLD, Oxford Brookes University





A photograph of a student in a dark jacket sitting at a computer workstation in a library. The student is looking at a computer monitor. In the background, there are other computer workstations and a mezzanine level with a glass railing where other people are visible. The text is overlaid on the image.

What effect is this investment having, *as experienced by learners*

What have we learnt from learners about what investment we should be making?





Learners' Voices

3 trends

- A shift towards more holistic research
- Proposed by Sharpe et al, 2005, 2006; Bluic, Goodyear & Ellis, 2007)



Recipe cards

interview plus
telephone interviewing
technology card sort
talking walls
email interviewing
audio logs
nested narratives

Email interviewing: the 'pen-pal' method

What is it?

Researchers enter into a personal dialogue with learners by email. This can be used to collect reflective, written contributions from learners over an extended period of time.

Strengths

- Can record experiences that learners might subsequently forget.
- Can build up a picture of the process of studying as it happens and track developments.
- Allows the researcher to personalize the questions asked at other data collection points.
- Minimal intrusion into learners' time.
- Uses a basic, robust technology which stores data automatically.
- Maximises sustained participation through establishing a personal dialogue between researcher and learner.

Weaknesses

- Time intensive for the researcher to craft individual questions and follow up responses.
- Inconsistency in timing and content of questions across students and courses. This may be important if you are looking to combine data across participants.
- Researcher and learner are both subjectively involved in interpretation as they compose their exchanges, which means careful checking for validity against other sources of data (triangulation)

Process

1. Each learner is allocated to a single, named researcher, who signs their messages personally.
2. Questions are adapted for each learner so that they take into account the course the student is taking and any prior knowledge about their own individual experiences as a starting point.
3. Timing of messages is organized to coincide with significant events, whilst avoiding busy periods close to assignment deadlines or exams.
4. Researchers follow up with secondary questions or comments as appropriate.

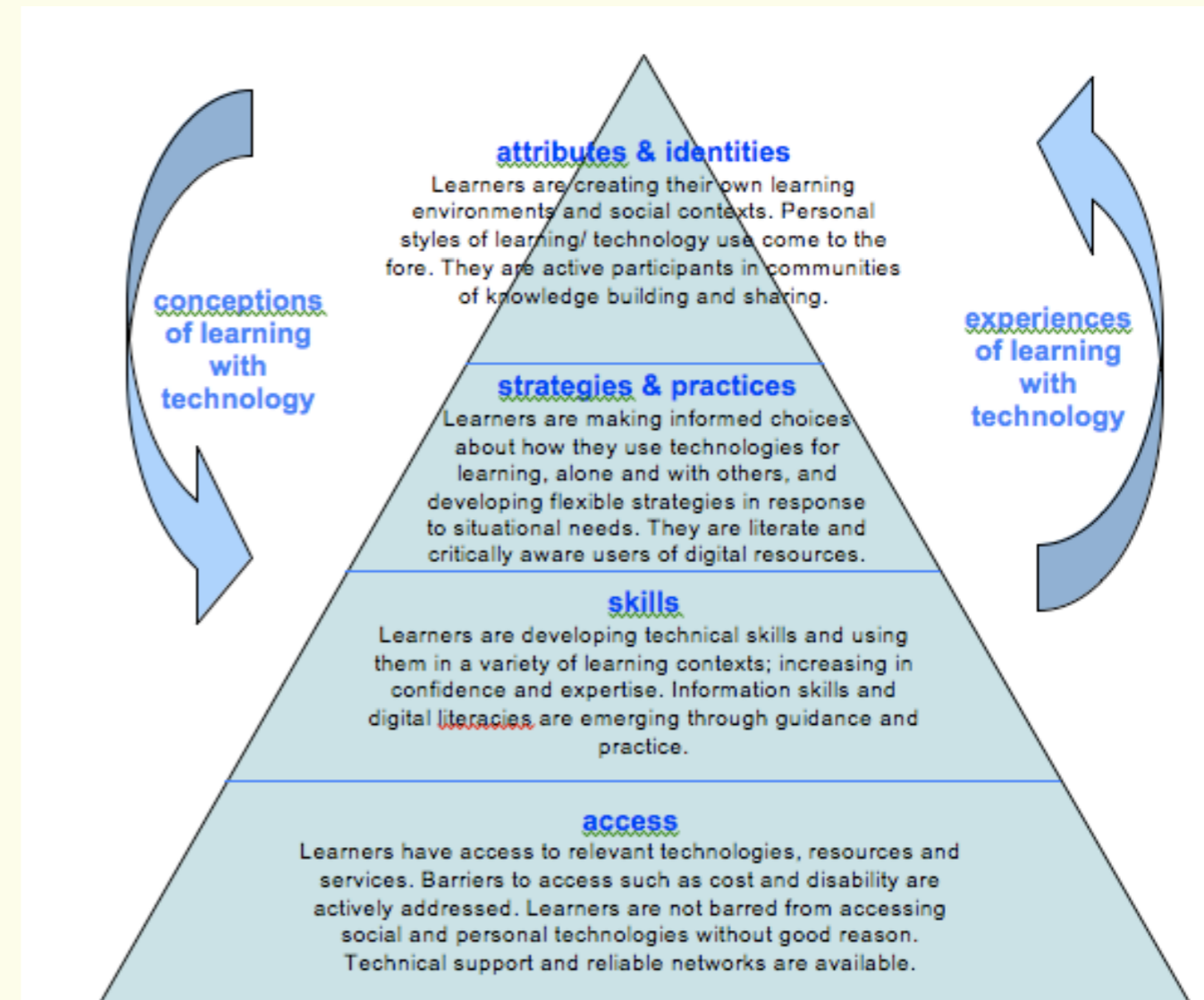
Examples from the Learner Experience projects

The Thema project has been soliciting written contributions from research participants by email, four or five times over an eight month period. This 'pen-pal' method is used in combination with a traditional interview to build a portrait of each learner.

3 trends

A shift towards more holistic research

Developing conceptual accounts



Sharpe, R. et al (2009) Learners Experiences of E-learning Synthesis Report: Explaining Learner Differences at <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCle2f/Findings>

3 trends

A shift towards
more holistic
research

Developing
conceptual
accounts

**More strategic use of the process and
findings of learner experience research**

Facebook fans do [redacted] in exams

DAVID MARSH

Research finds the website is damaging students' academic performance, write Jonathan Leake and Georgia Warren

FACEBOOK users may feel socially successful in cyberspace but they are more likely to perform poorly in exams, according to new research into the academic impact of the social networking website.

The majority of students who use Facebook every day are underachieving by as much as an entire grade compared with those who shun the site.

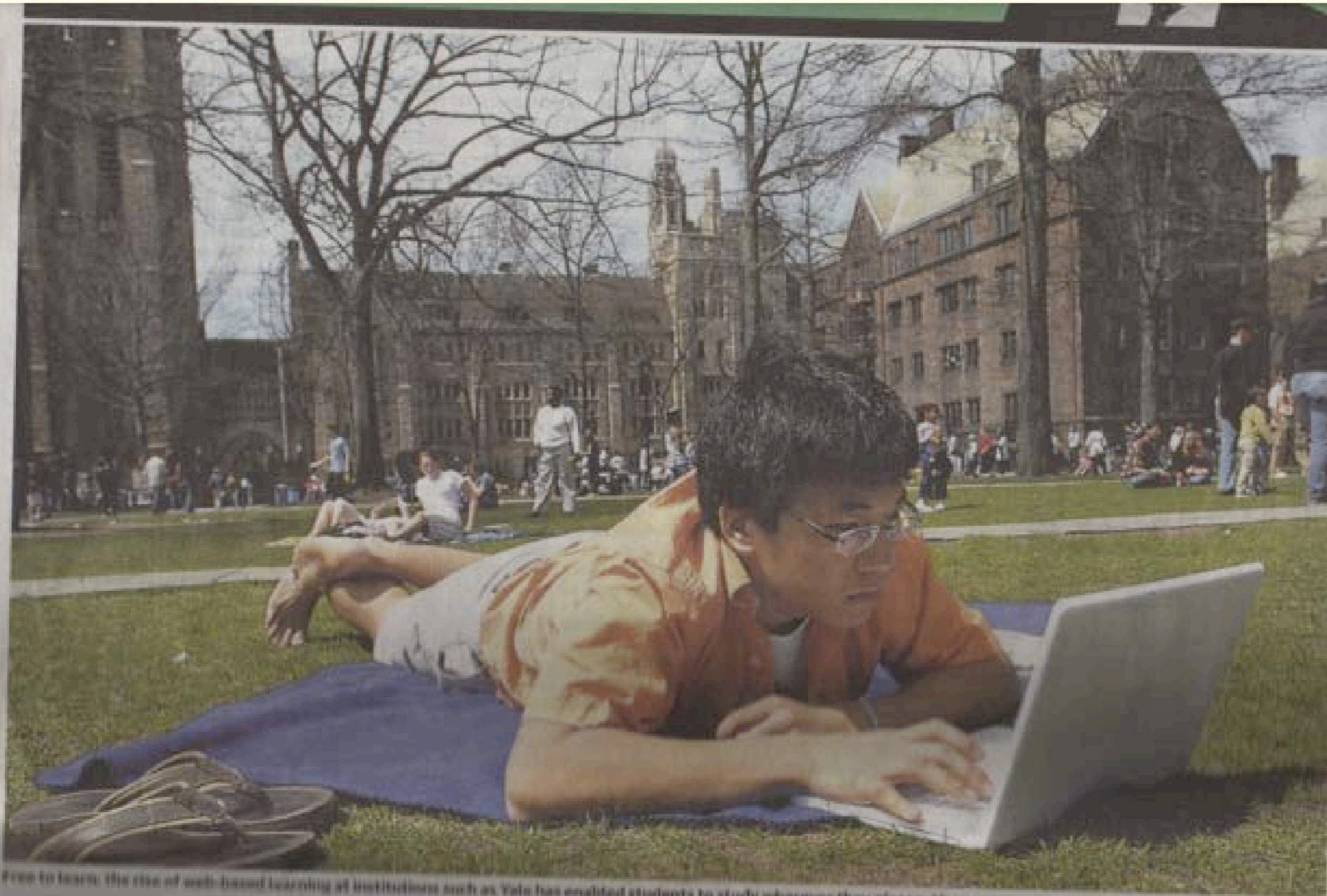
Researchers have discovered how students who spend their time accumulating friends, chatting and "posting" photos

who spend more time on Facebook spend less time studying," said Aryn Karpinski, a researcher in the education department at Ohio State University. "Every generation has its distractions, but I think Facebook is a unique phenomenon."

Karpinski and a colleague questioned 219 US undergraduates and graduates about their study practices and general internet use, as well as their specific use of Facebook.

They found that 65% of Facebook users reported that





Free to learn: the rise of web-based learning at institutions such as Yale has enabled students to study wherever they like

Dawn of the



Collaborative learning, wikis, virtual classrooms: web 2.0 is transforming higher education, and students are driving the changes. Can UK institutions keep up? **Harriet Swain** reports

many learners use technology to multi-task; some find it a distraction from study



students stress that learning with ICT should be balanced with face to face and paper-based learning



students expect consistency across modules in use of the VLE



learners have high expectations of technology with respect to access, choice and reliability



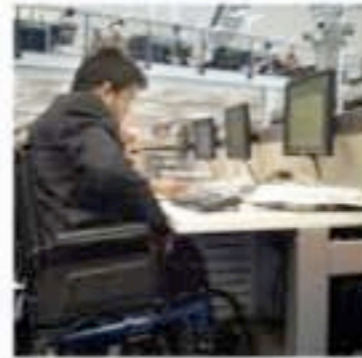
technology is widely used by learners to fit learning into life



learners want meaningful choices over how they learn with or without ICT




learners expect to personalise institutional technology and use personal technology in the institutional environment



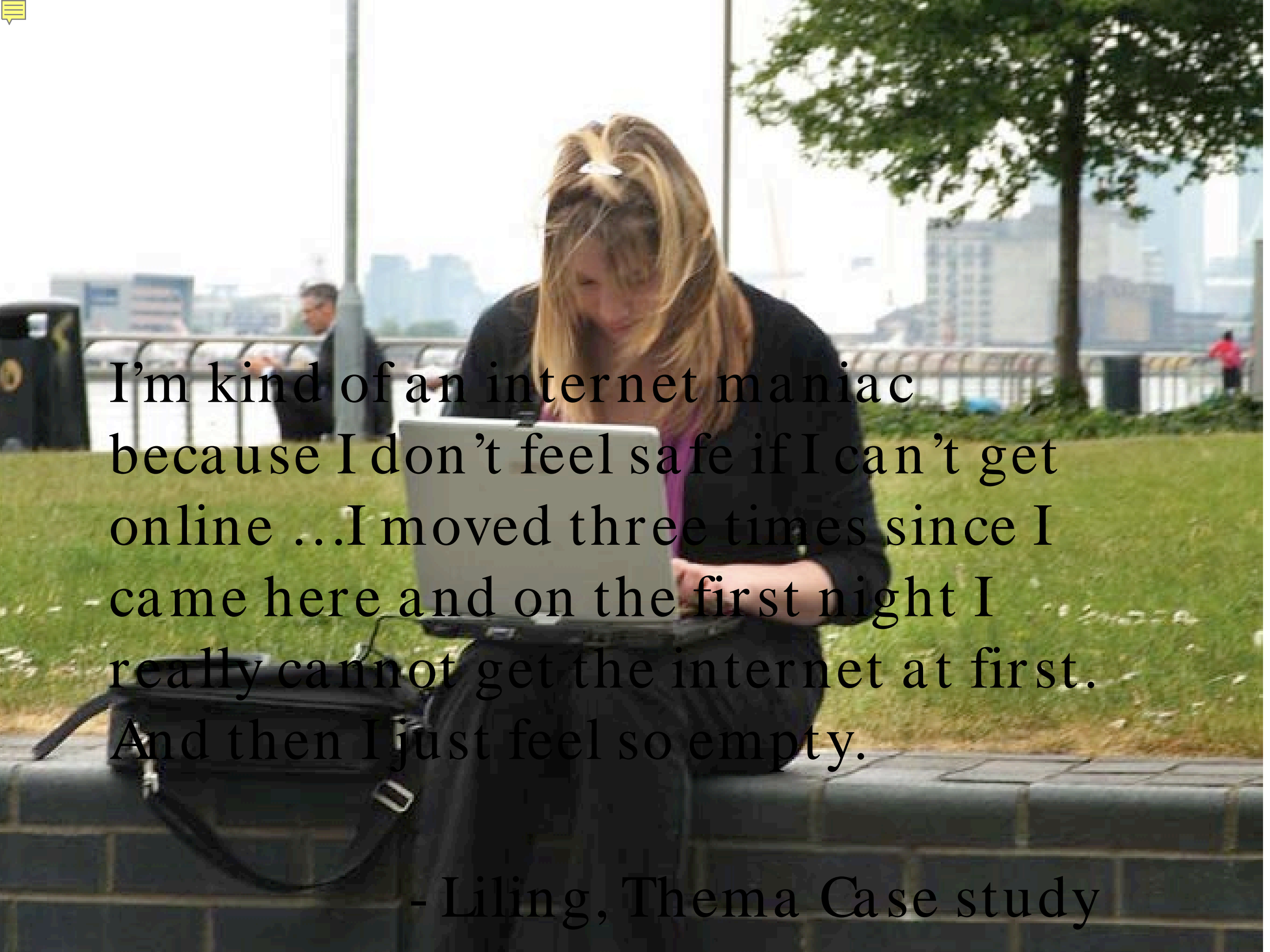
as technology makes learning more public, learners are playing the academic game in new ways



<https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCL>
E2



**Learners are living complex lives
and need to be connected**



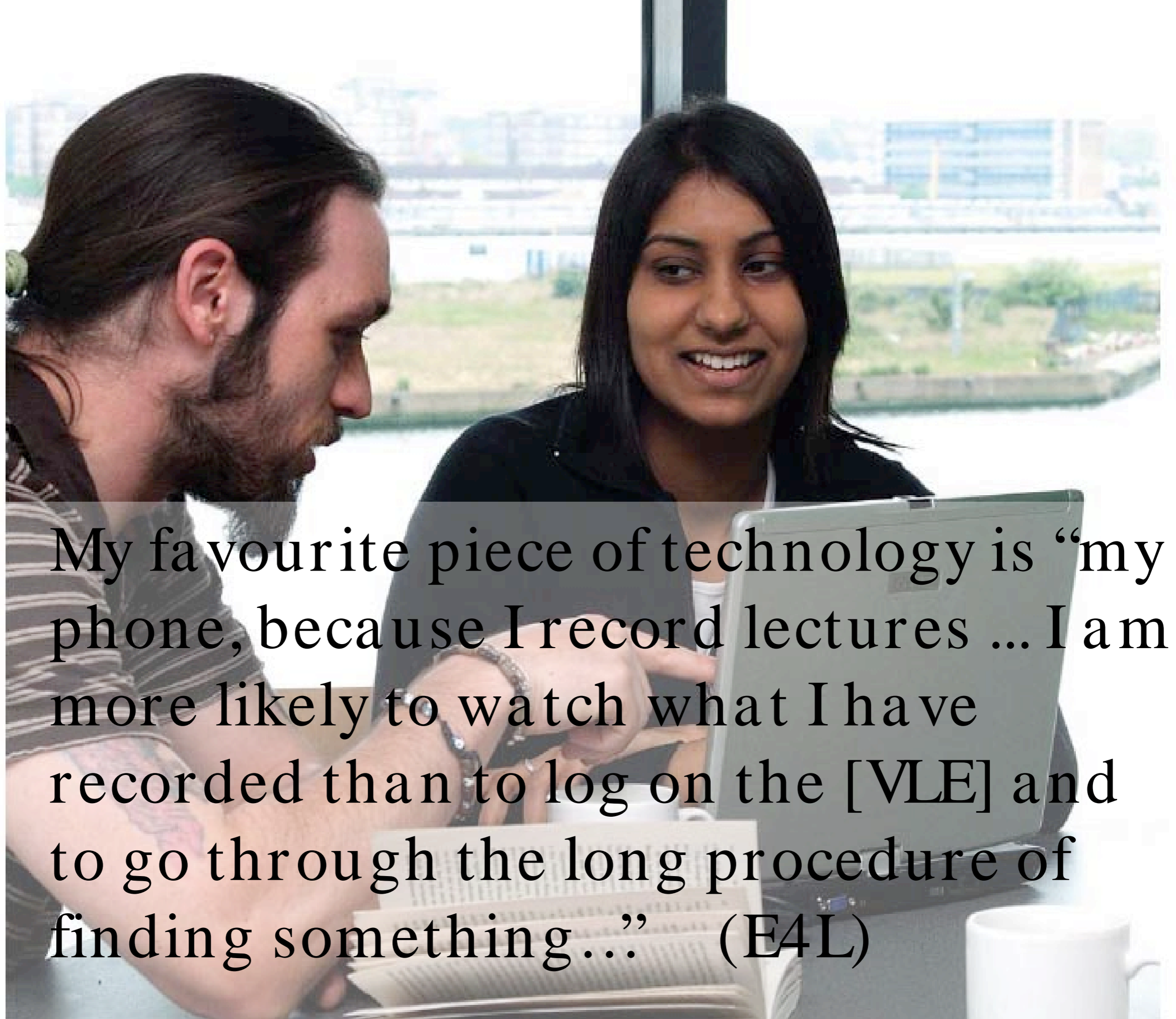
I'm kind of an internet maniac because I don't feel safe if I can't get online ...I moved three times since I came here and on the first night I really cannot get the internet at first. And then I just feel so empty.

- Liling, Thema Case study





**Learners have access to,
and expect to use, a great
deal of personal
technology**



My favourite piece of technology is “my phone, because I record lectures ... I am more likely to watch what I have recorded than to log on the [VLE] and to go through the long procedure of finding something...” (E4L)

wales / FrontPage

http://wales.pbworks.com/ JISC WALES project

Most Visited Getting Started Latest Headlines

Welcome to the WALES Website

WALES (*Work-based Access to Learning through E-Services*) is a JISC funded project to evaluate the use of mobile technology and social software in support of on-line learners.

The broad aim of the WALES project is to:

Implement and evaluate the use of mobile technologies and social software in the delivery of a personalised learning experience for work-based learners following HE blended learning programmes supported by FE institutions.

The project objectives are to:

- Design, implement and evaluate a tutor support system that includes the use of mobile technologies; mobile phones, PDAs and other devices
- Include in the support system the use of social software such as Blogs, Wikis, instant messaging and discussion forums
- Include also, the use of social on-line resource providers such as Google, MySpace, YouTube and del.icio.us
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the technologies in the context of HE courses being delivered by FE staff to work-based and campus-based learners
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the technologies in support of the administration of collaborative teaching and learning and access to support services

This site will be used to host all the project documentation, links and other resources and will be accessible to the project team and all interested stakeholders.

To join this workspace, [request access](#).

Already have an account? [Log in!](#)

Navigator

Unfiled Items

SideBar

WALES Wiki Navigation
Click on the pages below

Wiki Pages

- [FrontPage](#)
- [Project Management](#)
- [Project Partners](#)
- [Project Reports](#)
- [Management Meeting Archive](#)
- [Work in Progress](#)

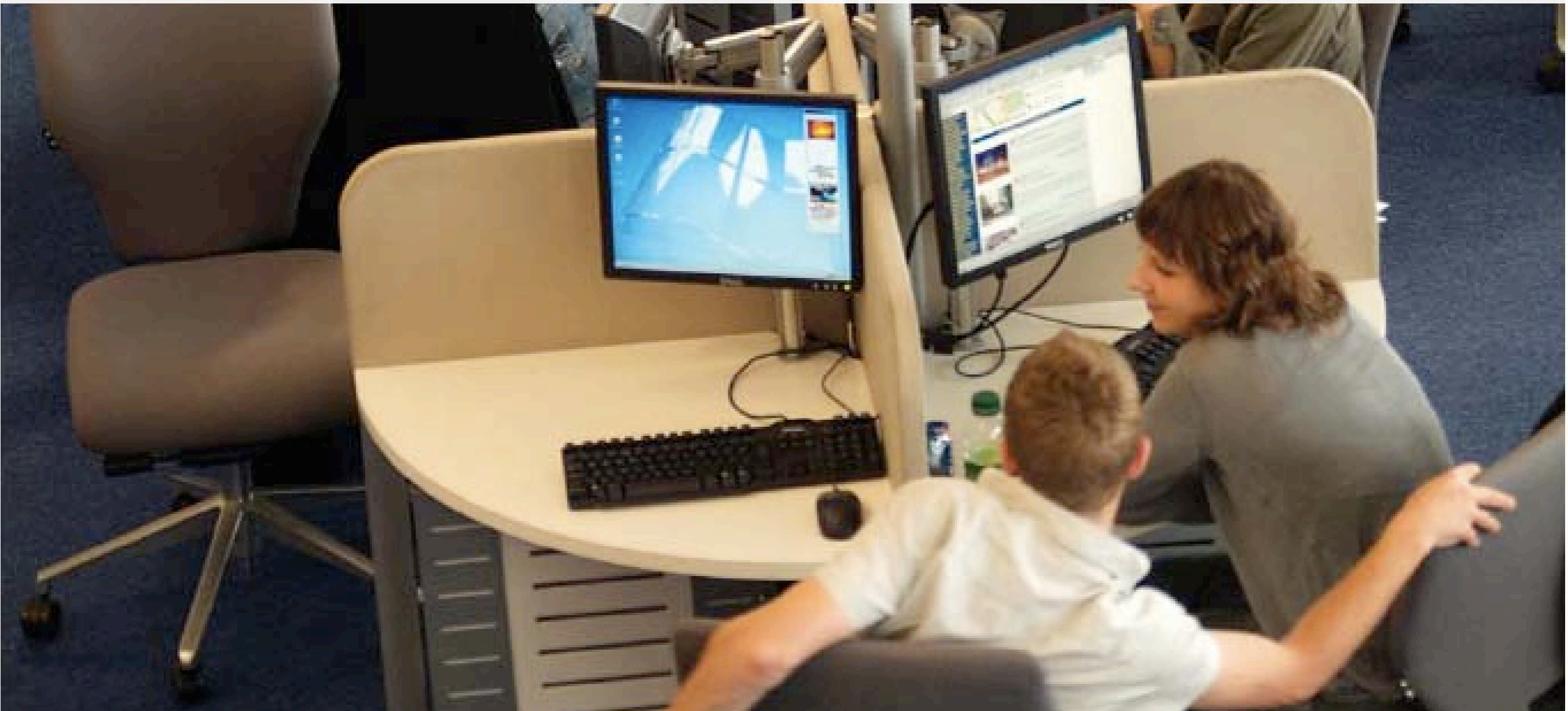
Done zotero

wales.pbworks.com





Learners make extensive use of peer support networks



Welcome to Develop Me!, LSS, University of Bradford

http://www.brad.ac.uk/developme/

bradford develop me

Most Visited Getting Started Latest Headlines

UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD
MAKING KNOWLEDGE WORK™

LSS A-Z Index | Search LSS for Search

Develop Me!
Managed by Learner Support Services

LSS | Careers | Counselling | Disabilities | Graduate School | IT Services | LDU | Library | People Development | TQEG | Telephony | Corporate Services

Develop Me!

- ▶ Home
- ▶ Using Develop Me!
- ▶ Meet and chat online
- ▶ Your views
- ▶ SaPRA online
- ▶ Online resources
- ▶ Workshops
- ▶ Links

Get more help from:

- ▶ Learner Development Unit
- ▶ Learner Support Centre
- ▶ Career Development Services
- ▶ Learner Support Services

Accessibility

- ▶ LSS Disability Information
- ▶ University Accessibility Information
- ▶ Low vision/text layout

Text Style

- Sans-serif
- Serif

Text Size

- Small

[University of Bradford](#) >> [Developme](#) >> Welcome to Develop Me!

Welcome to Develop Me!

The Develop Me! links and resources should help you to:

- Feel more confident about being at University.
- Meet and chat with other students at the University of Bradford.
- Identify your levels of confidence in different skill areas.
- Articulate what evidence you have for the skills you feel confident in.
- Define an action plan to develop the skills you feel less confident in.
- Access online and face-to-face development activities.
- Review your progress.

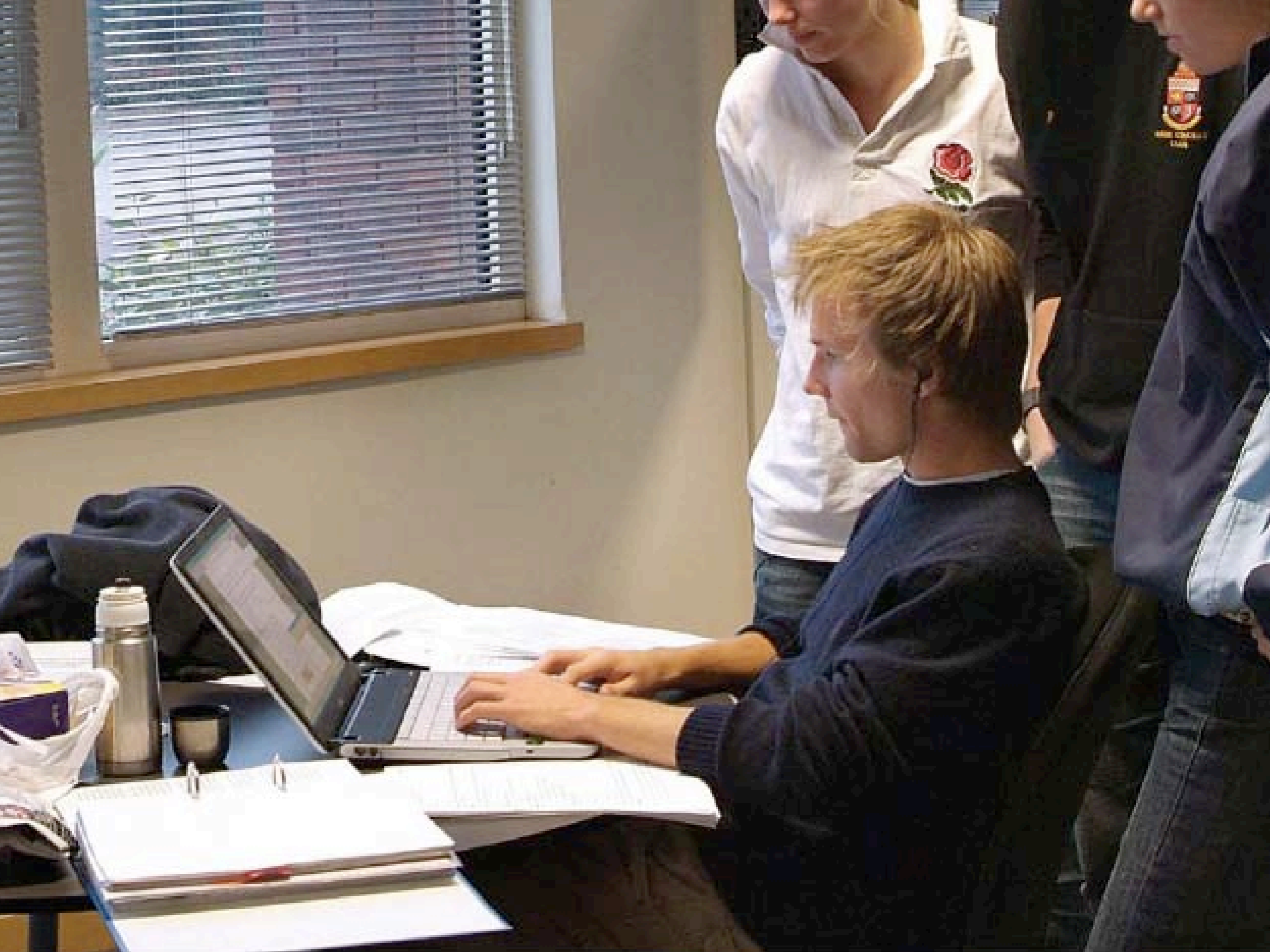
Using Develop Me!
You can use Develop Me! in any way you wish; however, we have provided some guidelines to help

Your views

Workshops

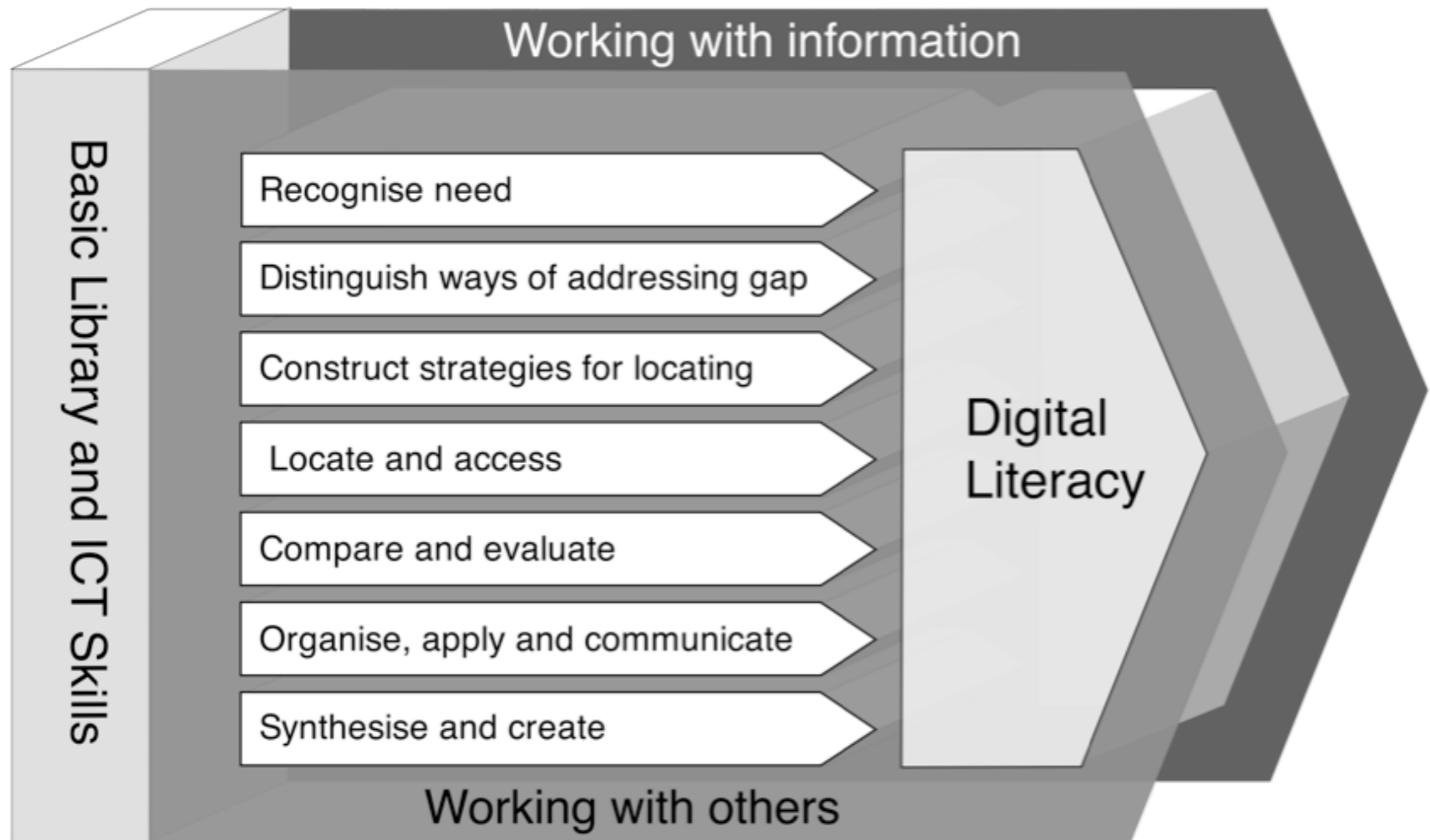
Done zotero

www.brad.ac.uk/developme/



**‘Digital natives’
are not
necessarily
digitally literate**





Oxford Brookes University LLiDa Case Study
www.academy.gcal.ac.uk/llida

A photograph of two young men sitting at a white table in a meeting or classroom setting. The man on the left is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and is looking towards the man on the right. The man on the right is wearing a light blue polo shirt with dark stripes on the sleeves and glasses. He is gesturing with his hands as if speaking. There are papers and a smartphone on the table in front of them. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**Learners have much
to contribute**

Student Dimensions, University of Glamorgan

http://dimensions.glam.ac.uk/

University of Glamorgan About News Research Blogs Businesses Students Staff Cartref

University of Glamorgan
Cardiff • Pontypridd • Caerdydd

Courses glam.ac.uk Search


Student Dimensions

Feeding back to you on the many dimensions of student life

Do you think that sometimes the University really asks a lot of its students? For example, we want you to be Course Reps, or do a questionnaire, or join a focus group, or click on this poll... and so on. Well that's probably right, but we always use the information you give us to plan changes – or even **not** to change something that we had assumed was a good idea! Honest – we use this stuff!



These pages, called 'Dimensions', are about all those different



You Said...!



Social & Welfare



Voice Reps

Student Expectations

109 Recommendations

- Overarching Recommendations *updated!*
- Academic & Learning Facilities *updated!*
- Accommodation
- Assessment & Feedback
- Campus & Security
- Catering Facilities
- Communication
- Contact Time
- Course Content
- Finance
- Induction
- Language *updated!*

Done zotero

dimensions.glam.ac.uk

We have seen learner experience research

- 1.** Assessing the impact of institutional services and environments *in context e.g. JISC Learner Experience projects*
- 2.** Taking a learner centred approach to the design and development of new tools *e.g. JISC WALES*
- 3.** Facilitating technology mediated peer support *e.g. Univeristy of Bradford, DevelopMe*
- 4.** Providing frameworks for learner development *e.g. Oxford Brookes digital literacies*
- 5.** Embedding learners' voices into quality assurance processes, *e.g. Univeristy of Glamorgan Student Expectations project*

**Which of these areas of learner
experience research might you be /
are you involved in?**

and why?

Chat to your neighbour

Then TEXT to 07786 204949
starting your text with **emerg**

A student is seated at a computer workstation in a library or study area. The workstation features multiple monitors, a keyboard, and a mouse. The student is looking at the screens, which display various documents or data. The background shows bookshelves and other people in the library.

What effect is this investment having, as experienced by learners

- **Where investment has been used to provide services & resources which are reliable, robust, and accessible, this is allowing students to be more flexible in where and when they study**
- **Adopting new practices and technology takes time**
- **Technology we provide isn't always used in the way we expected**
- **Learners' expectations of innovative use are limited by lack of academic experience**

What have we learnt from learners about what investment we should be making?

- Our view of technology needs to be as broad as our learners' is
- We should be supporting peer networks, recognising that these are now largely technology mediated
- We should be regularly monitoring the learner experience
- We should be involving learners in decision making

Resources

ELESIG Community at elesig.ning.com, including videos shown in this presentation

The logo for ELESIG, consisting of the word "ELESIG" in a bold, dark red, sans-serif font, set against a solid orange rectangular background.

ELESIG Summer Symposium 23-24 June 2009, University of Glamorgan

The logo for JISC, featuring the letters "JISC" in a large, orange, sans-serif font.

JISC Learner Experience projects at <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCL E2>



HEA Learner differences (HEALD) project at

<https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/heald>

References

Bluic, Goodyear & Ellis (2007) Research focus and method-ological choices in studies into students' experiences of blended learning in higher education. *Internet and Higher Education*, 10, 231-244.

Sharpe, R. et al (2006) Review of student experience of blended e-learning undertaken for Higher Education Academy.

Sharpe, R. et al (2009) Learners Experiences of E-learning Synthesis Report: Explaining Learner Differences at <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCle2f/Findings>

Sharpe, R. (forthcoming) The impact of learner experience research on transforming educational practices, in T. Mayes (ed) *Transforming higher education through technology enhanced learning*. Higher Education Academy, York.

Credits

All the images used in this presentation are taken from the JISC Learner Experiences with E-learning key messages slides, available from <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCLE2>