

RSC Newsletter

Issue 17 – October 2007

Stimulating and supporting innovation in learning

Groovey Strategies in Practice



"Groove contributed significantly to us producing a comprehensive ILT strategy document that combined the inputs of 12 colleagues on different sites". So said David Kinnaird, North West Regional College, speaking about the recent experience of using the collaboration tool, Microsoft Office Groove.

Specific advantages of using collaborative software, such as Groove, noted by David were, "you can bring the team, tools, and information together in one place, even though your desks may be in different locations. With Groove's many tools such as, file and discussion areas, calendar and issue tracking, you don't need to switch

tools to work with people outside your campus or organisation."

"A key issue for us", said Charlie Mc Keown, NWRC, "was that Groove automatically sends the changes you make in a workspace, to your team members' computers and their changes are sent to you each time you log onto Groove. No more attaching, detaching, uploading, or downloading, and wondering which is the latest version of anything. The team spends less time co-ordinating and more time working."

Groove comes with Office 2007 and with the new built-in SharePoint Files tool. You can easily check out documents from SharePoint Server 2007 or a Windows SharePoint Services 3.0 team site into a Groove workspace, collaborate on them, and push them back when you're done.

Great expectations of ICT...

New research suggests that young university hopefuls expect unrestricted access to the Internet.

A report, link below, suggests that the research carries important implications for learning providers, particularly on the expectations of young people as 'customers', the

near-ubiquity of social networking and the need expressed by survey respondents for clear social or academic benefits of new technologies to be presented.

For more go to:
www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/publications/studentexpectations

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Podcasting

- Even Jeremy Paxman Does It!

It is almost impossible to watch a TV show or listen to the radio without the announcer inviting you to download the podcast or vodcast (video podcast)

A podcast is an audio file usually created in .mp3 format. It can be a monologue, an interview, a talk show or whatever format works for you and your audience. Once created, it can be uploaded with what is called an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) file to your website, intranet page, VLE or wherever you want to make it available. Your listeners subscribe to your podcast by adding your RSS feed to their podcatcher eg, iTunes or other similar software. The podcatcher looks for new episodes of your podcast and downloads them automatically when they are available.

Implications for learners

Podcasting has a lot to offer learners. Audio is a natural learning mode, as we have been talking and listening to each other long before the advent of e-learning. In the past creating audio content for learners has been underused as it was often hampered by production problems. Now anyone with a computer, a microphone and a few software applications can create audio content very cheaply, offering learners the chance to learn on the move and at their own time and pace. Below are two excellent websites to get you started:

Assignment Podcast –

Everything you need to make digital audio programmes
<http://www.bteducation.org/img/lib/dialogics/schoolradio/index.htm>
Ufi Improving Skills, creating potential

Technology and learning sharing best practice

http://www.ufi.com/home/section5/10_goodPracticeGuides/goodPracticeGuides.asp

For more information on podcasting contact c.gormley@rsc-ni.ac.uk



What's On the Box?

Did Bruce Springsteen get it right when he sang "57 channels and nothing on"? Well, that's going to change as a new channel, ChannelNI, will bring e-learning developments to your desk this autumn and winter when RSCni

begins its first foray into webcasting some of its support, live to a computer near you.

Webcasting is one of a number of innovations in our support programme for 2007-8. A series of short webcasts and webinars of 15-30 minutes duration will allow many colleagues from across N Ireland to learn new tips and tricks, share knowledge and record what happened for later reference and replay.

How do you tune in your set? Simple – all you need is an internet connected PC, speakers or headphones. We will supply the rest. Details of individual programmes will be distributed to our key contacts in colleges one month in advance of individual broadcasts. You will also be able to check forthcoming schedules on ChannelNI from our re-designed website at: www.rsc-ni.ac.uk

Have You Tried Our Delicious Resources?

In the development of RSCni's new look website important and, we hope, useful changes, have been made to the way in which links to e-resources are presented to you. Previously, the range of subject-related resources has been accessible via a set of drop down menus. This form of organisation has meant that resources that cross boundaries, say between 'Accessibility' and 'Hairdressing' have had to be duplicated in two different areas – and it has sometimes been difficult to spot the best starting point for your search.

But now the site has gone **del.icio.us**. Links to useful websites have been tagged using this Web

2.0 social bookmarking tool. This means that the resource can exist just once – but have relevant tags to guide you to it. The tags – think of them as topic signposts – are displayed in a 'tag cloud' so you can see all of the topics in a single view instead of having to search the drop-down menus. Just one click will get you to the right group of sites for your subject or theme.

To see what we mean go to:
www.rsc-ni.ac.uk/LearningResources/FindingYourResources

If you would like more information on developing your own "delicious" clouds contact m.moran@rsc-ni.ac.uk or go to the dedicated website [//del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us)

What's Happening

Date	Title	Location
Mon 15 Oct 07	Learning Resources Forum	RSCni, Stranmillis Rd, Belfast
As and when requested by Colleges	Individual college support, examples below	
	• Technical overview	College
	• e-Tools for e-Learning	College
	• Enhanced ILT Health Checks	College
	• ILT for specific subject	College
	• ILT for Course Co-ordinators	College
Late Oct	Integrating Your Apples	TBC
Thurs 15 Nov	Technical Forum	TBC
Fri 30 Nov	Accessibility Webcast	Hosted by RSCni
Tues 4 Dec	e-Learning Forum – Joint event with HE, LR and Champions	RSCni, Stranmillis Rd, Belfast
Wed 16 Jan	Network Security is a Corporate Issue	TBC

JISCmail – Are You on Our Lists?



Over the past few weeks RSCni staff have been adjusting the contact details on current e-mail lists used to keep various staff and interest groups informed of our events and news. So far we have been trying to ensure that e-mail addresses that we hold for existing members are changed to conform with the new college email address formats.

The main lists we use, at present, are aimed at Technical Support Staff, LR Staff, Directors and Senior Managers and ILT Champions. The lists are used as the main circulation vehicles for our e-News and LR Digest and, for the Higher Flyer, sent to those who teach HE courses.

If you are not on one of our lists and would like to be or, if you have suggestions about lists you think we should create, please email b.stewart@rsc-ni.ac.uk.

e-Portfolios: What Impact Do They Have?

QCA's Blueprint for E-assessment proposes that, by 2009, all awarding bodies should be set up to accept and assess e-portfolios.

A recently published Becta report has reviewed the use and impact of e-portfolios in education, local government and the NHS. Specifically, it aimed to provide advice on:

- the potential of e-portfolios for learning
- which aspects of existing projects have an impact on learning
- whether these are transferable

Of the eight case studies, four centred on FE. The first concerned their use for planning and reflection; the second focused on the use of a web-based e-progress file; and the third on the use of e-portfolios for transition to and from higher education. The final case dealt with small-scale, independent, pilot projects focused on staff development of tutors in the use of e-portfolio approaches.

The results of this study suggest that e-portfolios benefit learning most effectively when considered as part of a joined-up teaching and learning approach, rather than as a discrete entity. The approach should include online repositories, planning and communication tools, and opportunities for both students and teachers to draw out and present e-portfolios at particular times and for particular purposes. There is then likely to be substantial impact on both learning processes and learning outcomes.

The full report can be found at: www.becta.org.uk or from m.moran@rsc-ni.ac.uk

Network Trouble shooting...

finding the problems you DON'T know about!

Have you ever wondered if there were any issues on your inter-site communications links? Maybe suspected performance problems with the JANET connection or DNS resolving but feel it's too sporadic to tell for sure? As colleges have now merged their infrastructures these problems can only intensify in complexity and severity, which could be overlooked due to intense pressures already placed on network staff.

Most colleges do suspect that there are issues on their networks, but don't have either tools or knowledge to discover and remedy them. There are free and inexpensive utilities available that can assist in determining real-time bandwidth issues, monitor services and detect systems failures. In some cases the real issue is having the skills and knowledge to conduct these tests and analyse the results.

The RSCni plans to provide support during this academic year to help address these issues. This will include a hands-on workshop utilising free and low cost tools, exploring the possibility of working with colleges to purchase more expensive commercial tools.

If you suspect you are having network issues or would like to discuss this topic or our plans further contact Noel McDaid at n.mcdaid@rsc-ni.ac.uk.

For further information or enquiries concerning any of the information in this newsletter please contact: b.stewart@rsc-ni.ac.uk

Supporting Your Apples



Have you been finding great challenges in supporting Apple computers that are part of your college network? Recently RSCni has been discussing this situation with Apple, who have undertaken to address these problems.

The first step is to organise an event by Apple to launch their new operating system and explore possible future workshop topics including active directory integration. This event is planned for near the end of term one. We



will keep you updated with details on this by the technical mailing list, e-News and on our website, www.rsc-ni.ac.uk

Netsight v2 Imminent

Netsight has been a very useful visual JANET network monitoring tool developed a number of years ago. This system gathers data on the availability of JANET connected organisations and graphs it for viewing on a web page.

Organisations have liked what Netsight has delivered thus far but, have commented that more detailed information would be useful in the monitoring of the JANET connected systems. JANET(UK) is now in the process of



upgrading the Netsight system. The new system will enhance the features available, provide more granular measurements and allow flexibility to add additional measurements, as and when required.

Tessella has been appointed to undertake a detailed Requirements Analysis, system design and to build the new system. The full system will be in place within the next few months.

Updates can be found at: <http://www.ja.net/development/mm/jms.html>