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Developing Experiential Learning: Blended learning in a 'real' world scenario

Karen Le Rossignol

Abstract

How do we absorb or learn social entrepreneurial skills? Has the recent emphasis on experiential learning tools and techniques had an effect on our learning styles? A recent research study at Deakin University has indicated the need to combine the exploration of the way students access 'learning, with imaginative virtual communities which simulate the real world and deepen understanding of community activism or social engagement.

Neomillenial learning styles are a starting point. These have been postulated by Dede as:

- Fluency in multiple media and in simulation-based virtual settings
- Communal learning involving diverse, tacit, situated experience, with knowledge distributed across a community and a context as well as within an individual
- A balance among experiential learning, guided mentoring, and collective reflection
- Expression through nonlinear, associational webs of representations
- Co-design of learning experiences personalized to individual needs and preferences (Educause Quarterly, Vol 28 No 1 2005)

These potential neomillenial styles are now being tested and defined further at Deakin by the development and application of resources which explore the nonlinear, associational approach in virtual contextualised work environments which include:

- Newlandia, a Pacific island where postgraduate students (international and local) creatively come to terms with persuasive writing and community groups as a lobby force
- Bilby, the Australian town where undergraduate students start their university journey in a first year transition unit Writing for Professional Practice.

These virtual worlds are part of the media platform, as students creatively engage with 'real world' issues and communities. However it seems the factor driving engagement may be the strong need to participate in and build on narrative, to be a storyteller. These virtual scenarios invite that sort of active engagement.

Key words: Anura; Frog; Polypedates maculatus; Life history; Metamorphic progression

Introduction

Experiential learning tools and techniques are instrumental in developing relevant skills, entrepreneurial attitudes and multiskilling across the challenges faced by creative small businesses and freelancers alike. Within the School of Communications and Creative Arts at Deakin University, resource development and teaching methods are grappling with the learners and their needs, searching for the perfect blend. 'Real world' scenarios, live work projects and the collaboration of disparate groups has led to some interesting results.

This paper explores:

- Definitions of blended learning
- Potential neomillenial learning styles and what they indicate may be required for the 21st century learner - incorporating Case Study 1
- Future trends in preferred learning strategies and technologies - some initial findings from virtual world simulations in Case Studies 2 and 3.

The Starting Point - Blended Learning Definition

As has been indicated by many researchers, blended learning as a term and a learning approach is still being refined, at times

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debated as a legitimate area of research (eg Oliver and Trigwell 2005), at times seen as the answer to the conundrum and challenges of the digital learner (eg Rossett, Dougliis and Frazee 2003).

Is it the Emperor's new clothes? All learning from infancy through the classroom into the workplace is blended learning isn't it? As Morrison suggests (Morrison 2003), blended learning could be seen as 'we can't make up our mind learning'. Unlike a blended whiskey for instance (where up to 50 different single malt and grain whiskies are taken from different regions and distilleries), the five to 10 components used in blended learning are not skilfully and consistently blended. It could also be seen as a distraction from the apparent failure of e-learning (Morrison 2003), a way to find a solution to promises given for e-learning.

Some definitions include:

- The integrated combination of traditional learning with web-based online approaches
- The combination of media and tools employed in an e-learning environment
- The combination of a number of pedagogic approaches, irrespective of learning technology use (Oliver and Trigwell, 2005)

Driscoll, referred to by Oliver and Trigwell, offers four different concepts within the term:

1. Combining or mixing web-based technology to accomplish an educational goal
2. Combining pedagogical approaches (eg constructivism, behaviorism, cognitivism) to produce an optimal learning outcome with or without instructional technology
3. Combining any form of instructional technology with face-to-face instructor-led training
4. Combining instructional technology with actual job tasks.

Valiathan (Valiathan 2002) describes blends in terms of the focus for learning:

- Skill-driven learning - combining self-paced learning with instructor or facilitator support to develop specific knowledge and skills
- Attitude-driven learning - mixes various events and delivery media to develop specific behaviours
- Competency-driven learning - blends performance support tools with knowledge management resources and mentoring to develop workplace competencies.

So, for blended learning is it a matter of combining online learning with face-to-face? Or is it e-learning with traditional learning, or mixing media and contexts?

Let's consider what's included in the mix. There should be at least two, maybe up to five or six, components in the mix (Bersin, 2003). The following provide some of the options:

- Classroom instruction
- Web-based courseware
- CD-ROM-based courseware
- Live virtual classes
- Webinars
- Conference calls
- Virtual labs
- Simulations
- Text-based job aids
- Portals
- Communities of practice
- Mentors

Or, to put it another way, it could be a mix of offline and online components (Clark, 2006):

Offline
- Workplace learning
- Face-to-face tutoring, coaching or mentoring
- Classroom
- Distributable print media
- Distributable electronic media
- Broadcast media

Online
- Online learning content
- e-tutoring, e-coaching, e-mentoring
- online collaborative learning
- the web
- mobile learning

Technology is a part of blended learning, and has an influence on the learning. Technological innovations have included, over time:

- Writing
- Printing
- Broadcast media
- Consumer storage media
- PC and CD-ROM
- Internet technology
- Mobile networks

There are dangers in developing blended learning thinking as the supplier - there are models which simply don't work (summarised from Clark 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Default model</th>
<th>Decisions on delivery made before the training has been designed - often according to wishes of the trainer or learning provider - not using reason and research - falling back into the familiar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom preservation</td>
<td>Traditional training is so strongly linked to the classroom that it is often seen by all involved as synonymous with the word learning - hanging onto past behaviours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learners and Neomillenial Learning Styles

Learners will blend anyway. It is a natural behaviour to use lots of different learning approaches. Think about methods used to learn a foreign language before travel - a phrase book, quick face-to-face conversation classes, a CD or website demonstrating pronunciation, a grammar text or online quizzes.

When developing courses from the learner perspective, it has been valuable to review the learning styles. The various project management approaches have included setting up groups with Honey and Mumford approaches such as activist, reflector, pragmatist and realist (http://www.peterhoney.com/). Another tool is the Keisey temperament sorter (http://www.keisey.com/). Then there was the Belbin approach to management and working in teams (http://www.belbin.com/). To select teams for the case study below, Building Creative Teams, these were all combined.

This is a postgraduate coursework unit, with a group of 20-30 international and local students involved in working in teams and liaising with creatives to set up an arts showcase season. The aims of the learning? As stated in the outline distributed to the learners, to achieve the following skills and knowledge:

- analyse the implications of a range of skills and backgrounds of participants in a creative partnership
- develop collaborative work skills with a range of creative stakeholders
- identify the unique and common communication and production needs of projects in communications
- develop and implement the planning, budgetary and reporting processes necessary for a successful creative communications project

Case Study 1: Building Creative Teams

The unit Building Creative Teams is a 13 week process of developing project management and teamwork skills of a group of 20-30 students to successfully support the ‘creatives’ in the university six week performing and creative arts season. This project team contained an age range, approximately 22 to 28 years old, displaying new media literacy in their technologies as communication tools. The team came from eight different countries and learning approaches - Thailand, China, Uzbekistan, Norway, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka and Australia. Their expectations were to develop skills in working in the four teams proposed - to negotiate with a creative community of performing arts students and staff with a successful end outcome clearly stipulated for each group. These included the launch, the enewsletter and promotional website, the archives and the record of the live work process. They were studying in the framework of the Master of Communication, a program which allows a broad selection of study (and therefore an eclectic mix of skills) within streams - public relations, advertising, journalism, media - film/video/photography, and professional creative writing.

When I assembled the four teams, I used a range of approaches to discover their learning styles and technical skills, their sensory/personality-based approaches and their leadership/management skills. I deliberately set up teams with a mix of skills and backgrounds, learning styles and management or leadership qualities, including quite divergent English language skills. In fact, I set up teams - which were guaranteed to have friction, to test their abilities to work together - that had a very strong risk factor of failure. I was depending on:

- the use of different media as the communication ‘glue’ - initially the Deakin Studies Online platform, eventually the wireless, portable and speedy response alternatives the students turned to
- the use of an experienced educator/project manager/mentor as the risk minimiser - a simulation of the work environment of a project agency
- experiential contexts - the live work project and its pressure to commit to the outcomes.

These would become the drivers of the learning, rather than the information in print and online, or the educational ‘expert’ or authority.

There was an additional complexity, the mobile technology and the way the net generation learners (Tapscott 1998) use it, as opposed to the baby boomers who may be designing the program. This led me directly to millenials - new generational learners. Blending learning needs also to consider a student profile where they are connected to each other (and mobile), and proficient in communicative technology (and use it as a matter of course). (Oblinger 2003, Wendover 2002).

Right, a bit more added to the blend. I looked further, and discovered Chris Dede’s work on neomillenial learning styles (Dede 2005), and now we’re into mediated immersion. This is where I went back to my case study pilot - Building Creative Teams.
What are neomillenial learning styles? Dede believes they are:

- Fluency in multiple media and in simulation-based virtual settings
- Communal learning involving diverse, tacit, situated experience, with knowledge distributed across a community and a context as well as within an individual
- A balance among experiential learning, guided mentoring, and collective reflection
- Expression through nonlinear, associational webs of representations
- Co-design of learning experiences personalized to individual needs and preferences

(Educause Quarterly, Vol 28 No 1 2005)

Do neomillenial learners synthesise and process experiences rather than (or as well as) information?

Dede has developed research which is considering the movement from the three general types of learning styles:

- Sensory-based, which rely on visual and auditory skills
- Personality-based, which is measured using the Meyers-Briggs test
- Aptitude-based, which relies on determining multiple intelligences to a fourth, which is media-based.

He proposes that media can neutralise learning differences, and bring students together.

Initial findings with this pilot group have supported these in interesting ways:

1. Each of the four teams was fluent and self-directed in moving between multiple medias, focused on what they could achieve with the alternatives - many reflected rigorously on the powerful learning achieved by the blending of face-to-face and media-related communications in emergency situations.

2. Although there were many in the group who had come from traditional teacher-directed learning models, they adapted almost instantly to collective sharing of experiences to pool their information. Whether it was in skills or knowledge-based learning areas, they were comfortable in using the team as a learning tool. The educator/project manager was the 'boss' of the agency, not the learning authority (although there was risk minimisation in the learning/teaching role of the mentor).

3. The print materials (useful readings, weblinks and resources, learning activities) were utilised by the students in exactly the same way as the learning from the team - one of the sources when events became difficult and required strategies.

4. The sense of excitement at working with a live project lasted the length of the project, despite mixed success in achieving the outcomes. It was leavened with realistic reflection, in classic action learning approach - we were all learning immersively about group dynamics and team learning models, incorporating assessments which were a part of the project outcomes rather than an adjunct tool (ie team presentations which were captured in a range of media, written reports and e-portfolios, action plans and scheduling tools, websites).

5. There were regular opportunities for reflection, both in individual surveys and in public team and individual presentations. The comparison to scenario-based team presentations used in this unit from previous years indicates a greatly increased applied learning of the key interpersonal skills - the problem-solving, negotiating, mediating between different skill sets. The planning and team management strategies were also used on a needs basis with the live work project, so discussion of their validity was infused with applied knowledge and enriched reflection on the situated learning.

6. Personalised learning is the next stage of this project, as the six week arts festival has become a yearly event (assisted by the accumulation of expertise, experience and archives by the current postgraduate project teams). Groups/teams were initially allocated to quite specific and controlled projects, so that there were not too many variables in the mix. The students themselves have proposed the next step to be a smorgasbord of projects related to the season in exciting and creative ways, or potential projects brought to the unit by the individuals. These are to provide the basis of negotiation into projects and teams - a form of self-selection which is subject to high risk, but great learning!

What did the unit finish with?

1. A successful launch of the 'exposure' arts season
2. Mixed success with the enewsletter and website - with problems of style and content, and organisational compliance requirements
3. An archive in eportfolio format targeting six areas of the season - dance, animation, photography, drama, visual arts, collaboration - this will form the basis of next year's promotions
4. A creative documentary-style DVD capturing the live work process, including reflections and summary of each group - this product had difficulties of definition of purpose, and was totally dependant on the outcomes of the other teams
5. And above all, teams who were able to maturely and publicly analyse and evaluate the successes and failures of the above achievements, including socially difficult issues of language and culture within the teams.

It was learning ... 'sometimes... face-to-face, but sometimes distributed across time, space and media', as Dede has affirmed, a very blended range of facilitation methods, learning styles,
resource formats and expertise. This creative mix will be stirred some more to test further the neomillenial learning styles and their relevance to this live project team-based learning.

Blended Learning Future Trends

So where does that leave future predictions for blended learning and my postgraduate coursework development?

Curtis Bonk and Charles Graham, in The Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs (2006), have assembled a range of working models, as well as summarising the situation so far. In the last chapter, 'Future Directions of Blended Learning in Higher Education and Workplace Learning Settings' by Curtis J. Bonk, Kyong-Jee Kim, Tingting Zeng, there is a futures focus.

A survey was conducted within both the higher education and workplace or organisational learning environments (which is an interesting movement in itself and worth further discussion at another time). Some findings are interesting for the purpose of finding the next signpost for the blending journey of resource development.

Predictions of the six most widely used pedagogical techniques for e-learning in higher education settings (from a given list of 14):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 group problem-solving and collaborative tasks</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 problem-based learning</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 discussion</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 case-based strategies</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 simulations or role play</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 student-generated content</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lecturing or teacher-directed, modelling or Socratic methods sit at about 11%. The respondents, a mix of lecturers and others involved in developing learning, saw the potential of the Web to become a tool for virtual teaming or collaboration, critical thinking and student engagement, but not an opportunity for student idea generation and expression of creativity.

Compare these results to the workplace responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 authentic cases and scenario learning</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 simulations or gaming</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 virtual team collaboration</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 problem-based learning</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 coaching or mentoring</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 guided learning</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 self-paced learning</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The prediction? Hands-on learning activities were favoured as opposed to additional auditory, visual or reflective ones. Hands-on learning was deemed the weakest area in online higher education courses, but will become the most important in e-learning courses in higher education and the workplace.

The other area of interest is the perceptions of respondents to emerging technologies and their applicability to blended learning in the future.

For the higher education survey, there were 14 technologies listed. Respondents predicted growth in usage of:

- reusable content objects
- wireless technologies
- peer-to-peer collaboration tools
- digital libraries
- simulations and games
- assistive technologies
- digital portfolios.

Less than 5% listed e-books, intelligent agents, tablet PCs, virtual worlds, language support or wearable technologies.

For the workplace survey, the indicated technologies were:

- knowledge management tools
- online simulations
- wireless technologies
- reusable content objects
- adaptive technologies
- tablet PCs and handheld devices.

Less than 5% listed digital libraries, e-books, intelligent agents, Weblogs or Web diaries and multiplayer online gaming.

Coupled with the issues raised by Dede, there are key trends emerging in developing the blend. Blended learning seems to currently operate as a replacement for or extension of face-to-face environments. The approaches are not new - supporting learning communities, extending training events, follow-up resources, accessing guest experts, providing timely mentoring/coaching, online labs or simulations, providing supplemental resources (Bonk, Kim, Zeng, 2006).

BLEND ONE

The three interfaces, the mediated immersion Dede talks of, are summarised as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The desktop interface</th>
<th>Tool offers access to distant experts and archives, enables collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avatars</td>
<td>'the Alice-in-wonderland' environment in which a self-created digital character interacts with other digital characters - allows learners to transcend their physical selves and help design their own virtual environments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the survey responses centred on active learning, problem solving, authentic learning and collaboration.

(summarised from Bonk and Graham (2006))
Ubiquitous computing Mobile wireless devices (cell or mobile or palm pilots) incorporate virtual resources into everyday life

BLEND TWO

It now seems to be a matter of extending the forms and formats to meet more appropriately those neomillenial learning styles:

• Fluency in multiple media, valuing each for the types of communication, activities, experiences and expressions it empowers
• Learning based on collectively seeking, sieving, and synthesizing experiences rather than individually locating and absorbing information from a single best source
• Active learning based on experience (real and simulated) that includes frequent opportunities for reflection
• Expression through nonlinear, associational webs of representations rather than linear ‘stories’ (for example, authoring a simulation and a Web page to express understanding, rather than a paper)
• Co-design of learning experiences personalised to individual needs and preferences. (Dede, 2005)

BLEND THREE

The trends to consider (Curtis, J. Bonk, Kyong-Jee Kim, Tingting Zeng, in Bonk and Graham, 2006) are summarised as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLEND THREE</th>
<th>simulations and role play, problem-based learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Linking working and learning</td>
<td>differences between workplace training and formalised learning environments will continue to shrink - degrees can increasingly take place in the workplace ie internships?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Changed calendaring</td>
<td>less tied to traditional calendars - ie grab a learning object when travelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Blended learning course designations</td>
<td>courses with reduced classroom meetings or seat time - what sort of mix? Type and amount of blend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Changed Instructor roles</td>
<td>skills in multiple teaching and learning environments - coaching, mentoring, counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Emergence of blended learning specialists</td>
<td>complicated and multifaceted - shift gears, add new tasks or resources, allow self-learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The blended stirring has resulted in the two case studies below, trialled in 2007 and 2008.

Case Study 2: Writing for Communication Media - the Newlandia scenario for postgraduate coursework students

This is a postgraduate unit in the Master of Arts (Professional Communication), with both face-to-face and online groups. The face-to-face group is a mix of international and local students, similar to the previous case study cohort, except that the group is bigger. The online cohort comes from across Australia and international locations, as well as in the next suburb. Total numbers have averaged about 25 in face-to-face, 55 in online/off campus mode. Learners were given open choice on delivery options.

The unit has three areas of focus:

• Report-writing
• Persuasive writing, using a scenario of Newlandia
• Extended research essay

The aims of the unit are to enable students to strengthen their skills in writing, research and presenting. Students will explore the power of language and the characteristics of effective and ineffective writing; the relationships between written and spoken language; strategies for developing arguments; and the requirements of a range of types of writing including reports, letters, resumes, academic essays, summaries, media releases and persuasive writing.

The unit will support students in their written tasks in other subject areas, as well as providing them with workplace-oriented
skills that will enhance their performance in professional fields. Students will participate in a hypothetical scenario. They will be required to employ different forms of writing and communication tools to tackle issues that arise from this scenario. (Deakin Postgraduate Handbook 2007)

The persuasive writing section includes a scenario, an island called Newlandia which has a water problem and two organisations trying to solve it - the Newlandia Business Development Authority, and Newlandia Environment Council. There are several outcomes for the students to achieve - a letter to the editor (of one of the island papers), a media release, a news story or interview profile of the leaders of each organisation. The aim is to change styles and formats for each task, and define carefully the audience and purpose. Students work in one of the two organisations, and discuss approaches collaboratively, then develop individual responses. I have been delivering this unit with a print-based outline and some photos, with mixed success. In 2007 it had a web-based island simulation, with animations, audio and video used as breaking news triggers weekly.

This is not tackling all the trends forecast above. I am blending my approach, to the technologies, the neomillenial learning styles I perceive in the learners, and modes of delivery incorporated within the one unit.

Statistics taken from access to the Deakin Studies Online site reveal that there is a strong engagement with the Newlandia scenario. Figure 1 below indicates the high percentage of time taken in visits to the site, particularly in comparison to the Home Page, Unit Resources and Unit Guide sites which are key information sources and therefore regularly visited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Visits</th>
<th>Av Time per Visit</th>
<th>Total Time</th>
<th>% of Visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALW729 Writing for Comm.</td>
<td>131980</td>
<td>15:00:10</td>
<td>1294:06:04</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSTGRADUATE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newlandia</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>0:11:11</td>
<td>349:11:40</td>
<td>26.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Page</td>
<td>6902</td>
<td>0:00:48</td>
<td>92:08:12</td>
<td>7.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit Resources</td>
<td>2418</td>
<td>0:00:26</td>
<td>17:44:26</td>
<td>1.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALW729</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>0:03:44</td>
<td>13:17:00</td>
<td>1.03%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 Deskin Studies Online: ALW729 Writing for Communication Media Usage Statistics

The key point here is that the scenario seemed to cause students to explore further, to stay within that virtual world.

**Conclusions**

Some comments from the evaluations:

- Interesting scenarios, not bogged down with theory, enabled imaginative approach
- This was my best experience of DSO so far especi Newlandia
- I thought the Newlandia scenario kept the subject re interesting. I have participated in a DSO scenario like previously and really enjoyed it then as I did this same
- At first I was sceptical but in the end it was fun. K building it, it's good fun in there. Perhaps we could h pumped out more quantity in the various styles.
- I only had difficulty with Newlandia on my home PC didn't have the latest version of flash player for what needed. Newlandia provided a new and exciting way learn, if only real life situations were this easy to reseat
- The Newlandia scenario should create into CD-ROM students can practise anytime.

**Case Study 3: Writing for Professional Practice - the Bilby scenario for undergraduates**

An undergraduate scenario used the framework of Newlandia and reconstructed it as an Australian country town, Bilby. This is part of a unit called Writing for Professional Practice which is recommended as an initial or introductory unit students just starting their degrees. It is offered across all campuses and off campus across the year, and has approximat 500 students per year. They are in a range of degrees: generalist, media and communication, professional and creative writing, public relations, education - primary and secondary, health and behavioural science, particularly sports management and law.

Bilby is used to bring to life the tasks of report writing, narrative/profiles, letters of persuasion (e.g. to edit media releases and developing applications for jobs. Over seven weeks of the 13, Bilby becomes the focus of research as students become a part of a lobby group - Bilby Landcare, Bilby Business Association and Bilby Historical Society. They become a part of the town and write from that point of view, so their audience and purpose is clearly stipulated.

Bilby is full of stories - the current point of dispute is that town has grown too fast (9000 - 19,000 in five years) and need a new hospital. The Shire Council, in its wisdom, has stated that will be built on the old graveyard at the edge of town. This threatens the habitat of several endangered species (specifically the growling grassfrog) and the historical sensitivities of elements of the population.

Other stories are seeded in the scenario, for example:

- adventure or ecotourism opportunities - how manage tourism in Bilby
- wind farms and the debate on where they should located
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• the new leisure centre and how to get the people of Bilby fitter.

Each week's catalyst to develop a writing task is a Breaking News segment. There is potential for this to be in hard/electronic copy, or as part of the Shire Council's latest Media Release slot, or as a podcast in the local community radio station area - 3BBR.

An example of Breaking News would be:

BREAKING NEWS SESSION 8  BILBY - Media release

The letters to the editor have raised interest and media debate. Each group has decided to hold a special event to publicise their viewpoints.

• The Bilby Business Association is launching the plans for the new hospital, and they have invited the local member Daly Downs (who is Minister for the Community and Health) to present them to the community. John Herd, the local footballer who is now a star in the national league, will respond to the minister on behalf of the community.

• Bilby Landcare is meeting at the entrance to the graveyard, and has invited Garrett Pietro of the famous rock band Grassroots, to launch their campaign. He will be playing a song he has composed especially for the occasion. Garrett was a resident of Bendalong, who has since become nationally famous both for his music and his concern for the environment.

• Bilby Historical Society has put together an interactive historical presentation of Bilby in the Bilby Museum. The two most dynamic parts of the presentation are the depiction of the various settlers from the Gold Rush period to the last few years (including old photographs and the relevant tombstones from the graveyard), and the section dedicated to the recent TV show City Stresses Country Pleasures. The producer of the TV show, Valerie Gennini, will be opening the presentation.

Your group will need to decide on the program for the event, the date, time and place. Consider carefully your audience and purpose as you prepare the details of the event. Each member of the group will select one of the newspapers and send a media release to that newspaper.

Once more, the Deakin Studies Online site provided some interesting measurements of time taken to explore the scenario. In Figure 2 below, Bilby scores 26.66% of the time taken in visiting the Unit's site. This compares with, for instance, the home page, where everyone accesses the information and resources provided, and the Unit resources where there are many different notes and weblinks to explore.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<th>Total Time</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALW117 Writing for Professional Practice - UNDERGRADUATE</td>
<td>196398</td>
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<td>1660:01:43</td>
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<td>227</td>
<td>0:03:08</td>
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Figure 2: Deakin Studies Online: ALW117/217 Writing for Professional Practice usage statistics

Future trends

Both the undergraduate Creative Collaborations Project and the postgraduate Building Creative Teams students have since been surveyed on their attitudes to the range of learning approaches and technologies.

The top six preferred learning approaches resulting from surveying the group in Building Creative Teams:

• Working in groups/teams on experiential, immersive projects
• Group problem-solving and collaborative tasks using action learning ie solve problems as they arise
• Authentic workplace cases and scenario learning
• Coaching or mentoring with lecturer/tutor guidance with feedback and as a resource in a project
• Problem-based learning as individual - given a project problem/situation, asked to provide strategies to resolve
• Discussion (ie tutorial, online discussion area)

The top six preferred learning technologies for the postgraduate group are:

• Peer-to-peer collaboration tools - could include discussion boards, tools such as e-Live
• Wireless technologies - portable devices used in any classroom or other space
• Virtual worlds - interactively working with an online world which provides problems/issues/strategies for your responses
• Reusable content objects ie an online scenario which can be used in learning/assessment across more than one task or subject
• Digital portfolios - area to archive/store own work electronically for display to others
A comparison with the undergraduate group on future trends (using the Bonk and Graham descriptors referred to above) indicated the following conclusions.

There was a consistency between groups in learning approaches. The key differences were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Postgraduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teacher-directed</td>
<td>authentic workplace-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simulations</td>
<td>problem-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students developing learning</td>
<td>discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was also consistency between learning technologies. The differences were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Postgraduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simulations and games</td>
<td>virtual worlds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge management tools (DSO)</td>
<td>e-books, e-learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students' predictions of future trends, using the indicators from Bonk and Graham (2006) were remarkably similar. The only difference was the undergraduate higher preference for increased connectedness, community and collaboration versus postgraduate linking of working and learning.

To get to know the learner more, the study will go on to consider the learning styles currently identified by such tools as the Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Questionnaire and the Belbin Management Tool. The findings will shape further exploration of potential neomillenial learning styles and their impact on the drive for experiential learning.

Start with the learner, says Dede.

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Additional Resources

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