One step beyond: VLEs in art and design

What role can libraries play in supporting an eLearning culture?

Constructivist viewpoint (Malins and Pirie (2006))

- …**constructivist viewpoint**, that is that knowledge and understanding are not acquired passively but in an active manner through personal experience and experiential activities, learning is based on problem solving and active engagement with ideas.

- three 'generations' of VLE's, from passive transmission through to active collaboration and latterly reflective development.

Malins, Julian & Pirie, Ian (2006). Developing a Virtual Learning Environment for Art & Design: A Constructivist Approach, Gray's School of Art, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen

http://www.elia-artschools.org/_downloads/publications/EJHAE/Malins.doc

Courseware and pedagogy

Research by **Goodyear (2001)** and **Mayes(2005)**

Suggestion that courseware can be divided into 3 types – *Primary, Secondary and Tertiary*

- Primary = documents that convey information (i.e handouts, lecture notes)
- Secondary=Online tests or quizzes to question and apply new concepts
- Tertiary=captured online discourse (i.e discussion board) providing opportunity to engage in collaborative working

…..students input could then be used to drive further discussion and learning…..

Why bother with a VLE?

- ..the new technologies are improving access to learning, not just for minority groups but for all students' computers provide improved flexibility of study, allowing students to learn at different paces and according to different learning styles; the learning process itself can be **enhanced through imaginative use of ICT**
- **Sustainibility and support**

JISC

- to reduce the administrative load on tutors in order to allow them to manage their workload more effectively so that they can give more time to individual students. In addition it is to provide opportunities to improve the quality and variety of teaching and learning, enhancing current methods
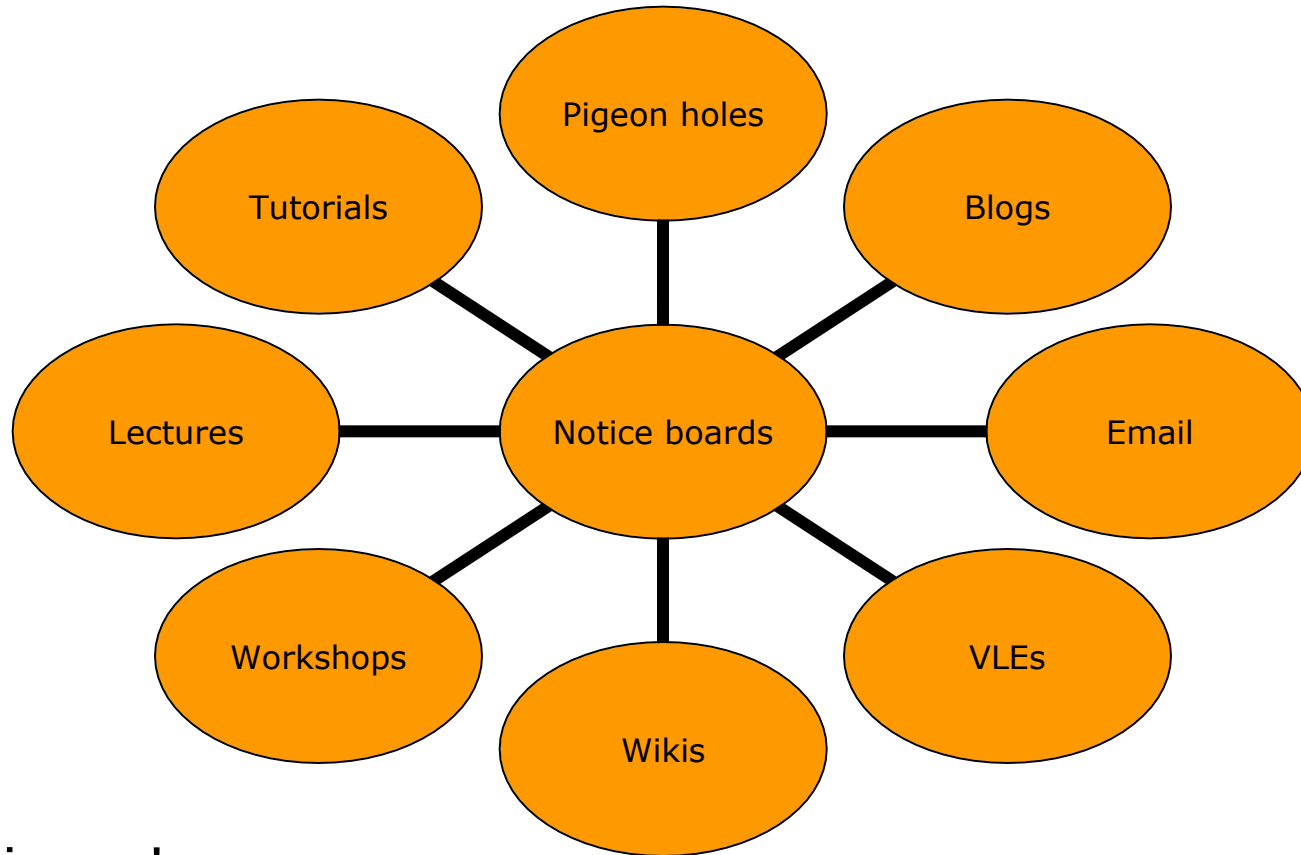
What do students want?

- Single search boxes like Amazon and Google giving instant satisfaction.
- More contact time with their tutors
- Opportunities for social networking (MSN, Youtube, Twitter, blogs, wikis.)
- Virtual access to information at times they want.
- Opportunities to learn from each other.

What do they get?

Confusion….!

Intranets versus VLEs

- □ "Why should I bother using an expensive VLE when I can provide the same sort of functionality on the college intranet?"
- □ "I have a
    - ▪ Contextual resource versus generic

So what are the benefits of using a VLE?

- It develops independent research skills
- Increases flexibility of provision
- Enhances capacity of integrating study with work and leisure.
- On screen learning can be made visually exciting (i.eYoutube, flickr, podcasting, wikis, etc)
- Ease of access to course materials and lecture notes
- Opportunity to share knowledge with peers…..

Some examples at the University for the Creative Arts

- http://www.blackboard.ucreative.ac.uk/webapps/login/

Why is takeup of VLEs in art and design so small?

- Lack of time to develop programmes
- Misconception that e learning is a replacement for studio teaching
- No technical support
- Confusion of communication channels

"Well, it's just a big filing cabinet isn't it?. Why use it when I've got a course secretary"

What skills do staff actually need to develop a VLE?

- **Content Creation** – increase the interactivity of Word or Powerpoint
- **Uploading content** – drag and drop
- **Online communication** – Email, discussion boards and synchronous chat
- **Online assessment** – Multiple choice, gap answer, mix and match
- **Course building** – understand functionality and sequence them into a course.
- **Course management** – Tracking learner activities, mark books and ability to add/remove learners from course.

- And of course pedagogy!

Approaches to training

- Blunderbuss – let's train everyone!
- Short sharp sessions – on a tool by tool basis
- THE SPECIALISTS – bring in specialist VLE trainers
- Cascading – VLE Champions
- The carrot – financial gain
- The surgery – specialist available for one to one guidance
- The newcomers – build into new staff inductions
- Use the VLE for CPD – i.e UCA PG Cert

Accessibility

2 main issues – accessibility of the **learning platform** and **accessibility of the content**

- The VLE itself should be included in the institutions inclusive teaching and widening participation strategies, as well as teaching and learning strategy and ILT strategy.

- See Ferl/TechDis/JISC RSCs publication 'Inclusive learning and Teaching (under Further Resources in packs)

- "Create more forums.
  We have only one place to post, which limits the effectiveness of what can be said, as we have to trudge through all topics to find any information we want! It is an unfriendly interface and system."
- "More tutor input on the forums"
- "Useful place to interact with other students to see each others work and ideas."
- "Perhaps access can be given to the visual theory lecturers as well or anyone else with an opinion?"
- "What I'm really interested in is the views of other students and what they think of my work. Why not involve students from other courses too?"
- " My major beef with blackboard is that the thread system used is about 5-6 years old, this isn't particulary a big problem, it just makes everything harder to read. If you look at modern forums like the Concept art forums that use the vbulletin system, the threads are much easier to read there. I realise that it's a lot to ask, but I feel that this is the direction KIAD should be going if they want to implement Blackboard on a larger scale."

Future directions

- More Stage 2 and Stage 3 courseware
- E Learning Strategy
- Communication protocol for students
- Rewarding teaching excellence
- Employ a consultant to encourage cultural shift
- Appoint a learning technologist
- Develop and share pilot projects
- Develop an E Learning Centre for Learning Technology (LSE model)

And for the library?

- Develop online Info Literacy programmes via Blackboard (see iskills@Bristol)
- Incorporate some Web 2.0 functionality into your VLE:

Tagging, wikis, podcasts, potential of the HE Scanning Licence..

Use the VLE as an **experimental online platform to showcase your resources!**

Be innovative...