Digital Collaboration work 2015

(Mairéad Meade, Peter Lynch, Julia McGrath & Kathy O' Hare)

"*How we learn in a ubiquitous information environment***"**

Introduction

In the digital era, information is an ubiquitous commodity mainly due to the mainstreaming of digital products and tools. Information and knowledge in today's society is instant and "live" and contributes to generating huge amount of data which is accessible through portable digital products.Technical and cultural information is everywhere and with the world connected to the Internet, this information is available to anyone, at any time; once they are connected.

Yet as humans, how do we become aware of this ubiquity of information? Digital humanities and humanists have a key role to play in educating students on how to harness the potential of this universal access information. As scholars and as digital humanists, we have a whole world of information available to us and considerable work to do in terms of being true to our digital humanitarianism. A number of scholars have put forward their own definition concerning digital humanities in recent times;

"The digital humanities field seems to offer a realm of study for exploring the changing dynamics between the research library and the scholar." Cunningham, L. (2010)

In its definition, Wikipedia highlights the educational potential of digital humanities "Digital humanities is an area of research and teaching at the intersection of computing and the disciplines of the humanities."

"The scholarly field of the digital humanities has recently expanded and integrated its fundamental concepts, historical coverage, relationship to social experience, scale of projects, and range of interpretive approaches. All this brings the overall field (including the related area of new media studies) to a tipping point where it has the potential not just to facilitate the work of the humanities but to represent the state of the humanities at large in its changing relation to higher education in the postindustrial state." Liu, A. (2012,*11*(1-2), 8-41).

Jones, (2013) states the following "I understand digital humanities as an umbrella term for a diverse set of practices and concerns, all of which combine computing and digital media with humanities research and teaching".

These definitions of digital humanities show how it can be at the forefront of educational initiatives to address the issues of learning in an ubiquitous information society.

Digital Learning (with universal information access)

Digital natives are young people who have grown up in an environment where accessible digital information is the norm and not something new. The term 'digital natives' is often used to refer to the generation born from late 70s to late 90s. (Teras & Mylla 2011). Although there are slight discrepancies amongst scholars regarding the precise start and end dates for the generation in question. From birth to their young adult years, their lives have been influenced, shaped and moulded by online digital technologies. They know that they are only 3 clicks away from any piece of information that they require. With domain information now being ubiquitous, how do we educate these digital natives?

Tapscott (2009) describes digital natives as being, among other things, globally thinking and natural collaborators, they appreciate freedom of choice, and are interested in finding new and creative ways to learn and share ideas and information. Tapscott also asserts that there is strong evidence to suggest that organisations that embrace new ways of working, experience better performance and higher rates of growth and success. Many colleges and specific departments now market directly to potential students (the majority of whom fit the criteria of being digital natives) on social media, but it is debateable as to whether or not they continue to engage effectively with those same students once they begin their studies.

75% of students admit to being on Twitter "all the time" (*Source*: TopUniversities.com). Some lecturers have sought to exploit the potential benefits of social media in education, with many faculties and societies using the micro-blogging site as a forum to exchange ideas, share content and answer queries. Some courses use hashtags that allow students to form an online community. Some educational commentators have asserted that this strategy provokes greater reflection and more thoughtful responses, as their contributions can be viewed by their peers, as well as their lecturers.

But when one considers the social media "upbringing" of this current generation, it may be worthwhile considering how adequately educational institutions are currently meeting their needs and learning requirements.

The term 'digital native' was used by the author Marc Prensky to describe young people who grew up immersed by digital technology. Prensky claimed that a digital environment dramatically changes the way that young people think and process information. While they are natural consumers of digital content, do young people and students have the skills required to critically analyse the information available to them? Prensky acknowledged the fact that in order to use digital technologies critically and effectively, young people need to acquire learning and analysis skills. In the years since Prensky's influential, but controversial work, many scholars have returned to examine the theory of digital natives. While it is true that technology plays an important role in most of our lives, contemporary society is a continuation of the past, and

despite its importance, technology is not the only determining factor in our lives. The challenges currently facing the educational sector cannot be entirely met by the application of digital tools and resources. (Helsper and Eynon 2009).

Where and how do young people acquire the skills necessary for the modern age? Up to recently, it was the role of educational institutions to acquire, disseminate and assess curriculum based information. If you wanted to learn mathematical skills such as algebra or geometry, you were taught these at school and in college. With online content providers such as the Khan Academy, students can now acquire these mathematical skills without having to leave their house. In addition, they have access to every conceivable mathematical subject area.

The negative aspects of heavy social media use have been frequently discussed, and the subject of many studies, but it is worth investigating if there is a positive aspect to social media use within the field of education, and if educational establishments have harnessed the full power of the medium to engage and interact with students. Does social media have the potential to form an effective educational tool, or is it merely a distraction?

It might be argued that distance learning models are actually more advanced than their campus-based counterparts with respect to online learning opportunities. By virtue of their nature, they are obliged to keep pace with trends and developments in technology and in order to promote communication with and between their students, and enhance the learning experience. An interest in the possible applications of virtual reality in educational provision has already emerged amongst the providers of distance learning models. Dominic Micklewright, a dean of academic partnerships at the university of Essex, believes mixed reality teaching and learning environments - which enable online students to enter a real face to face lecture virtually - will become increasingly popular. (www.theguardian.com).

Other than ensuring that we have digital competent students, what is the role of our educational institutions in this digital information age? Using just two online sources (Google and Wikipedia), students can access information on any topic or subject area in seconds. The conventional role of schools and colleges as libraries of information is now redundant. Yet more than ever, students need to acquire the skills and knowledge to manage their own education. With instant access to all curriculum related information, how is this information transformed into knowledge?

This is where our schools and colleges can expedite the development of self-directed learning. The "flipped classroom" model has proved successful in allowing students to study online with the role of the teacher changing to that of a facilitator. However this model is still not widespread in second and third level educational institutions.

An example of a "flipped classroom" model can be seen in digital humanitarianism. Digital communities have been advancing in terms of delivery of training and the utilisation of digital tools in comparison to the more traditional institutionalised educational structures mentioned above.

Digital Humanitarianism

The beauty of the digital humanitarianism concept lies in the fact that anyone can participate and get involved. Technology platforms have allowed for the exchange of data which means that in theory volunteers can contribute to a "live mapping" project,using open source platforms removing the physical need to be on location thus transcending time and space.

Current projects that Humanitarian Open Streets are working on are in Afghanistan, South Sudan and Hurricane Patricia. These projects involve training up volunteers on the digital interface of JOSM. JOSM is the software that HOT (Humanitarian Open Street Maps) use as their platform. Skills and knowledge are passed from volunteer to volunteer thus decentralising the knowledge base. This is a central theme in the online movement and one which we have discussed at length previously (Ken Robinson).

Kathy O' Hare experienced the use of social media technology as a volunteer co-ordinator. Her description shows how quickly we learn and adapt these technologies for real-world uses:
"One of the observations I made was how approachable these volunteers are. I have been invited to google docs meetings, skype calls with 26 other people representing various projects and organisations all working in a collaborative manner. The concept of sharing and exchanging knowledge is very much present within the culture of these groups and I have to say it is also very inspiring, this type of energy permeates and transcends across the virtual screen".

She moves on to describe the following "I recently had my first online mapping training session with a volunteer co-ordinator. The language used and the directions given were very clear. I was made feel at ease from the very beginning of the call. My introduction session was a skype call which lasted over an hour. The results of which I can now begin to map my own local area. Once I have mastered the mapping skills myself, I will then be going to Calais Refugee Camp where I will be passing on my newly learned skills to residents in the camp and start mapping the Camp and the journeys that these amazingly resilient people have taken to get to Calais."

Conclusion

If information is ubiquitous, this means that the digital humanities field has open access to a huge amount of freely available information through the internet and also via television and radio, newspapers, books, journals, websites and blogs. Even the local library contributes to this ubiquitous information available to us as digital humanists.

Owing to its inherent interdisciplinary approach, digital humanities has a key role to play in transforming our educational thinking and teaching to cope with the opportunities and challenges posed by our ubiquitous information environment.

The overarching theme of this paper is the positive application of digital technology to modern life, be that through education or mapping projects. Freely open access digital tools and information has contributed to the emergence of 'live mapping', an aspect of digital humanitarianism that allows volunteers throughout the world to make an effective and positive contribution to society.

While the utilisation of technology in the field of education in general, but particularly within the distance learning model, has provided learners with greater opportunities for engagement, discovery and collaboration. It has also allowed people to access educational programmes who might not otherwise have had the opportunity.

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TEAM Conversations

Sat 18.00 21/11/2015
Had quick peak there...Looking good Peter..If possible can we all pick a time for tomr at some stage to for half hour?

Put your name when you are available

Morning   Kathy
Afternoon Kathy Mairead
Evening   Kathy Mairead Peter

We need to work on the bibliography and the conclusion tomorrow.

I have accepted your changes to my introduction, Peter. I will meet ye here this evening hopefully. Thanks, Mairéad

Ok Mairead, any time in particular ?

I'll be back at 19:30

Meeting 8pm 19/11/2015
Present Mairead & Kathy

Hi Mairead...Kathy here...Where did all the side bar discussion go?
I accidentally resolved the conversation sorry. silly me!
1.Okay..If anyones knows how to get them back can they do it please, I dont know how to?

2.I guess the next thing to do is for everyone to read over the skeleton framework? I will put up the breakdown of themes which may be of use. (From memory so there will be stuff missing)

Themes

Mairead Meade-
Dichotomy Teaching & Learning, The role of the Student and Teacher, Creating digital Cultures & digital tools.

Kathy O' Hare-
Accessibility & Open Source,Time & Space Barriers,online training cultures/facilitation & digital tools.

Peter Lynch-
Ubiquitous (pushing time & space barriers), instantaneous information, process of online learning, Role of Teacher to Facilitator. Institutional catch up.

Julia Mcgrath-
Social Media & Education, Distance learning, Time & Space Barriers (advantageous to educational institutions), digital tools, Institutional catch up.

Mairead You mentioned something about a bibliography?

Yeah it's an add-on, it's down the bottom of the document

I guess we need to connect the intro with the content and make a conclusion
then add to the bibliography (add-on) each of us according to our own quotations

Sounds like a plan.
if you work on the intro so and Ill work on my piece a little and so some tidying up as well, that will give the others a chance to catch on whats been going?

ok, I will also give a sentence or two to the conclusion and we can decide what to use

Fab..
Will we go for tomr evening at 7pm for another meeting/chat here in the document?

okey dokey
Great stuff...chat tomr!
kool, see u then
lol I just found the comments-top right hand corner button that says "COMMENTS"

INDIVIDUAL ARTICLES-------------

Digital humanitarianism - Educating: Teaching and Learning in a digital framework

On being a digital humanist:

By Mairéad Meade

"The digital humanities field seems to offer a realm of study for exploring the changing dynamics between the research library and the scholar." Cunningham, L. (2010)

Wikipedia - "Digital humanities is an area of research and teaching at the intersection of computing and the disciplines of the humanities"

Wikipedia - "The humanities are academic disciplines that study human culture"

I am a radio broadcaster or so I thought until I started this Master's in Digital Cultures. I never thought I would be calling myself a digital humanist but I realise now that this is what I am fast becoming.

Now I am interested in more than radio broadcasting. I want to be a part of the online world of digital cultures and make a difference. I am now a digital humanist. I want to immerse myself in the digital humanities that study human culture through computers and particularly (for me) via the world wide web's online radio resources.

"The scholarly field of the digital humanities has recently expanded and integrated its fundamental concepts, historical coverage, relationship to social experience, scale of projects, and range of interpretive approaches. All this brings the overall field (including the related area

of new media studies) to a tipping point where it has the potential not just to facilitate the work of the humanities but to represent the state of the humanities at large in its changing relation to higher education in the postindustrial state."

Liu, A. (2012). The state of the digital humanities A report and a critique. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, *11*(1-2), 8-41.

I hope to teach Radio Broadcasting in higher education at the end of this year as I believe that studying the digital humanities is giving me a broader spectrum on how to teach a digital culture and how to teach how to work with digital tools from the perspective of teaching and learning. Studying the digital humanities is helping me become a better teacher.

"I understand digital humanities as an umbrella term for a diverse set of practices and concerns, all of which combine computing and digital media with humanities research and teaching".

Jones, S. E. (2013). *The emergence of the digital humanities*. Routledge.

The emergence of the digital humanities has given me grounds not only to learn but to teach and to specialise my teaching in the area of radio broadcasting towards giving a wider "culture" of digital tools and digital humanities' knowledge to my future students.

I am learning how to be a teacher and how to channel my digital knowledge in my specialist field of radio broadcasting towards my future students all thanks to this Master's in Digital Cultures. I am very grateful for this opportunity to learn and to teach.

Digital Humanitarianism-Kathy O' Hare

Patrick Mier (youtube) describes Digital humanitarianism as a "network of networks". The world of digital humanitarianism is one of collaboration, exchange and freedom of big data in order to help shape humanitarian crisis response. It is an extremely exciting area of decentralisation and the utilisation of open source technologies.

The use of social media for natural and manmade disasters has imploded over the past number of years. Arab spring and Hurricane Sandy to give examples. As with all crisis situations information is a valuable asset that can help or hinder a crisis intervention or plan of operation. Lack of information or "old" information can create havoc when assessing needs on the ground. As these situations are so fluid and circumstances literally change by the second it can be difficult to coordinate plans.

Interestingly having access to huge amounts of data (Big data or Big Crisis Data) that is generated through social media can be just as inefficient as having no information at all. Verifying sources and credibility can also slow down response.

NGO structures are not typically designed to cope with advances in technology and social media communications. This has created a gap of which technical and digital volunteers have come together in the hope of radicalising response time to crisis and also to risk asses structural impact as a preventative measure.

The beauty of this digital humanitarianism concept lies in the fact that anyone can participate and get involved. Technology platforms have allowed for the exchange of data which means that in theory I can contribute to "live mapping" an area of disaster from my home in Cork that maybe happening in Haiti or Philippines or anywhere in the world.

Essentially tools like this are empowering grassroots organisations and communities and moving towards a notion of the "digitally conscious global citizenship". This gives communities agency as opposed to what we see now which is the inability for structured organisations to react on the ground. An example of which is demonstrated by social media activism & volunteers throughout Europe organising in Greece, Croatia and Serbia. Whilst the structured organisations (Red Cross, Medicin du Monde, and Save the Children) are having talk shops in Geneva, grassroots volunteers are leading the way advising these NGOS on distributions, donating stock to them and generally keeping them up to date as they battle with inefficiency political bureaucracy.

The current refugee "crisis" unfolding is Europe is one that is heavily reliant on digital platforms from organising volunteers on social media to mobile phone charge up units to using real time humanitarian open street mapping.

Educating "Digital Natives"   (PETER LYNCH)
How we learn now that information is ubiquitous

Digital natives are young people who have grown up in an environment where accessible digital information is the norm and not something new. From birth to their young adult years, their lives have been influenced, shaped and moulded by online digital technologies. They know that they are only 3 clicks away from any piece of information that they require. With domain information now being ubiquitous, how do we educate these digital natives?

The term 'digital native' was used by the author Marc Prensky to describe young people who grew up immersed by digital technology. Prensky claimed that a digital environment dramatically changes the way that young people think and process information. While they are natural consumers of digital content, do young people and students have the skills required to critically analyse the information available to them? Prensky acknowledged the fact that in order to use digital technologies critically and effectively, young people need to acquire learning and analysis skills.

Where and how do young people acquire these skills? Up to recently, it was the role of educational institutions to acquire, disseminate and assess curriculum based information. If you wanted to learn mathematical skills such as algebra or geometry, you were taught these at school and in college. With online content providers such as the Khan Academy, students can now acquire these mathematical skills without having to leave their house. In addition, they have access to every conceivable mathematical subject area.

Yet young people do not inherently possess the learning skills required in this age of ubiquitous information. Exposure to technology cannot be equated with ability to use it as an educational tool. ICT and digital skills are a prerequisite for all students. However the levels of digital competence vary widely across Europe. The 2014 EU Horizon Report Europe also highlights the wide discrepancies in digital competency levels for young people across Europe.

Besides ensuring that we have digital competent students, what is the role of our educational institutions in this digital information age? Using just two online sources (Google and Wikipedia), students can access information on any topic or subject area in seconds. The conventional role of schools and colleges as libraries of information is now redundant. Yet more than ever, students need to acquire the skills and knowledge to manage their own education. With instant access to all curriculum related information, how is this information transformed into knowledge?

This is where our schools and colleges can expedite the development of self-directed learning. The "flipped classroom" model has proved successful in allowing students to study online with the role of the teacher changing to that of a facilitator. However this model is still not widespread in second and third level educational institutions.

Digital natives are accustomed to instantaneous feedback and experiential learning. In addition to student's skills, there is an increasing need for teachers and educators to be trained and upskilled in digital educational methodologies.

As a student in the late 80s, my own experience of our formal education system was mixed. In secondary school, you figured out it was a game and you had to learn the rules to achievement results. It would have been better if you were rewarded for learning, rather than data regurgitation. From what I have heard from present day students, it seems like some of the same problems exist and we are still struggling to implement effective models to assess our digital native students.

Social Media and Education – Julia McGrath

One of the most popular social networks, Facebook, was initially developed at Harvard University, before spreading to other U.S. colleges. So it may be pertinent to now discuss the role of social media in education. Statistics compiled by Ofcom show that 66% of all adults aged 16+ have a profile on at least one social networking site.

For many, social media use has become something of an addiction, with the acronym F.O.M.O, (fear of missing out) being coined to explain what pushes many people to compulsively check and post to their network of choice. The negative aspects of heavy social media use have been frequently discussed, and the subject of many studies, but it is worth investigating if there is a positive aspect to social media use within the field of education, and if educational establishments have harnessed the full power of the medium to engage and interact with students. Does social media have the potential to form an effective educational tool, or is it merely a distraction?

Many colleges and specific departments now market directly to potential students on social media, but it is debateable as whether or not they continue to engage effectively with those same students once they begin their studies.

75% of students admit to being on Twitter "all the time" (*Source*: TopUniversities.com). Some lecturers have sought to exploit the potential benefits of social media in education, with many faculties and societies using the micro-blogging site as a forum to exchange ideas, share content and answer queries. Some courses use hashtags that allow students to form an online community.

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It might be argued that distance learning models are actually more advanced than their campus-based counterparts with respect to online learning opportunities. By virtue of their nature, they are obliged to keep pace with trends and developments in technology and in order to promote communication with and between their students, and enhance the learning experience.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are growing exponentially in higher education. They challenge the mainstream of higher education and provide global learning opportunities to a huge number of students so they can learn anytime and anywhere. The MOOC movement has arisen largely because of the shortcomings of traditional learning models in higher education, namely the inability to reach a large number of learners and the failure to implement open and networking technologies. The development of MOOCs is rooted within the ideals of openness in

education: "knowledge should be shared freely, and the desire to learn should be met without demographic, economic, and geographical constraints" (Yuan & Powell, 2013, p. 6).

Early data from some of the most successful MOOCs indicates that student participation is greatly increased when social media platforms are integrated with the learning programme, and at the same time, student drop-out rates are reduced. While MOOCs may be a relatively new phenomenon, these early indications suggest that the introduction of social media can have a very positive influence, one which universities can perhaps ill afford to ignore for long.

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