

**Title:** Breaking down barriers: 'hanging out' online

**Presenters:** Sue Beckingham and John Walton  
Sheffield Hallam University

### **Abstract:**

#### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- identify the barriers to effective communication on a distance learning course
- see how the introduction of activities using web 2.0 tools can enhance the delivery of teaching using the traditional VLE
- understand the preparation required to implement such tools tool to ensure that both tutor and students are confident in using them
- appreciate how these enhancements can impact on the learning experience within and beyond the classroom/office hours
- discuss how such enhancements could help the development of digital literacy skills with a positive impact on future learning

#### **Session Outline**

Key issues to be addressed are:

The introduction of a module traditionally taught face to face to full-time post-graduate students was offered to part-time distance learning students. Due to the discursive nature of the subject taught, it had become apparent that the opportunity to have an open debate within the classroom was not being realised by those on the DL route. In an attempt to replicate this experience the use of discussion boards had been used, but it was evident that not every individual was engaging. There was a clear danger that this was encouraging a passive mode of learning in isolation. New activities to scaffold knowledge construction and provide a more authentic way for students to collaborate and *socially* interact (Bird 2007) with their tutor were sought.

The exponential growth in social media has opened opportunities for anyone with access to the internet to a wide range of free tools that enable social dialogues to take place online. Their affordances have enabled such interactions to be openly public or confined to invited individuals within a group; and more importantly in the context of this module include tools that allow the users to talk, listen and see each other. However for both tutor and students this was uncharted territory and they embarked as visitors rather than experienced residents (White 2011). What we will explore in this paper is the impact the use of Google hangouts had on the student learning; the use of screencasting and YouTube had on the Tutor's

learning; and the key developmental processes which included orientation, communication, socialisation and organisation (Levy 2007) that took place to achieve this.

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 20 minutes | Presentation of the discussion paper (which will include an introduction to the web 2.0 tools used in this pilot study)   |
| 25 minutes | Discussion<br>Indicative questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How important is to scaffold the introduction of new technology into teaching?</li><li>• What value will the development of digital literacy skills bring to future learning?</li><li>• Considering the barriers to effective communication what other enhancements could be made using digital technology?</li></ul> |

### **References**

Bird, L. (2007) The 3 C design model for networked collaborative e-learning: a tool for novice designers. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* vol. 4, no. 2, pp 153-167.

Levy, P. (2007) 'Living' theory: a pedagogical framework for process support in networked learning. *ALT-J* 14:3, pp 225-240.

White, D. S. and LeCorni, A. (2011) Visitors and Residents: A new typology for online engagement. *First Monday* Vol. 16, No. 9.