Welcome and introduction

Welcome to this special edition of our Better@Bath publication marking the conclusion of our digital literacies project, Professionalism in the Digital Environment (PriDE).

The main aim of the PriDE project, led and managed by Kyriaki Anagnostopoulou, our Head of e-Learning, has been to explore how we can support staff and students to develop digital skills in their professional lives. During the last two years, PriDE has helped to facilitate discussion and identify the needs of the different disciplines in relation to digital literacy skills. Although we have reached the formal completion of the project, we will be maintaining an on-going focus on this work. In my role as Chair of the PriDE Steering Group, it has become clear that if we are to be successful in enabling staff and students to develop the skills to operate in an increasingly demanding digital society, we must provide appropriate support and create the right learning opportunities.

Student involvement in PriDE has been central to the project from inception including representation on the Steering Group, membership of the project team, employment of students to undertake data analysis and participation in both the faculty learning communities and mini-projects. This level of involvement has benefited the project significantly, helping to inform how we can embed digital literacies in the student experience. We will continue to give this work priority through the Student Experience Forum.

Building on this successful project, we are now well placed to support an institutional approach to digital literacies that we will reflect in our new learning and teaching strategy. As the articles in this issue capture both the findings and outcomes from PriDE, I hope you will find it both informative and thought provoking as we continue to seek ways of enhancing our student experience.

Professor Bernie Morley
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching)

The PriDE project has been a great opportunity to get students and staff talking about digital skills and exploring the roles they play in our lives. Although students are engaging with new technologies from their earliest years, the extent to which they arrive at University equipped with the most appropriate skills and understanding is hugely variable. For some students, skills acquisition comes as second nature but for others, this is not always the case. The PriDE project has provided an engaging and constructive way of helping to map both the tools and related skills needed within the different subject disciplines and also highlighted where we need to create new development opportunities.

The project has been an excellent demonstration of the working ethos of the University where students are active partners in their learning environment. Students have played key roles as part of the faculty learning communities, the Steering Group and the project team including the students who helped to create the tools that emerged as part of the process. E-learning and technology are key priorities for students, and the PriDE project has enabled us to explore a range of different ways to enhance our delivery in this critical area. It has provided a strong foundation for the University and the Students’ Union to build on for the future.

Whilst the project is now coming to a close, this only marks the beginning of what looks to be a strong chapter in the history of the University. Technologies and the skills required to use them effectively are evolving constantly, not just in higher education but in all aspects of today’s society. The outcomes of this project will help steer and shape new approaches, both for the students who study here and the academic community as a whole.

Alexander Pool
Education Officer, Students’ Union, (2012-13)
One of the hardest skills for students in Humanities and Social Science to master is the ability to reflect and write critically on contemporary issues for different audiences. As part of a Master course (Politics and Policy in Developing Countries) the convener, Dr Séverine Deneulin worked with the PriDE project team, to introduce a reflective blogging activity for students. The activity was not formally assessed but was introduced to help students learn critical argumentation skills as well as to practice how to structure an argument in preparation for the formally assessed essay at the end of the course.

Each week a different group of students were given one or two questions to reflect on and were asked to write up to 1000 words on a collective Wordpress blog set up for the activity. Each question was related to the course content ad readings for the week.

Examples of questions included:

- Is the Occupy movement an example of participatory democracy?
- Should the ‘Muslim Brotherhood’ be seen as part of civil society?
- Is it right for the UK to ring-fence the aid budget while cutting down social expenditures domestically?

In each case students were required to justify their answers. A member of the PriDE project team attended a seminar session to demonstrate the Wordpress platform to students and address any questions regarding the activity. Interestingly, students chose to keep the blog private rather than public as very few of them had any experience blogging prior to the activity and they felt their confidence would be knocked should their ideas be publicly exposed. The blog posts were used as a basis for class discussion and students were given individual feedback on their posts from Dr Deneulin if they wanted it.

Dr Deneulin is looking forward to running a similar activity on the course next year. “The trick” she says “is to emphasise the informal, playful and ludic nature of blogging, while encouraging students to see the value in the exercise for preparing them for their formally assessed work.”

Julian Prior, PriDE Project Officer in collaboration with Dr Séverine Deneulin, Senior Lecturer, Department of Social & Policy Sciences

Dr Allum also noted an increase in attendance and more sophisticated participation in the seminars. Students commented that they received and appreciated more extensive feedback on their presentations. Feedback came from their peers and their tutor, both online and subsequently, during the seminar sessions. In addition students valued the opportunity to self-assess their presentations. One student commented:

“This is an exceptionally useful tool for self-evaluation”.

For almost all the students, this was their first experience of creating an online presentation. As well as supporting their learning on the unit, the students reported having gained awareness of ‘new and creative’ approaches to presenting. Over half the students mentioned that they had developed new skills as a result of creating online presentations, including how to use their voice more effectively through changing pace, tone or rhythm. Several students talked about the challenges of engaging with an ‘invisible audience’ stimulating reflections about online identity. The online presentations also opened a debate around copyright, creative commons and appropriate attribution of digital images. Dr Allum has plans to keep online presentations as a formative task in her Organised Crime unit but will look to embed them in the assessment for the unit. She also has plans to extend the use of online presentations in her second year unit, ‘Italian politics and society: Italy since 1945’.

Dr Felia Allum, Lecturer, Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies and Mrs Geraldine Jones, e-Learning Officer, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences

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Enhancing critical thinking and writing

Students presenting to their peers as a stimulus for discussion and analysis of key issues has traditionally been the format for face-to-face seminars on the Organised Crime Unit, which forms part of a Masters programme. This approach brings with it a number of teaching and learning challenges including:

- as seminar groups grow in size the time taken in listening to presentations during the seminar increases leaving less time for in depth discussion.
- attendance in seminars is sometimes reduced to only those students whose turn it is to present, thereby constraining the potential benefits accrued from peer to peer critique.
- equitable participation can be difficult to manage as some students’ presentations over run, which means that others are cut short.

To address these issues, Dr Felia Allum changed the presentation task from PowerPoint presentations shared face-to-face to narrated presentations created, shared and peer reviewed online via Voicethread (a Web 2.0 service). Dr Allum’s aim was to create more time in the face-to-face seminar session for a range of group tasks including “fish bowl” discussions, role play activities and debates designed to promote a deeper exploration of the week’s theme. This small change resulted in a variety of benefits for the 26 students studying the unit. Students noted that the online presentations helped them better prepare for the seminars. Dr Allum commented:

“The online presentation means that people come to the seminars with some background knowledge of a given topic. This enables more time to be dedicated toward debate, rather than setting the groundwork of the debate through presentations at the start of the seminar.”

http://go.bath.ac.uk/betteratbath
Dr Niki Panteli is Unit Co-ordinator and Instructor on Virtual Organising, an undergraduate course that aims to deepen students' understanding of how information and communication technologies enable organisations to build teams and collaborate virtually. On the course students are encouraged to think “beyond technology” and examine issues of online collaboration, trust and conflict resolution. Each year, Dr Panteli runs an activity with students which exposes them to practical examples of meeting and collaborating online. This year Dr Panteli decided to work with the PriDE project team to develop and run a real-time exercise in virtual team-building. The aim of this was to increase student engagement by getting them to explore the affordances of a particular collaboration tool (Adobe Connect).

Prior to the activity, students were assigned to groups and given a case study to analyse; this was displayed in the shared document area of Adobe Connect and students could access it as soon as they could login in. Initially, all students remained within the plenary online space where they were introduced to the online collaborative platform (Adobe Connect) and were briefed on the case study. It was explained that they had just over an hour to work on this activity and that they had to produce a PowerPoint presentation by the end of the session. Following this, students moved into their break-out rooms and it was only then that they met their other group members. Five groups were formed. Pride facilitators were available to assist students with any technical problems during the activity. With the end of the activity, students moved into the online plenary space where they gave feedback.

The outcome of the activities was used for class discussions in the session that followed; students were also asked to discuss this virtual team experience in their individual assignments. Despite some technical problems, overall students found the activity worthwhile and the feedback was positive.

Dr Panteli plans to use Adobe Connect in next year’s unit as she considers this a valuable tool for exposing students to the opportunities and challenges of virtual team collaborations and offering opportunities for the development of subject-specific digital literacies.

Julian Prior, PriDE Project Officer in collaboration with Dr Niki Panteli, Reader in Information Systems, School of Management

http://go.bath.ac.uk/betteratbath
Developing a tool for self-assessing student digital literacies

From conversations with the Students’ Union (SU) at Bath we discovered that, contrary to common belief, that all students are ‘digital natives’, i.e. familiar and confident with using digital technologies, the reality of students’ understanding and skills in this area is far more complex. Whilst many students may know how to use Facebook or tablet devices for personal entertainment do they know how to maximise learning technologies in order to enhance their profiles for prospective employers? Are they aware of the particular digital skills and competencies needed to succeed on their programme of study, for example? And if not, do they know where, and how, to improve their digital literacies?

With this challenge in mind, the PriDE project team set about developing an online survey tool to help students self-assess their digital literacies. Working closely with Senior Systems and Software Developer, Alastair Hole from the e-Learning Team, and final year Computer Science student, Ivan Dyankov, we created a survey for each of the Faculties and the School of Management. Each survey is based upon the graduate digital skills, attributes and practices identified by the Faculties themselves as being most desirable for their students. The code for the survey was adapted with kind permission from the University of Exeter’s Cascade Project (https://projects.exeter.ac.uk/cascade/). Once completed we will make the adapted code available to the education community under open license.

After students have responded to the survey questions, they are presented with personalised feedback. This feedback is presented as a radar chart that reveals their competence in different aspects of digital literacy. This includes areas such as creativity, confidence and communication. For aspects needing further attention, the student is signposted to a range of training and development opportunities at Bath.

The online tool is currently being piloted with students and is available at: http://skills-survey.bath.ac.uk We would welcome feedback from students and staff on the survey which will in time be located within a collection of online resources focused on enhancing the first year student experience at Bath. We hope this survey tool will provide a valuable resource to students and hope to see wider take-up across the higher education community.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this project has been working with Ivan Dyankov, who undertook the development of the survey as part of his final year dissertation in Computer Science, together with his supervisor and Director of Teaching, Alan Hayes. As well as enhancing his own digital literacy skills, Ivan was keen to emphasise how working on this project has made him an attractive proposition for potential employers. Ivan said:

“I can definitely say that working on the skills survey has made me more employable. In parallel with working on PriDE, I was also sending out applications for graduate jobs. When I was invited to attend an interview with a potential graduate employer, I was able to bring in examples from my work on the PriDE project. I think employers really liked that, because it showed them that I am a person who can take on responsibility, manage projects and solve problems.”

Julian Prior, PriDE Project Officer, Learning & Teaching Enhancement Office
The decade or so since I was an undergraduate at Bath has given me ample time to reflect on being a student. Whether it was learning how to become a Senior Trainer for the Skills Training Programme or participating in the Musicals Society, this extra-curricular involvement clearly shaped my personal and professional interests. I have also considered my own Industrial Placement experience, from which it was clear that employers placed great importance on the ability to use digital technologies and tools.

One of the key areas of development in the Students’ Union has been the successful implementation of The Bath Award. Established in 2008, its aim is to recognise and accredit the achievements of students engaged in extra-curricular activities whilst at the University. Supported by Santander Universities, this scheme is open to all students, where completion of it appears on degree transcripts. One of the main learning outcomes is to give students an opportunity to articulate their skills development in preparation for employment. As part of their portfolio, students are expected to evidence their skills development within a Skills Competency Framework; namely Teamwork, Written Communication, Verbal Communication, Leadership, Commercial Awareness and Problem Solving.

Over the last year, I have worked with Samantha Chaffey, the Bath Award Co-ordinator, and Julian Prior, PriDE Project Officer, to develop a new optional element into The Bath Award to cover core competencies and skills linked to digital literacies. Our aim is to give students encouragement to self-recognise and have accredited those digital skills that they acquire. For example, these could have been obtained not only through Students Union’ activities such as ‘Apps Crunch’, but also those developed in the running of student societies and on their industrial placement year. The Digital Literacy statements which were developed by faculty learning communities as part of PriDE, were used to guide the writing of the assessment criteria, with key terms associated with Blooms Taxonomy of Learning to give an evidence-based approach to our work.

“Employers are increasingly looking for graduates with more than just a degree, who can demonstrate a high level of digital literacy.

By offering this area as part of The Bath Award, our students are able to receive formal recognition for skills which are often implicitly developed throughout a degree programme. The skills that students demonstrate through completing The Bath Award really set Bath graduates apart from students at other universities.”

Scott Burfiend, SU Activities Officer (2013-14)

Following the introduction of this new element, further enhancements that will enable students to keep building their digital literacy skills are planned. These include the piloting of Mahara, an e-portfolio application, to allow students to collate and present their portfolios online.

As part of PriDE’s activities in year two, the project team has been pleased to work with both the Library and the Students’ Union (SU) to design and set up two mini-projects. Part of the project’s aims were to consider the skills and knowledge requirements of both staff and students in relation to digital literacies and these two projects have been designed to help achieve this.

In an increasingly digital age, the University Library recognises the importance of ensuring staff stay abreast of new technological developments in order to provide a well-informed support service to students and have designed a seven week staff development programme focusing on social media literacy. The main aim of the programme is to raise awareness of a range of digital tools and technologies and explore how to use them effectively. During the programme, staff will be given the opportunity to use these tools themselves and consider their applications.

Members of Library staff will be able to participate in regular one hour sessions over the seven weeks. Topics will include blogging, Twitter, use of wikis, screen casting, web conferencing and managing your online identity. David Stacey will be setting up a collective blog in which participating staff will be able to reflect on their learning experiences.

Working with Lisa Taylor, Bath Award Co-ordinator, from the SU, a workshop has been designed that is run by students for students. This workshop builds on a similar event, run as part of PriDE with the Careers Team earlier in the year, entitled ‘Managing your online identity’.

The main aim of this workshop is to support students to understand the importance of digital literacies specifically in relation to managing your online identity. Having already introduced a digital practice component to the Bath Award, this workshop will complement that activity. The students running the workshop were trained at a ‘Train the Trainer’ workshop in early June.

Examining issues around creating and maintaining an effective online presence, often referred to as a digital footprint, participants will learn how to maximise this in order to enhance their employability. During October and November, the workshop will be run as two 90 minute interactive sessions exploring good and bad practice examples of using media tools such as LinkedIn and Facebook. The SU is keen to integrate this session permanently into the annual SU Skills Training Programme.

Sarah Turpin, PriDE Dissemination Officer, Learning & Teaching Enhancement Office

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As we live out more and more of our lives in an online environment, it has become increasingly important to raise awareness of our “digital footprint”; the traces and trails we leave online when we upload images or videos of ourselves, contribute to blog or forum posts or tweet about our studying, work or leisure time. From the start of the PriDE project we were keen to work closely with students to examine the challenges of presenting a professional online identity, particularly with the University of Bath’s excellent record in helping to place graduates in full-time employment. As Careers Adviser, Ghislaine Dell explained, “Not all employers check candidates’ social media presence or Google them to see what comes up. However, I see almost weekly statements from employers about how important it is for candidates to have a consistent and professional online profile. We developed this workshop to help students think about the importance of digital identity and the best way to construct and manage their own.”

With this in mind, the PriDE Project Team worked with Ghislaine to design and run an interactive student workshop with the aim of exploring the importance of creating and maintaining a professional online identity. A secondary aim was to help students use social media in an active and appropriate way as part of their career search. The workshop included the use of an Audience Response System (ARS) to gauge students’ attitudes towards, and usage of, social media. This particular topic generated plenty of lively discussion about the attributes of an appropriate and professional online identity. We considered both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ examples of online identities in the form of LinkedIn profiles, and students were given the opportunity to assess their digital footprint using an online tool. One student commented: “I really enjoyed the session, it was great to hear about other people’s experiences with social networks and online identities, and I particularly enjoyed learning about LinkedIn as up until then I didn’t know the first thing about it.”

The workshop will now be offered to students as an integral part of the Careers Advisory Service’s Skills Development Programme and a similar session will be run with library staff as part of their summer Staff Development Programme. Faculties at the University have also expressed an interest in running the workshop during student induction. Finally, we will be offering a ‘Managing Your Online Professional Identity’ workshop run by students for students as part of the Students’ Union Skills Training Programme in the next academic year.

Julian Prior, PriDE Project Officer in collaboration with Dr Ghislaine Dell, Careers Advisor, Careers Advisory Service
Giles Martin, Course Director for the Bath Course for Enhancing Academic Practice has, together with PriDE Project Officer, Julian Prior, taken to the "Director's Chair" to create a collection of short case study videos to demonstrate the wide variety of technologies being used by academic staff across the University.

With the main aim of the project being to capture the experiences of staff using technologies to enhance their practice in learning, teaching and research, Giles and Julian are also seeking to highlight both the range of technologies being used and the different ways they are enhancing the student experience.

Each video clip, two to five minutes in length, will show a member of staff explaining how and why they use a particular technology as part of their academic practice. This will include highlighting the benefits or advantages in addition to the problems they may have encountered. The main audience for these video clips is other academic staff/teaching fellows here at the University and they will be available online for ease of access. The sharing of these experiences will help to inform staff who may be interested in exploring the use of a particular technology but have little time available to determine the benefits and value. Gaining first-hand experience and ideas from within our own university context should provide valuable insight for interested staff.

Talking about the project, Giles said:
"Our hope for these resources is that they will provide a quick and easy way for busy academic staff to find out more about a wide range of technologies and their potential application whilst also inspiring greater and more effective use of technology to enhance academic practice."

Julian added:
"We have purposefully opted to use basic equipment and informal filming making it easy for other people to get involved at a later date. Videos enable us to easily provide real personal accounts of the activities that staff are engaged in here and we give easy access through the Vimeo channel."

Giles and Julian are aiming to have an initial set of videos ready by the end of the summer in time for the start of the new academic year. The project will be on-going to build up a comprehensive collection. The collection will be provided online via the Vimeo channel with the clips also being embedded, to offer examples within other areas such as Moodle and web pages. The videos will be released as open educational resources (OER) under a creative commons license enabling access from outside Bath.

If you are interested in contributing to this project, you are welcome to contact Giles, Course Director for the Bath Course and Academic Staff Developer, Academic Staff Development Team, email: g.d.r.martin@bath.ac.uk or ext 3236

Dr Giles Martin, Academic Staff Developer, Academic Staff
Incorporating digital literacies into an embedded employability skills development programme

This programme aimed to build upon the success of the placements programme at Bath through increasing employability skills development in first year undergraduate students. One of the key objectives was to promote personal development planning throughout students’ entire degree programmes. In 2011, we proposed the implementation of an employer-led development programme within the first year of specific Faculty of Science undergraduate programmes. Within these programmes the assessment criteria for each employability skill was developed from research carried out by the Higher Education Academy and Confederation for British Industry. This, in turn, gave the project a sound evidence-based foundation.

Through collaboration with our industrial placement partners, we developed a needs-led skills programme to raise students’ awareness of employability skills from the outset of their degree programme. From feedback received during the pilot year of the programme, it was clear that sessions needed to be delivered by employers and had to include relevant industrial activities and be credit-weighted.

At the time of this development, the e-Learning team was also embarking on the PriDE project, which sought to define and embed digital literacies across the institution. Within this scope, discipline-specific statements were developed for digital literacies skills, competencies and attributes. These developments provided added direction and motivation for the development of this employability skills programme to utilise learning technologies wherever possible.

During 2012/13, the programme included specific assessment activities. Within semester one, students utilised Mahara to develop a complete e-portfolio that could be used throughout their degree programme. They were required to complete a specific activity that related to the development session within the programme. For example, and following on from the Leadership skills session, students completed the activities and interests section of Mahara, providing examples that evidenced leadership skills. The online activity was hosted in Moodle where instructional screencasts enabled self-paced learning for students.

In semester two, students were required to give a presentation on a specific area covered within the development programme. Later on in the semester, students utilised Panopto, the University’s lecture capture platform, to record their presentation on Microsoft and/or Microsoft technologies which allowed them to self-review their own presentation performance. As expected, the new credit-weighted nature of this programme had a positive net effect resulting in more consistent student attendance and participation.

It is our expectation that students will continue using Mahara to develop their placement CV’s and as a resource to capture evidence of their employability skills. We are also currently exploring how this initiative might develop in future academic years, particularly related to the scalability of this work across the institution as well as the recognition and validation of digital skills development through The Bath Award.

Louise Oliver, Faculty Placements Officer, Faculty of Science
Why digital literacies in higher education?

Digital technologies are everywhere in daily life, from our access to basic services to our travel and leisure and in almost every sector of employment. In fact the UK Government sees digital literacy as an essential requirement for citizenship: in simple terms it defines the ability to live, learn and work effectively in a digital society. However, being digitally literate means different things in different settings and at different stages of education. In higher education (HE) it generally means the capacity to use digital tools for research, communicating ideas, critical thinking and analysis, and being proficient in the digital practices of a particular discipline. Digital literacy also contributes an important facet to professional identity and allows that identity to be visible in the medium most widely used by graduate employers. These graduate level capabilities are more advanced and specialised than a ‘net generation’ familiarity with digital devices and media.

Students are already taking ICT provision into account when choosing their programme of study, and have increasingly high expectations of the role digital technologies will play. Forward thinking universities are making digital provision a brand identifier and a hallmark of their student offer. And to deliver on that promise, they need to invest in the digital capacities of their staff. This is not only so that staff can teach more effectively and engagingly – and support the development of digitally literate students in their turn – but so they can remain at the cutting edge of their own subject area, pursuing new scholarly methods and responding to the profound changes taking place in public knowledge.

Why digital literacies at Bath?

The PriDE project was one of twelve projects selected through a highly competitive process to receive funding for digital literacy development. For me, what made the project stand out was the focus on subject differences and on academic staff taking ownership of the digital agenda. Alongside funded projects at Exeter and Cardiff – all members of the South West Research grouping – PriDE set out to initiate a scholarly debate about digital literacies in HE, and promised to showcase best practice from research-intensive settings.

The motive to engage with digital literacies was also linked to Bath’s commitment to student-centred learning, with a recognition that digital know-how can open up effective strategies for study. Early consultations identified problems with students’ self-assessment of their digital skills – a common finding among undergraduates.

Students were arriving with a wide spectrum of digital experience, but whatever their skills were tending to overestimate their ability to apply digital tools to academic study. Bath was also moving towards a ‘bring your own device’ model of ICT support. Being able to rely on students’ personal access to resources and networks allows for new learning approaches: for example, if self-directed study time is being used productively, in-class time can be focused on troublesome issues or devoted to creative and collaborative work. But a supportive ICT environment is only valuable if staff and students are proficient at using their own devices, networks and services.

For all these reasons, the PriDE project was a timely intervention in the life of the University.

What has PriDE achieved?

From my perspective as synthesis consultant to the programme, PriDE has been a locally successful and nationally influential project. The project team has engaged staff from all four Faculties/School in conversations about what digital literacy means in their disciplines. From these conversations they have developed a number of faculty-specific frameworks, with statements on the desirable digital attributes of graduates in different disciplines. For example:

“A digitally literate person in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science is critically and ethically aware, confident in engaging in a wide array of digital practices, resources/tools and academic and professional environments, and establishing coherent identities.”

PriDE in place: setting the national scene

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http://go.bath.ac.uk/betteratbath
The frameworks and statements are a significant contribution to the national Digital Literacies programme and have been widely consulted by other institutions, as well as being put to practical use at Bath. There is interest from digital literacy researchers, and the statements have been used to validate a well-known model (Belshaw’s 8 Essential Elements of digital literacy). It is the consultative process, however, which I think will leave the most powerful legacy. It has meant that digital literacies are fully owned by staff in departments and programmes of study. Case studies from dedicated teaching staff are adding detail to the frameworks, and ensure that practical examples are ready to hand.

Looking to the future, universities like Bath face new kinds of competition, including competition from virtual providers of education. Bath will need to build virtual research networks, to revolutionise research methods, and to nurture new partnerships across disciplinary and national boundaries. Bath graduates will be leading their professions into new territory, and tackling new social issues such as data security, the public communication of ideas, and collaborative knowledge. All this can be achieved if Bath continues to cultivate a scholarly approach to digital technology, which includes a critical as well as a creative and confident attitude to digital tools and media. Those whose awareness and expertise have been enhanced through the PriDE project are ideally placed to lead the way.

Helen Beetham
Helen has worked as a researcher, analyst and adviser in the field of e-Learning for over a decade. She has been closely involved with the JISC e-Learning programme during that time, and is currently synthesising the outcomes of the JISC Developing Digital Literacies projects. Her most recent edited book, Rethinking Pedagogy for a Digital Age (2nd Edition) has just been published by Routledge.

Reflections on PriDE

Having been successful in gaining support from the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), as part of their ‘Developing Digital Literacies Programme’, for our two year PriDE project, it has been hugely rewarding to work across the whole institution. The award of external funding has enabled us to increase our focus and build momentum in an area of skills development that falls within the remit of such a wide group. As we considered the far-reaching scope of digital literacies, our two main challenges were to find new ways of bringing together the full range of stakeholders involved in the student experience whilst retaining the value we place on diversity in all that we do.

Recognising that digital literacies belong to everyone with each person starting from a unique place in relation to knowledge, skills and understanding, it has been good to progress and open up the debate on all three levels, the individual (students and staff), the faculty and the institution.

The creation of faculty learning Communities (FLCs), comprising of academic and professional staff and students, to come together to define the meaning of digital literacies, in relation to the specific group of disciplines, skills development and infrastructure needs, has proved to be a powerful way of working. From the FLCs’ discussions, emerged a set of discipline specific definitions of digital literacies. The articulation of attributes, identities and practices demonstrated some areas of commonality but also revealed some significant differences between disciplines. In turn, this has informed a strategic approach at a number of different levels and, very specifically how the e-Learning team, as a central support service to academic departments, can adopt new ways of working.

The completion of PriDE marks a notable departure from how the Team has worked in the past to developing a more tailored, discipline specific approach with an increased emphasis on transforming pedagogy.

PriDE has served to reinforce the critical role that students play as our ‘change agents’. Very often, we find our students informing us of the new and innovative ways they are using technology in their personal lives. In turn, we are able to identify ways of supporting them to utilise the technology in their learning lives. Benefiting from our strong culture of co-ownership of the student experience, PriDE has drawn on the invaluable ideas, feedback and experience from our student representatives. One of our overarching aims has been to increase our understanding of existing institutional processes in order to embed digital literacies more effectively as opposed to attempting to impose new and potentially ill-fitting processes.

Throughout the duration of the project, our work has attracted considerable interest from across the sector as other institutions have been keen to learn more about adopting our ‘learning communities’ model and exploring disciplinary differences in digital literacies. Here in our own institution, we look forward to progressing the work that PriDE has enabled us to undertake and now look to integrate digital literacies in many more ways across the curriculum.

Kryiaki Anagnostopoulou, Head of e-Learning and PriDE Project Manager
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Vicky Hill, Faculty Placements Officer
Sean Cumming, Senior Lecturer, Health
Séverine Deneulin, Lecturer, Social & Policy Sciences
David Galbreath, Reader, Politics, Languages & International Studies and Director of Studies (MA)
Ben Bowman, Student in MRes Politics & International Studies
Paul Goodstadt, Student in BSc (Hons) Economics
Peter Bradley, Subject Librarian, Health, Social & Policy Sciences
Susie Martin, Student in MPhil/PhD Research in Psychology
Tim Gamble, Experimental Officer, Psychology
John Lowe, Lecturer, Education
David Cameron, Vice-President (Community), Students’ Union (2011-12)
Peter Lambert, Associate Dean (Learning & Teaching)

Dear Blog….

digitally literate reflections from our data analyst student. Extracts from Charlotte Tucker’s PriDE Blog posts

Charlotte wrote:
This journey has certainly been a fast one! Jo Platt and I have sped through the different stages of the project at high speed, having to make quick decisions with confidence at every turn. A point in fact though, is that this method has provided us with a project that was not held back or hindered at any point. In fact, I am convinced that had we spent hours jointly discussing the pros and cons of each move, we would have, without a doubt, made the same final decisions that we made in reality.

On a personal level, I can relate to the concept of feeling digitally illiterate when entering a new environment. Having completed my undergraduate studies at two different Universities, the subject of digital literacies became something that I was made aware of firstly, when studying abroad during my undergraduate degree, and then again when I started at Bath. To explore what we mean by a digitally literate graduate is an extremely important piece of work to ensure that graduates flourish in employment or further study, and continue to develop digital literacies throughout their life.

The fact that similar projects have been developing in other Universities around the UK has been incredibly exciting and the idea that our work could actually have an impact somewhere has certainly been a drive. Being part of this project has actually improved my digital literacies - I had never heard of a wiki before or posted a blog. I am really looking forward to learning how this project moves forward and following the rest of its journey: keep blogging! All the best!

Charlotte Tucker worked as a data analyst for the PriDE Project whilst studying for an MA in Contemporary European Studies: Politics, Policy and Society (Euromasters) at the University of Bath