

The outcomes

Project Communications - Testing & Sharing Outputs

Discussions on how a technological solution could encourage an open and collaborative culture between project participants led to the establishment of a dedicated Moodle area and “sandbox” where project announcements could be made and test courses could be uploaded.

A social bookmarking site (created using “delicious”) was established where useful web links and e-resources could be described and shared.

Copyright

A number of online copyright tools were introduced as links on the Project’s Moodle site, and a number of specific queries directed to JISC Legal and JISC Digital Media, both JISC Advance services which have advice available on their websites.

Qualifications

Discussions focusing on available qualifications that would offer project participants a mechanism for acknowledging, recording and formalising new skills developed throughout the duration of the project were held. Consideration of technology solutions included the exploration of ePortfolios, Moodle and the possibility of an online version of the RSCs eSkills for eLearning programme.

Video Conferencing

The possibility of using the Video conferencing suite at the RSC to hold project partner meetings was explored.

The impact

Meetings to discuss the issues outlined above impacted on the college more generally in a number of ways. Knowing that there was support on hand to assist with advice and recommendations was of great benefit to the project manager.

"Having someone on hand that I could discuss the technological resources and mechanisms available to assist in the management and day to day running of the projects was invaluable. It was good to have someone to bounce ideas off. This helped narrow down the choices and establish what potentially would and wouldn't work, given the size and complex nature of the project itself."

Lesley Martin – GOAL Project Manager

Collaborative projects by their very nature are complex and the complexities can be exacerbated when new technologies form a critical part of the core outputs as skill sets of staff are wide and varied.

Dissemination of resources, links and services that are available for staff has raised awareness of broader issues that require to be addressed across other / all curriculum developments. Staff have a greater

understanding of Copyright issues when using digital resources and solutions that can be used to minimise the possibilities of infringement. In particular, being able to source copyright free materials and understanding the Creative Commons movement has had a wider impact on more general copyright issues including those associated with printed materials too.

A number of easy to use online Web 2.0 applications have been used to great effect - Social Bookmarking and Animoto just two examples of social software that were used in resource creation.

Staff are more confident and willing to disseminate and showcase their resources and demonstrate new software that they have been using in the project to colleagues in their own departments.

Lessons Learnt

Developing personal relationships both internal and external is critical to the success of a project. Face to face meetings particularly at the outset are of great value and allow individuals to establish a common understanding of roles and expectations of collaboration.

While new and project specific communications mechanisms were set up, people preferred to use the existing and familiar tools that they used every day i.e. email with distribution lists. Using two different systems was inconvenient and resulted in an unnecessary barrier to good communications.

There was a preference to upload the resources that project participants created into their own private area rather than use the open "sandbox" arrangement provided through Moodle. In the first instance people preferred to let a few trusted individuals peer review their materials. Only once the prototype was sufficiently developed and tested, were they happy to share more widely. Maintaining this level of reassurance and confidentiality was an important tool in building confidence.

The value of informal "Ad Hoc", "sitting by Nellie" training should not be underestimated. This informal model allows skills and knowledge to be contextualised in terms of subject / department relevance and provides concrete rather than abstract examples, which is of most benefit to their colleagues. In the initial stages of new skills acquisition, formal CPD is less important than gradual confidence building, therefore while the need to find ways to attribute formal qualifications is necessary, methods of capturing informal learning would also benefit from further investigation.

Useful links

JISC Legal Information Services - www.jisclegal.ac.uk/

JISC Digital Media - www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/

Intellectual property rights at a glance - <http://sca.jiscinvolve.org/2009/10/13/ipr-at-a-glance/>

Creative Commons - www.creativecommons.org

Web 2.0 Rights: Intellectual Property Rights - www.web2rights.org.uk/IPROverview/index.html

JISC Casper: The copyright advice & support project for JISC e-learning resources - <http://jisc-casper.org/>

Delicious - <http://delicious.com>

Animoto - www.animoto.com

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