

WORKSHOP ACTIVITY: SCENARIOS

HELPING INSTITUTIONS RESPOND TO EMERGENT TECHNOLOGIES

OVERVIEW

In this exercise you will consider how your institution would respond to the adoption of a range of emergent technologies described in a number of scenarios. These scenarios are based on the JISC IRET pilot projects and on issues raised through consultation with staff from a range of institutions as part of the IRET programme.

ACTIVITY – NOTES FOR FACILITATORS

A range of scenarios are presented here, but facilitators may wish to choose those that are most appropriate and consider customizing them to better reflect local needs and conditions at their institution. Facilitators should also be aware that by definition, emergent technology is subject to change, so updates to scenarios may need to address this.

We recommend that details of the scenarios to be used are distributed to participants well in advance of the date of the workshop to allow sufficient time for research and preparation.

For discussions using scenarios based on the JISC IRET projects, participants should further details about the challenges faced, solutions implemented and lessons learned are available in the project case studies at:

<http://jisciret.jiscinvolve.org/case-studies/>

For other scenarios, participants may need to do some independent research into the nature of the technologies described and the issues they might raise.

As this activity uses the JISC-IRET 5Rs model as a framework for discussions, we also recommend that participants familiarise themselves with this model, the IRET definition of emergent technologies and the issues they raise for educational institutions, by watching the 'Understanding IRET' video at:

<http://jisciret.jiscinvolve.org/understanding-iret/>

For the workshop activity, participants should work in groups of 4-6 people to consider one or more given scenarios.

Each group should consider the opportunities, challenges and implications of adopting the emergent technologies described in the scenario at your institution. At the end of the discussion, a designated member of each group should report back to give members of other groups the opportunity to consider and contribute to the debate.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further details about the JISC IRET programme, IRET projects and their findings are available from:

<http://bit.ly/jisciret>

SCENARIOS: JISC-IRET PROJECTS

You can read more about these projects and the opportunities and challenges they present for institutions at:

<http://jisciret.jiscinvolve.org/case-studies/>

QUALI-R: IMPROVING QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

The Quali-R project implemented a small-scale platform enable better tracking and management of Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement processes. A web-service client was developed to extract actionable items from the narrative documents used in quality processes to create time-delimited actions and tasks. The extracted items we're made available as RSS feeds (for progress) and iCalendar feeds (for task deadlines), allowing syndication and aggregation using both institutional and user-owned systems.

EGRET: USER-GENERATED EVENTS PUBLICITY SERVICE

Talks.cam is an event publicity and syndication service that enables organisers of lectures or seminar series to add their own events for display on a public website and for sharing via RSS feeds, iCalendar feeds, email reminders and embeddable website widgets. Users can search for and subscribe to talks matching desired criteria, with results supplied via their chosen syndication method. The system is fully user-generated content, with no centralised control or hierarchies over who can view or set up a series of talks.

DIVAS: INTELLIGENT COURSE VALIDATION SYSTEMS

The DIVAS project developed a web-based repository for submission, storage and retrieval of validation outputs to make documentation more accessible to staff and to facilitate intelligent reuse in new validations. Staff support for this process was facilitated through a community of practice (CoP) based in an externally hosted social network. This CoP included academic practitioners, administrative staff and learning development staff from the institution and affiliated institutions.

KATAPILLA: TIMETABLING & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Katapila project developed and deployed a web-based timetabling system to assemble and manage timetable information relating to courses of study, assessment schedules, examination programmes and other time-bounded resources. The Katapila system is now the institutional tool for assembling and modifying curriculum data at Kingston College and is a key part of their integrated online environment.

REACH: COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS

The REACH project developed open-source software to enable personalised announcements placed on a Virtual Learning Environment to be delivered via RSS feeds and through text messaging to the student's personal mobile device. In addition the project has evaluated both student and staff attitudes to these newer forms of communication channel.

ONLYCONNECT

The Only Connect project created a new, open communications environment to strengthen bonds between individual learners and the university. The project developed a message brokering service to deliver information about timetable changes to students via their preferred channels, whether email, SMS, RSS or through widgets and gadgets.

OTHER SCENARIOS

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Apple iTunesU, part of the iTunes Store, allows access to a huge collection of freely-available educational media from universities around the world. Participating institutions create their own branded channels through which they can distribute educational content to their students or to the world. Institutions can allow open access to content or restrict this through user authentication via Shibboleth and other commonly-used authentication systems. Similarly, YouTube and YouTube Edu offer possibilities for sharing educational video.

Task: Consider how your institution might capture and publish video on a branded channel on iTunesU or YouTube. Discuss the implications of adopting your chosen approach with reference to the IRET 5Rs.

VIRTUAL OR PERSONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Many institutions support teaching and learning activities with a commercial virtual learning environment (VLE). These enterprise systems offer a range of online tools for staff and students and are designed to integrate with other enterprise systems such as the student MIS. However, an ever increasing range of web services offer similar, some would argue better, functionality than their equivalent tools within VLEs. These are typically free to use, easy to setup, have intuitive, engaging user interfaces and foster an active community of users beyond institutions. As a result, staff and students are exploring the use of such tools to build their own personal learning networks.

Task: Consider whether some or all of the functions offered by a VLE could be replaced by collections of online tools and the implications of this for staff, students and the institution, using the IRET 5Rs as a framework.

MICROBLOGGING

Microblogging services like Twitter enable users to broadcast and receive short messages to their subscribers. Such messages may also be made publically available. These services can typically be accessed directly through a service website, by SMS text-messaging or with a wide range of 3rd party clients intended for use on different devices. An increasing number of staff in educational institutions are using microblogging services both personally and professionally. Furthermore, institutional units such as careers, the library and alumni associations are adopting microblogging as a new communication channel.

Task: Consider how your institution might exploit microblogging such as Twitter or Yammer to enhance communication within and beyond the organisation. Discuss the implications of adopting your chosen approach with reference to the IRET 5Rs.

COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOMS

Hotseat was developed by Purdue University to help create a more collaborative classroom. It enables students to interact and provide feedback during class by posting messages to Hotseat via Facebook, Twitter accounts, text message or through the Hotseat web site. Hotseat is currently being piloted at Purdue University, but may become available for use by other institutions.

More information is available at: <http://www.itap.purdue.edu/tlt/hotseat/>

Task: Consider the implications of your institution implementing a collaborative classroom system such as Hotseat and how the institution should support the response with reference to the IRET 5Rs.

ENHANCING COURSE INFORMATION

Universities now need to manage and share course information of increasing complexity, including for example, course descriptions, fees and entry requirements, both within and beyond the organisation to aggregators such as UCAS. Institutions face significant challenges in ensuring that this information is communicated accurately, consistently and effectively. Exchanging Course Related Information (XCRI) and the XCRI-CAP specification provides a model through which this course information can be shared and adapted.

More information is available at: <http://www.xcri.org/>

Task: Consider how information regarding courses at your institution could be made more accessible to prospective students, staff and other institutions. Discuss the implications of adopting your chosen approach with reference to the IRET 5Rs.

CROSS-INSTITUTION COLLABORATION

Staff at educational institutions increasingly need to collaborate with staff from other institutions. For example, many research projects involve groups from multiple institutions working together. Typically, each group will have their own set of technologies to support their activities, some of which may be provided by their institution and some by external providers (e.g. Google). This can present challenges for technologies not designed to operate beyond the traditional boundaries of the institution.

Task: Consider how your institution would allow access to the systems and services staff require to collaborate with staff from another organization and how emergent technologies might make this process easier? Discuss the implications of adopting your chosen approach and how the institution should support a response using the IRET 5Rs as a guide.

RESEARCH EVENTS CALENDAR

Research seminars are a key part of the academic community. They bring together experts from different disciplines and institutions to present and discuss cutting edge research. However, these seminars are often known only to people in a research group or department, not to the wider academic community within and beyond the institution. Making research seminars easy to publicise and easier for people to track both within and beyond the institution can therefore enhance cross-disciplinary exchange of ideas, showcase the research, raise profile of institution.

Task: Consider how you institution might use a service like talks.cam, Google Calendar, Yahoo! upcoming or iCal feeds to make seminars more visible to staff and the public. Consider the implications of adopting your chosen approach and how the institution should support the response with reference to the IRET 5Rs.

SENDING/RECEIVING LARGE FILES

Email attachments are still one of the most common methods used to exchange files by staff and students. However, traditional restrictions on the size of files that can be sent/received through email are increasingly too stringent for files of the size now commonly needing to be exchanged. Web services like Yousendit provide a simple way to upload, store and distribute large files online without the need for email.

Task: Consider the possible solutions available through your institution and other providers and discuss the implications of adopting them and how the institution should respond using the IRET 5Rs model as a guide.

WORKING WITH MULTIPLE COMPUTERS

A common need for staff and students in educational institutions is to have access to the same files from multiple computers, both on and off campus. Services like Windows SkyDrive provide free, generous offsite file storage and access. Other services like Dropbox allow synchronization of files worked on in multiple locations and on multiple devices.

Task: Consider the possible solutions available through your institution and other providers and discuss the implications of adopting them and how the institution should respond using the IRET 5Rs model as a guide.

WEB CONFERENCING

Services like Skype and Windows Live messenger allow people to communicate via call, video call and instant messaging for free, regardless of distance. This has the potential to improve communication and collaboration by staff in educational institutions. However, some concerns have been raised over issues such as communication security, quality, reliability and the misuse of such services.

Task: Consider the issues in implementing emergent technologies to provide an institutional web conferencing solution to facilitate meetings, teaching and research. Discuss the implications of adopting this approach and how the institution should support a response using the IRET 5Rs model as a guide.

VIRTUAL WORLDS

Virtual worlds such as Second Life represent users as avatars in three-dimensional landscape where they are free to interact with other users and objects. Users are also able to construct objects and even entire buildings. Second Life is used as an educational platform by many institutions, to support both taught courses and research.

Task: Consider if and how your institution might use virtual worlds such as Second Life. Discuss the implications of adopting this approach and how the institution should support a response using the IRET 5Rs model as a guide.

ONLINE EXPENSES

Historically, expense claims by staff were submitted on paper forms, either handwritten or created using a simple spreadsheet. However, it is now more often the case that expenses are submitted through an online system based on a self-service model. Although this potentially means a simpler system with access from anywhere at any time via any device, in practice these systems often fail to meet this expectation.

Task: Consider the features that would be required by an online expenses system to more effectively meet the needs of your institution. Discuss the implications of adopting your chosen approach and how the institution should support a response using the IRET 5Rs model as a guide.