TECHNOLOGY MEETS LEARNING: IMMERSING STAFF IN E-LEARNING DEVELOPMENT IN A BLENDED LEARNING COURSE

This paper is an account of a blended learning staff development course which immersed Monash University Library staff in various e-learning development projects. In addition to collaboratively developing their knowledge of online pedagogy and building on a range of practical e-learning development skills, the final 'product' they produced is an e-learning module for use from the Library online tutorials web page. Thus the course had authentic outcomes.

The purpose of the product is to contribute to student learning by extending the curriculum beyond the classroom for anytime, anywhere learning and/or by enhancing face-to-face teaching for use in the classroom by Library staff and students. This approach aligns with Monash University's focus on blended learning, which has seen an increasing number of Library staff using blended modes of delivery.

The Library contributes to student learning through information research and learning skills programs, services and resources. With around 60,000 students and some 4,500 units taught at the university each year, there is vast potential for program delivery through the curriculum. With so many opportunities to contribute to learning, it remains nonetheless difficult to reach all students with the high numbers of students, units and the multiple modes in which students now study, including on-campus, off-campus, and online. E-learning resources and activities provide opportunities for students who cannot attend programs for whatever reason and for all students to enrich their face-to-face learning through a different lens. For these reasons, and in alignment with the University's blended learning approach, the Library has adopted e-learning as part of its strategy.

The development of e-learning resources, activities and environments requires specialist knowledge and skills, so Library staff work with an e-learning coordinator and web and e-learning officer in various ways, including in-person, through email and phone consultations and workshops. Templates, procedures, and software tools such as Adobe Captivate, Google Docs and Hangouts, mind mapping software, a learning objects repository, LibGuides, virtual classroom software, and the Moodle learning management system (LMS) are also provided as important parts of the e-landscape. The Library also identified that more could be done for staff to develop a deeper understanding of online

design principles and practices. Consequently the first 'Design and Develop an E-Learning Module' course was designed and implemented for staff in 2011.

The course evaluation revealed a number of areas for improvement and recommendations were made, which were then implemented in the new course design. The course was conducted again in 2012.

The underlying pedagogy of the course is a social constructivist one with authentic learning goals. Course tasks are evaluated for their effectiveness against best practice criteria by a facilitator, as well as by peers within the course. The task sequence follows a possible project life-cycle of e-learning development within industry, which incorporates collaborative learning and working, as well as formative review. The course tasks require participants to develop artefacts such as mind maps, e-learning storyboards, discussion forum posts, online evaluation chats, as well as multimedia items.

The course evaluation uses a mixed methods methodology and is pragmatic in nature. Participants in the evaluation include the course participants, expert reviewers, and the facilitator as participant observer. Data is gathered through an online questionnaire, a focus group, an evaluation of course artefacts, an implementation log, and expert reviews. This evaluation aims to determine if recommended changes have improved the course experience for participants and the facilitator.