

SWAP Project

TITLE OF PROJECT: 'Making the most of my space': Students use of mobile phones for studying and note making

INSTITUTION: London Met

PROJECT LEADERS: Claire Bradley, Debbie Holley

DISCIPLINE/DEPARTMENT: Learning Technology Research Institute and London Metropolitan Business School

YEAR/LEVEL OF STUDENTS: First year

CONTEXT:

Themes of physical and pedagogic spaces have been drawn into a new debate: what happens when we (and our students) leave our physical presence and start to engage with our learning in cyberspace? The student as an 'embodied self', is viewed through the work of authors such as Land, Bayne and Kefka, who broadly consider the body in space as an extension of the physical being, and authors such as Dreyfus, who take an opposite stance (Holley, Burns & Sinfield 2009). Views vary as to whether a revolution has occurred (or is imminent) for teaching and learning with the introduction of new technologies and this is a hotly contested area within the 'academy'. Yet the views and experiences of the students are surprisingly underreported – and comparatively little is known about how students actually use their mobile devices for study.

Many mobile phones are now mini computers, possessing access to the Internet and tools that can be used to capture notes, such as image capture, video recording, audio recording and written notes. A survey of Business Studies students has shown that students all own mobile phones of varying sophistication, and feedback indicates students are keen to use their mobiles for studying. However, more detailed enquiries uncovered that although many students 'say' they are web 2.0 users, in reality, their understanding of the term is limited to social space usage such as Hi 5, Bebo and Facebook. Our project is to find out from empirical research, how students are using their mobiles to help them study, and in particular for note-making.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project intended to and successfully:

- Conducted a survey of student mobile phone use
- Captured student mobile study experiences
- Uncovered more about hitherto unavailable aspects of our students' lives outside the classroom.

METHODOLOGY:

The first stage was to conduct a survey (via a questionnaire) about students' mobile phones: what they have, their attitudes to using them for learning, and how they use them to help with their learning.

Three students were then loaned Flip Video Camcorders to produce video diaries of how they use their mobile phone for learning (two of them also interviewed some of their fellow students). Afterwards, these three students were asked to complete the questionnaire and were interviewed, to explore in more depth their questionnaire responses and their mobile learning practice. A written case study has been produced which illustrates in-depth how each of the three students use their mobile for learning, and their attitude to using it.

A website has been created to showcase all the outcomes from the project.

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/learningonthemove/index.html>

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

The project has resulted in:

- A website which includes all the outcomes from the project: the result of the student survey, the student case studies and videos, a list of what students are using their phones for and tips on how students and tutors can utilise mobile phones for learning. See <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/learningonthemove/index.html>
- 74 Business Studies students completed the student survey of mobile phone use. The data has been analysed, and the results are on the website.
- The three students that borrowed Flip Video Camcorders, have produced 21 usable videos of themselves, and in some cases fellow students, using or talking about using their mobile phones for learning.
- Three case studies have been created from the interviews and video diaries, which illustrate in-depth how these students use their mobile for learning, and their attitude to using it. The case studies are on the website in the 'Examples' section.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT OF PROJECT:

We have a lot of quantitative and rich qualitative data that illustrates what mobile devices students have, what their attitudes are towards using their mobile phones for learning, and what they are actually using their mobiles for. We can see that some students are using their mobiles to help with their learning and for note-making, and that the range of learning activities those students are engaged in is broad.

However, whilst many learning activities they engage in are predictable, for example accessing the Internet for research, communicating with other students by text, calls, and email, some students have found innovative solutions that help them meet their individual learning needs. For example, for one student her Blackberry has overtaken the use of her laptop for many functions, because her MacBook does not easily connect to University systems, so she uses her phone instead. She also uses it for communicating with other students (via email, Messenger, text messages, Facebook), taking notes, writing and submitting assessments amongst other things. Another student who has a more basic phone and doesn't access the Internet on it, because it is too expensive, uses text messages to take notes of things that she wants to remember, such as ideas for coursework, page numbers in books she is, reminders about deadlines or meetings, room numbers for classes etc. She prefers using her mobile for such tasks rather than a pen and notebook, because it is more convenient (she always has her mobile with her but not necessarily a pen or a notebook) and easier if she is on the tube where there is not much space to work. Several students also use their mobiles to take visual notes, by using the camera to capture things to remember or things that give them ideas for their coursework, such as equations for an exam, notices, adverts on the tube, artwork in galleries. This is just a snapshot of some of our findings – for more detail about individual student practice see the 'Examples' section on the project website for the case studies. The 'For students' section summarises the learning activities that students use their mobiles for.

Whilst the outcomes from the project will be interesting to anyone (both students and tutors) considering utilising mobile learning within their own learning or their modules, it is also helping to uncover more about hitherto unavailable aspects of our students' lives, both inside and outside of the classroom, and the types of everyday learning practices they adopt. On the whole, these practices are largely as a result of their own initiative, rather than being tutor driven. But such practices could be adopted by other students or encouraged by tutors where they may help to facilitate or engage students in learning scenarios. The ubiquity of powerful and Internet-connected mobile phones amongst our student population offers a range of just-in-time, convenient and more flexible learning opportunities.

We have received favourable reactions from two recent conference presentations. The paper at the ALT-C conference in Nottingham won the award for the 'Best paper' at the conference. In addition, one of the reviewers of the paper accepted for the mLearn conference said, "This has already inspired me to add a module on using mobile phones as study aids to our first-year study skills course".

DISSEMINATION:

- Bradley, C. and Holley, D. (2010). How students in Higher Education use their mobile phones for learning. In Montebello, M., Camilleri, V., Dingli, A. (Eds), *Proceedings of mLearn Conference*, pp 232-239. Held 20 – 22 October 2010, Malta.
Paper: http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/learningonthemove/docs/mlearn_2010_Paper51_CB_DH.pdf
Slides: <http://slidesha.re/aV7xov>
- Bradley, C. and Holley, D. (2010). An analysis of first-year business students' mobile phones and their use for learning. In Creanor, L., Hawkrige, D., Ng, K., Rennie, F. (Eds). "Into something rich and strange" – making sense of the sea-change, pp 89-98. The 17th Association for Learning Technology Conference (ALT-C 2010). Held 7–9 September 2010, University of Nottingham, England, UK.
Paper: <http://repository.alt.ac.uk/797> This paper won the award for the 'Best paper' at the conference.
Slides: <http://slidesha.re/ap0SL8>
- Bradley, C. and Holley, D. (2010). Learning on the Move: exploring student usage of their mobile phones. A seminar presented at the HERS (Higher Education Research Seminar) series, 25 October, at London Metropolitan University.
- Learning on the Move: exploring student usage of their mobile phones, Article in London Metropolitan Business School Research Newsletter, March 2010, Issue 4, Page 5.
<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/learningonthemove/docs/LMBS%20Research%20Newsletter%20March%202010.pdf>

The 'Best paper' award for 'An analysis of first-year business students' mobile phones and their use for learning' at the ALT-C conference resulted in a news article appearing on the London Met website about the award and the project: <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/news/latest-news/september-2010/the-unstoppable-tide-of-mobile-learning.cfm>

The project is on the LTRI website [\[http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/ltri/research/projects/lotm.htm\]](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/ltri/research/projects/lotm.htm) and is featured in various articles on the 'News' page (publicising dissemination events and publications).

AVAILABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES

All information on this project is available on the project website: <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/learningonthemove/index.html>

Learning on the move

Home | Examples | For students | For tutors | Survey results | Resources

Learning on the move - mobile learning

This website contains experiences and ideas on how students can use their mobile phones for learning and studying.

There are many benefits of using mobile phones for learning activities, for example:

- everyone has a mobile phone and carries it around with them all the time
- phones are getting more sophisticated and have more applications, e.g. for notemaking, taking photos and videos
- many phones now connect to the Internet, making research 'on the go' a reality.

The website has separate sections aimed at students and tutors, with tips for how each can get involved in mobile learning.

Contact us

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Write NOW Learningier APD LTRI

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Quick links

- Examples
- What students do now
- Resources
- Contact us

- The student videos and case studies are on the 'Examples' page.
- Student uses of mobile learning are on the 'For students' page.
- Tips for tutors are on the 'For tutors' page.
- Full survey results are in 'Survey results'.
- Publications (with links) are on the 'Resources' page.

FUTURE PLANS FOR PROMOTING PROJECT WORK/OUTCOMES:

We will be submitting extended papers to journals based on the two accepted conference papers: ALT-C paper for ALT-J (the Journal for the Association of Learning Technology) and the mLearn paper for a special issue of the International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning.

We will also submit a paper for the next issue of London Met's 'Investigations' so that the outcomes of the project will be available to University staff. We will also be presenting the project at the London Met Supporting Writing for Assessment Purposes (SWAP) symposium on 17 January 2011.

REFERENCES:

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Bayne, S. (2004). 'Mere jelly': the bodies of Networked Learners, Networked Learning Conference 2004, Lancaster.
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