

**\*\* Inquiry Based Learning as a First Year Experience**

Presentation, 23 July 2009, Infolit iSchool

(Notecard updated 7 September 2009)

Sheila Yoshikawa's presentation was in voice, but there is a log of the text chat at <http://sleeds.org/chatlog/?c=1065>

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This is based on a presentation given at the Learning Through Enquiry Alliance conference that took place in Reading, UK, 14-15 July 2009.

[http://www.rdg.ac.uk/cetl-aurs/LTEAConference2009/cetl-aurs\\_LTEAConference2009.aspx](http://www.rdg.ac.uk/cetl-aurs/LTEAConference2009/cetl-aurs_LTEAConference2009.aspx)

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I have done some blog posts (and have a couple more to complete) at <http://information-literacy.blogspot.com/search/label/LTEA2009>

and there are some more good impressions of the conference at

<http://thelrtproject.blogspot.com/> (search for the word LTEA within the blog)

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Sheila Yoshikawa (Sheila Webber in RL) identified how an Inquiry Based Learning approach is synergistic with what is recommended for a good First Year Experience. She identified the ways in which the first year of the BSc Information Management at the University of Sheffield fits with these approaches. She also reflected on using interviewing in SL as part of the approach in one module.

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The following is the text from the slides that were presented.

\* Slide 1: Title Slide: Inquiry Based Learning as a First Year Experience

Sheila Webber/ Yoshikawa, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield, July 2009

\* Slide 2: Engagement in First Year Experience (FYE)

Transition as a year long experience

Scaffolding transition into the discipline

\* Slide 3: Transition and inquiry

“Approaches to supporting transition are linked to improving preparedness for HE, easing integration into the university environment - both academically and socially - and encouraging the development of the independent learner.” (Whittaker, 2008: 3)

“Curriculum design should have a greater focus on the interactive dimensions of learning and the social experience of students, for example working in small groups and more enquiry-based and project work. It should also provide a more challenging learning experience to encourage greater engagement and the development of independent learning and high-level critical skills.” (Whittaker, 2008: 8).

\* Slide 4: 4 pointers for engagement & retention in FY

- The allocation of resources has to reflect the importance of the first year
- The teaching approach has to be focused on student development within the subject area(s) concerned
- Ways need to be found to enhance the chances of students developing the supportive network of peers that can sustain them when difficulties arise
- Those teaching first-year students should have a strong commitment to teaching and student learning.

Yorke and Longdon (2008: 48)

\* Slide 5: “Key features of an 'ideal' first-year curriculum from the literature”

Themes from the literature(Bovill et al. , 2008: 10)

- orientation of students to increase social and academic engagement, 'connectedness' to university, sense of direction and future career

development of learning skills

- student-centred, active learning through problem-based, project-based and group learning
- collaborative learning or learning communities to enhance - transferable skills and lend a sense of belonging
- formative assessment and feedback

- progressive skills development
- time and structures for reflecting on learning

From the original research in Bovill et al.'s study, the importance of student input to curriculum design, and of early feedback, also emerged

\* Slide 6: Inquiry Based Learning

"IBL is a term used to describe approaches to learning that are based on a process of self-directed inquiry or research. Students conduct small or large-scale inquiries that enable them to engage actively and creatively with the questions and problems of their discipline, often in collaboration with others. IBL approaches include case-study and problem-based learning (PBL) methods as well as research projects of different kinds. It is a key characteristic of IBL that inquiry tasks facilitate exploration and investigation of issues or scenarios that are open-ended enough for different responses and solutions to be possible

(Khan and O'Rourke, 2005)" cited <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ciclass/ibl.html>

\* Slide 7: BSc Information Management

20-25 students each year

\* Slide 8: Issues with discipline/ course

- Information Management not familiar as a disciplinary name
- There are no A-levels or Highers in IM
- Contested discipline
- Investigations (NSS + our own) showed issues with UG subject engagement & lack of awareness of research impact

\*\*\* The next 4 slides have the learning outcomes (from our module outlines) & assessments of the 4 modules that are core at Level 1 for our BSc Information Management \*\*\*

\* Slide 9: Inf102: Introduction to Information Management

- By the end of the module, the student should:

- - Be able to identify and describe the principles and practice of information management in relation to: organizations; information technology; and the information society.

- - Have developed their practical information-handling skills in information searching, and web site design.

- Assessment: IM report; annotated bibliography; report presented as web page

\* Slide 10: Inf104: Information literacy

By the end of the module students will have learnt:

- to analyse their own information behaviour and start to identify ways in which they can become more information literate

- to understand some key information literacy models and theories

- to plan a strategy for seeking information and search for information in specific information sources

- to apply an evaluation framework to information resources

- to interact with others to explore their information behaviour and needs

- to communicate more effectively orally and in writing

Assessment: Website/article/book review; Analysis of & reflection on research interviews in Second Life; Reflection on their progress in relation to the SCONUL 7 Pillars of Information Literacy, presented in an e-portfolio

\* Slide 11: Inf103 Information and Communication Networks in Organisations

By the end of the module you should be able to:

- discuss the impact of electronic communications media on interpersonal communication, group work and communication cultures in organizations;

- explain basic concepts, principles and problems regarding: interpersonal communication and group dynamics in organizational settings; organizational communication cultures;

- describe the features of a range of computer-supported collaborative work (CSCW) technologies and explain the role of these technologies in new forms of organization and work practice;

- propose guidelines for the effective use and deployment of information communications technologies in organizations.

In addition, the module also aims to assist in the development of your personal awareness and skills as a learner, and of your skills in group-work and use of computer-mediated communication.

Assessment: Group report, individual reflection, examination

\* Slide 12: Inf106: Inquiry in Information Management

By the end of the unit, a student will be able to:

- Identify and discuss some of the key issues, concepts and practices of Information Management;
- Identify a range of different ideas of what Information Management is, from different practitioners and researchers, and be able to explain how different viewpoints fit within their own, evolving conception of information management;
- Recognise and describe basic techniques of research and scholarly communication that are relevant to the field;
- Understand what is involved in carrying out a small-scale research project using some of these techniques (such as literature searching and summary; ethical issues; small-scale interviewing/surveying; analysis of data; poster-based research dissemination);
- To be able to read, understand and synthesise academic articles effectively;
- Reflect critically on their personal engagement with the inquiry process experienced in the module.
- Assessment: Group produced poster & report (and unassessed individual reflection); Individual e-portfolio

\* Slide 13: Picture of Inf106 posters in Second Life

\* Slide 14: Selected IBL elements: Level 1 BSc Information Management

This has a diagram with some elements of learning and teaching

\* Slide 15: Students as research assistants

- Using SL as part of the Inf104 class
- Learning/ research spaces are classroom, WebCT, Second Life, the information space of the web
- Second Life: 3D virtual world
- SL activity required for coursework as was site for interviewing
- Initially students used SL together in lab with me (FYHE socialisation element)

\* Slide 16: Approach to teaching information behaviour

This is a diagram showing different contributions to learning about information behaviour

\* Slide 17: Interviewing in SL

Benefits include:

- Access to a wider range of interviewees
- Automatic transcript if using text chat
- Interview spaces flexible
- and ... (next slide)

\* Slide 18 3D environment gives opportunity for social/ informal interaction (e.g. chat about chairs and other features of the venue, appearance etc)

“Interviewee 11 08/09: so this is your university area

Int: ya

Interviewee: looks like a lot of work has been going on”

“Interviewee 2 08/09: Welcome to [their land]

Int: Hi, thank you, it’s a nice place that you have here ”

“Interviewee 13 08/09: And I much rather sit on the sand here with the blue sea than just be in a plain chat space”

\* Slide 20: Example issue: Difficulty in telling when someone has more to say

“communicating over an online chat log causes delay in conversation as both myself and [interviewee] would sometimes type at the same time” (Int-j)

“In Second Life it is always going to be harder to anticipate how much your interviewee plans on saying” (Int-s)

\* Slide 21: Using research methods exercise to collect data on impressions of the class ...

\* Slide 22: Exercise on data collection

- Exercise in Inf106 on data analysis

- Posting quick answers to questions, then doing rough analysis of responses

- Questions: What is the most interesting thing you have learnt about Information Management this semester? & Why do you think it is interesting?

- Most frequent answers:

- - Guest speakers: 2 information management consultants

- - Realising scope of IM

- - Seeing relationship with future careers

\* Slide 23

“Most interesting thing learnt about IM this semester: the broad spectrum which information management covers either directly or indirectly and how it often relates to many activities in everyday life, especially in business related activities.”

“Why was this interesting: This was interesting because I previously thought that the scope that information management covered was quite small until the two guest speakers came in and showed how wide the spectrum is and what different names can often be given to information managers”

\* Slide 24: Some other aspects emerging strongly in focus groups etc

- Choosing their own research topic was valued: increased interest and also felt it made it more achievable
- Working with people they were familiar with already
- Access to staff, and guest speakers

“What made us pick this particular topic was that we were all fascinated by something non-one within the department really knew the answer to. Although we were not actually carrying out original research, and someone out there had the facts we needed to successfully answer the question, it was the challenge of finding this that drew us to the idea of [the topic]...”

(student quote from first cohort)

\* Slide 25: 4 pointers for engagement & retention in FY - revisited

- The allocation of resources has to reflect the importance of the first year: Staff commitment inc. Profs

- The teaching approach has to be focused on student development within the subject area(s) concerned: Focus on progressing & engaging with IM

- Ways need to be found to enhance the chances of students developing the supportive network of peers: Group work including assignments

- Those teaching first-year students should have a strong commitment to teaching and student learning: Core team interested in pedagogic research (etc)

\* Slide 26: “Key features of an 'ideal' first-year curriculum from the literature” revisited

In relation to Bovill et al.'s (2008: 10), can highlight

development of learning skills: developing information literacy, presentation skills, ICT skills, etc & explicitly learning-to-learn

student-centred, active learning through problem-based, project-based and group learning: overall IBL approach

formative assessment and feedback: some formative assessment planned in

progressive skills development: progression through level 1 (& subsequently)

time and structures for reflecting on learning: part of LT&A

\* Slide 27: Has IBL conceptual framework from

Centre for Inquiry Based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences. (2008) Inquiry-based Learning: a conceptual framework. Sheffield: CILASS. <http://www.shef.ac.uk/cilass/resources>

In first year moving from staff directed/ exploring & acquiring knowledge to student led/ Participating in building disciplinary knowledge - ultimate (academic) goal is the project they do in 3rd year.

\* Slide 28: Conclusions

“Good first year experience” and “Good IBL experience” seem highly compatible

Place and use of “technology” in both these areas is multifaceted and more complex than sometimes framed

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## References

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