Mind the Gap

Staff development to bridge the digital divide

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Session aim:

To provide an overview of the motivations, methodology and findings from year one of the DEBUT programme.

Session content:

• Concepts, background and approach
• An illustration of the DEBUT approach
• Hearing back from our DEBUT participants
• Project findings and the way forward
• Questions and answers
Digital literacy:

• The concept of digital literacy is at the heart of the DEBUT project.

• Digital literacy is the ability to understand and use the information which is conveyed from a wide variety of sources via an increasing array of electronic or digital tools.

• It is as much about attitude and application as it is about skill or process, and it is a relative concept.

• Allan Martin (DigEULit) defines the elements of digital literacy as:
  
  - **Awareness** of the ICT and information environment
  - **Confidence** in using generic ICT and information tools
  - **Evaluation** of information-handling operations and products
  - **Reflection** on one’s own eLiteracy development
  - **Adaptability** and willingness to meet eLiteracy challenges
Background to DEBUT:

• At Canterbury Christ Church we have wide spread practice of using e-tools, but few really creative examples, and mostly this practice is concentrated on our VLE.

• Few staff are “digital natives” – each new technology is often challenging sometimes threatening.

• So we (the sector) have to “train” staff on each tool as it comes along. A systems-approach to staff development. We thought this approach was exacerbating our lack of progress.

• What we wanted to explore was a more contextualised, holistic and intensive approach where the focus was on raising the overall digital literacy of staff rather than their skills on a specific tool.
The DEBUT approach:

• We accepted expressions of interest from 25 of our staff from across our institution.

• We made available a suite 25-30 digital experiences (some of which were existing technologies in the institution, others completely new) and asked our participants to choose six.

• We helped participants choose these tools by interviewing them at the outset of the project to discuss their digital experience, their attitudes to and use of technologies, their needs – their context.

• Our tools were supported by a variety of staff development approaches (workshop, 1:1, self-directed), a number of times during the project life cycle.

• Participants evaluated each digital experience and the overall DEBUT approach.
An illustration of the DEBUT approach

To illustrate how DEBUT works we are going to ask you to:

1. Reflect on your digital use and confidence
2. Choose some digital experiences

From this exercise you can then take away a personal digital development plan.
Hearing back from our DEBUT participants

Motivations, reflections and applications – some comments from some of our DEBUT participants…..
Findings thus far:
Our participants have overwhelmingly been extremely positive about DEBUT with most saying they are becoming far more digitally confident.

Issues
• Time pressures
• Impact of different skill levels in group staff development

Factors which our participants have particularly valued are:
• Choice of learning was personal and could be applied immediately
• Intensity and variety of digital experience
• The realisation and ability to link tools e.g. PowerPoint and video
• Use of follow-up sessions with activities valued as a motivator
• The opportunity to share approaches of tool use in practice
Where next?

• We will commence DEBUT2 in May 2008 – why:

  • to further enhance the programme
  • to embed it in the institution
  • to make the support for and development of e-learning more sustainable by developing a community of e-experts/mentors in our faculties
  • to better equip the institution to exploit a increasing variety of learning environments – physical and virtual.
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Any questions?

Further info at: http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/lteu