

A guide to using Delicious, Google Reader and Twitter in the context of an Open University course: H800 Technology-enhanced Learning: practices and debates

This guide was developed initially within the Social Networking for Practice Learning project, funded by the PBPLCETL. The authors, Mary Thorpe and Philip Greaney, worked together with the chair of H800, John Pettit, to develop the material for use within H800, which was first presented in February 2009. Details about the course, including registration, are available here: <http://www3.open.ac.uk/courses/bin/p12.dll?C01H800>

Some details of the course materials have been changed for this version, but references to H800 have been left in because they indicate areas where the material would need to be adapted to fit with a different course code or project approach. Other changes could be made obviously, to suit different activities using these tools, but we hope that this version provides an effective basis for seeing the possibilities for reuse in different contexts.

Our thanks to the course chair of H800 Technology-enhanced Learning: practices and debates, for his input to these materials, [which are reused here with permission](#). Thanks also to our IET colleague Anna Page, for her testing of the H800 activities.

Please note that the materials are available for use under the following creative commons licence which allows you to copy/distribute the work so long as the Open University is credited and for non commercial use only. Users are not permitted to create derivative works. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

1: Delicious

Activity 1

About a quarter of an hour

Preparation: your browser

If you are not already using Firefox or Internet Explorer (IE), we recommend that you switch to one or the other. Both offer tabbed browsing, which makes switching between several open web pages much easier. Each site you visit can be opened in a new tab that will sit alongside the tabs you have already opened.

If you are using a version of Internet Explorer earlier than IE7, you can upgrade your browser from [Microsoft's website](#).

There are detailed guidance notes for IE, including use of tabbed browsing, via the Help menu once you have the browser opened. The notes below on opening a new blank tab are just one instance of this guidance and may be useful if you're new to tabbed browsing:

- To open a new blank tab, click the New tab button on the tab row or open the link with the CTRL button held down. You can also open a new blank tab by pressing CTRL+T.
- To open a new tab when you follow a link on a web page, press CTRL as you click the link or right click the link and then click Open in New Tab.
- If you have a mouse with a wheel and it's set up to do so, you can click a link with the wheel to open a new tab.

2: Opening your Delicious account

Activity 2

About a quarter of an hour

If you already have a Delicious account and are familiar with using it, please skip to the next page, 'Adding resources and tagging'.

- Go to delicious.com and select 'Join Now', which will open a page asking for your name, email address, user name, password (note the guidance to include at least one number or symbol), and letter recognition. If you have a visual impairment you may need help from a sighted person to do the letter recognition. Enter those details. Read the Terms of Service and, if you agree with them (they usually cover routine items that most people can agree to), tick/check the box and click 'Register'.
- At the next page that opens, click 'Add Buttons' in order to put the Delicious buttons onto the toolbar of your browser.
- At the dialogue box 'Do you want to run or save this file?', click 'Run' and then click 'Run' again.
- You should then get a dialogue box asking you to install the software in the Program Files folder. Agree to this and close down Internet Explorer when asked.
- Once the installation is complete, select 'Close'. Internet Explorer will open again and you should now see the Delicious buttons located in the toolbar of your browser. (If you already have many icons on your toolbar the Delicious button may be pushed off screen and you'll need to retrieve it.) Select the Delicious squared box icon and click to go to your account.

If you want to import your existing Internet Explorer favourites (or existing Firefox bookmarks), select the 'Easy Import' button and click on 'Import Now'. (The default for imported bookmarks is that they are private and not seen by others unless you specifically choose to share them.) You should then see 'Registration Complete' and a message that your bookmarks have imported successfully. Close that left-hand window.

- Go to the Delicious home page where, at the top of the screen and also part-way down, it will offer you 'Bookmarks' or 'Your bookmarks'. Click on that and a list of your bookmarks will open – assuming you have imported your favourites of course. The padlock icon beside a bookmark means that it is not shared; you can choose to share it, but you may prefer to keep your imported bookmarks private.
- At the top right of the page you will see several options, one of which is 'tag options'. Click on this and scroll down to the last option 'Learn about options'. This will explain what tagging means and how to select tags and, if you wish, group them into 'bundles'. This is certainly worth doing at an early stage so that you keep your tags manageable.
- If you don't want to remain signed in to Delicious once you have closed your browser (for example, if you don't want your bookmarks to be available to anyone else who uses your computer), you need to remove the tick from the box 'Keep me signed in for 2 weeks' on the Sign In page, each time you sign in.

3: Adding resources and tagging

Activity 3

About an hour and a half

- Find any resource that you'd like to bookmark and tag for practice. It could be a journal or newspaper article, a file on YouTube, or an institutional website for example.
- Save the bookmark to your Delicious account by clicking the tag button next to the Delicious button on the toolbar of your browser. This will bring up a box in which you can type any notes you want to about the item, and can also enter one or more tags. You will be offered the option of also selecting from tags you have already used, if any of these fit. Remember that Delicious will only allow you to create a tag longer than one word if you put an underscore between each word. Spaces indicate a new tag, hence 'social_networking' has to be entered like that, with an underscore (but without the inverted commas), otherwise both words will be treated separately as two tags – 'social' and 'networking'.
- Click on the Delicious button: you will find the item now added to your list of bookmarks. These are usually organised with the most recent addition at the top of the page.

Using the H800 tags

One of the key benefits of Delicious is the ability to see what other people have thought worth bookmarking. You can do this by searching on any tag that relates to resources you are interested in. However, sharing is much more effective, in the context of a course for example, if people use the same tags. Since we are all involved in H800, we can benefit from sharing resources by tagging them with the same tag.

In Activity 4, for example, you'll be finding journal papers about blogs (and other subjects that interest you) and sharing them with your group. Because it makes sharing resources so much easier, we recommend that for the items you find for this activity and Activity 4, you use 'H800_block2_2009' (note that no spaces are permitted in the tag). This means that if you want to see what others have found, you can search on the tag 'H800_block2_2009'.

When saving any resources connected with H800, we recommend you select the most relevant of those listed here:

- H800_2009
- H800_block1_2009
- H800_block2_2009
- H800_block3_2009
- H800_block4_2009

- To search for all bookmarks tagged with one of the H800 tags, go to the Delicious home page and click on the down arrow beside 'Tags' in the toolbar across the top. Select 'Explore' and type 'H800_block2_2009', for example, or 'H800_2009' and click the arrow at the right-hand end of the box. You will get all the examples that have already been saved as bookmarks with that tag. If you use the tag 'H800', you may also find articles that members of the course team have selected during the production phase of the course.
- You can achieve this in another way. On the Delicious home page, select 'Explore tags', which is an option listed alongside 'Popular Bookmarks'. This opens a page with a box where you can enter a tag such as 'H800_2009'. Having done that, all the bookmarks that anybody has tagged with 'H800_2009' will appear on screen.
- If you do not want to categorise something in relation to a particular block or year, for whatever reason, simply use the tag 'H800'. Your fellow students will then be able to search using that tag and find out anything you or others have saved with that tag as well.

As the course progresses, we may find it necessary to add other shared tags to the list of H800 tags. Remember you can also add other tags that suit your own tagging approach: each bookmark can have several tags.

Subscribing to tags

In addition to searching for particular tags, you should also set up subscriptions to any tag that you want to follow regularly. In this case we recommend you subscribe to the H800 tags.

- In order to subscribe to a tag, go to your bookmarks site in Delicious. Immediately beneath your Delicious name you will see five options – Bookmarks, Network, Tags, Subscriptions, Inbox. Select 'Subscriptions' and, if you've not used subscriptions in Delicious yet, a box will open saying 'you haven't subscribed to any tags yet'.
- Click the option 'add a subscription'. This opens a box where you can input the tag you want to subscribe to. You should enter therefore one of the H800

tags, such as 'H800_2009'. Click 'add' and you will see that you now have a subscription to 1 tag; and if you or anybody else has tagged a resource with 'H800_2009', all of them will be listed showing whose resource it is and the list of tags they gave it – which will include 'H800_2009' of course.

- Now work through the list of H800 tags above ('H800_block1_2009' and so on), adding each one in turn. Select subscriptions, as you did above, then on the page that opens you will see a box on the top right with three options – click on 'add a subscription'. Go through the same process as you did above, this time adding each H800 tag listed above in turn, so that by the end you have a complete list of all the H800 tags you want to subscribe to.

If you have not used Delicious or some other social bookmarking tool already, do start now to use it to save any resources that you want to have available to you for H800 study purposes, using the tagging conventions outlined above. We hope that any disadvantages for you of only using Delicious for this purpose are outweighed by the sharing and network benefits of all H800 students using Delicious. You can, of course, save any resource you are interested in – whether related to H800 or not. There are other benefits from using Delicious and you may choose to explore these.

Videos: opening your Delicious account

Videos of how to register with Delicious and start tagging have been created at the OU for staff with an interest in social networking. By the time you are working on this activity, the interface is likely to differ somewhat from the videos, given that sites such as Delicious are regularly changed or revamped. Nevertheless the functionality is the same or very similar. Should you wish to view the videos, they can be found on the Social networking for practice learning (<http://www.open.ac.uk/pbpl/activities/details/detail.php?itemId=499992885667b&themeId=49887a1373845>) area of the Practice-based Professional Learning Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning website (www.open.ac.uk/pbpl).

Social networking tools

There are many ways to find information on the Web. The one you might be most familiar with is a Web search, using Google or your preferred search engine. For broad search terms or popular topics this can result in a bewildering array of thousands of search hits. Rather than replace the often useful search engine, there are numerous tools – including library databases and book searches – that can supplement its use.

Some of these alternative tools are social networking tools such as social bookmarking, RSS aggregators or readers that enable sharing, and micro-blogging sites to find and share information. The rise of Web 2.0 means that much of what you do when you use the Web can be shared. In turn, you might find that those with similar interests who have used the Web for research might share their findings with you.

In the following activities you are going to use Delicious, Google Reader and Twitter to help harness the 'wisdom of the crowd' (see Surowiecki (2004) *The Wisdom of Crowds*) in order to find more information on three key issues.

1. What evidence can be found about the actual use of social networking and its accessibility to people in different countries and in low income groups?
2. How are universities and other educational institutions making use of Web 2.0 social networking tools?
3. Having gathered information on these two issues, what do you think it says about how roles, curriculum, assessment and education institutions should be reconfigured? (If you want to focus only on universities or schools that is acceptable.)

In each case, there are alternatives to the tools we've chosen. We've chosen Delicious, Google Reader and Twitter because they are popular, easy to use and stable. Finding which tool suits you best is one of the skills you'll develop when confronted with the many different tools available online. But for now we ask you to use these three tools. The guidance below will help you to create accounts for Google Reader and Twitter and to become familiar with the basic functionality so that you might use them in your research.

If you have questions about such tools, or if you are concerned about any activity online related to your work on this course, your tutor and, indeed, other students may be able to provide answers from their own experience.

Terms of service

Just to repeat a point made in Week 10a, it is obviously important that you find your use of tools and websites not created or controlled by the OU enjoyable and productive. 'External' sites, like Google Reader, Delicious and Twitter, have their own terms of service, which you'll find on each site, but you might also find the [OU Computing Code of Conduct](#) helpful.

Delicious

Rather than begin your research in relative isolation using a search engine such as Google, an alternative method is to see what others have found interesting or relevant with regard to your topic. If you find a lot of people have bookmarked a link, for example, you can often assume that the link is a useful one. Using the 'wisdom of the crowd' in this way means that you're making use of the work of others to your own ends (in turn, you'll make a contribution that others might use, too).

Using this approach, you are going to use the social bookmarking tool Delicious to find more information about social bookmarking, but the same process can be equally applied to the three key issues listed above and later activities will focus on these.

You will already be familiar with Delicious and the term social bookmarking.

If you need to refresh your memory on what social bookmarking is and how it works, watch this short video:

[Social bookmarking in plain English](#) (around three and a half minutes)

Accessing videos

Some locations will not be able to access YouTube videos. You might find this video, and other videos used in this course, elsewhere on the Web. Those working without broadband might struggle to watch streaming video such as those found on YouTube. You might try downloading the video so you can watch it at a later date, although please consider the costs of doing so before you begin.

Should you at any point find you need more information about how to use Delicious, please consult their Help site, [Delicious help](#), which has very clear advice.

Screenshots

To help you with Activities 4, 5 and 6 we have provided a pdf file (<http://www.open.ac.uk/pbpl/resources/details/detail.php?itemId=4a26913f3469e>) containing screenshots of key parts. We suggest you print them out and refer to them as you work through the activities.

4: Searching everyone's bookmarks

In order to discover the most popular bookmarks for the topic 'social bookmarking', you will need to search everyone's bookmarks. That 'everyone' means every user of Delicious. In this activity we guide you through the process.

Activity 4

About half an hour

- Open Delicious now in a new tab on your browser. Make sure you are logged in, as you'll be saving bookmarks as you progress.
- In the drop-down 'Search these bookmarks' menu on the right-hand side, choose the option to search 'Everyone's bookmarks' (see screenshot 1 in the pdf).

The screenshot shows the Delicious home page for user Phil Greaney (one of the authors of this material). The main purpose of this image is to show how in the top right-hand corner it is possible to use the drop-down menu to perform the function 'Search everyone's bookmarks'. The image has five bookmarks listed down the left and centre of the page and these are just some of those saved as interesting and tagged by the user. These bookmarks are Web links. They are not accessed during the course of the activity and are merely for illustrative purposes. On the right-hand side are the tags by which the bookmarks are organised; they include such tags as web2.0, presentation, VLE, music, download, shopping, blog and so on.

- Enter the search term 'social_bookmarking' into the search box. It's important you use the underscore '_' between the words because this connects the two words into a single phrase. Otherwise Delicious will recognise the term as two separate words. You are searching for every bookmark throughout Delicious that has been tagged with 'social_bookmarking'.

The Delicious [FAQs](#) (Frequently Asked Questions) says: ‘search results are ranked by relevance, which takes into account bookmark titles, notes, and tags, among other things’. So, it’s often the case that the most meaningful results are on the top. But this is not the only criterion.

- Your results may look something like screenshot 2. (It’s inevitable that the bookmarks will change between the time this screenshot was taken and when you see it but use the example as a guide.)

Screenshot 2 in the pdf is of a Delicious Web page showing the results of a search made during early 2009 of ‘everyone’s bookmarks’ using the search term ‘social_bookmarking’. There are six hits (please note that item 2 no longer brings up the document). Some bookmarks are more popular than others (that is, more people have saved the website bookmark to their Delicious account using the tag ‘social_bookmarking’ than others).

1. Social Annotation: Seamless Integration of Social Bookmarking – www.diigo.com – 7100 [have been bookmarked].
 2. Social Bookmarking Tools: A General Review – www.dlib.org/dlib/april05/hammond/o4hammond/html – 3296.
 3. AddThis – #1 Social Bookmarking Sharing Button – Delicious Digg Facebook Widget – www.addthis.com – 8552.
 4. BlinkList: Your Personal Start Page – www.blinklist.com – 4665.
 5. digg – www.digg.com – 53054.
 6. Video: Social Bookmarking in Plain English – <http://www.commoncraft.com/bookmarking-plain-english> – 1957.
- Now have a look at some of the search hits listed above.

The most popular is a site called ‘[digg](#)’, with 53,054 users saving this bookmark using our search phrase. If you open the site and explore it, you will quickly discover that it is an alternative to Delicious in that it is a social bookmarking tool. Indeed, more than one of these search hits refers to a tool, such as the ‘AddThis’ site and the ‘Social annotation’ site.

- You can explore these hits later, but for now return to the final entry on the list – the bookmark for ‘Video: Social Bookmarking in Plain English’, saved by 1,957 users with the tag ‘social_bookmarking’. You know that nearly two thousand users have considered it useful enough to save to their bookmarks and you might speculate that, as a result, it might be a useful resource for you too. (It’s the same video you might have used to refresh your memory on social bookmarking.)

Assessing the usefulness of links

When searching for information on Delicious there are three strategies you can use to quickly assess the content of a link before you visit the site:

- **Popularity.** The wisdom of the crowd dictates that the more popular the bookmark, the more relevant it is likely to be but, as you saw above, some sites may turn out to be not exactly what you’re looking for. What’s more, sites may take time to establish as popular and therefore a low number of people bookmarking it might just mean a site is in emergence.
- **Title.** If the site has a descriptive title, like the ‘Social Bookmarking in Plain English’ example, then it tells you something meaningful about its content.
- **Other tags.** You can see the other tags that have been applied to a bookmark. In the ‘Social Bookmarking in Plain English’ example, you can see that the tags ‘video’,

'socialbookmarking', 'tutorial', 'del.icio.us' and 'Web 2.0' have been used. These may help you to select the sites that are likely to be the most useful.

Soon, you will be using Delicious to find out more about the three key issues.

Before you do so, we'd like you to think about the implications for the accuracy and usefulness of information you find on Delicious and other social bookmarking sites.

5: Delicious as a research tool

Activity 5

About half an hour

- Use your experiences of searching for information on 'social_bookmarking' to think about this question:
 - What barriers do you think Delicious might create to finding relevant, accurate and reliable information?

We'd like you to focus on the usefulness of an online resource and how this can be gauged by thinking about how it applies to the issues at hand. Also consider the specific mechanisms and processes of Delicious. You need to consider the reliability and accuracy of the sites you access and the fact that Delicious makes it easy to access popular sites. But these may not necessarily be the most useful for your particular purposes.

You can also consider the likely reliability and accuracy of a website by checking out who wrote it, and why, and how this might have influenced its accuracy. You might go on to ask whether the evidence you find in the resource appears equally reliable.

One popular way to verify online resources is known as the PROMPT method:

- **P**resentation
- **R**elevance
- **O**bjectivity
- **M**ethod
- **P**rovenance
- **T**imeliness

If you're interested in learning more about the quality of a website's information using the PROMPT approach, the OU's [Safari](#) website might be useful.

Discussion

Perhaps the most significant barrier is that, using the process outlined above, you are searching for tags that are applied by an end user. Since the end user may tag an item with whatever tag he or she chooses, this might lead to idiosyncratic organisation of information, meaningful to a specific user or users but not to all users of Delicious as a whole. This potentially may make it more difficult for users to find information.

Continuing this idea, variations on a specific keyword might be a barrier to searching. What one user might tag with 'social_bookmarking', another might tag with 'social bookmarking' or 'socialbookmarking'. Delicious attempts to overcome this by introducing a fuzzy search that takes into account variations on keywords. But if a user rejects the term altogether – perhaps using 'web 2.0', 'favourites' and 'sharing' to refer to more or less the same subject – then using the keyword 'social_bookmarking' won't find this user's bookmark at all.

The term folksonomy is used to refer to this kind of classification of information. The alternative, called taxonomy, is based upon a collectively agreed and universal system. The Dewey decimal system used by libraries is a good example of taxonomy: it does not differ between institutions, and is predictable, publicly recorded and fixed. But, similarly, it doesn't respond to the specific needs of the user. Many Web 2.0 tools have an increasing trend towards personalisation and decentralisation – using a folksonomy is one such example.

Delicious attempts to address these anomalies by suggesting tags that others have used for the same bookmark. Here's the tag box that appears when you are saving a bookmark (see screenshot 3).

This screenshot shows the Delicious 'Save a bookmark' window. There are several elements, described in order.

- At the top is the URL of the bookmark you are about to save
- The title of the site
- Notes, which can be added by the user
- Space for tags
- Recommended tags – in this list they include wiki, web2.0, web, tools, social_networking, resources, reference, ning
- Network tags – so you can share the tags with your network through the 'People' tab
- Popular tags – this example includes wikis, wiki, web2.0, web, tools, technology, teaching, teacher

At the top right there is a clickable box with 'do not share', which would keep the bookmark private.

Note the 'Recommended tags' and 'Popular tags'. If you choose these tags, then you agree with other users that they are meaningful and move towards something of a taxonomy.

You might question the 'wisdom of the crowd' principle. It does not necessarily stand that the crowd is right, especially where a consensus that appears in a smaller cross section doesn't represent the wider competing opinions. Sometimes users with opposing views might tag with similar numbers and choosing the bookmark with the highest number of tags ignores the more complex matters, and variety of opinion and engagement underpinning its choice.

We suggest you bear these barriers in mind when using Delicious to find bookmarked websites for the three key issues.

6: Searching for 'social networking'

Activity 6

About an hour and a half

- Use Delicious to search for keywords that address the first key issue:
 - 1. What evidence can be found about the actual use of social networking and its accessibility to people in different countries and in low income groups?
- Save any bookmarks you find useful.
- You may also find it useful to search 'social_networking' alongside the key terms 'low income' or 'poverty' and so on.
- When you have found two or three sources relevant to this first key issue, bookmark them in Delicious and make a note in your blog about what you have found out from them about this issue. Feel free to comment on what you find out about social networking generally, not purely with reference to low income groups only.
- When you've finished your search, return to this activity and compare your search results with ours.

Discussion

The search is quite complicated because there are several elements that make it relatively narrow in focus. Rather than find a link that is a survey of social networking in different countries, we chose a continent upon which to focus. We searched Delicious using the terms 'Social_networking Africa'. The results are shown in screenshot 4, which shows eight search hits, described in order. Please note: the Web addresses do not appear in the image and are therefore not described here.

1. Nyasa Times – Malawi breaking news, sports, showbiz, jobs, business and social networking – African women economic empowerment summit begins in Malawi – 1 [number of people who bookmarked this site]
2. SANGONeT – Social Networking Trends in South Africa – 3.
3. The Future of Social Networking Sites in South Africa – 2.
4. SANGONeT [repeat of above] – Social Networking Trends in South Africa – 1.
5. Belgische Werknemers Zien Voordeel in Corporate Social Networking: Europe, Middle East, Africa – 1.
6. They shouldn't call it 'social' networking anymore at Media in Africa Blog Solutions – 1.
7. Social networking hits SA's cellphones – South Africa – The Good News – 1.
8. Does Africa use Social Networking Sites? Only Egypt, Senegal and South Africa appear on LeMonde map – 1.

You'll notice that there are very few users bookmarking these sites – most have one. This is because we're addressing a subject that appears to be more specific and less popular in terms of users researching it. The wisdom of the crowd, as you saw earlier, isn't as useful for less popular subjects.

The final site on the list above, [Does Africa use social networking sites?](#) seems promising and on opening the link we find some data that might be useful for our survey.

Indeed, by searching for Africa we've found a world map that gives us an idea of the use of social networking tools across the globe. We need to validate the information

in the normal way. If we think it's useful, then we can save it as a bookmark to Delicious.

Limits to Delicious's usefulness

There are limits to how far Delicious is useful in some circumstances. Perhaps when looking for 'evidence ... about the actual use' – a key term in our key issue – you need to look at official statistics. These are likely to be published by international organisations, such as the United Nations, and whether or not you find a relevant UN publication in Delicious obviously depends on whether somebody else has chosen to save and tag it with a tag that you are using for your search. Delicious is not meant to replace using a search engine to locate relevant documents; it is an additional means of finding resources that you might otherwise miss. We expect that you will continue to use both search engines and Delicious, in order to get the benefits of both.

We hope that you've found Delicious a useful tool for searching, saving and organising bookmarks. In the next activities, you'll refine your skills in using Delicious – and in doing so, find resources that send information to you, rather than you going out to find it.

RSS and Google Reader

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds, otherwise known as 'newsfeeds' or simply 'feeds', allow you to subscribe to sources of regular output in areas you are interested in. Once subscribed, information is sent to you in distilled chunks so you can see if it's relevant. If you think it is, then you can read the article in full.

Some of the sites you encountered when using Delicious, such as blogs, you can subscribe to, so the information is sent to you rather than you going out and finding it. You're going to look more closely now at how to subscribe to such sites. (If you didn't find any sites that use RSS, don't worry – there is an example to follow.)

A video outline of what RSS is and how it works can be found on YouTube:

[RSS in Plain English](#) (around three and a half minutes)

To read, subscribe to and share feeds you need a feed reader (also known as an aggregator). For the following activities we would like you to use Google Reader as your feed reader. We will guide you through the process of creating a Google account, adding RSS feeds to Google Reader and then sharing them with your tutor group.

Should you at any time need more information on how to use RSS and Google Reader, please consult [Google Reader Help](#).

6: Creating a Google account

This activity helps you to set up a Google account and shows you how to access Google Reader. You will need a Google account to use Google Reader to subscribe to a feed on an example area of interest – this time the use of RSS in education.

Activity 6

About half an hour

Setting up a Google account

You'll need a Google account to use Google Reader. A Google account is free and will take only a few minutes to set up.

- If you don't have a Google account already, watch this video (remember that a link to it can be found on the Social networking for practice learning area of the Practice-based Professional Learning Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning website (<http://www.open.ac.uk/pbpl/activities/details/detail.php?itemId=499992885667b&theMeld=49887a1373845>))

Creating a Google Account (around one minute)

It explains how to create an account.

- Follow the video's instructions.
- Alternatively, a text version of how to set up a Google account is set out below, which you can follow instead.
 1. Open your browser and go to the following address: www.google.co.uk
 2. Click on 'Sign in' in the top right-hand corner.
 3. Under 'Don't have a Google Account?' click on 'Create an account now'.
 4. Enter your details in the boxes provided. If you wish, read the Terms of Service associated with having a Google account. Click 'I accept' to create your account.
 5. You should now be on the Google home page. If not, go to www.google.co.uk for the UK home page.
- If you already have a Google account, perhaps because you use Google Mail or Google Maps, you won't need to create a new account: just log into Google Reader using your existing Google account.

Getting to Google Reader

- Watch the video

Getting to Google Reader (about one minute) and follow its instructions.

Alternatively, a text version of how to do this is set out below, which you can follow instead.

1. You need to be signed into your Google account in order to begin the process of accessing Google Reader. If you haven't done so already, refer to the section above, 'Setting up a Google account'.
2. Go to [Google Reader](#) or type 'Google Reader' into your search engine.
3. Sign in (create a Google Reader page) by entering your Google account details, which are your email and password. (You may wish to bookmark this page when you've signed in.)
4. You are now using Google Reader. Spend a moment looking over the page, but don't worry too much about functionality right now – we are going to come to that soon.

5. You will notice that Google already adds some RSS feeds for you – you can ignore them for now.

When you've finished, you should have a Google account and be signed into Google Reader.

Finding RSS feeds

- Use Delicious to search for the following terms: 'RSS education'.

You need to find a site that is interested in the use of education. It should be either a blog or updated frequently and it should contain an RSS feed. If

you're using Windows Internet Explorer, you should see the RSS symbol appear in the address bar. This tells you that the site you've visited has an RSS link that you can subscribe to.

- When you've completed your search return to this activity and compare your search results with ours.

Discussion

Our search results for the terms 'RSS education' can be seen in screenshot 5 (in the pdf). The image shows the results of searching 'RSS education' on everyone's bookmarks in Delicious. There are nine hits. They are described in the following list. Please note: no URLs are provided.

1. RSS marketing and Real-Life Marketing Experience – 97 [people have bookmarked this site]
2. NYT > Education – 20
3. Edu_Rss – 18
4. Education Guardian – 10
5. Edu_RSS – Education RSS feeds – 2
6. feedpass = rss education – 2
7. Rss Education – 1.
8. Education/Technology – Tim Lauer – 2
9. Weblogg-ed – 2467

We investigated the most popular site here, with 2,467 bookmarks: <http://weblogg-ed.com/>

This site is interested in educational technologies in general and doesn't devote itself entirely to our area of interest, the use of RSS in education. However, like many well-organised blogs it has a list of tags appearing on the page that we can use to find articles on a specific category. To see them:

- Scroll down the page until you come to 'Categories' on the right-hand side.
- Choose 'RSS' (or click here: <http://weblogg-ed.com/category/rss/>). All the articles that appear discuss RSS in education in some way, according to the blog writer who tagged them.

Let's assume this is a useful site and we'd like to return to it, not just for its articles on RSS in education but because it discusses educational technology more broadly and

has many interesting comments and informed visitors. Because it is a site that uses RSS, we can use Google Reader to subscribe to it and have it send information to us.

The next activity will show you how to add an RSS feed to Google Reader.

7: Adding RSS feeds to Google Reader

Google Reader doesn't begin being useful until you add feeds. We're going to search the Web to find some now and add them to Google Reader by subscribing to them.

Activity 7

About a quarter of an hour

- Watch the video on

[How to add an RSS feed to Google Reader.](#)

- Alternatively, a text version of how to do this is set out below, which you can follow instead.

1. You should be signed into your Google Reader page. Go here if necessary:

<http://www.google.com/reader/view/#overview-page>

2. Visit the following site: <http://googlereader.blogspot.com/>

This is a blog about Google Reader. Subscribing to it will tell you more about developments in Google Reader (you can always remove it later).

3. You have different options for subscribing to your Google Reader page. At the moment, we will simply copy the web address and paste it into our Google Reader page.
4. Go to the address bar, where you find the web address. Copy it in the normal way (by selecting it and pressing CTRL-C or right click and choose 'Copy').
5. Now return to your Google Reader page. If you have it open on a tab, click the Google Reader tab.
6. In the top left-hand corner of the screen, you should see a button that says 'Add a subscription'. Click this button and a text-entry box appears.
7. Paste your Google Reader RSS feed (the one you copied to your clipboard a moment ago) into the box. If you're uncertain, type or paste this in the box exactly as it appears:

<http://googlereader.blogspot.com/>

8. When you've pasted or entered the text, click 'Add'. The Google Reader Blog will appear in your list of subscribed feeds in the left-hand column of the web page.
 9. You have now subscribed to an RSS feed using Google Reader. If you wish to add more feeds that discuss subjects you're interested in, you'll need to find them online. Remember to look for the RSS symbol when you visit that Web page to see if you can subscribe to it using Google Reader.
 10. Now you are able to use Google Reader to subscribe to RSS feeds.
- When you've watched the video or read the text above on how to add a feed to Google Reader, add the Weblogg-ed site to your list of feeds: <http://weblogg-ed.com/>

Discussion

By themselves, RSS and feed readers aren't examples of social networking as such. When you share your feeds with others or use feeds that others have shared you begin to adopt a social networking approach.

8: Sharing feeds

This activity guides you through the process of adding other users of Google Reader (referred to by Google Reader as friends) to your network and sharing feeds with them.

Activity 8

About half an hour

- If you do not already have it open, open Google Reader in a new tab.
- Click on 'Sharing settings' in the left-hand menu. Your screen (if you have no users to share with, which is the default) should look like screenshot 6.

Screenshot 6 shows the top right-hand corner of Google Reader, with a focus on its sharing function. The 'Sharing Settings' window is open. Within the 'Sharing Settings' window is a box where the user can enter the names of other users with whom they'd like to share the RSS feed or article they have saved. On the left-hand side is a list of links, including those related to sharing. These include: 'Shared item', which shows the items being shared when clicked; and 'Friends' shared items', which details all those feeds and articles that have been shared with the user by friends.

- There are different ways to add users to your Google Reader account. If you know that your contact has a Google Reader account and you know their username, you can simply add that.

Use the tutor group forum to tell your tutor group your Google Reader username so that they can add you to their network and you can add their usernames to yours. Your tutor can remind the tutor group to do this and should be able to help make the usernames available.

In addition, you may add friends to your network by entering the email addresses of people you wish to share items with. If you wish to add more than one, separate the names by using commas. We recommend you add the email addresses of your fellow students in your tutor group.

- When you've created a network you need to mark feeds to share with them. This is done when you open a feed.

Open a feed now. Choose an interesting article you've found on something like RSS use in education or any other use of RSS, and click 'Share' at the bottom of its window. See screenshot 7 for an example, with 'Share' at the bottom.

Screenshot 7 is a detail of Google Reader, which shows how an article appears. Moving from top to bottom, there is the title 'The Ed Techie', which is the name of the blog where this extract comes from; then there are the showing options: 'Show: 10 new items – all items'. Then the menu items: 'Mark all as read'; 'Refresh' and 'Feed settings'. These options control how the articles appear in general. The article from the Ed Techie blog then appears, approximately 200 words; then the menu items at the bottom. These are the ones we're specifically interested in. They are: 'Add star', which makes it a favourite; 'Share', which is our primary interest as this marks the article for sharing; 'Share with note', as before but the user can add a note; 'Email', where the user can email the article; 'Keep unread' and 'Edit tags' are not of interest here.

You'll notice that when you've clicked 'Share' it will turn to 'Unshare' and appear with the RSS logo by its side, as shown in screenshot 8.

Screenshot 8 is a partial shot of how the Google Reader share function is used. It shows the bottom half of an article page with the 'Share' function checked and functioning. When the 'Share' function is clicked, it becomes 'Unshare', meaning it's a toggle switch to turn it on and off. Here, the article has been shared, so the screen shows 'Unshare' as the toggle.

In Activity 4 (the Delicious activity), you should have saved several useful links that are relevant to the first of our three key issues. Some of those links are likely to use RSS technology. If they do not, you'll need to return to your search in Delicious and find some that do by broadening your search to include 'Web2.0' and 'education', for example. Alternatively, visit the BBC RSS site and use one of the examples of RSS feeds to add or subscribe to in Google Reader. You'll find them here, along with an explanation of their use: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/help/3223484.stm>.

- Return to Delicious. Locate the useful RSS feeds you found earlier and add them to Google Reader, so you've subscribed to them.

If you can't find any and wish to move on, use one from the list on the bottom right of the BBC [RSS feeds](#) website.

- Now that you've added the feeds, share specific articles with your network of friends by clicking 'Share' at the bottom of the article.

If you wish to learn more about how sharing works in Google Reader, including a refresher on how to share feeds, watch this video:

Sharing Items with Google Reader (around two minutes).

- When you've added at least two or three people to your network and shared two or three feeds, you're ready to move on.

9: Searching for 'Web 2.0 in education'

Now you are ready to apply the process of searching for and adding feeds that you'll share with your network. This time you'll be looking for information about Web 2.0 in education.

Activity 9

About an hour and a half

- Search Delicious for examples that provide information about the second key issue:
 - 2. How are universities and other educational institutions making use of Web 2.0 social networking tools?
- Look out for blogs and other RSS feed sites that you might subscribe to.
- When you've found some useful feeds (at least two) add them to your Google Reader.
- Find at least two articles that are relevant to social networking and education and mark them for sharing with your network.
- When you've completed your search return to this activity and compare your results with ours.

Discussion

We searched everyone's tags on Delicious using the keywords 'social_networking education'. The first page of our results is shown in screenshot 9.

There are ten hits, followed by the number of people who bookmarked the site. Please note: there are no URLs associated with this list and so they have not been recorded. The hits are:

1. Education world school issues: School and online social networking – 55.
2. Economist.com – 40.
3. Education world school issues: School and online social networking (repeated from above) – 13.
4. Education.au Seminars – 2.
5. Joe Wood online: Social networking & education – 1.
6. Ning: create your own social networks! – 16800.
7. Classroom 2.0 – 3198.
8. Infinite thinking machine – 193.
9. Ning in education – 498.
10. elgg.net: the learning landscape – 1094.

There is an interesting mix of sites here and we'll have to interpret some of the tagging in order to make sense of the list. Starting with the most popular, we find that Ning.com is a tool for creating social networks. This has limited use for us right now so let's move on. The second highest is 'Classroom 2.0'. Could this term have arisen to capture the use of Web 2.0 – which includes social networking – in education? Perhaps it would be useful to search using this term. We note too that it also has the RSS symbol, so we can add it to our Google Reader feeds. You'll find the site here: [Classroom 2.0](#).

Another approach we might use is to find bookmarks that contain both 'social_networking' and 'education' tags. There is only one of those, the first one. It takes us to the following site: [Education World](#).

Skim reading this, we find it's an article specifically directed towards schools. We need to apply our normal processes for checking the provenance, reliability and usefulness of this kind of article.

When we have done so, we might choose either to save it or to disregard it.

We also notice that in some cases, our keywords appear in the bookmark title but do not appear as a tag. The 'Joe Wood Online: Social networking & education' bookmark is a good example. It has been tagged with 'education' but the title tells us that it is also interested in social networking. Note this has been bookmarked by just one person according to Delicious, so we can't rely on the wisdom of the crowd. Open the link here: [JoeWoodOnline.com](#).

Finally, at the bottom of the screen we find a set of tags under the heading 'Everyone's related tags'. This is useful because we can use these as alternatives to the keywords we've been using: searching 'education' and 'web2.0' for example might yield more results of the kind we're interested in.

10: Searching RSS feeds

You may have felt you needed to supplement your search on Delicious with a search engine such as Google. You may have also felt that using popular tags in Delicious was difficult, since there may have been few bookmarks. That's fine: remember that a range of tools including Delicious and Google search can be used concurrently, rather than in isolation.

However, almost all blog sites use RSS technology, and it's likely that a search for RSS links will return links to blogs. It's often the case that blogs are not dedicated to the exact area you are interested in but cover a wider range. It may be necessary, therefore, to search your feeds in order to find exactly the item or article you are looking for. Once you've established a list of useful and relevant feeds you can search only those feeds you've added to your Google Reader account or those of your network that they've shared. This helps to refine your search in areas that you're interested in, using blogs you trust.

Activity 10

About a quarter of an hour

- Use Google Reader's search function to search your feeds and those your network has shared.

You'll find the search box in the top left-hand corner of the Google Reader home page, as shown in screenshot 10.

Screenshot 10 shows the text entry box for the Google Reader search function. No keywords have been entered or results found: it is merely to show where the function appears. It is in the top left of the Google Reader screen. There is a pull-down box, not activated, which shows different options. Here it is set to 'all items'.

The search function gives you the opportunity to narrow your search and find individual articles from the feeds you've added. Use the pull-down menu to adjust the filter on the search.

We hope that you'll find Google Reader useful throughout the remainder of this course for adding feeds and sharing them with your network.

1: Reflecting on using RSS feeds

Activity 11

About half an hour

- Now you've searched some of your RSS feeds, make a note of what you found out from the most useful of these feeds, in relation to the second key issue:
 - 2. How are universities and other educational institutions making use of Web 2.0 social networking tools?
- Reflect on any benefits – or otherwise – of having access to feeds from other students in your tutor group.
- Post a message to your tutor group forum commenting on the benefits or otherwise of finding feeds from other members of your tutor group.

12: Twitter

Activity 12

About half an hour

Twitter has been described as a micro-blogging service, where users post short messages that can be read by all the people in their network. A network is established by one user 'following' another. Often the user that is followed might reciprocate and users find they are following one another, but this is not always the case. A user's network grows as other users are followed, and so on.

When one user follows another, they can read the posts, or 'tweets', of the person they are following. The network of followers and those they follow together create a series of messages known as the 'stream'. The term stream is a useful metaphor in that it illustrates how users interact with posts: rather than the direct demands to read email, or instant messaging, users can dip their toe into the stream when they desire, either by reading the tweets of others or posting their own. The stream continues with or without you: sometimes you'll bathe in it, other times you'll look on from the shore.

Screenshot 11 (in the pdf) is an example of a stream of discussions, representing some of Twitter's functionality. It shows a series of seven messages, or 'tweets', posted by some of its users. One has posted about a blog they have written; another makes a reply to someone using the @ sign before their name. Another provides a link (where the url has been made smaller with the link-shrinking Web tool TinyURL) to a website he finds interesting. Another message tells his followers that he is on a train to London, while another remarks he is 'glad the fog is outside [his] brain and not in it today'.

It's also possible to tweet at another user, if you know their username, while simultaneously keeping the post in the stream. In this way, it's a discussion directed to another user *and* made public, allowing other users the opportunity to contribute.

Finally, you can directly message to a user, where the message is kept private and not in the stream. This is relatively rare: the approach of Twitter is to be open and to share, underscoring its Web 2.0 credentials.

The following video outlines what Twitter is and how it works. If you have access to YouTube and a good connection, you may like to watch it now but it is not essential because the text here covers the main points as well:

- [Twitter in Plain English](#) (around two minutes).

Unlike Delicious or Google Reader, Twitter's main purpose is not to help you directly find information or to provide a search function. But what it can do is help you to discuss, share and discover more about what others are working on (or, more pithily, stay 'in the stream'). In this sense, Twitter can be considered as a 'meta commentary', one that is not dedicated to a specific social object, idea or approach, but that can encompass them all.

Should you at any time need more help on how to use Twitter, please consult the Twitter [Help](#).

13: Using Twitter

You are now going to create a Twitter account, establish a network and share and discuss some of the links you found in the previous activities.

Activity 13

About half an hour

- Create a [Twitter](#) account using the instructions on the site. We hope you will feel confident to do this having set up the accounts on Delicious and Google Reader already.

Many users adopt a shortened version of their name so there is more room to write a message. Others use pseudonyms, but it can be harder to trace

someone using this so we recommend using an abbreviation of your real name so others can find and follow you.

- Use your tutor group forum to share your Twitter username with your tutor group and tutor. Once you know the Twitter usernames of your tutor group and tutor, add them as followers. You might like to start with the username of one of the authors **MaryThorpe** (there are no spaces).

You can also search for people on Twitter using the 'Find People' function in the menu at the top right-hand corner. Often it's a good idea to add people who are followed by your network, too.

- Tweet about a useful link you've found on either of the first two key issues. Keep your message short (fewer than 140 characters) and to the point.
- Respond to others' posts using the '@username' function. So, to send a public message to Mary Thorpe you would enter **@MaryThorpe**.

Discussion

Twitter is a useful place to discuss not just the websites and online resources you've found, but also any ideas you've had or thoughts on different approaches to responding to the three key questions.

It's often the case that those who write blogs on the kinds of area you're interested in might well use Twitter, so you can follow them there. Don't be too worried about following people – often they will be pleased to have more followers in their network, and are likely to be amenable to responding to any questions you might have.

Setting up your account and posting your first few tweets shouldn't take more than half an hour or so, but it will take longer to start discussions with other users. Unlike some other forums of online communication, Twitter is known for its speed, as users often respond quickly to messages as they appear.

14: Reading tweets

In this activity we would like you to use Twitter to discuss the third of the key issues:

- 3. Having gathered information on these two issues, what do you think it says about how roles, curriculum, assessment and education institutions should be reconfigured? (If you want to focus only on universities or schools that is acceptable.)

Activity 14

About an hour and a half

- Open Twitter and make sure you are signed in.
- Choose one of the four elements of the key issue: i.e. roles, curriculum, assessment or institutions.
- Read through tweets from your peers to establish if any discussion on your chosen element has already taken place. If it has, then respond to it, using the @username function.

- If there is no discussion yet, feel free to start one. Remember to keep it relevant to the subject, but don't worry about being too formal. Twitter is a relatively informal network that works best when people make clear, unambiguous points in simple language. Feel free to share ideas, concerns, resources, links, pictures, and so on.
- When you've finished your part in the discussion, consider whether the discussion has helped to develop your understanding of the key issue.
- Make a note in your blog about your experience of using Twitter in this activity.
 - a. Summarise what you have learned about the third key issue; that is, how roles, curriculum, assessment and education institutions should be reconfigured in the light of Web 2.0.
 - b. Note the information, resources and tweets you found.