e- and m-research: carrying out research online

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Hanging sculpture or “mobile” by Alexander Calder: L’empennage (1953)
A (pre)history of e/m-health/learning

- 1860: heart signals sent by telegraph
- 1876: Alexander Graham Bell patents the telephone
- 1901: Linguaphone release language lessons on wax cylinders
- 1941-8: Computer invented
- 1960: Univ. of Illinois linked computer terminals in classroom
- 1969: Internet (as ARPANET) begins
- 1975: First online group (an e-mail list) on ARPANET
- Late 1970s: First online support groups
A(n) history of e/m-health/learning

- 1987: First(?) research paper on online support groups (Gustafson *et al.*, *Ann Rev Public Health* 8: 387-415)
- 1989: Whyte (*J College Student Develop*, 30: 86-89) writes about increasing role of computers in higher education
- 1991: Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow ‘Wireless Coyote’; PalmOS Mobile Learning; *etc.*
- 1992: First SMS sent
- 1996: WebCT launched
- 2002: Moodle launched
- 2004: Facebook launched
- 2006: Twitter launched
Methods (just some examples)

‘Old’
• Questionnaires
• Interviews
• Focus groups
• Observations
• Trials (before/after, randomised…)

‘New’
• Online questionnaires (SurveyMonkey, Opinio…)
• Online interviews (epistolary, synchronous text, Skype etc.) and focus groups (e.g. within Moodle)
• Log data
## Theories(/assumptions)
*(just some examples)*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Old’</th>
<th>‘New’</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• …</td>
<td>• Online disinhibition</td>
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<td>• Digital natives</td>
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<td>• Techno-utopianism</td>
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<td>• Actor-network theory</td>
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<td>• Recursivity</td>
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Turn your mobile on!

- Digital natives vs. digital immigrants
- A useful concept in medical education?
A happy confluence?

- Self-directed learning
- In a collaborative & participative environment
- Web 2.0
- User-generated content – ‘produsage’
- Wikipedia, Facebook…

Digital natives?
• Digital natives – oh, really?
• Mismatches in quality perspectives
• ‘Produsers’ in a minority
The meta-narrative approach...

Creating and sharing material

• Facilitators…?
• Barriers…?
Encouraging creating and sharing material

- Enjoyable
- Familiarity with material
- Part of a community
- Structure
- Meaning
- Feedback
- Culture of informal discussion
- Familiarity with each other in person

- Anxiety
- Sense of worth of contribution
- Intimidated by peers
- Lack of response/others’ contributions
- Having to be the first
- Protective/competitive
- Other pressures/focus on assessment
- Social networking fatigue
Encouraging creating and sharing material

• Asynchronous vs. synchronous
• Permanence
• Group size
• Modality
• Other digital channels
• Right technology
• Social comparison

Potts (2011) methods

- Epistolary e-mail interviews (with distance learners)
- In person focus group (with face-to-face learners)
- Personal research log
- Transcripts of Skype tutorials

Farič & Potts (2013) methods

- Analysis of editors’ userpages
- Interviews: face-to-face, by Skype, by e-mail
Big data vs. feral data
Thank you

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Also see:
http://www.uhmlg.ac.uk/2012_springforum.html

Bradley & Holley (2010):
www.ESCalate.ac.uk/8140