

7. Ideas and examples

This section provides links to examples of and discussions about using social networking services in education. These examples are designed to support the areas for investigation identified in **Evaluating social networking services**.

Educators may be interested in:

- staff development and digital literacy – for example, to better understand sites that are popular with learners, or to be able to deliver e-safety information
- engaging with students and other members of the school, college or organisational community who are using services – for example, by setting up a school profile to provide information about the institution
- using social networking services for e-learning – for example, working with learners or supporting their collaboration on a particular class, topic or project
- ICT provision planning – for example, exploring services because they are considering hosting or running services for their communities
- personal learning environment planning – for example, seeing how particular services can be incorporated into institutional service provision, and how learners might use social network services as hub sites, exporting and importing resources created in other locations.

The examples below cover these different approaches to exploring and evaluating services and practices. They are divided into the profile-based, content-based, white label, multi-user virtual environments and micro-blogging services outlined in the initial chapter, **What are social networking services?** The micro-blogging examples, based here on web and mobile social networking service Twitter, also serve to explore mobile services.

Profile-based social networking services: Bebo, Facebook, MySpace

ECAR: Facebook as a teaching tool?

<http://nellison.blogspot.com/2007/12/ecar-facebook-as-teaching-tool.html>

Nicole Ellison, Assistant Professor at Michigan State University, USA, discusses Facebook as a platform for teaching and learning, and links to her research on students' use of social networking sites. Looking at some of the issues surrounding the use of Facebook as a teaching tool, the post highlights some specific benefits and reasons to be cautious. Benefits include responding to environments which are already incorporated into students' daily routines, and the potential of social networking services to support digital literacy and social engagement. Drawbacks include the lack of the independent commercial services' accountability to the education provider, and the difficult territory of student-teacher "friending" – adding people to your friends list within the service.

Open University course profiles on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/apps/application.php?id=4472914735&ref=s> (requires a Facebook account to log in)

One of the application's developers, Martin Weller, writes in his blog about the Open University course profile application

http://nogoodreason.typepad.co.uk/no_good_reason/2007/10/first-ou-facebo.html.

The application allows Facebook users to look up Open University courses by code or title and then list the courses they have studied on their profiles. This application provides a good



example of how providers can create their own applications or widgets to provide students with useful services through the social networking services that they already use. The application allows students to display courses they have taken or are currently taking and to link with other users on those courses. It also offers a starting point for thinking about learner-centered e-portfolios and how providers could support learners to record and demonstrate their achievement in non-institutional online environments.

Students Against Closures

<http://www.bebo.com/saveedinburghschools>

This is the Bebo profile of the Edinburgh-based student-led campaign to protest against proposed school closures. It is an example of students using social networking services within peer networks to coordinate activities, and provides a good starting point from which to explore the range of independent uses that students put social networking services to.

Services may also be used by student councils (for example, the Bebo profile of Redditch Student Council <http://www.bebo.com/Profile.jsp?MemberId=3931605902>) and unions (for example, the Facebook page run by the University of Nottingham Students' Union <http://www.facebook.com/pages/University-of-Nottingham-Students-Union/6432383094>).

Warwick University at MySpace

<http://www.myspace.com/warwickuniversity>

The MySpace profile for the University of Warwick, UK, provides information about the university and acts as a meeting place for current, prospective and past Warwick students. This page demonstrates how education providers are approaching social networking services and creating a presence in order to connect with learners.

Content-based social networking services: Flickr, YouTube

Classroom displays

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/classrmdisplays>

This Flickr group is administered by UK primary school educator Linda Hartley to connect and share ideas with others who are interested in the creative use of classroom displays to enhance children's learning. The Flickr group works as a visual archive to capture interesting and original displays that would otherwise vanish unrecorded, and to promote discussion. This is a great example of educators using social networking services to create peer networks of practice. As well as creating a useful resource for practitioners, the site demonstrates the author's creativity and competence in using online tools effectively, and could be used to evidence personal professional development.

Tell a story in 5 frames

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/visualstory>

This is an international visual story-telling group on Flickr. This is a lively and popular group which uses Flickr to explore visual narrative using a framework of submission rules. This is a useful example of how social networking services could be put to imaginative and effective use by both teachers and learners. This type of narrative approach addresses a range of learner preferences and could be used to support a wide range of disciplines.

The whole Merode Altarpiece

<http://flickr.com/photos/ha112/901660>

This is a great example of how the annotation tool and comments feature can be used to support learning – in this case art and art history. Individual pictures uploaded to Flickr can be easily annotated by clicking the “add note” button that appears in the tool bar and resizing and dragging a box frame over the part of the image you want to attach your note to. Members can also give permission for others to use the feature on individual pictures. Labelling, annotating and elaborating on elements of images is an approach which can support a wide range of disciplines.

University of California, Berkley, at YouTube

<http://youtube.com/ucberkeley>

The University of California, Berkley, was the first to make full course lectures freely available through YouTube. It runs its own channel as a YouTube partner and provides over 300 hours of programming.

White-label social networking services: Ning, Elgg

Classroom 2.0

<http://www.classroom20.com>

Classroom 2.0 was created to provide an easy introduction to the tools of Web 2.0 and to encourage educators to be part of an online conversation about using new technologies to support learners. It is administered by USA-based educational technologist Steve Hargadon, and particularly supports educators interested in using Ning to set up their own social networks. A wide range of information and links to example networks are available, as well as discussion around using social networking services to support a wide range of topics and kinds of learner.

Community @ Brighton

<http://community.brighton.ac.uk>

Community @ Brighton is an institutionally run social networking and blog service for students and staff at the University of Brighton. The service is Managed by Stan Stanier and run on the open source social networking software Elgg. It serves as a good example of how providers might create and run their own social networking services rather than rely on third-party, externally hosted services.

Talkabout Primary MFL

<http://primarymfl.ning.com>

Talkabout Primary MFL is a social network run on Ning for people teaching, or considering teaching, foreign languages in primary schools (ages 3–11). It is a place to share worries and successes with supportive colleagues. UK-based primary modern foreign language teacher Jo Rhys-Jones started the site in 2007.

Again, this is a good example of how staff can make use of social networking services to form online communities of practice. Such communities serve many purposes: they can support discussion, be used to share ideas and opportunities, and contribute to professional development.

Multi-User Virtual Worlds: Second Life

Schome

<http://www.schome.ac.uk>

Dr Peter Twining of the UK's Open University directs the Schome Park project, a closed community run within Teen Second Life for 13- to 17-year-olds. Current students come from the UK, the USA and the Falkland Islands. The project explores the potential of the virtual world as a creative and engaging alternative to traditional schooling environments. More information about the project and its success to date in supporting learners in a non-traditional environment can be found on the site.

Second Life in Education

<http://sleducation.wikispaces.com>

This wiki-based site provides a range of resources for educators who are interested in exploring the use of virtual worlds, in particular Second Life, in teaching and learning. It was developed by Jo Kay and Sean FitzGerald, who are both based in Australia. The wiki includes useful resources for educators who are new to Second Life, including how to get started, an extensive overview of educational uses of Second Life, a comprehensive categorised directory of current and future virtual worlds, and links to Jo and Sean's presentations and workshop materials.

Suffern Middle School in Second Life

<http://ramapoislands.edublogs.org>

This blog presents a running account of the process of the proposal, acquisition, development and integration of a virtual presence for education at Suffern Middle School, New York, USA. Hosted and maintained by Peggy Sheehy, facilitator of the virtual campus, the blog tracks the successful progress and expansion of the programme to support 1,000 13- to 15-year-olds and their teachers. The virtual world campus in Teen Second Life supports a wide range of teaching, learning and curriculum exploration.

Mobile social networks and micro-blogging: Twitter

Twitter in the Classroom

<http://web20primer.wetpaint.com/page/Twitter+in+the+Classroom?t=anon>

This is a wiki page from Web 2.0 Primer for Newbies (<http://web20primer.wetpaint.com>), a collaborative project that supports the Teaching and Learning in a Networked Classroom course at Plymouth State University, USA. The page provides links and examples of how the micro-blogging social network service Twitter is being used in schools. The use of micro-blogging to support teams and collaborative work, and to provide fast updates on projects, is elaborated.

Twitter me this: Brainstorming Potential Educational Uses for Twitter

<http://eduspaces.net/csessums/weblog/179742.html>

Here, Director of Distance Education at the University of Florida, Christopher D. Sessums talks about the pedagogy of micro-blogging. He discusses using the micro-blogging service for short, focused responses from learners, and for project management. The post also links to useful third-party Twitter applications – services that allow Twitter to be updated in different ways or allow Twitter to be used in conjunction with other services.

Twitter Tweets for Higher Education

<http://web20teach.blogspot.com/2007/08/twitter-tweets-for-higher-education.html>

This blog offers tips and useful links from Alan A. Lew, a geography professor at Arizona State University, USA, on Twitter for learners and for library service professionals.



Young People and Social Networking Services
Childnet International 2008

