Chapter XVI
Scholarly Collaboration Across Time Zones

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ABSTRACT

The barriers to global collaboration of yesteryear include country boundaries and time zones. Today, however, in a world where communication is thriving on new technologies, these barriers have been overcome, not only by the technology itself, but also by the collaborators in a desire (and need) to extend knowledge, seize opportunities, and build partnerships. This chapter reports on one such collaboration: a case study where the focus is the writing of a scholarly article between authors from Australia, England, and South Africa. The challenges of different time zones, academic calendars, and managing the collaboration are outlined in this chapter. Findings from the case study suggest that the key elements of success are related to individual and project management techniques, and not the technology per se. The constructivist learning theory, as well as the e-moderation model are supported by this work, and thus extend their application to the academic writing process.

INTRODUCTION

As an academic, how many times have you listened to a presenter, or read a paper, and thought to yourself that you would like to have a discussion with the presenter or author to develop a research project with them? How often has this actually happened? Have you ever considered why it has, or has not come to fruition?

This chapter reports on one such occasion where the research did eventuate. Lynch, Heinze, and Scott were all presenters at the England (InSITE, 2006) conference in Manchester, England. From informal discussions emerged a formal commitment to collaborate across land, sea, and time to explore and share the approaches and challenges in the delivery of capstone or team projects in their information technology undergraduate degree programs at their respective universities.

This chapter presents the processes undertaken by the academics to write, edit, and present a scholarly article (Lynch, Heinze, & Scott, 2007). It exposes the issues, problems, and challenges encountered during the collaboration, and concludes with several recommendations that could be used when considering collaborating in similar settings.

The chapter is organized in the following manner: First of all, the background to the case study is outlined drawing on the literature on collaboration and information communication technologies, and the way these can be used to facilitate online collaboration. This section is followed by the case study description, which outlines the work undertaken and provides an analysis of the main issues encountered. The chapter then details the academic outcomes and benefits together with suggestions that others may wish to adopt in their online collaborations with academic peers. The key issues are then summarized in the conclusion section of the chapter.

BACKGROUND

The impact of information communication technology (ICT) in higher education has provoked a surge of publications examining online collaborative work. The dominant emphasis has been on students' learning through their engagement with technology, and in general, the application of technology for educational purposes and how these are best incorporated in the curriculum

(Collins, 2002; Salmon, 2000). Pedagogy is understood to be the science of teaching, and it is the role of a teacher to be aware of the teaching process to facilitate student learning. Pedagogic research suggests that pedagogic paradigms are shifting from a behaviorist approach towards a constructivist stance (Cullen, Hadjivassiliou, Hamilton, Kelleher, Sommerlad, & Stern, 2002; Shepard, 2000), and that constructivism as it is applied today, is enabled by technologies that facilitate interaction, discourse, and interactive writing (Lapadat, 2002). This enablement is exemplified by the work on Conversational Framework (Laurillard, 1993/2002) and Conversational Theory (Heinze, Procter, & Scott, 2007; Scott, 2001a, 2001b). These publications highlight the development of a conversational dialogue between student and the teacher, and how different types of ICT can facilitate different aspects of the dialogue. The concepts of communities have been renegotiated in the Internet era where virtual communities have become a popular paradigm (Bell, 2003).

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

ICTs can be broadly categorized based on their speed of interaction (with the speed determined according to the time between when a sender sends a communication, to when the receiver receives the communication). An instant (or synchronous) communication is where participants exchange messages in real-time—for example, instant messenger dialogue, and the latter refers to communication which is not real-time (or asynchronous)—for example, an e-mail dialogue.

Web 2.0 and the Semantic Web are the latest generation of technological tools driven by the need for collaboration. Web 2.0 is based on the concept of simple online document editing which allows any user to voice their opinions (Rollett, Lux, Strohmaier, Dosinger, & Tochtermann, 2007). Web 2.0 examples include Wikis, blogs,

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