

Chapter 17

Blended Learning in a Digital Library Learning Programme

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces a blended learning approach within a joint international Erasmus Mundus master programme on Digital Library Learning (DILL) at the Institute of Information Studies (IIS) of Tallinn University. IIS has experimented with technology-based teaching and learning methods and tools since the early 1990s. The DILL programme has been designed to offer ways to integrate traditional strategies with methods offered by the current technology for teaching and learning. The pedagogic approach used advocates using a variety of technology and media for content delivery, communication, collaboration, and student support to meet the needs of diverse student groups and improve the quality of teaching. The chapter introduces using the virtual learning environment, social media tools, open educational resources, and video interactions with remote experts within this programme. A virtual collaboration initiative (Entrepreneurship Seminar on European Virtual Venturing) between the Ecole Supérieure d'Informatique, Réseaux et Systèmes d'Information (ITIN) in Cergy-Pontoise, France, and IIS in Spring 2010 and 2011 within the Human Resource Management Module of this programme is also considered.

INTRODUCTION

There have been an increasing number of studies in the last several years exploring how to integrate various technologies and media into the conventional classroom, and how face-to-face instruc-

tions can be mediated by technology (Chew et al., 2008, p.44). The blended learning approach has become increasingly popular in higher education and business, with many authors discussing the subject (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Bonk & Graham, 2006; Graham & Robinson, 2007; Graham & Dziuban, 2008; Vaughan, 2010). Garrison and Vaughan (2008, p.5) believe that it represents a new educational paradigm integrating the strengths

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of face-to-face and online learning, whereby each is improved by the presence of the other. It is believed that blended learning can provide a flexible learning environment, offer access to remote resources, improve communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing independent of time and place, and therefore enriches the student learning experience.

The Institute of Information Studies (IIS) at Tallinn University has experimented with technology-based teaching and learning methods and tools for the past two decades. The first experiments with information and communication technologies (ICTs) were mainly project-based, in which integrating ICTs into teaching and learning was one of the main goals (Virkus, 1997; Virkus & Sponberg, 1999). In the past decade, various technologies (e.g., audioconferencing, videoconferencing, Web 2.0 tools) and pedagogical approaches were implemented and a convergence between face-to-face and online learning emerged. Currently, ICT is an integral part of all programmes and courses at IIS (Virkus, 2008, 2011).

This paper reports on a blended learning approach implemented within a joint international *Erasmus Mundus* master programme on Digital Library Learning (DILL) at IIS. The focus is on the use of ICTs within the DILL programme. The paper is divided into two sections. The first gives an overview of the DILL programme and some examples of a diagnostic analysis survey; the second provides an example of the use of the blended learning approach within the DILL programme.

INTERNATIONAL MASTER'S IN DIGITAL LIBRARY LEARNING

Erasmus Mundus is a cooperative and mobile programme of the European Union in higher education that aims to enhance the quality of European universities and promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through cooperation among three countries. An international master's

programme in Digital Library Learning (DILL) is a two-year programme for information professionals who intend to work in the complex world of digital libraries. It is a joint programme between Oslo University College (Norway), Tallinn University (Estonia) and Parma University (Italy), which was supported in the framework of the *Erasmus Mundus* programme in 2007. The students acquire a joint master's degree of 120 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) units, recognised by all partners.

The DILL programme is delivered on campus, and students spend one term at each partner institution. The first three terms consist of six modules of 15 ECTS each. In the first semester at Oslo University College, two modules are offered: *Research Methods and Theory of Science* and *Digital Documents*. In the second semester at Tallinn University, *Information and Knowledge Management* and *Human Resource Management* modules are given. The third semester, at Parma University, consists of two modules: *Access to Digital Libraries* and *Usage of Digital Libraries: Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation*.

In the last term, students write their thesis (30 ECTS). Students can choose to write it at any of the three partner institutions, depending on the topic and the location of the primary supervisor. Fifty-six students from three cohorts have graduated from the DILL programme, 18 from the first in 2009, 21 from the second in 2010, and 17 from the third in 2011. Twenty-three have completed their thesis at Tallinn University.

As mentioned above, two modules in the DILL programme are offered by IIS at Tallinn: *Information and Knowledge Management (IKM)* and *Human Resource Management (HRM)*. Both are deeply intertwined and crucial for any contemporary organization, including digital libraries, to perform at a high level of efficiency. Effective IKM produces greater productivity, efficiency, and successful innovations in organizations; appropriate HRM is one of the critical factors for effective knowledge management (Badaracco,

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