CASE STUDY

Workers' Educational Association (WEA)

Digital Diversity

Showcasing students' work on Flickr

PROJECT LEAD

Jan Ball

Regional Education Manager and VLE Manager

Commissioned and funded by

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1. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDY

The WEA has been piloting ways of showcasing students' work through the use of technology. Ken Fisher is a WEA tutor. He set up the Creative Recoveries Flickr gallery as a way of showcasing progress and achievement. This case study highlights some benefits of this approach and some issues to watch out for.

2. WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM THIS CASE STUDY AND WHY

- Tutors interested in showcasing student work online.
- Managers and marketing leads looking for ways to showcase student achievements to a wider audience.

3. ABOUT [LEAD ORGANISATION]

Founded in 1903, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is a charity and the UK's largest voluntary sector provider of adult education. In 2013/14 we delivered 9,700 part-time courses for over 70,000 students in England and Scotland with classes in almost every local authority area and our work in England was assessed in 2014 as 'Good' by Ofsted. With the support of nearly 400 local branches, 3,000 volunteers, 2,000 part-time tutors and our active membership, the WEA provides high quality, student-centred and tutor-led education for adults from all walks of life. We bring education into the heart of communities, helping people learn whatever they want – from maths, English and skills for employment, through health and wellbeing courses, to cultural studies that help students

broaden their horizons and community engagement programmes that encourage active citizenship. We also have a special mission to reach those who want to improve their lives and communities. Education is a beautiful and powerful tool for tackling economic and social disadvantage because it raises aspirations and helps people create their own change. http://www.wea.org.uk/home

4. WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO AND WHY

What challenge did you set yourselves? Focus on identifying processes that other organisations can take, adapt and apply to their own context.

The tutor was looking for a way to showcase student work and potentially reach a wider audience. WEA courses often lead to exhibitions of work in community venues, but it isn't always possible to do this, and these exhibitions will usually only show one or two final pieces of work per student. Could the use of technology to create an online gallery provide an alternative way of students exhibiting their work, helping to reach a wider audience, and record progression and achievement? The tutor decided to pilot use of Flickr to house the Creative Recoveries gallery.

The first step was to set up a Flickr account and establish the gallery space online.

The next step was check with the course venue that the Wi-Fi connection would be strong enough for all students to upload images to the gallery within the sessions.

The tutor then introduced Flickr to the students, talking them through how to upload images of their work.

The online gallery could then be shared with students, who could view and comment on each other's work, and with their friends and families.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/creative-recovery/

5. EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Ken's experience of using Flickr

Ken taught on a WEA photography course and set up a Flickr site called Creative Recovery. He said that the use of the gallery really depended on the IT abilities of learners. He also said that particular attention needs to be paid to learners with literacy issues and other disabilities such as partial sight. "Don't make assumptions about students."

Ken's experience was that planning for learners is essential. He taught learners with literacy issues which impacted on their ability to use computers and go online. Ken also said that partially sighted learners found it quite difficult to engage with the online gallery.

Feedback from Hannah, one of the students on the course

 "The use of Flickr on the course had some good and bad aspects. The good aspects were that it made it very easy for us to view the groups work, the tutor could access them easily and the class could view them as a whole so as to critique and review the work done and to show us easily how we could improve. We were also able to edit pictures using an online

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editing suite that worked in conjunction with Flickr. We also used just a single account for the whole class and sectioned off space for each person to upload to, it allowed us to share, critique and edit all in one place.

The bad aspect was the internet access. You need a good strong connection to work with images and to have several iPads connected at the same time."

Getting the technology right

Unfortunately the premises that were provided for us to have our class in had assured us that their internal Wi-Fi would be more than sufficient for 8+ laptops to be online at once and for our uploading purposes. This however, was not the case; we had issues with connectivity and signal. We struggled regularly keeping all devices connected. Their Wi-Fi stopped working altogether on a few occasions. This meant that uploading became problematic, and when all devices were connected it took a considerable amount of time to upload just a few pictures each, a portion of which would fail to upload and therefore would have to begin the process again. It need not have taken so long or have been so frustrating. It was simply that the premises could not meet the Wi-Fi requirements the course called for. If the signal/speed of their services had been of a higher standard, then the process would have been a lot less stressful for those on the course.

6. LESSONS LEARNED

The online gallery has encouraged students to engage with and critique each other's work, a key aspect of studying on an art based course.

The Flickr gallery created by the group could become a catalyst for more online galleries linked to WEA courses, but we do need to look at how we can make more use of Flickr as a social media tool, gathering followers to help reach a wider audience. It is also important to get permission from the students in the group to promote/share the gallery more widely.

Connectivity issues can be a real barrier to using this technology within community venues. As students develop in confidence, it may be possible to set this as a task outside of the taught sessions, but this would rely on the students being able to access the internet at other locations.

7. TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

- Introduce the technology to the students during the session, and encourage students to support each other to learn how to use the application.
- Make sure the WiFi connection is strong enough for multiple users to upload large images at the same time.

- Encourage communication and feedback within Flickr by commenting on images and following the site.

8. CONTACT DETAILS

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