Hybridisation of Social Networking and Learning Environments

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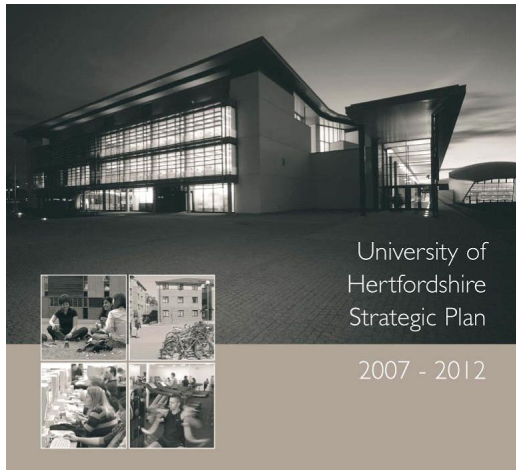{i.r.glover}, {a.oliver}@herts.ac.uk

Topics

- Background to UH
- Project Drivers
  - Behavioural
  - Institutional
- Vision
- Initial Implementation
- Subsequent work
- Conclusions

Background to UH

MLE: StudyNet

- Developed in-house

- Launched 2000-2001

- Currently 30,000+ live accounts, ~20,000 unique user logins per day (term-time mean average)

Project: UHEvolution (UHTalent/UHExcel strand)

- Provision of (some) facilities to Alumni, Businesses & Applicants

- 250,000 new accounts by 2011
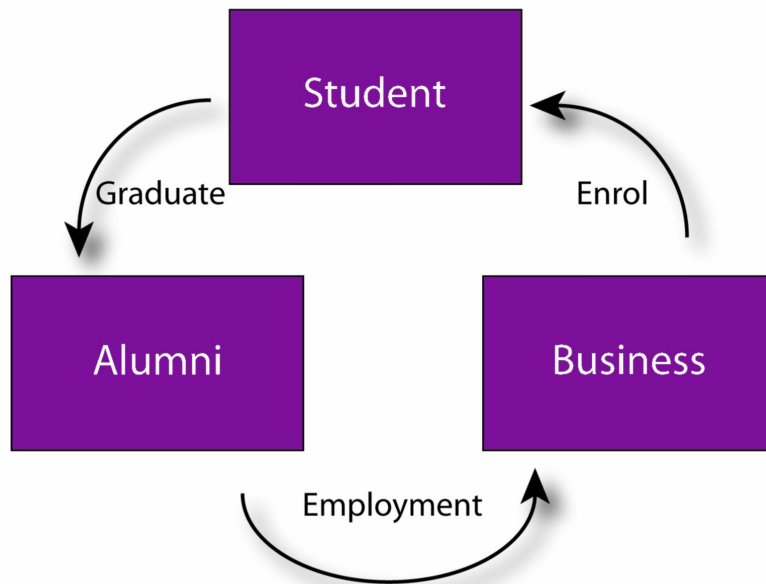
- Email address for life

Drivers

Behavioural - Students

- ## Experience of technology increasing
  - ### Expectations of Web advancing

- ## Social Networks major part of life for many
  - ### Use interspersed with M/VLE accesses

- ## Comfortable being Content Producers
  - ### Gives a sense of empowerment

- ## Expectation of personalised experience

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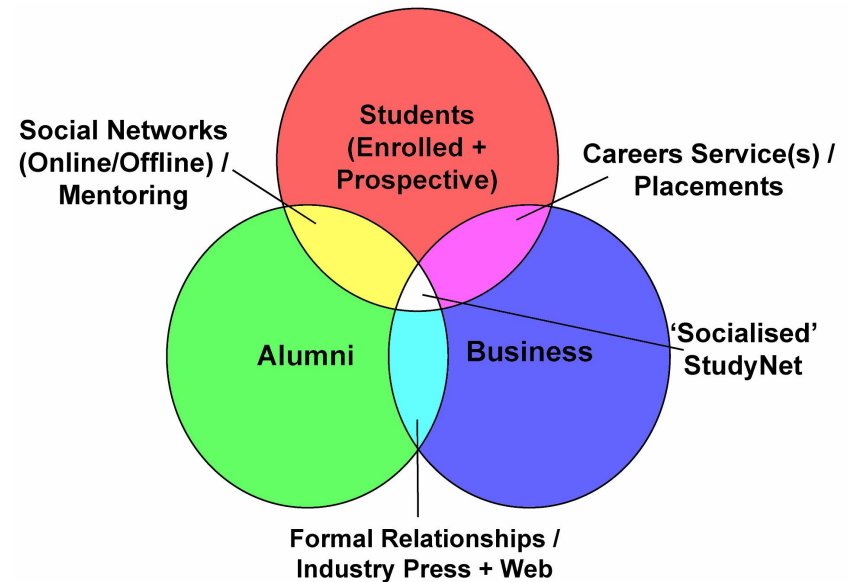
Drivers
Institutional

One possible institutional life-cycle

- Engagement beyond graduation
- Provide opportunities for marketing courses
  - Build developmental 'Loyalty'
- Grant Business access to Students / Students access to Business

Vision

- Knowledge Transfer
  - Students <-> Business
- Employability
  - People <-> jobs
- Develop contacts
- Find possible friends
- Restrictions on access may prevent future repercussions

User Group Overlaps

Social Networks (Online/Offline) / Mentoring

Students (Enrolled + Prospective)

Careers Service(s) / Placements

'Socialised' StudyNet

Alumni

Business

Formal Relationships / Industry Press + Web

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Vision

- Engagement prior to enrolment
- Maintain up-to-date records of Alumni
- Improve links with businesses
  - Create collaborative projects
  - Generate placements for students
  - Spin-out research and products
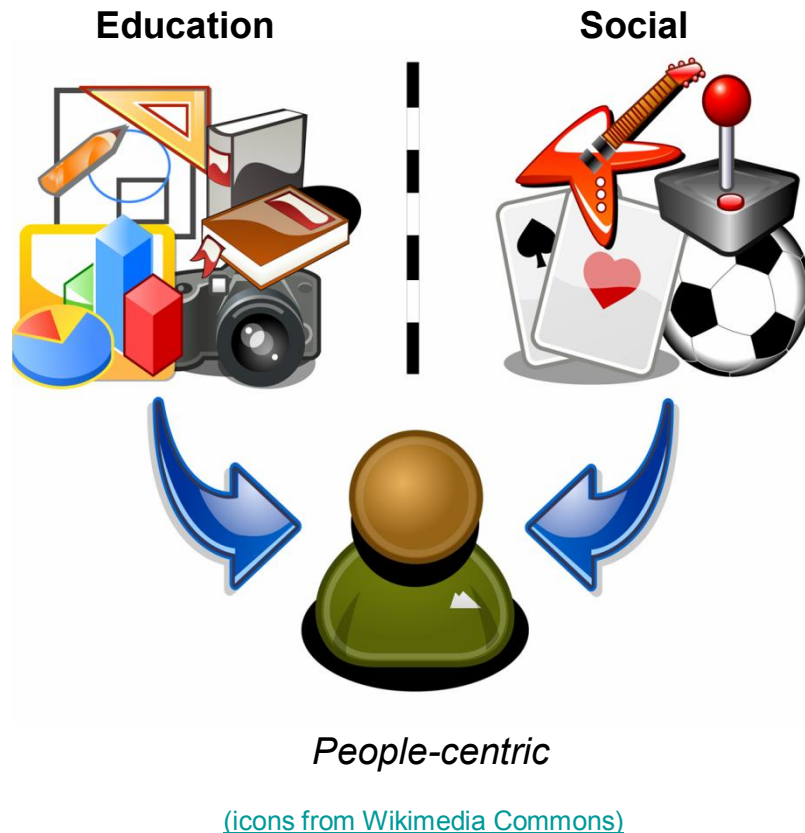- Marketing of Short Courses and other training

Vision

Why not just use Facebook, Blogger, Flickr, ...

- Excellent systems, already in use
  - But who owns the data?
  - All users access subsets of same information

- Institutional control allows:
  - Public & Personal personae
  - Data Protection/IP assurances
  - Integration with e-Portfolio

- Institutional Information available:
  - Fellow course members, modules studied, assignment info., etc.
  - Email accounts, work placements, club memberships, etc.

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4th July 2008 - Ed-Media 2008 – Vienna, Austria

Vision

The 'Socialised' MLE – in brief

Education   **Social**

People-centric

All about content…

- Created through blogs, forums, profile updates, photo and video libraries, essays, project work, wikis, CPD, PDP, (remixed) course content, etc. etc.

And where it ends up…

- Flows to / from the individual through profile matching, group & course affiliation, contacts, PLE settings, etc. etc.

Initial Implementation
Phase-1 Rollout

- Centred on e-Portfolio functions
  - Driven by usage of StudyNet
- 'Externalising' some existing features
  - e.g. Blogs
- Available to existing staff and students, and new Alumni from September 2008
  - then, phased roll-out to older alumni

Subsequent Work

- Student video portal (staff version already in StudyNet)

- Photo albums

- Curriculum Vitae generation

- People matching

- Investigation of OpenSocial integration
  - Possible inclusion of Facebook-like apps.

- Import/Export tools for Facebook, Flickr, etc.

Considerations

- Legal implications over:
  - Data Protection
  - User Interactions and Accountabilities
    - Users below age of Majority (Applicants at ~17)

- Competition from 'Outside'
  - Need to provide a 'hook' (such as e-Portfolio)

- Licensing of subscribed materials

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Conclusions

- Opportunity for beneficial outcomes
  - Though some caveats exist
- 'Hooks' needed to encourage sustained use
- Focus on the user experience
- Gradual roll-out essential
- Key part of strategic development at UH.

Further Information

Presentation around Topic - ALT-C 2008, Sept. 2008:

"Enhancing learner experience of managed learning environments through a dramatic expansion of the user type and the integration of social networking technologies" – A. Oliver & I. Glover.

StudyNet Open Demo:

http://www.studynet.herts.ac.uk/open_index.html

LTDU Website (Team Info, Projects, Magazines, etc.):

http://www.studynet.herts.ac.uk/ltdu

Thank You!

Questions?