# Student Social Bookmarking Activity

## Brief Outline of Distributed Research Activity

During this activity pupils are given a topic to research on the internet. They are each given a login for a social bookmarking site where the pupils are all a member of a class repository, which the teacher will set up. The pupils will then research their topic using search engines, blogs, wikis, corporate websites, etc. Once the pupils find a useful website they will "bookmark" it using a browser plug-in and give it a tag/tags relating to the content of the web page. The web page will subsequently be stored in the class repository for further investigation by the pupil and his/her peers. The class repository could then be used to contribute to a group project or design task that the pupils will undertake depending on the subject specified for research.

## Duration

1 Week

## Pedagogic Rationale for Activity/ Research Testing Results

Mejias (2006) studied distributed research and found that the activity has many desirable pedagogical positive attributes, these attributes include:

- "It engages students in learning to learn by having them assume some of the responsibility for integrating and maintaining the social software systems that allow learning to happen;

- It promotes the benefits of working cooperatively with tools that facilitate the aggregation and organisation of knowledge while at the same time demonstrating that the diversity of individual research interests enhances learning for all;

- It helps students develop practical research skills that they need in a world where knowledge construction and dissemination make increasing use of online information networks" (Mejias 2006)

(Mejias 2006) also found that in distributed research the "interest and knowledge of the topic is augmented by the contributions of the students" (Mejias 2006). This leads to increased motivation for the pupils because the interest that a number of pupils enjoy is augmented by the rest of the pupils until all of the pupils (who engage with the research) are engrossed in the research that is taking place.

## Subject Matter of Activity

This is at the discretion of the teacher, depending on the content being researched and the importance of the content.

## Aim of Activity

To introduce pupils to using social bookmarking using a practical example

| Objectives | Assessment |
|---|---|
| 1. Pupils will familiarise themselves with the social bookmarking software | 1. The pupils questions about the software should decrease as pupils begin using the software for their research |
| 2. Pupils will research a given topic using social bookmarking software | 2. Monitoring the number and relevance of contributions made to the class repository by each pupil (each bookmark added to the repository is automatically tagged with the contributors name) |
| 3. Pupils will categorise their bookmarks by tagging them with words relative to the content of the web page | 3. Relevance and consistent use of tags for each type of website (May be a good idea to give pupils prescribed tags to use at first) |

## Assessment of Activity

This activity may assess individual pupils' contributions to the class repository or simply grading the relevance of information stored in the repository in its entirety. Generally distributed research is conducted in conjunction with another activity which requires the pupils to use the research stored in the class repository to complete a project.

## Teacher/Pupil Activities

1. Set up class group folder on a social bookmarking site
2. Set up accounts for each pupil and make them a member of the class folder
3. Give the pupils an introductory lesson where you give them their logins, explain how the social bookmarking system is operated, introduce them to the topic that they will research and the time limit on the distributed research activity
4. Pupils will go home and search the internet for relevant sites
5. Once they find a relevant site they will bookmark it in the class folder and tag it with a relevant word which describes the content of the website clearly. Each pupil will repeat this step for each site they find, which they think would be useful to the class's research on the prescribed topic
6. Review the class repository with the pupils, once time limit has been reached

## Important Teaching and Observation Points

- Before beginning this activity it would be beneficial to show pupils examples of relevant websites and non relevant ones. Although some websites may be aesthetically pleasing, this does not mean that their information is any more relevant than a plainer website.
- Consult with the pupils' computer teacher to see what experience your pupils' have of using the internet in an education context. This is important as if they have never before used it in an educational context. It will require much further analysis by the teacher in class than if they have already been introduced to the internet's academic uses.
- Add some relevant blogs and websites which have links to other relevant websites and blogs to the class folder before the pupils begin interacting with it. These websites will act as an exemplar and will also give the pupils a start on their research that will aid them tremendously
- Ensure that all pupils are participating and if some are not participating, talk to them and ask why? They may be having trouble using the software.

## Resources

### Organisational Resources

- A class group folder on a social bookmarking site set up in advance
- Logins for every pupil
- Examples located within the class folder at the beginning of the activity
- Access to computer room/ school laptops for pupils

### Technological Resources

- Access to an appropriate social bookmarking site

## Other Distributed Research Activities

Distributed research can be conducted on any topic in either Construction Studies or Design and Communication Graphics. Any distributed research project using social bookmarking as a facilitator could be organised in the same way as above.

# References

Mejias, U. (2006) 'Teaching Social Software with Social Software.', *Innovate: Journal of Online Education*, 2, 6.