Thinking Digitally Report May 2015

After the plenary presentation at the 2014 North Alliance where we issued an invite to apply we received 22 notes of interest from which we were able to then offer 6 people a place (matching their availability, skill level and geographical location as we were looking for someone from each area as far as possible).   Emma Whitelock, Learning & Business Development Manager and Gail Phillips, Perth Get Online Lead Scotland project delivered the programme.

Getting started: Participants embarked on a paperless digital learning journey from the first one to one introductory chat on the phone moving to introduce ourselves on the project padlet to remote involvement over 12 group sessions on the gotomeeting video conference platform. Mostly we were in 'discussion' mode as shown by the picture on the left, but participants and 2 guest speakers (from idevelop, Digital Agile Principles) also used the screenshare facility to 'show and tell'.

GoToMeeting was excellent as a remote learn office tool allowing up to 6 participants to share their webcam and several more students using only audio. This worked out well for our group, keeping broadband glitches to a minimum, compared to Lead's experience with other platforms.

All participants developed their digital skills, knowledge and skills on the course and challenged themselves in different ways to try something new. We tailored the content to introduce tools and web authoring platforms that we felt were relevant and particpants shaped this further through their own investigation, producing padlets, pinterest boards, prezis, evernotes, screencast videos and a range of other tools.

Digital artefacts produced by participants as their main 'artefact':

Website: Creating a new section on the Voluntary Action Orkney's joomla website to bring local resident's eventide stories alive as the result of intergenerational working.

Social media: Creating Linked in profile and Linked In 'business' page and facebook community page for Strathpeffer Community Centre to connect with the community and beyond.
Creating a facebook community of interest page for Karaoke for Literacies.

3 Prezis: Producing a prezi with broad Guidance about the Community Regulations instead of using powerpoint

Producing a prezi about confidence with numbers to use as a tutor aid tool with learners

Producing a prezi about a new community campus for use in community involvement events.

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How will participants continue to use and share their learning?   We asked people this in the evaluation at the midway and end point of the programme. Here are the comments from the end:

How will you use the digital skills that you have learned on this course?

- To collaborate more with colleagues and setting up some online practice forums. To engage better with learners and communities in a variety of ways. To utilise web-based artefacts more for learning and information with a range of people. To be able to design where necessary more Prezis and explore using blogs and Wordpress more.
- Will try and incorporate using digital tools in any future literacy tutoring sessions I am involved with and encourage other tutors to experiment with some of the tools I have found most useful.
- I will continue to develop my digital artefact to include more material. I'm also interested in showing Prezi to colleagues as an alternative to Powerpoint in their work. I will continue to be inspired by the other course participants work, learning from examples, e.g. social media being used effectively as a promotional/information tool.
- Continue to develop the artefact and spread more widely its use. Run taster sessions on digital artefacts. Support colleagues with their needs around this subject. Incorporate this into future work projects.

One learner said that he might be willing to do a workshop at the North Alliance conference using his facebook artefact Karaoke and literacies. Gail gave him an extra session focussing specifically on facebook at the end of the course to support his aspiration to continue growing this resource.

How did participants feel along the way?
Their individual reflective accounts showed us that they had all developed their knowledge skills and confidence and they all engaged with the course actively and enthusiastically. "It's been an interesting and useful learning journey" (participant). We were impressed by their enthusiasm and their willingness to use gotomeeting and the screen sharing facility.

Feedback at the end of the course (4 of 6 responses as at 29/5/15):

What were your main reasons for wanting to take the Thinking Digitally course?

- I signed up for this course because I was interested in learning more about how to use internet based applications for strengthening relationships with learners and communities as well as being able to utilise various tools and resources to further the aims of community learning and development in relation to my work.
- Course was recommended to me by Moray Council Essential Skills Development Officer, and I recognised that I wasn't particularly confident digitally. Being a volunteer I was unsure how I would fit in with the course, but was encouraged to see the input I could make to Essential Skills as well as improving my own abilities.
- As part of my role at work I am responsible for my organisation's digital communication including website and social media. I wanted to find out more about what other digital tools are available and to develop my skills in assessing and using these.
- Challenge myself and to push myself into learning different IT resources.

Confidence change from start to finish of the course related to learning outcomes:

Learning outcome	Confidence at start	Confidence at end
Plan a project to develop own digital skills through creating a digital artefact	2 x low 2 x low	1 x some 3 x very confident
Demonstrate effective use of online tools and environments for communication and collaboration	4 x low	4 x some
Select and use appropriate digital tools and resources to create a digital artefact –	4 x low	2 x some, 2 x very confident
Produce a multimedia based online digital artefact	2 x low 2 x some	1 x some 3 x very confident
Evaluate own development of digital skills and knowledge	1 x very low 1 x low 2 x some	3 x some 1 x very confident

Please rate the value to your learning of each of the following features of the course

	No value to my learning	Valuable to my learning	Extremely valuable to my learning	Total	Weighted Average
Weekly gotomeeting sessions	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	75.00% 3	4	2.75
Guest expert gotomeeting sessions	0.00% 0	100.00% 4	0.00% 0	4	2.00
One-to-one support from your tutor	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 4	4	3.00
Carrying out the assessed coursework tasks	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 4	4	3.00
Readings and resources provided by the tutors (e.g. suggested readings, web links etc)	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	75.00% 3	4	2.75

What advice would you offer to future participants on the course?

- Make sure you have enough time set aside to work on this each week. Make sure your technology and internet connection can keep up with the demands of this course.
- Don't be put off by thinking such a course is just for those employed in CLD, but you do have to be prepared to put in a fair number of hours every week experimenting with the tools/platforms/artefacts which were introduced in the first 6 weeks of the course. Only by doing this yourself, will you truly build up your confidence with digital skills.
- Do it! I have gained lots of knowledge and skills on the digital tools out there, free (mostly) for us to use. Above all, I have enjoyed the weekly meetings with the other participants and realise that everyone is on a continual learning journey. The content and tone of the course were spot on and tutors were always encouraging. For anyone that has basic digital skills and wants to try out new tools, this is the course for them.
- Just do it...very worthwhile.

Have you any last suggestions about how we can improve the course experience?

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- I would have found it more useful to have had the examples of templates and evidence that would count towards outcomes earlier on in the experience so I had a clearer idea of where I was heading. I think it is a good idea to share some of what we have done, produced and learned as a group to future learners so that they can have a better understanding.
- Perhaps have a set 6 weeks of input with tutors introducing the range of tools etc over the weekly Go Meeting sessions and then have a 2 week break when every participant has to work on their artefact (with online help as required by tutors over email/individual screen chat) and then come together again for final 2 weeks of consolidation and sharing of experiences.
- No - the length of the course was just right. Being able to be flexible about weeks, e.g. having a week's break over Easter and giving time for folk to consolidate their learning and artefact was really welcomed. Only slight issue was technical problems occasionally at the weekly gotomeeting, although this didn't detract from the course.
- Only thing to change is to get all the participants on the screen at once with goto or its equivalents. Thanks for a great course.

Feedback at the midway point (5 out of 6 responses):

What did you like?
- Making me think and find out about a variety of different online programmes
- Really practical course, giving you opportunities and time to try out different online tools. I also like meeting as a group regularly to discuss everyone's progress.
- Being encouraged to try and learn new tools that will and already are being useful, with the support and knowledge from tutors and other students which really helps with finding relevant tools and materials rather than searching aimlessly forever (which I just wouldn't be motivated to do!)
- It is pushing me to try things I have always steered away from. It is supportive and fairly informal. The tutors are helpful and the other participants all join in.
- Has introduced me to wide range of digital tool & platforms and given instruction on how they might be used.

What did you not like so much?
- Not having as much time to do it - remembering all the different sites I have looked at and the various passwords etc. My artefact/project does not involve a great deal or collaboration with my colleagues as I run a very small organisation and it's not that relevant to my 2 assistants.
- Lot of content and new things to try within a short space of time, although that may be because I've not been online enough up to now!
- Sometimes I feel the expectations re evidence and assessment have been a little too vague, although I think I'm starting understand!?
- Not having an initial 'get together', starting out online via video link does not give the old fashioned feel of having been able to meet and discuss to get a good grounding on what is expected etc.
- There are so many tools available and each one requires time invested in it to really work out how it works that it has been difficult to decide what is most useful.

Please rate the value to your learning of each of the following features of the course

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	No value to my learning	Valuable to my learning	Extremely valuable to my learning	Total	Weighted Average
Weekly gotomeeting sessions	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	80.00% 4	5	2.80
Guest gotomeeting session	0.00% 0	80.00% 4	20.00% 1	5	2.20
One-to-one support from your tutor (if you have had this yet)	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	75.00% 3	4	2.75
Carrying out the assessed coursework tasks	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	80.00% 4	5	2.80
Readings and resources provided by the tutors (e.g. suggested readings, web links etc)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 5	5	3.00

How do you feel about being able to choose the different tools that you use and the tool you will use for your digital artefact?
- Feeling more confident that I can pull this together and get to grips with the different tools
- I was fairly confident about the tool I would use from the start, but being able to try different options means that I am rethinking whether it's still the right way to go. The knowledge I've gained so far has made me go back and re-evaluate the tool I should use for my digital artefact.
- Ok. I feel sometimes that I would benefit from more time during my week to really play around with all of these more.
- Better. It is like being a kid in a sweetshop at first, so many choices, but I have had to learn quickly to rationalise my decisions and make an informed choice about the tool to use. This has been a helpful learning experience for me.
- Is good that the course allows totally flexibility and each participant can design something in relation to their own situation.

Have you started to use the digital skills that you are developing on this course in your workplace? If so how? If not, why do you think this is?

- I will suggest using Prezi when we review our organisational powerpoint as this may be easier to use by all staff if online. Blogs are something that we are thinking of using as an organisation so finding out about the different
- I started a padlet for a project I am working on because I am looking for contributions and thought it would be a good place for people to post these.
- Not yet, I have used it to have discussions about my tool choices and some discussion about how it can be used within the workplace after. But I suppose I want a finished product to

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show first, I suppose the need to see if it 'passes', before I use it in a wider context and also go on to develop more tools and artefacts.

- As a volunteer it has been more difficult to share what I have been learning with a wider audience, but I have demonstrated a couple of the tools to staff members.
- I haven't used many of the new tools yet, still identifying and reviewing them.

What advice would you offer to future participants on the course?

- Get online as much as you can and try out different tools, ahead of the course if possible.
- Make sure you know what is expected as evidence and assessment, and plan your time before you start so that you set aside a few hours every week to explore what is being discussed.
- Just give it a go. Don't do it from a council PC!
- Before joining the course, check out what limits (if any) your employer puts on accessing and downloading different pieces of free software as I have done all of this course at home with my own settings. Broadband speed and council policy would not have allowed me access in the office.
- Set aside time each week and whatever time you think it will take - double it!