Suite of 5 Victorian houses converted into offices

January 2010

June 2010

Facts and figures

- Number of students: 20 000 (UG: 11 766; PG: 8 701)

- University divisions (4):
  Humanities; Social Sciences; Medical Sciences;
  Maths, Phys and Life Sciences

- Colleges: 38 colleges and 6 private halls – all
  independent and self governing

- Oldest Colleges - established by the 13th century

- Libraries – about 100, spread through the city
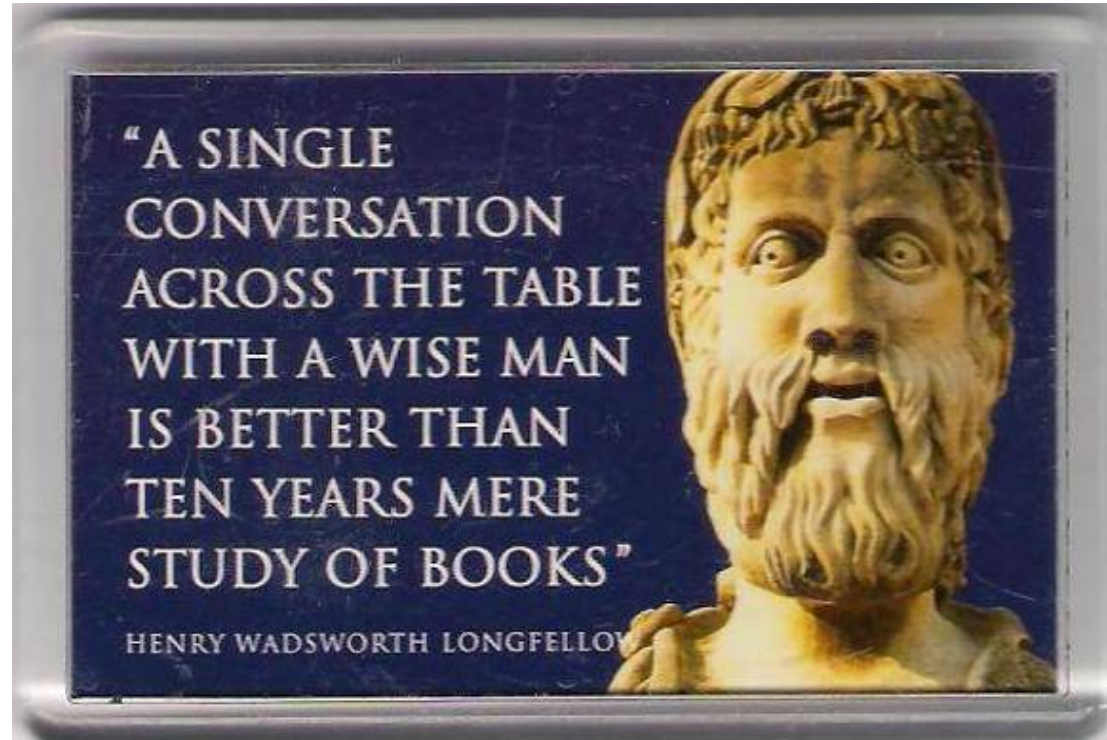
- Buildings – about 300, spread through the city

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Terminology

WebLearn:
the name of the VLE
at Oxford University

UK	USA Australasia South Africa
Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)	Learning Management System (LMS)
Learning Technologist	Instructional Designer
Tutor: Teacher / respected scholar / leading expert	Tutor: Teaching assistant / graduate student

The Socratic method

The **Socratic method**, is a form of **inquiry and debate** between individuals with opposing viewpoints based on asking and answering questions to **stimulate critical thinking** and to **illuminate ideas**

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socratic_method

"A SINGLE CONVERSATION ACROSS THE TABLE WITH A WISE MAN IS BETTER THAN TEN YEARS MERE STUDY OF BOOKS"

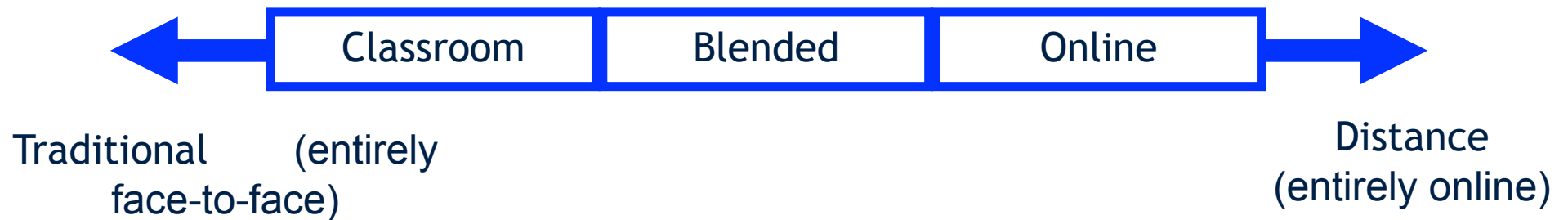HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

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Change …

"Change is and will continue to be the only certainty."

(Rummler and Brache, 1995)

"Nowhere is faculty resistance to change so pronounced as it is in the activity of teaching."

(Maddux et al., 1999)

Technology enhanced practice

Classroom | Blended | Online

Traditional (entirely face-to-face)

Distance (entirely online)

"**skillful combinations** of online resources and face-to-face activities **to promote independent, self-directed learning**" (JISC: *Effective practice in a digital age*)

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Blended learning

(Adapted from Bonk et al., 2000)

web-dependent

web-enhanced

web-supported

1

- Learning resources
- Calendar
- Announcements
- Web links
- Reading lists

2
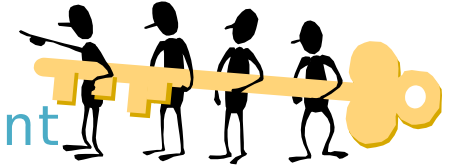
- Interaction and collaboration with peers
- Discussions
- Assignments
- Quizzes
- Grade book
- Tutorial sign up
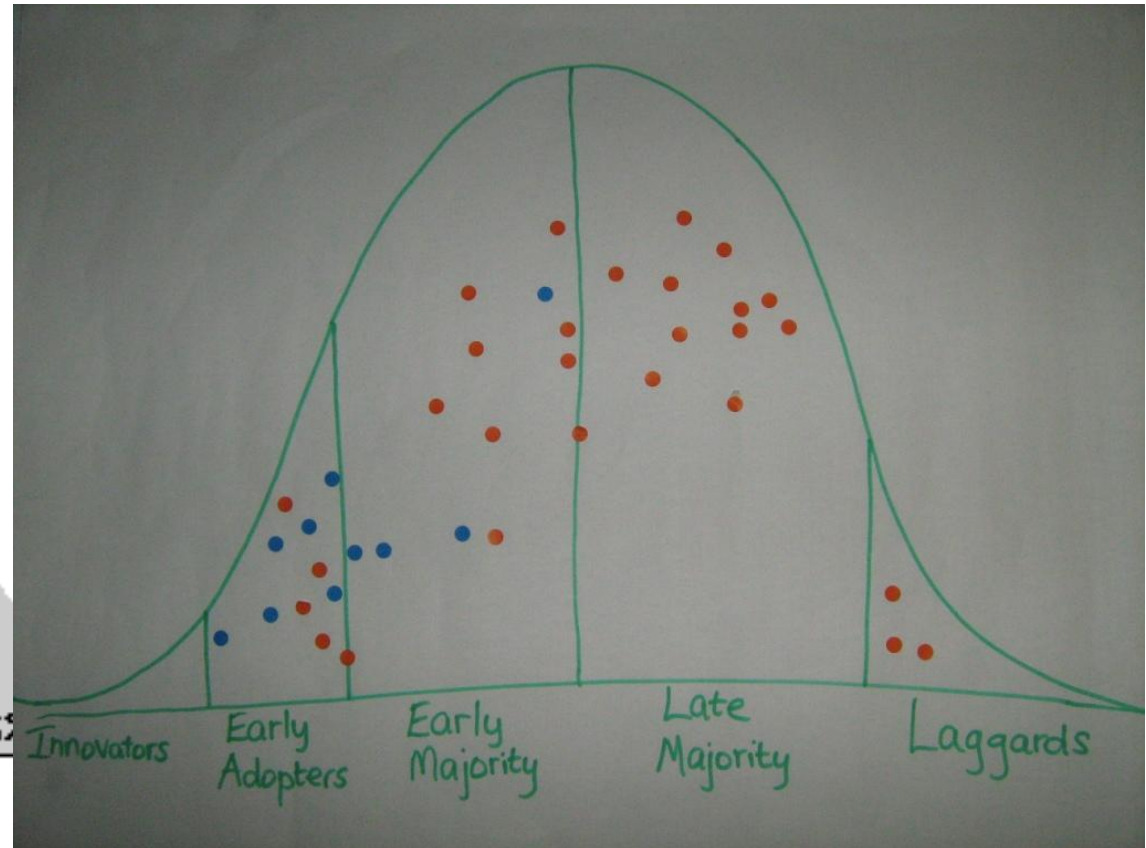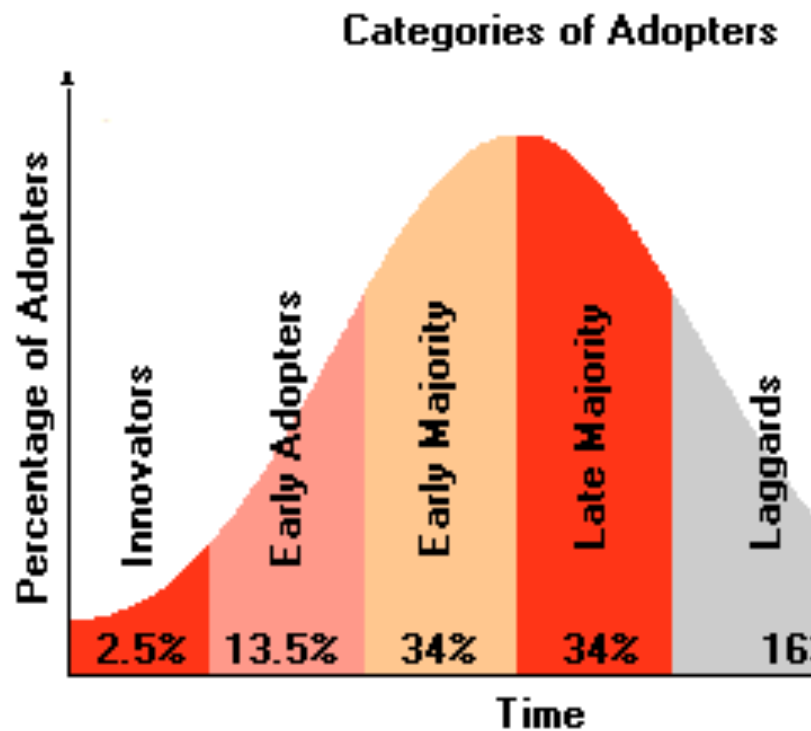
3

- Fewer contact sessions
- Podcast lectures
- Multimedia support
- Audio feedback on essays
- Students communicate with experts
- Majority of course materials online for 24-7 access
- Blogs, journals, e-portfolios
- Students part of learning and knowledge community

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Moore's adoption curve

Ask your users where they place themselves (and their colleagues) on the curve…

Barriers to technology adoption

- Lack of conviction about the benefits – What's in it for me? – What's in it for my students?

- Lack of time

- Resistance to change

- Lack of incentives

- Revised role for academics

- Proliferation of emerging technologies

- Dealing with new versions of software

Challenges for the VLE team

- Unique and complex nature of collegiate university
  - No uniformity across the institution
- Small central team
  - 1 manager, 3 Sakai developers (soon to be only 1), 1.5 learning technologists
- Training – mixed target audience
  - students, academics, administrators, researchers, retired staff
- Encouraging users to use the VLE for more than an information repository
- Expectation that the VLE can handle anything!

Pedagogical challenges

- Why do I need to use the VLE when I see my students weekly in small tutorial groups?

- What can the VLE provide that I can't achieve with email and a website?

Initiatives undertaken

- Case studies – written (provide a template), video/audio

- Showcase exemplar WebLearn sites

- Formal training sessions – 3 hours face-to-face; course book available in WebLearn

- Exploratory workshops – 3 hours; more reflective

- Re-energising the WebLearn User Group

Lessons learnt - 1

Afford participants the opportunity to be involved in the planning and design of staff support interventions

WebLearn User Group:

- Sharing ideas and best practice

- Face-to-face meeting once per term – Show & Tell, expert on copyright, 'cream tea' tradition

- Site in WebLearn – announcements, email list, polls, agendas and minutes of meetings, screen casts of Show & Tell presentations

- Video tutorials – prior survey to determine user preferences; users evaluate draft videos

Lessons learnt - 2

Model best practice in the use of blended learning, using low-threshold technologies

- Workshops:
  - 'Interactive Teaching'
  - 'Learning and Teaching: using technology tools'
- Use of JISC and local case studies
- Participants reflect on their teaching philosophy
- Easy-to-use content creation and recording software (e.g. eXe, Wimba create, Screentoaster, Audacity)
- Audio commentaries to provide feedback on student essays
- Use of 'clickers' in the classroom - evaluation

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Lessons learnt - 3

Employ student interns over the summer

- Interview academics about their use of technology

- Write and/or film case studies

- Develop video tutorials on using the VLE
  - take time to plan the structure, the logic, the tone
  - write detailed scripts that can be used in text and/or audio form

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Support offered...

- Formal 3-hour training sessions

- Free, scheduled weekly consultation sessions

- Centralised email support

- Customised departmental, committee sessions

- WebLearn Guidance Site www.weblearn.ox.ac.uk/ info

  - step-by-step tool guides

  - least-you-need-to-know guides

  - how-to guides

  - video tutorials (coming soon...)

Conclusion

Are things set in stone in an 800 year-old institution?

The challenge is to involve academics in matching various technologies to meet their needs and student expectations in an immersive learning environment.