

## Leeds Collections in Context – Curriculum Development 2012

Module Leader: Mark Westgarth

Based on learning from the [workshop enhancements](#) last year, for the 2011/2012 presentation of the module, Mark updated the module handbook to include the use of a blog:-

Remember to use the 'Virtual Exhibitions Blog' linked from the VLE to develop materials for your exhibition projects.

This is a space for you to create a kind of 'scrap-book' for your exhibition projects. You can post anything you like on these blogs; commentaries on an exhibition or museum you have seen; podcasts on any interpretation in museums/galleries; reminders of what you've seen that has interested you...etc etc...you can then build up a portfolio of ideas and reflections to help with your exhibition projects. The Blog is a WORDPRESS, so it's public, but don't let that scare you!...imagine it as a living CV for your future career as curators, or museum and gallery officers etc....

Here is the link to the BLOG:

[Leeds Collection in Context Exhibition Blogs 2011-12](#)

This year, Mark set up a WordPress blog for the students, and we [created resources for them](#) on the VLE showing how to use it. However, none of the students used the blog, despite repeated prompting from Mark. This might be because they felt they didn't have time to engage with it (see below).

We also made the audio recorders available again, thanks to a loan from Blended Learning Support. Three students borrowed audio recorders, but none of them were willing to attend the focus group, so we don't know whether/how they used them.

We did have two students who attended a focus group, and they told us a lot about how they used audio recorders and blogs – but not for the module. So I took the opportunity to ask them a few questions about how they used technology to enhance their learning, and wrote a case study.

They did mention that another student had used a digital recorder to record her thoughts on field trips. When I asked them whether they had tried that, they said that they would feel self conscious, or as if they were disturbing people. Another student preferred to write:-

*I quite like writing. It's like my train of thought ... seeing it, I find that helpful. I can process, and ... you know, it links – whereas I feel like I'd say something (into the audio recorder) and it would stop and I don't know if it would carry on.*

One student told me that she found it easier to take pictures, which she used to remind herself. Another also took pictures, and used them in her essays. I asked for more information about how the pictures were helping them:-

*Quite a lot of our essays we need to describe something in a country house or a museum and it's quite often a lot easier to describe that. Often I go with an agenda, say I'm doing a project on Leeds City Gallery, I know the kind of thing I'm looking for. So I can see it, I've just got to take a picture and then I can go home and write an essay about it. But often I find that I tend to ramble - so if I've got a picture it stops me from rambling, because I can just describe the thing that I'm talking about. And then if I need context I'll say 'refer to image whatever' and then if it's in the appendix I don't need to waste my word count describing the full context; I can just describe that one thing and you can refer to the image.*

Mark asked whether they had used the audio recorders for the exhibition project, or whether they generally used them just to take lectures. They hadn't used them for the project. As one said:-

*Mine wasn't really useful in the exhibition project because I couldn't really ... I find it quite difficult to get my head around actually what was being asked of us*

**Mark: they're difficult projects to do when you first encounter them**

*I don't know whether this was just me but because it was 6,000 words as well as soon as I heard that I put a block on everything else, I just thought 'oh my God, 6,000, I'm never going to be able to write 6,000' so when you were explaining it to me, I was like 'no, no, can't do it', just ignoring everything*

This echoed the concern expressed by the students last year that the exhibition project itself is so demanding that the digital reflection seems like another thing 'on top'.

Carole Kirk, June 2012