SCHOMS

connections

www.schoms.ac.uk

expertise creativity enhancement technology community support   no9 summer 2018

Review of talking points from a buoyant SCHOMS18 at the University of York

Ron Cooke Hub

Afloat with new ideas

The Ron Cooke Hub – home of SCHOMS18 – fringed by the Univeristy of York's island study pods

WELCOME to our first SCHOMS18 extra supplement - a brief initial review of experiences shared at our University of York conference in May.

You could call it a skim across the surface of the learning spaces and technologies stories that emerged during the four-day gathering – just to keep action points fresh in your mind.

We will still be issuing the main, larger edition of Connections around the beginning of the new semester with more detailed accounts and follow-ups.

Digital transformation and continuing professional development were dominant themes at the conference, which was opened officially by John Robinson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Students at the University of York.

SCHOMS18 was attended by 70 delegates from 55 UK institutions – including a sizeable cohort of first-time attendees – and overseas visitors from Malta, New Zealand, Australia and Hong Kong.

A move to grow further was taken during the AGM when members voted in favour of changing the constitution to allow full SCHOMS memberships to institutions from the Republic of Ireland.

The conference was again the focal point for one of the UK's highest-profile suppliers' exhibitions with an HE focus. Sponsorship packages for the exhibition had sold out among manufacturers and suppliers within minutes of being announced.

Exhibitors also joined delegates for a major networking discussion on procurement.

Full SCHOMS18 reports in the next issue of Connections

'First-time' delegates give their impressions of SCHOMS18. Here's what MICK GIBBENS of King's College, London, thought. . .

Why did you attend SCHOMS18?
After meeting Caroline Pepper at an ALT sig conference and attending the ISE in Amsterdam, I realised that the SCHOMS conference could be very useful. I had also read the 'Learning Space Toolkit' – it was very interesting in some areas of specific concern for me.

What were your expectations?
None, other than meeting other people in a similar role or position to discuss their experiences and any resolutions. Also to see if I would learn from the presentations.

What did you enjoy most?
The whole conference was so well run. There were no issues around getting lost, the hotel was very good in a great location. The evening dinners were very good and a great way to connect with other attendees and companies.

What was the most surprising element?
The friendliness of the organisers and attendees. Conferences can be very impersonal.

The most valuable element?
A mixture of presentations and talking to others with similar experiences.

What was the key message that you came away with?
The amount of similar repeated mistakes made at other Universities that SCHOMS were trying to eliminate. We are not alone!

What was the least valuable part of the conference?
Not all presentations are well presented. Maybe some guidelines for presenters to be more concise.

Digital campus revolution

Ross Parry, Associate Professor Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Digital) at the University of Leicester, spoke about the ground-breaking Digital Campus that is changing the face and nature of his institution.

THERE'S a 'golden thread' running through a digital transformation at the University of Leicester, according to Ross Parry.

It connects every discussion and initiative to a comprehensive digital strategy and, in turn, to the institution's mission statement.

"A digital strategy is much wider than an IT strategy," Ross said. "It's not just about cabling, structure or wifi, it's seeing the university as a digital platform and constantly building it.

"But because we're a university, we call it a digital campus. We say it again and again. It's a galvanising idea."

Ross explained how the strategy revolved around programmes of digital skills and capabilities, digital learning environment and digital research environment.

"It begins with skills," he said, "you can have best wifi, touch screens, monitors and infrastructure, but if don't have a digitally confident workforce, it doesn't transform you."

In a wide-ranging presentation, Ross gave examples of the strategy in action including the Digital Literacy Framework, Digital Innovation Partnerships - in which students and staff work together to deliver technological micro change - and the digital reading room, a revolutionary new learning space, which he described as "a physical manifestation of all the university stands for digitally."

He said the challenge had been met while maintaining 'a beginner's mindset' – "it's a volatile market and a complex culture, I'm suspicious of people who present a road map."

Hub of activity for prestigious exhibition
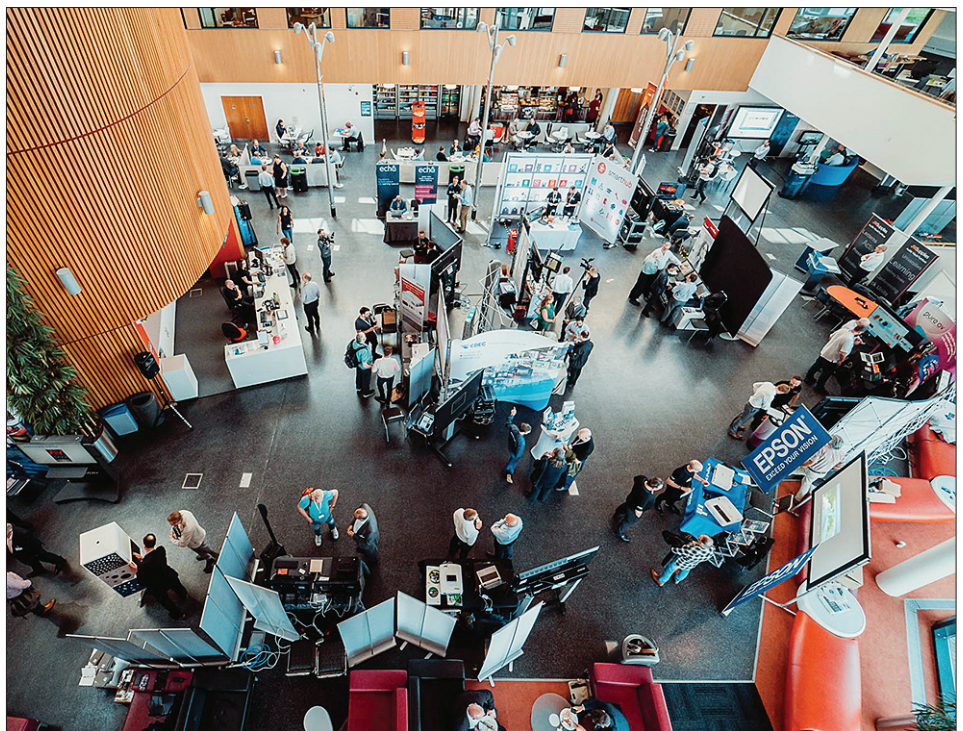
SCHOMS again hosted one of the UK's largest AV/IT suppliers exhibition with an HE focus. Companies set up stands in the exhibitions area in the Rob Cooke Hub, giving delegates the chance to discuss products, developments and requirements.

Rebuild is a small wonder

Rob Howe, Head of Learning Technology, and Andrew Taylor, Senior Audio Visual Engineer - AV lead, talked delegates through the challenges they faced providing an AV solution for the brand new Waterside campus at the University of Northampton.

WHAT would you do if you had the opportunity to level your campus and build it all over again?

That's what delegates were asked to imagine by Rob Howe and Andrew Taylor – because it was exactly the challenge they were presented with five years ago.

With one proviso from the Dean of Learning and Teaching: "If the new systems take more than one touch or we have to spend more than five minutes learning them, you've failed."

Massive amounts of culture change were involved. Lecture theatres, lecterns and outdated room PCs were rejected in favour of standarised flexible teaching spaces, a 'choose your own device' strategy, interactive screens and web-based controls.

Andrew Taylor explained how the wireless presentation systems brought about a digital transformation for the university. "We've put the same easy configuration into every space," he said.

Rob Howe said: "We're reversing the trend of what other universities are doing by going smaller - learning happens in discourse, when people are being challenged.

"We want to get to the point where 'tech' disappears and people don't have to worry about the technology. You lose learning and engagement if you do."

Sharing digital worlds

John Sumpter, subject specialist in teaching, learning and assessment with Jisc, sought to explore whether consistencies could be reached between the digital worlds provided by universities and those more familiar to students.

STUDENTS occupy a digital world of Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat - a rapid environment of updating every second, John Sumpter told delegates.

"They come to education and they're confronted with virtual learning programmes like Noodle, MOOC and Blackboard – it's so different."

He wanted to know if it was possible for universities to have a mix of social and institutional tools and space to compromise between the digital worlds.

And he set out to discover it by posing questions to delegates through a series of interactive digital applications - Mentimeter voting, Padlet, TodaysMeet and the response-gathering app PollEv.

His questions included:
• What are the opportunities and challenges that face us when use

social web 5.0 and type of tools we provide students in university?
• How can we compromise between different worlds – what needs to be changed to allow them to be used together more harmoniously?
• If it was agreed there was some sort of happy medium to be reached, how do we support staff and students to engage effectively with the tools required?

After discussing responses on a number of themes, delegates concluded that consistencies could be achieved.

The themes ranged from the need for digitally literate staff and for making sure IT is flexible and working all the time to the need to employ a common approach across universities instead of individual faculty approaches.

Engaged in transformation

Ian Woolner, Technology Specialist for Education with Microsoft, spoke on how 'Education is Done with Transformation'.

DIGITAL transformation is disrupting every industry at pace, according to Ian Woolner. In HE, this meant new ways of engaging with current and prospective students.

Universities were placing a greater focus on marketing to attract students, including the trialling of bots. "The manual phone queue process is being replaced by automatic responses to calls about courses."

He explained how Artificial Intelligence (AI) could help with student data analysis. "The focus on student analytics is intense.

"AI can track how students react to different things – if they are turning up for lectures, what are they saying – and it can identify different styles of students who are vulnerable.

"Being able to build an AI picture takes us past student experience and satisfaction surveys. It goes into welfare and how students are reacting to the pressures of courses."

More customer relationship manager (CRM) products were being introduced to manage the student experience.

"Students don't go to a helpdesk, they seek advice or complain on social media. We've been asked to optimise a lot of these interactions with tools to manage Facebook comments by students," Ian said.

"Students are students until something goes wrong, then they are customers. An agile management process recognises that if something doesn't go right, we have to fix that."

3

How to come back from the brink

A POIGNANT tale of resurrection from the rubble was shared with conference by Nathan Gardiner, Space and Systems Architect at New Zealand's University of Canterbury.

He won the AETM scholarship to present to SCHOMS on how his institution recovered from the devastating Christchurch eathquake of 2011.

In the aftermath, no building over three storeys could be occupied by any of the 20,000 students and 131 teaching spaces were unusable.

"We built a village of portable campuses in the car park to keep the campus alive," he said. "From there, we had a clean slate to work from."

The AV budget was increased 15-fold. The campus was completely re-cabled, teaching spaces restyled and learning technologies introduced.

"If we have another incident, we will be in better shape because we can re-route systems,"he said. "But my big message to you all is – start thinking about disaster recovery."

Awards launched

AETM president Scott Doyle told SCHOMS how the professional development of members in Australia and New Zealand had been boosted by the introduction of its own awards scheme.

The first awards ceremony was held this year after AETM recognised members' projects had been receiving honours but not the members themselves.

AETM were also hoping to open up their online forums by offering free affiliate opt-ins so SCHOMS members could take part in conversations.

Power up your influence

Inspirational executive coach, writer and speaker Robina Chatham lifted the lid on 'Developing Personal Power' in organisations. She talked through the different personalities that can be found and how to deal with them positively

CORPORATE politics is like a political zoo to Robina Chatham – with a bit of the animals in all of us.

"But essentially it is about our prime behaviour," she said.

She identified the animals as:
• Innocent sheep – a person who acts with integrity but hasn't got a clue what's going on.
• Clever fox – knows exactly what's going on but uses that knowledge to exploit weakness in others.
• Inept baboon – neither acts with integrity nor knows what's going on.
• Wise dolphin – both acts with integrity and knows exactly what's going on.

She said the key characteristics of the wise dolphin were self-awareness and understanding the differences in other people before communicating effectively and influencing them.

Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator - a tool to denote how people pyschologically perceive the world around them - Robina also illustrated the art of influencing.

She identified the strengths and weaknesses of central personality types:
• Sensors - who gathered data and factual information from the real world through any one of the five senses.
• Intuitives - who used their sixth sense and gut feelings and were more geared to the world of possibilities.
• Thinkers - who used their heads, basic on logic, therefore objective.
• Feelers - who acted according to their hearts and personal values, therefore subjective.

She defined categorised people further as pragmatic, theoretical, idealistic and sociable - and advised how to approach and persuade each type.

"Information must be delivered in the preferred 'language' of the recipient if it is to be received at all," she told delegates.

In a concluding analysis of time management, Robina warned of 'giving up tomorrow at the expense of today'.

"Time is finite, a budget item," she said. "If you don't manage time, it gets eaten up by what's urgent but not necessarily important."

Major meeting of minds on procurement

Exhibitors and delegates came together to discuss procurement issues under the stewardship of James Trotter, Head of Procurement for the universities of Leicester and Loughborough. His collated responses to the questions asked of all groups can be seen at www.schoms.ac.uk

4

Clarity: WiT it's all about

Jon Moon, an independent consultant on document clarity and author of 'Clarity and Impact', spoke to delegates on how to make the best impression with their reports and presentations. And how it gives one ubiqitous device the bullet. . .

DELEGATES were introduced to Jon Moon's concept of Words in Tables (WiTs) – "fewer, shorter paragraphs with less waffle in between."

It's a style that dispenses with bullet points. "Paragraphs with bullet points are almost always incomplete," he said.

"WiT teaches you where to put your words – in easier-to-read narrower columns of text, with headlines on the left and details on the right.

"It helps you to put information in the right order and take your thinking further. It's not about clear layout, it's about clear thinking.

"Most people sit down and write fluffy joining-up guff but it makes it difficult for the reader to see what they want to see."

Jon gave examples of how the concept worked with CVs, reports and presentations.

He said people who had used the concept succeeded in halving the length of what they had to say and increasing their readers' interest in it.

"It satisfies both those who love detail - with the explanations in the right hand column – and those who don't. People who have a short attention span can dip in and dip out. It gives people choice."

Other tips from Jon included changing the order of 'features and benefits' in reports to 'benefits and features' and to 'start at the end' by opening with conclusions.

Starring on social media

Glenn Hurst, Assistant Professor of Chemical Education at the University of York, spoke on 'Innovative Use of Social Media'. Glenn has been recognised as one of the top 10 HE social media superstars by Jisc

STUDENTS engage more deeply when their learning is given 'real-life' meaning on social media, according to Glenn Hurst.

He told conference how he and his colleagues in the Department of Chemistry at York used Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube to bring home how chemistry applied to students in everyday terms.

Glenn received recognition from Jisc for his work on the photo messaging app Snapchat, which he said he uses to "contextualise content in the real-life world," provide an insight into his professional life "to help students with their career development" and to demonstrate key experimental techniques.

"I established a class account and encouraged first year students to follow it," he explained. "I said I would not add them so I wouldn't see their personal information. They would view images and updates - it's for dissemination more than communication."

His posts on experiments often carry a deliberate mistake which students are asked to spot and reveal in an update with prizes offered for the feedback. "It's a powerful tool," he said.

Glenn also outlined work being developed with the students to design game-based learning apps.

And he praised Twitter for the part it played in his own continuing professional development.

Glenn takes part in #LTHEchat – an hour-long discusssion on learning and teaching in HE. "It's a fantastic account," he said. "Academics across the world debate a different topic every week. I've been invited to talk at other conferences through Twitter rather than my publications. It's a great platform to disseminate my own work."

Go further with a SCHOMS bursary

MORE exposure of burning issues of the day was urged by executive committee member Tessa Rogowski – so SCHOMS members could claim a travel scholarship as well as project support.

The SCHOMS Bursary Scheme – an annual award to address vital concerns in learning spaces and technology – is set to carry the chance for winners to present on their subject across the world.

It mirrors a scheme run by AETM, SCHOMS' sister organisation in Australia.

Tessa said: "We are prepared to do the same as AETM, to offer a bursary to travel and present at their conferences in Australia."

But more ideas on how to tackle burning issues were needed, she added. "If there's something you're proud of having done or if you know someone else doing great work, put together a proposal and submit it to us."

Previous awards have been given to work on Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) in education and research into effective learning spaces.

Training praise

AN AVIXA training day kicked off SCHOMS18 conference week at the University of York.

Organised in response to membership feedback, it included sessions on balanced audio systems and designing for user experience.

The session was praised by delegates during a conference review of plans for further AVIXA days and SCHOMS training.

Members were asked to suggest topics according to their specific needs or those that would be of benefit to their teams.

5

SCHOMS now

DETAILS of a new SCHOMS Executive Committee line-up were announced.

Daniel Roberts of the London School of Economics joins as two long-standing members leave – Paul Wood of Bangor University and Jill Snelling of the University of Exeter.

Mark Dunlop of the University of Dundee replaces Paul as Vice-Chair.

Mark is also responsible for ISE and InfoComm liaison.

The committee also comprises:
Caroline Pepper, Loughborough University – Chair, supplier liaison

Jay Pema, University of Cambridge – Treasurer, website articles and newsletter

Chris Gooch, University of Leicester – Secretary

Tessa Rogowski, University of Essex – SCHOMS Bursary Scheme

Jim Bain, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh – Training and Member engagement.

There will also be co-opted roles for a member of the next university to host the SCHOMS conference and for a liaison representative following conference approval to extend full membership institutions in the Republic of Ireland.

Both Chris Gooch and Paul Wood urged delegates to consider putting themselves forward for the committee. "It's a very worthwhile and rewarding experience," said Chris. "It allows you both to give something back and to take things forward in your personal development."

. . . and then

In her conference swansong – she is due to retire from her post at Hong Kong University and end an 18-year official association with SCHOMS – longest-serving member and former chair, Toni Kelly, took delegates on a trip down memory lane.

TONI KELLY recalled how she first came into contact with SCHOMS in September 2000.

"I had an office at University of Birmingham in the same space that an executive meeting was being held," she said. "I was greeted by the chair at the time, Keith Buckman, who suggested I really ought to be part of the group."

The first SCHOMS conference was held on 21 September 2000 at Loughborough University with 45 member institutions.

"I couldn't make it," Toni said, "but in a lesson to you all to attend if you can, I was proposed and elected as secretary in my absence."

SCHOMS has since held 28 conferences - for a period there were two a year.

Toni recounted how women had played a major role in shaping and leading SCHOMS.

Dr Anne Mumford was chair from 2001-07 and responsible for a number of iniatiives – the Value of Money printing project, benchmarking and research into physical learning spaces which formed the basis of today's Learning Space Toolkit.

Toni also paid tribute to Nita Spectorov, vice chair from 2004-06; founder member Therese Walker; former committee member Shona Cameron and current 'SCHOMETTES' Caroline Pepper, Tessa Rogowski

Toni in conversation during the suppliers exhibition.

and Jill Snelling.

Her largest praise, though, was reserved for Stuart Davies – the man who became her vice-chair when Toni replaced Anne Mumford as chair at the 2007 Warwick conference.

"Stuart made massive changes to what we did," she said. "We found ourselves joining the judging panel for the AV Magazine Awards, then we were added to the AV100 list, then we attended an event and met Mike Blackman of ISE, who floated the idea of doing something to get more SCHOMS members to ISE."

Through his contacts in HEFQ, Stuart also built the supplier exhibitions and was heavily involved in developing links with AETM.

"Stuart became one of my very best friends and remains so today," Toni said. "I've made a huge number of friends in SCHOMS. It's very special to have these sort of relationships."

"We've always had lots of fun and happiness at conferences but we're still very professional. We learn a lot from each other, SCHOMS is incredibly inclusive, members share experiences and really support each other through issues and problems."