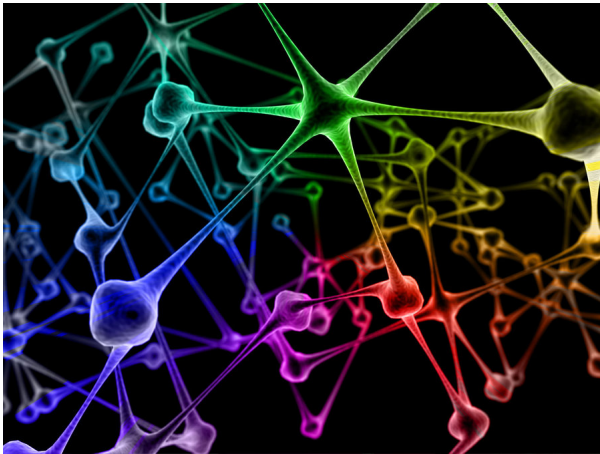


The London Met Elearning Matrix

CELT support for elearning

Developing your Personal Learning Network

***Snapshot:** In an age of information abundance, how can you harness the power of digital tools to create and manage your Personal Learning Network?*



What is a Personal Learning Network?

Whether you like it or not, we are living in a technology-saturated environment. The abundance of technology and the information it gives access to can be exciting but also very daunting.

- *What is the best way to keep up with what we need and avoid being distracted by all the rubbish that's out there on the web?*
- *What are some of the online tools and applications we can use to help us navigate this vast ocean of information and use it to our advantage?*

These are complex questions, but one way you can start to answer these questions is to begin actively creating your own academic (*Personal Learning*) network. Of course, everyone has a personal learning network of sorts - this can include teachers, colleagues, family and friends. We probably weren't taught how to develop and cultivate these offline relationships, and yet building up a network online is far from easy and sometimes we may need to be pointed in the right direction. This entry will give you a few ideas on how to get started on developing your own **PLN**, provide links to tutorials and thought pieces and hopefully encourage you to get out there and start experimenting with some of these tools. The [Prezi](#) presentation on the left introduces the concept of a Personal Learning Network (or PLE, E for Environment if you prefer...)

For an introduction to Personal Learning Networks, have a look at the presentation above. The tools recommended here are just ones which I have found useful and reliable in my own online life. There are countless others, and a basic websearch will provide plenty of alternatives if you want to try different examples. The important thing is what it allows you to do, not who makes or provides it.

The benefits of Twitter

[In the web page version of this article there is some media here]

In this presentation, Andy Priestner (Head Librarian at Cambridge University's Business School [2013]) demonstrates the benefits of using Twitter *for academic researchers* and explains how it has enriched his own practice.

He identifies common reasons behind many people's rejection and misunderstanding of Twitter and gives recommendations for those just starting out using it.

If you prefer text, here's a link to a really handy guide from LSE: [Using Twitter in university research, teaching and impact activities](#)

Social Bookmarking with Diigo

Being able to save, annotate and easily share online resources (primarily weblinks) between multiple platforms and devices is a necessity for effective online working.

CELT elearning have created a screenast showing you how to get started using the social bookmarking service Diigo: [How to set up and use Diigo](#)

Why blog?

Do you write a blog? Do you read any blogs? Blogging is a great way to get more familiar with the online environment and start developing your own digital literacies.

For an introduction to academic blogging, some of the following links might be useful:

[By the blog: Academics tread carefully](#) (Times Higher - scroll down the page to find URLs to some example academic blogs)

[Academic Blogging - the power and the pitfalls](#) (Guardian Higher Education Network)

The Guardian Higher Ed Network has also started [a blogs directory](#) which might be worth a look.

Two of the most popular blogging platforms are **WordPress** and **Blogger**.

To get yourself set up with a **WordPress** blog, have a look at their [Getting Started](#) pages.

Blogger is another very popular blogging platform owned and run by Google. It's very easy to use and has a lot of good features. For basic getting started info, try their [Help Pages](#).

NB: When you first set up a blogger blog, it will ask you for a Google account. If you don't have one, you will need to set one up. Annoyingly, using your London Met institutional gmail address

is not an option as Blogger is not supported in the university. If you have a personal (i.e. non-institutional) gmail account, it's probably easiest to use this. **However, it is possible to set up a Google account without a gmail address** (using your Yahoo, Hotmail or other email address).

To create a Google account without Gmail, go to:

<https://accounts.google.com/SignUpWithoutGmail>

Storing documents in the Cloud

Memory sticks, Flash drives, pen drives, USB sticks - they've been around for a long time and are probably part of your average academic's toolkit. But do they need to be? Keeping documents 'in the cloud' is now an easy option which is worth considering. Services such as Dropbox or Google Drive make the process incredibly easy, are free and can be a really convenient way to ensure that you can access your stuff wherever you are.

One of the most popular services is called Dropbox. For a quick introduction, view this [Dropbox Tour](#).

We hope you enjoyed this article and found it useful. To leave feedback please follow the link to the article (at the top of this page) and leave your comments.