



The Evolution of Digital Systems: Keystone to the Diversity Agenda

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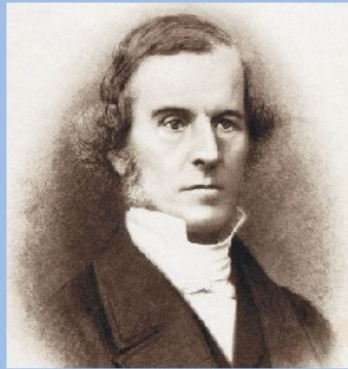
John Gibbins apologises for not being able to attend the Summer Conference

John wishes to respectfully draw your attention to the fact that his 'magnum opus' is being published today

'John Grote, Cambridge University and the Development of Victorian Thought'

John Grote

Cambridge University
and the Development
of Victorian Thought



JOHN GIBBINS

- **Hardcover:** 520 pages
- **Publisher:** Imprint Academic (2-7-2007)
- **Language** English
- **ISBN-10:** 1845400070

Reviewer: "A 39-year labour of scholarship that will '*light a bonfire under the history of modern philosophy*' "

Plus THES Review: 6 July, 2007



Key Aim of this Presentation

To establish the E-Agenda as a
cornerstone of future
postgraduate training and
development in Britain



The Evolution of Digital Systems: Keystone to the Diversity Agenda

- **Future challenges in PG Education**
- E-impact on Roberts' Skills Agenda
- The Diversity Agenda and Factors involved in Diversity
- E-learning – Features and Creativity
- Evolution of Diversity – 'E-Darwinism'
- E-Support and resources



4 Challenges for the Future of Postgraduate Education

- **Access** – ensure access for all PG researchers to excellence in skills development and disciplinary / interdisciplinary research training
- **Engagement** – ensure attractiveness of PGE to all researchers to keep them on agenda, on song, on message
- **Enhancement** – underpin the quality of the PG student experience
- **Impact** – assess achievement of goals, redefine, refocus and re-engage

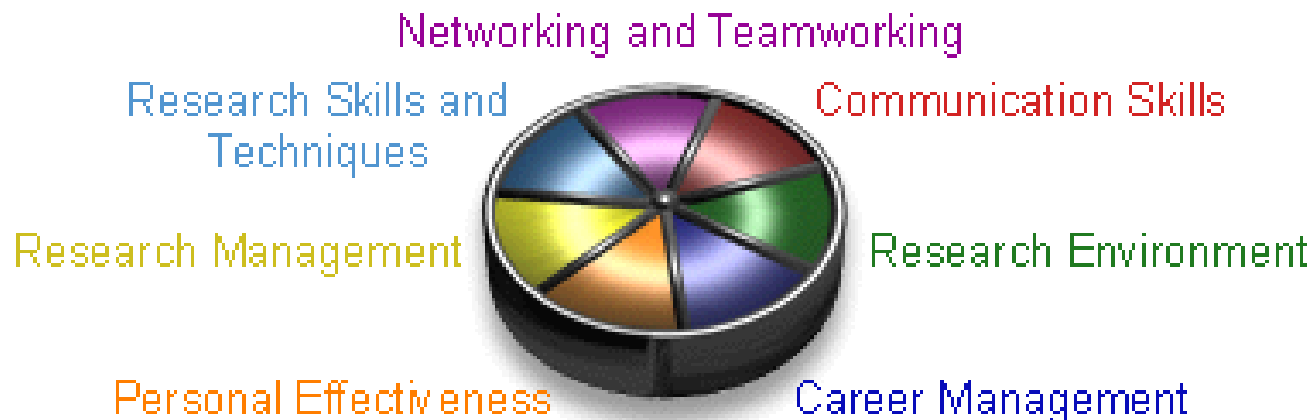


E-Systems can support each Challenge

- **Access** – e-supported activities / programmes can reach every researcher – wherever access to phone or satellite link e.g. *E2R* and the *Postgraduate Portal* at Newcastle
- **Engagement** – in principle well constructed and pedagogically sound products can be attractive, accessible and engaging –
e.g. E-Bookings at Newcastle;
"The Skills Forge" – PDP at York

E-Systems can support each Challenge

- "*The Skills Forge*" - powerful platform for tracking past, current and required skills during development
Jonathan Carr@ York
<<https://www.theskillsforge.co.uk/help/>>
- Research Councils' Skills Statement – mapped onto 7 areas – Student progressively completes the "pie" and reflects on progress – supervisor comments formatively





E-Systems can support each Challenge

- **Enhancement** – high quality database systems and e-based learning enhance the quality of the PG research experience of today's "*digital natives*"
- **Impact** – e-learning systems permit rapid, systematic and independent evaluation of impact – compared with traditional modes – as in Blackboard Systems Data – e.g. *E-Portfolio; E-Progression* at Newcastle



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E-impact on Roberts' Skills Agenda

- It is essential to **embed, exploit** and extend the UK's national advantage in PG skills development
- E-practices can be **durable** and **flexible** – if regularly updated and maintained – but note significant overhead costs for raising a cadre of E-trained practitioners
- E-practices can **complement** face-to-face modes of delivery
- E-systems can ensure **continuing impact** of Roberts' Skills Agenda – especially in the **post-Roberts** funding environment



E-impact on Roberts' Skills Agenda

- Increasing access by practitioners to UKGrad *Database of Best Practice* is the keystone to globalisation of Roberts
- Live E-access to *Database* records would impact positively on skills training agenda
 - within HEIs, regionally, nationally and internationally
- E-access to & implementation of Roberts' outputs in UK will underpin excellence in PG training and development – to give global market advantage and impact on PG recruitment



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The Diversity Agenda

- All groups and types of researcher including Post-Docs should be able to access skills development, engage and develop their abilities
- Specific needs of diverse groups should be met effectively – and as appropriate, specifically
- HEIs and the Sector as a whole have a responsibility to meet these diverse needs



Factors involved in Diversity – 1

- ***Origin of entry*** – meeting the needs of cohorts from overseas, out of region
- ***Diverse locations*** - how to ensure that the needs of locally based and distance learners are met equally
- ***Diverse modes of learning*** – how to meet the needs of students studying part-time, full-time, on sandwich programmes, externally



Factors involved in Diversity – 2

- ***Diversity of Qualifications*** – embracing researchers with an array of different qualification entry routes and backgrounds e.g MRes, MPhil, MProf, PhD, Prof Dox
- ***Diverse previous experience*** – how best to recognise skills and experience imported – and identify requisite Training Needs
- ***Diverse abilities*** – how to meet the needs of the very able and gifted?
- ***Diverse research training needs*** – addressing the domain-specific research training needs at doctoral / post-doc level



Factors involved in Diversity – 3

- ***Diverse personal needs*** – how to meet specific needs e.g. mobility, sightedness, mental health
- ***Diverse cohorts and lifestyles*** – a how to integrate the needs of diverse lifestyles e.g. mature, late, young, religious
- ***Language diversity*** – accommodating the needs of researchers whose first language is not English
- ***Cultural diversity*** – ensuring that diverse cultural backgrounds are respected appropriately



Factors involved in Diversity – 4

- ***Diverse funding sources*** – private, voluntary, Council, overseas government, business, shared – and especially variable periods of funded support
- ***Diverse employment destinations*** – responding to the needs of researchers aiming at diverse employment options
- ***Diverse expectations*** – over employment expectations; life objectives and goals



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E-Learning – Features and Creativity

- Access by any registered student/post-doc when and how required – best practice examples include:
 - PREMIA for disability,
 - 'All in One Day' for part-time researchers
- Responsive to diverse pedagogies, speeds and learning modes and student learning styles
- Response time – can respond rapidly to changes in learner needs and utilisation
- Transnationalism, speed and economies of scale – can aggregate audiences and penetrate new international arenas

eg Digital Arts Research, *Planetary Collegium*, *Plymouth University*,
E-Thesis developments;

*Adam-EU Adam Tempus project collaboration with Belgrade University
to provide streamed on-line lectures, conferences, networks*



E-Learning – Features and Creativity

- Provides a space for invention and imagination eg *The Planetary Collegium*
- Provides space for networks, collaborations and partnerships to grow and flourish
- Hosts diverse projects and activities from *E-conferences to E-journals, E-skills training to E-publications, E-data banks & E-archives*



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Evolution of Diversity – 1

Threats / Inhibitory Factors:

- High costs of development
- Fears of plagiarism
- Technological and IT phobias
- Fears of obsolescence
- Fears of high maintenance costs
- Fears of 'dumbing down'



Evolution of Diversity – 2

Opportunities:

- Costs can be reduced by collaborations and partnerships – eg local Hub plans
- We can develop skills in staff – *Netskills*
- “*Survival of the fittest*” applies here
- Electronic products can generate IP income
- E-Space offers quality enhancement



Evolution of Diversity – 3

Darwin noted several key drivers for evolution:

[1] Progressive diversification – pluralisation

[3] Adaptation to diverse and changing environments

[3] “Survival of the fittest”

[4] Higher order things develop gradually out of lower order things



[1] Progressive diversification

- We should expect and encourage diversity until an effective and more generic model, paradigm, system and practices emerge



[2] Adaptation

- Encourage adaptation of existing products e.g. the PREMIA site could quite easily be evolved for generic usage
- Follow the example of JISC – FAIR programme (*Focus on Access to Institutional Resources*)
- EThOS – model electronic thesis template for sector – Glasgow & BL
- Moderate knowledge ownership (IP) to facilitate knowledge transfer models within HEIs



[3] “Survival of the fittest”

- In PG training some programmes will survive, others will become extinct.
- e.g. For the UKGrad *Database of Best Practice* the same principle will apply – so the best entries will emerge as generic exemplars for all professional groupings, fields and institutions



[4] Higher order things develop gradually out of lower order things

- Energy and resources must be invested in E-learning – then let systems evolve via a form of '*natural selection*'
- Need to start somewhere with E-Learning and build upwards, via pluralisation, adaptation – survival of the fittest and natural selection
- Need for some Forum for national consensus on the way forward – to capture developments so far and take to next level



E- Opportunities for All – Final Thoughts

- **More than an archive – it adds in every way**
- **Accessibility and openness – more democratic**
- **Sociability – allows social networking – chat rooms etc**
- **Virtual communities – create forum e.g. Blackboard**
- **Encourages new forms of production, reproduction and consumption**
- **Encourages new pedagogies – E-thesis, live conferencing**
- **Encourages new ways of thinking, acting and being**
- **Allows the embodiment and embedding of good practice on a national and global basis**
- **Allows us to identify and meet the specific needs of diverse cohorts**



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Support and resources

- *UKGrad* Good Practice Data Base
<http://www.grad.ac.uk>
- *JISC* site and resources <http://www.jisc.ac.uk>
- *UK Grad* national and regional hubs
- Research Council sites e.g Arts and Humanities Data Services (*AHDS*)
- E Archives and Banks e.g. Economic and Social Research Council (*ESRC*) data base at Essex; and the British Universities Film and Video Council
http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/services/as_bufvc.aspx



More Resources

- Search projects and researchers e.g. <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/48.htm>
- Adopt and adapt training products e.g. *Netskills* - http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/services/as_netskills.aspx



Some Useful Links

- www.jisc.ac.uk/index
- www.ethos.ac.uk/
- www.thesisalive.ac.uk