Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, mobile devices such as iPhones and iPads and the use of wikis and blogs currently play a big part in our students’ everyday lives. A number of teachers at CityU are making effective use of these new technologies and online tools in their teaching to benefit and support student learning.

In this month’s issue we look at how some of these technologies are being used to enhance student engagement with learning both in and out of class. We also suggest a selection of Google applications that can be used easily and effectively by teachers and students.

Using Google applications (Google™ Apps)

Google provides a collection of tools and applications which are accessible from the Internet through most web browsers and smart phones. All CityU staff and students have access to a Google apps account free of charge. To activate your account go to: http://www.cityu.edu.hk/gapps

The advantage of using Google apps over the existing Blackboard functions is that most tools empower not only teachers but also students to initiate and manage learning activities.

Google Reader

- Google Reader constantly checks users’ favourite news sites and blogs for new content.

- Use Google Reader’s built-in public page to easily share interesting items with your students and colleagues.

- Request/require students to set up a free Google Reader account. Then, have them subscribe to the class blog, teacher’s blog, and/or other students’ blogs in Google Reader.

Google Alerts

- Create custom alerts on particular topics of your research or teaching discipline to stay up to date with the latest news on the subject.

- Similarly, students can create custom alerts on topics they are studying to see what the current developments are in the field. Note - The more specific the terms for the alert, the more refined and potentially useful the results.

Google Videos

- Find suitable videos easily to support the content of your lecture/class.

Google Docs

- Create and share your online documents, presentations, and spreadsheets.

- Post an information document for your class as a Google Doc rather than a Word file for easy online editing and sharing.

- Upload a Word, Excel, or PowerPoint file for online editing.

- Add collaborators to your document.

- When ready to share with others, control the access and either make publicly available via a URL or grant access to particular individuals.

Google Sites

- Create websites and group wikis.

- Create sites from scratch or make use of the templates provided.

- Integrate multimedia into your work online.

- Create individual or project ePortfolios.

http://sites.google.com/site/itl2009conference/google
Using **twitter**

**Twitter** is a free social networking and micro-blogging service, that allows its users to send and read other users’ updates (otherwise known as tweets), which are text-based posts of up to 140 characters in length. *(Wikipedia, 2011)*

It can be used:

- to teach bite-sized information which can be learned in any order and taught in small amounts
- to increase communication/interaction between teachers and students in a more informal way
- to inform and share news
- for research purposes: note taking, recording, reflecting and evaluating
- for teachers and students to post interesting websites that are relevant to the course content
- for teachers to get an insight into what their students are ‘talking about’ or are interested in
- for students to communicate with experts in their particular field of study

![Image](http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/43747152.html)

![Image](http://www.onlinecolleges.net/2009/09/14/101-ways-to-use-twitter-on-campus/)

**Professor Christian Wagner**, Associate Provost (Quality Assurance) shares with us how he has used Twitter to improve peer evaluation in the classroom.

**The big, bad idea**

Let students use Twitter to provide instant feedback to fellow students on presentations and similar in-class activities. Feedback is given while the presentation goes on, or immediately thereafter. Comments are then reviewed instantly, with the presenters having a chance to answer any open questions and respond to criticism.

**What’s cool about it**

Students are generally reluctant to criticize others, especially when it requires raising one’s arm and voicing the criticism openly in front of others. Surprisingly, ‘live tweeting’ dramatically removes the shyness and leads to a multiplicity of comments, often quite candid ones. It is a surprising and valuable experience for presenters and critics alike. It also helps the instructor to capture feedback in written form and obtain one more item of class participation.

![Image](http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/43747152.html)

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**Tried**

Many times, in environments from undergraduate to postgraduate. Never ‘bombed’. Mostly provides good to excellent results. Usually yields 10+ feedback items per presentation for a class of 30 students. Expect a number of “great”, “good”, or “like” answers. They constitute useful feedback as well.

**Set-up** Everyone must have a Twitter account

1. Open an account for your course by going to [http://twitter.com](http://twitter.com)
2. “Follow” course participants’ accounts (this is similar to “friending” in Facebook)

For technical support, go to [http://support.twitter.com](http://support.twitter.com)

**How**

- Start the Twitter Program from the web on the instructor computer. Project it on a smaller, second screen or in the background, so as not to overshadow the presentation.
- Ask students who are not presenting to give short feedback.
- Remind them to state which project they are responding to. Also remind everyone to be critical but nice (“Tweet me right”).
- Allow 1-2 more minutes after the presentation completion. Then reveal results and invite presenters to comment immediately.
- Make sure to copy and paste all the discussion into a document so as to retain the comments for future use.

If you have any teaching tips or any comments on using technology for teaching, please post them on the Teaching Ideas Gallery site

[http://go.cityu.hk/gallery](http://go.cityu.hk/gallery)
Using mobile devices (MDs)

A mobile device is a pocket-sized computing device and typically has a display screen with touch input and/or a miniature keyboard. Mobile devices include mobile computers, digital cameras, digital video cameras, mobile phones (e.g. iPhones) and tablet computers (e.g. iPads). (Wikipedia, 2011)

Dr Terence Cheung from the Department of Information Systems discusses how he used mobile devices in one of his courses to achieve the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs).

The course

The “Digital Marketing and Customer Relationship Management Systems” course was offered in Semester B in 2010/11. One of the CILOs was to apply digital marketing knowledge and customer relationship management (CRM) applications to design integrated marketing plans. The students, therefore, were required to develop hands-on skills for running digital marketing campaigns and CRM applications.

Why?

MDs:
- allow students to learn anytime and anywhere
- are easy to carry around
- are not difficult to use
- make social networking and sharing knowledge easy

Examples of how MDs were used in the course

MDs were used to encourage and facilitate learning outside the classroom.

Activity 1: Discovery@HK Shopping Malls

Students worked in groups. They were asked to find digital marketing techniques across various channels in Hong Kong shopping malls. Such digital marketing elements included the QR code from ToysRUs (a barcode of the ToysRUs website and readable by camera phones) in Festival Walk, and an e-Bookshelf in a bookstore in Shatin New Town Plaza.

Students used digital cameras to take photos of these elements, and then shared them on Facebook. 

They commented on other classmates’ photos and took part in online discussions.

Assessment marks were based on the quality of the comments and the number of “likes” each group received.

This activity helped students learn in a relaxed, free and collaborative environment.

Activity 2: Tweeting@Professional Seminars/talks

Students worked in groups. They were asked to attend digital marketing/CRM related seminars such as those given during the Hong Kong Social Media Week.

During the seminars students used their iPads to report and reflect on the seminars they were attending through their Twitter accounts in real time.

Through using their iPads they were able to maximise the course’s resources.

“The course design is very innovative. The teaching and learning platforms are no longer limited to a classroom or within campus. Through using mobile devices and social media I’m able to learn and discover new things anytime and anywhere! I really enjoyed this new and interactive learning method.”

CHAN Wai Man, Brian
Year 3, BBA in E-Commerce

“This course taught me not only different theories but also how to apply the online marketing techniques to real world situations. Such a new approach to teaching enhanced my knowledge and the relationship between our lecturer and classmates.”

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Using wikis

A wiki is a website that allows users to freely create and edit web page content from within any web browser using a simplified markup language. (Wikipedia, 2011)

Using wikis to promote learning

- A wiki allows students to access PowerPoint presentations, course handouts, videos, teachers' notes, homework assignments, reading materials and web links, not only from on campus but from home too.
  - On-line materials/resources can be added and deleted easily and quickly.
  - Links can be embedded in online resources to support lectures/tutorials.
  - Students can share interesting websites that are relevant to their course.
- A wiki allows students to work collaboratively on projects as they can edit each other’s work. They can work as a team without all having to be in the same place at the same time.
- A wiki records each student’s contribution, which allows teachers to identify those students who have only participated minimally or not at all.
- A wiki provides an ideal platform for receiving and giving feedback.
- A wiki helps students organize data and information and present findings.
- A wiki enables students to publish work online easily.
- A wiki encourages students to become active content editors and developers rather than passive content receivers.

http://www.suite101.com/content/using-wiki-technology-to-engage-students-a69448

Professor Lilian Vrijmoed from the Department of Biology and Chemistry describes how and why she uses wikis with her students.

Why?

I use a wiki to gauge the level and interest of students at the start of a new course. I ask them what their expectations are of the course after the introductory lecture. I’m interested in their views on additional content and teaching and learning activities (TLAs) they would like me to include and skills they would like to learn besides the ILOs and TLAs stated in the course information (Form 2Bs).

How?

I use the wiki page in their Blackboard course site.

What are the advantages?

Students can read what has already been posted so it prevents similar comments being repeated. Instead, they can add any new points or elaborate on ones already there if necessary. From all the information in the wiki I’m then able to get a bigger picture of what exactly my students’ expectations are early on in the course and can modify my materials accordingly.

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- Lilian Vrijmoed (BCH)

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