# #23ThingsEdUni Thing 5&6

**Diversity**

I do enjoy a good emoji, it brings another dimension to a chat message – introducing tone, reaction and feelings that can be misinterpreted when you are not in a face-to-face conversation. I have no problem if someone wants to identify themselves through an emoji and think it's great that we now have that option. It makes sense to use a diverse representation of yourself, a bit like creating an avatar showing how you would like to be viewed. I myself stick to the Simpsons yellow when using emoji's as I like to be neutral, plus if I wanted a face/reaction emoji to be a representation of me it would need to have a beard and be slightly rose cheeked. I have used bitmoji where I can create a better representation of myself. I do however reserve these for special messages to family and friends such as a 'happy birthday' or 'congratulations'.

When it comes to equality and diversity, I think it should be highlighted more and that everyone should be treated as equal. I think it's disgusting that even nowadays people are judged or treated differently on their sex, sexual orientation, upbringing, beliefs or skin tone. Things are getting better but there is always going to be someone that would treat someone differently, abuse power and even use diverse emoji's to offend or disrespect others.

**Accessibility**

I have been thinking about accessibility a lot recently. I believe I'm more aware of accessibility and inclusion now as it affects more aspects of my job than it did before. In my previous position I looked after audio visual technology in the physical teaching spaces on campus. Here I only considered accessibility for hard of hearing and physically disabled users but now I understand more about accessibility needs for all. I think this is due to the nature of the job and moving to online working. I must make sure any content I post in blogs or when I publish user guides or information that they are accessible for all. Videos or audio recordings that I make should have closed captioning and transcripts available as well as any material used such as power point, PDFs or word documents.

I've also discovered tools I can use to help make content more accessible such as the accessibility checker within Microsoft, WebAIM contrast checker and WAVE the web accessibility evaluation tool. Now that I'm more aware of accessibility I include it in my

training sessions that I run encouraging others to think more about accessibility and promote good practice.

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# #23ThingsEdUni Thing 3&4

I'm continuing on with my digital skills this week with digital footprint and security.

**Digital Footprint**

Having not much of a social media presence my digital footprint is quite sparse. After googling myself it took me a few attempts to find something that relates to me. Apparently there are a lot of Alan Hamilton's in the world that are more important and achieved more than I have. It wasn't until I put in Alan Hamilton University of Edinburgh that I made top of the page with my media hopper training videos coming first followed by my Linkedin profile.

The process has made me think more about what accounts I have over all the social media platforms and how I should keep profiles up to date and relevant. Also how I use social media and the settings I can put in place to protect myself by keeping my privet life separate from my professional life. What ever happened to Bebo though? I have also closed down old email and user accounts that I no longer use.

**Digital Security**

This is a very useful thing to read indeed. I was please to find out that my digital security is rather good. I had already put in place the suggestions and tips that was presented in step 1 'Smartphone Security Information'.

It is easy to not think about all the ramifications of digital security as technology moves more online and mobile. We do have a lot more of our personal data being held by companies and third parties that is easy to hack or be stolen.

In my experience I notice some people find it hard to keep up with technology, where you find them stuck in their ways. People might not think to choose a strong password or put a lock on their device. Or to check where they get apps from and the restrictions you can set for them. When I was back in the office if I noticed one of my colleagues had left their computer unlocked, I took the opportunity to re orientate their desktop or change the desktop picture. Harmless fun really but it does highlight how dangerous something as simple as not locking your computer when you leave your desk can be.

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# Digital or Physical — a teaching space is a teaching

# space

I'm now 15 weeks into my new position as Learning Technology Support Officer for Educational Design and Engagement — and I'm seeing a lot of similarities from my previous position in Learning Spaces Technology. Both teams look after services, providing user advice and support, contribute to service improvement and course design. EDE mostly supports the Virtual Learning Environment and LST supports physical teaching spaces on campus.

Designing and supporting teaching spaces, whether it's in a physical or an online digital space, is very much the same thing. I find it has a lot to do with user awareness, knowledge of the technology and the reliance on it.

Yes, technology fails. So we do regular maintenance — such as testing of services and updating software and equipment. We can put in place a work-around to make sure we minimise the disruption of teaching and services, but other issues occur due to user error and lack of technical knowledge of systems and tools.

Therefore it's up to Learning Technologists to educate the user and help design a course that works well, both in the physical and online teaching spaces to make sure tools are used correctly and effectively to enhance the student experience. After all — hybrid teaching, blended learning and flipped classrooms are certainly not a new concept.

Providing training sessions, workshops, user guides, training videos, drop-in sessions and one to one training sometimes just isn't enough. Users don't seem to know where to find the materials or know what support is available. Some might not feel the need to engage until they have a problem.

This was highlighted more so due to the current Covid-19 pandemic forcing users to teach in different ways and using technology they may not have used before. We have evidence of this with the sheer number of support calls coming through Unidesk, with the volume of calls increasing by approx. 400 percent on last year. I do understand it can be quite frustrating and time consuming for the user at times and the "why doesn't it just work" approach to an issue could be avoided by adding a bit of knowledge.

So how do you educate the educator and make them aware of all the help and support that is provided that would prevent them for putting in so many support calls?

Should we be introducing training during course design, during on-boarding or should certain training be mandatory?

Communication on a university level is definitely key and users do need to fully engage for it to be a success. That way we all can help provide the best possible student and user experience.

# New job, new skills and more exciting technology #23ThingsEdUni

I'm now continuing my career progression into supporting virtual learning environments with my new role as Learning Technology Support Officer with Education Design and Engagement (EDE).

The new position is an ideal opportunity for me to apply my digital and practical skills as well as my technical knowledge in supporting users and technology within teaching and learning environments at the University.

Having only started on Monday I feel I will fit in very well as I'm already seeing similarities to the role from my previous secondment with Digital Learning Applications and Media (DLAM). I'm pleased also to find out that I will still have some interaction with my DLAM colleagues – working with them on certain virtual tools that are in use.

I'm joined, as a newbie to EDE, with four other new colleagues

who all come from very different professional backgrounds. I find this quite exciting as it shows how diverse the position is going to be in the ever-changing world of learning technology.

It's great to go through the induction and training process as a group, where we are able to support each other and work through tasks. As we aren't in the office, our regular Team catch-ups are a great sanity check and a place to decompress after all the information that is being presented to us. We have also been made to feel very welcome and are gradually being introduced to new services and training.

I have just recently started the "23 Things List" – this is the University's digital knowledge program that is self-directed with the purpose of exposing me to a range of digital tools to help with my personal and professional development. Similar to Linkedin Learning, I like how you are able to take the training and tasks at your own pace. By joining this program I'm hoping to strengthen my digital skills and even learn some new ones! I've just completed 'Thing 1 – Introduction' and 'Thing 2 – Blogging' (hence the new post).

Having not much of a presence on social media (something I'm working on – see shameless plug: [my Linkedin profile](#)) I wasn't aware of the University's 'Social Media Guidelines for Staff and Researchers'. I do however find it useful to reference as there is a lot more to a social media presence than you might think!

"Thing 3" and "Thing 4" will cover Digital Footprint and

Security – a couple of great topics to add to my skill set!

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# Working from home is working for me.

Now that I have been working from home for the last four months, I have started to notice a few things both positive and negative – but mostly working from home is working for me.

I'm quite fortunate that I have been able to set up a reasonably comfy temporary office where I can still separate home life from work. I'm also lucky to have a decent size garden so I can escape from the office on a sunny day and spend some time outside cutting the grass or tending to our fruit and veg. I do have a great view from my makeshift office of the garden and have noticed the wildlife a bit more. With the countless number of little birds, a family of woodpeckers, the acrobatic squirrels and the resident fox all very active throughout the day. It's this that has made me appreciate my home a bit more and my surrounding areas that I have had more time to explore.

Not having to commute has saved me a lot more time in the day for activities that I want to do. It has also saved me a bit of money plus the fact I'm not spending as much eating out for lunch or the post work pints. Overall, I believe I have been more productive and have learned a lot more form my secondment in DLAM and my digital skills training. This has now helped me into my new role of Learning Technology Support Officer that I

will be starting in August.

There are however a few negative things I have noticed. Firstly, my broadband speed is terrible! This isn't great when your job revolves around being online. Thankfully, fiber is on its way, so I just have to put up with it for a little longer.

Another negative is that I'm not moving as much during the day. When I was back in the office I was out and about on campus going to meetings and visiting teaching spaces. I was averaging 15000 steps in the day but now my Garmin is happy enough if I make it out of bed in the morning!

I'm also missing interactions with my colleagues where you can see how they are getting on, how their weekend was or even quickly work through an issue that a user is having. Now it's a Teams message or a scheduled video call between other meetings.

I was in the office today, however, conducting one of my final duties with LST and it was good to get back on campus. It was strange to work in a computer lab without any students to dodge around whilst trying to fix PCs. The area has been set up well with social distancing measures, one-way traffic and hand sanitizer stations but it did seem quite eerie with the lack of staff and students.

It looks like I will be home working for a bit longer than most of my LST colleagues. It would have been nice to meet up with them before I finished but I guess it will have to wait.

I'm quite excited to see how hybrid teaching will look for semester one and I'm looking forward to the challenges it brings. I'm also looking forward to meeting my new colleagues and starting my new role as I continue to progress in my career supporting learning technologies.



Photo of garden SW

Photo of garden NW

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# What exciting technological times we live in and thank goodness for Microsoft Teams.

I have recently been looking to make the leap from working and supporting teaching in physical learning spaces to the virtual learning environment (VLE).

Due to the current pandemic forcing the university to close the campus and moving teaching and events online — I have seen a large reduction in my workload given the fact my department

*Learning Spaces Technology* supports 400 physical teaching spaces, over 2000 open access PCs, on site conferences and events alongside the equipment loans service. Therefore, I have taken this less-than-ideal situation as an opportunity to utilise my existing digital knowledge and learn new skills within online technology enhanced learning by helping-out colleagues in other *LTW* departments.

I have recently started a secondment assisting the *Technology Enhanced Learning Service and Media Team* within *DLAM* who look after the University's VLE and all its tools.

I have found the experience of starting with the new team very surreal having not physically met my new colleagues, although we are on regular video calls and instant message chat, I have still been made to feel very welcome and part of the team. After a lot of online sessions and a couple of weeks of shadowing (very much online support for the online support) I believe I'm now pretty much up and running and have gained a lot more knowledge in using and supporting the following:

- VLE *Blackboard Learn*
- Virtual classroom and meeting tool *Blackboard Collaborate*
- *Turnitin* assignment submission tool
- Online portfolio *PebblePad*
- Blogging services (which helped me start this blog)
- Lecture recording tool *Media Hopper Replay and Create*
- *Kaltura Capture* desktop recording tool

I have also taken the opportunity to complete online *LinkedIn Learning* courses on Learning Technologies such as Teaching with Technology, Flipping Classrooms, Teaching Techniques: Blended Learning and Creating Multimedia Learning. I am also in the process of completing courses on WordPress, HTML Essential Training and Python programming fundamentals. So much learning!

I do feel my skills have transferred well as I am still helping to look after services, providing user support and contribute to service improvement. In a way a lot of it feels very familiar. When you feel that dread as you read that unidesk call for the first time and think oh no!!! To the satisfaction of closing that same call after working through the problem or issue with a "thank you for all your help" from a grateful end user or colleague. I do still have a lot to learn but I'm really enjoying the experience and new challenges so far and look forward to what the coming weeks will bring.

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# Working within a Technology Enhanced Environment

The progression in technology has always interested me and I'm in the fortunate position of working within ISG, LTW at the University of Edinburgh to see how new technologies emerge and change the way we support teaching.

I have been working with Learning Spaces Technology for eight years now progressing from AV/IT Service Team Technician to Service Team Supervisor.

Within that time I have witnessed teaching spaces evolve from having a roller screen, overhead and carousel projectors with wired remote controls, a chalky blackboard and no sound reinforcement — to a completely integrated audio visual system. This integrated system features 4k resolution

projectors and LCD touch screen, a dedicated PC, multimedia players, document cameras, inputs for user devices wired and wireless, system sound reinforcement and multiple radio microphones, with system capabilities of recording and live streaming all controlled by a button or touch panel… incredible! The lecturer now has a way of engaging with the students by producing multimedia and blended learning – quite literally "flipping the classroom".

Technology has come a long way in such a short space of time and I am impressed by how well we all have managed to keep up and adapt. I understand that rapid progress is key to the student experience and enhances learning.

My experience has always been in physical learning spaces but recently I have been getting a taste for virtual learning environments. I believe this is due to my interest in keeping up with the progression of technologies and their role within teaching. This is where I think the university really can enhance learning for the students and further improve on the student experience.

I'm looking forward to utilizing my digital skills and learn new skills within technology enhanced learning online.