

LDNet

Concept and rationale

John Delany & Lyn Williams
INOVA
August 08

Rationale and identified need

Anecdotal evidence (FLLinNZ and other professional networks, workshop feedback, our own experience with sites such as Nga Kiwai Kete), plus recent research (eLearning Guidelines Project focus groups) has shown that of all the areas in which tertiary staff feel a need for further support, Learning Design is consistently ranked highly. LDNet is not intended to replace face to face institutional support for course designers – it is a supplement and community resource which may be built 'around' the learning design community.

LDNet is designed for learning designers who do not have access to a broad range of collegial advice and support for their learning design activities. Communities of practice have great potential to facilitate the relationships between beginning and experienced professionals and form a critical component of ongoing professional development. These 'professionals' might be part of a 'flexible learning team', they may be programme leaders or course tutors charged with developing more flexible course delivery, or they may be sole champions of flexible learning.

There are many high quality web-based learning design resources but the quality and knowledge levels vary and there is usually no support provided. Our experience has shown that beginning learning designers (in particular) need a scaffold of support that is more than just resources, research or exemplars to explore in isolation.

There is no NZ based single resource or community of support available at present.

The Concept

1. LDNet site

"The resource" – an updatable selection of best practice, research-based learning design resources is organised and scaffolded according to the purpose of each resource.

Users are able to match their need and skill level to the most appropriate learning design resource for them.

LDNet components include:

- a. An interactive pathway based around the questions learning designers ask and what they wish to achieve.
- b. Supplementary Resources – annotated links to interactive websites, best practice resources and research, design exemplars etc. These resources can be added to by community members.

2. A community of practice

Established & new learning designers can develop their profile, provide links to exemplars of their practice, and suggest their availability for support and contact. The target audience includes:

- a. learning designers who are willing to maintain their engagement will add resources, mentor others, set up small interest groups etc
- b. a facilitator will promote and manage the community: answer queries, broker contact between learning designers with varied job expectations and experience, draw in other experts when required, create connections to external experts, etc.
- c. consultants and experts can promote their own resources and services

The site will provide the tools to actively facilitate interaction and support and provide community forums using discussion, email, wiki, glossary, bibliography etc.

LDNet's point of difference with other learning design repositories is the blend of scaffolded online resources, online interaction, and asynchronous support. While the website makes maximum use of flexible interactive tools, the availability of the community to support the learning designer in their course development work and the use of these online resources is crucial.

Please refer to the table below '*Concept: LDNet*' for a clarified description of the objectives, components and outcomes.

Concept Plan: LDNet

Objective	Site components	Intended outcome
<p>1. The development of a site for resources and an evolving community of practice for learning designers</p>	<p>i. site will develop a mechanism to support communication, resource sharing and resource development</p> <p>ii. the site will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ up to date, best practice resources and information for staff wanting support for learning design ○ Provide multiple pathways for exploring learning design resources and sharing best practice ○ tools for collaboration, information sharing, interaction ○ facilitation and support to help establish a sustainable community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a learning community environment is established and the tools effectively support the purpose of the community • learning design that is founded on research findings and sound pedagogy is promoted, demonstrated, shared and created • existing quality tools and resources for designing learning are disseminated • learning design principles and process is shared and elucidated through a combination of resources and interaction
<p>2. Ongoing support for learning designers through key activities and active facilitation</p>	<p>i. site launch and profiling</p> <p>ii. a core community of experienced learning designers prepared to engage with each other and with beginning learning designers on LDNet</p> <p>iii. key expert to provide asynchronous facilitation and support for site users including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ responsive site development ○ promotion ○ building interaction between practitioners seeking and offering mentoring, scaffolding, professional development in learning design ○ facilitation of forums: response to enquiries, requests, brokering relationships ○ supporting online events ○ building groups with common issues & interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning design practitioners are supported across a variety of contexts • a network of experienced and less experienced learning designers is facilitated and established • expertise in the design of learning is shared and grown • the ongoing development and use of LDNet’s community of practice and learning design resources is promoted and supported to a level of sustainability Promote • a range of experts and support people are actively engaged with LDNet