

# Use of Web 2.0 tools by students at Loughborough University

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## **Executive summary**

Loughborough University and its Library have witnessed tremendous changes and developments in how information and communication technologies (ICT) are impacting on learning and peoples' lives. This experience is mirrored across the world, as these technologies provide alternative methods of accessing information, whilst opening communication channels and creating communities. It is clear that they are performing important social functions, but it is not so obvious how they are being used in the academic context.

For this reason Loughborough University Library and the Students' Union undertook a small project aimed at:

- Exploring which Web 2.0 applications are being used by students
- Gathering an awareness and appreciation of their role in students' learning.

The study was overseen by a project team consisting of Library staff and the Vice President for Education from Loughborough Students' Union. A short online survey was circulated to gauge an initial overview of where Web 2.0 figured in students' learning. 32% of respondents stated they use Web 2.0 for both social and academic purposes, indicating a more detailed investigation was justified. A full survey was circulated and completed by 178 respondents; the respondents were spread relatively evenly across the three University faculties, with 90% being undergraduates.

The full survey provided a detailed insight for the University to how Web 2.0 figures in students' academic lives. The five main Web 2.0 sites identified (Facebook, Wikipedia, iTunes, YouTube and Google apps) are used for both academic and social purposes, with some accessed 'constantly'. In terms of academic purposes, the sites were used predominantly to find information and to discuss work with friends, although the functionality of the sites themselves often predisposition their use. The most popular way to access Web 2.0 sites was through PCs provided by the University, followed closely by using student's own laptops. Significantly fewer accessed the sites via hand held devices, however, this number was higher than expected. In addition, students were asked to identify Web 2.0 features they would like to see provided by the University.

From this study it is now possible to state that the majority of respondents use Web 2.0 as part of their academic work at the University. The tools have high levels of use and a select number of sites make up the majority of uses. From this investigation, eight recommendations have been established for Loughborough University.

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# 1. Introduction

Loughborough University Library undertakes two evaluation studies each academic year, exploring aspects of Library research and learning support. In recent years, it has become apparent to the Library that new technologies are emerging which have a dramatic impact on peoples' lives. The overall aim of the project was to gather a deeper understanding of Loughborough University undergraduate students' perspectives and experiences in using web tools in learning. It had the following objectives;

1. Establish which Web 2.0 tools Loughborough University students are using
2. Gain awareness and appreciation about how and why Loughborough students use Web 2.0 tools and whether this use relates to their learning
3. Demonstrate effective partnership and collaborative practice between the Students' Union and the University Library

It has become increasingly evident that there is a growing trend for students to using a mixture of formal University systems (such as LEARN and MetaLib) and informal Web 2.0 applications such as (Facebook and Flickr) to support their learning. The work undertaken on this project has provided evidence and data for the Library and perhaps the University to use, to inform its future academic programmes and the learning experiences offered.

## 1.1 Context

There is much discussion about what 'Web 2.0' actually means. Webopedia (2010) states that Web 2.0 is 'focused on the ability for people to collaborate and share information online.... based on serving Web applications to users ...including open communication ...with an emphasis on Web-based communities of users, and more open sharing of information' .

Business and the workplace are being changed by Web 2.0. Agarwal & Martin (2009) believe that people who use social networking sites will be more willing and able to work collectively in a global, virtual working environment. And as Gangadharbatla (2008) points out, businesses are keen to benefit from consumer engagement with products and services on Web 2.0 sites.

Web 2.0 is also having a major impact on Higher Education (HE). Armstrong & Franklin (2008) discovered that Web 2.0 is being used both in the academic, administrative and support areas to enhance student learning in universities in Australia, the Netherlands, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. This trend may not be across the board in all HE institutions in the UK, but Sir David Melville believes universities are coping well. However, a word of caution; "there are major issues to address if universities and colleges are to keep up with these changes in student practice and attitude" (Lipsett, 2009). One such issue is encouraging PhD students to discover and use Web 2.0 tools to support their research (Corbyn 2009). A range of public and HE libraries are using Web 2.0 applications to promote themselves and their services, for

example the Orkney Library & Archive Service (Bain 2010), and many HE Libraries use Web 2.0 to support information literacy teaching (Godwin, 2009).

Until recently, the general view within the Library and University as a whole, has been that Web 2.0 (predominantly 'Facebook') is being used by the undergraduate student community for social networking. The Library was concerned that this perspective was mostly anecdotal and that there was a need to gather firmer evidence on which Web 2.0 tools are used and where they are positioned in University learning.

This concern was informed by previous studies that the Library had undertaken, which had pointed to information and communication technologies (ICT) increasing in relevance and importance for the Loughborough University undergraduate. In a joint study (Burke, Beranek, Walton & Stubbings, 2008) on students and PCs at Loughborough and La Trobe University (Australia), it was shown that students expected quick and easy access to technology at all times. When the Library focussed on information sources that Loughborough students used in assessed work (Jones, Stubbings & Walton, 2008), newer sources of (primarily electronic) information, such as Wikipedia and websites were emerging. From the Library's perspective, a critical finding from a general Library users study (Walton, 2010) was that some students were asking the Library to stop colleagues using Web 2.0 applications in the Library as they perceived it was not for academic use. These general findings are transferrable to the wider University and re-enforce the importance of this project to gather evidence that can be used across the institution.

## 2.Methodology

A project team was set up consisting of the following people:

- Lee Barnett, Faculty E-learning Officer (Science)
- Elaine Collis, Senior Library Assistant,
- Jenny Narborough, Faculty E-learning Officer (Engineering)
- Frank Parry, Academic Librarian
- Chris Peel, Vice President Education, Loughborough Students Union
- Charles Shields, Head of E-learning
- Ruth Stubbings, Head of Academic Services
- Dr Graham Walton, Head of Planning and Resources

An important feature of this study was that it was jointly managed with the Students' Union at the University, with representation from the Students' Union at the majority of the Project Planning Group meetings. There were no resources specifically allocated for the work, as it was undertaken within peoples' existing workloads. The work took place over a 6 month period from October 2009 to March 2010. The project team was aware that it did not have the resources to undertake a labour intensive study and that students are asked to give views and perspectives to the University on a regular basis. It was therefore decided to choose data collection approaches that would be straightforward to create and implement, require a short amount of time for responders to complete, and not need extensive input to evaluate. There were two phases of data collection based on online surveys.

A short online survey was made available on LEARN to gauge an initial overview of where Web 2.0 figured in students' learning. Students were asked three questions:

- Which is your favourite Web 2.0 site?
- What do you use it for?
- How often do you use this site during term time?

There were 99 responses to this during December 2009. The results from this work were used to develop a more substantive online survey (Appendix 1).

Web 2.0 applications identified in the short survey were listed in the full survey and students were asked to indicate if they used them for academic work, social life/sport, or both. They were also asked for their favourite Web 2.0 sites. Where sites were used for academic purposes, respondents were requested to choose which academic purposes the sites were used for. Respondents were asked to specify which two Web 2.0 sites were their favourite. Demographic data gathered included age, gender, year of study, Faculty and home country.

The full survey was piloted with members of the Students' Union Executive. It was developed using the Bristol Online Survey software (BOS) and launched on 22 January 2010. The full survey was active for three weeks and promoted to students via the electronic Student notice board, the Library blog and General news & announcements on Learn. The project team were reluctant to heavily promote the survey owing to the sensitivities of students being asked to undertake similar activities on a regular basis by the University. An incentive of a prize draw for a £25.00 iTunes voucher was offered to encourage participation.

There were 178 responses to the full survey. Of the 178 respondents:

- 90% were undergraduates, with the majority (31% of the total) being undergraduate second year.
- 73% of respondents fell into the age category of 18 – 21 years.
- Disappointingly only 14% of respondents were non-home students, meaning we were unable to explore Web 2.0 usage and cultural background.
- The spread of respondents across the three Faculties was relatively even.
- 62% of respondents were male, 38% respondents were female.

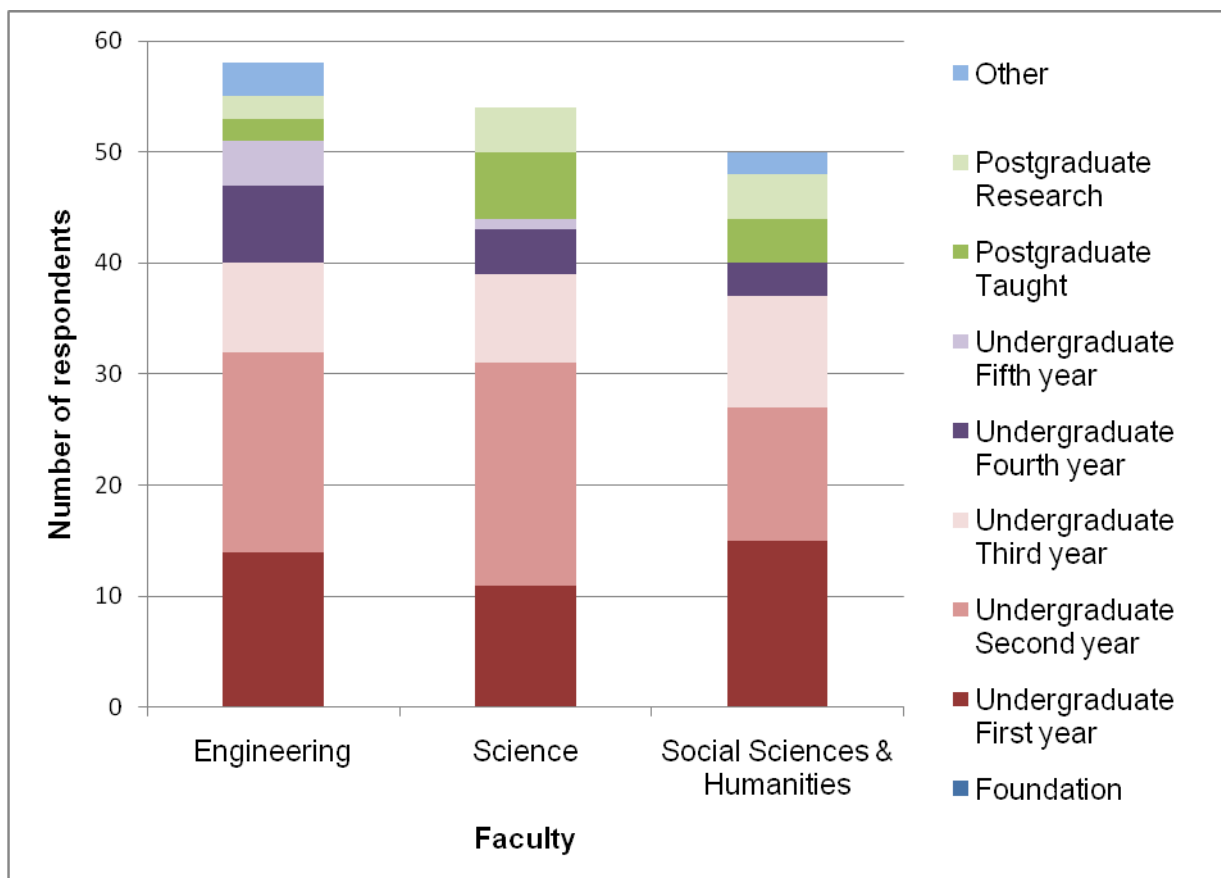


Figure 1 Demographic data of respondents to full survey

### **3. Results and discussion**

#### **Short Survey**

There were 99 respondents to the initial short survey, providing us with an indication of the breadth of Web 2.0 sites in use by the students, the purpose of use and also the popularity of certain sites. The results showed

- 80% of respondents chose Facebook as their favourite site
- 40% of respondents used Web 2.0 sites for academic purposes
- 80% access Web 2.0 on a daily bases or more frequently

These results confirmed a more detailed investigation was justified.

#### **Full survey**

Respondents were asked to identify their two favourite Web 2.0 sites. Facebook was significantly the most popular, with 111 (62%) respondents ranking it as their top site. YouTube scored highly as the second favourite website.

Favourite Web 2.0 sites were:

- Face book (62%)
- Wikipedia (8%)
- YouTube (8%)
- Twitter (6%).

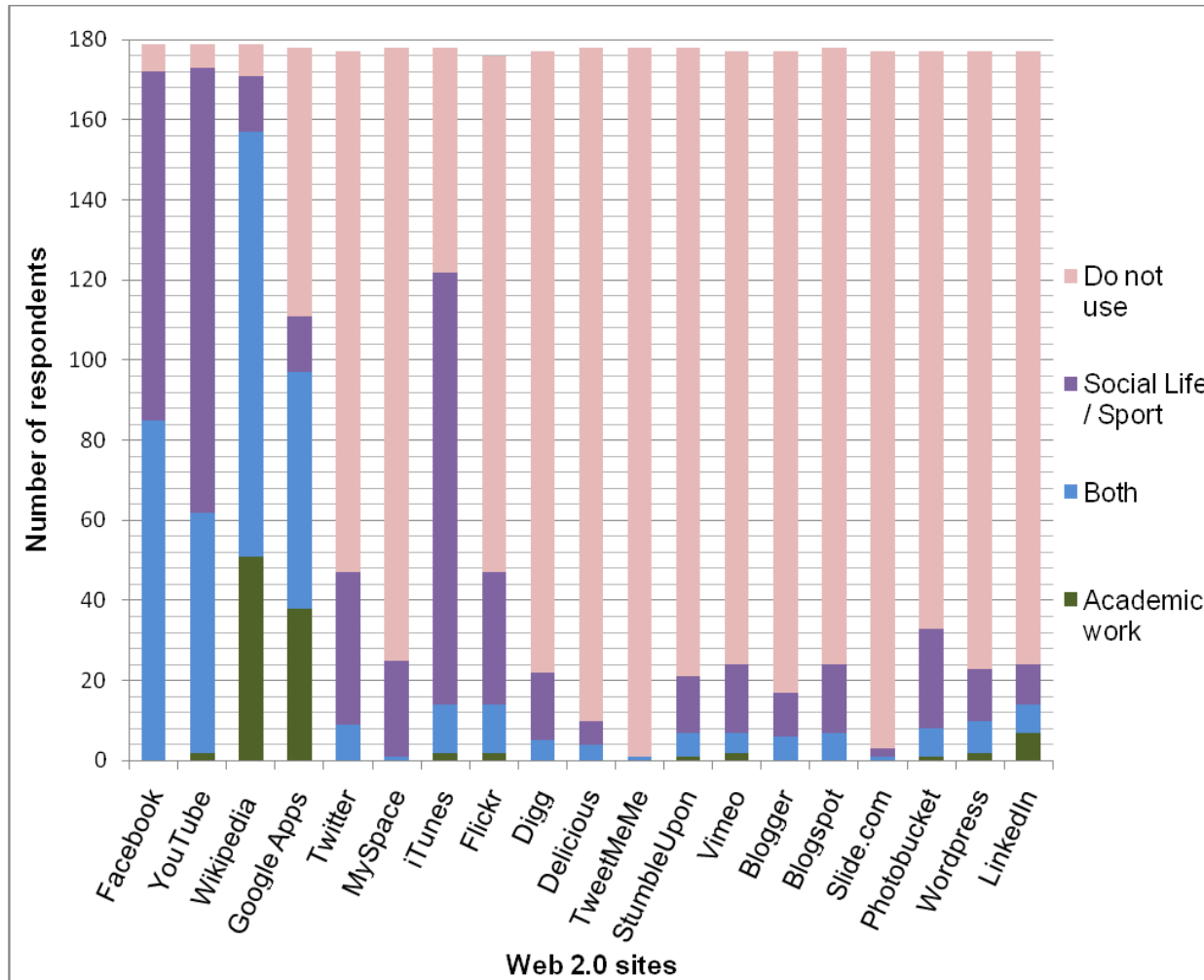
Second favourite Web 2.0 sites were:

- YouTube (35%)
- Wikipedia (19%)
- Facebook (15%)
- iTunes (13%)

The survey asked if respondents used other Web 2.0 sites which were not listed. Twenty additional sites were noted, but only three sites were mentioned more than once, these were deviantart, tumblr and livejournal. Therefore it can be assumed that the sites chosen by the survey team were key sites regularly used by students at Loughborough.

### 3.1 Web 2.0 sites used by respondents

The survey listed nineteen Web 2.0 sites with respondents asked to state which sites they used, and the purpose of use, whether relates to academic work, and/or their social life/sport.



Five web options were used heavily for both academic and social purposes.

These were:

- Facebook
- Wikipedia
- iTunes
- YouTube
- Google apps.

Sites with significant less use but predominant social use included:

- Twitter
- Flickr
- Photobucket.

The comparison of use of sites by gender shows little difference in use by male and female students.

Students from the Engineering Faculty tended to use Web 2.0 sites slightly more than those from other Faculties, especially YouTube and Wikipedia. They also used Facebook heavily for social life & sport.

Figure 2: Purpose of use of Web 2.0 sites

### 3.2 Frequency of use of Web 2.0 sites

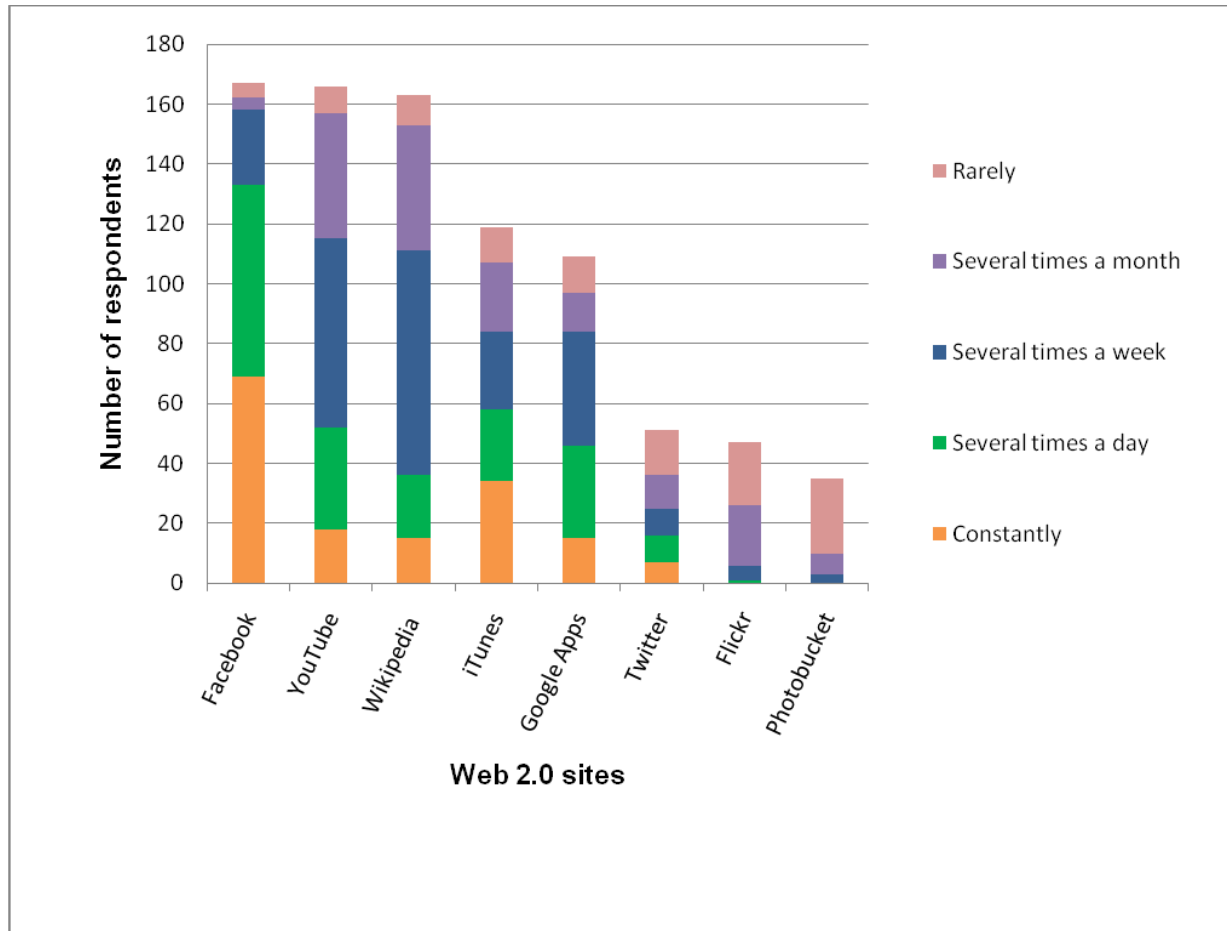


Figure 3: Frequency of use of Web 2.0 sites

Eight Web 2.0 sites were looked at in more detail in terms of how often they were visited by the respondents.

From this it can be seen that 96% of respondents use Facebook, with 41% using it constantly, 38% using it several times a day, and a further 15% using it several times a week.

Youtube and Wikipedia are regularly accessed but less constantly than Facebook, with weekly or more frequent use of 69% and 68% respondents consecutively.

iTunes and Google apps were also used on a fairly regular basis but by fewer students.

It is assumed that by constantly, the respondents meant that the application was permanently open on their desk top and they returned to it on a regular basis. However, this assumption should be further investigated, to clarify what constantly means.

### 3.3 Use of Web 2.0 sites

Respondents were asked to indicate the purpose of use of Web 2.0 sites if used in relation to academic work. Not surprisingly, the results clearly indicate that they mainly use the sites for finding information and discussing academic work with friends.

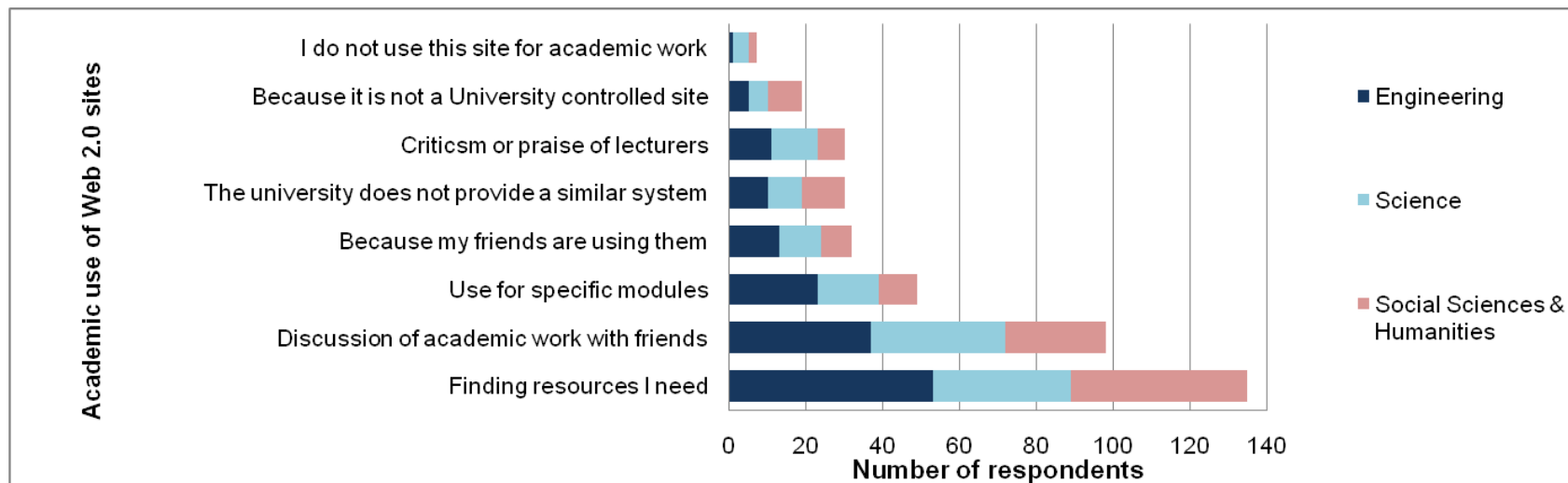
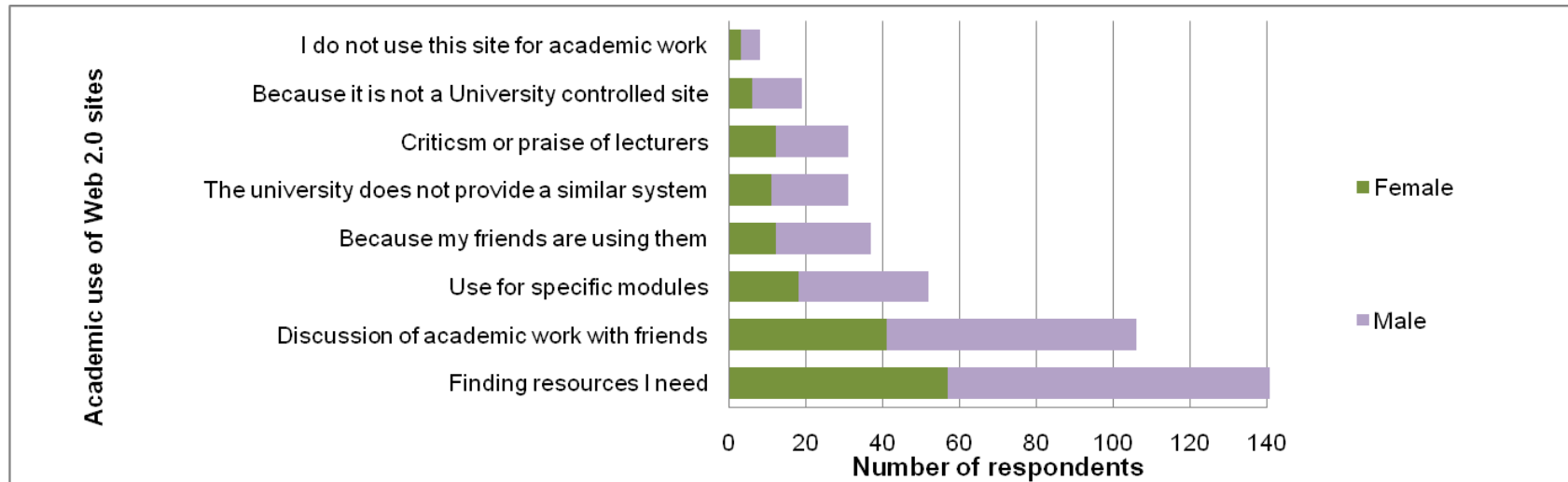


Figure 4: Academic use of Web 2.0 sites by gender

Figure 5: Academic use of Web 2.0 sites by faculty

When looking at particular Web 2.0 sites, 41% of respondents used Facebook to discuss work and 42% of respondents used it find resources. Surprisingly 56% of respondents stated they used Wikipedia to discuss work, but as expected, 77% of respondents used Wikipedia to find resources.

### 3.4 Devices used to access Web 2.0 sites

Respondents were asked to select all the responses that applied in relation to how they access Web 2.0 tools. The most popular way to access Web 2.0 sites was from PCs provided by the University, either in the Library (81 respondents – 52 male, 29 female) or other PC labs (78 respondents – 55 male, 23 female). 157 respondents regularly use their own laptop to access Web 2.0 sites. There was far less use of hand held gadgets, e.g. smart phones to access Web 2.0 sites. Of the respondents, male students used hand held devices slightly more than female respondents to access Web 2.0 sites.

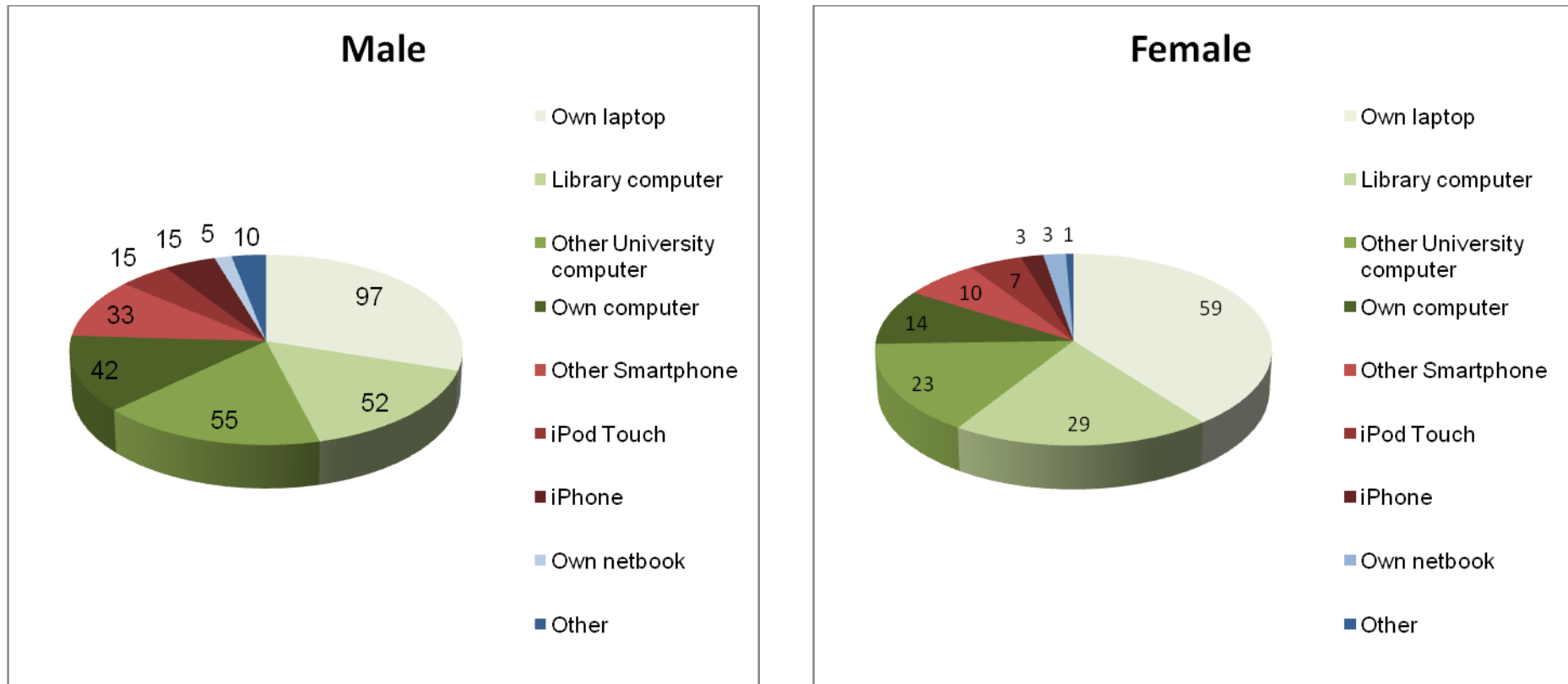


Figure 6 and 7: Responses to devices used to access Web 2.0 sites by gender

Web 2.0 features in tools provided by the University

Respondents were asked to identify Web 2.0 type features they would like provided by University systems. The majority of feedback related to features the students would like to see in Learn. Some of the functions are already available in Learn, but are either not highly used or provided by academic staff. The full list of responses to this question are included in Appendix 2.

The features the students would like to see provided by the university, in particular in relation to Learn fell into five key areas:

1. Ability to communicate in more than one way with peers and lecturer, for example:
  - “Synchronous chat facilities for instant communication, particularly when asked to do group work.”
  - “Provision of discussion forums relating to modules”
  - “Ability to find and communicate with people in your module or within your groups.”
  - “Easier discussion of module material would be nice”
2. Provision of learning material in a range of formats, for example:
  - “Recordings of lectures, either just voice or with video”.
  - “Lectures should be made available as podcast-style videos”
3. Ability for user interaction, to customise the interface, share and annotate resources, for example:
  - “Better and more customisable layout of home page.”
4. Links to other resources, for example:
  - “Individual Learn accounts should be linked to our student email accounts.”
  - “Google calendar for modules”.
  - “Google apps and webmail should be integrated into Learn”.
5. Greater awareness by academic staff in how to use the tools on offer.

## 4. Conclusion and recommendations

This study has highlighted some interesting trends for both the Library and Loughborough University, in terms of how students are using technology in their learning. It is apparent that Web 2.0 is being used by the majority of respondents as part of their academic work at the University. The usage of certain Web 2.0 applications for academic purposes tends to sit alongside respondents using the technology to meet their own social purposes. Web 2.0 services that are particularly jointly valued are Facebook, Wikipedia, iTunes, YouTube and Google apps. The two major reasons students are using them for academic purposes are to find resources and to discuss work. An interesting finding is that some Web 2.0 technologies are used 'constantly' by students.

The approach taken by respondents is very similar and there are very few gender differences. The low responses from international students make it impossible to compare and contrast their use of Web 2.0 with UK individuals. Respondents from the Engineering Faculty appear to use Web 2.0 more those from the other Faculties. Of the method of accessing Web 2.0 tools, hand held devices have a higher profile than anticipated, as the functionality has only recently become available that allows effective use. As a result of this study, there are recommendations for both the Library and the wider University.

1. Students should not be restricted in their use of Web 2.0 technologies on University provided PCs.
2. Approaches to ensuring students have the skills to make effective use of Web 2.0 should be introduced (using a light touch approach).
3. Academic staff are to be encouraged to make more effective and informed use of LEARN and its various pedagogic applications.
4. Processes should be established to allow students to more effectively integrate information of different digital types with resources provided both internally by the University and external resources.
5. Facebook has a high uptake by respondents and highly probably Loughborough University students as a whole. The University needs to consider how Facebook is best used in its activities.
6. Mobile devices are already important in accessing Web 2.0 applications for learning by Loughborough students. University services and systems need to be developed and enhanced to support this.
7. A particular difficulty encountered by students is accessing (and being provided with) on-line discussion forums for their studies. The University should consider how this issue can be best re-addressed.

8. Many Web 2.0 applications are freely available and students are already taking advantage of them. The University should support the use of these existing technologies rather than developing new technologies from scratch.

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## Appendix 1 – Full survey

Survey of student attitudes to / use of Web 2.0 sites

The Library and Students' Union invite you to take part in this survey to investigate the use of Web 2.0 social networking tools among Loughborough students.

Web 2.0 sites are commonly characterised by individuals generating and sharing content; for more information on what constitutes a Web 2.0 site see:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_2.0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0)

Survey responses are stored anonymously but there is the option to leave your email address to be entered into our prize draw for a £25 iTunes voucher. The results from this survey will be used to help us plan our services for the future.

Thank you for your participation.

Web 2.0 survey.

Section 1					
1. Which of the following Web 2.0 sites do you use? Select any that apply.					
	What do you use it for?				How often do you use this site during term time?
	Academic work	Social life / Sport	Both	I don't use this site	
a. Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
b. YouTube	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
c. Wikipedia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
d. Google Apps	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
e. Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
f. MySpace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
g. iTunes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
h. Flickr	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
i. Digg	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
j. Delicious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
k. TweetMeMe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
l. StumbleUpon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
m. Vimeo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
n. Blogger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
o. Blogspot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
p. Slide.com	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
q. PhotoBucket	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
r. Wordpress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
s. LinkedIn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Select an answer ▼
2. List any other Web 2.0 sites you use that are not mentioned here. Note: only include sites that are based on individuals generating and sharing content, not websites in general. <i>(Optional)</i>					

**3. Which is your...**

	Please state
<b>a. favourite Web 2.0 site?</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>b. second favourite Web 2.0 site?</b>	<input type="text"/>

**4. If you use Web 2.0 sites for academic work which of the following applies? (Optional)**  
(select all that apply)

Discussion of academic work in general with friends.  
 Criticism or praise of lecturers.  
 Finding resources I need.  
 I use it more for specific modules.  
 Because my friends are using them.  
 Because it is not a University-controlled site.  
 Because the University does not provide a similar system.  
 I do not use this site for academic work.

**5. Which of the following methods / devices do you use to access your favourite Web 2.0 sites? (Optional)**  
(select all that apply)

Library computer  
 Other University computer  
 Own computer  
 Own laptop  
 Own netbook  
 iPhone  
 iPod Touch  
 Other smartphone  
 Other (please specify):

**6. Are there any specific Web 2.0 type features you think should be provided in Learn or other University systems?**  
Do you have any further comments? (Optional)

**About You**

**7. What is your age? (Optional)**

Select an answer

**8. What is your gender (Optional)**

Female    Male

**9. What is your year of study? (Optional)**

Select an answer

If you selected Other, please specify:

**10. Where are you from? (Optional)**

UK  
 European Union (EU)  
 Other (please specify):

**11. Which Faculty are you in? (Optional)**

Engineering  
 Science  
 Social Sciences & Humanities  
 Other (please specify):

**12. If you wish to be entered into the prize draw for a £25 iTunes voucher, please enter your University Email address. (Optional)**

## Appendix 2 – Answers for Question 6 from full survey

Are there any specific Web 2.0 type features you think should be provided in Learn or other University systems? Do you have any further comments?

- A better area for research post-graduate students that includes specific useful information, links to journals, information about conferences, and some chatting areas that could be work specific or for peer support, or social.
- Ability to group message everybody in a module whilst choosing to exclude your lecturers. This is probably a reason why facebook is more popular. ability to have a thread from this group message that anyone can reply to and post content such as videos etc.
- Better and more customisable layout of homepage.
- Chat
- Chat facilities to enable quick interaction
- Chat function is useful in facebook...
- Chat system (google mail chat) or at least setup the LDAP for the email system
- Combining university systems into one site might be helpful. Adding email support to learn would reduce the need to check multiple websites.
- Communication, Ability for interim assessments, more efficient use of developing web technologies, uniform display some modules have lots of relevant information, others not so much, I found one that had not been updated since 2006 (!)
- Discussion group...as existed in the old version of Learn
- Discussion/comments of content posted, on LEARN for example, might be useful. A way to quickly link items on lboro websites and learn onto facebook/twitter/digg/etc.
- Easier discussion of module material would be nice. That said, I don't think that many students are aware of the content that can currently be used on learn. Additionally, it would be easier to integrate 2.0 content into Learn if lecturers were more willing to add material to learn in the first place. Google Wave would be ace, if it could be worked into learn or something similar as it would allow for incredibly easy collaboration.
- Facebook is easy to use to communicate with your friends for coursework because you're always on it and can get quick replies, so anything the university tried to copy would be unnecessary.
- Having a quick list of links which I can choose e.g. an important pdf file, the current problem sheet, or a previously visited list, useful for referring back to something in early sections
- How is iTunes a Web 2.0 when it is a piece of software you download and is just the Mac equivalent of Windows Media Player?
- I have already experienced Facebook 'addiction' severely disrupting academic work, in fact, I would support a blanket ban of social networking sites on university open-

access computers (which would definitely free up resources) and wireless access points in the Library.

- I think our individual learn accounts should be linked to our student email accounts
- I think there are some present that aren't taken advantage of such as Google calendar for modules and some features of learn
- I think you should get rid of the blogging stuff, what a rubbish idea. Does anyone actually use that feature? It might be nice to add some RSS feeds for things like lecture notes, or module discussion items?
- I use delicious to store a lot of academic related links, it would possibly be useful to have something similar for modules within learn.
- If you were to provide a similar resource like Facebook - there would be little intake by students, Facebook allows for social AND academic work at the same time, we don't need another resource. Perhaps online lecture slides you could add your own notes to / drawings / annotations may be useful or the ability to share useful links with other students (just like lecturers share links with the module group, allow students to contribute to the list for each weeks topic etc.)
- Improve the current system Links to download all the resources at once for a module or lecturer, similar to gmail's download all attachments. A marking for new content uploaded, highlight etc and the option to be notified by email.
- Include a timetable for each student, with links to the campus map showing where each lecture is held. Possibly allowing temporary room changes to be displayed at short notice via the lecturers input on Learn.
- Instant messaging, way of disabling email notifications from discussion threads that you are not a part of
- It seems to me (although I've no expert on Web 2.0), that whatever there other virtues most of the Web 2.0 sites are of NO academic value whatsoever. What can you learn from facebook or myspace? Wikipedia is occasionally useful for checking facts, so long as you're prepared to accept that there's always a chance that the info will be wrong.
- Learn seems to have a lot of these features already. eg. discussion boards, networking, etc. Possibly advertising via a short user guide on youtube or similar going through all the features Learn has. Possibly add a wiki-esque page for each department for staff/students to add to. Not sure how much interest it would get at first, but if you found something really difficult, then you can use the wiki to help others who will probably have the same problem. I assume that google apps and google documents will be incorporated into the emailing system at some point, where each student is allocated a google calendar, which the university can add lecture timetables, and tutors are able to search when you are free, even putting suggestions of events on campus onto it. This can be either student-specific or generalised, accordingly. The addition of deadlines to course works and exam

timetabling would be easier. Important documents can be put on this system. Again, I assume this is why google mail was used, since there are no benefits as of yet...

- Lectures should be available as podcast-style videos or uploaded to youtube (see University of California and many other successful American Universities)
- Link to find other people in the same module as you ...same tutor groups lecture groups etc
- Making the Loughborough iGoogle page have the full apps on it - not just the pre set apps that are there.
- Module specific forum/bulletin board for discussing module with fellow participants. - Old learn had it, moodle can support it, but its not being make use of and thats a mistake in my opinion.
- No
- Put address book on new email system!!!
- Recordings of lectures, either just voice or with video. (Although it might stop people turning up to lectures! Maybe only people who go to lectures and are registered would be provided with the videos so they can revise from them.)
- Some kind of alternative web folder support. Though network drive mapping works, the current web file access (<http://wfa.lboro.ac.uk/>) provides an extremely outdated interface, of which I've seen much more superior systems.
- Some modules set up groups for student use for group work on learn, this is very useful. However, when requested from other modules lecturers said: this is not possible, they don't have time to do t, that we should set up our own facebook group to do this (no good if members aren't on Facebook!)or that they can do the groups but not make them accessible for one group only (which wasn't the case). A very useful services which would be good to have for all modules involving groupwork.
- Specific chat rooms for modules that students can log onto ..ie a diff chat room per module that activates when the module starts and deactivates when it ends. I know there are already forums available but i think because chat is realtime it will be used more frequently and will be more beneficial
- Student wiki for information on relevant student topics e.g. shopping, entertainment (bars/clubs in loughborough and other activities in the area), choices of accommodation. Information compiled and controlled by students (not staff) all in one location and would be useful to arriving students - both freshers and foreign.
- The ability to communicate with other users of the same degree course on the learn site. This could be done like a facebook chat style program that runs at the bottom of the page and can be turned off when not needed. This would make it easier to communicate with group members and other people on your course while working on learn, if you encountered a problem. Personally I find one on one help from a friend can be a very useful way of learning a subject and this would make it easier to gain this help without contacting tutors and arranging meetings or having to wait till the next tutorial/lecture

- The Google Apps and webmail should be integrated into learn, and have a single log in. One stop stop for all student resources.
- The Learn system works well how it is now, so why change it!
- There used to be a discussion forum on Learn for students to discuss any difficulties with particular areas of modules. It seems to have been removed on the new learn system (or maybe it is hidden somewhere). I would be helpful if some system like this was made more freely available. Also, Learn is only as good as the material the lecturers upload and some lecturers seem to like to avoid it. Maybe it could be made easier for staff to upload content (lecture slides, notes etc...)
- Twitter / Facebook integration? A better forum/discussion board. iTunes U.
- Video of lecture, key topics covered by video explanation
- Web 2.0 is a very generic and over used term that has little meaning to many users of the internet. Many University systems could benefit from many of the collaboration and sharing features found today on the site mentioned above. For example the library system could include a user review section for book. This review could be linked to modules that use the text etc. This approach could be extended to learn with students able to discuss each weeks content, link additional text, images and any other relevant information. One aspect of many of the above mentioned "web 2.0" is the easy of use and clear design. This is something, in my opinion, many University systems lack. This limits the use of often helpful functionality due to the users inability to find it or the attention it is given as part of the design.
- Would be cool to have a meta-search engine for content on such websites.
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