

## background story

# KEEPING UP WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people are at the forefront of the fast-changing world of digital communications.

**D**igital technology – and especially social media, such as Facebook – is becoming an everyday part of so many young people's lives. As mobile phones become, in effect, portable computers, it is more and more important to understand how the digital world can best be used as

a tool in support of youth work and informal education.

The recent Anti-bullying Week of action and awareness-raising focused on cyberbullying. It was a timely reminder of the potential risks, as well as the opportunities – and a timely reminder, too, that it is vital for responsible and caring adults to 'connect' with young people's online worlds. Messages about internet safety remain vitally important, as

the risks are still there.

Staying in touch with these changes is an essential challenge for anyone working with young people. More and more opportunities are opening up – and adults tend to be left further and further behind! The articles in this Feature give some background information, as well as showing examples of ways in which technology can support informal work with young people.

## Some of the digital options

There is an ever-increasing range of digital tools for supporting learning. The following summary is edited from **A review of the current landscape of adult informal learning using digital technologies**, a report from Futurelab

**Social networking:** Social networking sites connect people into online communities, where they can communicate, create their own content and link with others with similar interests. There is increasing research on significance of social networking sites and the possibilities that they may present for learning.

see ► MySpace, Facebook and Bebo.

**Online communities:** Online communities offer unprecedented access to experts in a particular field. For example, if you are interested in home improvement and design, the Mydeco site offers discussion forums and a place where members can ask questions of experts.

**Blogs:** A blog is a website containing a collection of pieces of writing by one or more authors presented. Many researchers point to the potential of blogs both as a means of engaging in learning and as a method of reflecting upon learning.

see ► [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com), [www.bbc.co.uk/blogs](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs)

**Podcasts:** A podcast is a piece of audio or video (vodcast), which can be downloaded from the internet onto a portable media player.

**CD-Roms:** The vast amounts of high-quality information that can be stored on CD-Roms make them a popular tool for learning, especially for language learning.

**Micro-blogging:** Micro-blogging is a new way of blogging, where those taking part write very brief text updates (generally 140 characters) about their daily lives. see ► [twitter.com](http://twitter.com)

**Wikis:** A wiki is a website that allows those who access it to create or modify content. This can assist the creation of collaborative texts, where learners can explore issues and actively participate in the construction of shared meanings.

**Games:** There is increasing attention to the way in which games can be used to support learning.

**Mobile devices:** Learners can now access all the services they get from the internet on their mobile phones. There is increasing research attention on the possibilities that mobile devices present for learning.

pdf ► download the full report from Futurelab.



# OPLE



## The '7 Cs' Model

In a series of articles earlier this year, Nicola Fenwick identified seven ways in which IT can be used in work with young people. The '7 Cs' of multimedia participation are:

1. **Context setting** – introducing discussions and providing key information and insights about an issue.
2. **Creativity and creative expression** – engaging young people and exploring and expressing ideas in different creative media.
3. **Consultation** – using the internet and interactive tools to ask for young people's views in dynamic and accessible ways.
4. **Conversation** – starting and hosting discussions in the spaces where young people are active.
5. **Collaboration** – providing a space (online) where young people can work together across boundaries.
6. **Campaigning** – engaging with a wider range of people to convince them of the need for changes and gain their support for change.
7. **Change** – the goal of participation and something that can be celebrated through multimedia and social media.

pdf ► download the full 'Across the 7Cs' article on IT in youth work.



## in practice 1

# ONLINE RESOURCES

**Futurelab uses new technologies to develop resources and practices to support new approaches to learning.**

**N**ot-for-profit organisation, Futurelab uses the latest technology develop new ideas for use in the field. Futurelab mainly focuses on work with schools, but the technologies it has developed are accessible by anyone. A number of Futurelab projects have a relevance to youth workers and others working informally with young people.

### Empowerment

Futurelab's Greater Expectations initiative explores the issues that matter to young people in their lives and learning. It asks how they can feel empowered and motivated to achieve their aspirations, learn about their entitlements and create change, and examines what role digital technologies can play in that process. The project is working deliver a free-to-use, learner-centred resource that aims to support young people to have a

voice and take action around the principles and issues important to them.

### Learner voice

'Learner voice' – the formal education system's term for what youth workers might call 'participation' – is a theme that links a number of Futurelab initiatives. These activities attempt to help young people to articulate and share their ideas, views and opinions which are then the basis of a range of actions. Power League – explored in detail on the Activities pages in this edition of the Source – is one example; Enquiring Minds is another. The latter project attempts to build from young people's real world experiences to then build 'formal' curricula. Both programmes have developed practical ideas for use with young people, which are available online.

go ► for more on Futurelab.

go ► for more on Greater Expectations.

go ► to Enquiring Minds.

see ► the Power League, one of the activity ideas developed by Futurelab.

NETWORK UPDATE

YOUTH VOICE

ACCREDITATION

FEATURES

ACTIVITIES

WORKFORCE

NEED TO KNOW