

## Ready for Action: How SHAREVILLE Can Prepare Students for the Workplace

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This multimedia presentation (approximately 25 minutes) starts with the premise that providing students with real work experiences can be increasingly difficult. Some of the systems used at Birmingham City University to help bridge the academia/workplace divide are mentioned before considering the role of Shareville (**Shareable, Holistic Assets and Resources, Existing in a Virtual Interactive Lifelong Learning Environment**) in bringing 'real world' scenarios to students in order to prepare them for the workplace. Shareville is a three-dimensional virtual town where video resources are situated in relevant contexts and is an ongoing project which commenced in 2008. The aim is to create problem-based scenarios, role-played and acted by staff and students, and filmed using 'green screen' technology so that the video can be cut out and placed within the town providing a very authentic experience for the learners.

Used in conjunction with face-to-face teaching and other technologies such as Moodle, Shareville is already creating opportunities to enrich the learning experience, and indeed some 'virtual experiences' can take place that would rarely be possible in real life.

The presenters spend some time discussing the design principles underpinning Shareville and make clear distinctions between this and other virtual worlds such as Second Life. Using real video to represent characters within scenarios, and avoiding the use of avatars the designers focus on reality. There has been no attempt to duplicate the functionality of other systems, and in general the scenarios are quite separate from other teaching and learning processes. The thinking behind this is to allow one scenario to have many possible uses – a housing scenario being used by Law, Surveying, and Criminal Justice students for example, with each group having different instructions, quizzes, and forums in Moodle. The multidisciplinary aspect of Shareville is a key feature.

The presentation also involves a screencast demonstration revealing a quick tour around the town and then two specific examples: firstly a traumatic encounter in a small residential home for people with learning disabilities (used in the School of Nursing and Midwifery), and then a house purchase scenario in a virtual solicitors office (School of Law).

Delegates will have the opportunity to explore Shareville for themselves and consider a variety of issues before feeding back any thoughts via the conference. It is expected that discussion will take place in four themes:

- **Transferability**

The team within CELT would like to find out if delegates think this approach might work in their own contexts. So, thinking about your own subjects, your own students, and your own view on pedagogy, where might this approach work well, and where might it be inappropriate? Ideas for new scenarios are most welcome!

- **Usability**

- How easy did you find using Shareville?
- How much familiarisation and instruction do you think students would need?
- What issues are there for students with disabilities?

(Please bear in mind when considering these questions that we have not given you a detailed task to complete or given you any specific instructions ourselves.)

- **Design Principles**

- Do you agree with our approach of integrating with other systems and not trying to duplicate functionality, while at the same time keeping the scenarios quite separate from other teaching and learning processes?
- What are your views about open content, shareability, and re-usability – where do you think Shareville fits into this debate?
- We have deliberately avoided the use of avatars and social networking tools – how does the experience of using Shareville compare to using an environment such as Second Life?

- **Effectiveness**

Can an environment such as Shareville really prepare students for the workplace?

Please note that there is no expectation of a technical discussion (technical details are provided as a supplement) but we do hope this presentation is a 'trigger' for a lively debate...