What does it mean to be a digital lifewide learner?

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Commentary

What does it mean to be a Digital *Lifewide* Learner?

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What does it really mean to be a digital learner? An immediate reply might be a learner who is taught online, engaging in an online course, using digital technology to access the learning experience. This learning is likely to be time limited (duration of the course) where formal learning takes place (accredited and assessed). But what does it mean to be a digital *lifewide* learner?

We learn everywhere and are often engaging in informal learning without realising it. Every day as lifewide learners, we are absorbing new information; by listening, watching and reading. This may be with others at home or in the workplace, through the radio or television; books, magazines and newspapers; or over the phone, which may be a call or text. As we do this we are learning new things, some we will retain and some we will forget or dismiss. This ever growing assortment of information however is getting harder to process. To add to this, increasingly many of us are also accessing information digitally via our mobile devices, connecting us wirelessly to the Internet and to more information than we could consume in a lifetime. Search engines help to some degree, 'focus in' on topics we actively seek to learn more about, but in reality do not always provide all of the results we need to see. The filter bubbles play a part in this, selectively choosing what we see through its complex algorithms.

To become an effective digital lifewide learner we need to find new ways to filter the abundance of information we find, but we also need new ways to access it and to archive it. Using the 5C

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framework is a good starting place as a way to enhance our own <u>learning ecologies</u>; that is the space(s) in which we learn. The five 'C's are: *connecting, communicating, curating, collaborating* and *creating*. Using the affordances of online digital spaces such as Twitter and LinkedIn, it is possible to build a network of trusted *connections*, which in time will become your personal learning network with whom you *communicate* and learn from and with. In *collaboration* it is possible to take a critical lens to evaluate what you are co-learning and challenge thinking. From here it is useful to consider how you are going to gather and *curate* the essential information you are learning about, to return back to when needed. There are a variety of tools available now such as Evernote, Pocket or through a personal blog. For the visual learner being a little more *creative* can be beneficial, where the use of multimedia such as capturing photos, video or sketch notes, can help you to not only archive information but be able to recall it when needed.

<u>Learning to use our own smart devices for learning and teaching through the 5C framework</u> (see page 108-127) can help us to rethink our approaches to become more effective as digital lifewide learners; where learning can take place anytime and anywhere.