

WEB 2.0

spotlight

## Twitter in HE?

[www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

Twitter is a free social networking tool that aims to answer just one question: what are you doing?

Sometimes called micro-blogging because you're limited to just 140 characters per post, it's a way of keeping in touch. You can let others know what you are doing and by "following" another twitter stream, you can keep an eye on what someone else is up to. Stephen Fry twitters and is a popular choice to follow; others limit it to just friends or colleagues.

Often accused of being utterly inconsequential and trivial (which can indeed be the case), it can be used in academic settings in number of ways. By using 'hashtags' (a prefix code to link twitters on a particular theme) discussions can be held very informally between students or staff (or both); updates from your particular field of interest can be received very promptly; and perhaps one of the best uses seen was to create a 'back channel' of discussion at a conference with Twitter users continuing and expanding on their networking and discussion of conference topics between and during formal sessions. A panel session even included one of the panellists answering questions from the 'floor' via Twitter.

## Networking EndNote

The latest version of the EndNote reference management software is X2, and currently Information Services are trying to resolve some problems they have encountered when trying to network it. For the time being the previous version (X1) is being networked, but

as soon as the issues are resolved EndNote X2 will be networked in its place. The major differences between X1 and X2 are mostly cosmetic, although X2 handles 'groups' slightly differently from X1. Anyone purchasing their own copy of EndNote from the



UK vendors - [www.adeptscience.co.uk](http://www.adeptscience.co.uk) - can now only get X2, but Andy Barrow will do his best to support that version prior to it being networked University-wide.

## TwitterSim



Interested in getting your students to discuss and reflect on a class? Can't get students using Victory discussion boards but hear them all going on about Twitter? Not sure about using Twitter in class?

At the **Expert Centre Retreat** just passed, one session used a paper-based version of "Twittering" to engage everyone involved in the discussion. (See panel on left for an explanation of the 'real' Twitter). More lo-fi than wifi, dozens of (inch wide) strips of paper were provided at each table; participants were encouraged to think up a nickname to 'sign' each strip they wrote on; and everyone was instructed to use no more than 25 words (which is approximately the Twitter limit of 140 characters). As each 'tweet' was written it was pinned up on a panel eventually producing a twitter stream for each discussion question. Described as Twitter and seen as very very casual, participants felt much more free to reflect and comment on everything from the very inconsequential to the deeply thought provoking; to mention everything from the subject itself to surroundings or the process. Be-

cause it was fast, it meant each table felt connected to the others, and because it was fun it seemed to generate its own momentum in getting people to contribute.

Even 'post-it' type contributions can feel quite formal and end up being reserved in comparison.

For a session discussing student reflection (or lack of it) it was an interesting way of getting engagement and interaction and it might be worth considering trying it in workshops or even lectures.

## ETHOS

ETHOS—the Electronic Theses Online Service is new from the British Library. It's still in beta testing, but it allows you to search across quarter of a million theses very easily. The idea is to be a central hub for all UK higher education theses, but it is also helping in the transition to electronic provision. Where a thesis

is available on an institutional repository, ETHOS will enable access to it; where it isn't available the BL are able to digitise it and offer it in fairly short order. (You can also limit searches to just those available for immediate download).

Find it at:  
<http://ethos.bl.uk/>

**ETHOS - Beta**  
**ELECTRONIC THESES ONLINE SERVICE**  
Opening access to UK theses