Digital literacies and work placements

PELeCON 2013 | Nadja Guggi, University of Reading, 11 April 2013

Digitally Ready

- A JISC-funded project at the University of Reading to help staff and students to develop their digital literacies – live, learn and work in a digital world

- Individual and institutional development

- Focus on student employability

www.reading.ac.uk/digitallyready

Digital literacies and work placements

- Work-related and placement learning (WRPL) – 'digital' opportunities

- Structured and semi-structured exploratory interviews – staff, student and employer needs, expectations and experiences

- Inform strategic discussions around planning, monitoring, assessment and evaluation of work placement schemes

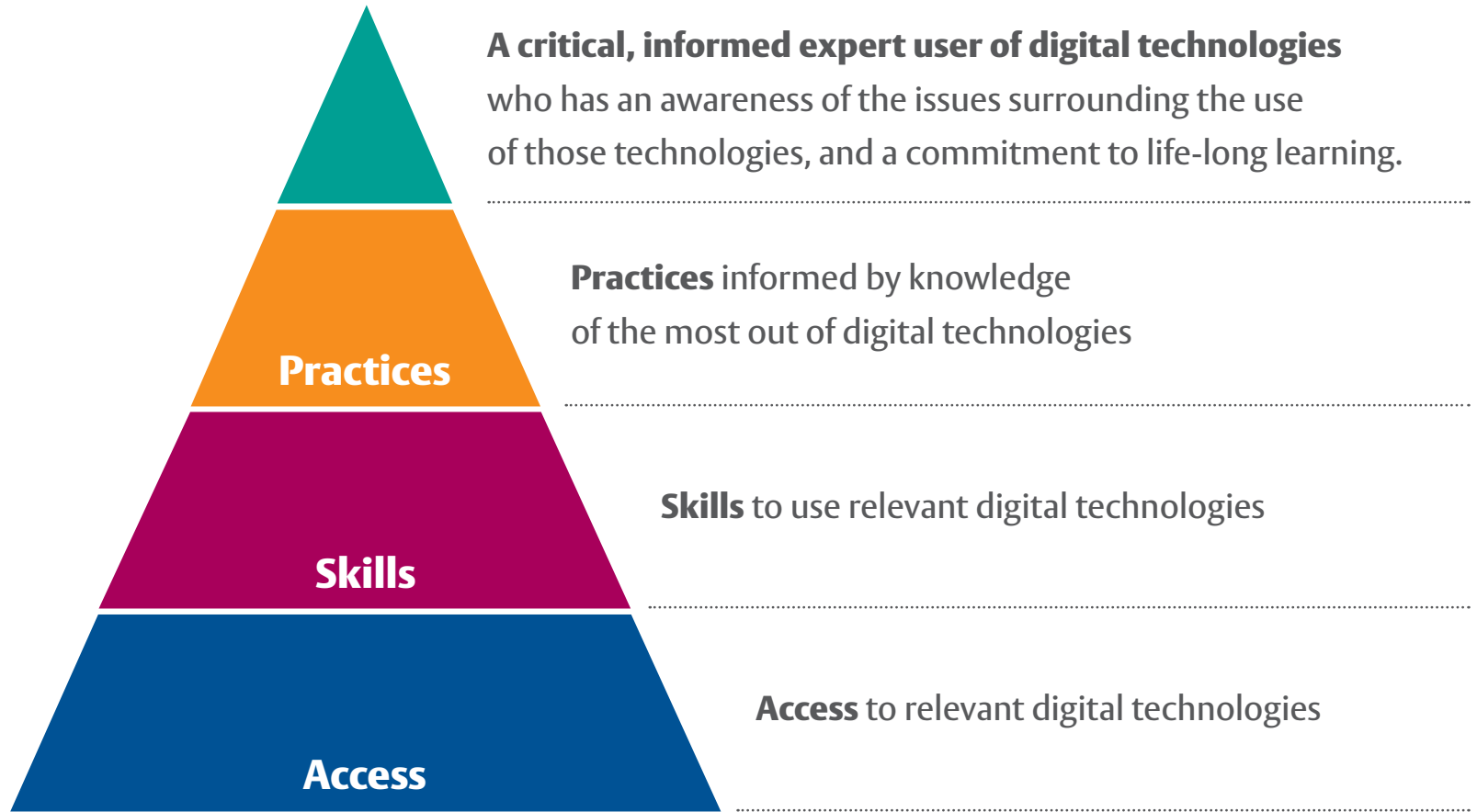- Focus on formal work placement opportunities – embedded and extra-curricular schemes
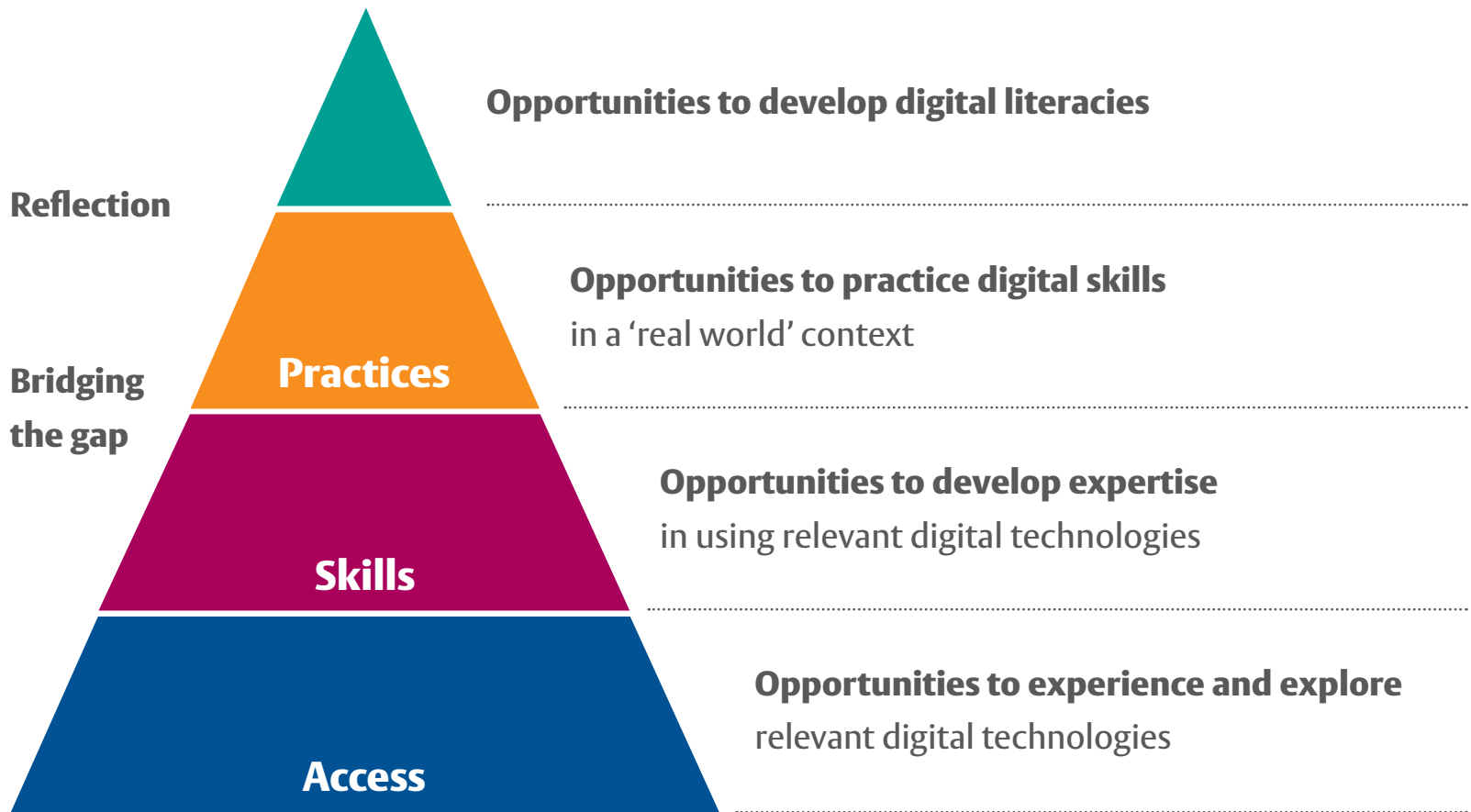
Work placement schemes at Reading

- Extra-curricular schemes (admistered centrally):

  – Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme (UROP)
  – Summer Employment Experience and Discovery (SEED)

- Embedded placements (admistered locally):

  – Embedded in all undergraduate programmes with 2011/2012 entry
  – 'Skirts' model: maxi, mini, micro

Framework: The development pyramid

A critical, informed expert user of digital technologies who has an awareness of the issues surrounding the use of those technologies, and a commitment to life-long learning.

Practices informed by knowledge of the most out of digital technologies

Skills to use relevant digital technologies

Access to relevant digital technologies

Practices

Skills

Access

Developing Effective e-Learning: the development pyramid
(Beetham and Sharpe, 2008)

Framework: The development pyramid

Opportunities to develop digital literacies

Reflection

Practices

Opportunities to practice digital skills
in a 'real world' context

Bridging
the gap

Skills

Opportunities to develop expertise
in using relevant digital technologies

Access

Opportunities to experience and explore
relevant digital technologies

Adapted from 'Developing Effective E-Learning: The Development
Pyramid (Beetham and Sharpe, 2008)

Findings

- Awareness

- Reflection and articulation

- Monitoring and assessment

- Tangible outputs

- Positive online presence

- Social media skills

- Time to develop

- Contact with supervisors and co-workers

- Promoting the 'digital' placement experience

Awareness

- Lack of proper understanding of digital literacies and their importance for student employability

- Lack of insight into the transferable and subject-specific digital skills that are sought-after by employers

Reflection and articulation

- The role of placements in bridging the gap between students' learning and applying digital skills in a professional context

- Reflection & articulation: making the link in the student's mind

Monitoring and assessment

- Need to develop effective methods of monitoring students' digital skills development

- Need to develop effective methods assessing placements

Tangible outputs

- 'Something to show for it'

- Ownership and responsiblity

- Stronger applications, better interview performance

- Role of digital technologies in producing visible/public outputs finished to a high standard

Placement Showcase: Harriet Taylor

I have been asking some of my fellow placement students to share their experiences and talk about what impact their work has had on the projects they've been working on.

Harriet Taylor, a third-year History student, has spent 10 weeks interning in the Knowledge Transfer Centre. She has recently finished her SEED placement but has been asked to return to the office for a half day each week to develop their marketing and advertising strategy."My

SEED placement student Harriet Taylor

internship was with the Knowledge Transfer Centre who runs the Reading branch of the national Knowledge Transfer Partnership programme. Primarily my role was to come up with marketing and advertising strategy aimed at Reading students and graduates to attract them to the scheme."

"The first tangible thing I saw from my internship was my overhaul of the noticeboards. Used to convey details about the partnerships and advertise jobs, the boards were dull and not overly informative. Whilst there was a lot of text the message managed to get lost and due to the use of overtly technical language it was confusing to many people. Using Microsoft Publisher I redesigned the boards so all the right information was there in a colourful and eye-catching format. It was great to be able to see the work I had done to promote Knowledge Transfer Partnerships but what was even better was hearing that a colleague had witnessed someone stopping and reading my redesigned board, a rare sight beforehand!"

Positive online presence

- Lack of awareness of the importance of a positive online presence – employers do care

- Lack of awareness how to raise your professional profile online

My success at the Digitally Ready showcase

Posted on March 14, 2013 by samholton

As you have picked up from the title, the recent Show & TEL event on 'Progress with Digitally Ready' was a success for me! I was excited to find out more about other projects here at the University of Reading that Digitally Ready had funded, and to talk about my on work and what I had achieved on my project.

The projects discussed ranged from a longitudinal survey of students using technology to the modification of the Blackboard VLE to include an e-Learning Support tab. There was very little similarity between any of the projects. However, it was clear that every project had the same aim in mind: to increase digital opportunities and on the whole to enhance
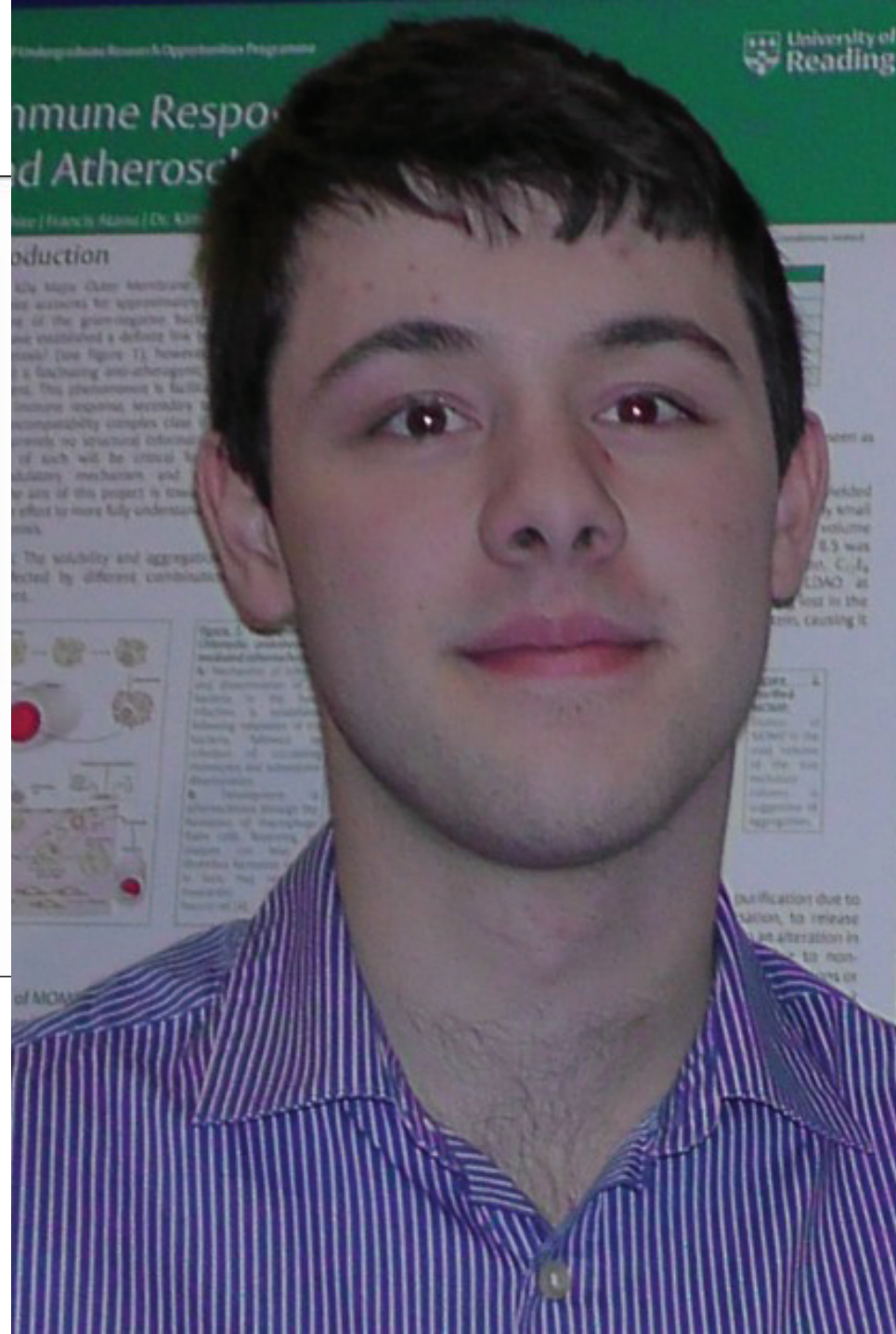
Social media skills

- Employers are actively looking for skills in strategic use of social media

Placement showcase: Carrie Philp

With UROP student Carrie Philp

Continuing my placement showcase series, I interviewed Carrie Philp about her experiences during her UROP placement and how she used social media to recruit students for her project.

A third year Psychology student, Carrie, who only heard about the opportunity at the last minute, says she has learnt a lot over the 8 weeks on placement:

"I have been conducting a piece of research in collaboration with the Careers, Placement and Experience Centre, located on the University Campus. The aim of the research is to investigate the views and opinions of students who have and haven't used the careers services, and to investigate how they could be improved to meet the needs of the students.""As part of this research I conducted an online questionnaire. I used Facebook to recruit my participants as it was a cheap and easy way to reach a diverse population, whilst ensuring that I was only gathering students from the University. I posted my advertisements on various academic and social group pages, and gathered a sufficient number of participants for my survey."

"Completing this project has allowed me to develop my social media and computer skills. Whilst before I had a working knowledge of programs such as Word and Excel, I now have a more extensive knowledge of their functions. I learnt a lot about how to conduct a piece of scientific research from start to finish, and these skills will help me on other projects, such as my dissertation and independent projects. I have found my project to be

Time to develop

- Students need time to develop and practise the digital skills needed to make a positive contribution in the workplace

- Employers prefer longer placements

- Benefits of relatively short placements

Contact with supervisors and co-workers

- Students value regular contact

- Integration and support

- Immersion in the professional environment

Promoting the 'digital' placement experience

- Disappointing numbers and quality of applications

- Advertising on a skills basis vs. subject basis

- Expectations, outcomes, benefits

- Lack of confidence

Maximising 'digital' benefits of WRPL

- Promotion on a skills basis – skills required and skills developed

- Opportunities to explore a variety of digital technologies

- Ownership and responsibility – tangible outputs

- Regular contact with supervisors and colleagues

- Longer placements and/or flexible models

- Monitoring students' digital skills development

- Supporting reflection and articulation

- Assessment linked to reflection and articulation