

2011

Getting Started with Wikis

Part 1: A Brief Introduction



About this guide

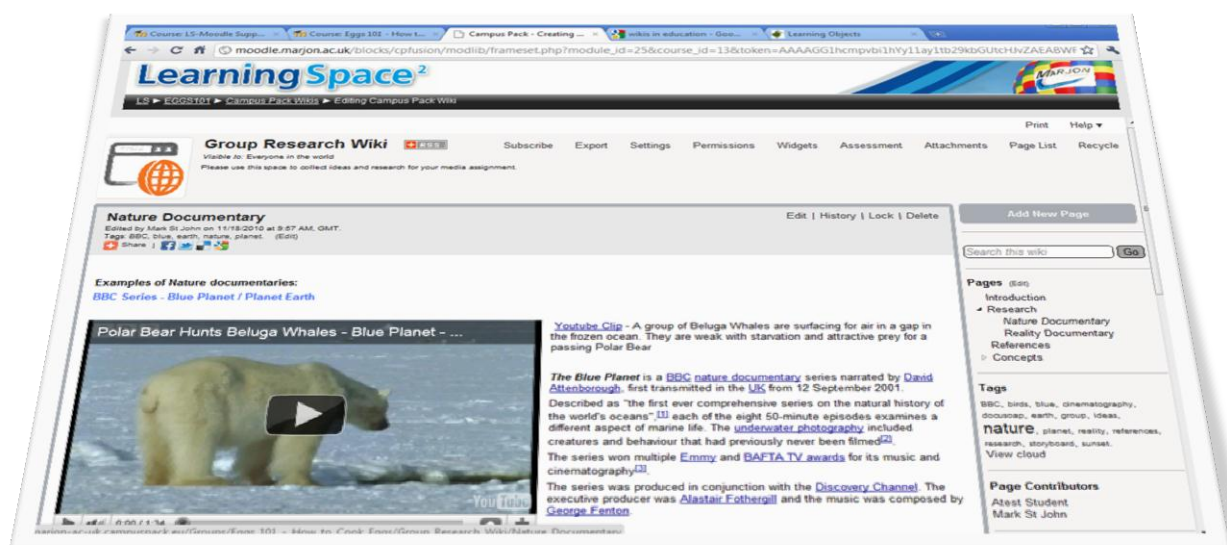
This is part 1 in the **eLearning essentials: Getting Stated with Wikis** series. Part 1 introduces wiki technology and also offers some suggestions on how such tools could be used to enhance learning & teaching at UCP Marjon.

» What is a wiki?

The word 'wiki', taken from the Hawaiian language for 'fast', describes a type of web technology that allows users to edit a webpage (or group of pages) via a web-browser, from anywhere in the world. In most cases, wiki pages are edited collaboratively, allowing many users to build upon a single resource.

Historically wikis often required users to learn an unfriendly 'mark-up language' to add or edit content, making the barrier towards adoption steep for less-technical users. Today however, it is much more likely that a wiki site will use a standard 'WYSIWYG editor', much like those found in popular word processing packages, to allow users to create or amend content.

As wikis are essentially webpages, users are not simply limited to adding text as content. It is also possible to add hyperlinks, images, video, audio, and even file attachments. Every time a wiki page is modified, a new version of the page is created. This means changes to a page can be tracked and rolled-back if necessary.



» Supporting learning & teaching

The diagram below offers some examples on how wikis can be used to support learning and teaching.

Research Scrap-Book

- Students and staff can keep an online scrap-book of project research. Materials collated from different sources and in text, audio, video format can be stored electronically.
- [Pros] Electronic so allows access to all research in one place, across multiple devices. As changes are tracked, it is possible to see how research has grown overtime and who has edited what/when.
- [Cons] In group work there might be a tendency for some students to carry-out more of the editing - which might not always reflect the true nature of group dynamics.

Shared Knowledgebase

- Students and staff can create an online, content-rich wiki, demonstrating understanding of topics in a module.
- Content can be authored individually or in groups.
- [Pros] Allows students to develop their understanding of topics and to reflect on what they have learnt, individually or with their peers.
- [Cons] Easy to become over-reliant on textual content, rather than enriching learning by using a multitude of media.

Group Work

- Any collaborative projects might benefit from having an online editable space for students to pull-together ideas, sources etc.
- Our LearningSpace wiki also supports 'commenting' allowing a dialogue to appear alongside content.
- [Pros] Allows individuals within a groups to work anytime, anywhere - while still contributing to a single-shared resource. Can break down geographical / time barriers.
- [Cons] Some students may need additional support to instil confidence in their own ICT skills.

» Glossary of terms

WYSIWYG

An acronym for 'what you see is what you get' (pronounced 'wiz-ee-wig'). In this case a WYSIWYG editor describes a text editor in which the content presented during editing appears very similar to that of the final output. WYSIWYG text editors generally have formatting buttons similar to those found in desktop word processing packages.