

Mobile blogging: supporting informal mobile learning

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Abstract

Reflective practice is recognised as a useful tool to support a wide variety of learning opportunities and approaches (Schon, 1983), providing a period of reflection on action and drawing out key lessons learned. Supporting such introspection about learning is as useful in mobile learning; potentially, even more so in informal, unstructured scenarios that often occur in a mobile setting, where a deeper understanding of the things learnt comes about after the event and not during it. Weblogs have been used to support reflective practice, but often there is a long delay between experiencing a learning episode whilst out and about, and being able to record the key elements of it and reflect on it. To address this problem, we have developed a mobile blogging client that runs on a smartphone, which allows the learner to record the event at the time, using the phone's multimedia capabilities – photos, sound, text and so on, and to enter their thoughts and impressions and reflections immediately, and post these to their blog. This approach captures the more immediate stream-of-consciousness style that is prevalent in blogging (Nardi et al., 2004, Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht, 2004), and produces a system that is always available and therefore supports the immediate, ad-hoc nature of mobile learning experiences more effectively. This paper discusses the design and architecture of the system, discusses it in relation to other more limited approaches (Nokia, 2003, Gratton, 2004), and reports on its use in mobile blogging.

Keywords

Blogging, reflective practice, smartphone, mobile learning

Biography

Russell Beale's research focuses on the intersection of users, technology, and artificial intelligence; the intention is that through effective design and appropriate use of artificial intelligence, we can produce much more appealing, usable systems. His recent research has focused on systems and theories to support social interaction, on mobile learning (including architecture and context work for the Mobilelearn project), ambient intelligence and art, and in modeling, visualizing and data mining information. He is Chair of the BCS HCI Group, leads Birmingham's participation in Kaleidoscope: the future of learning with digital technologies, and co-leads a project on nature-inspired design.

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