



A new mindset for a new world - or a return to the ideals?

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The Internet has changed the world and its business models, but how can universities take advantage of the new potentials for teaching, learning and research, we've only just begun to grasp the scope of? How can the traditional University of Copenhagen change our own mindset and get ready for the future? We created a vision of the university of the future as a "live university": being accessible anytime, anywhere, and open to participation and co-creation between students, faculty and staff.

This is the account of how we aim to use this vision to change our perspective, raise awareness of what technology can do for us, increase our IT-literacy and get ready for the future university - when we don't yet know, what the future holds.

Keywords: institutional change, creating change, vision, professional development, IT-fluency, teaching and learning.

The internet has changed the world - how can universities take advantage?

The Internet has enabled free global communication and made most of the world's knowledge accessible to anyone. Text is no longer the sole king of knowledge and communication - the easy access to creation and distribution of images, audio and video, the mixing and re-mixing of media and the social conversations we can have about them. This not only changes how knowledge can be created and exchanged, but also disrupts the business models underlying every sector. Easy access and communication cuts out any middle man, as the record industry, physical book- and video stores can attest to - this disrupts many of the traditional business models and even copyright. (Meisel and Sullivan 2002, Lessig 2008, Anderson 2006 and 2009)ⁱ But the disruption is also innovative creating new mechanisms, economic models and opportunities (Christensen 1997, Shirky 2008).

Universities have already been affected by some of the change disrupting the publishing industry, paving the way for open journals and open access academic publications, (Willinsky 2006, Antelmann 2004) and in the realm of teaching and learning, MOOCs have been making waves in the last few years. But we've only begun to grasp the scope of possibilities for research and learning.

This paper is an account of the strategy work we are doing towards 2016 at the Humanities Department, University of Copenhagen, and outlines how we plan to facilitate a move into the digital future (and present), and get the institution and the people it consists of ready to take advantage of all the new possibilities the future holds for teaching and learning.

Where are we now?

The University of Copenhagen is founded in 1479 and a traditional research university. The current LSM has been in use since 2006, but even though adaptation is good - it is used as a repository for course materials and online submission of papers more often, than as an interactive learning platform. Pioneer teachers and digital learning projects have resulted in innovative courses and programs, but the vast majority of classes and lectures are not taking advantage of technology.

There is no evidence to suggest that the future generations of faculty and students will have a significantly

higher level of IT-fluency. Research has debunked the myth of the "digital natives" (van den Beemt 2011), but even if students should have better skills, the institutional culture is highly change resistant. So the coming of new generations is not going to bring about a sea change on its own.

Where do we want technology to take us?

The aim is to make use of technology seamless and effortless. We want technology, and our infrastructure, to become transparent. To become tools we use, not something that gets in our way and demands a special effort. Just like nobody talks about "IKT-supported learning" when writing in a word processor, we want it to just be something we do - not something we need to think about.

We strongly believe better technology use can strengthen our core services: facilitate better research, teaching and learning, better education. Many of the existing collaborative online tools can be used to create synergies and cross-pollination between teaching and research. Using technology for learning brings along new perspectives and sometimes surprising gains: streaming live lets guest lecturers participate from around the world, and allow for more diversity. A jointly taught class across the Atlantic lets students and teachers experience the differences in their academic traditions, and see how this shapes their perception of the field. Streaming a language class live, with Twitter as a backchannel, gives the teaching a broader reach and grants a wider access to education.

We want to open up and make the university and our content accessible, so we can become a platform for knowledge creation, sharing and learning. We want to engage and draw in students and society, to add to, re-use and remix the resources. And even more possibilities for enhancing, supporting and changing education and facilitate learning and research will emerge in the coming years, raising questions like: Can we gain a better quality of research by sharing our research data openly? Or can we crowdsource or even crowdfund our data collection, and at that get better samples, larger datasets and more reliable results? Betting on a single current trend to shape our future will just make fools of us all, so what we need to do, is to create an environment, where we are aware and ready to use the new opportunities as they arise.

What do we need to get there?

A change in culture and attitudes of both employees and students is needed, particularly to our self-image: Because our university is not only an old-fashioned place - it is also a place where a student tweets his translation of the Gothic language live over the wifi of a bus on an Israeli motorway. But even those involved consider this an exception from the rule - and most faculty are not even aware these are viable options, so it doesn't occur to them to think outside the box of the classroom, when they plan their teaching, even if many of them are interested in doing so.

So as a supporting tech-unit, we realised that we need to change our focus. Rather than trying to get more academic staff to try new things, we need to work more strategically at an institutional level to support change. We suggested the digital strategy work under the title "Live University". The deanship of the faculty immediately embraced the suggestion, and made it one of the 12 major themes of the faculty's 2016-strategy - a great first step, as commitment from management is crucial for success, when implementing change.

How do we get going?

To change the attitude and self-image of a traditional university is a tall order - and there is no technical quick fix for this. But to set the institution in motion in the same direction, we need a goal... or several goals. And since we're talking about web-technology, where no one knows where we'll be in 5 years, and certainly not in 10 years - we created a vision we can aim towards.

We call it "Live University", to signal that we want the university to be live, not just during teaching hours, and on campus - but anytime, anywhere - and not just broadcasting one-way communication, but open to participation and co-creation of knowledge. And Live University is a vision of a university, which utilizes technology to be active and collaborative anytime and anywhere. The values underlying Live University are the same kind of values of the Internet and the open source cultures that helped shape it: Openness, sharing, collaborating and taking responsibility and contributing. Ideals that may not be the perfect image of a modern day university - but isn't it really the ideals the university as an institution was founded on?

The vision is a means to give us all a common sense of direction, allowing more people to be a part of the change, to see their efforts as part a greater change of moving the institution in a new direction - even when turning a super tanker is slow.

A vision is vague in nature, and this is an advantage, since we're navigating in unknown waters: our change needs to have direction, but be open to what new possibilities will emerge in the years to come. Therefore we

are not focusing on any particular technology - video or live streaming might be the big thing right now - and as such we shall explore the options, but we don't want to limit ourselves, as it may not be, what (alone) ultimately serves us best.ⁱⁱ

Where to start the change...

So how does a deliberately vague vision translate into action, and actual change? At the heart of our vision is a change in attitude about how we, as an institution use technology.

This is a complex matter - but we've grouped our efforts into three main areas:

- Infrastructure
- IT-fluency / professional development
- Opening up the university to the outside world

Infrastructure

Our infrastructure needs to support the use of technology - and that goes for the rooms we teach in, as well as the human resources in support functions. For technology to become transparent and our services to scale beyond supporting a few tech-pioneers, we need plug and play solutions in the classroom, access to and support for relevant web platforms and tools.

We're already doing pretty well in this area: We have a dark fiber infrastructure for AV and streaming in much of our campus - and a great collaboration between different units handling operations and maintenance of IT, buildings etc. There is still work to be done coordinating and improving our services and different ventures handled by different units, but in some ways this part of the change is the least complex, as it can be handled by existing support units and incorporated into their development plans for the years to come.

IT-fluency / professional development

Faculty, students and staff need to have the skillset and competences to reap the benefits of technology. So the aim is to increase the all-over level of IT-fluency. Our faculty, staff and students do not need to become super-users of every single technology, but they need to have the ability to choose the best and most relevant tool, service or solution for their need, knowing their range of options (but not necessarily the details of each).

Better general understanding of how we can use technology is needed for everyone, as digital outputs are becoming the norm for projects at large - and to get better results we need to incorporate digital early in the process, not think we can hand it off to some programmer, who can make something of it afterwards.

Status here is a complex picture. There are extreme differences in skill levels and needs, and this goes for all staff and students. And in this area there are no easy solutions, but we need to find scalable solutions, probably through a combination of efforts. An institutional and managerial focus on the area will raise consciousness and underline the strategic importance, we also need to include "the digital angle" in all the existing offerings - mandatory teaching certificate courses, PhD-training courses etc. But we also need to create new ways of entering the digital domain for our tenured staff, and those need to be relevant and useful in their existing practices - if we can't answer the crucial question "What's in it for me" - our success rate will be low. Mentoring and "teach a colleague"-schemes as well as just-in-time courses can be part of the solution - and it's well looking at successful programmes from other universities, as most face the same problem.

Opening up the university to the outside world

To change our perception of ourselves and the institution, an important step is to make visible and known the existing efforts, projects and products. We need to share our success stories from the digital domain, because people are already doing great things. We also need to create frictionless access to all the units at the university working with the related areas: Teaching and learning, IT-infrastructure, e-learning and communication. And at an institutional level we need to create even better collaboration between those and common and coordinated strategies.

Status here is that a lot of things are moving in the right direction - but we also have hurdles, that we do not necessarily have ways of getting around in a short-term perspective. Copyright is one such topic. A long culture of not sharing research before publication is another.

However there are also winds blowing in the right direction - there is a strong pressure from the government to digitize and make our communication and content accessible to students on digital platforms. Our students are central in this effort, not just because students are our future generations of teachers and researchers - but also because a modern university should educate students with digital skills and knowledge - and a way for them to hone their digital skills is participating in digital knowledge sharing, while at the university - thereby being an important part of the open and collaborating live university.

First steps

We're already working to strengthen and create networks between staff, faculty and units with an interest in the affected areas: infrastructure, IT, teaching and learning, etc. The immediate goal is to spread the idea, boost enthusiasm and locate resourceful and interested people, who can join in the next task: To co-create and define the next moves in the process.

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