



Connect, create, collaborate: UCL's digifest

This exemplar is relevant to Digital Student challenge:

Engage in dialogue with students about their digital experience and empower students to effect change in their digital environment

UCL's digifest (10-14 November 2014) was a week-long celebration of all things digital at the University and beyond. Organised by students and staff to shed light on the many digital activities that were happening 'under the radar', digifest was described by its organisers as *'part unconference, part hackfest, part showcase, part online course, where we combine and deliver both a digital and physical experience to everyone involved'*. A Google+ online community was used to plan and shape the event. In the end, each day was organised around a different theme:

Mon: Activism | Politics | Ethics | Citizenship | Privacy | Security
Tues: Making | Sharing | Collaboration | Creative Commons
Weds: Digital Identity | Digital Professionalism | Digital Footprint
Thurs: Learning Technology | Future University
Fri: Showcase Day

Staff and students worked together to plan the events, which included a mix of games, online and offline debates, interactive workshops, coding and making sessions, a 'translate-athon' and even a specially-formed laptop orchestra! The making and showcase days brought to light projects that had previously gone on behind closed doors, such as 3D scanning at the Petrie Museum or CASA's 'Pigeon Sim' (previously seen on [The One Show](#) but relatively unknown at its home institution).

Equally creative ways were found of gathering feedback during the event, such as using keywords to trigger a playlist of music, holding vox pops and focus groups, and inviting participants into a talking photobooth. One undergraduate said: *'This is the best way to get involved with technology... connecting staff and students within UCL was amazing. Staff were friendly, listened and were interested in making things work.'* A selection of other student views can be found on the [UCLdigifest YouTube channel](#) and Jisc will be releasing a detailed case study soon. Meanwhile the impact of the event continues to play out, and the laptop orchestra has decided to meet and play together regularly.

How does this meet the challenge?

- Students were the driving force behind this initiative, with staff supporting and enabling.
- A world away from the typical 'digital literacies' workshop, digifest focused on fun, creativity, excitement and inspiration.
- However, difficult issues were also addressed: staff and students experienced the digital agenda as contested and contradictory.
- The event was organised to allow both online and offline participation, and to bring both kinds of participant together wherever possible.

Find out more

- [Digifest web site](#)
- [UCLdigifest YouTube channel](#)

Contact: Janina Dewitz <j.dewitz@ucl.ac.uk>