

ideas

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CENTRE FOR INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY'S
EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

In this issue...

What do blogs, plagiarism prevention and animal behaviour have in common? The answer: A lecturer from Biological Sciences, N. Sivasothi, who has used these CIT services in tandem for the LSM1303 Animal Behaviour cross-faculty module. Read on to find out more about this unusual combination.

Student blogging, plagiarism prevention and animal behaviour

BY N. SIVASOTHI, LECTURER,
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL
SCIENCES

For the third year running, non-biology students who take the cross-faculty module LSM1303 Animal Behaviour are blogging. As part of their continual assessment, every student in the class of about 200 creates a single blog post each. Their blog site, [Blogging about Animal Behaviour](#) is hosted on [Blog.nus](#).

Blogging benefits

Writing an original post encourages students to read and communicate beyond the limits of their project work and lectures. It also exposes them to their fellow-students' efforts which cover a wide range of examples of animal behaviour.

The blog engine can limit the display of posts to those tagged with a specific group number (which the students add, if they followed instructions)! Teaching Assistants (TAs), who visit the blog to contribute constructive comments to the specific groups they supervise, merely need to click relevant tags instead of ploughing through 200 posts. Students quick on the uptake learn another feature of blogs - they can explore the blog for topics from the syllabus such as "territoriality" or "mating rituals".

Evolving guidelines and copyright

I drew up [guidelines](#) which reside online on Google Docs. These were edited immediately after encountering issues each year and are now relatively comprehensive. Concomitantly, I receive fewer queries about clarification, and student posts have also improved. Still, new issues emerge. For example, although citations were evident this year, many did not integrate these effectively within their text.

Comment moderation (which I enabled), alerted me to another problem this year - two professional photography sites traced pingbacks to our blog, ironically alerted through the students' proper citation. Despite restrictions about 3rd-party use displayed on these sites, students had persisted. The culpable students replaced the photos even as I updated the online guidelines to explain copyright and introduce them to [Creative Commons](#). A relatively new issue to most of them, I extended the deadline by a day to allow them to adopt the new guidelines. I also thanked the complainant for adding to our learning objectives!

Beyond plagiarism

Despite the briefings at the beginning of term and just before the assignment, the odd individual or two will plagiarise, either knowingly or unknowingly. Although some TAs can easily spot these, we submit a pdf of the entire site to [TurnItIn](#), an excellent plagiarism detection tool for which NUS has a license.

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Blog.nus FAQs

1. What is Blog.nus?

- Blog.nus is a blog service for the NUS community.
- Blog.nus is powered by WordPress Multi-User and hosted by Edublogs Campus.

2. Who can use Blog.nus?

- NUS staff and students can set up blogs for academic, educational, research and administrative purposes. You can set up a blog for personal learning, your faculty, school, department, module or NUS-based club.

3. Where can I set up a Blog.nus blog?

- To set up a blog at Blog.nus, please visit <http://blog.nus.edu.sg/>. Click the **Create a blog** image or the **Create a blog or a user account** link.

4. Is Blog.nus single sign-on enabled?

- No, it is not single sign-on enabled. Your Blog.nus account is separate from your NUSNET ID.

5. How do I use the blog?

- Blogging is relatively easy. If you know how to use email and a word processor, you should be able to get started on your own.

6. I have more questions or need further assistance. Who can I contact?

- Your first stop for assistance should be <http://help.edublogs.org/getting-started-with-edublogs/>.
- NUS-specific Blog.nus FAQs can be found at: <http://wiki.nus.edu.sg/display/blognus/>
- Finally you can also email citpkg@nus.edu.sg.

Contact

Blog.nus

Mr Kenneth PINTO
citpkg@nus.edu.sg

Plagiarism Prevention (TurnItIn)

Mr Prasad IYER
citki@nus.edu.sg

CIT Website

<http://cit.nus.edu.sg/>

"In my own experience with Turnitin, I have found it to be useful in doing four important things: categorically exposing crude and massive plagiarism; providing a graphic illustration of general student practices regarding the use of sources and the composition of research essays; providing a graphic teaching aid to instruct students on the problem of cut and paste; and sending a general signal about plagiarism, academic culture and responsibilities."

Associate Professor Brian Farrell
Department of History

Plagiarism Prevention FAQs

1. What is Plagiarism Prevention?

- A service to detect plagiarism in students' work, powered by TurnItIn.
- Generates an originality report, flagging possibly plagiarized items and highlighting the source.
- You can submit soft-copies of students' work for checking or set it up so that students can check on their own before submitting work.

2. Who can use the Plagiarism Prevention service?

- All teaching staff in NUS can use this service.
- NUS students can use this service only if authorized by teaching staff.

3. Where do I access the Plagiarism Prevention service?

- You can access the service at <http://cit.nus.edu.sg/plagiarism-prevention/>.

4. How do I use the Prevention Plagiarism Prevention service?

- Instructions on how to use the service are on the [Plagiarism Prevention page](#) itself. For further assistance, email citki@nus.edu.sg.

5. Why is it called Plagiarism Prevention when this service detects plagiarism?

- It is hoped that this service is used in a preventive manner.
- It affords faculty staff a chance to show students where they have gone wrong and rectify their work before final submission.
- If faculty staff choose to allow students to check for plagiarism before submitting, the students will be able to correct their work on their own before submission.


Blogging about animal behaviour (2010)

LSM1303 Animal Behaviour student posts

Pufferfish – A Blessing in Disguise?

Filed under: Uncategorized — u0900746 at 2:49 pm on Tuesday, April 6, 2010 Tagged defense, Group39, self-defense Edit This

Pufferfishes are the second most poisonous vertebrate in the world. They are made up of two families of closely related fishes, namely the smooth or sharpnose pufferfish (*tetraodontidae*) and spiny pufferfish (*diodontidae*). Though its skin and certain internal organs are highly toxic to humans, it is still a delicacy to some, with proper caution exercised in preparation of course.



Pufferfish Inflation as a Defense Mechanism

Natural defense mechanism is the key to the survival of the pufferfish. These mechanisms compensate for the locomotion and slow movement of the fish (Zimmer, 1997). Pufferfishes have a unique and distinct ability to inflate their body upon threatened, by swallowing water (if captured by predator) or air (if captured by avian or human) to fill their expandable stomachs, causing their body shape to become spherical. The ribs of the fish are short, and the collagen fiber organisation in it is modified, allowing its

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Tags

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- Group21

LSM1303 Animal Behaviour blog screenshot

Next year I hope to go beyond TurnItIn's policing capability by having students check their own content. This will help them to learn about plagiarism, paraphrasing and citation.

[Biodiversity 2010](#) blog and Facebook pages. The enthusiastic comments on Facebook were a great read but faded when the flood of last-minute posts swamped the blog!

Instead of a single explosion of 100 blog posts at semester-end, rostering groups for weekly blog posts would improve class and public readership. If synchronised with the syllabus, their posts can be integrated into the lectures. I already include and acknowledge the rare student-suggested content and have been heartened by the 'conversation' with otherwise quiet individuals. Blogging to encourage dialogue? We'll see.

Future directions

With the practical issues ironed out and filled with enthusiasm, I finally asked the 2nd year ecology students to blog. [Ecological observations in Singapore](#) was greeted with an immediate and wider local audience when their blog posts were highlighted by Singapore's [International Year of](#)

Article Links

Blog.nus

<http://blog.nus.edu.sg/>

Plagiarism Prevention (TurnItIn)

<http://cit.nus.edu.sg/plagiarism-prevention/>

Animal Behaviour

<http://blog.nus.edu.sg/lsm1303student2010/>

Animal Behaviour blog assignment guidelines

<http://tinyurl.com/lsm1303ca-blog>

Ecological observations in Singapore

<http://blog.nus.edu.sg/lsm2251student/>

Creative Commons

<http://creativecommons.org/>

Article adapted from

<http://snipr.com/lsm1303blogs>