

CPsquare as a learning space for cultivating global literacies

Initial Guidelines and Considerations

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CPsquare copyleft: Feel free to modify and improve on these guidelines in the
spirit they are written – for sharing, learning and social action.

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Introduction:

This document began principally as a response to some people feeling excluded from CPsquare events because of their geographical location, periphery to the United States. Meanwhile, some people were also asking the question: while CPsquare talks about international inclusion and participation, how does, or how should, that translate to practice?

A space in Web Crossing was set up and a discussion took place with the aim of producing some “emerging logistical, cultural and linguistic guidelines for facilitating, participating and collaborating in an online distributed community that includes people from different countries”.

While the conversation took place in three separate Web Crossing discussions: on logistics, cultural issues and linguistic issues, the three areas are clearly inter-related. In fact, the deeper the discussion, the more difficult it became to disentangle the threads.

The document is intended to be the basis for practice and ongoing reflection and improvement. Comments and suggestions are invited from CPsquare practice groups and from individuals or groups who use and adapt them for their own purpose(s).

The spirit of these guidelines is that of social action for globally interconnected working and community life that is evolving in the context of newly discovered borders. Designing for and facilitating conversations that cross borders requires global literacies. Global literacies address substantive diversity of cultural, geographical and language differences as well as diverse modalities such as web based, asynchronous, synchronous, visual and paper.

We view CPsquare as a learning space for cultivating these global literacies.

These guidelines come in three parts, representing the discussions in the three folders: cultural, logistical and linguistic. A summary of the discussion that took place in each folder precedes recommendations that arose from each discussion. A summary checklist is included at the end of the document.

Related links are being organised and will follow shortly.

Culture: a summary of the issues discussed and raised

We approached the issue of culture by thinking of how to develop ways that individuals could be routinely cultivating global literacies in CPsquare.

A metaphor for someone who is routinely cultivating global literacies is that of *designer*. A designer is in the process of building capacities, practising, reflecting, improving and creating artefacts as well as constantly reconstructing and negotiating in a hotbed of complex communication!

The design we are referring to emphasises change rather than convention, active design rather than detached critique, interested design for social futures rather than cultural reproduction.

Another metaphor for our role as globally literate participants in CPsquare is that of *dancer*. A dancer between the often-contradictory worlds, realities, perspectives, contexts and formalities of people from different national, academic, professional (etc.) cultures. The music changes. The beat shifts and so does the dancer.

Importantly, we have to accept that designing and dancing, or exploring and spanning borders, takes time. Time stands out as an important variable. Efficiency cannot be the only driving force.

In fact differences in cultures (in all its forms) will always be the potential for both bridges and disconnects.

There are cultural divides around the types of communication environments we can or cannot thrive in. That means that no one communication environment can be equally inclusive to all people. One implication of this is that CPsquare may not be a CoP itself, but a network from which CoPs can sprout, develop or be sheltered.

People come to CPsquare and its practice groups with different expectations that are culturally influenced. People's expectations cannot be taken for granted. They are not always obviously articulated, particularly without visual cues.

There is already an emerging culture (or cultures) in CPsquare. It cannot be taken for granted that newcomers or people on the periphery can see or understand this culture.

Sponsorship (for participation of people who otherwise not be able to afford to participate) is important for including people from different economic cultures.

Rather than developing cultural guidelines, we will refer to them as recommendations for good cultural practice.

Recommendations for good cultural practice

1. CPsquare leadership tasks:

- (i) Include CPsquare as a learning space for cultivating global literacies in the CPsquare charter.
- (ii) Develop a mission statement clearly articulating CPsquare's global purpose(s) and principles.
- (iii) Identify and value existing globally literate practices and practitioners in CPsquare as role models.
- (iv) Actively draw and engage a diverse member base.
- (v) Become a resource for people interested in the same set of global challenges so that they join CPsquare to learn and ask us to help them.
- (vi) Construct a workshop on global literacies in online learning spaces.

2. CPsquare culture(s):

- (i) Design for and facilitate ongoing articulation of, and reflection on, people's cultural, learning and communication expectations;
- (ii) Design for and facilitate ongoing articulation of, and reflection on, CPsquare culture(s);
- (iii) Given the open, changing and voluntary nature of CPsquare culture, encourage individual exploration and initiative (based on the concept of JDI – Just Do It);
- (iv) Develop a "culture" in CPsquare based on principles of mutual respect and equality of culture, such as:
 - respect for and ability to find joy in each other's culture and an approach to each other's culture based on equal partnership;
 - attitudes that assume the other person has something important and useful to say even if it may sound strange at first;
 - attitudes where we learn from others' different viewpoints;
 - respect and pride in our own culture(s) as one of many different and valid ways of approaching the world;
 - willingness to be explicit and rationalize our own ways of thinking, and to hear alternatives without rushing to judgement;
 - preference for outreach, to continue to enrich the pot with yet more viewpoints;
 - extra efforts to reach across language and other barriers to connect;
 - ability to tolerate diverse views even if they clash at times and can't always be resolved simply (to be able to "hold the contradiction").

Logistics: summary of issues raised or discussed

CPsquare should aim to become an exemplar at being able to create an inclusive community and learning environment. This relates to geographical, professional, cultural and linguistic inclusiveness.

Logistical Guidelines & Communication Tools

There are different modes of technology available (asynchronous and synchronous) each of which represent easier or more difficult (or impossible) access to different groups of people.

Without due care, communication tool selection, such as an over-reliance on teleconferences, can create barriers to inclusiveness. The most significant barriers for teleconferences are costs, different time zones, lead-time necessary for planning a teleconference.

Access to information is another issue. It would be helpful to have one up-to-date front page that everyone can depend on for currency and reliability of information.

Communication and Planning Processes

Adherence by practice groups to processes and norms are vital for transparency, trust and inclusiveness.

Inclusiveness on a logistical or technological level is not enough *per se*. It is closely linked to inclusive discussion and inclusive moderating skills.

“Ramps” and graceful ways of bringing in guests are important.

Any such set of guidelines is a work in progress. There is not set of “known answers” for many of our questions. These initial guidelines will only be useful if they are discussed, implemented reflected on and improved.

Logistical Guidelines

1. Develop time-zone standards and sensitivities

- (i) Use GMT as the standard time zone.
- (ii) Have a shared time-zone bookmark.
<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/meeting.html>
- (iii) Consider repeat sessions of synchronous events if the anticipated participant time-zone spread is very broad.
- (iv) Give advance notice time for events and activities.
- (v) Specifically inquire as to which time zones may be represented before scheduling.

2. Select inclusive communication tools

- (i) Strive to make web-based asynchronous activity with e-mail notification and e-mail posting the primary mode of communication, applying other modes selectively and sensitively.
- (ii) Have a clear statement (up front in the introductory materials) of the selected/preferred technologies used by the group with the rationale for their choice. (See: <http://ts.mivu.org/default.asp?show=article&id=994> for some thoughtful questions about this)
- (iii) Have a visual map of groups, tools & activities.
- (iv) Use and adhere to a shared calendar.
- (v) Pilot events in different modes and find out the preferences/barriers for each member of the group. Share back to the group what is learned for future planning. (i.e. in the Coordinators PG and elsewhere).

3. Invite international logistical personal profiles

For example:

- due to costs, I generally can't do teleconferencess
- due to language, I prefer text
- due to learning style, I prefer teleconferences
- I'm a total introvert, send me a personal email
- due to my work situation, I cannot do calls during working hours

4. Create an inclusive online interface which includes reflective spaces

Examples:

- personal journals
- on-line mentors
- welcome wagons
- off-topic social spaces
- quiet spaces away from the turn-taking conversations to compose, annotate, craft and revise.
- shared writing spaces (i.e. blogs and wikis)
- summary spaces

5. Leverage the strength of diversity

- (i) Accept and encourage working at different paces.
- (ii) Have a third ear for people we need to integrate.
- (iii) Use a range of technologies.
- (iv) Invite people in to CPsquare (as members? honorary guests? practice group guests?) who could bring new (deeper, wider, diverse) perspectives to its practices.
- (v) Have celebration of diversity as a state of mind.
- (vi) Learn to dance :-)

6. Promote inclusive discussions

- (i) Make it a norm that all members of a discussion welcome new people (not just the coordinator).
- (ii) Develop/encourage better asynchronous communication skills.
- (iii) Encourage active facilitation/animation/moderation of asynchronous discussions.
- (iv) Make sure that the norms of interaction are crystal clear and systematically enforced in an online event.
- (v) Organise “hosts” and host roles to bring guests into the online space.

7. Invite and give ongoing feedback

- (i) Keep these guidelines sparkling and alive by actively seeking regular ongoing feedback from group members.

8. Maintain and value good practice(s)

- (ii) Adhere to agreed/negotiated global literary practices.
- (iii) Elect a person in the group who is responsible for the above;
- (iv) Notice and encourage good practices. See an example of good practice from the Health Care Practice group in the annexe.

Language: summary of issues discussed and raised

CPsquare needs to take a lead in the complex area of language as a form of meaning-making, but with “eyes open”.

Different language(s) includes jargon from different areas i.e. from different *semiotic domains*. While many concepts are not easily translated into other languages it is important for an international community to have a shared understanding and translations of the jargon, core concepts and texts in their domain.

Discussions that take place in English in international groups work better if a “user-friendly” type of English is used.

Time is an essential component for multi-lingual participation and for discussions between people who don't speak one language with the same proficiency.

Sponsorship (for translations) is an important factor for multi-lingual groups.

Rather than developing linguistic guidelines, we will refer to them as language considerations.

Language considerations

General considerations

- (i) Acknowledge that language is an issue.
- (ii) Incorporate linguistic diversity as a design feature rather than an add-on consideration.
- (iii) Where possible incorporate multilingual participation as an opportunity for experimentation and learning.
- (iv) Don't underestimate the time and work required to work with big language gaps.
- (v) Work in teams – for design, implementation and participation.
- (vi) Take discussions more slowly (and with more depth).
- (vii) Allow time for reflection.
- (viii) Where possible have sub-groups working in the same language.
- (ix) If necessary, try to get translation and bridging help (and possibly sponsorship for it).
- (x) When translations are taking place, have a separate space for translation discussions.
- (xi) Have a hypertext glossary of basic CoP terms meaningfully translated into different languages and perhaps with a short definition.
- (xii) Use short, clear sentences and commonly used words. Provide definitions or a link to definitions of complex terminology and jargon.
- (xiii) Direct newcomers to sources of jargon de-coders and glossaries.

Some notes about user-friendly English

As a general rule, be conscious of the words you are choosing.

More specifically:

1. Avoid using obscure expressions (without an explanation).
2. Avoid using cultural-specific references (without an explanation).
3. Don't use abbreviations (without an explanation).
4. Be conscious of false friends between own language and others in the conversation. False friends are those words which sound the same in two languages but mean something different. For example. In Portuguese "**actual**" means *current* and "**actualmente**" means *currently/nowadays*.
5. *Latinize* vocabulary. "Simple" language in English is often more confusing for someone whose first language isn't English. For example: *extinguish* (Latinized) is easier to understand than **put out** ("simple" English); *investigate* rather than **look into**; *resist* rather than **hold out**; *reinforce* rather than **back up**; *cancel* rather than **call off**; *accomplish* rather than **bring off**; *complete* rather than **fill in**.
6. Use rich rather than lazy verbs. Examples: Instead of **do** (*perform, execute, undertake, conduct*); **put** (*locate, insert*); **get** (*acquire, obtain*); **job** (*project, occupation, employment*); **thought** (*conception, notion*); **guess** (*speculate, predict*).

Annexe 1: An example of good practice for logistical inclusiveness from the Health care Practice Group:

Here we see examples of:

- consciousness of the time challenge in call schedule
- a blend of phone and asynch
- use of text that plays multiple roles (*the following is both an announcement for a synchronous event that is sent out by email and it's the header of a discussion in Web Crossing*)

Learning Topic: CoPs and Healthcare, Dr. Alasdair Honeyman, Online Discussion starts July 16, Teleconference on July 23

July 23 on the CPsquare Teleconference Bridge, at 1900 GMT, 2000 GMT London, Dr. Alasdair Honeyman will discuss and take questions on CoPs in healthcare. His talk will be a mix of some basic points of perspective on CoPs and learning, and some thoughts regarding CoPs in Healthcare in particular. A chapter from Alasdair is attached for reading prior to the talk. This area will serve for the asynch half of our discussion. Alasdair is pressed for time currently, but will participate in the asynch areas as possible. Please note the teleconference time is chosen to cover as many time zones as possible, and make it possible for members from Japan, Korea, Australia, the Pacific, North America, South America, UK, Europe and Eastern Europe to join in.

Jim Palmer reflects on the logistical arrangements of the Healthcare practice group.

“Within the asynch discussion space I post additional comments on the topic, and pointers to resources. For time I am using GMT as the lead time, and mentioning also the GMT at the city of the presenter. This is a gesture of respect in a way to the presenter(s), and a second reference point to double check the time.

“As we have actually done with all our conference calls on topics (Lee Lefever on vendor supported customer communities; Janet Guptill on CoPs in Hospital systems; an ad-hoc member (margaret mcintyre) convened call to help with a CoP situation; and all upcoming Learning Topics, we have both an asynch discussion space, and a telephone event.

“I am calling our discussions Learning Topics now. The reference to Cross+Practice in the posting sample above is our effort to create synergies of various sorts by consciously seeking out topics that are cross practice. The facilitation of the online asynch and any phone work will be shared by persons from the respective practices.

“Resources, e.g. suggested readings, websites, audiofiles (when we become cool enough techologically to do that ;-)) are posted ahead of the asynch discussion and call.

“We are going to try to have any presenters on teleconferences available to also answer questions, and join in discussions online ahead of, and after the teleconference. Time delimiting this is respectful of the presenters time and puts some energy into the conversation. One possible challenge is with speakers from outside CPsquare, for whom, either the phone or the internet is what they afford in time to do.

On some topics presenters may just present online if they prefer, as I expect to do part of the Oct Cross+Practice discussion on Reflective Practice in Ed and HC.

Learning Cluster: I will mention briefly here that to maximize learning potential, we hope to offer Learning Clusters, for example, two asynch/telephone discussions relevant to Reflective Practice - one by John Parboosingh and colleagues on Physician CoPs, and one led by Bronwyn Stuckey/et.al. on Reflective Practice in Education and Healthcare. Resources, with recommended readings, perhaps other study points, will complement the discussions. I hope to have a third Reflective Practice/Self directed learning topic in October, TBD to round out the cluster. Around all this people can do an a la carte, or everything, approach, and learn in a self-directed/class mixture. All this together creates some intellectual mass hopefully. See a more thorough discussion soon of Learning Clusters in the HC-PG space, and i will cross post to the PG support space.

“We also as a group have been making good use of IM (sometimes with the twist of a time delay, e.g. seeing an IM reply the next day, etc.), email, and P2P phonecalls.”

(Thanks Jim)