



The LONG LIVE THE PLATFORM Conference

A Collective Report

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For the CPsquare community

ABSTRACT

Abstract - CPsquare members and friends gathered for a unique online conference to explore practices afforded by several different online community platforms. Seven conference calls punctuated three weeks of asynchronous threaded discussion and sandbox visits to eight working online communities around the world. Conference organizers devised a touring method consistent with the technology stewardship practice of perspective-taking. Participants felt that the experience was worth repeating and sharing with a larger audience, so they surveyed participants to recollect and consolidate what they learned. This report is the result. It describes the method of organizing the conference, the sustaining motivations driving participant roles, reflections of the conference organizer, and some of the memorable learning gained by the CPsquare community.

Introduction	2
I. Conference Organization	2
Structure	
Planning requirements	
Steps	
Roles	
Time investments	
II. Motivation and Benefits	5
Social	
Professional development	
Reflective practice	
III. Behind the scenes with the Conference Organizer	6
IV. Collaborative Consolidation of What We Learned	8
Collective Learning	
It's about the people	
The complexity of a living system	
What we might change the next time we do this	
Appendix	14
Platforms and Volunteers	



INTRODUCTION

CPsquare is an international community of professional practitioners whose general domain is social learning in communities of practice. Diversity of professional roles in its membership is prized for cross-pollination of perspectives across sectors, community domains, and functional responsibility (developer, designer, consultant, builder, researcher, or facilitator). CPsquare employs a discipline of inquiry-based research that contributes to knowledge-building in this emerging field. Twice a year, CPsquare stages an online Foundations Workshop to disseminate the distributed expertise of recognized Communities of Practice pioneers while beginning new investigations of field practices. Questions for this research are generated by teams of workshop participants, and often result in summary papers. As needed, at least once per year, a conference will develop around themes emerging from the research, wherein industry professionals will be invited to share experience through online site visits, threaded discussions, and conference calls.

The idea for the Long Live the Platform Conference was sparked by a project carried out by a group of participants in a Foundations of Communities of Practice Workshop (referred to here as “the Foundations Workshop”) six months prior. Workshop participants explored a number of technologies (platforms) that communities use with the needs and history of one or two different communities in mind. Earlier conferences and other projects in and around the community contributed ideas, a web of relationships and a style of inquiry. Conversation evolved on Web Crossing about how the conference might be organized.

Our report here is an organized redrafting of recollections from the conference organizer and conference participants.

I. CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

The CPsquare community did not intend for these tours we took together to yield a recipe for guaranteed success that anyone could use to choose a community platform. But, we believe that our touring process could be adapted successfully by people who are attempting to make purchase or design decisions. So what does this type of online conference look like? What does it require in the way of planning? Who does all the work? How long does it take? What are the parts or the recipe if another group wanted to do this?

Structure - Communities and community platforms were explored together. Conference attendees could be involved in the exploration of a given platform by reading a short description, by watching a short screen-cast, by participating in a discussion, and through direct observation. They were given guest or member access to the actual communities in some cases, archived samples for others, and a specially created working replica for the CPsquare community in one case. Visitors afterward participated in threaded discussions online using Web Crossing, which has been the platform home base for the CPsquare community the last five years. There, they commented on platform affordances

and inquired further of the people hosting the various communities. Conference calls with hosts and spokespeople took place on a phone bridge through Skype three or four days after access was granted to each platform. Call participants kept notes in a side chat and those notes were posted afterward along with an audio recording. A CPsquare newcomer, with others, spontaneously posted summaries of some call conversations and discussion topics. The conference organizer structured discussion headlines for each topic and emailed weekly announcements to subscribers. Additionally, three supporting papers written by CPsquare members were made available in the conference area of WebCrossing to weave into the discussions.

Community platforms to be explored were nominated by CPsquare members. Two or more members from CPsquare served in specific guiding roles for each tour. Being insiders, these people were sensitive to the types of things that CPsquare members would be interested in. Other roles were shared with developers, owners, or managers from each community, some of whom were also CPsquare members or alumni of the Foundations Workshop. (See appendix for a list of communities, platforms, and tour leaders.)

Planning requirements - The LLP Conference was preceded by a long evolutionary process that depended on certain conditions. There was no "conference committee." A sufficient number of group members were motivated to volunteer and invest the time. The CPsquare community possesses a group culture that values open discussion, participation, rotating leadership, discovery, and enjoys sharing perspectives.

Although CPsquare oftentimes functions as an organized mob, there is an appointed organizational leader who directs and shepherds all functions of the community, including the Long Live the Platform conference. Between early conversations in the months prior and the end of the conference, the conference organizer conservatively estimated spending two weeks planning. During the three weeks of the conference, he invested another 30 hours providing mechanical services like setting up guest access, recording calls & posting them, and posting chat transcripts. He also asked questions, posted to try to steer the inquiry, and participated in all the calls. More detail on that role is provided in Section III, "A balancing act: Reflections of the Conference Organizer."

Steps - The general steps to planning the conference were:

- Discuss conference purposes to arrive at a general philosophy that would accommodate the needs and perspectives of community leaders, platform vendors, and the community at large
- Invite members to nominate communities and platforms to visit
- Recruit volunteers for hosting roles from membership and likely communities
- Choose places with enough interest and announce a visit and discussion schedule in the membership forum
- Recruit more volunteers to help orient visitors and take responsibility for facilitating discussions
- Integrate registration payment system with email, welcome announcement and discussion subscriptions
- Improvise as new possibilities emerge, e.g. responding to the recognition that summaries or a final report were justified by the insights generated

Roles - Lots of attention and evolution has shaped the roles essential to our inquiry method. Past experience in CPsquare has shown that interesting content alone is not enough: events have flopped when social interaction was not supported by appropriate roles such as those used in the LLP Conference. A good bit of the evolution of the "visit roles" happened in the Foundations Workshop. They are always a challenge given diverse membership and an all-volunteer effort. The tour guide roles planned in advance of the conference were:

- **Platform spokesperson** - produces the "platform introduction" and addresses platform-specific items that come up in the discussion. Organizes highlights of the platform into a format that would be useful for others involved in online communities.
- **Visit coordinator** - attends to the overall coherence of the visit to the given community on the given platform. Researches the platform in order to distill what matters to the conference participants
- **Community host** - produces the "community introduction" and addresses community-specific items that come up in the discussion.
- **Platform support** - helps any CPsquare members who want to visit a platform with technical or logistical details.

There was an ensemble production aspect to these roles, since some of the platforms had empty slots and everyone was responsible for moving the conversation forward. Two other leadership roles emerged at the last minute and during the conference that proved invaluable – paper-presenting, and summary-making.

Papers - Three papers were posted for reading and discussion. One exploring social network platforms had been written as a culminating activity by Foundations Workshop participants and was presented alongside visits to the platforms reviewed in the paper. The second was a chapter from a forthcoming book on stewarding technology for communities of practice written by three long-time members of CPsquare. Together, these two papers generated discussion as to where to start when one approaches platform choice for a community. The third paper had been the Masters thesis for one of the platform spokespersons and was shared because it detailed the process of choosing and designing community tools.

Summaries - Summarization has always been a goal at CPsquare, but we haven't managed to do very much of it. A third of the way into the conference, a new person joined and immediately started posting summaries of conference calls after transcribing and lightly coding them with a qualitative research reporting method. Conference participants commented extensively on the usefulness of these summaries, so this person tried to maintain the time consuming practice, and others started doing more summarizing of the platform discussion threads.

Time investments - Most **visit coordinators** and **platform spokespeople** spent 4 to 6 hours preparing and coordinating a visit. More time was invested depending on how many people new to each other were sharing duties, the type of visual aid they chose to create, and how many collaboration technologies were used in the process of preparing for the visits. At the other end of the spectrum, one platform spokesperson spent ten days making a screencast and preparing the community and another visit coordinator put in 25 hours.

Community hosts spent less time preparing, maybe 2 to 3 hours. People who volunteered to do **platform support** mainly functioned as contact people inside the respective platforms and did not report that it required any significant additional time. The time spent presenting and hosting discussions of the papers was incidental to other calls and discussion threads. Some participants felt the papers significantly complemented tours to platforms while others felt the reading added too much density of information over too short a period. Each summary required at least three hours.

A visit coordinator's experience

"I shared visit coordinator duties with one other person and spent about 25 hours doing this work, which I think is unusual for that role. I think this took that much time because we, the visit coordinators, had to do a lot of the work that the speaker was not able to do, such as create a screencast. To do the screencast, we had to do a lot of research on the platform in order to distill what mattered to the conference participants. We also spent a lot of time (several hours) trying to coordinate via multiple technologies (Skype, Elluminate) that kept crashing. The speaker was in Boston, MA, I was in Virginia, and the other visit coordinator was in England. Although the amount of time involved got a bit frustrating, I really enjoyed the collaboration between the speaker and the other visit coordinator. Her technological skills complimented mine, she taught me how to use Audacity, and was really fun and pleasant to work with. The speaker was a really pleasant person with a prodigious amount of experience and intelligence - I really enjoyed learning from him.

In addition to the time and activity associated with assigned community platform duties, volunteers were also just as active as other conference participants. They lurked and visited communities, took notes during calls, and posted to discussions for upwards of ten hours a week.

II. MOTIVATION AND BENEFITS

In addition to the 30 people engaged in tour leading, twenty more registered for the conference. Some people visited all the communities and lurked or posted almost daily, while those constrained by other commitments spent as little as three hours. Why would so many professional people dedicate so many hours of their busy lives exploring community platforms? Although it was a tremendous amount of work, the safe social access to a level playing field of diversely experienced people enhanced individual and collective professional development.

social benefit - Conference leaders valued making connections with others in and outside the CPsquare community, through both the preparatory collaborations, and with the communities they joined during the tours. For those new to the CPsquare community, volunteering in a leadership role offered a way to quickly assimilate through contribution to the work of the group. Most participants, leaders and discussants alike, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to "get inside", take a look, play, and connect. They welcomed the safe intellectual climate and a turn at bat. And if they didn't express this, the enjoyment came from offering the opportunity to better understand their own community and show off their platform.

professional development - Like most professionals, community of practice practitioners and technology stewards **need to keep current** on trends, hot topics, new tools, and knowing who to turn to for expertise in their field. Technologies such as web 2.0 tools and content management platforms emerge rapidly and there is a lot to be known about any one of them. Communities that might discover and use the tools are complex. Our particular conference process offered people the opportunity to interact with each other while actually using the different tools and observe how the tools interact with the users. Discussion with those in community management roles brought understanding of what is needed to keep platforms in tune with needs of a community.

Many leaders found themselves in **new and unanticipated roles** within their own organizations as a result of their conference experiences. For instance, one was able to set a professional example for the role academics at their polytechnic should be filling in terms of linking local and international organizations. Another learned how to use new presentation software while collaborating with a team member halfway around the world. Some people gave professional leads to those in a design or development role. A visit coordinator volunteered out of curiosity as an interested outsider but gained insight and connection with the organizers of that community.

The conference's more project-based approach and lack of hierarchy gave people an opportunity to experiment with their professional role – and do it in front of an authentic audience. One person commented, "I felt like I was a freshman who got away with sitting in the cafeteria with the graduating seniors."

reflective practice - Community hosts and platform spokespeople enjoyed sharing and comparing notes with others who were using the same platform for different communities. The conference provided them a focus to reflect on their own design's strengths and weaknesses and get feedback on their own practices. The CPsquare group is made of community of practice practitioners, but many are also technology stewards. Those who practice in both domains enjoyed looking at the communities and the platforms from both perspectives.

III. A BALANCING ACT: REFLECTIONS OF THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZER, John Smith

Because the role of a community organizer and technology steward is so crucial to its successful endeavors, we want to highlight the thinking that led to the LLP conference. Lynn Tveskov interviewed John afterward and provided him with a transcript from which these reflections were drawn:

We have organized quite a few **community field trips** in the Foundations Workshop. They take a lot of coordination but can provide invaluable context for considering all kinds of issues, including the use of technology. In the early days, when they were set up as a solo activity, participants were given an URL and sent off to visit and report back. That approach was generally unsuccessful. The field trips organized for the LLP Conference built on recent experience in the Foundations workshop where we made a field trip as social a process as we knew how to do. Our field trips allowed conference participants to pull up a chair “virtually” and have an interactive and social visit with an insider from a community. Questions could cover technology, community goals, facilitation, membership, community orientation, etc. - all those elements that are woven (and sometimes blurred) together in a successful community.

CPsquare, like every community of practice has its **energy peaks and valleys**. The previous fall had been a period of somewhat low energy. The LLP Conference was a real energizer for CPsquare. The Conference became an example of the value that the CPsquare community can generate. In the LLP Conference we hit a very productive balance between old CPsquare members, guests, and members who joined the community because of the LLP Conference. This combination provided enough diversity, coherence, social history and collective development of a joint repertoire. People were able to talk effectively about the issues that mattered to them. Several months later, people still find value browsing through the conference discussions.

Organizing the conference required balancing several conflicting goals:

Planning: “hurry it up” vs. wait for it to mature. The idea of this conference had been brewing in the community for months. At a certain point it was necessary to name a date, try to pull all the threads together and run with it, hoping that volunteers would rally round a proposed agenda. I then pushed a conference planning process, a statement of benefits to members and guests, a new procedure for member registration, distinct levels of participation, platforms and speakers. It was overly ambitious but in the end it worked for most people.

Timing: concentrate the schedule vs. spread it out. The original thinking was to spread out the platform visits across 6 months or a year. It was clear that concentrating all the visits into 3 weeks would limit depth, but it enabled comparisons between platforms and enough feverish intensity to make participation exciting. A very concentrated event forced everyone to prioritize their time, although many people felt like they missed out on conversations they wished they’d joined.

Scheduling: plan it in advance vs. plan as you go. Given that there was a lot of uncertainty in the conference agenda and inquiry process and not really enough time to plan it all out, I was not able to plan the conference out completely in advance.

After the target date was set, a high-potential platform spokesman seemed to evaporate, not responding to emails or phone calls. The schedule for the third week was not really worked out till the middle of the second week. This required an act of faith from participants, but it also let us figure out what was working and what was worth emphasizing.

Staffing: recruiting volunteers vs. just making it happen. Although the LLP Conference was designed as a community event staffed by volunteers, there was plenty of work that I could not delegate (or could not figure out how to fast enough). Volunteers participated in the event's discussions, helped design it, and signed up to present. But recruiting volunteers could not really be delegated (nobody else knew quite as much about who to ask or what to ask them for). There are many other administrative tasks that could not easily be delegated to volunteers such as guest registration, access control, platform management, teleconference logistics, etc., etc.

Protocol: role flexibility vs. role adherence. The conference roles were intended to involve the community, spread out the work, insure that technical, leadership and other perspectives were woven together in the conversations, and build distinct levels of participation into the conference structure (e.g., from casual observers who were just taking a look to people who were ready to spend a lot of time because they were facing an impending technical or community design decision). The roles and work plan could only be a goal since some slots could not be filled and in some cases individuals had to and were able to span several roles.

Focus: presenting individual perspectives vs. developing a negotiated understanding. Tapping the expertise of people who know a lot about a particular platform (e.g., leveraging the knowledge of a vendor, a programmer, or a technology steward) would produce interesting presentations but it would not necessarily help us develop a deeper understanding of the issues. We had found that "other people's perspectives" on community platforms could be quite intractable and incomprehensible – "my platform is better than yours and I have no idea why you still like yours." CPsquare is full of people who disagree on many, many issues, including the platform we use for our own discussions. This led to our focus on specific cases, personal experience, and platforms as seen through the eyes of a specific community (not an abstract or "general" community). That was followed by a free-wheeling conversation about the evidence we gathered together. This was quite ambitious, risky, and labor intensive, but it seemed essential to try.

The LLP Conference was a great experience for me. I learned a lot about organizing a collective inquiry as well as about the platforms and communities that we visited.

IV. COLLABORATIVE CONSOLIDATION OF WHAT WE LEARNED

Many of the conference tour volunteers attended our final wrap-up call where we attempted to summarize what we had learned. As usual, we recorded it, took call notes, and even produced a near-verbatim transcript. We in CPsquare have often talked about ways to share group learning after our events. We (John and Sue) thought we could do

something like a paper or podcast that would incorporate the summaries that had assembled throughout the LLP Conference. Sue however felt the summaries were isolated and disjointed bits that would be challenging to weave into a document. So we created a summary survey inspired by a thread on the online facilitation list, "How many list members does it take to change a light bulb?" (Day after day, people had added punch lines which, taken together, provided a rich vignette of crowd wisdom on the topic.)

The survey we created using notes from the wrap-up call was not your typical post-conference evaluation. We emailed participants encouraging them to participate in an online survey that prompted the conference participants to remember what happened and add to our learning story. Responses from the survey platform were posted in a conference Wiki, so people could easily look at the results as a whole. This report has been composed using most of the collected voices from thirty-five people, and we think this survey and reporting process itself is a unique and valuable way to conclude a conference. While we were at it, we unanimously confirmed that there was interest in conducting more tours over time, so we tried to gather advice on improving the experience.

COLLECTIVE LEARNING

For all the different benefits people gained, participants unanimously agreed that seeing the platforms from each other's perspectives, and in the natural environment of community use, generated new insights. It was useful to check one's own theories and practices against others while looking at a series of community-platform combinations. The tours compared one platform to another, but did so through the eyes of real communities. The resulting historical context is substantially different from a "feature shoot out table", and we concluded that this approach is substantially more powerful.

We did not emerge with anything close to one participant's expressed wish: "a matrix of features and rating for each platform with one, two or three stars on each measurement, such as 'cost', 'good for small communities', 'good for multiple communities', 'ease of interface', 'flexibility to grow over time', etc..." They, with others, found the touring process very helpful, but it did not get them to a place of **making a decision** about the platform to invest in for their community.

What we learned does not necessarily add up in a "logical way-- we got a little too close to direct experience." We did however manage to get beyond the "tourists view". From terms like "affordances" to acronyms like YOYOW (You own your own words), some newer to either communities of practice or technology stewardship learned a language to discuss the issues – acquiring a lot more than just the words. This collaborative visiting and discussing method with people who were involved in the community design seemed an extremely efficient way to learn, but you had to be there. The historical context, the give and take, and the "live witnesses" seemed essential to understanding what we saw.

IT'S ABOUT THE PEOPLE

The most important element in any community of practice (CoP) is the people, the users of the platform. We wanted to know, “what platforms work for a given community?” The answer has everything to do with the needs of that community. Many people ask CPsquare members “to provide us with a CoP”, but they have no sense of what their community might yet be in their own context. For professional networks, you cannot take the line that “build it and they will come.” It's virtually impossible to design or select a platform which will adequately serve a community which has not clarified its own needs and desires. The technology merely facilitates already established processes, and these have to be assessed and understood. (Of course, over time a platform seems to subtly influence its inhabitants, too.)

Making apparent - We need to remember that a significant part of a community's repertoire is invisible on the screen. Therefore, a community practitioner or technology steward must explore to perceive the needs of the group, the characteristics of its individuals, and then imagine their potential interactions with available tools.

Balancing tensions - Polarities and tensions such as private and public spaces or individual and group usability must be balanced. The example of March of Dimes Share Your Story illustrated how it is possible to provide an intimate space for a community while still ensuring that individual postings could be found with a Google search.

Evolving - As people develop more and more experience with a given set of tools, they become more comfortable with them and conversely become un-comfortable with others. We discussed two groups and their preferences, digital natives and digital immigrants. While we debated the meaning and constraints of those terms, we agreed that many younger people, along with older folks who work actively with new technologies, tend to expect the personalization and rich media available in their tools. They turn their noses up at tools that are lacking those features. At the same time, many older people and those who have mainly worked with texts will face a very steep a learning curve in the absence of the familiar. Hence, selection of one platform may discourage some users, even though it is aimed at lowering the “ease-of-use” threshold for people.

Blending - The different ways that communities use a platform are so unique, that it can be difficult to tell that the underlying software is the same. What the platform offers becomes really secondary to the people who understand how to blend it into something that works with the needs of the community. For instance, in the DITA example, Bob Doyle saw “a platform” where others would see five different “software packages.” He made them work together as one “community platform” through the use of standardized nomenclature, common menus, visual conventions, and consistent navigation elements.

Planning with change in mind - It is a matter of concern how web 2.0 tools provide more personal – and constantly changing – constellations that can be mashed up to serve in more than just one community context. The dynamics of personal configurations may or may not work well with community configurations. Some issues in this area are membership authentication, security of internal data, and use of RSS feeds.

There is a balance between choosing something that is relatively easy to use initially but easy to outgrow, versus something that has the potential to invoke or graft on additional features that the community may need as it grows. The fact that we can use so many different tools and can combine them in so many ways is good but also scary.

Platforms themselves are emergent and experimental. Successful ones have adapted with the evolution of the communities that inhabit them. Platform architecture does however create a sense of what can be accomplished. Sometimes a functioning community simply outgrows their “home” and abandons a platform, as we learned from Bev Trayner’s work with CIARIS. The CIARIS platform now particularly suits the knowledge work focus with its access to tagged library objects, while Q2Learning Xpert is adeptly good at conversation management.

Because needs change as the community and tools evolve, and neither the community nor the facilitator can predict the direction that will take, we have to be able to live with that uncertainty of having chosen a platform with too few versus too many features. Investment in support functions (facilitation, moderation, etc.) then is arguably the most important element in developing a CoP.

THE COMPLEXITY OF A LIVING SYSTEM

The platform concept is bigger than most of us originally thought. Among other things, we found a general pattern that the people in a community of practice tend to use more than one platform to hold its communication activity together (e.g., an email application **and** Skype **and** a wiki **and** a content management web). We learned that there are many platforms to choose from and that both the process of choosing, implementing and configuring one is quite complex. As we became aware of the centrality of this complexity, someone suggested the conference name should have been, “The Long Living Platform”.

Indeed, the merging of people, passions, projects, and places into communities through the use of emerging technologies exhibits characteristics of a living system. Some surveyed wished for a simple decision matrix. We decided it is necessary to reframe the task of community platform choice into a complex problem where there are no simple answers. However, the touring process we used presented us with the ways communities untangle the complexities they face. Their stories and the patterns we saw created useful exemplars.

We learned that much goes into the rich back-end of preparing a platform for current and future needs. Tenderness and care go into many designs and facilitation. We also looked at the transition process of moving a community onto a different platform, and how to keep users of the established community in process. We got hints of – and would like to learn more about – the skill-sets involved in all of this and getting access to those skill sets behind the scenes.

Seeing what goes on, and the challenges involved, was helpful and further emphasized why we should be paying attention to things that drive technology stewardship. A technology steward needs to be on a continuous learning, integrating, and expressing

journey throughout the evolving fertile platforms soup. That is a practice in itself, perhaps requiring its own forms.

WHAT WE MIGHT CHANGE NEXT TIME WE USE THIS PROCESS

The start gate - We should get off to a more compelling start by sharing our objectives, bulleted quick benefits, and a "hip" front- or overview page, visuals, etc.

Try some multimedia? - It was asserted that as digital immigrants we tend to be more bent toward print media – and some wondered what our platform would look like if it accommodated more multimedia – a question they were also asking in their own work. We wonder how much of what we do/think/produce will translate readily into multimedia and how much of that can be portable? What if we didn't have print-based media? How else might we engage each other? Could papers could be turned into 10 minute YouTube videos so people could see AND hear the authors?

Go deeper - We got little glimpses of "the platform administrator's view" – one style of being a technology steward – but we could go much deeper and be more thorough about checking out that view of the world. **Techno-ethnography** has a lot to offer and the community context that we give it in CPsquare is hugely important. We might also solicit more talk about the **social and political impacts** of platforms on the communities that inhabit them.

One tour per week - Most of us surveyed agreed the conference was great as a package – even though few could read and engage in every aspect given other obligations, travel, etc. The date- and time-specific events tended to create a sense of urgency – real or imagined – and collectively we sense that this event was perhaps too dense for the allotted time span. Recognizing that it takes time to soak up a complex experience such as one of our tours, it was suggested that in the future we focus on fewer platforms per week, or even just one. Or, we might want to keep everything and just do each one over a longer time-frame.

Involve even more people in more tasks - Keep ongoing sign-up sheets, and remind people they need to sign up for tasks. Perhaps those members who **blog** might be able to **commit to that role** for a session.

Consider new types of roles - If participants are not clear about what they want to get out of the event, and are unable to make sense of it, they tend to miss out on the value. People really need to think about what they want ahead of time. To help mitigate that, there may be a role for people who are “paying attention” to specific questions.

Intend to create collective intelligence - As we accumulated our collective insights, our own community of practitioners had a difficult time summarizing conversations in a sharable way. Summaries of calls were very helpful, but we need a better way to separate and organize information to make it more apparent what is where.

Increase access - Thank goodness the conference calls were recorded and the discussion threads and papers stay accessible in Web Crossing. Will conference participants have access without CPsquare membership? Could there be a wiki to archive the conference? “We need to be careful that we share ‘knowledge’ that is useful and accessible.”

This point highlighted the tensions between insiders and outsiders about how public to be with our content. While everyone seems to agree we don't publish enough of our learning beyond our community and more sharing out needs to be done, managing a “public face” for CPsquare would be a pretty large undertaking. It raises questions, “Are we after a broader audience?” Some are not overly invested in a CPsquare take on things, and it’s not certain anyone else is either. “Mostly we seem to be a group of practitioners gathered for our own benefit, which is perfectly fine.” Nevertheless it was proposed that we “Do these things in public, not behind a password. Let the world summarize, not just our community. Networks are more scalable than communities, as much as we love our communities.”

Speaking of the way our platform works for the conference, “The way it is seems valuable and workable for those inside now”. “To a certain extent these conversation threads are by nature emerging and interwoven, and they are not just open to the public.” Some people would like us to explicitly commit from the beginning to “getting the stuff out there” in such a way that it promotes CPsquare and offered these solutions:

- **Consider publishing** outcomes, debates and summaries via **the (public) blogosphere**, and making more use of wikis to consolidate key learning points. “Writing wikipedias is a tremendous idea.” Or, “possibly pay someone to report on CPsquare conversations & doings on one of CPsquare's blogs. Expect an average of 2 postings a month. Have the job rotate so that nobody does it for more than 6 or 9 months in a stint.”
- **Present at conferences** - Also, people could sign up to write the stuff up and include it in the public resources area of CPsquare. Some would welcome the opportunity to get themselves better known in the field by doing some of that writing.
- **Tagging** – being more systematic about tagging or making it more visible would be helpful. The <http://del.icio.us/tag/cp2llp> tag was only used by a small group and did not receive public comment or discussion within the conference.
- **Help newcomers more** – When the forum does open to people beyond the CPsquare community, we need to provide friendlier and (‘clearer’) access for non-members. Part of the work is around **navigating** the very deep pages of text.
- **Interpret** - It seems everyone has a slightly different vocabulary and set of acronyms. It would be helpful to ask speakers to please speak using more common language. Or at least someone take on maintaining a living glossary.

APPENDIX

Communities and platforms:

Moodle, Facebook and Ning - Best practices in e-learning community

Platform spokesman - Sylvia Currie sjc

Platform support - (Moodle) Sylvia Currie Moodle Sandbox:

<http://scope.lidc.sfu.ca/course/view.php?id=7> -- (Facebook) Caren Levine

Community host - Helen Walmsley <http://crusldi1.staffs.ac.uk/bestpracticemodels/>

Visit coordinator - Caren Levine

Custom-made for [the CIARIS community](#) using Ruby on Rails

Visiting the CIARIS community Platform spokesman - Bev Trayner

Platform developers - David Ramalho, David Bluestein

Community hosts - Carla Alcobia, Vicky Giroud-Castiella, Simone Rosa

Visit coordinator - Josien Kapma and Bill Williams

Learning 2.0 Event xPERT eCampus by Q2learning

Platform spokesman - Bill Bruck

Platform support - Val Bock

Community host - Bill Bruck

Visit coordinator – Barb McDonald

"DITA users group" Word Press, Drupal, Moodle, MediaWiki, Timeline, Eclipse, and Yahoo Groups

Platform spokesman - Bob Doyle

Community host - Bob Doyle

Visit coordinators - [Lynn Tveskov](#) and Cristina da Costa

March of Dimes Share Your Story - Web Crossing

Platform spokesman - Tim Lundeen and Michael Krieg

Platform support - [Lynn Tveskov](#)

Community host - Nancy White, James Soohoo (MoD), and Darcy Milder (MoD)

Visit coordinator - Elena Goubanova

Story-telling in Organizations community of practice - Ning

Community host - Shawn Callahan

Visit coordinator - Daryl Cook

CompanyCommand - Tomoye Ecco

Platform spokesman - Eric Sauve

Platform support - Eric Sauve

Visit coordinator - Bronwyn Stuckey

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sue Wolff (<http://www.suewolff.com/>) is a researcher, technology steward, and consultant living in the Seattle area. She is using her Masters in Educational Technology from Pepperdine University to get involved with global service work that relies on networked communications technologies. She assists nonprofits in discovering and implementing online tools to accomplish organizational objectives, especially in the area of knowledge management and community development. Prior to this transition, Sue worked in public high schools on numerous education reform initiatives, most notably small schools, career pathways, and the senior culminating project. Her first connection with CPsquare was during the Long Live the Platform Conference. When she is not hiking or camping in the evergreen northwest, Sue compulsively collects and analyzes data to better understand the way living systems behave. Her research often focuses on the intersection of the Internet, web 2.0 tools, and personal or professional identity.

John D. Smith (<http://www.learningalliances.net/>) is a technology steward, coach, community leader, and evaluator for communities of practice. He helps communities, their leaders, and their sponsors with the design and production of community events, with community self-assessment, and with the selection, configuration, and use of technologies. He has been a community leader and technology steward for CPsquare, an international community of practice on communities of practice, since its inception. He has been working on a book with Etienne Wenger and Nancy White entitled “Technology stewardship for communities of practice” for 3 years. Over the past 8 years he has offered workshop about communities of practice and technology with Etienne Wenger and other members of others of CPsquare. He is trained in dialog, evaluation, and data analysis. He worked at the University of Colorado as a planner, institutional researcher, administrator, and technologist. He received a Bachelor’s degree from St. John’s College and a master’s degree in planning and architecture from the University of New Mexico. He was born and raised in Humacao, Puerto Rico.

Lynn M. Tveskov (<http://abalone.typepad.com/>) is proud to call herself primarily a learner. She’s also a community of practice mentor and advisor, technology steward, collaborator, social activist, traveler and artist. She works at United Way of America (UWA). Lynn’s primary expertise is in adult learning and human performance management. At UWA, her goal is to help local United Ways become exceptional at getting to the problems behind the problems and bringing people and organizations together to bring about real community change. At UWA, she co-created UWA's first e-learning program, Introduction to United Way. Lynn is enjoying the transition to collaborating on and sharing learning primarily in online environments with people from around the globe, using the communities of practice model. She has served as a mentor for CPsquare’s “Foundations of Communities of Practice” program, and works as a process leader and advisor on several United Way learning communities. Lynn has a degree in Anthropology with an emphasis on Southeast Asia from Hamilton College, and earned the American Society for Training and Development’s Human Performance Improvement Certificate in 2005.