



Learning in Later Life

A European Network

New activating media
in further education for older
people in the civil society

Neue aktivierende Medien
in der Weiterbildung älterer
Menschen in der europäischen
Zivilgesellschaft

Nouveaux médias dans
l'apprentissage pour
des hommes âgés dans
la société civile

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web4seniors
communication – cooperation – participation

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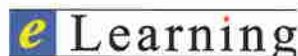
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Arbeitsgruppe



**New technological developments
and their uses in seniors' education**

Neue technologische Entwicklungen
und deren Nutzen in der Seniorenbildung

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ICT use standardisation at the UPUA as tool to achieve the social integration and active participation of seniors.

The University of Alicante : Development of digital technologies and senior training programmes for social integration and personal development

The University of Alicante has gone through an ongoing technological evolution which has had a direct impact on the teaching/learning process, increasing accessibility to educational resources and contents, as well as communication with teachers and researchers, and encouraging lifelong learning. It is in the latter area that access to ICTs has proved critical both in the self-learning process and in the development of over-50s' personal autonomy.

The incorporation of state-of-the-art Digital Technologies, along with the social changes operated in the educational process, has led to conceptual and methodological shifts based mainly on a more active group-based, collaborative, tutored, self-learning work on the part of students, which has been supported on a continued monitoring of the process and an ongoing assessment by part of the teaching staff.

During the last few years, these changes—which are customary for young university students who enrol in the UA with a professionalising specialisation or lifelong training goal—have been affecting the 50+ students who started their university training at our university in 1999, within the 'Permanent University' (UPUA) programme, which is not a professionalising one, strictly speaking, since it is addressed to a segment of people between 50 and 92 years of age, the largest subsegment of which corresponds to the 60-75 age-group, i.e. the retired, non-active population. However, the UA regards personal development and active citizenship as being sufficiently important to justify the promotion of this programme.

In addition to a wide formative offer, distributed between the knowledge areas of Legal and Social Sciences, Humanities, Health and Social Action, Experimental Sciences and New Technologies, Image and Sound, a huge effort has been made to promote a training scheme based on the development of educational programmes through the use of the Internet, virtual tools and platforms, and other advanced multimedia materials. For this purpose, a set of accessible, open means and systems have been developed that will allow students to access the information more easily. Central to this strategy has been the importance assigned to the disciplines and courses which focus specifically on Information and Communication

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Technologies (ICT), which have combined all the above with the aim of facilitating intellectual activity and access to science, technique and culture, thereby favouring social integration through the development of mechanisms and initiatives that encourage self-learning and the implementation of autonomous projects by students.

After taking part in a programme academically coordinated from the UA, the UPUA students will be able to continue their intellectual development and socio-cultural involvement in initiatives and projects focused on various knowledge areas (Literature, Sociological Research, Art, Environment) in which they are particularly interested, for which the ICTs in general and the virtual platforms in particular have come to be considered decisive, essential elements.

As for the actions and resources developed by the UA, they have made it possible to implement online training tools such as "Campus Virtual", as well as a number of portals and services that have been grouped together under the name of "www.ua.es 2.0", including: **Portal Audiovisual** (born with the objective of managing, preserving and giving access to a collection of audiovisual resources available at the University of Alicante used for teaching and researching purposes); **RUA – UA Institutional Repository** (institutional deposit of the works in digital format resulting from the research and teaching carried out at this university. RUA is structured in three sections: RUA Teaching, RUA Research and RUA Journals); **OCW-UA – UA Open Course Ware** (new space that tries to provide society with the contents of the programmes and knowledge that the University generates); **BlogsUA** (periodically updated weblogs for the university community which compiles chronologically texts or articles by one of several authors, with the most recent one appearing first. The author always has the freedom to leave published or remove what he considers appropriate.); **Urgent Notification Service** via SMS through 'Campus Virtual'; the **free-access wireless network** all over the University Campus and, finally, the **campaigns** to facilitate the purchase of laptop computers by students.

Thanks to all of the above, most UPUA students have now joined the ICT World, and senior students' autonomous initiatives have been set in motion, among which stand out:

- Club EuCoNet
<http://www.ua.es/en/upua/programasint/proyectoEuconet/euconet1.htm>;
- Blog **Palabras** (words) <http://www.proyectosupua.es/palabras/node/18>;
- Portal of the **AAUP** (Association of UPUA Students and Alumni)
<http://www.ua.es/upua/aaup/>

all of which are currently working at full swing. Other initiatives find themselves on a development stage, e.g. Conversations at the UPUA; the 'Senior Citizens and Communication' Observatory http://www.aepumayores.org/compartido/WEB/2006_07/mayoresyMedios/mayoresyMedios_en.html; and the Portal of Experience (an Intergenerational Observatory). Information about them all can be obtained at http://www.proyectosupua.es/index_en.html

The accumulated experience has allowed us to check how important it is to develop didactic strategies which foster groupwork, collaboration and interaction (both teacher-student and student-student) in virtual teaching/learning contexts. The activities proposed within the different projects and initiatives have generated a high degree of motivation and involvement on the part of students during the years of existence of the Permanent University programme, and the wide range of institutional resources and support means provided by the UA have had significant spin-off benefits for students and, consequently, for the society in general and the older adult segment in particular. This fact is illustrated by the active

participation in the forums and in other environments where the different individual and collective works and projects have been developed.

This is why, we will insist on creating and developing active learning environments within our future educational and planning policies, which means encouraging and implementing didactic strategies based on the constructivist theory, taking into account the training needs, the application contexts and the specific characteristics of senior students. Apart from virtual environments, emphasis will also be laid on the previous planning, not only of the materials which will enable the students to obtain the information, but also of the use of technological resources and a pedagogic design oriented to favour a certain type of learning and the previous training level that can enable them to access those resources in a non-traumatic way.

A longer version is available on the conference website.

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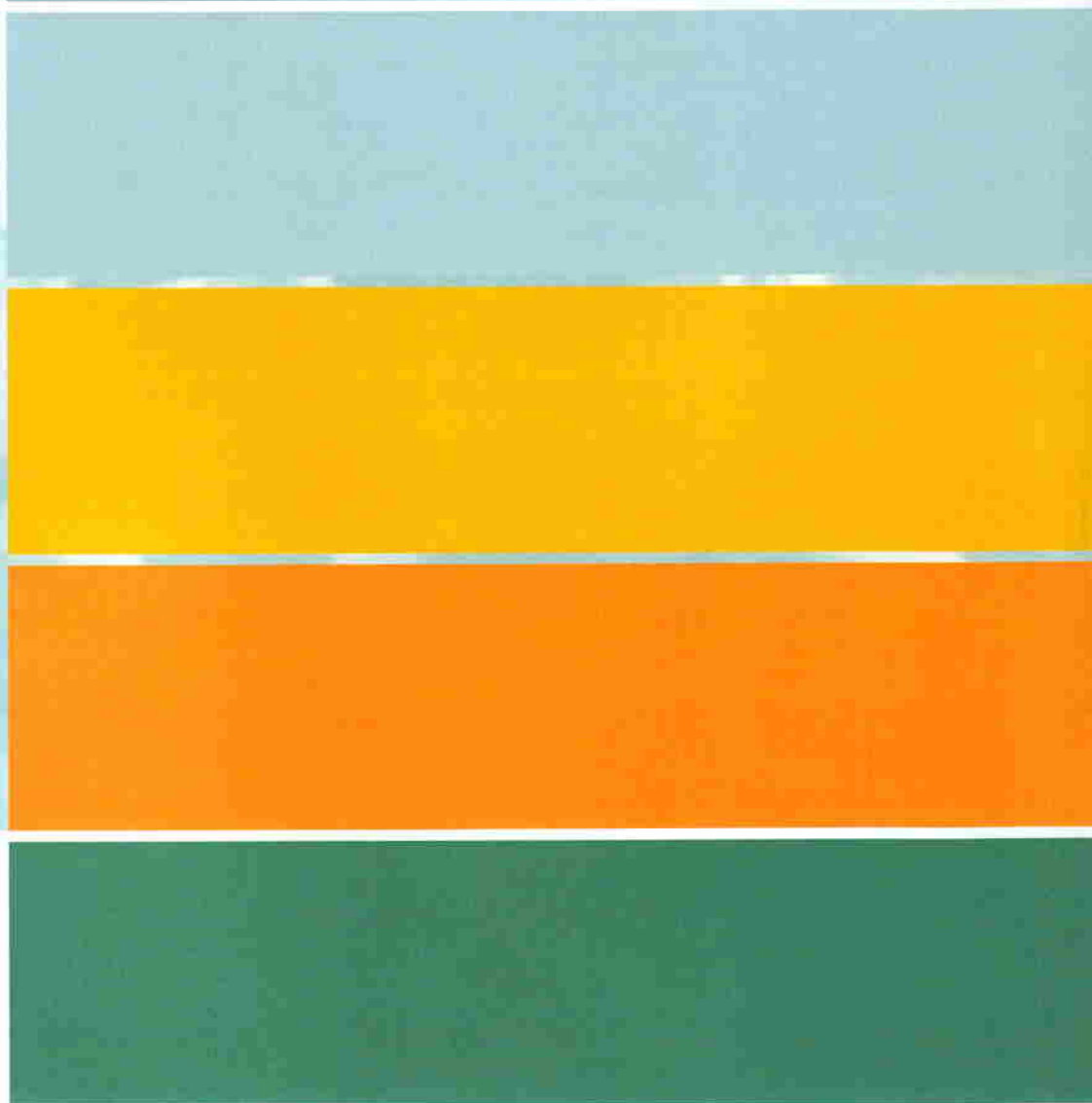
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