Computing at School

RUNNING A CAS TEACHER HUB

REPORT

February 26 - 27 2010
University of Warwick
Thirty members of the CAS working group met at the University of Warwick on February 26th-February 27th 2010 to consider ways in which the local teacher networks - hubs - can be developed. Ideas were swapped, discussions were had and training was received. This brief report summarises our activity for both those who attended and the wider membership of the working group.

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# Contents

1 Schedule ................................................. 1  
2 The Teachmeet ........................................... 1  
   2.1 Round table discussion - University of Warwick and Coventry BCS activities . 1  
   2.2 Unconference Lite .................................... 2  
3 Scratch .................................................... 3  
4 Links with HE ........................................... 3  
5 Running a hub ............................................ 3  
6 Greenfoot .................................................. 4  
7 Feedback and Action .................................... 4  
8 Summary .................................................... 5  
9 Delegate List ............................................. 6
1 Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:30 pm</td>
<td>Registration and Light Refreshments</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:20 pm</td>
<td>TeachMeet Event</td>
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<td>8:50 pm</td>
<td>Close (retire to the bar or restaurant)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Reflections from the TeachMeet</td>
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<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Scratch Workshop I</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 am</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
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<td>11:15 am</td>
<td>Scratch Workshop II</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00 pm</td>
<td>Practical Aspects of running a hub</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30 pm</td>
<td>Links with HE - discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:00 pm</td>
<td>Lunch (opportunity to tour the lab and CS dept)</td>
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<td>2:00 pm</td>
<td>Greenfoot Workshop I</td>
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<td>3:30 pm</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
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<td>3:45 pm</td>
<td>Greenfoot Workshop II</td>
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<td>4:40 pm</td>
<td>Plenary and Next Action Steps</td>
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<td>5:00 pm</td>
<td>Close</td>
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2 The Teachmeet

A new experience for many of use, the concept of the Unconference\(^1\) which is being used with very great effect in different settings. One of the manifestations of the unconference is a Teachmeet which sounds exactly like the style of event which would make an excellent hub meeting. Daniel Needlestone, our Teachmeet guru, came and took us through the process and explored two different ways in which a Teachmeet can operate:

1. Round table discussion
2. “Unconference Lite”

2.1 Round table discussion - University of Warwick and Coventry BCS activities

Irene Glendinning summarised many of the activities that are being undertaken in partnership with the University of Warwick, BCS (Coventry branch), Coventry University, LEA, other schools and colleges in the region as well as industry partners.

Much discussion followed about the ways in which the various partners have been able to work together. They are helped enormously by having a supportive and active LEA advisor.

\(^1\)http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unconference
It eases the flow of communication enormously. Irene’s presentation can be downloaded from www.computingatschool.org.uk/ZurichPaperV3.pptx

2.2 Unconference Lite

Time was short for a full Teachmeet event, but it was sufficient to get a feel for this style of event with a number of short presentations from both those physically present as well as from those who were listning and watching online. The dynamic of having other participants online who were able to contribute comments on screen as well as give a short presentation was very exciting. The collaborative and supportive atmosphere seems to be a feature of the style, engendered no doubt because no-one is setting themselves up as an expert on a topic, we are all participants hoping to pick up some new ideas from colleagues and friends. It certainly convinced me that the style would work really well for some of the CAS hub meetings.

To summarise some of the features, Daniel writes:

“Rules for Presentations:

- Presentations can be anything computing related. You could demonstrate how you teach a particular topic, a brief intro to a great piece of software or just something interesting that you wish to share.

- Try and make your presentation relevant to classroom practice, the best presentations are often the ones that are easy for teachers to replicate in their classroom. REMEMBER - what seems run of the mill for you may be mindblowingly innovative to someone else!

- You don’t need to be a teacher to present, if you are a University representative and have something to show that you think will be of interest to teachers please do.

- Presentations mustn’t be commercials or trying to sell something.

- Do avoid talking through powerpoints and don’t think you need to have one! Many similar events ban them! We’d rather see something in action!

The links to all presentations given:

  Kongregate http://www.kongregate.com/labs
- John Woolard: Southampton ITT http://www.pgce.soton.ac.uk/IT/Training/DAactivities
There is another Teachmeet planned, being hosted by Mark Clarkson in April [http://teachmeet.pbworks.com/TeachMeetComputingNE10](http://teachmeet.pbworks.com/TeachMeetComputingNE10)

3 Scratch

Margaret Low and Jean Bodycote took us through the ever popular Scratch. Whilst this product has been used a great deal by teachers there is still need for further training and ideas of how to introduce this to our colleagues. A very informative session which gave us a relaxed and useful way of using Scratch with first-time users and a very useful lesson plan to take away. Examples were shown from the Scratch gallery and the folks from High Wycombe shared some of the work developed by their students. It’s a powerful product and many teachers are asking for training in using Scratch. If CAS can begin to develop training materials for this purpose to be delivered by the hubs ....? Any volunteers?

The presentations and teaching material can be downloaded from [http://www.computingatschool.org.uk/files/scratch.zip](http://www.computingatschool.org.uk/files/scratch.zip)

4 Links with HE

A discussion led by Dr Steve Russ (Warwick University) on ways in which HE can support local teachers. A number of important ideas were suggested:

- A road map of courses for computing-related subjects to enable teacher to advise their students on sensible choices
- “Computing in the classroom” - open days run by Kent Univeristy
- Courses for teachers e.g. A Level training (SimonH, Steve Bunce and others to discuss further)
- School conferences for sixth form and interested Year 11 students.
- Sharing of resources from HE to schools e.g. [www.dcs.warwick.ac.uk/modelling](http://www.dcs.warwick.ac.uk/modelling) and follow:
  - Software ⇒ Web Eden ⇒ Further examples ⇒ The Sudoku Experience.

5 Running a hub


- Two meetings a year - autumn and spring term. Summer term is the teacher conference.
• Twilight or during the day? Inconclusive. Both have worked. It is easier to get teachers to attend during the day if the focus is on training.

• Publicity - hard to reach teachers but several groups may offer support e.g. HE Outreach, Vital, STEM, LEA. The twitter community can be very fruitful as is the TES ICT Forum.

• Registration - www.eventbrite.com. CAS have used this tool very successfully for handling invitations and registrations. The primary advantage of using Eventbrite is that all hub leaders, with access, can see what events are being planned. CAS organisers can also see at a glance what is happening and can therefore promote the events on behalf of the hub organisers. If planning hub meetings please use Eventbrite! Simon H can set hub leaders up under the CAS account. Email him to get this set up for you.

• Marketing - CAS have produced a template flyer for sending as an email attachment to prospective attendees. The common branding helps to identify CAS in the minds of teachers.

• Finance - There is some. The needs should be small, perhaps refreshments, food, travel expenses for speakers. Ask! No hub leader should be out of pocket for running a hub meeting.

• Keep Simon H informed about all meetings planned; post notices to the Google Group so that all can see what is going on.

6 Greenfoot

Greenfoot is a popular environment for introducing pupils to the concepts of programming. Suited to an older age-range than Scratch with enormous scope for activities in the classroom through the use of Greenfoot scenarios. One of the most popular Cambridgeshire hub meetings focussed on Greenfoot. There is scope for running several meetings using Greenfoot and comparing different approaches to introducing it into schools.

Michael Kolling took us through some of the introductory scenarios, also featured in his Greenfoot book, and also showed the latest developments within the Greenfoot community - the **Greenroom**. "We have just opened the *Greenroom*, a community site for teachers for all things related to teaching with Greenfoot. The Greenroom offers functionality to share and browse resources, comment, ask questions and have discussions. We are hoping to create a lively community of teachers with a strong common interest. It is new, so currently only a limited number of resources are there, but among the things we already have is material that helps migrating from CS Unplugged to Greenfoot, material that helps moving from Scratch to Greenfoot, and Karel the Robot in Greenfoot."

Presentation and supporting materials are at [http://www.greenfoot.org/workshop/](http://www.greenfoot.org/workshop/)
7 Feedback and Action

- CAS need a membership list which can be searched, sorted, by area
- Using Google maps to locate where CAS members are based and include this online
- List of possible presentations that could be used as the focus for hub meetings
- A mailing list of computing teachers, able to be processed by region or key stage.
- List of possible speakers - again by region
- Assistance with co-ordinating activities with other bodies e.g. BCS, HE, Naace, STEM, Vital.
- Development of the CAS website to enable professional networking

8 Summary

CAS exists because the folk who have signed up commit their time and energy to supporting each other. In the short time that CAS has been in existence an enormous amount of excellent work has been done. In many ways it is surprising that we have been able to achieve as much as we have! We hope that several more hubs will be established as a direct result of our meeting. There is always room for more. If you think you might be interested in being the local contact for a hub in your area please let Simon H know and he will do all he can to support you in getting it established.

Similarly, the action points suggested above need people to volunteer to help us out with. The geographical membership list would be SO useful. Can anyone help?
Mr. Daniel Needlestone  |  dneedlestone@rickmansworth.herts.sch.uk  
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