ONLINE CONTENT CURATION TOOLS: TECHNOLOGY REVIEWS

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SECTION 1: AT-A-GLANCE PLATFORM COMPARISONS

There are myriad online content curation tools now available. We have selected a range of the most well-known platforms and piloted and assessed them as support tools for use in higher education. The list is not exhaustive, and will be updated periodically as we review additional platforms. The technology reviews should be read in conjunction with our Best Practice in Online Content Curation guidance, which includes introductory videos on the core concepts and tips on how to get started.

We have assessed each platform against a set of criteria. **Please note**: these are our personal views on the platforms as we have experienced them at the time of publication – you may disagree with our assessment, and the platforms may have been upgraded since our review. Please contact us if you think there are inaccuracies, broken links, etc. The assessment categories were scored out of 5, which we have colour-coded for ease of use:

Descriptor	Score	Colour
Excellent	5	
Good	4	
Reasonable	3	
Acceptable	2	
Poor	1	

Additional commentary and discussion can be found in the more detailed reviews in Section 2.

November 2018

KEY FEATURES

This section focusses on the main initial questions when assessing a platform for use. Internal/external refers to whether the platform is supported by Cardiff University (Internal) or not (External). **NON-CARDIFF UNVERSITY READERS PLEASE NOTE**: scores in the implementation domain are heavily influenced by whether Cardiff University specifically supports a platform; please take this into account when assessing a platform for your own use. Visibility refers to whether the content that is posted on the platform can be seen by anyone, i.e. it is public, or whether access can be restricted in any way, either to just yourself or a selected group of people. Licences are usually free for individuals, but there are often premium versions that cost; platforms with education licences are also highlighted. We have also provided links to the main website, but also to the help/introductory pages so you can easily access additional up-to-date information. We have listed platforms in alphabetical order.

Please note: two platforms in the original review list, Del.icio.us and Storify, have now been withdrawn from use. This highlights the issues of sustainability in selecting your platform. Please take care and ensure you have a back-up and exit strategy!

Platform	Internal /External	Visibility	Licences	Link to website	Link to Tutorials and FAQs
Blogs (any provider)	**Internal (Cardiff blogs) and External**	**Public**	**Free; paid premium versions available externally**	**http://blogs.cardiff.ac.uk** **https://wordpress.com**	**https://learn.wordpress.com**
Diigo	**External**	**Public or private options**	**Free for individuals; teacher licence is free; other paid options available**	**https://www.diigo.com**	**https://www.diigo.com/about**
Flipboard	**External**	**Default public, but "boards" can be made private**	**Free**	**https://flipboard.com**	**https://about.flipboard.com/help-center/**

November 2018

Pearltrees	**External**	**Public, but private options in paid plans**	**Free; paid premium options, with teacher options also available**	**https://www.pearltrees.com/**	**http://www.pearltrees.com/s/faq/en**
Pinterest	**External**	**Default public, but can make "boards" private**	**Free; business versions exist but are not needed for education**	**https://www.pinterest.co.uk**	**https://help.pinterest.com/en**
Scoop.it	**External**	**Public; can have private topics with paid options**	**Free for individuals; education licences exist, are cheap, but hard to find; premium**	**http://www.scoop.it**	**http://feedback.scoop.it**
Sway	**Internal (to Cardiff University)**	**Public, private, or accessible only by those with a link**	**Part of Office 365; supported by Cardiff University**	**https://sway.com**	**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcg6DGO9hpI &list=PLXPr7gfUMmKyE22-YpbgcDfr2SXEO7-qX&index=1**
Yammer	**Internal (to Cardiff University)**	**Public or private groups**	**Part of Office 365; supported by Cardiff University**	**https://www.yammer.com/**	**https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/Say-hello-to-Yammer-02ac514e-cf1d-4060-9cde-6038ca812ede**

Platform	Aesthetics	Navigation	Editing, commenting	Ease of adding content	Ease of Sharing	Search functions	Following topics and collaboration	Editing notifications
Blogs (any provider)	4	4	4	2	3	3	2	3
Diigo	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	3
Flipboard	5	4	4	5	4	1	3	3
Pearltrees	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4
Pinterest	4	3	3	5	5	2	4	4
Scoop.it	5	4	4	4	3	4	5	4
Sway	4	4	4	3	4	1	1	1
Yammer	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4

November 2018

IMPLEMENTATION

Platform	Training needed for wider use	Authentication /ease of login	Ease of access	Licence implications	Hosting solutions	Backup	Resilience	Exit strategy
Blogs (any provider)	2	4	4	5	5	5	4	4
Diigo	2	3	4	3	3	4	3	4
Flipboard	4	3	4	3	3	1	1	1
Pearltrees	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	4
Pinterest	3	3	4	3	3	2	3	2
Scoop.it	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	2
Sway	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	3
Yammer	4	5	5	5	5	5	3	4

November 2018

SECTION 2: PLATFORM REVIEWS

Within this section you will find detailed reviews of the curation platforms listed in the at-a-glance section. They follow the categories above, but with a commentary. All the pages are hyperlinked below, and from the at-a-glance section. The links at the end of each review will take you either to the at-a-glance section or back here.

Platforms:

1. Blogs
2. Diigo
3. Flipboard
4. Pearltrees
5. Pinterest
6. Scoopit
7. Sway
8. Yammer

Category	Score
Aesthetics – presentation, layout Most blogging websites have a standard layout, and many have a variety of images and designs that can be used to improve the aesthetics. There is usually quite a lot of flexibility with Wordpress sites, although there may be restrictions on editing University-based sites. Curated topics will be presented in a linear fashion, like an online tutorial, similar in structure to a standard blog post.	4
Ease of navigation – including to the post's original source page Navigation is usually straightforward on blogging websites – they will usually have an archive list, often arranged in sections/topics as well as by date. Links can be included to the original source page, but you will likely have to add this in manually, rather than it being automatic as is the case when using a specialist curation platform.	4
How easy is it to edit / alter layout / annotate / comment? Editing blogs is usually easy, although for full control some training will be required, as Wordpress for example is not the most intuitive interface. Other website builders, eg www.wix.com have software that can design the site for you, but this will mean you lose some flexibility. For most curation applications, this isn't a big problem, however. The main limitation is that the structure cannot be altered easily from a linear model.	4
Ease of adding a post to the topic page eg does the platform use a bookmarklet? How easy is it to do this from both desktop and tablet / smart phone? Quality of search engine hosted by the platform itself Adding blog posts is easy, but capturing web-pages, other than through copy-and-pasting the web address (URL) is not a standard feature of these platforms. There are no bookmarklets, or search engines on the blog sites, and searching for other curators requires standard search strategies on the internet or within a particular hosting site. Sites will work with mobile devices.	2
Ease of sharing posted resources, eg on social media, within Learning Central etc Sharing posts on social media is standard for blogging platforms, but embedding within Learning Central is not possible, although you can post a link.	3
Are topics searchable eg by tagging? How easy is this to do? Blog posts can be tagged on most platforms, and posts searched (within a given blog) for relevant material. This is dependent on the curator manging the blog and site overall, however. Searching across blogs, as noted above, is done via standard web-based searching.	3

Can you "follow" topics or a curator? How easy is this to do? How easy is it to collaborate?	2
You can follow blogs you are interested in, but this typically requires an RSS feed to be set up to alert you. It isn't an intrinsic feature of the platforms, and so multiple tools are needed to do this effectively. Collaboration is possible, with contributor and editor privileges available on many platforms, but this usually means you only involve those you know well, or invite to write a post.	
Can notification settings be edited? How easy is it to do this? Yes, although it can be challenging to find the settings buttons!	3

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – user issues

Category	Score
What training would be needed for wider use? Blog platforms such as Wordpress, while powerful, do require some training to use. There are lots of "how-tos" available, and many new website builders make the process much more intuitive, but there is still an investment of time needed that exceeds set-up times of other methods of curation.	2
Authentication – does it require any authentication to contribute? Does it require new user accounts be created for staff and/or students? Can LDAP or Shibboleth authentication aid single sign on? There is sign-on needed for all blog platform editors. Within the University this is done through single sign-on.	4
Access: can it be accessed from PC, tablet, and smart phone? Can it be accessed directly from Learning Central? Access is generally good for blogging platforms for various devices, but as with most curation editing and writing is best done on a laptop or desktop computer.	4

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – managing the system

Category	Score
License implications – By using the service what are the terms and conditions of use? With there be an SLA with the provider? Wordpress software is freely available to download, so there are minimal issues with licencing. Other blog providers may have more stringent terms and conditions, but these are usually standard.	5

November 2018

Hosting solution – Is it hosted or requires a CU server installation? Cardiff University hosts Wordpress on its servers. This can also be done on a smaller scale for users using their own or external hosting.	5
Backup – How are resources backed up? For the university sites, blogs are backed-up through the usual IT processes. Externally there would be more risk, but if a large well-established company is chosen for hosting this should be minimized as they all back-up user accounts.	5
Resilience – What happens if the platform fails/company goes bankrupt? What are the downtime statistics for the past 12 months? How often is maintenance scheduled, is it communicated to users, does the system have to go offline and if so for how long? As noted above, if the university or a well-established website-hosting company are chosen to host, there should be minimal problems. Most other blogging websites are also fairly resilient, but paying attention to back-up is still important.	4
Exit strategy – Can the resources be exported and used elsewhere? Yes, usually RSS feeds can be set up, and blog-posts are more text-based and are often held as an original file before uploading to the blog platform in any case.	4

Other comments / issues arising during the evaluation:

Blogging platforms are powerful tools, but are not set up with curation as the primary use. They can perform well if a linear structure is needed, but do not have the range of functionality of other platforms. They therefore work best for specific purposes, for example if you are putting together a tutorial-style collection, or wish to comment more extensively on a resource collection than is possible with other platforms.

Hyperlinks:

DIIGO

User interface

Category	Score
Aesthetics – presentation, layout The Diigo website itself looks a bit clunky – very much like an older social bookmarking site with a list of bookmarks and some commentary, not particularly attractive, particularly compared to its competitors. The Outliners feature is better, as it not only provides more flexibility in presentation, but allows you to organise the collected resources into topics with section headings, bullet points, and a mix of text and links. But still a bit text-heavy. Videos do embed though, which breaks up the text.	3
Ease of navigation – including to the post's original source page Navigation is relatively easy, and links well to source pages. These can also be viewed within the Outliners. Working out what each bit does is not very obvious – I wasn't sure what an "Outliner" was initially!	3
How easy is it to edit / alter layout / annotate / comment? Annotation of web-pages is the best feature from Diigo – you can do this as you browse with the extension tools, and these are saved to your Diigo account and so are there when you return. Highlights, comments etc can be added. Within the Diigo website it is a bit more difficult, and you can only really edit the order effectively in the Outliners. Commenting is straightforward.	4
Ease of adding a post to the topic page eg does the platform use a bookmarklet? How easy is it to do this from both desktop and tablet / smart phone? Quality of search engine hosted by the platform itself Diigo has a browser extension – relatively easy to install, but can be a bit clunky – the Diigo tool is fine for adding annotations, and saving is possible, but it is sometimes tricky to work out if you have actually done what you had intended. Thankfully every save goes into your library, so any additional actions can be done from there.	3
Ease of sharing posted resources, eg on social media, within Learning Central etc Posted resources can be shared via social media, and they can be allocated to an Outliner from the point of selecting it using the bookmarklet, and comments and tags added at that point too. The resources are automatically posted to your library whether shared elsewhere or not. It is much harder to share a link to a whole group – the only real way to do this is to share the URL of the group. Outliners can be shared by generating a sharable link, or exporting and effectively copy-and-pasting. There are a variety of other options to generate tag clouds and other widgets. But there is no easy way to generate an html widget that links via Learning Central.	3

Are topics searchable eg by tagging? How easy is this to do? Yes. Tagging is easy, and is relatively intuitive. Tag clouds can be generated for embedding in other sites.	4
Can you "follow" topics or a curator? How easy is this to do? Yes, easy to follow people and topics.	4
Can notification settings be edited? How easy is it to do this? Yes, notifications can be altered to a degree through settings, but some notification settings are harder to find (and therefore harder to turn off!)	3

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – user issues

Category	Score
What training would be needed for wider use? Training would be needed, and more than just a short introductory session as this is a harder tool to learn how to use than others we have reviewed.	2
Authentication – does it require any authentication to contribute? Does it require new user accounts be created for staff and/or students? Can LDAP or Shibboleth authentication aid single sign on? You need to set up your own account (this is free). It can't be accessed through the university.	3
Access: can it be accessed from PC, tablet, and smart phone? Can it be accessed directly from Learning Central? Diigo can be accessed via apps and a website. The mobile apps are quite good, and all link up well. It is not quite so good from Learning Central, although a tag cloud can be embedded, where a click on a tag will take you to a list of resources in Diigo with that tag.	4

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – managing the system

Category	Score
License implications – By using the service what are the terms and conditions of use? With there be an SLA with the provider? This is single-user led – a university-wide solution is probably not suitable. But this is no different to the other curation platforms reviewed here.	3
Hosting solution – Is it hosted or requires a CU server installation? Hosted elsewhere. This could create issues with sustainability, particularly in the event that the company goes out of business.	3
Backup – How are resources backed up? The Diigo servers are presumably backed up, but there are ways to capture the content in other ways through RSS feeds, and you can export (i.e. download) from the site into spreadsheets. If you purchase premium upgrades, Diigo will also cache (i.e. store) the webpages you have annotated, so you don't lose anything even if the website no longer is active. It is therefore less vulnerable than most other platforms, and is a good option if you are looking for a more robust base for your online working.	4
Resilience – What happens if the platform fails/company goes bankrupt? What are the downtime statistics for the past 12 months? How often is maintenance scheduled, is it communicated to users, does the system have to go offline and if so for how long? Long-term resilience depends on the company viability. It is a longstanding and leading site however, so less likely to fail.	3
Exit strategy – Can the resources be exported and used elsewhere? Yes – export functions are available, and can be exported in a variety of formats. This does depend on which part of the site you are exporting from though!	4

Other comments / issues arising during the evaluation:

There are some great features with Diigo, particularly with annotating and highlighting directly on web-pages, and mixing the captured content with your own commentaries. It seems to work well, therefore, as personal knowledge organiser for the web. The collaborative aspects are less obvious, and as it is harder to use and looks less attractive and not as well laid out as other tools, it doesn't immediately pull you in. Its functions cross over with OneNote, although they do complement one another in many ways.

November 2018

FLIPBOARD

User interface

Category	Score
Aesthetics – presentation, layout The look and feel of this platform on Tablets is 'magazine-like', and makes for an enjoyable browsing experience. This experience is less impressive on smaller screen smart-phones and using desktop browsers.	5
Ease of navigation – including to the post's original source page Each item is presented in the order in which content was added (i.e. most recent first) but cannot be searched within the Flipboard magazine. Once the creator has signed in it appears that one can create unlimited content magazines, allowing the creation of very specific content collections with limited – but targeted – content. Tapping/ clicking on each item takes the viewer to the original source.	4
How easy is it to edit / alter layout / annotate / comment? The content can be reordered/ removed easily once signed in. Comments can also be made easily for items added.	4
Ease of adding a post to the topic page eg does the platform use a bookmarklet? How easy is it to do this from both desktop and tablet / smart phone? Quality of search engine hosted by the platform itself Content within other Flipboard magazines can be easily added when signed in – on all platforms - by tapping/ clicking on a '+' symbol which appears with content items. When browsing the web, content can be added using a bookmarklet (and allow the curator to add a comment, and select which magazine it is going to go into). The internal search engine in Flipboard is good for social media results, and for content within Flipboard magazines, but is not good enough for a replacement for a conventional browser.	5
Ease of sharing posted resources, eg on social media, within Learning Central etc Content and magazines can be emailed, or shared via Facebook and Twitter via a link. The magazines can also be embedded in a webpage. Sharing via Learning Central could be achieved via weblinks (I haven't tried to embed a magazine in LC).	4
Are topics searchable eg by tagging? How easy is this to do? Content items can't be tagged.	1

| Can you "follow" topics or a curator? How easy is this to do?

Magazines can be easily followed – if the viewer has a Flipboard account. Viewing content online via a desktop does not require the viewer to install Flipboard, but viewing on smartphones and tablets does.	3
Can notification settings be edited? How easy is it to do this?

Notifications (when content has been reflipped, or when the magazine has been followed) can be edited but this is not something that I have done – there is a help section with steps to follow though! | 3 |

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – user issues

Category	Score
What training would be needed for wider use?

Minimal training required – content creation is intuitive, and easy to incorporate in your workflow. | 4 |
| **Authentication – does it require any authentication to contribute? Does it require new user accounts be created for staff and/or students? Can LDAP or Shibboleth authentication aid single sign on?**

User accounts would need to be created by staff, although magazine creators can invite others to contribute to the magazine via an email invitation, so a magazine for a course/ module could be created by one person in a team rather than all members having to sign-up.

Co-creation of content with students could be via email invitation (e.g. for a small group in Years 1 and 2), with the tutor as magazine creator (then students don't have to sign up to Flipboard unless they want to access content on smartphones/ tablets). Invited members can be removed when necessary. | 3 |
| **Access: can it be accessed from PC, tablet, and smart phone? Can it be accessed directly from Learning Central?**

Access can be achieved on multiple platforms, but in my opinion is best on Tablets. I have used links to magazines on Learning Central, but do not know if the embed function would work. | 4 |

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – managing the system

Category	Score
License implications – By using the service what are the terms and conditions of use? With there be an SLA with the provider? There is no SLA with the University, and terms of use are provided here: https://about.flipboard.com/terms/	3
Hosting solution – Is it hosted or requires a CU server installation? Externally hosted.	3
Backup – How are resources backed up? There is no way (that we can find) to back up your magazines or download your Flipped weblinks from the Flipboard site.	1
Resilience – What happens if the platform fails/company goes bankrupt? What are the downtime statistics for the past 12 months? How often is maintenance scheduled, is it communicated to users, does the system have to go offline and if so for how long? This is difficult to predict – it is externally hosted, so could fail. This would be problematic for a site where backup options are unavailable.	1
Exit strategy – Can the resources be exported and used elsewhere? There does not appear to be a facility to do this on the Flipboard site.	1

Other comments / issues arising during the evaluation:

Flipboard is an attractive and easy to use curation platform, and great for presenting online magazines. It doesn't have the same options for backing up your resources though, and comments on resources are somewhat in the background.

Hyperlinks: Return to At-a-glance comparisons

Return to list of platforms

November 2018

PEARLTREES

User interface

Category	Score
Aesthetics – presentation, layout This is now excellent, and much improved over previous versions which used a tree-like structure and lacked some flexibility as a result. Now it has a layered file-like structure, not dissimilar to Diigo's outliners, but more aesthetically pleasing. Collections and subsections can be seen easily, but commentaries are not visible by default.	4
Ease of navigation – including to the post's original source page Navigation is fairly intuitive, and doesn't take too long to get used to. Everything is well laid out, the navigation buttons are clear, and the organisation of resources (if you spend the time) makes navigation easy. Clicking on a curated resource post takes you back to the original resource page.	4
How easy is it to edit / alter layout / annotate / comment? Editing posts can be done, and altering the layout and organisation of resources is straightforward with multiple options. Full editing and commenting can only be done in the premium versions however, which include a discounted teacher version. The functionality, in highlighting, editing, changing images and so on is fairly powerful in the upgraded paid versions, and similar to Diigo although organised in a different way. Commenting is "behind" the main post, i.e. you have to click on the "comments" icon to see it.	4
Ease of adding a post to the topic page eg does the platform use a bookmarklet? How easy is it to do this from both desktop and tablet / smart phone? Quality of search engine hosted by the platform itself Adding a post is very easy, and perhaps the most flexible of all the curation tools reviewed here. A bookmarklet is available, and easy to install by following the instructions from the "Tools" menu. You can also upload your own documents, including videos and add your own notes. There is no search engine for the web as a whole on Pearltrees (but I don't think this is really needed); the search function for collections of other curators is effective and brings up relevant material for you to explore. The functionality is remarkably good on a mobile device as well.	5
Ease of sharing posted resources, eg on social media, within Learning Central etc Sharing is also very flexible on this website – embedding the collection into learning central and other websites using html "cut and paste" is as easy as it could be, and displays the whole collection very well once embedded. Specific sections can be shared like this, or the whole collection. Sharing to social media is at the touch of a button, and the link can also be shared using a QR code generated from the website itself.	5

Are topics searchable eg by tagging? How easy is this to do?	4
Topics are searchable, and the search function allows you to specify where you wish to search, e.g. within your own account or within Pearltrees as a whole. It is possible to tag, but this is much less intuitive than other sites, and is a weakness. The structure that Pearltrees brings, however, does help to mitigate this.	
Can you "follow" topics or a curator? How easy is this to do? How easy is it to collaborate?	4
Following is done by "subscribing" to collections, and you can add other curators to your "connections". You can also "team-up" with other curators on a topic; if you are the originator you retain control and can invite and remove others as required. Thus, building a network of interested others and collaborating as the need arises is well catered for. It could be improved if the networks were more easily visualised – at present this is presented in the form of a list.	
Can notification settings be edited? How easy is it to do this?	4
Notifications are quite easy to set – you just need to find the settings and change them as needed.	

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – user issues

Category	Score
What training would be needed for wider use?	3
This would require some training, but it is not a difficult website to use, and is comparable to other curation websites.	
Authentication – does it require any authentication to contribute? Does it require new user accounts be created for staff and/or students? Can LDAP or Shibboleth authentication aid single sign on?	3
Accounts are needed for staff and students individually if you want to curate your own pages, but can use social media log-ins if you are so inclined. Browsing collections, if they are public, does not need a sign-in.	
Access: can it be accessed from PC, tablet, and smart phone? Can it be accessed directly from Learning Central?	4
Access is good, and from all devices listed above. Learning central access, as noted above, is good, and can run from within Learning Central itself.	

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – managing the system

Category	Score
License implications – By using the service what are the terms and conditions of use? With there be an SLA with the provider? No SLA – individual use. However, education plans do exist, so it is possible to use it across institutions, but this would need to be discussed directly with the company.	3
Hosting solution – Is it hosted or requires a CU server installation? External hosting – cannot be hosted by the University currently. It is not clear if institution use would mean server installation.	3
Backup – How are resources backed up? It is possible to export your bookmarks from the site. In premium versions, the webpages in your collection are archived, so you can still view them even if they are removed.	4
Resilience – What happens if the platform fails/company goes bankrupt? What are the downtime statistics for the past 12 months? How often is maintenance scheduled, is it communicated to users, does the system have to go offline and if so for how long? This seems reasonably resilient as present – Pearltrees has developed and improved over time, and there is no indication of any problems. The facility to back-up (see below) helps protect against problems.	3
Exit strategy – Can the resources be exported and used elsewhere? Yes – they can be exported, eg as an html file, which preserves all the links.	4

Other comments / issues arising during the evaluation:

Pearltrees has come a long way since it first started. It is now in the top-tier of curation platforms in our view, with an easy-to-use interface, good organisational structure, and some improved network features. The facility to export is welcome, but other formats would be helpful. The teacher and premium versions have better features and are reasonably priced, and at the top level include some of Diigo's best features, i.e. the ability to annotate and place notes on curated webpages/resources.

Hyperlinks:

November 2018

PINTEREST

User interface

Category	Score
Aesthetics – presentation, layout Looks great, as it is image-based, and videos can be run from within it. However, commentaries are not obvious, and the titles on the pins are small and the description minimal, which can make finding what you want difficult as they layout encourages you to click on images that look like they might be good, with little else to base a decision on.	4
Ease of navigation – including to the post's original source page Navigation is reasonably intuitive, but it is not always obvious where you are browsing, and it is surprisingly hard to work out how to follow other people's boards. You can easily get back to source pages if you need to, but need to click on the pin and select the "Visit" button. The search function is good however, and it easy to get going, and the tutorials in the help centre are excellent and should be viewed before starting.	3
How easy is it to edit / alter layout / annotate / comment? This can be done, once you have learned what the different icons do. Editing is easy with each pin, and comments can be added to your own pins or to others. Changing the layout of your board is currently limited to deleting pins, or copying or moving them to another board, although Pinterest does report that it is working on a feature that will allow boards to be split into sections.	3
Ease of adding a post to the topic page eg does the platform use a bookmarklet? How easy is it to do this from both desktop and tablet / smart phone? Quality of search engine hosted by the platform itself This is very straightforward with the bookmarklet, although you need to look through the various icons to find it! As noted above, searching within Pinterest is very easy, and throws up usable material most of the time.	5
Ease of sharing posted resources, eg on social media, within Learning Central etc Sharing boards and pins is easy – accounts can be connected to social media sites, and embed codes can be generated to link boards or profiles into Learning Central, although learning technologist support might be needed if you are unfamiliar with the latter.	5
Are topics searchable eg by tagging? How easy is this to do? Boards are not easy to search or organise and there is no tagging. Searching largely require you to browse to find what you are looking for.	2

November 2018

Can you "follow" topics or a curator? How easy is this to do? Both boards and curators can be followed, but this is not particularly intuitive, as you need to click on the image of the curator and/or the board name under the pin to navigate to the relevant pages, and then click the "Follow" button, when it at last becomes obvious what to do.	4
Can notification settings be edited? How easy is it to do this? Notifications can be set in your home page, by clicking on the account icon.	4

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – user issues

Category	Score
What training would be needed for wider use? Pinterest is easy to use once you have learned the basics, which shouldn't take very long. Integrating into learning central is likewise not a significant barrier, so this platform could be used with relatively little effort for teaching. However, it is not supported by the university.	3
Authentication – does it require any authentication to contribute? Does it require new user accounts be created for staff and/or students? Can LDAP or Shibboleth authentication aid single sign on? Accounts need to be set up by individual users.	3
Access: can it be accessed from PC, tablet, and smart phone? Can it be accessed directly from Learning Central? Access is easy from all types of hardware, as the apps work well, as does the website. Links and widgets can be added to Learning Central to aid linking to the website.	4

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – managing the system

Category	Score
License implications – By using the service what are the terms and conditions of use? With there be an SLA with the provider? The licences are free, but Pinterest is not supported by Cardiff University IT.	3

Hosting solution – Is it hosted or requires a CU server installation? Pinterest is hosted externally.	3
Backup – How are resources backed up? This is not clear	2
Resilience – What happens if the platform fails/company goes bankrupt? What are the downtime statistics for the past 12 months? How often is maintenance scheduled, is it communicated to users, does the system have to go offline and if so for how long? No information on this, but Pinterest is a major player in the curation market and looks here to stay.	3
Exit strategy – Can the resources be exported and used elsewhere? No, there does not appear to be a facility to do this.	2

Hyperlinks: Return to At-a-glance comparisons

Return to list of platforms

November 2018

User interface

Category	Score
Aesthetics – presentation, layout Sccopit presents material in well laid out, magazine-style collections, with most recent posts at the top and commentary below. Popular tags are right at the top, which makes navigating easier. The banners can be customised with the premium licences. Headlines and main pictures are grabbed, which adds to the attractiveness of posts, and all are appropriately attributed.	5
Ease of navigation – including to the post's original source page Navigation is straightforward, as it is a case of scrolling down the page browsing posts; navigating to the original post is easy. There is a search feature, and if you manage your collection well with tagging then visitors can reach posts they are interested in more easily. Recent posts appear near the top, so it works a bit like a blog in this regard.	4
How easy is it to edit / alter layout / annotate / comment? Editing is easy; it is mainly a case of finding the right button. The only layout change that can be made is altering the position of a post on the page. Adding a commentary to a post you have scooped, or commenting in another collection is straightforward.	4
Ease of adding a post to the topic page eg does the platform use a bookmarklet? How easy is it to do this from both desktop and tablet / smart phone? Quality of search engine hosted by the platform itself Scoopit has a good bookmarklet add-in that works well in browsers. Comments can be added in the pop-up window, image from the webpage to display selected, and tags selected. The bookmarklet also allows you to share to social media directly when posting to Scoopit. The desktop version is the best; the tablet and smartphone apps are not as functional and it is difficult to manage with these alone. Scoop.it has a search engine built in but I have not found it very useful as it tends to suggest a lot of news content, and material that is not relevant.	4
Ease of sharing posted resources, eg on social media, within Learning Central etc Scoop.it links very well with most social media sites, although the numbers of links are limited on the free plan. Integration with learning central is fine with premium plans, but with free and education licences is limited to a scrolling display of the latest 5 posts, which is not adequate for a resource collection.	3

Are topics searchable eg by tagging? How easy is this to do?	4
Topics are searchable by tagging, and this can be done at all points in the curation process from the point at which a webpage or resource is selected. There is also an independent search feature, which is reasonably effective when looking for resources and posts within Scoop.it itself.	
Can you "follow" topics or a curator? How easy is this to do?	5
Following both topics and curators is possible in scoop.it, and varying notifications can be set if you want to be updated. This is very simple to do with the "follow" button. You can also see how your pages perform in comparison to others if you are so inclined, from the My Community pages. You can also suggest resources or news posts to other users.	
Can notification settings be edited? How easy is it to do this?	4
Notifications can be customised through your personal profile, although you do have to find it yourself and the default is to notify you regularly of updates and views and comments on your scooped posts. This can be annoying.	

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – user issues

Category	Score
What training would be needed for wider use?	3
Training is needed to make the best use of scoop.it, although it is fairly user-friendly once you are up and running. Getting the bookmarklet and topic management skills fine-tuned is the key, but these may not be familiar to many. There are user-guides on the site, but they can be difficult to find.	
Authentication – does it require any authentication to contribute? Does it require new user accounts be created for staff and/or students? Can LDAP or Shibboleth authentication aid single sign on?	3
The site requires you to register as a user, and this cannot be done through existing university systems. This is also needed to comment on posts from other users.	
Access: can it be accessed from PC, tablet, and smart phone? Can it be accessed directly from Learning Central?	3
Scoopit can be accessed from PC, tablet and smartphone, but is more difficult to use on mobile devices if you are actively curating, although browsing topics and resources works well. The links from learning central are not as good as other curation platforms, and this does not promote student use as well as it could.	

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – managing the system

Category	Score
License implications – By using the service what are the terms and conditions of use? With there be an SLA with the provider? Licensing would have to be negotiated with Scoopit. This could be done through purchasing a premium subscription, but this is relatively expensive compared to other curation platforms. Our experience of customer service was poor with the education licence, but might be expected to be better with premium.	2
Hosting solution – Is it hosted or requires a CU server installation? Currently Scoopit is hosted externally, and services would have to be bought.	3
Backup – How are resources backed up? Mailed newsletters and RSS feeds can be set up if a record of posts is needed. Back-up of weblinks is less flexible than other platforms we have reviewed, but can be done.	3
Resilience – What happens if the platform fails/company goes bankrupt? What are the downtime statistics for the past 12 months? How often is maintenance scheduled, is it communicated to users, does the system have to go offline and if so for how long? If the company fails, then the resources posted there would be lost. The technical details on downtime etc are not known. The company however appears stable at present.	3
Exit strategy – Can the resources be exported and used elsewhere? Resources can be exported elsewhere, but doing this in bulk may be problematic.	2

Other comments / issues arising during the evaluation:

Scoop.it is a good curation platform, it has a professional look and displays comments and video well within the website. Building a personal learning network and sharing resources with others works particularly well, and in this regard it stands in the top tier of curation platforms. However, with large numbers of resources it can be unwieldy if it is not organised well, and to be done effectively this needs to be done from early on. An attractive feature is the ability to have multiple curators for a topic in the education and premium plans. We have had problems with customer service however, and this is likely to remain an issue outside of premium plans. Scoopit is geared more to the business market than the education sector, which makes it more expensive than others at the top-end, although still a good option.

Hyperlinks: Return to At-a-glance comparisons

Return to list of platforms

November 2018

SWAY (MICROSOFT)

User interface

Category	Score
Aesthetics – presentation, layout Layout looks good, with sway organising content automatically and possessing several designs to choose from. You can also select the direction content is displayed, ie vertically or horizontally. There is a lack of flexibility however, so personalising it is less easy, and when importing pictures from websites on Creative Commons licences it is not clear where attribution is stated.	4
Ease of navigation – including to the post's original source page All external content is linked to the original source but current does not attribute within Sway itself. The content is easy to navigate for users.	4
How easy is it to edit / alter layout / annotate / comment? Editing is easy – you can upload video and pictures directly, or import them from external websites. Sway has a search feature which works quite well. A commentary can be added between resources, in much the same way as Storify.	4
Ease of adding a post to the topic page eg does the platform use a bookmarklet? How easy is it to do this from both desktop and tablet / smart phone? Quality of search engine hosted by the platform itself There is no bookmarklet add-on for browsers, so capturing content as you review resources is not as well designed as with other curation platforms. There is a Sway app, which is user-friendly and has most of the features of the web-based version, and viewing a Sway is easy from these as well. The main issue with Sway is the lack of a facility to link in an aesthetically pleasing way to web-pages – currently this is by adding in a link or hyper-link, which is fine, but lacks the punch of having some of the content viewable from within the presentation. Video e.g .from YouTube embeds in much the same way as in other curation platforms, and pictures embed normally. User comments on the Sway are not supported, so to do this it would probably have to be embedded in a blog or other curation platform such as Scoop.it	3
Ease of sharing posted resources, eg on social media, within Learning Central etc Easy to share on social media, as links can be added. Sway can be embedded using html code in Learning Central and presents well in this format.	4

Are topics searchable eg by tagging? How easy is this to do?	1
No, Sway doesn't work like this, it is more of an online presentation or tutorial using curated resources rather than a resource repository.	
Can you "follow" topics or a curator? How easy is this to do?	1
No, again, this isn't really what Sway is designed for. It would have to be linked to another curation platform in order to do this.	
Can notification settings be edited? How easy is it to do this?	N/A
No, there are no notification settings.	

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – user issues

Category	Score
What training would be needed for wider use?	5
It is very easy to use, and requires minimal training to use effectively. Using existing resources it took me 30 minutes to learn how it worked and put a new Sway together. It is part of Office 365, so training would presumably also be available via the university if needed.	
Authentication – does it require any authentication to contribute? Does it require new user accounts be created for staff and/or students? Can LDAP or Shibboleth authentication aid single sign on?	5
Sway is freely available, but can be accessed via the University intranet as part of the Office 365 suite of tools. Users can simply access the app and start using it without any further need for approval.	
Access: can it be accessed from PC, tablet, and smart phone? Can it be accessed directly from Learning Central?	5
Excellent access on all devices, and integrates well with other tools including Learning Central.	

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – managing the system

Category	Score
License implications – By using the service what are the terms and conditions of use? With there be an SLA with the provider? An SLA with Microsoft already exists with the university.	5
Hosting solution – Is it hosted or requires a CU server installation? Uncertain, but currently available on university systems, and fully supported by the university.	5
Backup – How are resources backed up? This is cloud-based, through OneDrive.	4
Resilience – What happens if the platform fails/company goes bankrupt? What are the downtime statistics for the past 12 months? How often is maintenance scheduled, is it communicated to users, does the system have to go offline and if so for how long? This is a Microsoft product supported by the university, so resilience is high, and managed by the university IT team. There does not appear to be another way to back-up individual Sways on local hard drives though.	4
Exit strategy – Can the resources be exported and used elsewhere? Resources used in a Sway would likely have come from another source in any case – the model would probably to use another tool such as Pinterst, Scoop.it or Diigo that have social bookmarking functions to collect resources, and then use these to pull into a Sway for presentation.	3

Other comments / issues arising during the evaluation:

This is a good tool for presenting videos and your own materials, to produce an engaging curated resource for specific topics. It works much like Storify or Wakelet but with less sophisticated functions, but does make it very easy to curate and also to control access. It would likely form part of a suite of tools used to curate resources, being mainly the "front end" to present some types of material, but certainly does not perform all the functions, the main missing element being social bookmarking. The most significant concern at the moment is the attribution of external resources used to their original source, which is not clear or automatic, and to add them yourself takes additional work. For this reason it may not be the best platform to use if you wish to make your curated collection fully public, at least until the developers fix this problem!

November 2018

YAMMER

User interface

Category	Score
Aesthetics – presentation, layout Yammer looks like many other social media platforms, and has good presentation; curation is not the primary focus, but it is possible to use it for curation purposes although this is not as intuitive as other platforms.	4
Ease of navigation – including to the post's original source page Navigation is easy; posted material links back to the source page with attribution, but it can be difficult to find older posts and material if they are not tagged properly.	4
How easy is it to edit / alter layout / annotate / comment? Editing is easy, as is commenting, but it is quite difficult to alter layout.	4
Ease of adding a post to the topic page eg does the platform use a bookmarklet? How easy is it to do this from both desktop and tablet / smart phone? Quality of search engine hosted by the platform itself Posting is easy to both the discussion stream and also to collections of files or a Note, but these all need a URL for websites. There is no bookmarklet and no internal search engine.	3
Ease of sharing posted resources, eg on social media, within Learning Central etc Sharing is easy within Yammer, but not so easy with public social media, but as there is an embed code the feed can be added to learning central, and presumably a blog. The issue with linking to other social media sites is not a significant issue as Yammer is a social media site itself.	4
Are topics searchable eg by tagging? How easy is this to do? Tagging is easy once you know how – you can use hashtags, or a menu below the posts, but this isn't immediately obvious.	3
Can you "follow" topics or a curator? How easy is this to do? Yes, easy to follow someone, but topics are a bit less intuitive. Groups are easy to join.	4
Can notification settings be edited? How easy is it to do this? Yes, this is fairly easy, but finding your profile settings to do this could be easier.	4

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – user issues

Category	Score
What training would be needed for wider use? Can be provided in house. Easy to get set up and running.	4
Authentication – does it require any authentication to contribute? Does it require new user accounts be created for staff and/or students? Can LDAP or Shibboleth authentication aid single sign on? Yes, university login which all students and staff should have; NHS users can set up an account once invited.	5
Access: can it be accessed from PC, tablet, and smart phone? Can it be accessed directly from Learning Central? Yes to all.	5

Implementation within institutions (e.g. Cardiff University) – managing the system

Category	Score
License implications – By using the service what are the terms and conditions of use? With there be an SLA with the provider? Already in place with Cardiff University	5
Hosting solution – Is it hosted or requires a CU server installation? Fully supported by Cardiff University	5
Backup – How are resources backed up? Not sure – but as university supported this should not be an issue.	5
Resilience – What happens if the platform fails/company goes bankrupt? What are the downtime statistics for the past 12 months? How often is maintenance scheduled, is it communicated to users, does the system have to go offline and if so for how long? Not sure – more info needed.	3

Exit strategy – Can the resources be exported and used elsewhere?	4
Yes – can be shared elsewhere. But probably not a great need to do this.	

Other comments / issues arising during the evaluation:

Yammer seems to work quite well as both a social media and curation platform. The major advantage is university support, and the social media aspect seems to work for students as they are quite familiar with Facebook and Twitter, and are comfortable using it.

Hyperlinks: Return to At-a-glance comparisons

Return to list of platforms

Please note: reviews are current as of the time of writing, completed November 2018. Updates to websites since then will therefore not be accounted for.

November 2018