Outline of Presentation

• Ethics – Law and Culture
• Why Ethics
• Ethics – the Big Issues

• Concentrating on evaluating and monitoring learner responses to mobile learning trials and pilots
Ethics – Law and Culture

- Ethics
  - from
    - Legally allowable
  - to
    - Socially, (sub)culturally acceptable
  - via
    - Institutional, professional codes and regulations
Ethics – Law and Culture

• Currently,
  – Postmodernism: away from essentialism/realism towards constructionism in how reality viewed
    • changing the nature of informed consent *eg*
    • problem of ethics “not-worth-mentioning”/“taken-for-granted”
  – Codes move towards principles amongst bodies
    • from reactive and pursuing events to pro-active and responsive to context or situation; may then match progress in pedagogy and technology
  – Mobile devices
    • redefining public/private space/discourse
Ethics and Mobile Learning

- Mobile Learning specifics:
  - Ethics of computer-based and remote online research, including evaluation, with participants immature and untested.
  - Online learning, including mobile learning, could take place in several different countries, across different legal jurisdictions.
  - Online learning, including mobile learning, might be working with participants whose ages are near the legal age of majority (which may vary from country to country).
Why Ethics

• research which doesn't conform to an ethical framework may
  – be seen as improper or immoral
  – be breaking laws or regulations
  – be rejected by the research community
The Ethics of Online Social Research

• Still Novel and Imprecise

– Internet research methods: a practical guide for the social and behavioural by Hewson et al
– Internet communication and qualitative research: a handbook for researching by Mann and Stewart
– Readings in Virtual Research Ethics - Issues and Controversies edited by Buchanan
The Ethics of Mobile Online Social Research

• This paper, perhaps!
Principles of Fair Information Processing Online

• The overarching context - embodied in DPAs etc
• Personal Data Should be Collected for One Specific and Legitimate Purpose
• People Should Have Access to the Data Collected About Themselves
• Existence of Data Banks Should be Publicly Known
Principles of Fair Information Processing Online

• Personal Data Should be Reasonably Guarded Against Risks such as Loss, Unauthorised Access Modification or Disclosure
Principles of Fair Information Processing Online

• Data Should be Collected in a Context of Free Speech,
  – *ie* same rights and responsibilities

• Personal Data Should Not be Communicated Externally Without the Consent of the Subject who Supplied The Data
Practical Ethical Guidelines

• Needed because
  – a variety of unresolved legal issues
  – laws are never not enough
  – currently insufficient guidelines
  – to encourage how culture and usage develop

• Derived from existing appropriate (?) practice
• Concentrating on “pure” mobile
Informed Consent – the Big Issue

• May be difficult to explain the scope of mobile learning in a succinct and appropriate fashion in a way that is consistent with mobile learning itself.
• Participants may only engage in mobile learning via SMS or VoiceXML - few precedents for gaining and signifying informed consent.
• A mobile learning system may not preserve persistent learner identities across sessions or across devices - confusing the source of consent and the data to which it relates.
Informed Consent – the Big Issue

• In any remote research, it is easier to deceive researchers and evaluators.
  – researchers have no reliable face-to-face cues.
• There may be insufficient means for would-be participants to check their understanding of the research and their part in it.
• Consent can only legally be granted by participants who understand the nature of their participation.
  – In mobile learning, it may be difficult to establish whether this is the case without face-to-face contact.
Informed Consent – the Big Issue

• Expressing consent, especially in a legally significant fashion, usually requires a conventional written signature.

• Informed consent assumes that any explanation upon which the consent rests is expressed in a fashion that is inclusive of varied literacy, linguistic and physical abilities

• Accidental or deliberate personation possible
Informed Consent

• Obtaining Consent
  » cf Email Interviewing, Conferencing, Participant Observation

• Parental Permission
  » Not so bad after all legally

• Participant Risk
  » eg race-hate

• Participant Withdrawal
  » They can only take their data with them
  » Postmodern research uses process consent

• Financial or In-kind Payment or Compensation
  » Fairness across differences
Confidentiality

- Confidentiality
  - difficult to ensure in cyberspace - technical systems complex and leaky

- Anonymity
  - problem of fictitious identities

- Privacy
  - System data and location-awareness may undermine privacy
Power, Class, Difference

- Evaluation often works across differentials in:
  - Power
  - Age
  - Class
Netiquette

• Email Netiquette
  – Smileys, informality
• Chat Netiquette
• Conferencing Netiquette
  – Flaming, spamming, lurking, FAQs, on-list/off-list
    • m-moderating
      » Gilly Salmon
• SMS
  – Txt
• “Metiquette” – how can we shape it?
Thanks

Comments or question?

john.traxler@wlv.ac.uk