At the beginning of 2010 Curtin integrated Campus Pack Fusion within the Blackboard environment. Campus Pack provides a suite of collaboration tools which includes wikis, blogs and journals. These tools facilitate collaboration, communication, sharing and reflection. Each of these tools has its own strengths and provides opportunities for staff and students to engage in learning in different ways. The focus of this issue is the humble wiki.

The best known of all wiki projects is the often misunderstood Wikipedia® that currently boasts in excess of 20 million pages in 94 languages, 12 million registered users and around 400 million traceable edits; arguably the largest collaborative document in human history.

What is a Wiki?

The earliest form of wiki was simply a webpage that anyone could edit. The first wikis allowed only text, but later as technology improved wikis started to boast fully WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) multimedia-capable editors.

Wikis developed in a culture of open information. The first wikis were generally very public, democratic, non-proprietary operations where the act of contributing to a wiki was to relinquish all control of the content to the community.

The modern wiki allows for version history and discussion and these features make the wiki a powerful tool for teaching and learning. As more and more educational settings begin to adopt wikis there has also been a shift in their visibility. Many wikis are now password protected and contributors can determine the extent to which the wiki is publicly available. Wikis created within Blackboard can be shared within groups, units or courses.
The ability to track who has edited a wiki means that accountability is maintained. In joint construction activities it is now possible to identify the contributions of any individual. Additionally, there is the capacity to develop an ongoing discussion around the content of the wiki.

Assessing a users’ wiki contributions - see Learning Objects Community.

**The How and Why of Wikis in the Classroom.**

The strategy of joint construction is a well-used one in educational settings. It requires contributors to develop an appropriate writing style as well as the requisite critical and analytical skills to participate effectively in a community of practice. Students must find an appropriate disciplinary voice in order to articulate their understanding with their fellow students. They must also recognise that they are accountable for their contribution and the role they play in constructing and representing knowledge.

Wikis can be used in a variety of ways in teaching and learning. Learning tasks that lend themselves to the development of documents and knowledge expression in textual form are particularly suitable:

- Developing and organising a glossary of key terms;
- Building a knowledge base around a subject;
- Coordinating and collaborating on research;
- Responding to sample examination questions;
- Collaboratively creating tutorial or laboratory summaries;
- Joint writing of papers and articles;
- Organising events (common in conference and colloquia organisation);


Many Curtin academics and students are already engaging with wikis in a variety of learning activities.

**Tip - How to start a wiki**

The great news is that in just a few minutes you can activate and develop your own wiki environment within Blackboard.

1. Go to a content page and click on *Edit View*.
2. Select *Wiki* from the drop down menu and click *GO*. 
3. Give your Wiki a relevant name. It’s best to include the name of your unit in the title – ie ‘Uni101 – Group Wiki’) and enter a description. That’s it! Now your students can start contributing to the wiki.

For further steps see the CeL website or visit the Learning Objects Community.

The Centre for eLearning will be conducting short workshops on using wikis in your teaching in July/August. See CeL workshops.