

Open Annotation and Humanities Education

TDG Sharing in LCS, 2 October 2019



**The Education University
of Hong Kong Library**

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.

Today

- I present the results of my Faculty-level TDG project. The Co-I was Emily Ridge.
- The project ran for 15 months, from May 2018 to July 2019.
- It has been way more work than I anticipated. ^_(\ツ)_/^



The Education University
of Hong Kong Library

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.

Annotating digital media

- Technology for annotating digital media has been developing since the late 1980s.
- However, in the last couple of years, the underlying tech has been standardized and widely adopted.
- An era of “open annotation” has begun in which it is increasingly possible to “annotate everything.”



The Education University
of Hong Kong Library

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.

Example: Hypothes.is

- Hypothes.is has emerged as the dominant open annotation project. It allows the annotation of any webpage.
- Cf. Vannevar Bush, “As We Might Think,” *Atlantic Monthly* (1945)
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1945/07/as-we-may-think/303881/>



The Education University
of Hong Kong Library

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.

<https://web.hypothes.is>

Social Annotation

- If annotations are shared with a group rather than with everyone, “social annotation” is more accurate than “open.”
- We decided to investigate the power of social annotation for humanities education.
- We decided to do this because we felt that the humanities already centrally involves annotation.

The Project

- Phase 1: Investigating SA Tools (Summer 1028)
- Phase 2: Exploring SA Tools in LCS courses (Sem 1, 18-19)
- Phase 3: Investigating SA Tools in LCS Courses (Sem 2, 18-19)



The Education University
of Hong Kong Library

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.

Phase 1 (Summer 2018)

- Looked at all the currently available annotation systems (~25).
- Defined functions that seemed important for humanities education.
- Produced a list of six recommended tools and general guidelines for how colleagues might use them.



The Education University
of Hong Kong Library

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.

Phase 2 (Sem 1, 18-19)

- LCS colleagues were invited to participate by using an SA tool in any LCS course in any way they saw fit.
- Four colleagues used the tools in four courses in Sem 1.
- At the end of the semester instructors had a roundtable discussion, and students were surveyed about using the tools.



The Education University
of Hong Kong Library

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.

Phase 3 (Sem 2, 18-19)

- LCS colleagues were invited to participate by using an SA tool in any LCS course in any way they saw fit. Three colleagues **explored** the tools in four courses in Sem 2.
- LCS colleagues were also invited to participate in a more organized and focus way. Three colleagues **investigated** in three courses in Sem 2
- Another roundtable discussion, and another round of surveys.

In addition, three focus group interviews were held.

Summary of LCS participation

- Instructors: 10
- Courses: 11
- Groups: 18
- Students: 584



The Education University
of Hong Kong Library

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.



Example: Jeff's students

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pcX1SuS1zHWi6YmZzj3ipOc7AJSLaDEgSG81yTw4fU/edit?usp=sharing>



The Education University
of Hong Kong Library

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.

Overall Results

- Student surveys overwhelmingly show that students like SA and find it helpful.
- Instructor roundtables show that instructors agree that social annotation “fits” humanities education.
- Both groups confirmed that:
 - SA enables better feedback and communication
 - SA is highly engaging and fun
 - SA is a useful scaffolding for later assessment



The Education University
of Hong Kong

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.

Research Background

- All of these results confirm previous research into SA (~90 previous studies) in education studies and computer science.
- But there is only one previous paper connecting social annotation to humanities education and it is a description of a use case by a single instructor in a single course.



The Education University
of Hong Kong Library

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.

Plan for Publishing

In phase 2, three instructors agreed to SA implementations that shared the following three features:

- Using Google Docs as the SA tool;
- Using Google Docs for SA at least six times in a semester;
- Using Google Docs to annotate synchronously in the classroom.

Students in these instructors' courses participated in the focus group interviews.



The Education University
of Hong Kong

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.

Results for Publishing

- The journal paper is still being finalized, but it will depend largely on the results of the focus group interviews.
- Interviewees emphasized that:
 - SA forced them to focus on particular textual details
 - SA required a higher level of concentration than other tasks
 - SA showed them how other students read and annotated
 - SA made them nervous



The Education University
of Hong Kong Library

For private study or research only.
Not for publication or further reproduction.

Conclusions and reflections

- The hypothesis that SA is among the best blended learning techniques for LCS colleagues is confirmed.
- SA is blended learning that draws us closer to what we want to do, rather than the opposite.
- There are myriad opportunities for follow-up projects and I plan to do so soon.