

## CHAPTER 1

### Digital technologies used in course implementations

Maria Cutajar

University of Malta, Malta

All courses developed in relation to the CARE/SS project except for one used a learning management system (LMS), that served to present course participants with a single portal to a course virtual learning environment (VLE). The partners used the LMS infrastructure offered by their respective university institutions. The most prevalent was the Moodle-powered LMS. One partner used Canvas to host the VLE course-sites. The blended course for in-service teachers offered by the Malta partner was the only course that did not employ a standard LMS. This was due to several mitigating factors making it impractical to expend expensive human and financial resources. Instead, cloud spaces were used as a VLE portal to the online elements of the course. One partner remarked that apart from the institutional LMS and the array of generic and specific application software applications incorporated in the course design, there is also included in the courses the use of the interactive whiteboard, interactive presentations and movies, and websites (Poland Partner). This observation rings true also for the case of the other courses expect perhaps for the case of the interactive whiteboard for the case of flexible, online courses. The Cypriot partner explicitly referred to the use of digital tools integrated in the LMS such as the discussion forum, resource-sharing possibilities and the online quiz tool. Put together the courses developed by the different partners feature a substantial selection of digital technologies forming an integral aspect of the learning activities and assessment tasks. All courses featured an array of digital technologies acting as a means for learning and/or learning productions. Tabulation 1 presents lists of digital tools, media and services pinpointed by the partners. This accruing list pinpointed by the partners, puts on show the wide and varied range of computer-based and online tools and services incorporated in these courses.

The partners identified a range of generic software applications such as the electronic spreadsheet, database application software, and presentation software. Partners emphasised the use of communication applications such as video conferencing software, social media platforms, and messaging systems so permitting synchronous and asynchronous interactions among peers and with the teacher. The partners identified a substantial number of media creation and manipulation software such as music creation software, photo editing software, graphic development software, video editing software, and so on. Two partners – Malta and Spain, indicated the use social media services such as Facebook and Instagram. One partner – Poland, noted the use of online media services: the digital music streaming service Spotify in this case. Between them, the partners also identified an array of media editing applications for the creation and manipulation of sound, image, and multimedia such as Reaper (audio), Adobe Media Services(photo) and Openshot (video). The list also includes a range of online digital tools permitting collaborative and cooperative art activities in recording songs, creating stories, building animations, and devising art exhibitions. Two of the partners – Cyprus and Malta, pinpoint open arts and culture sharing platforms such as Google Art and Culture, Tate’s Street Art, and Lake’s Language is a Virus.

This software list is of itself another resource that may serve educators of the arts as they look into ways devising blended and online courses. It is a small resource compared to the expanse of existing software applications. But it is a significant resource considering that this is a list of tried and tested applications and services used by real art educators in their learning courses. What needs to be kept in mind is that software applications and online services are subject to change and may in time disappear altogether and others emerge depending on broader societal demands and markets. The point is that, as a resource, this compilation of software applications used by the partners to support the development of blended and online courses is best used as a starting point to delve into the possibilities available. As emphasised in other reports forming part of this CARE/SS project, in thinking about blended and online learning course design, digital technologies need to be conceptualised and devised as integral elements of the learning task designs removed from any pursuit trying to fit the learning task to accommodate the digital tools and means.