ASCILITE 2026

The Future is Connection:

Collaboration, Creativity and Compassion in a Digital Society

Digital media as pedagogy: A human-centred decision approach for higher education digital media integration

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This poster positions digital media (DM) assets as pedagogical decisions, arguing that their value lies not in technical sophistication, but in how effectively a medium supports learning within a given educational context (Mayer, 2020). Aligned with the ASCILITE 2026 subtheme of Human Centred Learning Design, this work introduces Digital Media as Pedagogy (DMaP), a decision-making approach that supports intentional DM selection in higher education. DMaP foregrounds pedagogical relationships and learner needs over technology guided choice, demonstrating that the suitability of different media forms varies depending on learning outcomes and the specific educational context. Meaningful media decision making requires strong collaboration between Learning Experience Designers (LEDs) and DM teams.

Media design is frequently treated as a production task, downstream of the core learning content design (Thompson & Harris, 2025). This limits pedagogically aligned innovation positioning media specialists as technical implementers rather than pedagogical collaborators. Research on educational video and DM highlights that design decisions such as pacing, length, and interactivity, have a greater impact on engagement and learning than technical, even aesthetic, sophistication (Guo et al., 2014). This poster reframes the LED/DM relationship as a critical collaborative practice where expertise in pedagogy, accessibility, analytics and media production intersect. Early and ongoing collaboration supports more intentional and sustainable media design. This approach has informed changes to practice, including earlier involvement of DM specialists in subject development meetings. Positioning DM teams within early pedagogical discussions enables more cohesive alignment between learning intent and media, moving away from a more transactional style of interaction between LEDs and DM team members.

The DMaP approach integrates five interconnected design lenses. The lens of pedagogical intent draws on Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) to examine whether a medium is pedagogically appropriate for specific content and learner contexts, while also legitimising collaboration across pedagogical, technological, and content expertise (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The Cognitive Engagement lens applies the ICAP framework to examine observable learner activity, recognising that passive, active, constructive, and interactive modes each have contextual pedagogical value rather than forming a simple hierarchy (Chi & Wylie, 2014). Accessibility and Inclusion are foregrounded through Universal Design for Learning (UDL), positioning flexibility and learner choice as pedagogical strengths. This is realised through multiple means of engagement, representation and action and expressions (CAST 2024). Evidence-based Tool Selection draws on research demonstrating that digital media effectiveness varies significantly by context and design rather than novelty and considers pedagogical soundness and institutional viability (Kirkwood & Price, 2014). The final lens examines Integration and Learning Systems, recognising that, from our experience, media effectiveness appears to be influenced by LMS integration and breaks from cognitive load.

DMaP questions the conventional matching of digital tool to task which tends to favour novelty over pedagogical fit. Instead, it proposes a human centred decision logic where media is selected because it aligns with intended cognitive engagement. A pedagogical approach to digital media enables accessible participation and remains feasible within institutional constraints. DMaP offers an appliable, theoretically informed approach for learning designers and DM teams.

Keywords: Digital media pedagogy, human-centred learning design, TPACK, ICAP, Universal Design for Learning, higher education.

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