Speaker 1

How do you use technology now?

Speaker 2 (Professor Andrew Brown)

Well, I work in the music technology program at the Queensland Conservatorium, so that’s a fairly technology heavy area of the curriculum and the research activities. So, as we work in there, we’re using recording studios which have got lots of technology equipment to record sound and make records and so forth. We’re also using computers for doing music production activities, and using live electronics, so all sorts of crazy electronics plus laptops and iPads and other tablets and mobile phones, for just doing live music performances, so our area is very heavily dominated by this technology.

Speaker 1

How do you think you and your colleagues will be using technology in 2020?

Speaker 2

In 2020, we’re going to have increasingly mobile devices, so I think that desktop PCs and these things are going to be much less frequent. Devices will be smaller and more ubiquitous and they’ll be everywhere. So, in a sense we’ll be using technology even when we don’t even know we’re using technology, and in one sense that means it will go away, but on the other hand it will mean that people like in the area where we are, we will need to make sure we’re really on top of those advances, and are pushing those technologies forward and using them in innovative ways.

Speaker 1

What core skills will research academics need in 2020?

Speaker 2

In 2020, I think research will be very much as it is, but the role of technology I think will be even more ubiquitous. There’s been a strong move towards data storage and capture, and so they’ll be, need to be very particular about the way in which they store data, keep it on servers. I think research is becoming more internationalised, and so there is a lot more communication, and that’s going to be an IT activity as well; lots of Skype communications or other sort of video conferencing, sharing information. Perhaps a little bit less travel on aeroplanes as a result of that, but the face to face contact will still be very important.
Contacting research subjects and so forth also online will be important. There will be lots of sensor technologies which will be used for embedding devices and capturing data. In a sense, we’ll have so much data as researchers, we almost won’t know what to do with it, and so our challenge in the future will be to sort of manage that data, to be able to sort through it and make sense of it as researchers to find out what it really means, rather than just be overwhelmed by all the information.

Speaker 1

What core skills will learning and teaching academics need in 2020?

Speaker 2

One of the things in the future will be that communicating information will continue to be a core kind of educational skill. The creation of that information through research will be also important, and I think research-led teaching in that regard, making sure you’ve got something to say which is really special and different from anyone else will be important, because students will be able to access information about your subject area from anywhere in the world, and the only reason really to come to you as an academic, or your university, will be because you’ve got something unique to say, or because you’re presenting it in some interesting fashion, curating that data in a way in which adds in a lot of value to the students who come, in a way they couldn’t just get from doing a Google search, for example.

Speaker 1

Will it still be important to have a physical place to learn?

Speaker 2

It will be increasingly important in the future that the university places a strong emphasis on face to face contact, because other institutions will be able to start up which don’t need to have a physical presence and they can be virtual universities, and so a university like Griffith, which already has a strong physical presence will need to capitalise on that physical presence in the future.

Speaker 1

Is the way in which students and research supervisors interact changing?

Speaker 2

I think the interaction between lecturing staff and students is becoming one much more of mentoring and supervising, even at the undergraduate level, than it is of simply explaining and telling people about facts and information. I don’t know that it’s been like that for some time, but the access to information technology is, and the sorts of
information that people can get from online courses from places like MIT and other really prestigious universities means that just the opportunity to gain information is not sufficient. So, the staff need to be able to mentor people, be able to encourage them as a whole person and not just about the way in which they’re getting information, and also to be kind of role models, if you like, and to sort of practice what they preach and make sure that they’re really good at doing their discipline and not just simply good at talking about their discipline.

Speaker 1

Anything else you would like to add?

Speaker 2

In relation to an IT strategy for the university, I think it will be important for the university to look around amongst the activities that are going on that are very digital centric. For example, we have a digital arts research network in the AEL group, and these kinds of activities I think can be showcases for the sorts of things that can happen in a strong IT future.

[end of recording]