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# The Daily Dig

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Your Daily Dose of Yellowdig: The Early Adopters Edition

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## How Airbnb Uses Machine Learning to Predict Host Preferences

**“I remembered my friend’s behavior and was curious to discover what affects hosts’ decisions to accept accommodation requests and how Airbnb could increase acceptances and matches on the platform.”**

### Professor De Liu Talks Big Data Analytics & Developing a Sharing Culture Via Yellowdig

The Daily Dig speaks with Professor De Liu about his creative teaching techniques.

Introduction: Professor De Liu teaches big data and data management courses to MSBA (Master of Science in Business Analytics) students at the University of Minnesota.

**“The impetus for me using it is that the big data topic is very new and there is a lot of news and knowledge that we are not aware of. So I said let’s crowdsource it because I also want students to explore and [be] informed by these topics”**



### On his experiences with Yellowdig:

Yes, I find good use [for it]. The impetus for me using it is that the big data topic is very new and there is a lot of news and knowledge that we are not aware of. So I said let’s crowdsource it because I also want students to explore and [be] informed on these topics. Typically mailing lists don’t do it because students do not post things to mailing lists. So I think Yellowdig is a good forum because they can also share what they found and discuss and learn from each other and learn from me. So actually most articles were posted by students and I enjoyed reading them. I think it’s a great addition to the course that I am teaching.

### Have your approaches to using Yellowdig changed over the course of the semester?

I think that one change I noticed is that I started to share the team project updates and announcements during the midterms and finals, including the winners of team projects and presentations. I wasn’t anticipating it but I think it is a great forum to share that. It is better than email because I can format it in the way that I want it to be and also have students react to it because it’s like Facebook. People can like and comment on things and they can engage better with the project and winner announcements.

**I see that you have a TA for the *Harvesting Big Data* class. Did he help with posting? How was he involved with the Yellowdig process?**

I think that is another aspect where this forum worked well. So if you have a good TA, then he can help out either [by answering] student questions or help manage the forum. He was [also] helping with posting. For example, if there were common problems in homeworks, he would post on Yellowdig to either provide an answer that everyone can see or [give] tips to the students, or, if the students [had] questions— if I don't get to it first—he [would] try to get it.

I think it's also a way for me to offload some of my communication workload to TAs and even to other students because occasionally some students will also help answer questions, especially regarding homework assignments. Since they have many problems— sometimes there are clarification questions — and they can share and help each other.

**“I think [Yellowdig is] also a way for me to offload some of my communication workload to TAs and even to other students”**

**Are there any students or articles that you found particularly memorable? A conversation that you had on the virtual platform that maybe sparked discussions in class later on?**

Sure. As we talked about Sparks and also big data platforms, one student discovered Databricks, a platform for managing Spark clusters, and he posted an article on the forum. And that brought my attention to Databricks.

[It seemed] like a very innovative company that streamlines a lot of the big data setup and it allows you to easily connect to Amazon web services, which provides a lot of the computing power and data storage facilities. We use quite some time to set up our Amazon Web Services. Databricks makes it very easy, so you can focus on analyzing data without worrying about what happens in the back end. So he used that article to bring my attention to that [company] and right now I am investigating whether we want to incorporate that into part of the curriculum.

**“So he used that article to bring my attention to that [company] and right now I am investigating whether we want to incorporate that into part of the curriculum”**

**That's very exciting that something that a student posted was able to be considered for a curriculum review. Is this because of the nature of the course itself? Big data is constantly evolving so it seems that these students are actually pushing the boundaries of the subject itself.**

I think so. I think that's part of it. I think this course works the best [with Yellowdig] because of the changing nature of the [big data] landscape and the students are also very curious. And we truly learn from each other. You get a good dose of the news and new development in the field and the course is constantly evolving because at the end of the semester, the student teams discover some new technology and they ask, “Can we learn about it?” And maybe as a result I will incorporate it in the next iteration of the course.

**Do you think now that you've used Yellowdig for the first time this semester, are there any ways that you might change the way you use the platform in the Fall?**

I think I'll tweak some requirements probably. I think there are about 20% of students who did not post but the others were more active, which is fine with me because the active students were benefiting the whole class. I just want to see if I can either engage the rest of the students more through Yellowdig or also encourage them to interact with each other more by giving likes and giving comments— that part is hard because they have a very busy schedule. I understand if they don't keep up with all the articles in the forum.

**“I think this course works best [with Yellowdig] because of the changing nature of the [big data] landscape and the students are also very curious. You get a good dose of the news and new development in the field and the course is constantly evolving because at the end of the semester, the student teams discover some new technology and they ask, Can we learn about it? And maybe as a result I will incorporate it in the next iteration of the course.”**

## The Daily Dig Catches Up With Professor Benson Honig

Introduction: Professor Benson Honig teaches Management and Organizational Behavior courses at McMaster University. He has written for numerous publications, including the Journal of Management, the Journal of Business Venturing, the Academy of Management, Learning and Education, as well as the European Management Journal and the Journal of Small Business Management.



### On using Yellowdig:

I mostly use it to encourage students to come up with ideas, reading material in the newspaper, reflecting on it and just interacting a little bit with some ideas that they might have outside of class time. I like it because I find it a very useful class supplement.

### On best practices with Yellowdig:

Using contemporary materials, things that are newsworthy and related to the course— that’s always very good. And so if [I] talk about a subject in the class and [there’s] an article related to it, it’s good to share that with [the students]. Sometimes, [I] might have talked about something two weeks ago and an article comes out or something relevant happens— that could start an exchange. I’ve seen some students do some really good exchanges on some of the material that might be controversial.

**“I mostly encourage students to come up with ideas, reading material in the newspaper, reflecting on it and just interacting a little bit with some ideas they might have outside of class time”**

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### A few great ideas that were discussed:

- **The mobile app for executives and grad students.**
  - Executives in particular would benefit from the easy accessibility to classroom materials, as well as the communication within the learning community that Yellowdig provides with the mobile app.
- **A supplementary discussion board for groups of students where case studies can be played out and discussed.**
- **Can dynamic business simulations be incorporated into Yellowdig?**

## Good Reads

In our constant quest for personalized content curation, we at Yellowdig recommend a few great reads for your academic pleasure. Enjoy!

### Scientific Vision:

2000 New Mexico Sixth Graders Snapchat with Virgin Galactic, Virgin Galactic.

### Global Economy & Business:

What My 3 Years At Netflix Taught Me About Scaling A Startup, Fast Company.

### Engineering the Future:

Factory Robot Working On Some Of Its Own Designs After Hours, The Onion.

### Artistic Vision:

Picture This: Marketers, Let Emojis Do The Talking, The New York Times :)

### Lifestyle & Culture:

22 Profound Arabic Sayings That Will Clear Your Mind, Bright Side.

## TED: What’s So Sexy About Math? A Talk by Cedric Villani.

**“Did you know that Paris has more mathematicians than any other city in the world?”**

“And let me concede that when it comes to making money from the math, the Americans are by a long shot the world champions, with clever, emblematic billionaires and amazing, giant companies, all resting, ultimately, on good algorithm.”

## Meet Professor Megan Jehn

**Introduction: Professor Megan Jehn is the graduate and undergraduate program director for Global Health at Arizona State University. She is an epidemiologist and her research focuses on how socio-ecological systems can remain resilient when faced with disasters.**

### On her experiences with Yellowdig in a virtual classroom:

I used Yellowdig for the first time this spring in a large, fully online, Global Health course with 450 students. We have students from all over the world who enroll in our online degree programs and I was looking for a tool to better facilitate class discussion.

Yellowdig replaced the traditional Blackboard discussion boards that we had been using because these discussion boards weren't creating meaningful engagement for students. Our online programs run in 7-week blocks and so it is important to have a dynamic platform where students can quickly bond and peer learning can happen effortlessly.

### On discussing news of outbreaks in class:

One of the interesting things about a Global Health class is that there is always some type of health crisis happening somewhere in the world. For example, the Zika outbreak was a major news item this spring when I was teaching and it was fascinating for me to watch the students react to the news reports. I was able to quickly determine what the students were discussing, whether they were concerned about the outbreak and where they were obtaining their information (and more importantly, whether those sources were reliable).

By quickly identifying common questions, misconceptions and concerns, I was able to immediately record and post a lecture for the class addressing some of the issues that I observed in the discussions, thus creating an online learning environment driven by the students.

**“Yellowdig replaced the traditional Blackboard discussion boards that we had been using because these discussion boards weren't creating meaningful engagement for students”**

### On the relevance of content posted in Yellowdig:

Every week I post a Yellowdig discussion question related to the course content. Students are required to address that particular discussion question and they are always welcome to post current events related to the module material for that week. I had very few issues with students posting irrelevant content.

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### On interesting conversations on Yellowdig:

The Zika outbreak generated really intense discussions with the students in terms of poverty and social justice, health in developing countries and how politics shape the public health response. Global Health students have very diverse academic backgrounds from Engineering, Medicine, Environmental Science, Business, Law, etc. as well as different social, demographic and religious backgrounds.

**“The Zika outbreak generated really intense discussions with the students in terms of poverty and social justice, health in developing countries and how politics shape the public health response”**

Students were able to engage in very meaningful discussions about the social complexities of health and disease and it was exciting to see them sharing their personal experiences and knowledge with one another in a respectful way. I had many students tell me that they missed the conversation once they were finished with the course.