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# *The* **Career-Learning** **CAFÉ**

**what is it?**  
**who is it for?**  
**why is it important?**  
**how does it work?**

*The* **Career-Learning NETWORK**

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The Career-Learning Café is a learning web-site, in the form of an on-line magazine - 'Café Careers' - with many multi-layered and interactive supporting features. It is free to all visitors. It examines issues for contemporary career development in lively, searching and useful terms. It is run by Bill Law on behalf of the Career-Learning Network - an informal group seeking and developing much-needed new thinking in careers-work.

what is it?

The focus of café conversation is on the roles of advisers, counsellors and teachers - seeking to enable people in career development. They are called 'career helpers', and their work is called 'careers work'.

why is it important?

Careers work influences who gets to do what in society. There is no more important issue. Governments are increasingly involved, and both global and national business interests are influential in policy-making for careers work.

Furthermore, the core issue - who gets to do what? - embeds many challenges to contemporary societies. They concern equal opportunities, personal achievement, economic well-being, social cohesion, environmental sustainability and cultural values. All raise urgent questions for careers helpers, their clients and students, their families and communities as well as for society-at-large.

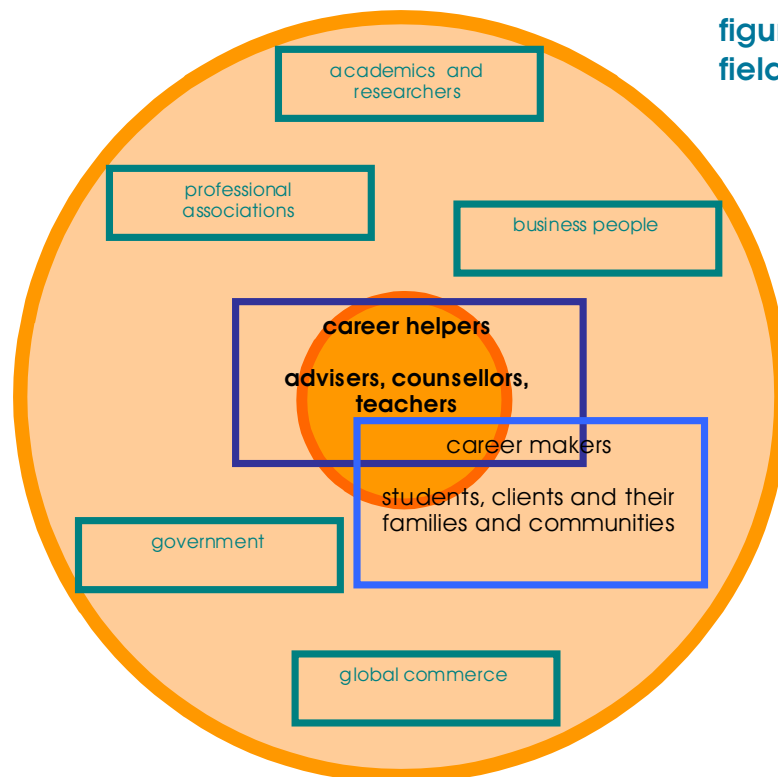


figure 1:  
field and focus

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All of these issues are central to current policy preoccupations in the careers-work and education fields - especially Connexions and Education for Citizenship.

### who is it for?

The site is addressed mainly to career helpers - advisers, counsellors and teachers. But no sensible stakeholder wants any other excluded from influence. Policy and business interests certainly cannot be allowed to dominate the terms in which career is understood. There are other authoritative voices. Significant among these are clients and students. In café conversation they are called 'career makers'. They must be understood as individuals, but in the café they are also understood in the settings of their families, neighbourhoods and ethnic and cultural interests.

The idea of a café conjures a picture of an ongoing conversation between many different points of view. As figure 1 (p.1) shows, all are welcome in The Career-Learning Café.

The site is, then, addressed first to career helpers, but they are encouraged to involve and exchange with others - notably career makers and their families.

### what can it do?

The site is designed to attract, interest and engage people with a stake in how careers work is conceived, developed, funded and delivered. The purpose is to give voice to all useful perspectives, and to enable an informed exchange on ideas for action.

The outcome will be to identify useful ideas for sustainable action which is appropriate to local conditions.

'Café' conversation is, then, both stimulating and purposeful.

### how does it work?

This requires an atmosphere which is informed and informal, contemporary and progressive, accessible and intelligent, concerned and constructive.

The site is designed to be fast-loading, and to be fully accessible to computers with relatively modest specifications.

Since this is a learning site, visitors to any part of the site are made aware of how their concerns are also being dealt with in other parts of this site, and on other sites. The site is, therefore, layered...

In order to be able to identify adapt good ideas to locally useful bases for action, visitors to the café must be able, as they decide, to move between knowledge that is:

- experience and research;
- local and general;
- concrete and conceptual;
- practical and theoretical;
- immediate and underpinning.

The design of the site does not assume the greater authority of any of these perspectives. All layers of learning carry necessary and distinctive insights: understanding found in any of these ways needs to be informed by understanding found in other ways.

The site's basic design feature is, therefore, a layered arrangement of material. And, as figure 2 suggests, continuous links are made between the layers.



Material in the immediate and underpinning layers is retained there while it is frequently accessed. As access becomes less frequent, material will be removed - some of it to an archive. This will keep the two main layers reasonably uncluttered.

Because all is linked to all, café visitors can enter at any level, and move through any other levels, in pursuit of material that is of use to them.

Selected material will be archived for as long as it is accessed, making room for new material. Some will be indefinitely retained, in what will constitute a "long-term memory" for a fast-changing careers work.

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The café has a carefully laid network of signposts, suggesting options for moving on to new ideas or for consolidating to the point where learning can sustain action. These signposts link visitors from where they start to where they may go. Each visitor can, then, 'click' her his way on a unique path to understanding for action.

Each route enables understanding for personal, professional, organisational, practical, policy and academic use. The intention is that all layers of understanding will influence all.

In summary: the café offers visitors ideas at whatever level of intellectual rigour and practical usefulness suit their interests and purposes.

Site features are set out in detail below. Further features will be organised, in response to needs suggested by visitors and sponsors (see also page 7).

## immediate learning

The most immediately accessible area is Café Career - in magazine format. The magazine is interesting and useful to careers helpers, but it is also accessible to careers makers, their families and communities. It contains material in the following areas:

- **features** - articles on issues of immediate concern;
- **letters** - from people with sharp and personal interests, speaking of their own experience;
- **'Espresso!'** - interviews with people with significant ideas having implications for careers work;
- **'Game for career'** - intriguing interactive processes, searching out key features of career, and offering feedback useful to further action by careers helpers and career makers, these are games with a point;
- **'Real lives'** - biographical accounts of people engaged in making a career, extracted with permission and linked to original sources;
- **'What can they mean by that?'** - quotations, speaking of working life and the help that careers helpers offer;
- **'Point of departure'** - a provocative, long-standing column in the NICEC Career Research and Development Journal, reprinted here with permission;
- **'Making it work'** - free and down-loadable material, outlining frameworks and examples for effective careers-work practice.

All of the magazine areas are posted on a rolling basis. Material will remain in these areas while it is frequently accessed.

figure 3:  
Café Career - the  
immediate layer

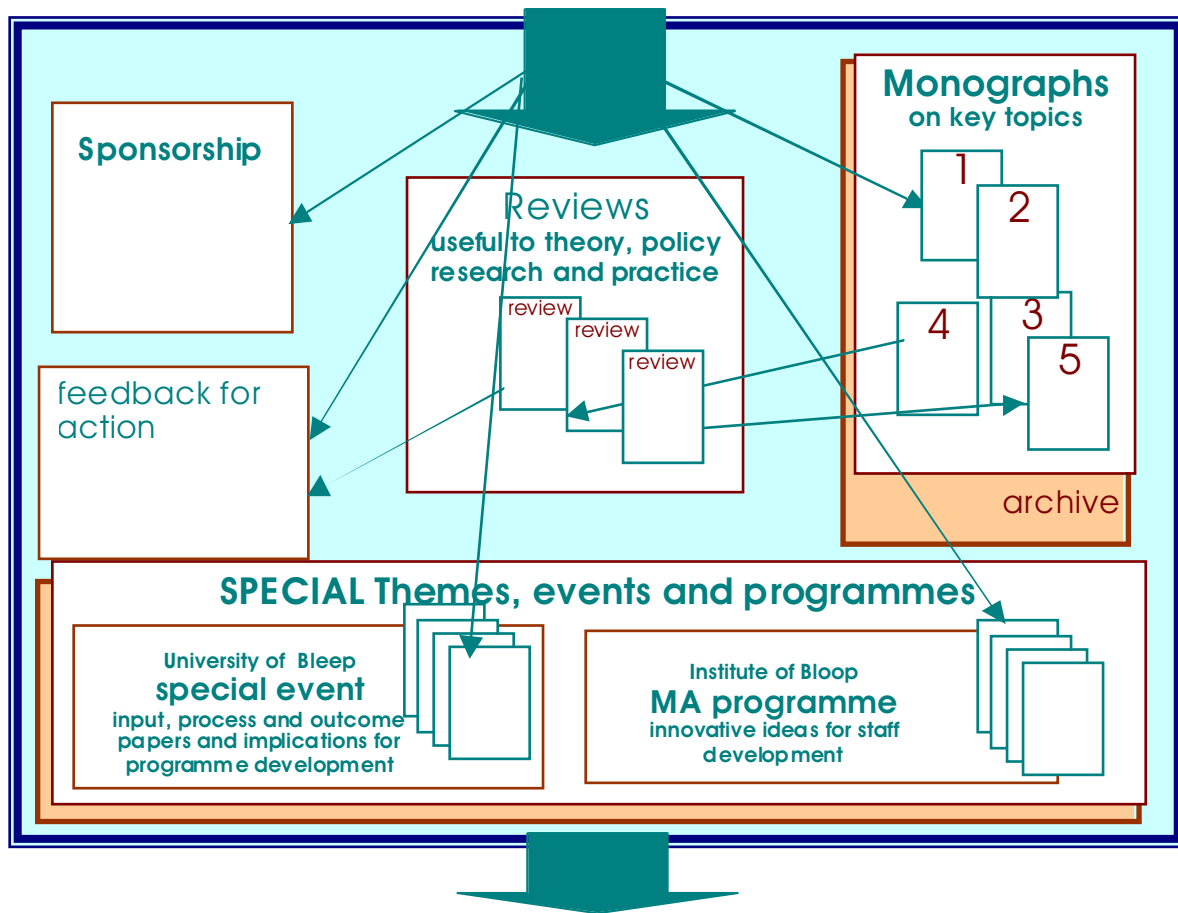


The underpinning layer contains:

### underpinning learning

- **monographs** - developing broadly useful ideas for theory, research, policy and ideology in careers work - written at sufficient depth to justify a longer treatment, and posted as free, down-loadable material;
- **Special themes, events and programmes** - course and conference material, which relates to the purposes of the café, reproduced with permission, and - wherever possible - contributing to the programme or event from which it comes.
- **reviews** - selected publication reviewed for their relevance to developments and issues addressed in the Careers Learning Café
- **Feedback for action** - a key section where visitors can make offers and suggestions on how the work supported by The Café can be developed - on the site and locally;
- **Sponsorship** - showing who is supporting The Café, whether in kind or through funding. Where appropriate, hot links to these people and organisations will be found in this area.

figure 4:  
the underpinning  
layer



The material in the underpinning layer is posted on a rolling basis, and will remain in this area while it is frequently used.

On removal, monograph and special material which is still being accessed, is transferred to the archive.

## the archive layer

A particularly useful feature of on-line learning is that earlier material can be made accessible to new visitors.

As they are 'rolled out' of the immediate and underpinning layers, the following areas are selectively archived: selected feature articles in the magazine, 'Espresso!', 'Making It Work', monographs, and 'special' material.

The archive will also contain key articles from other past publications, where they have proven significant in the development of useful ideas for action.



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The archive can be made searchable by key words.

The archive is also linked to and from the other areas, and will - in these ways - constitute a long-term memory for the careers-learning conversation.

All development costs, day-to-day work and much of the café's material have - so-far - been supplied free-of-charge. This situation is not indefinitely sustainable .

help  
needed

**Running costs** - aside from unpaid work on writing, editing and design-work on the site - include travel and office expenses, web-site rental and consultancy, expert programming, copyright payments together with hardware and software costs.

**Development costs** include the conceptualisation, overall design and development of the site and of gathering new material - especially from outside the Career-Learning Network.

It is intended that the café will remain free to all visitors. Help is therefore needed:

- offers of new material and services - particularly technical and editorial services;
- sustained funding to meet long-term development and running costs;
- sponsorship, in smaller amounts, to help with immediate running costs.

Offers of help will be negotiated in accordance with the rationale for the site, set out on pages 1-2. Where agreements are reached, full acknowledgment will be made on the site, and - where appropriate - reciprocal hot-links will be established.

Funding will be held in separately audited accounts in the name of 'The Career Learning Network'.

Please send suggestions for possible help to:

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Bill will be happy to talk with you about the possibilities.