virtual science hub

MANUAL

ViSH User Manual

ViSH is a social network for teachers and scientist to meet and collaborate in the science teaching.

ViSH includes a variety of functionalities that aim to provide users with the right tools and enough flexibility, allowing them to make use of resources and put together quality excursions that they can use in their classrooms and enhance their teaching. A few of these functionalities that we are going to look into more detail are listed below:

Social network

Excursions

Resources

Videoconference

The ViSH is available for registered and non-registered users. Non-registered users can view both excursions and resources. Registered user can create excursions, upload resources and access collaborative features such as MashMeTv and the social network.

Excursions are the centre and main important piece of ViSH. They are presentations composed of different resources that you can find in the Internet or upload yourself. For example they can contain text, images, videos, flash objects (games, simulations, etc.), remote e-Infrastructure resources (live webcams, remote labs, etc.), quizzes, ...

Advantages

The driving force behind ViSH is the wish to offer teachers a social and collaborative platform allowing them to create, manage and use pedagogical content using current web technologies based primarily on HTML5. The use of this latest technology contributed to the achievement of certain standards and advantages.

The first advantage is the possibility of collaborating among users in several ways. As a social network ViSH offers common features related to them like sending private messages, commenting in other user's timeline or sharing learning objects with the community (e.g. images, videos, presentations, etc.). In addition, ViSH integrates MashMeTV to allow real-time collaboration via videoconference. In this way, ViSH users can collaborate in a synchronous way while they are watching, for example, a virtual excursion.

The second major advantage is the easy accessibility derived from its technological foundation. Bearing in mind that the whole platform is based on web technologies, it is possible to access ViSH through desktop computers and mobile devices (i.e. smartphones and tablets) without the need of any special software installation.

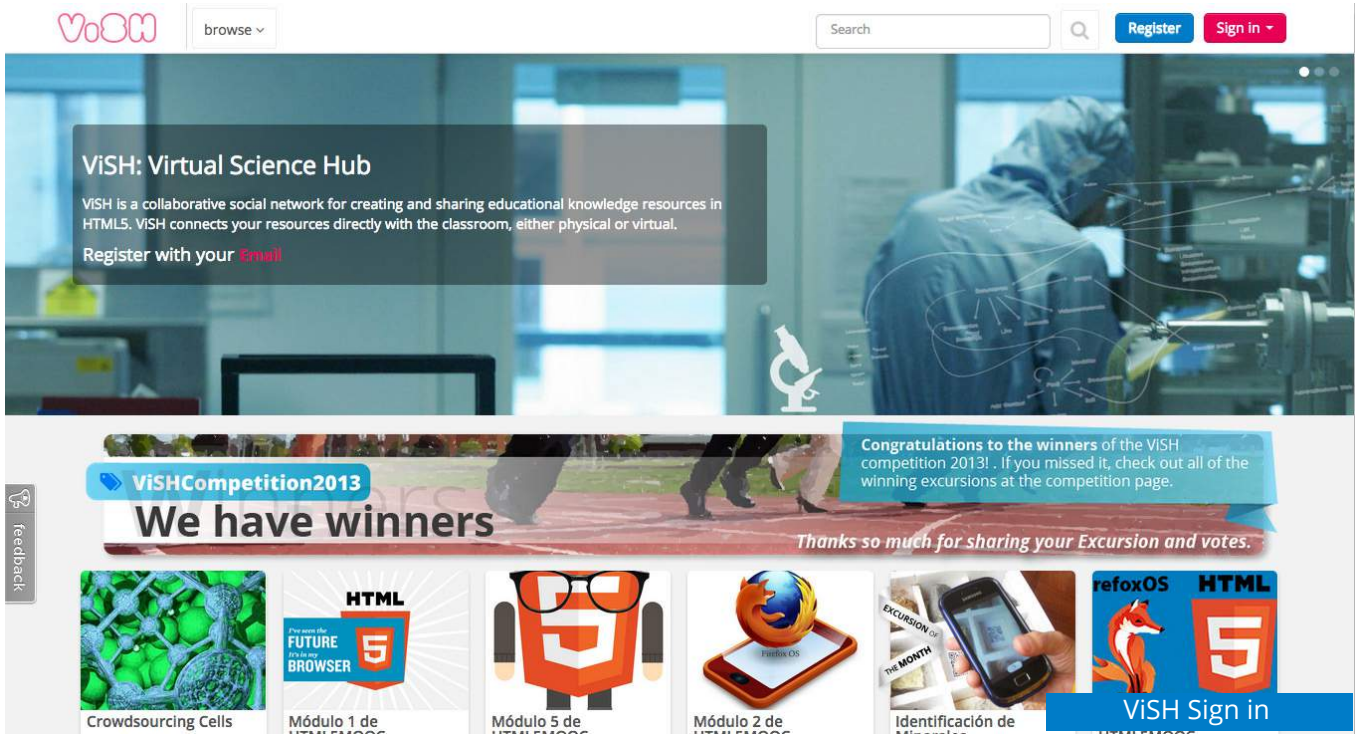
In the third place, ViSH integrates two powerful tools named ViSH Editor (which allows both editing and viewing presentations) and ViSH Viewer (that allows viewing presentations). Having both tools available in ViSH is a clear advantage in terms of user experience. In addition, the resources used to create virtual excursions can be chosen not only from ViSH repositories, but also from third-party web platforms, like YouTube or Flickr.

The next sections of this document will explain the main functionalities of ViSH.

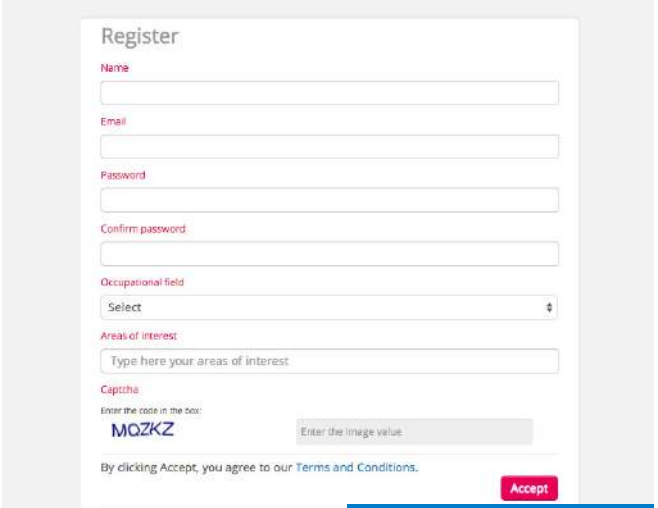
User registration/login

If you are interested in using ViSH not only as a resource repository but also as a tool for creating your own resources and excursions, you first need to register and identify yourself within the system. For this reason and as soon as you reach the appointed URL (http://vishub.org/) you are asked to login using the username and password you have chosen during your registration.

New users are invited to register by clicking on the Register link to be found on the top right just near the "Sign in" button of the page.



ViSH Sign in



User registration

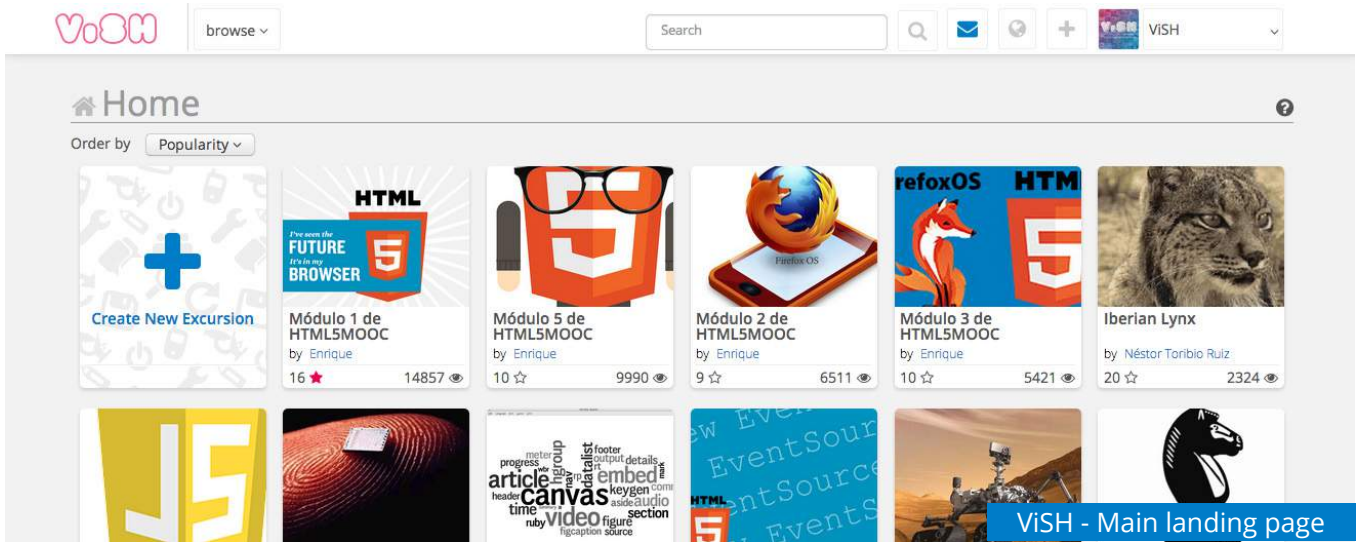
Once you complete your registration you are presented with a confirmation message on the screen while you also receive an email with your details which you can keep for future reference.

You are now ready to explore ViSH!

Non-registered user

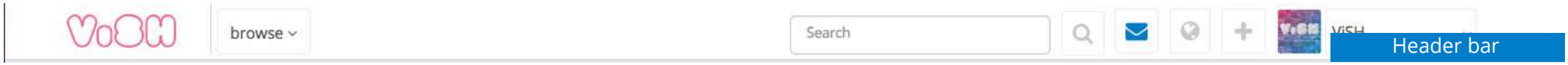
ViSH can be used in two different ways, depending on users' rights and identification within the system. A non-registered user is not excluded from the system but he can still use it while searching, viewing and using the available excursions and resources. Students are generally non-registered users, who can view the specific virtual excursions and even fill in quizzes without being registered.

Main landing page and header bar



ViSH - Main landing page

The main landing page of ViSH is what you get after Signing In. represents the heart and centre of all activity. From this page, users can obtain a quick overview of the latest excursions of their network and search for resources or excursion.
The header bar of the ViSH is common among all pages. So user can move between pages and go to the different sections.



Header bar

On the top left we can find the ViSH logo so from any page we can come back to the home page (where we see our network excursions). After that there is a browse drop down that allows us to go to the popular content, popular excursions, popular resources or popular users. This will allow us to find interesting content or users in ViSH.

The next field is the search field. We will explain this functionality later on. Then the envelope tells us if we have any notification or private message from our contacts.

The button with the earth icon allows us to go to the activities page and the + button allows us to add from any page a excursion, a resource, a category or an event.

Finally the icon with our avatar is a drop down to go to our profile (where all our stuff is) or to configure our settings.

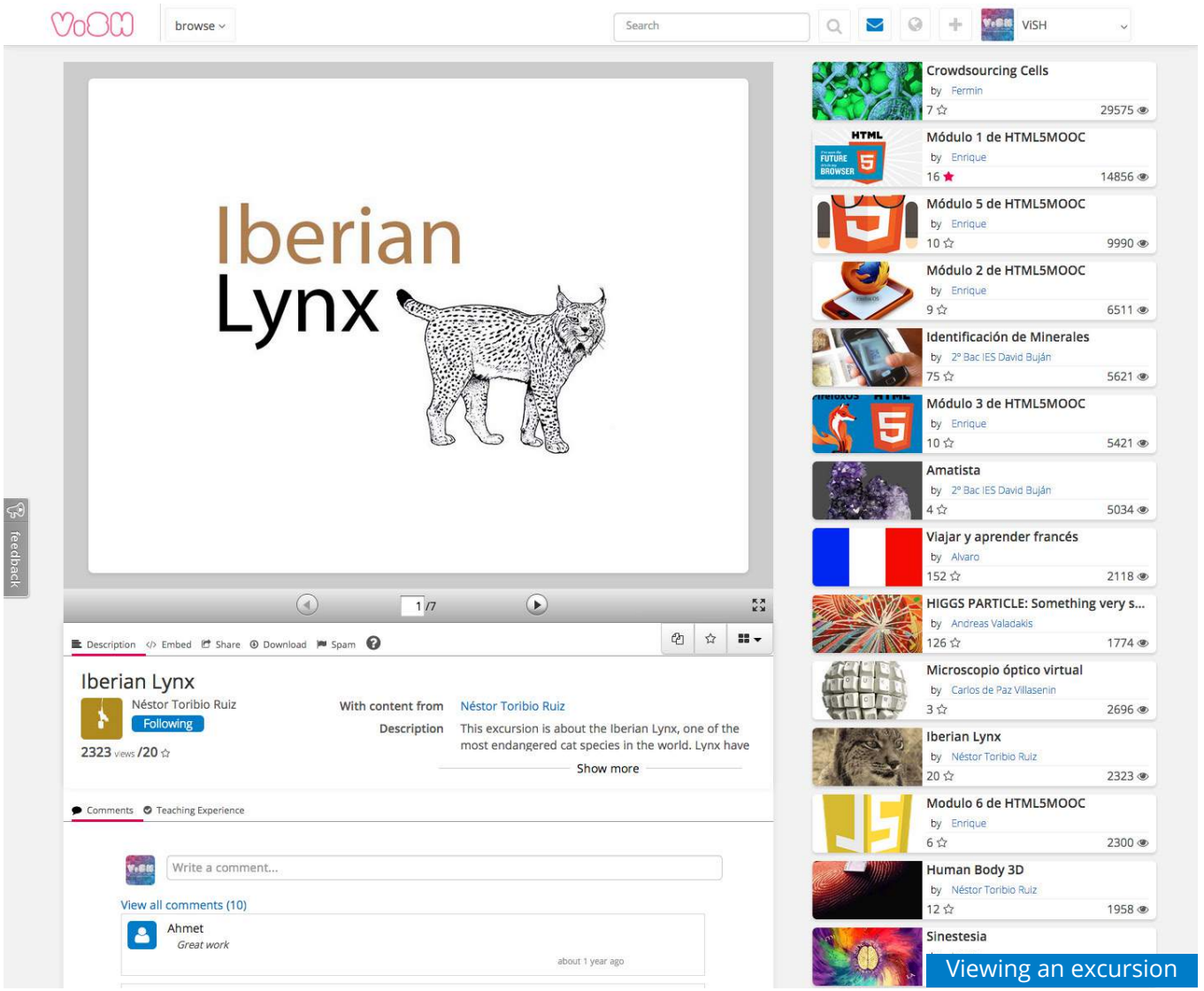
Excursions

Excursions are the centre and main important piece of ViSH. They are presentations composed of different resources that you can find in the Internet or upload yourself. For example they can contain text, images, videos, flash objects (games, simulations, etc.), remote e-Infrastructure resources (live webcams, remote labs, etc.), quizzes, ...

Viewing excursions

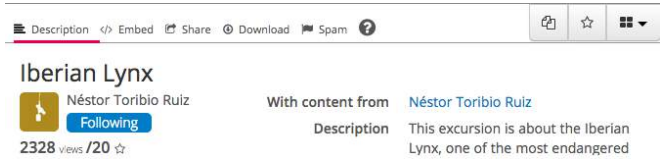
By clicking on an excursion title or avatar, user can access and navigate through it.

Excursion thumbnail

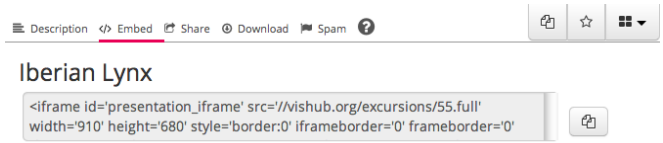


Viewing an excursion

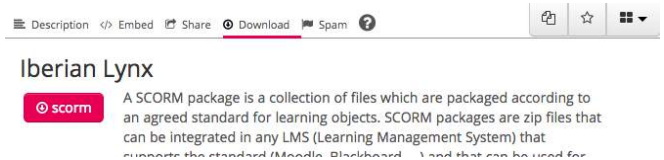
The user can use the arrows at the bottom and go back and forth to the different pages. Same result can also be achieved by using the arrow buttons of the keyboard. Below the excursion we can find five (5) tabs.



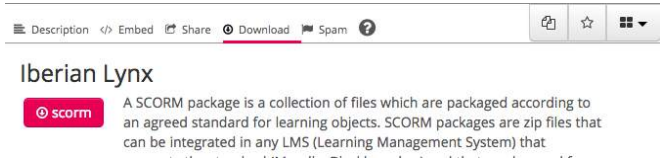
The first one is the description tab that tells us the title, the author, number of views and more information about the excursion.



The “embed” one gives information for exporting the excursion as an iframe which then allows us to embed it in an external site.



The “share” tab is for sharing this excursion in Facebook, Twitter or Google Plus and allowing more people to see it. Also a short URL is provided to share it.



The scorm tab allows us to download the excursion in SCORM format (it is a zip package) that is an e-learning standard format. This zip package can be uploaded to any LMS such as Moodle.

Finally the flag allows us to report spam or errors in the content. There is a supervisory board that will take care and remove the excursion if it has inappropriate content or will contact the author if something is incorrect.

On the right we find three buttons.

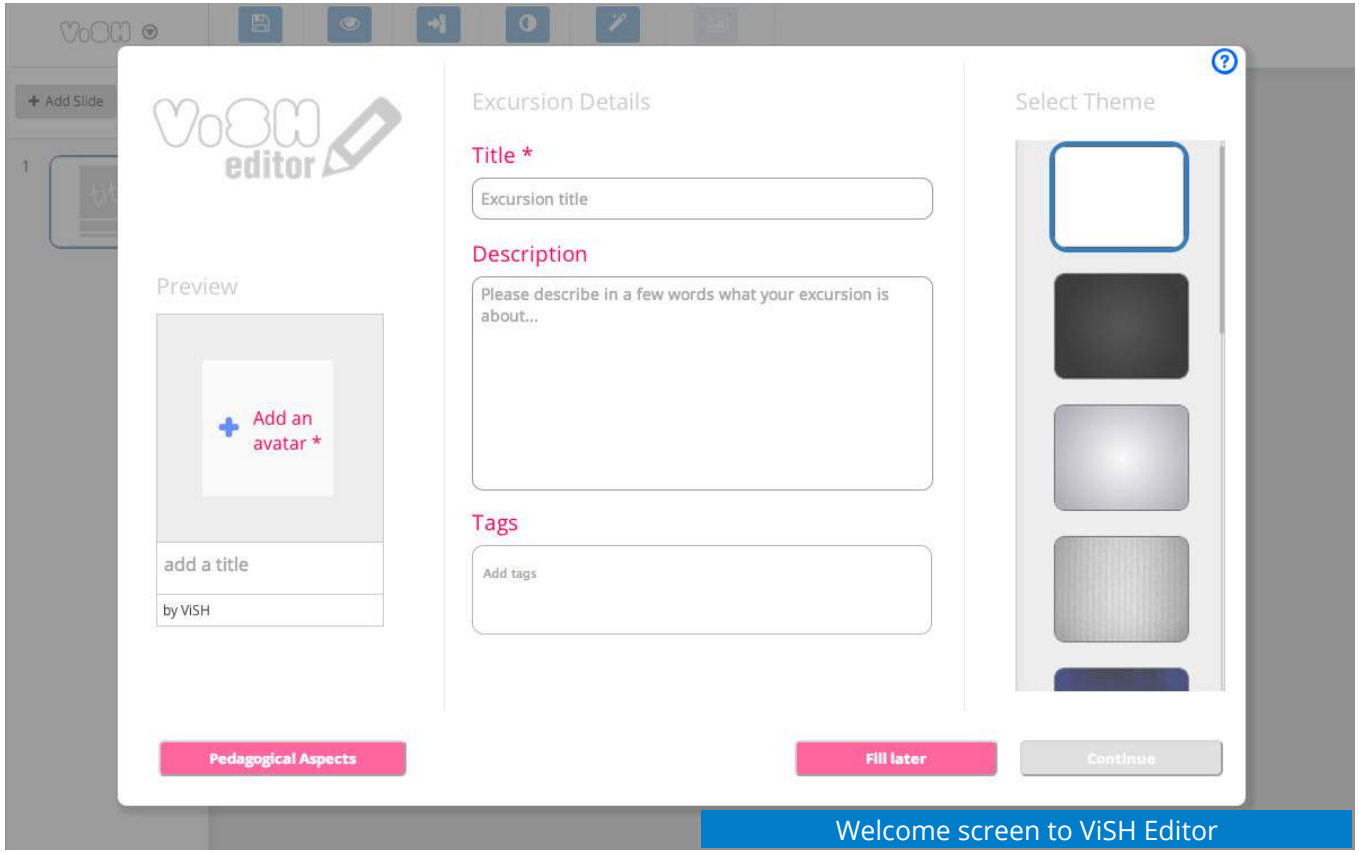
The first one has two sheets of paper in the icon. It is the clone button. It allows users to create a copy/clone of an existing excursion. Users can then edit the excursion, improve it and publish it as a new excursion.

The “star” button is for marking this excursion as favourite.

The categorize button is the one with four squares on it. It has a drop down with your categories so you can save the excursion there.

Creating excursions

In the home page users can find a “+” button that allows them to access the ViSH Editor tool so as to create a new excursion.



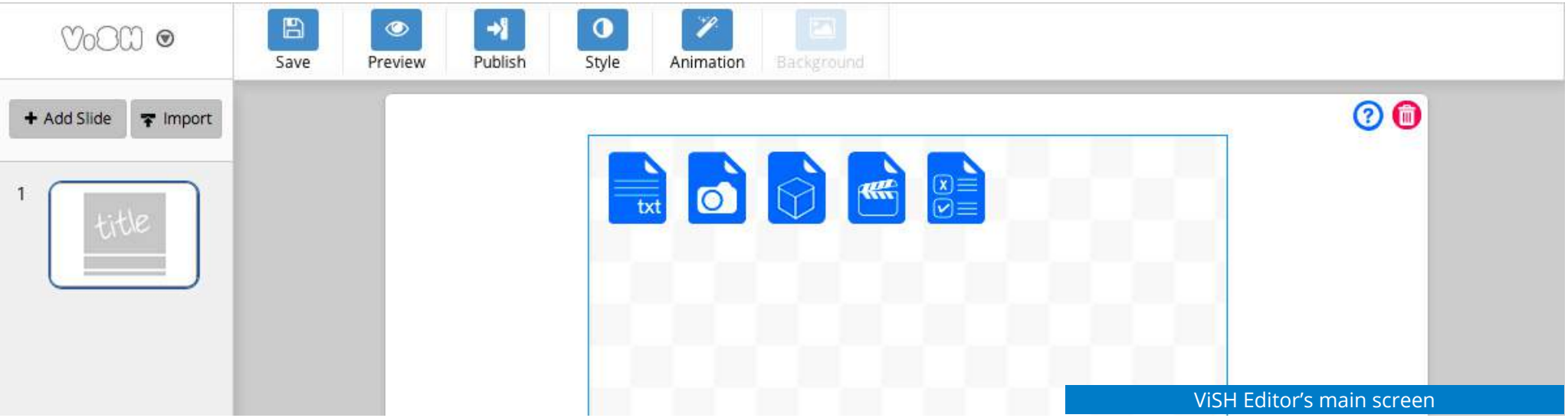
Welcome screen to ViSH Editor

The first screen that appears when creating an excursion is the “Welcome screen” where we have to choose a title, description, tags and a thumbnail for their excursion. Apart from the existing thumbnails, we can upload our own avatar, select it form a URL or search in Flickr or in the LRE.

There is also a help button that we can revert to every time we need help. This same button will be available in many places in the excursions’ creator to offer help.

Once users have filled in the “welcome screen” they have to click on “continue”. The “welcome screen” will disappear and the “main screen” will come into view.

In the main screen users can find three zones: a toolbar, a pages area and a thumbnails bar. All sections will be explained in more detail in the following subsections.



ViSH Editor's main screen

Toolbar

The toolbar has three zones.

The first one includes a drop down menu (with the ViSH icon) with options to save the excursion, preview it, import or export and get help.

The second one has several buttons to publish the excursion, preview it or change the style (theme).

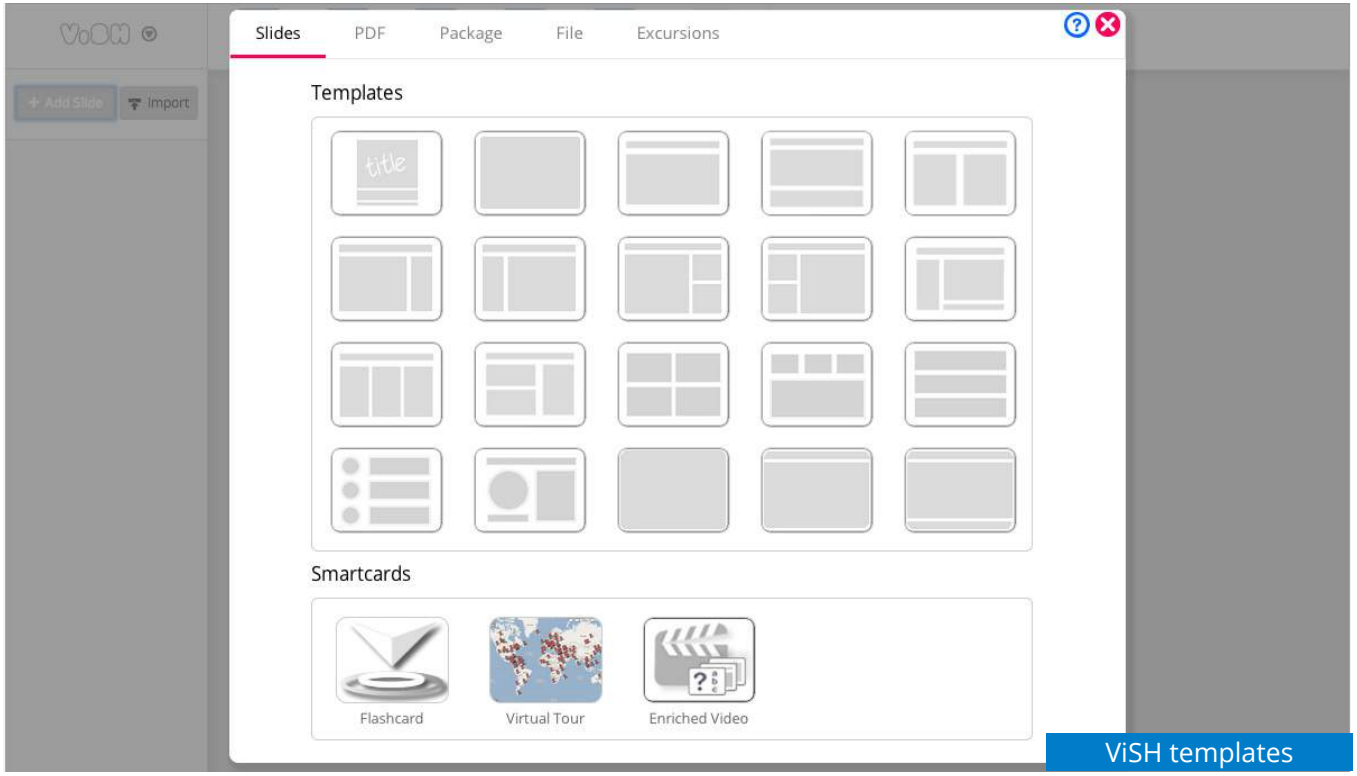
Finally on the top right zone is for the options on the zone that we are acting.

Thumbnails bar

On the left of the excursions creator tool we can find a thumbnails bar that will grow as we add new pages with the "+ add slide" button.

On the top of this bar there are two buttons "+ add slide" and "import". The first one allows us to add a new slide. And the second one allows us to import new content, from a PDF file, from another excursion, insert a flashcard or virtual map.

At the time-being, fifteen ready-made templates are available to create excursions.



ViSH templates

Pages area

The pages area takes up most of the available space. This area will show the excursion pages as we complete them. The pages are composed of areas that allow us to add different kind of objects or resources, i.e. text, images, flash objects, web pages, HTML5 and flash videos, and live content (such as a microscope or a live webcam).

We will be the one in charge of choosing the adequate resources to compose the excursion. These resources can be searched in the ViSH repository, in external services such as Flickr or YouTube or directly uploaded to the ViSH when creating an excursion.

Flashcard, virtual tours and enriched videos

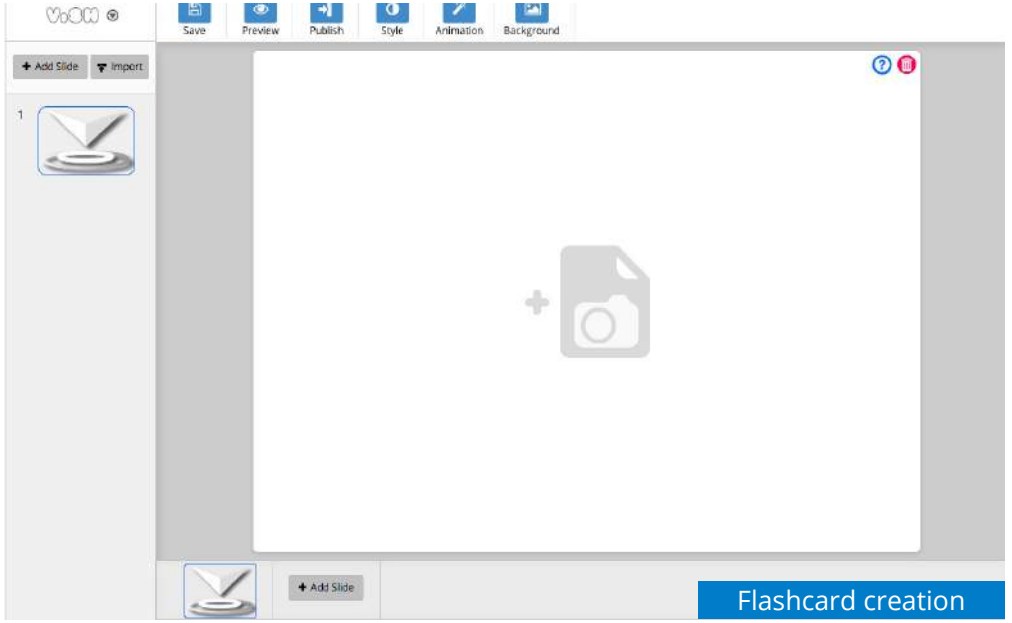
If we click on the “+ add slide” button we get the templates and smartcards that we can add.

Smartcards are flashcards, virtual tours or enriched videos. If we add a smartcard we get another carousel at the bottom. Where we can create slides for that smartcard the same way they are created in the main excursion.

Flashcards are a background with hot zones linked to other slides. For example we can see the Curiosity flashcard.

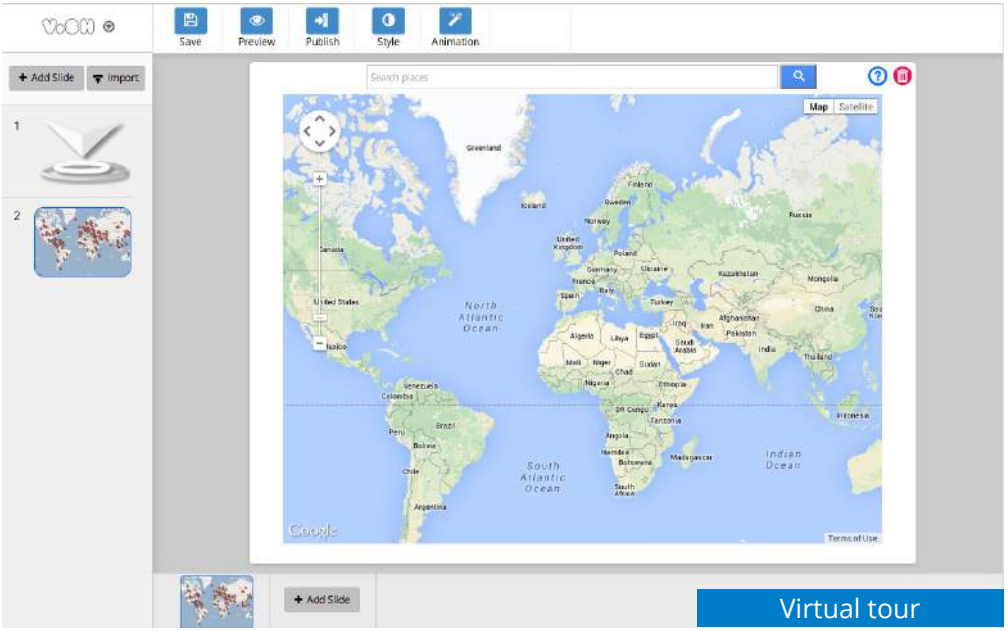
Virtual tours are maps with hot zones where we can link other slides.

Enriched videos are videos with hot zones where we can link other slides.

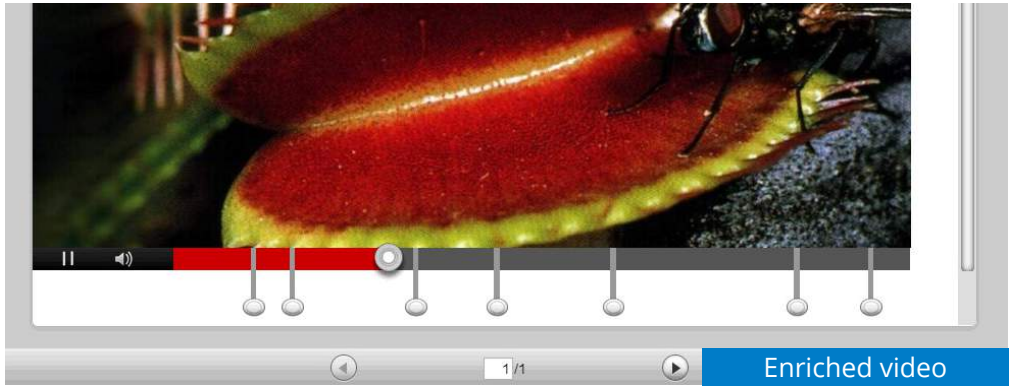


Flashcard creation

Curiosity flashcard



Virtual tour



Enriched video

Resources

Type of resources

ViSH supports a set of resources that can be uploaded to the platform and be made available for all the users. More specifically, we have:

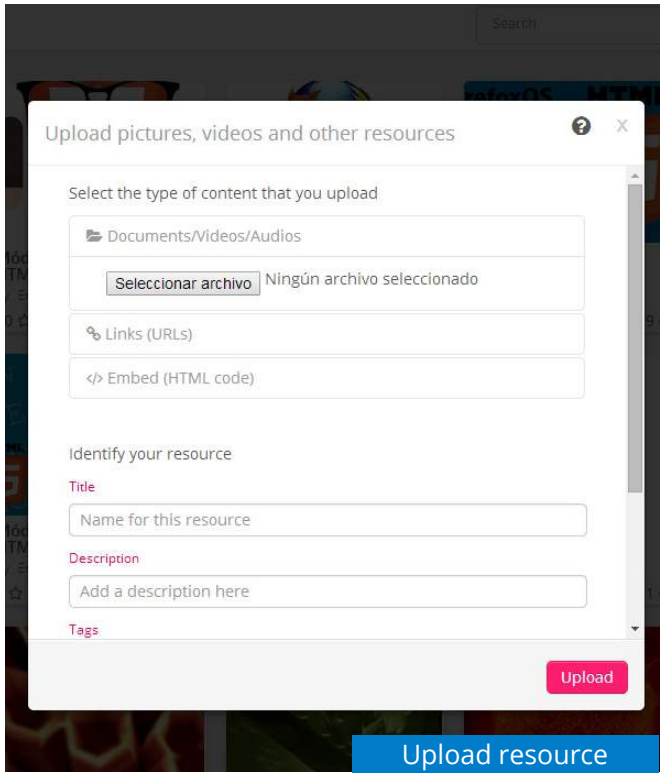
- Images
- Objects (flash objects)
- Videos
- Live objects: webcams or microscopes provided by the e-Infrastructures

These resources can be accessed searching for them directly in ViSH or searching for them from the ViSH editor when creating an excursion to introduce the resource in a slide.

To find our resources we have to go to our profile with the dropdown that we find in the header bar under our name and avatar. Also we can find other users resources in their profiles.

"Upload" function

If a user or e-infrastructure provider wants to add a resource to ViSH, the following steps need to be followed after having pressed the + button in the header bar:



1. Click on "Add resource" in the drop down that appears after clicking on the + button.

2. If you want to upload a document, click on browse to choose a file from your computer. If your resource is a link or embed code click on that option and you can paste it into the text box that appears.

3. Type a title and description.

4. Add related tags to your resource in order to specify the topics related to it. This information is crucial for recommendation purposes.

5. Choose a required language, if necessary.

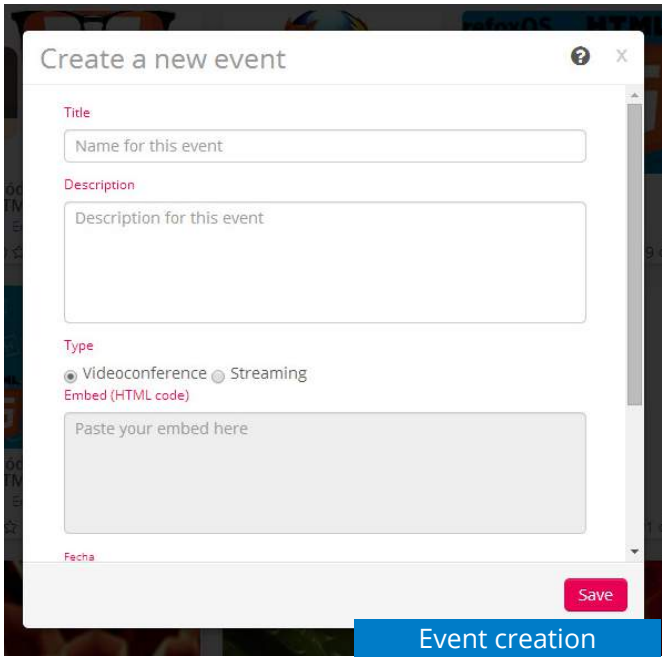
6. Select an age range. This information will be used for recommendation purposes.

7. Finally, click on save button to upload your resource.

Events

Events in ViSH are videoconference events. They are done with a videoconference tool called MashMe (http://mashme.tv).

The event creation is very simple. In the + button in the top header bar we go to “add event” option. In the lightbox that appears we type the title, description, date, start hour and end hour.



Event creation

When you finish creating the event you are redirected to the event page, where you can upload an avatar or poster to represent the event.

In that page, below the poster there is a button to enter the event. When you click on it the videoconference starts. It will ask you for permissions to access your audio and webcam.

Figure 15 Button to launch the event

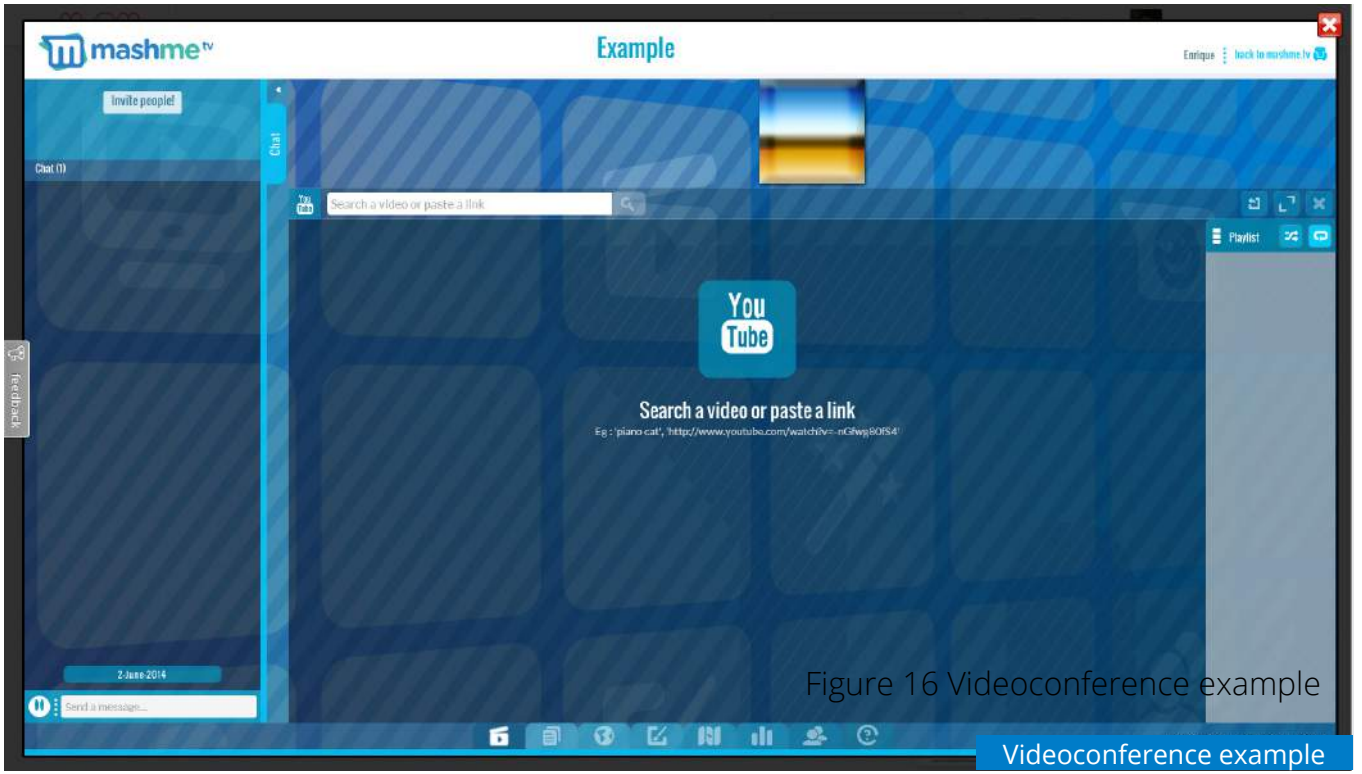


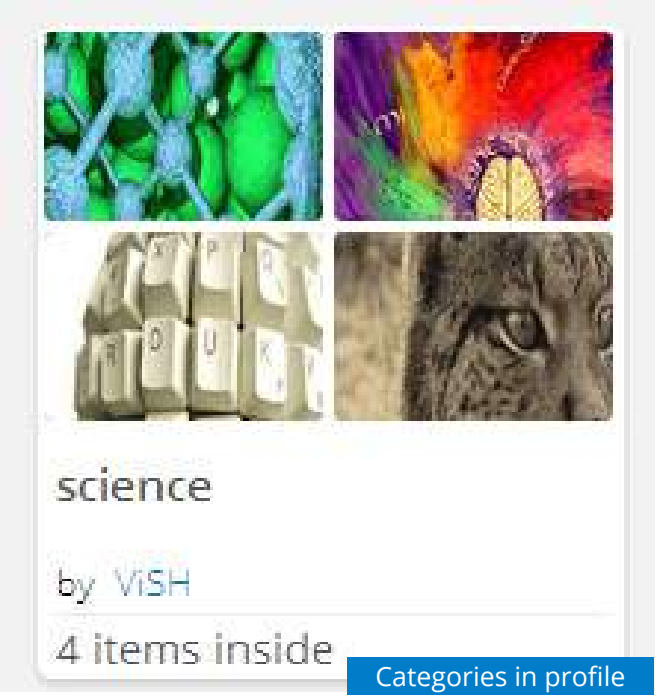
Figure 16 Videoconference example

Videoconference example

Categories

Categories are like folders to categorize and organize the information that you can find in ViSH.

They can be shown in the profile.

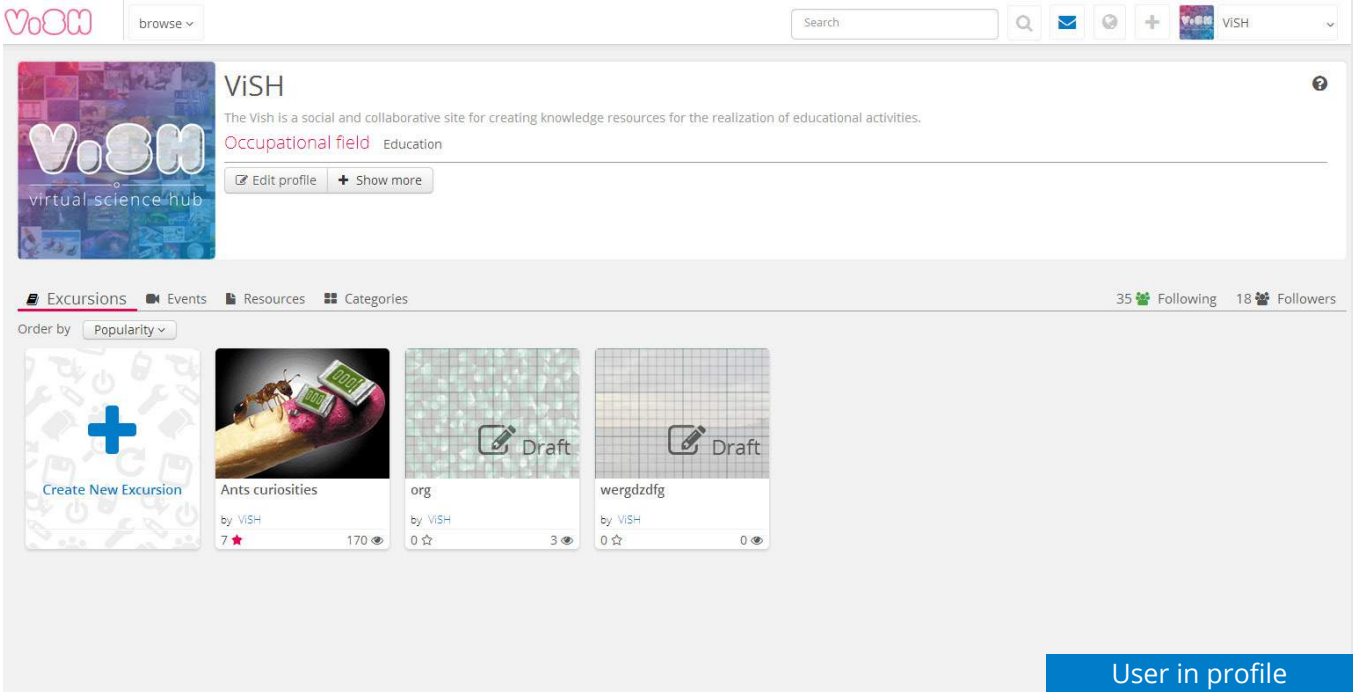


Categories in profile

Categories can be created directly in the profile, in every page in the top header bar in the + button or in the drop down that appears in every categorizable item.

User Profile

By pressing in a user's avatar and clicking the "Profile" button, the user profile screen is shown. This screen provides information about the activity of the user, like the excursions, events, categories and resources he/she has created; the followers/following contacts and the possibility of viewing his/her detailed profile.



User in profile

Contacts

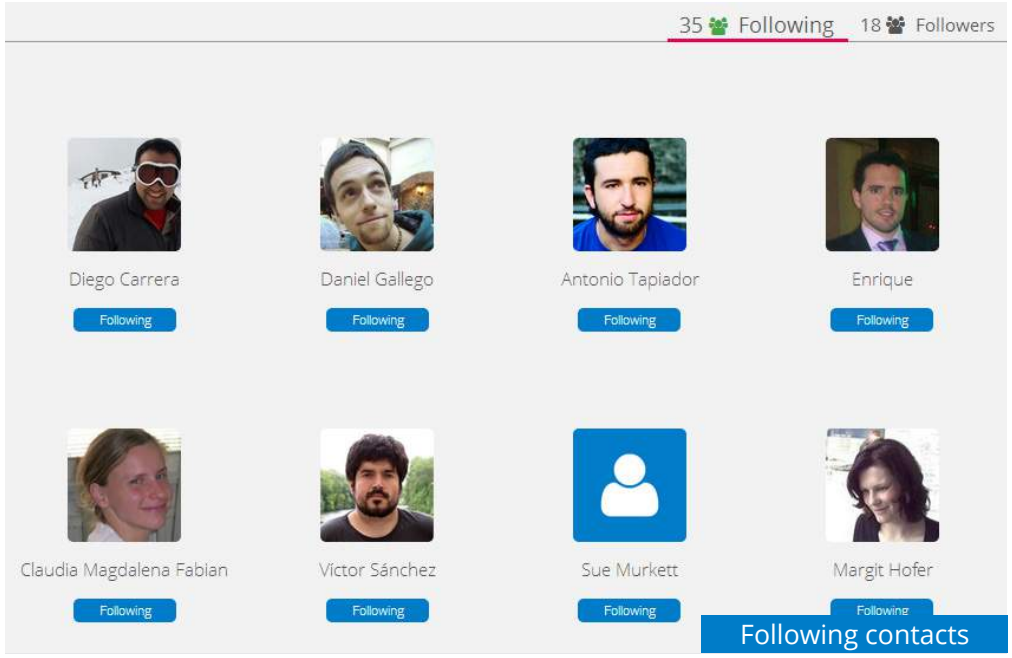
"Contacts" is mainly related to the people that a user is somehow connected with. There are two (2) different levels of involvement. They are showed in the profile page.

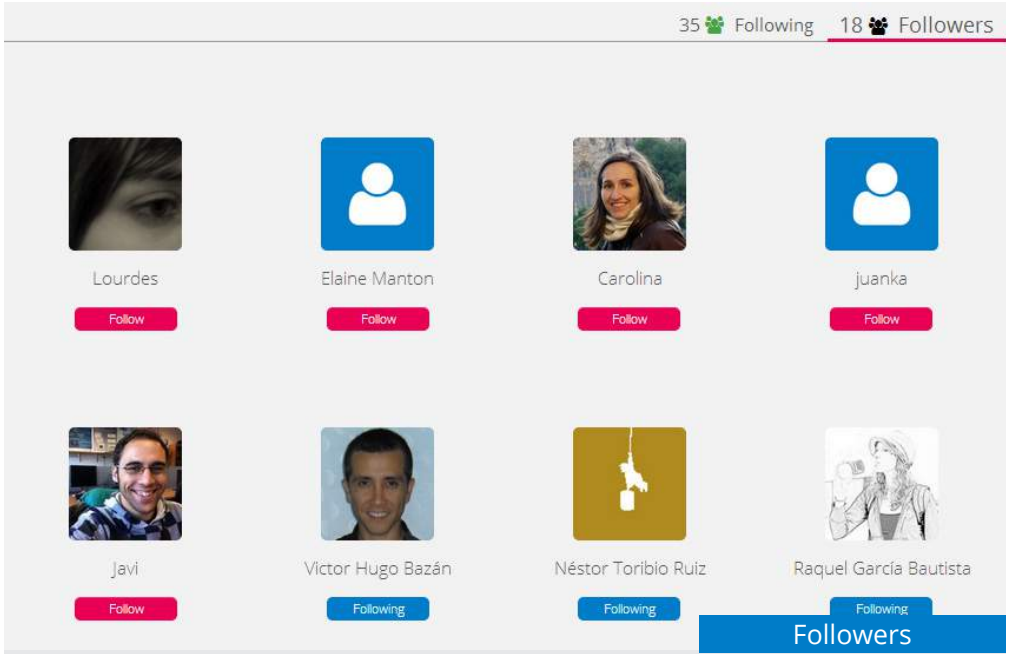
"Following"

"Following" tab lists the ViSH users that you have decided to closely follow their activities and actions within ViSH.

"Followers"

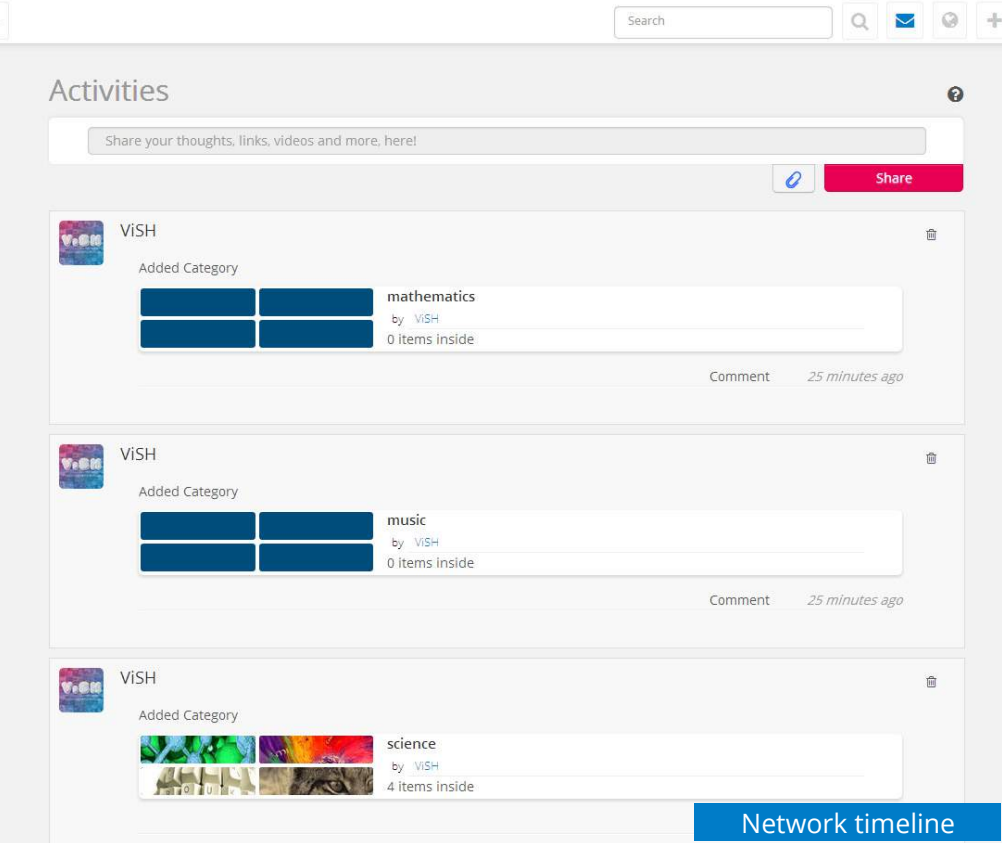
"Followers" tab, lists the ViSH users that have opted for following your activities and actions within ViSH. These users usually share the same or similar interests with you and are interested in keeping up to date with your activities.





Timeline

We can access our activities page on the world icon that is placed in the top header bar. In this page, you can obtain an overview of the latest activities that yourself and the people you are following, have recently performed within ViSH. All users' names are clickable which allows you to easily navigate through other users' profiles and discover other interesting people, excursions and resources.



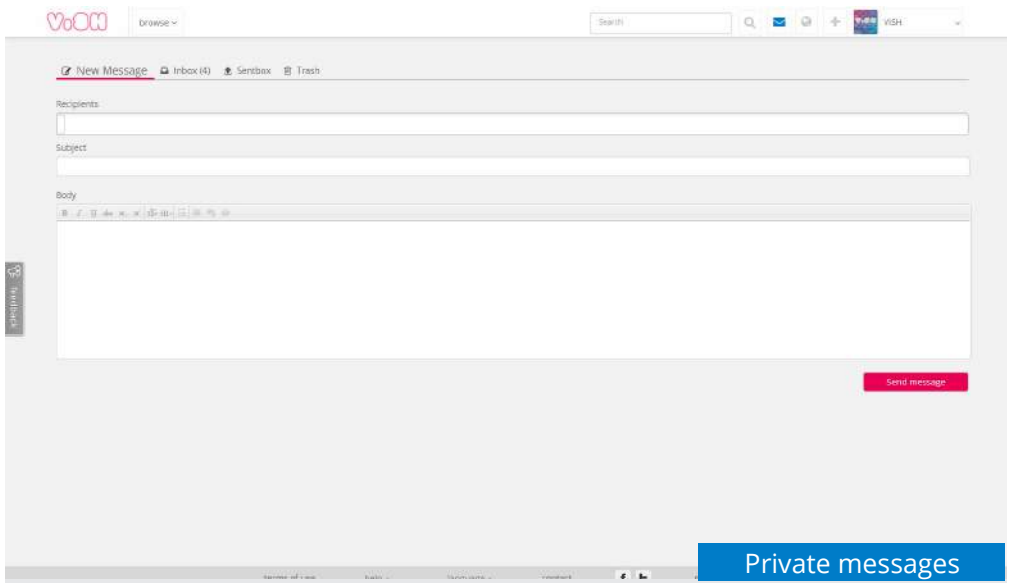
Network timeline

Private messages

As in many social networks, ViSH allow private communication among users by sending private messages. To do so, the user has to press the envelope icon in the upper right corner.

Following a common interface for this kind of tools, four (4) options are available:

- New message: to create and send new private messages.
- Inbox: to manage the new messages received. A number between brackets indicates the number of unread messages.
- Sent box: shows the private messages previously sent.
- Trash: shows the erased messages.

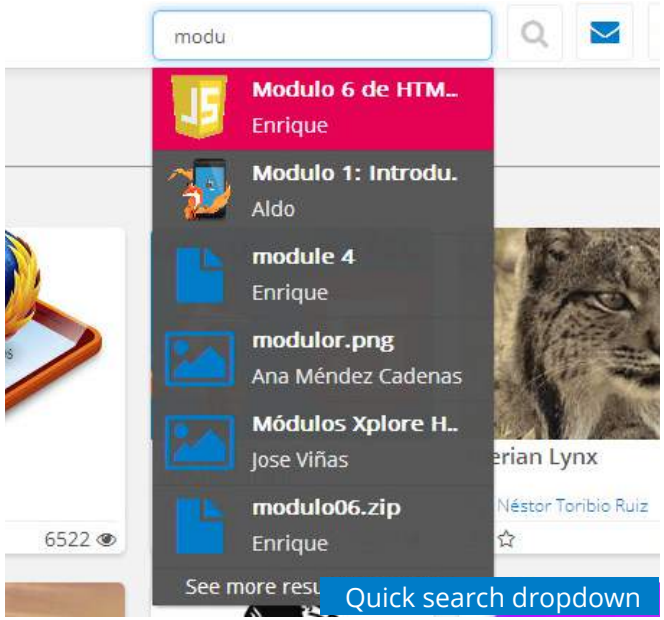


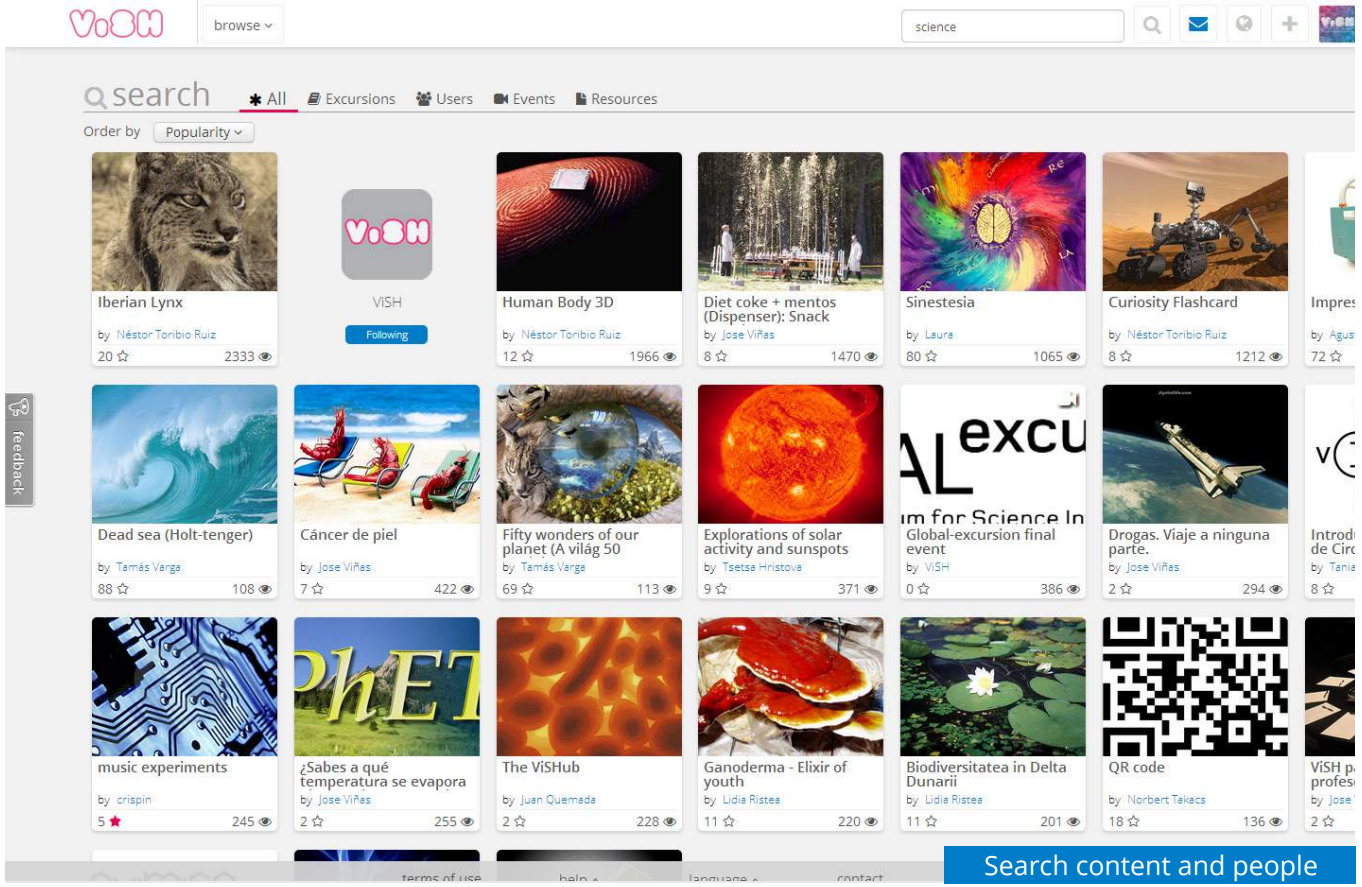
Private messages

Search functionality

Bearing in mind the great variety of educational content (i.e. virtual excursions and resources) and users existing in ViSH, a search tool is needed to help users find easily whatever/ whoever they are looking for.

Search function can be reached from any place in the top header bar. When you type the first three characters a dropdown appears with the first search results. If you click enter or “see more results for ...” you will get to the search results page.





The search engine is really powerful. It can either look through all types of items or just search into a specific type (i.e. excursions, users or resources).

Technical requirements

Since ViSH has been developed according to the latest web standards, it is compatible and supported by any modern browser. The currently supported browsers are:

Google Chrome

Mozilla Firefox

Internet Explorer (version 9 or later)

Opera

Safari

ViSH supports a huge variety of devices. In addition, a specific interface for mobile users is available. This interface provides a better user experience for mobile users, including not only a set of views optimized for the device, but also content (e.g. recommendations) which can specifically be consumed on mobile devices. As a result, ViSH supports mobile phones (i.e. Android and iPhone), tablets (i.e. Android and iPad) and desktop computers.

On the other hand, the ViSH Editor and the Viewer have been developed according to the HTML5 standard, and for that reason they will be supported by any browser that fully supports HTML5. The creation of excursions (ViSH Editor) is only available through desktop computers and tablets because of the limited screen size of mobile devices.
VISH Viewer is also responsive, so, it supports a huge variety of devices. It is currently supported on iPhone and Android mobile phones, Android tablets and iPad.

Last but not least, it is important to mention that the ViSH Editor allows the integration of third-party learning objects that are not based on HTML5 standards (e.g. flash objects, java applets, etc.). Therefore, some additional software might be needed in the cases where these non-HTML5 based objects are used to create virtual excursions. However, the flash plugin or the java runtime environment is usually installed in every desktop computer.