

Literacies, Learning & Libraries

Exploring the Web 2.0 World



ASLC

Alberta School Library Council
of the Alberta Teachers' Association

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From the Editor's Desk



Did you know that the Internet is 20 years old? In the blink of an eye, this amazing technological tool has changed not only the way we live and work but also the way we think about information daily, and no less in our schools and libraries. Consequently, a new name for the Alberta School Library Council (ASLC) journal was in order to keep pace with this dynamically changing information environment.

The ASLC executive put their heads together and decided that the new name should reflect what is happening not only in school libraries these days but also in regular classrooms as teachers embrace inquiry learning in the rich technological environment of the 21st century.

As a result, *Literacies, Learning & Libraries* (formerly *Teacher-Librarian Today*) hopes to reach a wider audience of readers.

To that end, the theme of this inaugural issue is "Exploring the Web 2.0 World." Dr Jennifer Branch of the University of Alberta taught an information technology course with Joanne de Groot in the Teacher-Librarian by Distance Learning program this past winter. The aim of the course was to better prepare teachers and teacher-librarians to work with students in their classrooms. The feature articles of this issue reflect the struggle and exhilaration experienced by the students in this class as they faced Web 2.0 tools head on: blogs, wikis, podcasts, Facebook, Nings, voice thread, mashups, Flickr and so on. We hope that by reading about their experiences in this new world, you will find yourself wanting to jump in and get started in your own classroom, if you haven't already.

School libraries may be changing technologically, but they are still well grounded in reading literacy, without which, all the rest are rendered moot. Our guest author Mary Woodbury shares her thoughts on the value of story and the joy of writing that have marked her career as a well-loved author for children and adults alike. We hope you too are rejuvenated and inspired by her words as much as the ASLC Edmonton Regional members were when they were captivated by her skill as a storyteller at the meeting in June.

Once again, I urge you to share this publication with your colleagues. *Literacies, Learning & Libraries* is for teachers and teacher-librarians as we learn together best practices for the 21st century. 🍷

—Diane GallowaySolowan

President's Message

We have had a significant year in Alberta in the areas of literacy, learning and school libraries. Though progress has been made, much is yet to be accomplished in these three areas. Keep on reading.

Learning and Literacies

As our new title denotes, we are excited about how Web 2.0 technologies can facilitate our own literacies and learning as educators. The ASLC is seeking to model learning through interactivity and collaboration, and working to become more Web 2.0 friendly. This fall, our council will work within two newly aligned north/south regionals. Some of our professional development will be made available through webinars, Nings, wikis and video conferencing, though we will maintain the crucial face-to-face interactions at conferences and provide regional professional development opportunities. We will need both personal and virtual contact to meet the needs of our growing and changing membership. Look this fall for a link through TNET to a Ning where you will have opportunities to join professional support groups and dialogue on topics such as literacy, inquiry and online book groups. Join me in reading *Web 2.0: New Tools, New Schools*, by Gwen Solomon and Lynne Schrum, and *Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms*, by Will Richardson. Join us in an online discussion about these books and topics this fall.

The BC Literacy Forum (www.bcliteracyforum.ca) is another example of how Web 2.0 technologies can engage Canadians about literacy. The forum is a Ning that grew out of the Canadian Ministers of Education Council (CMEC) Pan-Canadian Literacy Forum, in which some of us participated this past May. We listened to keynote speakers from across Canada talk about the crisis in literacy through video broadcasting; interacted face to face with adult learners, education and community members; and now continue our dialogue through online discussion groups. Did you know that four out of ten Albertans are functionally illiterate? We invite you to participate in one of these discussion groups about how educators can address the *Learn Canada 2020* initiative by CMEC. Learn more about *Learn Canada 2020* at www.cmec.ca/2008declaration.en.stm.

School Libraries

In November 2007, the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) passed the following resolution:

That ASBA urge Alberta Education to adopt the standards for school library programs that are outlined in *Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Library Programs in Canada*, edited by Asselin, M., Branch, J. and Oberg, D., and fund jurisdictions appropriately with the goal of reaching the exemplary standard in all Alberta schools by 2015.

ASLC worked with the trustees to provide background information, stories and research to support the motion.

In May 2008, Alberta Education hired Judith Sykes as a library resource manager to revise the 1984 standards, policy and guidelines for school libraries and to examine the *Achieving Information Literacy* (2003) standards. ASLC has been invited to provide input and consultation on the development of these new standards. Judith will also oversee the development of a supporting document for *Focus on Inquiry*, which will focus on deepening students' understanding. ASLC will act as a focus group to provide feedback on the development of this document. We look forward to working with Alberta Education to improve the standards for school libraries in Alberta as a means of supporting the development of students' literacy and learning.

ASLC has begun working on a foundational guiding document: *A Blueprint for the 21st Century Learner*. From this, we will examine how classroom teachers, technology and literacy leaders, and teacher-librarians can best prepare their students for new forms of literacy and will help them "learn how to learn" in virtual and physical spaces. Look for more information about this document in the coming year.

Conference 2009

From March 13 to 15, 2009, ASLC, the Educational Technology Council and Distributed Learning will hold a joint megatechnology conference entitled "Mega-Ends: Shifting 21st Century Learning." Look for more information on the ASLC website in early 2009. Expect to learn much more about bringing Web 2.0 technologies into your classrooms and schools.


President's Message

Heartfelt thanks go to

- our executive members, who have worked enthusiastically for students and their colleagues provincially and locally. It has been a privilege to work together to make some headway in the realm of school libraries. Some of my best professional development has come about at executive meetings and/or personal conversations with these exemplary professionals who seek to model how school libraries build literacies and learning.
- the Kaleidoscope 9 conference committee, under the leadership of Cathy Yusep, who has worked tirelessly for four years to prepare for this conference, which showcases international authors and illustrators.

Finally, I want to remind you that you need to renew your free specialist council membership through TNET each fall. A subscription is available to those of you who also have a vested interest in literacies, learning and libraries. Please see our website (<http://aslc.teachers.ab.ca/>) for more details.

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—Fern Reirson

Past President's Message

International Conference

I attended the International Association for School Libraries (IASL) conference in Berkeley, California, this summer. At the final meeting for our regional area of Canada, a discussion was held about IASL membership and reporting back to members within our country. IASL decided to have more than one director in each regional area to report back and forth, because the task is too big for one person. Much discussion focused on encouraging membership and the difficulty members have in being stretched between many organizations. A request was made that, at the very least, all provincial associations join the IASL as institutional memberships and then have one contact person in each province report through a Ning. Should this be the role of the past president? Logic says that the president-elect looks at the provincial picture, the president looks at the national picture, and based on all this experience, the past president heads communications internationally. This would have to be an addition to the duties listed in the handbook. We have been requested to put an IASL link on our website and to promote IASL at our conference.

Attending an international conference was a great experience. It is good to see where we are on the global picture. Many countries have the same concerns of maintaining or developing teacher-librarians, while others have the superb situation of having teacher-librarians in many schools. The necessity of government support is one key message that came across clearly. Many presented research papers at this conference, and it was good to hear what the newest research is showing us. The conference focused on reading, and the importance of free reading was the key message. The teacher-librarian is the enabling adult who facilitates things for students. The importance of access to materials, establishing a wide variety of materials and giving students the time to read was stressed.

I received a disk containing the 2008 proceeding as well as a print version of the 2004 proceeding, which will be added to the ATA library collection. Once we are IASL members, we will have access to the members-only section and be able to view these items online for our professional development. Calls for papers go out annually, so watch for them. They offer a great opportunity for us to do presentations.

Coalition

After the discussion in the spring, there is no longer a huge push on the coalition unless we have the support of parents as leaders. I will send information to the list of people who were initially interested in the coalition with the plea to find parents to lead this group.

Handbook

No work has been done on this handbook to date. After Kaleidoscope 9, I will sit with a committee to do the revision. Please let me know if you are interested in doing this with me. The work will be done through e-mail and teleconferencing.

Membership List

Lynda Smith and I have submitted our combined complimentary membership lists to Fern Reirson. But all members are advised that even though members have access to a complimentary specialist council membership, they must still renew their council membership every September.

Meeting with the Minister at ARA

It was with great pleasure that Jacquie Vincent and I met with the minister at ARA. He was happy to talk to two teacher-librarians and reminisced about his mother being a teacher-librarian. He was excited about October being National School Library Month, and suggested that he will announce it when the House goes back in session in the fall. It was a good meeting. Lyle Krause, our ATA staff advisor, spoke with him later in the evening, so two separate voices brought the message forth that day. It was time well spent. ✂

—Irene Masciuch

Alberta Conference Report

The theme of this year's conference, "World Class Learning and Literacy Through School Libraries," was to explore the world of literacy in digital format by building communities of readers, building literacy skills in school libraries and supporting reading instruction. In addition there was the opportunity to participate in research forums and special events. In my current role of administrator and teacher-librarian and having moved to a new school, the topic of reading was of particular interest to me. There were many sessions that offered a large variety of learning opportunities.

The first keynote speaker was Dr Stephen Krashen, author of *Power of Reading* (2004). In his extensive research around free voluntary reading (FVR), he showed us the effect that free reading had on Grade 4 boys who were given books to read that were in their interest range. Within one year they had significantly improved their reading scores. Free voluntary reading is the most powerful factor in improving reading. People who read are better spellers, readers and writers; use a broader vocabulary; have a better time in life; and have the potential for greater opportunities for advanced education. Important factors for FVR are materials that interest the reader, access to the material and time to read. Krashen looked at the impact of programs that offer rewards for reading, such as Accelerated Reader, which is a reading practice program. He found support for Alfie Kohn's work, *Punished by Rewards* (1993), which states that if you give someone a reward for something that is already pleasant, the message is that the activity is not pleasant, which increases the risk of the behaviour ending.

Krashen talked about the "home-run book," which is a book that turns a reader into an avid reader. Libraries play an important part in this as they usually can provide a variety of material from which a student can find that home-run material. Krashen's message is not new to those of us in the field of school libraries, though his witty presentation validated the need for us to continue to expose our clients to a wide variety of materials and continue to help readers select materials that will help them find their home-run book.

Morning reading for the whole school has been implemented in a number of schools in Denmark. Karin Gaarsted, from Denmark, told us that the overall scores for reading in Denmark were below what the education department found acceptable, so a morning reading program was begun in one school. Upon

entering the school, all students collected their books, went to their special spot for reading and read for half an hour every morning. This program is now used in a number of schools. The overall results are positive, and reading scores are improving. Important factors in this program are that teachers encourage everyone to read and model this behaviour. It takes a while to set the routine and expectations, but persistence pays off. Kindergarten students, English as a second language students or those with learning difficulties can be read to, receive individual instruction or view pictures and texts that are of keen interest to them. The time spent reading is for them. There is no discussion, no lessons or other activities around this reading time. It is important that students know their reading levels and select material that is at a level appropriate for them.

The views of the above-noted speakers were not held by all presenters. Judi Moreillon and Keisa William, from the United States, felt that students need strategies to build their comprehension skills so that they have a better understanding of what they are reading. Their session featured coteaching strategies between the classroom teacher and teacher-librarian to build comprehension strategies. Moreillon stated that reading advocacy is important work for a teacher-librarian, but it does not equal reading instruction. There are six strategies that she felt needed to be taught. She used Ed Young's book *Seven Blind Mice* (1992) to teach these strategies. The tail was background knowledge. If it is not there, you need to build it. Ears are sensory images involving all five senses. Tusks were questioning—the probing and poking that is done before, during and after reading. Head was making predictions, inferences. Legs were determining main ideas, what is important and what supports it. Trunk is the 16 different fix-up items to help make reading smoother. Indicators of incomprehension are when the reader loses interest, the movie screen goes blank or one needs to reread. If the whole elephant can be seen, then the reader can make meaning from many different resources. Moreillon believes that these strategies need to be taught in isolation then put together. Teaching this alone is too difficult—collaborate with your teacher-librarian, who can support you in using rich literature to develop each of these strategies. Moreillon used many different graphic organizers to help students understand.

James Herring, the next day's keynote speaker, spoke about reading websites. In his introduction he said that reading the Web is not about the tools, it is about the

culture and the values students hold. The tools are there to give the student voice.

Dianne de las Casa, an award-winning storyteller from Louisiana, not only entertained us but provided us with several workshops on the art of storytelling that we practised and were able to implement into our libraries right away. Using the rhythm and rhyme of our language is important for all students to be able to appreciate stories.

Ann Calson Weeks was the keynote on the third day and presented Strengthening Global Understanding Through Children's Books. She is part of the group that has created the International Children's Digital Library (ICDL) (www.childrenslibrary.org), a free resource with over 2,800 books in 59 languages from 48 countries with an interface in 16 languages. Ann had the most incredible goosebumps when we oohed and ahhed at the way that the website has been designed. Children helped to create the method of search—can you help me find that green book with the truck on the front? This is truly reading around the world! What a wonderful opportunity for us to show students books from a classmate's home country or make reading accessible at home, where the family can read in their first language. This group is starting to translate books as well as create special collections. All books are the full versions. We can link this to our OPAC, and the group is working on creating MARC records! Calson Weeks is looking for more contacts to bring in more books from all areas of the world. She is seeking the help from those who can provide author contacts so that the rights to scan in full books can be obtained. In my search of the site there, I found fewer familiar books that I was looking for, but the number of foreign texts was impressive.

Rebecca Hunt, of the United States, presented a paper titled "Star Struck: Characterizing Children's Literature Authored by Celebrities." Dr Peggy Sharp, of Oregon, regularly reviews books of this nature and applies the same lens that she applies to all other material. Hunt also concluded that some will be authors whose work will be sought out; others will pass by the wayside. Hunt used two frameworks to analyze these books: the traditional method of plot, character, setting, theme, style diversity elements and illustrations, and a method called Radical Change, which was developed by Dresang. Radical Change is a tool to enable users to evaluate digital media and to look at material holistically. Type one is changing forms and formats, which includes the graphic form, nonlinear presentations, interactive formats and

multiple layers of meaning. Type two is changing perspectives, which means looking at material from multiple perspectives, unheard voices and youth who speak for themselves. Type three is changing boundaries—subjects and setting that were forbidden or overlooked, characters portrayed in a new ways, new communities and unresolved endings. The important part of this session was not that celebrities are publishing children material—it is that we see them through the same lenses we use for all material and that we incorporate the Radical Change method for all materials.

One of the last sessions was titled "I Hate to Read—or Do I? Low Achievers and Their Reading." The researchers looked at high school students and their required summer reading assignments. This study came as a result of a previous study that looked at the gain over a school year and the loss in reading over the summer. Students who claimed that they hadn't read over the summer were targeted. From their interviews, it was learned that the issue was reading books versus reading. Reluctant readers wanted something to read that they could relate to, such as realistic fiction or information that related to their circumstances. Reading is very personal and private. They did not want to do a project or assignment on what they had read. Reading has latent effects that can't be tested, and offers life lessons and insights. Reading means a lot of alternative media. All of the above has implications for collection development.

Susan La Marche, from Australia, presented her paper titled "Building Knowing Readers: Unlocking Pleasure," in which she discussed the value of student reading. The teacher-librarian is the enabling adult who shares the love of reading and models language through poems, favourite stories and excerpts. All teacher-librarians must see students as readers no matter their ability. Three important things came out of La Marche's work:

1. Access and choice—committed and willing readers need a well-staffed library to give them access and choice.
2. Talk—avid readers want to share what they are reading.
3. Practise—students need to explore through thematic-centred units. Through programs such as Photo Story (like Imovie), students can create sequences to express their thoughts on the material that they have read.

The conference proceedings were available to us on disk. In addition, the IASL website has a wealth of information and provides an opportunity to communicate with people around the world who are experienc-

ing the same frustrations or who have found answers to some of the things we all struggle with. In our Canadian interest group we looked at how we spend time in various library organizations and how each one wants our membership. As a provincial organization, we are looking to acquire an institutional membership so that all of our members can have member-only access to the IASL website, and the ability to access these informative proceedings and take part in world-wide discussions.

I have worked in an English as a second language high school for the past four years. This school has always had a teacher-librarian. The library collection is broad and rich. The opportunity for interaction with students is wide and varied, but I am often frustrated by the lack of reading improvement that I perceive among the students. After having listened to the presenters at this international conference, I realized that I was viewing the wrong population. In trying to see an overall improvement for the whole school, I neglected the students who had moved from casual to avid readers. Once I looked at their achievement score, their interest in school and their overall attitude to learning, I realized that they were the ones making huge gains. Sometimes it is hard to see the forest for the trees. I took the time to reframe and saw where I need to create opportunities at my new location.

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- Young, E. 1992. *Seven Blind Mice*. New York: Philomel.

—Irene Masciuch
Calgary, Alberta

Manitoba Conference Report

Imagine if you can, 250 registered delegates, from 26 countries, enjoying the serenity and ambience of the southern California Spanish influence on the Clark Kerr Campus for six days of workshops, meetings, presentations and social networking. The weather was excellent; food, delicious; surroundings, conducive to discussion; and the entertainment, relaxed. Twenty-two delegates represented five Canadian provinces.

Themes

The conference was divided into themes: “Digital Literacy, Building a Community of Readers”; Building Literacy Skills in School Libraries”; Supporting Reading Instruction”; and “12th Annual International Research Forum.” Five preconference workshops were well attended, with frequent interactions and much positive feedback. Papers from these sessions are in the conference proceedings CD, and some aspects will be posted to the IASL website.

The Napa Valley winery tour was fully subscribed, and the pictures tell a thousand words. Opportunities to see the San Francisco Bridge and the Bay Bridge were thrown in for good measure.

Keynote Speakers

Stephen Krashen is at it again! He is examining the results of a variety of reading and literacy tests administered to fourth grade students in 40 countries. His analysis and observations shine a bright beacon on the role of quality school library programs and collections in predicting and maintaining reading schools relative to poverty factors around the world. His presentation was absolutely inspiring. Check out the CD for more details. Watch for articles in the professional journals soon.

As the Tuesday theme speaker, James Herring (Australia/Scotland) nibbled at the Achilles heel of most school library programs. His title was “Reading Websites: Assumptions, Problems and Potential Strategies.” He said, “There appears to be little evidence of systematic approaches to teaching students how to read, as separate from using websites.” He involved the audience in examining reading: texts on websites, graphics, photographs, visuals and related resources to demonstrate his thesis and to show strategies to improve the situation. It was an A++ session.

Wednesday’s theme speaker was Ann Carlson Weeks (USA). Her presentation was about the use of the International Children’s Digital Library (ICDL) as a full-text library of children’s books from around the world that is freely available on the Internet through the University of Maryland (www.childrenslibrary.org). This too was an outstanding view of how we can strengthen global understanding through children’s books.

Sessions of particular interest included:

1. “Understanding School Library Education in the International Context” was a panel chaired by Dr Jennifer Branch (Canada) that related the experiences and scope of programming around the world.

2. "Morning Reading for the Whole School," by Karin Gaarsted (Denmark) dealt with the impact and phenomena of earlier-morning sustained silent reading—competent and fast readers who understand that reading is key to their success in all other subjects.
3. "Researchers' Workshop: A New Approach for Literacy Learning in School Libraries" gave Dr Barbara McNeil (Canada) an opportunity to relate four educational frameworks, and to focus on the pedagogy of caring and nurturing learners over the long term in their learning activities.
4. "Reading Mandala: A Scalable Model for Developing Reading Habits in Children in Rural China" allowed James Henri (China/Australia) to report on a developmental project with sponsors and workers in rural communities, and ways to measure the success of the investments.
5. "Exploring the new AASL Standards for the 21st Century Learner" involved an animated panel discussion in which various stakeholders and participants discussed student cognition, self-assessment and strategies to implement this new tool.
6. "Helping Students Become Lifelong Learners," by Dona Hartwich (Australia) focused attention on the priority role for all T-Ls—helping kids learn how to learn.
7. "The Net Generation: Tech-Savvy or Lost in Virtual Space" addressed the data in the second phase of Barbara Combes (Australia) research in Western Australia. The results are critical for success in reaching this generation. Check out the Proceedings CD.
8. "Library Services for Students with Autism" gave Lesley Farmer (US) an opportunity to appeal for library resources and settings to help these students in regular situations.
9. "Facebook: A School Librarian's Tool for Building a Community of Readers" provided a palette for Paulette Stewart (Jamaica) to describe how this tool is being used effectively for social networking and direct learning.
10. "Libraries of the Ages: The Diglibs" showed how one school in India, managed by Madhu Bhargava, is addressing the "cultural changes caused by digital learning" as the format changes but the content, use and needs remain constant.

Archives

The IASL Archives collection 1971–2007, which has been compiled and indexed by Gerald Brown, was presented. The electronic database INDEX consists of 65,000 entries that can be sorted by author/initiator,

date, title, subject and country of origin. Several perspectives and developmental trends were reviewed. These files are now stored at Western Michigan University. See Proceedings CD for more details.

Fundraising

The 19th annual fundraising event included a raffle of 81 items that brought in \$510, a silent auction of 90 items that raised about \$726, and a public auction of 31 items that raised \$1,400. The highest bid went for a registration for the Padua 2009 conference at \$150. These funds are used as part of the Leadership Development Fund, which makes awards to delegates from developing countries to attend the annual conference, or other local professional growth activities in their local area. Eunice McKenzie (Jamaica) was awarded the Jean E Lowrie Leadership Award, and Jerry Mathema (Zimbabwe) received the Ken Haycock Leadership Award.

Some of the funds are also contributed to Support-a-Member mentorship programs and Support-an-Association projects. The manager of the auction activities was Gerald Brown, and superb assistance was provided by Jane Hardy, Bobbi Margo and Roseann Kosulandich (among others).

Awards

Here is a list of other 2008 awards.

- Murofushi Research Award—Dr Marcia A Mardis (USA)
- IASL/Softlink International Excellence Award—Madhu Bhargava (India)
- Linksplus Commendation Award—ASLA Online Virtual Conferences, Australian School Library Association
- IASL School Library Technology Innovation Award—Ray Doiron and Marlene Asselin (Canada)
- Books for Children Program—Kenya School Library Association (Lessos, Kenya), St Joseph's Primary School (Swaziland), Tipu Model School and College (Kabal Swat, Pakistan)

Bookmarks Project

A unique event was a contribution of approximately 1,000 bookmarks that had been created by students from across European school libraries for the ENSIL conference in Wels, Austria, in February 2008. Helen Boelens coordinated the collection and forwarded them to IASL to be displayed and sold at 5 for \$1, which brought in about \$250 for the LDF above. Thanks to our European colleagues for thinking of this and challenging another association or country to provide bookmarks and/or pins for the 2009 event in Padua, Italy.

Board, Executive Committee, Special Interest Groups, AGM, Long-Term Members' Tea, Committees and Assembly of Associations Meetings

It should be noted that these groups met to work on the directions for future growth, membership development strategies and other administrative matters. Thanks to President James Henri, Executive Secretary Karen Bonanno and the various other leaders for their significant contributions. Besides finding time for these meetings, their personal interaction with the delegates was greatly appreciated.

Conference 2009

Start planning now—the 38th annual conference and research forum will be held in Padua, Italy, September 1–4, 2009. The venue is Hotel Alexander Palace. The theme will be “School Libraries in the Picture: Preparing Pupils for the Future—Information Research Through the School Library.” Papers are now being accepted. See www.iasl-online.org/events/conf/2009. Coordinators are Dr Luisa Marquardt and Professor Donatella Lombello. Look forward to a fine program, wonderful entertainment and great contacts from Europe and around the world.

Thanks and Appreciation

Gerald Brown was awarded an Honorary Life Membership in IASL in appreciation for his 10 years as coordinator of the Special Interest Group—International Development, which position is being passed over to Ray Doiron and Marlene Asselin, and for his many years on the board and executive since 1994, and as a general member since 1982.

Special thanks to the other members who are stepping down from office at this time: Ruth Ann Cady (USA), coordinator, SIG—Children’s and Young Adults; Regional Director Jagtar Singh (India).

Welcome to the new members of the board and executive. We look forward to your strong and active leadership.

Warmest thanks and appreciation to Dr Blanche Woolls, 2008 conference coordinator (San Jose, California); Kristin Fontichiaro, program coordinator (Birmingham, Michigan); and Dr Marcia Maris, research forum coordinator (Ann Arbor, Michigan). The whole committee did a fine job of coordinating the numerous events, sites, volunteers and interacting with local site managers.

Berkeley is a beautiful campus, Oakland has many attractions and San Francisco is wonderful. Thanks for an excellent conference. 🙏

—Gerald Brown and Edith Doyle
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Teacher-Librarians Exploring a Web 2.0 World

Joanne de Groot and Jennifer Branch

Joanne de Groot is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Alberta. Her dissertation research focuses on children's experiences with public library summer reading programs.

Jennifer Branch is an associate professor in the Department of Elementary Education and the coordinator of the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Alberta. Her research focuses on technology integration, Web 2.0, inquiry and Think Aloud method.

To be effective educators in the 21st century, teachers and teacher-librarians must be familiar and comfortable with new technologies. Today's new technologies include Web 2.0, which are the new web-based tools that are readily available and used to communicate and collaborate with others. Blogs, wikis, photo- and video-sharing sites, and social networking (for example, Facebook or MySpace) are all examples of Web 2.0 tools. As Solomon and Schrum (2007, 24) state, "We can take advantage of the features that new tools offer and tap into students' natural affinity for these tools in order to create learning experiences that expand their worldview and enhance what they learn." Unlike our young students, who are comfortable and confident in these new online environments (see for example, Richardson [2006]; Rosenfeld and Loertscher [2007]), many teachers and parents are, according to Marc Prensky (2001), digital immigrants or "well-meaning adults who have to work at being comfortable with technology" (Solomon and Schrum 2007, 26).

Preservice and inservice teachers and teacher-librarians work with children and young adults who are comfortable with these new tools. As part of our graduate program in teacher-librarianship at the University of Alberta, we offer EDES 545, an information technology

course that has focused, in the past, on traditional technologies such as WebQuests, PowerPoint and Internet searching. Over the last year, it became obvious through course discussions and student assignments that we had a responsibility to better prepare teachers and teacher-librarians to learn the language and culture of the digital natives in our classrooms and schools. We also began to realize that many students are interested in the possibilities that new technologies, including Web 2.0 tools, present for schools but who are often reluctant to push themselves to learn enough about these technologies to effectively integrate them into their practice.

We realized that this was an opportunity to redesign the course to allow graduate students to explore these Web 2.0 tools as part of a course. The winter 2008 EDES 545 course introduced new assignments and course content that encouraged the students to inquire into Web 2.0 tools, seek new understanding of these tools, and reflect on how to use these technologies with students and teachers in their schools. This revised version of EDES 545 included an inquiry component that required students to create their own blogs. Students then explored a new Web 2.0 tool (for example, wikis, podcasts, social networking sites and so on) each week and blogged about their experiences with that tool in their personal or professional lives.

The Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning (TLDL) program at the University of Alberta has been providing online educational opportunities for teachers and teacher-librarians for 10 years. Students in the program can enrol in either a master of education or a diploma in teacher-librarianship. An online program technology is woven into the fabric of each course, with students completing all of their coursework and assignments online. Students are given the opportunity to explore technology in an educational context in EDES 545 Information Technologies for Learning. This required course provides students with the background and understanding needed to effectively

integrate technology into their classrooms and libraries.

After several iterations of EDES 545 in the old format, the instructors determined that a redesign of the course was necessary to better reflect the new technologies available to students and teachers in schools. The new version of the course was designed so that students could build on their strengths and so that each inquiry was a personal reflection of their individual learning journeys. The major assignment for EDES 545 in Winter 2008 was an inquiry project that required students to investigate ten Web 2.0 tools (for example, blogs, wikis, podcasts and so on). They then wrote a series of blog entries reflecting on their learning and exploring how they could use these technologies in their practice.

Some of the feature articles in this journal were a part of this new course while others represent the work of students in the fall course. We are currently analyzing the blogs, but we can give you some of our preliminary recommendations. Based on the analysis of the initial blog postings of students in EDES 545, we found that it is important to


- help teachers and teacher-librarians work and play to succeed in a Web 2.0 world;
- structure the course so that students are required to explore a variety of Web 2.0 tools;
- design the course for early success. Blogging was a good place to start, because the teachers and teacher-librarians could immediately see personal and professional opportunities and applications;
- have a strong understanding of Kuhlthau's Information Search Process to support and validate students' emotions and concerns;
- honour the other experts in students' lives (for example, their own children, students in their own

schools, friends and so on) and encourage them to seek out other experts when they need support;

- acknowledge that no one can be a Web 2.0 expert because technology changes quickly;
- develop a learning community where students feel comfortable taking risks and being critical of the technology; and
- have another instructor to work with on redesigning a course of this nature.

Children and young adults have already discovered the power of Web 2.0 and are using the social nature of these tools to interact and collaborate with one another. The new version of EDES 545 was exciting and engaging for these graduate-level students for many of the same reasons. Their sense of success and achievement was surprising and exciting for them and their instructors. How exciting it was to see digital immigrants working so hard and enthusiastically to learn the language spoken by digital natives. As one student wrote, "I am looking forward to the day when I can say that I speak English, French and Web 2.0."

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Introducing Web 2.0 to Staff

Arlene Lipkewich

The most important and powerful strategy I have found for sharing ways of integrating technology with others is leading by example. If I want to encourage technology integration, I must walk the walk as I talk the talk. I must serve as a role model for curriculum-based (core, complementary, ICT, inquiry) technology integration where the technology serves as a tool, a platform (Warlick 2008), with a learner-centred focus (Subramaniam 2006). The technology must be a means to an end and not an end in itself (Knezek et al 2006).

Because most of the Web 2.0 tools are so easy to use, they become invisible. For example, the tools make all the strands of the language arts curriculum, such as reading, writing, listening, viewing, speaking and representing, more visible and meaningful as they more readily connect to real life when there is a live global audience. The technology allows us to do things that were not possible without it (Knezek et al 2006) and causes us to look at what we have done before in new ways. The real audience makes every task more authentic; it is so interesting to see who will respond and what they will say. As my students use the tools and share their experiences with their other teachers, they too will become interested in what we're up to. It has been my experience that this kind of word-of-mouth enthusiasm, such as that now found on the Internet, is contagious and leads to a tipping point (Gladwell 2002) in integration of technology.

There are so many fabulous YouTube videos (www.youtube.com), like Stephen Heppell (www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2YCOHljF6U) that I learned about through the Teacher-Librarian by Distance Learning TL-DL Blog (<http://tldlblog.wordpress.com/>), TeacherTube videos (www.teachertube.com/) and Slideshare presentations that could be the starting point for discussion, such as Fisch's Shift Happens (<http://thefischbowl.blogspot.com/2006/08/did-you-know.html>). These can be found on any specific Web 2.0 tool or skills of 21st century learners (www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslproftools/learningstandards/AASL_LearningStandards.pdf) in general.

I am always envious of those who work downtown and can attend brown bag lunchtime presentations at

the public library, city hall or CBC stage. What if the brown bag speaker presentations, such as Sir Ken Robinson's presentation entitled "Do School's Kill Creativity?" (www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/66), came to my classroom via Ted.com (www.ted.com/)? Could I "screen" one of these one lunch hour a week? Absolutely! (Anderson 2003).

I like the idea of speed demos to present a Web 2.0 tool in five minutes or less, which I learned about through the EduBloggerCon wiki (www.edubloggercon.com/cue2008). Anderson (2003) calls these demos "Ten Minutes of Tech on Tuesdays." A five- or ten-minute edtech component could be added to each monthly staff meeting agenda in addition to the troubleshooting that already takes place. The brown bag lunchtime presentations and the speed demos could both be used to maintain momentum.

I must be ready and willing to answer questions as they arise and to provide just-in-time professional learning, turning inquiries into lessons (Anderson 2003). On Friday a college emailed me about some pictures saved from Google images to use in a photo story assignment. Were they copyrighted? I hopped on the Internet to Joyce Valenza's blog (www.schoollibraryjournal.com/blog/1340000334.html?nid=3714) where she wrote on copyright (www.schoollibraryjournal.com/blog/1340000334.html#1420024142). I copied the link, explaining in the e-mail that I had just read about this very topic, adding in links to Valenza's copyright-friendly wiki (<http://copyrightfriendly.wikispaces.com/>) and the Flickr Creative Commons Attribution page (www.flickr.com/creativecommons/by-2.0/). I then followed up with an informal conversation. I never would have been able to do this a few short months ago.

Part of helping colleagues understand why integrating technology is so important is to demonstrate the links between technology and core curriculum, complementary curriculum, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Outcomes and Focus on Inquiry. This is particularly important with the new constructivist, inquiry-based provincial curricula that are now being developed (Anderson 2003). Wiggins and McTighe talk about backward design in *Understanding*

by *Design* (2005). We must identify the curricular objectives that we want students to achieve with every task that integrates technology.


I recall a day I spent collaborating with two other teachers in the fall. At one point, all three of us were working at different computers looking for exceptional websites for students to consult for this cross-curricular project. I wish I had known about social bookmarking then instead of writing all the websites down on paper! That would have been a perfect time to model and provide a hands-on learning experience with this tool that, as Harris (2007), from *School Library Journal*, puts it, has the potential to be “a powerful research network.” Richardson (2006) adds that we can use social bookmarking to build comprehensive lists of websites much more effectively than any one of us could working alone. By visiting a social bookmarking page students wouldn’t have to type URLs into browsers, which Friesen (2003) says should never happen. I’m glad that I now know what social bookmarking is so that we can take advantage of it as a tool for organization, sharing and archiving the next time we collaborate. Similarly, my colleagues and I could have used a wiki (<http://aasl.pbwiki.com/>), rather than chart paper, as a place for discussion and as serving as an archive.

Which Web 2.0 tool would I present to staff? Unfortunately, I can’t pick any one tool. To explain why, I keep going back to the article by Knezek et al (2006) “Identifying Key Research Issues,” in which they say, “The use of technology in each subject area needs to address the learning issues specific to that subject area.” If I combine the needs of different subject areas with the differentiated nature of professional development that occurs at our school and teachers’ different levels of comfort working with technology, I see that one Web 2.0 tool will not fit all. I must take into consideration the learning context. While I can facilitate general discussions on integrating technology and introduce staff to each Web 2.0 tool and how it helps students master skills for the 21st century, I believe that each person must decide which tool he or she wishes to learn. This is how we approached integrating reading strategies across subject areas and adopted best practices in assessment. People need time to understand what works best for them. We all end up in the same place, though we take different paths to get there.

I also think about Michael Fullan’s presentation, which I was fortunate to hear at the provincial Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) conference in February (the video is available online at <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/aisi/wandc/conf.aspx>). Fullan says teachers must participate in professional

learning in context rather than professional development out of context. Top-down and bottom-up must meet in the middle. This is a shift for me—at the beginning of the course I believed that teachers must determine the direction of their personal professional growth because in my experience directed PD is not very fruitful. Yet, I don’t know when I would have learned about Web 2.0 without this course. I wouldn’t have been able to work from the bottom-up because I had no idea what I was missing out on. To me, the outline for this course provided an element of top-down. How I chose to learn about each of the Web 2.0 tools exemplifies working from the bottom-up. The two meet in the middle and, as Fullan says, “the learning is the work.” I can introduce my colleagues to the skills of 21st century learners and each of the Web 2.0 tools formally (for example, staff meetings and PD days) and informally (for example, e-mail, lunchtime conversations). It is then up to each person to determine which to use to meet the curricular outcomes of their specific subject area. Others can then take over the staff meeting speed demos or even have their students showcase how each subject area integrates technology.

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Web 2.0 Alphabet

Arlene Lipkewich

This is just for fun! I knew nothing about the Web 2.0 tools identified below in bold before taking EDES 545 Information Technologies for Learning at the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, as part of the Teacher-Librarian by Distance-Learning Diploma program. How many of these are you familiar with?

Analyze, Analogical, **Avatar**

Blogger, Blogging, **Bloglines**

Critical, Creative, Connect, Contribute, Constructivist, Curriculum

Digital_Storytelling

Exposure to Quality Information

Flickr, Facebook, "friend," Flexible, **Furl**, **Folksonomy**

gcast

Heppell, Stephen

Intuitive, Increased Access, Interact, Information_Ethics, Inquiry

JumpCut

Kaiser_Foundation

Learner-centered, **LibraryThing**, **Long_Tail**

Metacognition, Motivating, **Mashup**, Multimedia

Odeo

Problem_Solving, Peer-Reviewed, Process, **Podcasts**, **PageFlakes**, Patience

Question

Reflect

Synthesize, Socialize, Social_Responsibility, Self-assessment, **Slideshare**

TeacherTube, **Tagging**, **Technorati**, **Twitter**

Updated more frequently than print resources

Verify, Viewpoints, **VoiceThread**, Video

Wikis, **Warlick**

xtimeline

YouTube

ZohoWriter

Web 2.0 Tools in the Classroom ... Help!

Dawn Cowley

I recently took a graduate technology course in my master's program, never even having heard of Web 2.0 tools. Today, I can say that I have set up my own blog (dawnstechnologicaljourney.blogspot.com), participated in a wiki discussion, and recorded my first podcast and posted it to the classroom for sharing with my colleagues.

The assignment was to undertake an inquiry into a technological area I wanted to explore further. What did I want to know? As an elementary teacher who hasn't been in the classroom since my son was born (he's five), I could honestly say I didn't know where to start! After much discussion, I decided that an exploration of Web 2.0 tools was in order—and from the point of view of someone who was either new to teaching, returning to teaching or who has not yet ventured into the world of technology. In other words, I wanted to look at technology and these tools from a newbie's point of view.

What Technology Skills Do Teachers Need to Know?

There are varying thoughts as to what technology skills teachers need to have—efficiency in the use of word processor and presentation software, troubleshooting technology-related problems, the ability to locate Web resources and well-honed Web-searching skills (Poole 2006). Some believe that teachers don't really need to be proficient in technology use at all. (Educators do have to understand what technologies are and what they can and cannot do.) According to Prensky (2007) teachers must partner with their students and let them teach the teachers about technology. Prensky also says that teachers need to understand how students can use the computer as a learning tool and how teachers will evaluate students' use of technology.

Chaffin (1997) would agree with Prensky; he believes that teachers need to know how to engage their

students, individualize learning, guide and facilitate. However, students need to know how to use the computers as tools for meaningful communication and learning.

My job as a teacher is to ensure that my students are ready to make positive contributions to the world. Consequently, I must stay current with world events, specifically events in the world of technology. I must be aware of my school's and district's expectations for technology knowledge. I need to be sure of what I need to know to have my students use technology effectively and how best to evaluate their use of this technology.

How Do We Help Them Get There?

There are several ways that teachers can get the technology skills they require; one is from teacher training. Today's teacher training institutions need to ensure that preservice teachers can select and use technology effectively. They must be able to integrate technology across the curriculum and into existing curricular subjects. Our teacher training schools must design programs that provide our training teachers with numerous real-world opportunities to learn about and apply technology skills (Collier and Weinburgh 2004). If they haven't already done so, teacher training institutions nationwide need to examine their curriculum for technology inclusion.

Schools need "comprehensive well-thought-out plans that move educators along the continuum from novice to integrator over time, regardless of their starting position—a plan that demonstrates investment, commitment and thoroughness on the part of the district" (Cunningham 2003). The training needs to include the following (Sherman 1998; Cunningham 2003):

- Technological and pedagogical support
- Long-term visions from both the district and school

- Time for observing others
- Work with experienced mentors/peer coaching
- Networking with teachers experiencing the same issues
- Hands-on experiences
- Integration of technology training into other staff development programs
- Release time
- Communication and follow up (perhaps in the form of blogs)
- Ongoing support
- Administrative support and involvement
- Instruction in how to find relevant resources and access to resources needed to implement what was learned
- Learner-centred strategies
- A school-developed technology culture

The development of a master teacher or teacher trainers to help staff in schools (not just someone to fix computers or help the students) is recommended. If the budget does not allow for the training of such personnel, schools should at least identify experienced technology teachers who are willing to share their ideas and expertise with others (Sherman 1998). Cunningham (2003) suggests that leadership teachers could undertake special training and be paid to share with their colleagues.

Another interesting suggestion is incentives (Cunningham 2003). For example, school districts could offer credit for professional development taken, to be used for further professional development; salary increases could be associated with undertaking certain training; and teachers could get credit for software purchases for their own personal use.

Encouraging teachers to use computers on their own personal time is another way of providing training time. If teachers can be shown how to use blogs, post photos and create podcasts, they can transfer this knowledge to the classroom. Tenbusch (1998) says that we must appeal to teachers on a personal level by showing them how technology can improve the quality of their lives. Showing educators computer programs that can help develop their passion is certainly a way to get them interested.

Schools must be aware that a true commitment to training all teachers in technology takes both money and time. Money needs to be set aside yearly in the PD budget (at least 30 per cent) for teacher training. Teachers need time to attend training, learn new software, seek help and plan lessons.

What Do Teachers Need to Know About the Various Web 2.0 Tools?

Web 2.0 tools are those that publish, manage and share content in new collaborative ways. Wikipedia (2007, 1) defines them as “a perceived second generation of Web-based communities and hosted services—such as social-networking skills, wikis and folksonomies—which aim to facilitate creativity, collaboration and sharing between users.”

These tools are now being suggested for use in classrooms as a constructivist tool for learning; they expand the walls of the classroom and provide a real audience for students’ work. They accommodate different learning styles and teach students new literacies. In addition, these tools aid with reading, writing and critical thinking skills, and are highly engaging (Richardson 2006). Web 2.0 tools also address the need for educators to provide lessons using Gardner’s (1983) theory of multiple intelligences.

In the next section, three examples of Web 2.0 tools—blogs, wikis and podcasts—will be explored.

What Is a Blog?

Blogs are updatable easy-to-create websites that are a cross between a diary, a website and an online community (Clyde 2005). Blogs provide authors with an avenue for “expression, reaction and connection” (Educause Learning Initiative 2005) and can include photos and links. Blogs can engage students in knowledge sharing, reflection and debate. Beeson (2006) also suggests that blogs help connect students to the more familiar habit of reading things from a computer screen. As well, they are good for opinion writing, promoting a sense of camaraderie in the classroom, and for some students, are a way to overcome shyness about sharing their work.

So You’re Thinking of Setting Up a Blog

Start by reading some education-related blogs. Examples are Bud the Teacher (<http://budtheteacher.typepad.com>), Discourse about Discourse (<http://yongesonne.edublogs.org/2007/11/>) and Weblogg-ed: learning with the read/write web (<http://weblogg-ed.com>). Practise blog writing by joining a blog and becoming familiar with blog vocabulary and rules. Set up your own blog and start small, with simple diary entries and work up to adding links and photographs. Blogger.com and wordpress.com are two examples of

free blog programs that are easy for educators to set up and use.

To use wordpress.com, simply click on the sign up button, create a username and password and supply your e-mail address. The program then provides you with the domain and title of your blog. Click on write a post and create your first entry. Click Publish to post your entry online for all to see.

To use blogger.com, simply go to the website, click on Create Your Blog Now. Again, provide an e-mail address, create a password and name. Create a title and URL, and choose your own template. The blog is now ready for posting. Remember to search Customize at the top of the page to add links, lists and photos to your blog. You can also add YouTube videos, word documents and podcasts.

Before Using Blogs with Your Students

- Make sure your students are comfortable with technology.
- Teach Internet safety (CyberSmart and NetSmartz are examples of online websites that provide lesson plans and online videos for kids and teacher resources (www.cybersmartcurriculum.org/lesson_plans/ and www.netsmartz.org). Have safety precautions in place, such as a rule that students use first names only.
- Have a clear vision of the purpose for using a blog with your students.
- Talk with administration before you start blogging with students.
- Get parents' permission (www.budtheteacher.com/wiki/ has resources including an acceptable use policy, a student blogging handbook and examples of blogging parent permission letters).
- Consider which tools to use, who may read it, who may see the comments, who may register and post (many of these options can be controlled within the blog program itself).
- Provide opportunities for your students to read blogs and become familiar with blog vocabulary and rules.
- Discuss with students what they should be posting and your expectations; ensure that they know how to access and use the blog (see [budtheteacherlink](#) below).
- Start small. Post their assignments and class announcements to begin; have students respond to your posts in a class blog or have small groups create blogs.

Be Aware of the Downfalls

- Students need monitoring.

- Websites should be taken down when a unit is complete (give students the option of saving their work).
- Outsiders may access the blog, so use the options on the blogger program to close the blog.
- Inaccurate information may be posted.
- Blogs are unmediated.
- They are difficult to archive or index.
- Blogs are subject to vandalism.
- Be aware of copyright issues when referencing material in blogs (see the computer ethics lessons at Cybersmart (www.cybersmartcurriculum.org/lesson_plans/)).
- Web safety issues are important for you and your students to be aware of when using blogs (see Cybersmart for ideas).

Suggestions for Use in the Classroom

A classroom blog can be used to

- post writing prompts;
- post information about the class, including assignments, calendars and announcements;
- facilitate communication with parents;
- publish student artwork and writing;
- post online readings for student responses;
- discuss classroom and school activities, as well as post curriculum questions;
- write a review of a field trip;
- present a tour of the neighbourhood or school with photos;
- gain suggestions for a better classroom (suggestion box blog); and
- provide study and organization tips.

The suggestions are endless and there are many blogs, books, journal articles and websites to access for further information (see professional development suggestions chart on page 21).

What Is a Wiki?

A wiki is a collaborative Webspaces where anyone can add and edit content. Wikis are excellent tools for use in the classroom because they engage students in publishing, using and developing their collaborative skills, and negotiating. Students can practise their writing and editing for an authentic audience. Wikis encourage students to build flexibility in accepting others' ideas; they stimulate discussion and students learn that their work is a process (inquiry-based learning); they encourage the process of hitchhiking on others' ideas (Science of Spectroscopy 2007).

Graphics and links, as well as reflections and PowerPoint presentations can be added to wikis, which are easy to set up because relatively few technological skills are required and therefore the focus is on content rather than on constructing the site (Richardson 2006). As with blogs, wikis also give students opportunities to express themselves using multiple modalities (music, graphics, video and photos), and they fit into Gardner's philosophy of teaching with the multiple intelligences (McPherson 2006).

So You're Thinking of Setting Up a Wiki

Check out the largest and most popular wiki today, Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page), with your students and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such sites. The Canadawiki can be found at <http://canadawiki.org/index.php>. Investigate other wikis that have been set up by teachers for teachers. Examples are Teacher Librarian Wiki (<http://teacherlibrarianwiki.pbwiki.com>), Curriki Global Education Learning Community (www.curriki.org/xwiki/bin/view/Main/WebHome) and EduTech Wiki (http://edutechwiki.unige.ch/en/Main_Page). Interesting to note is that the entire high school curriculum for the country of South Africa can be found at http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/South_African_Curriculum.

Become a wiki contributor by looking for the edit link on the wiki of your choice. Page history will detail when and what changes were made and by whom. Pbwiki and Wikispaces are two wikis that are easy to use and free to educators.

To set up a wiki using Pbwiki, go to the website (<http://pbwiki.com>) and click on create a wiki. Then simply enter a name and an e-mail address, and a message will guide you to your e-mail for further instructions. The wiki will not be activated until you reply to the e-mail sent to your address.

Wikispaces can be found at www.wikispaces.com. Enter a username, password and e-mail address, then click on make a new space. Here you enter the name of the wiki and decide whether the wiki will be public or protected. The wiki is now ready for entries.

Before Using Wikis with Your Students

- Reread the suggestions under Before Using Blogs with Your Students (many of the same issues apply here) concerning familiarity with technology, Internet safety, vision of purpose, parental permission, copyright and expectations for students.
- Ensure that students know how to access and use the wiki.

- Ensure that students are comfortable with collaborative writing.
- Be sure to make your wiki private (so that only you and your students can access it) with the options in the program.
- Start small (students can practise by contributing to wikis that are already set up).

Be Aware of the Downfalls

- Wikis may be subject to spam or incorrect and inappropriate language.
- They are time consuming and personnel intensive.
- Poor readers and writers may experience difficulty.
- Students may be uncomfortable and unfamiliar with collaborative writing (McPherson 2006).
- Again, be aware of copyright and safety issues because both of these issues also apply to wikis.
- Inaccurate information may be posted.
- Vandalism may occur.

Suggestions for Use in the Classroom

- Create an online text for use by students and teachers on a particular topic or between classes studying the same topic.
- Brainstorm ideas for inquiry projects.
- Write an online journal article.
- Assemble a reading list (commentary on books).
- Create a fan club for a favourite author.
- Collaborate on projects with students in other parts of the world.
- Present a virtual art gallery.
- Support literature circles.
- Host portfolios displaying student artwork and writing as well as ensuing discussions regarding the work.

What Is a Podcast?

A podcast is the production of digital voice and video files and the subsequent publishing and distribution of these files on the Internet. The only equipment required for making podcasts is a digital audio recorder that can create an MP3 file, space on a computer to host the file as well as a blog to publish and post the podcast. By using podcasts, students gain practice in oral presentation and reading; as well, they are provided with an instant (and real) audience. The process of developing and recording a podcast takes students from the planning and brainstorming stage to writing the script and finally to recording and posting. The possibilities for using podcasts are endless, from teaching foreign languages to bringing guest speakers into your classroom from all over the world.

So You're Thinking of Setting Up a Podcast

Again, the best thing to do is listen to podcasts that have already been recorded to get a taste for the set up and language used. The Education Podcast Network (<http://epnweb.org>) contains a collection of useful education podcast programs. At Weblogg-ed.com (<http://weblogg-ed.com>), Richardson has attached podcasts to all his blog entries for listening to rather than reading his entries. Kathy Schrock's Nauset Technology News can be found at <http://nausetschools.org/podcasts.htm>. The next step is to try your own recording. Programs such as Audacity provide free podcasting technology and are very easy to use. A microphone, either in your computer or a plug in, is required. Start by logging on to <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>. It is also important to download the MP3 encoder at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/help/faq?s=install&item=lame-mp3>. Once the program has loaded, simply click on the buttons to record, stop and play. When satisfied with your recording, click on file and then export as MP3.

After some practice, begin editing your recordings, as well as adding sound effects and music. The finished file can then be added to your blog or wiki or to programs such as ourmedia.org, which will store your files at no cost; however, you must be willing to post your podcast for all to share. Podcast Spot (www.podcastspot.com) will also hold any files under 25 MB free of charge. Another way to get your programs out to the world is by uploading them to sites such as Podcastcentral.com, which also provides lists of and access to podcasts of all descriptions.

Before Using Podcasts with Your Students

- Consider the audience, the purpose of the podcast, how and where it will be created, where it will be accessed and how to protect your students' privacy.
- Reread Before Using Blogs with Your Students on page 18, which provides information on familiarity with technology, Internet safety, vision of purpose, parental permission, copyright and expectations for students.
- Start small; have students record for classmates only, to get practice with recording voices and techniques, before they publish on the Internet.
- Check if multiple computers in your school are able to handle all this technology work.
- Check if your school have sufficient microphones and headphones for recording purposes.

Be Aware of the Downfalls

- Computers must have sufficient bandwidth.
- Podcasts provide limited usefulness for the hearing impaired (Educause Learning Initiative 2005).
- There is no two-way interaction or audience participation.
- Because these are amateur recordings, often the sound or voice quality is not good.
- Be aware of copyright issues with music.
- Podcasts can contain inaccurate information.

Suggestions for Use in the Classroom

- Cover classroom and school events.
- Describe field trips.
- Practise interviewing techniques.
- Record lessons that students can access at home (foreign language lessons for example).
- Provide re-enactments of historical events.
- Record recitals or assemblies.
- Tell stories.
- Record information needed by students for tests.

Safety Issues to Consider for Web 2.0 Tools

Once again, it is important to mention that it is absolutely imperative to review online safety issues often when using Web 2.0 tools. Brooks-Young (2007) suggests that students be made aware of cyberbullying and uncomfortable online situations and how to deal with them. They should be instructed to use a screen name that does not reveal their identity and to leave the public profile section blank. They should know not to give out any personal information at all in their posts and to exercise caution when posting photos. Remembering that nothing on the Internet is private will remind us all of the seriousness in maintaining our students' safety.

How Does a Teacher Stay Abreast of New Technologies?

Teachers must take responsibility for their own professional development; they must devise an action plan that includes technology and that looks ahead two to five years. The chart below details examples of what teachers can do to keep up with emerging technologies, whether they be new to the profession or not. Some of the examples suggested are resources specifically for teacher-librarians; others are more general.

How	Examples
Read journal articles	<i>D-Lib Magazine</i> (www.dlib.org) and <i>Ariadne</i> (www.ariadne.ac.uk/) are magazines that keep librarians informed about technology; <i>Jamie McKenzie's From Now On: The Education Technology Journal</i> can be found at fno.org
Join educational blogs and wikis	Bud the Teacher (http://budtheteacher.typepad.com/); Discourse about Discourse (http://yongesonne.edublogs.org/2007/11/); Weblogg-ed: Learning with the read/write web (http://weblogg-ed.com/); Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page); Canadawiki (http://canadawiki.org/index.php); Teacher Librarian Wiki (http://teacherlibrarianwiki.pbwiki.com/); Curriki Global Education Learning Community (www.curriki.org/xwiki/bin/view/Main/WebHome); EduTech Wiki (http://edutechwiki.unige.ch/en/Main_Page)
Search out professional development opportunities within the district	Check for e-mails and announcements; contact technology experts at the district level
Enroll in courses	Check out course calendars from your local university or municipality
Look for free or low cost online resources	Sirsi Dynix Institute (sirsidynixinstitute.com) is an ongoing forum for PD in the library community; get free access to industry-leading speakers and events; School Library Learning 2.0 (http://schoollibrarylearning2.blogspot.com) is the California School Library Association website which is presently offering a free Web 2.0 tool course
Consider online master's programs	University of Alberta
Consult experts in technology or master teachers in your school	Ask for hands-on learning experiences
Receive e-mail discussion lists	Go to www.theteachersguide.com/listservs.html or http://edwebprojects.org/lists.html to find suggestions for discussion lists
"Attend" online presentations and podcasts	Blended Librarian (blendedlibrarian.org) and Infopeople (infopeople.org) for free or low cost online education; The Education Podcast Network (http://epnweb.org); Weblogg-ed.com (http://weblogg-ed.com); Kathy Schrock's Nauset Technology News (http://nausetschools.org/podcasts.htm)
Sign up for newsletters to be informed of upcoming seminars	Sirsi Dynix Institute (sirsidynixinstitute.com)
Play with technology on your own time	iPods, digital cameras, laptops
Read books and journal articles	<i>Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for the Classrooms</i> by Will Richardson and <i>Empowering Students with Technology</i> by Alan November; search databases such as ProQuest and ERIC for articles

When it comes to technology and teaching, it is important to remember that this is always going to be a work in progress, as technology is forever changing. The most important thing teachers can do, however, is to get over their fear, admit it if they don't know something and move on. Approach students for help, talk to colleagues, take courses, but don't get left behind in this digital age. As the great Franklin D Roosevelt once said, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." A positive attitude and a willingness to learn is the key to both staying current with new technologies and to learning how to use and implement technology in the classroom with the goal of increased student performance.

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Using Web 2.0 to Extend the Walls of Your School Library

Ronda Heit

What Is a Virtual School Library?

A virtual school library is an online learning centre that provides its users with access and guidance to information and resources. Virtual school library websites extend the physical walls of the library. They make the library accessible any time of day or night, from anywhere there is Internet access. Virtual school libraries empower learners.

As described by Joyce Valenza (2007):

Your library Web page is your second front door. It meets your students where they live, and play, and work, with 24/7, just-in-time, just-for-me support and intervention. It creates online signage for students and staff. It projects the image of the librarian as a 21st century teacher and information professional. The effective library Web page pulls together, in one unified interface, all of a library's resources—print and electronic.

The library website represents the library program. It offers guidance and instruction while it fosters independent learning. It models careful selection. It offers valuable public service and can redefine "community." The site supports reading, learning, and the building of knowledge.

Thinking About Goals

Good website design must have a clear goal. Creating a virtual school library website is more than simply learning how to link other sites, and thus, website design should "begin with the end in mind" (as cited in Braxton 2004). The goal of a virtual school library website should relate to how it will benefit the users: the students, teachers, teacher-librarian and community. It is easier to point the users to the information they need if you know what they're looking for (Regan 2003).

What Makes for an Exemplary Virtual School Library?

Although there is no standardization for this type of resource, there are general standards that can be used to evaluate what constitutes an effective virtual school library. For example, every year, the IASL/Concord School Library Web Page of the Year Award is determined according to an agreed upon set of criteria, based on the results of research and comments/advice in professional literature. The criteria include:

- Evidence of the school's teacher-librarian involvement in site development
- Relevance of the site to the goals and objectives of the school library
- Visual appeal: layout, choice of images, typeface and style
- Organization of the information on the site
- Quality of the writing and use of language
- Ease of use of the site and navigational features
- Educational, information or public relations value of the site
- Appropriateness for the needs of users
- Currency, evidence of update policy and the provision of current information and/or links
- Technical quality
- Value of the site as a model for other school libraries and/or teacher-librarians

Some previous winners of IASL/Concord School Library Web Page of the Year Award include Scotch College 2001/2002 (www.scotch.vic.edu.au/Library/library.htm), Springfield Township High School 2000/2001 (www.sdst.org/shs/library/) and Chico High School Library 1999/2000 (<http://melvil.chicousd.org/>). Each website is unique, while still meeting the IASL award criteria.

The Elements of Exemplary Virtual School Libraries: Design and Content

Experts in the field of website design have identified certain elements (although they may refer to these as quality indicators, principles or commandments), for the creation of successful virtual school library websites. The two general categories for these elements pertain to the design features and content features of the website. In general, design features relate to the overall aesthetics, visual impact and usability of the website. Content features relate to the actual resources, information and tools that are made available on the website.

The following is a synthesis of what the experts such as Baumbach, Braxton, Clyde, Jurowski, Minkel, Valenza and Warlick deem significant in good virtual school library website creation:

Design Features of an Exemplary Virtual School Library

1. Target audience. Understanding the target audience of the school library website relates to how well the needs of the users will be met, which is best reflected in a mission statement.
2. Visual appeal. This encompasses a number of factors which contribute to the overall appearance of the website: standard templates, consistent layout, appropriate fonts, appealing colours and visual magnets.
3. Organization of the information. The information that is provided on the website should empower the behaviours that you wish to see in the users; this relates back to meeting the needs of the target audience. Brief and concisely organized information should be a goal so that the user can easily scan the pages. Key words and small manageable pages lend themselves to the patience of the users.
4. No distracting features. The icons or graphics should enhance the website, not distract the user. Generic-looking images should not be used; they detract from the credibility of the site. Digital photos are desirable because they can feature the resources of the library.
5. User friendly and easy to navigate. Some navigational features that make a website user friendly are home page links on each page and navigational bars on each page. In addition, the purpose for a search tool should be clearly stated, information should be

retrievable in a consistent manner, and there should be hyperlinks. Common research tasks should require a minimal number of clicks and help information should be available on each page.

6. Regular updates or changes. The website should not remain static; rather, it should have a feature that changes daily, weekly or monthly.
7. Accessible to all users. Users with visual or hearing impairments should have access to all information on the website, including images. Images should include a text description that can be used with a screen reader. Any video or audio elements on a page should also include captions or a text transcript of the file.
8. Unique features. Interesting features make a website stand apart from other school library websites. "Inviting returns" are created when a website offers something new when a user logs on. This could include fun links to cool sites, book clubs, local event links or weather information.
9. Credibility. The school library website should be regarded as a credible source of information. This means that information available on the site should be reliable, and the name and contact information of the webmaster and the date of the last update should be posted.

Content Features of an Exemplary Virtual School Library

1. Library home page. A school library home page should act as a launching pad for the user and provide a picture of the online environment for the user. From a school library home page, users should be able to access search engines, databases, references and general library and school information.
2. Information about the library. Basic information about the school library should be present on the school library website: the names of the library staff, library contact information, hours and policies are a few examples.
3. Active links. All hyperlinks must be checked to make sure they are valid.
4. Search options. Age-appropriate toolkits grouped according to subject-specific search tools, subject portals and databases should be available to facilitate inquiries that go beyond the use of Google. Users should know how different search options are useful for different kinds of information needs. Links to search engines should be annotated so the user knows what to expect.

5. Databases. The school library website should offer quality databases such as peer-reviewed journal articles, magazines, reference materials and primary sources that may not be found by commercial search engines.
6. Guides for the ethical use of information. Information literacy and the ethical use of information should be modelled or demonstrated on the school library website. The website should contain tutorials for research methods, search strategies, citation advice, writing assistance, use of presentation software, examples of ways to demonstrate learning and samples of assessment tools. Users who can find information on proper citation and reference information will be less frustrated and more likely to maintain academic integrity with information.
7. Archives for sharing information. Sharing information through archives (such as wikis) for teachers and students has many benefits for teaching and learning collaborations. Archives can include handouts, sample assignments, rubrics and lesson plan ideas.
8. Help links. A help feature, in the form of a link, or an address to e-mail a question to the librarian is important to make sure students get answers to their questions. Instructional blogs that are regularly updated can explain the library's services or answer frequently asked questions.
9. Pathfinders. The presence of pathfinders for teachers and students helps users access information on specific topics. Pathfinders could be grouped according to grade levels or subject areas.

Implications of Virtual School Libraries for Teaching and Learning

Ideally, the virtual school library should be a student's or a teacher's first choice to begin any inquiry task. If the goals of the virtual school library are to help students become successful learners and to support teachers' efforts to craft meaningful learning experiences, the site must be shaped accordingly. Successful virtual school libraries teach and support information literacy.

Students and teachers have different levels of ability when it comes to conducting research with the school library website. Therefore, the site must meet the needs of both novices and advanced searchers. Considerations for the design of a website and its


content should consider the needs of the learning community that will be the primary users.

Valenza's (2007) wiki, "A WebQuest About School Library Websites," shows teacher-librarians examples of effective practice in virtual school libraries. Valenza provides two detailed taxonomies addressing the features/content and characteristics of school library websites. This is an extremely helpful resource for planning a school library website.

Other helpful resources exist to guide the planning or updating of virtual school library websites. The International Association of School Librarianship (IASL 2003) provides a list of Internet resources: "Creating a Web Page for your School Library" (www.iasl-online.org/advocacy/resources/creatingweb.html). The McLurg Elementary School Virtual Library (http://mclurg.rbe.sk.ca/files/old_website/mclurgvirtuallib/librarian.htm) provides a list of virtual school library websites to browse for ideas. For more design ideas and art resources, check out TL Links & BC Social Studies 8–12 Resources website (www.rupert.net/~rtoor/Library_WebDesignandClipart.htm).

With careful planning, the design and content of your virtual school library will improve accessibility and meet the information needs of your school community.

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VLTs: Virtual Libraries for Teachers

Linda Morgan

When I was a little girl, my dad used to sing a song about happiness. Part of it went as follows:

Happiness is
Different things to different people.
That's what happiness is.
On the desert, it's a drink, drink, drink.
To a showgirl, it's a mink, mink, mink.
To the banker, lots and lots of dough.
To a racer, it's a GTO.

I was thinking about those lyrics as I pondered the topic of VLTs. To someone hard of hearing (or someone ready for lunch), happiness might be one of those wonderful bacon, lettuce and tomato concoctions known as a BLT. To someone with an appetite more concerned with dinero than dinner, it might have a casino connection. But to a librarian, a VLT is a virtual library for teachers.

I'm not writing about virtual libraries that are found on virtual reality sites, nor am I writing about the virtual or digital libraries that store collections electronically and are accessed by computers. (Excellent examples of these are Project Perseus [www.perseus.tufts.edu] and Project Gutenberg [www.gutenberg.org].) The VLTs that I have in mind are homegrown learning centres created by educators to give their libraries an online presence. Some great examples include the Springfield Township High School's Virtual Library (www.sdast.org/shs/library), INFOhio (www.infohio.org) and Harry Ainlay Composite High School's (www.ainlay.ca/library/index.html) virtual library. Rattling around these and other VLTs provides a peek at the components of an

exemplary virtual library, which may include the following:

- Information about the library: contact information (e-mail, fax, telephone, physical address), staff introductions and photos, hours of operation, library policies, notices about special events and perhaps even a virtual tour of the facility
- Links to newspapers, journals, search engines
- Homework help: writing assistance, assessment exemplars, copyright information, citation advice and online lessons
- Help features including FAQs
- A forum to celebrate student and staff work
- Opportunities to collaborate online through wikis or blogs
- A soapbox to showcase new books and other library resources

When VLTs contain the above ingredients, align them with the needs of their clientele, ensure excellent writing, follow the kitty litter rule (change things regularly to keep them fresh), clearly organize everything in an easy-to-navigate manner, and present the entire package in a visually appealing format, a wonderful educational tool is created. And consider the advantages: material that is borrowed cannot be overdue, lost or damaged; multiple users can be accommodated simultaneously; access to materials is extended to an enviable 24/7 schedule and VLTs are überportable—they can travel anywhere a laptop can.

Happiness?

To a school in the know, know, know,
VLTs are the way to go.

To a librarian with her tight hair bun
VLTs are number one. 🐿️

Blogs for Learning

Arlis Folkerts

I took the plunge this fall and started working toward a master's degree in education by taking online courses at the University of Alberta. My first class, Information Technologies for Learning, really expanded my learning about using technology with students and the world of Web 2.0 tools.

This was a new learning experience in a few ways. I had never taken an online course or created a blog. It was great to sit at my computer in my bathrobe and slippers and participate in online dialogue and discussions, view virtual seminars or read course material in our dining room. I was skeptical about the lack of face-to-face learning that is part of a more conventional classroom setting. However, the reality was a professional learning community with classmates from Canada to Singapore.

Our final inquiry project was to integrate technology with teaching and learning for students in authentic and meaningful ways. I am currently a student assessment consultant for my school division, which means that I have been out of the classroom for seven years. I decided to investigate blogs for learning because they interested me personally, and I could see blogs as an instructional tool with practical implications for technology integration with curricula.

Inquiry Questions for Learning

- What are blogs? How can teachers use a blog as an instructional tool?
- Can student learning be enhanced through the use of student blogs for communication, analysis and reflective learning?
- How do teachers create a classroom blog? How do students create a blog for sharing and communicating their learning?
- How will student learning be assessed?

A multifaceted approach to communicate the questions of inquiry was used to meet the learning needs of both teachers and students who were new to blogging. A support document and sample blogs were developed to differentiate ways of learning. Visual learners need to see what a blog looks like; other learners need

step-by-step instructions they can refer to while the learning is happening.

Initially, I was going to write my reflective journal using Microsoft Word. My professor encouraged me to use WordPress. It chronicles the entries and is easy to set up and learn. In retrospect, this was valuable because it provided me with experience using two blog providers: WordPress and Blogger. You can join me in my blogging journey at <http://mom4.wordpress.com/>.

What Are Blogs?

Wikipedia defines a blog as "a website in which items are posted on a regular basis and displayed in reverse chronological order." A blog, short for weblog, is a webpage that is an online journal consisting of articles or posts, which in education supports the teaching and learning in your classroom. It becomes an extension of your classroom.

As a teacher, you must decide the purpose of your blog. Having a clear purpose will determine the structure of your blog. Echlin (2007), in *Digital Discussion: Take Your Class to the Internet*, describes the multiple purposes of an educational blog:

- An electronic binder or notebook
- A forum for classroom discussion between teacher and student or between classmates
- An extension of your classroom to include virtual museums and field trips, Internet sites, interactive quizzes and so on

Blog structures for your classroom or library can include:

- Classroom management: Post handouts, assignments, timelines and assessment criteria for assignments, classroom observations and learnings. In the blogroll, reference websites that connect to your curricular outcomes.
- Student learning journal: Students can post/write reflections, exit slips and reflections as they progress through inquiry. They can create a personal blogroll to organize electronic information.
- Class discussion: Blogs created with students as members. Students can post comments, reflections

and opinions to essential questions and research findings. Class discussion can be used for small groups of students or whole class dialogue.

- Assessment for and of learning: Individual student-created blogs can showcase student learning, showing the learning process through evidence posted to the blog. Teachers can collect assessment evidence of student learning based on student-generated criteria.

Blog Bits and Bytes

The specialized vocabularies in the table below are keys to understanding the process of blog development.

Getting Started

Setting up a basic blog is not a complicated, technical process. There are a number of free blog services available online. You can open an account with blogging services like Blogger, WordPress, Edublogs or Windows Live Spaces and use a template to get started.

A blogging service provided by Google, called Blogger, is used in this article. The technology skills required to create and monitor your blog are similar to the technology skills you use in e-mail or within your classroom environment. The web address for this service is www.blogger.com.

Archives	A hyperlink to view the section containing older postings.
Blogroll	A blogroll is a list of links in your sidebar to other blogs.
Comments	An area for the blog readers, which can include your students, to write their comments.
Date	The date of your most recent post. Previous posts are chronicled and pushed down on the page with the most recent post on top.
Password	Your blog password allows you to manage and edit your blog.
Post	An item that is uploaded to your blog. A post can include text, an image or picture, a podcast, a video and so on.
Post Editor	The Blogger.com editor has three modes: Compose-Create and manipulate text with formatting buttons. Edit HTML: A raw mode where you edit html text manually. Preview: Shows a full body mode of the post including title, text, links and images.
Post Title	The title of your most recent post.
Posting Information	Information about who wrote a given post and the date it was posted to the blog.
Previous Posts	A list of postings by date and in order going from most recent to least recent.
Publish Post	The text you typed in your post will be uploaded to appear on your blog.
Tag	A tag is a category name of your choice. Tags are used to organize posts, photos and videos with any tag that makes sense.
Text	The text you write in your post.
Title	The blog's title. This is a title you create.
URL	Web address (for example, www.edutopia.org/set-up-classroom-blog)
User Name	The name you select to log in. To log in to your blog, you must supply a user name and password. For the user name, you are allowed to have a nickname to keep your identity private.
Widget	Widgets are additional elements you can include on your blog layout such as a calendar, poll, clock, blogroll and so on.

From your desktop, double click on the Internet Explorer icon to launch the Internet. Type in the web address, or URL, into the address bar: www.blogger.com then press the enter key. This will upload the sign in or registration page to get you started.

Create a Google Account

Enter the fields with the required information. Your e-mail address will be your login. Create a password that you will be able to remember easily. After the information has been entered, click on the Continue tab.

Your title must not be in use by another blog author. It should make sense for you and your students to access your blog. You will also need to create a web address or URL. For example:

Field	Blog sample
Blog title	Home Away From Home
Blog address (URL)	http://teachingisrocket-science.blogspot.com
Blog title	Home Page
Blog address (URL)	http://homepagenotes.blogspot.com/
Blog title	Home Sweet Home
Blog address (URL)	http://homeforthinking.blogspot.com/

Select a Template

There are a number of predesigned templates for your consideration as you decide how your blog will look. Choose the one whose colour scheme and layout appeal to you. This will get your page up quickly, and you can go back later to change colours or template options.

Use the scrollbar to view the complete template selection. Select the one you would like for your blog, and click the radio button to indicate your choice. You will receive a message stating that you were successful, and your blog has been created.

Posting to Your Blog

To create a post for your blog, complete the boxes that contain the information about your classroom or

an event that relates to the topic of your blog title. A posting can include the following information:

- text
- podcast
- pictures
- slideshow
- video
- spreadsheet
- blogroll (links list)
- survey

You receive instant notification if your blog post worked. You can also edit your post or create another new post.

How to Manage Your Blog

Go to www.blogger.com for your blog sign in. Keep your user name and password in a safe place. You will need them to sign in to access your blogs.

It is a good idea to keep this information private.

If you forgot your user name or password, enter your blog URL or web address. Select Lookup or provide your e-mail address. Blogger.com will e-mail you with login instruction. You can re-enter your password, or submit a new password. Print out this information and keep in a safe place for future reference.

To go back to your Dashboard (the nerve centre for your blog) go to www.blogger.com. This has a link to your blog(s) directly from that screen.

Security Settings

Depending on the blog structure and teacher's purpose, security settings can be used accordingly. Under the Settings tab are some considerations for security and editing features.

Add your blog to our listings? If you select no, your blog will have limited access for your students, parents or school community to whom you have provided the URL (web) address. Using your Blogger Profile, you can restrict public access by selecting members only. Members only are invited by e-mail to read the blog or join as a blog author.

As a teacher, you can establish who will comment to the postings on your blog. Comments posted to your blog can be restricted to members only. As a teacher, you can also review and edit comments prior to their being posted on your blog. This notification comes through your e-mail account.

Blog Authors

Teachers can create an interactive class blog with students as authors to publish posts and comment on their inquiry. From the Permissions menu, teachers can limit access to a classroom blog. Select Add Authors to invite students in your class to join in the interactive dialogue. Add the student e-mail addresses from your class list. An e-mail notification will be sent to students in your class with an invitation to contribute to the classroom blog.

Blog Readers

Who can view this blog? Options are anyone, only people you choose or only blog authors. If you wish to restrict access to the students in your class, enter their e-mail addresses. This invites them to read your blog. Note: Blog authors are already included as blog readers.

Blogger Beware!

What are some of the safety and ethical considerations teachers need to consider when using blogs with students? To view how some teachers have structured this discussion with their classes, review the following sample classroom blogs to help you get started:

Pre-Cal 20S	http://pc20s.blogspot.com/2005/09/students-made-this.html
Bud's Blogging Experiment	www.budtheteacher.com/wiki/index.php?title=Bloggging_Rules
Blog of Proximal Development	www.teachandlearn.ca/blog/?cat=19
Discourse about Discourse	http://yongesonne.edublogs.org/2006/09/18/another-take-on-blogging-rules
Safe Blogging	http://mathmusings.blogspot.com/2006/01/safe-blogging.html

Check out the blog safety web list from my blog, (2007) Blogs for Learning at <http://blogsforlearning.wordpress.com/> for additional reading and resources. A few are highlighted below:

Childnet International (2006) has produced a special leaflet for parents/caregivers and teachers on blog safety issues that can be downloaded for free at *Blog Safety: Keeping Up with Your Child's Online Social Life*.

Susan Brooks-Young's (2007) article, "Nine Rules for Safe and Appropriate Use of Web 2.0 Tools" attributes the success of the new Web 2.0 tools to a large degree by the level of interaction and collaboration. Many students are not aware of the potential risks involved in Web safety. Brooks-Young outlines nine rules that teachers and students should know and practise:

- Be picky when selecting online tools.
- Choose a screen name that doesn't reveal personal information.
- Leave your public profile blank.
- Do not provide personal information in postings or in response to unsolicited messages.
- Think twice before posting photos.
- Postings on the Internet are not private.
- Once it's online, you can't take it back.
- Remember that online friends are strangers.
- When in doubt, talk with a trusted adult.

Blog Samples

A number of sample blogs are available on my Blogs for Learning site at <http://blogsforlearning.wordpress.com/>. The purpose of this blog was to pull the various components of my project together into one accessible space. This was not how I envisioned this early on in the inquiry. However, as I was creating my blogs for learning, I recognized it was a natural evolution for the application of my learning.

I created three blogs as models to illustrate the different purposes and functions of a blog. Home Away from Home is a classroom blog where the teacher can post videos, resource links and reviews of the class topics, assignments and additional information for students.

The second blog I created was a collaborative blog for students to interact and communicate about their inquiry. This one is for members only—the students in the class. The third, Home Page, is a blog in which students can reflect on their learning and collaborate to learn from each other. Students comment on posts, links, research and inquiry as we deepen our understanding about homelessness and poverty.

Home Sweet Home is a student reflection blog. Using the support document, Blogs for Learning ... for Students, students can create their own blog to organize their information and reflect on their inquiry.

A teacher would most likely not use all three formats of blogs during one teaching unit. However, the blog samples illustrate that based on the teacher's criteria, blogs can be technology tools for learning.

Also included on Blogs for Learning are sample blogs created by other teachers. These classroom blogs represent different blog structures and purposes. Samples from Early Years to Senior Years are included for review. The web list or blogroll provides additional support for teachers as they learn about creating blogs for learning.

Assessment Evidence

Assessment evidence of student achievement will depend on the blog structure and the teacher's purpose

for using a blog as a tool for reflection and/or instruction. When I was researching blogs for teaching and learning, I was surprised at how little is available in print or electronic resources for classroom-based assessment.

Included in the appendix in the next section of this article are student and teacher assessments for blog learning, which can be used as starting points for assessing student learning. Recognizing the role students have in the assessment process, blogs for learning help students create, reflect, learn, respond and communicate with respect to the criteria established by the students and teacher.

Appendix

Blog Reflection Assessment

Target Criteria	Not Yet	Beginning	On the Way	Met
Engagement with Inquiry	Blog posts and comments are few and are below criteria for number of blog entries established in class. Little evidence of connections made between personal inquiry and homelessness and poverty.	Most blog entries and comments are posted as identified by criteria established in class. Blog posts make some connections to issues surfacing from research, inquiry or class dialogue.	Blog posts and comments meet the criteria established in class. Blog posts demonstrate awareness and understanding of the key issues identified through research, inquiry and/or class dialogue. Clarification and/or questions are considered on personal blog and when posting on other blogs.	Blog posts and comments exceed the established criteria for posts. Blog posts demonstrate engagement and personal connections with key issues and causes identified through research, inquiry and/or class dialogue.
Personal Response to Issues of Homelessness and Poverty	The author shows little understanding of the topic. There is a lack of personal response to the major findings. No evidence of application to social contexts.	The author shows a limited understanding of the topic by expressing superficial personal opinions and responses to a few of the major findings. Personal thoughts and connections to classmates' comments are evident, but limited. Limited application to real world contexts.	The author shows an adequate understanding of the topic by expressing personal opinions and responses to most of the major findings. Connections are made to personal life and/or family responses to homelessness and poverty. Posts demonstrate that the student is capable of reflecting on learning, technology and society.	The author shows a deep understanding of the topic by expressing thoughtful personal opinions and responses to all of the major findings. Growth is demonstrated through reflection on learning, technology and society's response to issues of homelessness and poverty. Clarification, questions and potential solutions are included in posts both on personal and classmate's blogs.

Feature Articles

Engaged Writing	Blog entries provide limited evidence of correct grammar and spelling use, making it difficult for others to read and make sense of the information provided. Links to support ideas and statements are not included.	Blog entries demonstrate some evidence of correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. Classmates will have little trouble reading your blog posts. Few links are included to support your thinking.	Blog entries show a good understanding of applying grammar and punctuation into the writing process. Most blog entries include links for further study.	Blog entries show a very good understanding of applying grammar and punctuation into the writing process. Blog entries may contain multiple links to support statements and further study.
Building Community Blogs for Learning	Contributions are few to the development of the classroom blog. Contributions of posts to other student blogs are not evident. Content is minimal and/or some errors in the information that is shared. No connections to the issues and society. Some http errors are evident: dead or incorrect links.	Contributions to the classroom blog go beyond posts and comments. Comments are posted to other student blogs and are usually on topic. Content information is usually connected to topic and includes some connections to society. Most links and images are active and support inquiry.	Contributions to classroom blog include page elements that involve uploading from another source. Most of the information relates to the topic. Some application to society is evident. Content is factual and posts raise awareness of potential issues and solutions. All links and images are active and relate to inquiry.	Contributions to classroom blog extend the learning, including at least one Web 2.0 tool. Information relates to the topic and makes connections to society today highlighting both issues and ways to impact society. Strong connection between links for information and content. No http errors are evident. Image and copyright citations are included.

Assessing a Blog Entry

Source URL: <http://mollys64.blogspot.com/2007/08/student-assessment.html>

- 1. Did the student post an entry for the appropriate topic?**
No post—0 points; not on topic—1 point; related to topic—3 points; precisely on topic—5 points
- 2. Did the student use appropriate English syntax, spelling and grammar in their paragraph of five complete sentences?**
Three or more errors per line—1 point; two errors per line—2 points;
one error per line—4 points; fewer than one error per line—5 points
- 3. Did the student post the assignment on time?**
No post—0 points; four days late—1 point; three days late—2 points;
two days late—3 points; one day late—4 points;
on time—5 points
- 4. Did the post ask high-level questions that prompted critical thinking for comments?**
No—0 points; one low-level question—2 points;
one high-level question—4 points; more than one high-level question—5 points
- 5. Did the student leave well-thought-out comments on other blogs?**
No—0 points; one comment—3 points; two or more comments—5 points
- 6. Did the student respond to the comments of others on their own blog?**
No—0 points; one comment—2 points; two or more comments—4 points
- 7. Did the student post contain a link?**
No—0 points; one link—2 points; more than one link—3 points
- 8. Does the student blog contain images?**
No—0 points; one image—2 points; more than one image—3 points
- 9. Does the student blog contain video?**
No—0 points; one video—2 points; more than two videos—3 points

Reflecting on Blogs for Learning Creating a Blog for My Learning, Learning Was ...

Write a few comments about the process.
What worked well?
What didn't?
What would you try next time?

OK	Good	Great!	A challenge!

Two things I appreciated as I used blogs in communicating about homelessness:

One post or comment I don't want to forget . . .

Self-Assessment

Check and Reflect

Self-Assessment	Check and Reflect	My Next Steps
<p>Sharing ideas and information on my blog and posting on my classmate's blogs.</p>		
<p>Participation in online dialogue... How often? What was the quality of my posts or comments? Did I learn very much?</p>		
<p>Demonstrates critical thinking Was I able to connect what I already knew to other people's ideas? To information I found in my research? Did my connections deepen my understanding about homelessness and poverty?</p>		
<p>Demonstrates creative thinking to produce and communicate information. Did my blog organization make sense? Did it help me keep on track through my inquiry?</p>		
<p>Demonstrates responsibility and appropriate online communication skills. Was I able to stay on topic through my research and blog communication? Did I consider safety when using the Internet and other online resources?</p>		

Assessment for Learning

Observing the collaborative processes for evidence of student learning

Social Networking Skills	Janis	Brendan	Jesse	Dana
Sharing ideas and information				
Participation in online dialogue				
Demonstrates critical thinking				
Demonstrates creative thinking to produce and communicate information				
Demonstrates responsibility and appropriate online communication skills				
Notes				

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21 Classes: Setting Up a Class Blog

John Lobe

There are many tools available to students to express their ideas. Blogging has become a very compelling choice for teachers to offer. Its advantages are many: a student blog is totally portable, and it can be viewed and maintained from anywhere at any time. Blogs are increasingly able to contain rich media, such as audio, video, photos, maps and reference materials. A blog can easily be shaped into an effective way for a student to develop questions and share reflections during an inquiry project.

When it comes time to actually implement a class blog, two issues give me pause as a teacher. The first is student privacy and all of the related concerns that many parents have. The second is student-to-student communication. I need to be assured that blog posts and comments are constructive. As I move into Web 2.0 tools with students, I will admit that I still have some control issues to work out.

While great blog hosts abound, I have found that 21 Classes (21classes.com) addresses these issues well. 21 Classes offers some nice features to structure student blogs and to moderate posts and comments. To be clear, I have chosen to pay \$8.95 per month to have the option of password-protected blogs. This fee allows me access to full text search, the use of my own domain name, 25 megabytes of webspace per student and up to 100 student blog accounts.

Because I am using a blog for student reflections (a Grade 5 wetlands project), I thought I should set up a test site. I registered at 21 Classes and created a site. Customizing the opening page was relatively easy. Four default themes are offered (Figure 1). All text styles can be edited for finer control. Site creators can also create their own logo, a favicon, plus header and background images. I was puzzled that my default web browser (Safari) wouldn't successfully upload these

custom images and was forced to switch to Firefox while doing any image uploading.

Next, I created two fake students (Figure 2). Initially, each new student seemed to require a unique e-mail address. Later, I learned that when I turned off the e-mail functionality in my student settings, registering a new student required only a user name, first and last name, and a password. Very quick. This was a relief since the e-mail addresses serve no purpose in my scheme of things.

I started by making the accounts public. Sure enough, when student two put up a post, her blog was visible to the whole world. I knew I'd paid good money to have ultimate control over public and private posts, so I switched all accounts to private (Figure 3). Things started to get pretty cool. I made the blogs available to class members. I am notified of all new posts (Figure 4), and student blogs are published only when I approve them (Figure 5). Comments must also be approved by me. It is easy to set up links and blogrolls. News and assignments can be sent to the students, although, I have a few things to learn before I use these features.

On the less paranoid side, students can give each other coauthoring rights for an account. They can upload movies, pictures and other documents to share. The editing tools feel quite useable. Students can control the look of their own pages in the same way the site creator has control over the opening page. I am certain that this visual customization will really motivate students to put more energy and thought into their actual writing.

All in all, the 21 Classes blogging tool is giving me the confidence to plan the use of a class blog during an inquiry project. If there are other useful service providers, I would love to learn about them and compare features.

Available Weblog layouts

[Show inactive layouts](#) [Create own layout](#)

Booklet



[Disable](#) [Edit layout](#) [Make default](#)

Mycolors



[Edit layout](#) **Default layout**

Board



[Disable](#) [Edit layout](#) [Make default](#)

Colored



[Disable](#) [Edit layout](#) [Make default](#)

Number of student accounts to create

Number of accounts

Member data

Username

Password

First name

Member data

Username

Password

First name

Entry Visibility

Entries are visible for:

sce-wetlands members only

Comments

Comments are allowed for:

sce-wetlands members only

User content rights

Members may override visibility and comment settings for their entries

Save Cancel

New members in your portal

There are new members in your portal.

[Click here to go to the member-management page.](#)

There are new entries or comments awaiting a review

[Click here to go to the review page](#)

Review of entries and comments

[Help](#)

This page lists all entries and comments that have been submitted and still need to be reviewed or approved.

[Change review and moderation settings](#) ◀

Unpublished Entries

[A First Post](#)

[Review and comment](#)

[Accept](#)

[Defer](#)

Unpublished Comments

[The wetland field trip](#)

[Accept](#)

[Deny](#)

[Defer](#)

[Save](#)

[Cancel](#)

Coming Full Circle: A Blog Aggregator and Blogging as PD

Arlene Lipkewich

The best way to keep track of new learning and reflect on it at the same time is through a blog. A blog, short for Web log, is simply a place to publish online. With advances in blogging, all sorts of media can be linked to or inserted into a blog, but it can also be text only. Online blog services do not require knowledge of any HTML or FTP. The blogging service does all that for you with a click of the button.

Before taking this course, I had minimal experience with blogs. I really didn't understand how it could benefit my own learning let alone that of my students as well. Our blogs provided my classmates and me with a place to write about the process involved in learning about each Web 2.0 tool and how we were feeling along the way.

With more than a dozen blogs of my classmates to follow, as well as blogs on various other topics, it was necessary to sign up for a blog aggregator. By adding the URL of the blog that I wished to subscribe to into my Bloglines (www.bloglines.com) account, my blogreader of choice, I was able to collect all the posts of my fellow bloggers in one place, replacing the need to visit each blog. Within a few minutes of registering for a Bloglines account, I had it all set up and could see everyone's introductory posts in one place. One-stop shopping—just like Walmart. Actually, I'm not a Walmart fan, but that's another story.

I was proud of our collective accomplishments, because a week earlier none of us had a blog to reflect on our professional development. The most time-consuming part was trying to delete the default blog feeds. I kept searching for a link, button or specific instruction only to realize that I could drag and drop what I didn't want into the trash can. I asked myself, "Could it really be this easy?" I gave my head a little shake as I thought about how my old ways were getting in the way of how easy this really was. If, as an adult, I find this so easy, students will find it even easier.

I feel like an "infovore" (Gomes 2008) more than I ever have. I started by following a handful of blogs as

was suggested in our course materials. However, each week I added a few more, dividing them into folders by category in Bloglines: class blogs, edtech, del.icio.us, library, teaching, technology, personal, social studies and visual literacy.

I remember one blogger questioning the optimal number of blogs to follow. At one point he had followed 500 then weeded it down to 40. Others depend more on tools like Twitter (<http://twitter.com>) and read what others suggest in the status updates that are similar to those in Facebook (www.facebook.com). Still others have deleted all their feeds and asked their blog readers to suggest their favourites. I have conducted one such spring cleaning, deleting blogs that don't seem to be updated or topics that don't interest me. The way I read them has also changed. My mood and the amount of time I have to read influence what I read. In the beginning I felt somewhat obligated to read everything and was overwhelmed by the number of unread posts. Now, I am much better at skimming, scanning (critical reading skills outlined in *Focus on Inquiry*) and selecting what I want to read and am much faster at clearing out folders. This is a matter of survival because

For most of human history, there was little chance of overdosing on information, because any one day in the Olduvai Gorge was a lot like any other. Today, though, we can find in the course of a few hours online more information than our ancient ancestors could in their whole lives. (Gomes 2008)

I don't use RSS as a life tool (Poston 2008) yet, but I can see how I could use feeds to organize and follow all sorts of authors of different media optimized into one page like Pageflakes (www.pageflakes.com), which allows you to determine what information you see on your personal webpage. It was through Bloglines that I learned about

- the International Edubloggers Directory (<http://edubloggerdir.blogspot.com>);

Feature Articles


- the National Educational Technology Standards for Students Wiki (<http://nets-implementation.iste.wikispaces.net/>) through The Blue Skunk Blog (<http://doug-johnson.squarespace.com/blue-skunk-blog>);
- a wiki dedicated to seminal blog posts (www.dougbelshaw.com/2008/04/05/seminal-blog-posts/) through UK blogger Doug Belshaw's blog (www.dougbelshaw.com) and *bjheard*'s blog (<http://bjheard.wordpress.com>);
- microblogging (blogging very short posts) using a site like tumblr (www.tumblr.com) through *edtech-talk* (www.edtechtalk.com);
- unconferences, by reading about the GreenLibraries Unconference (<http://greenlibraries.wetpaint.com>) through LibrarianInBlack (<http://librarianinblack.typepad.com/librarianinblack/2008/03/green-libraries.html>) and Library Stuff (www.librarystuff.net/2008/03/15/green-libraries-unconference);
- Critical Perspectives on Web 2.0 (www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/issue/current) through Library Riot (<http://libraryriot.com/2008/03/14/first-monday-critical-perspectives-on-web-20>) and Information Wants to be Free (<http://meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/index.php/2008/03/09/critical-perspectives-on-web-20>).

Before this course I had no idea what I was missing out on. I didn't know what Web 2.0 was, and I was a bit averse to it because I didn't know anything about it. Bloglines is professional development that comes to me based on the feeds that I select to receive.

Every day I have my own personal "unconference" depending on what comes across my reader. The feeds criss-cross, so references may come up in several feeds; if I don't read about it now, chances are someone will remind me that I wanted to read it at some point later.

Blogging provides a differentiated form of PD by allowing people to read, comment or publish. One can read about anything imaginable related to the theory or practice of teaching in any subject area. Some blogs are philosophical while others are more practical, and the rest are somewhere in between. Because other media can be embedded or linked to a blog, it provides a jumping off point to other media in Flickr (www.flickr.com/), YouTube (<http://youtube.com>), VoiceThread (<http://voicethread.com>), wikis and podcasts to name a few. The blog is a tool, a platform, through which thoughtful reflection and discussion are mediated. The blog isn't the focus. The learning that takes place among a community of learners is. No one is ever alone in the blogosphere.

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Blogs and Blogging for Professional Development

Cynthia Smyth

Blogs and blogging have been a thought-provoking, educational and a phenomenal professional development experience for me. The opportunity to learn through collaboration by sharing information, thoughts and ideas, and asking questions on blogs positively supports my learning. "Sharing thoughts through self publishing and harnessing the collective intelligence of all users to generate information and solve problems creates huge changes in how educators and students receive and respond to information" (Mills 2007). By having created my own blog and commenting on my classmates' blogs as well as some educational blogs, I can get ideas out into the world at an amazing speed, which benefits me and others.

Abram (2007) follows about 600 blogs a day to find out what is happening in all types of libraries. He has an extensive list of favourite blogs related to teacher-librarianship, school libraries and learning technologies. Abram is a tough act to follow; however, I encourage everyone to look at a few blogs every day.

In *Library Garden*, Lackie (2006) blogs about librarians and educators using Web 2.0 tools to communicate, interact, share, create and publish information online, which is exactly what we did in Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning EDES 545. *Library Garden* influenced me to assess how effectively I connect with those who currently access the school library as well as those who will in the future. He also suggests that we set up a library blog and receive library or other related topics using Real Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds through bloglines.

RSS and Blogging

Blogs have an amazing amount of information about education, teacher-librarianship, technology and other related topics. To access them with ease and remain current, I started to pay attention to RSS. The browser-based RSS aggregator allows readers to subscribe to

content on blogs and other sites. The feeds, also known as RSS feeds, XML feeds, syndicated content or web-feeds, contain frequently updated content published by a website. They are also used for distributing other types of digital content-like pictures, audio or video.

If feeds are available on a website, the feeds button will change colour. Click it then click the feed you want to see. You can subscribe to a feed to automatically receive up-to-date material. View your feeds by going to the tab in the Favourites Centre, click the star button and then click the feeds button.

Subscribing to educational blogs and using the RSS feeds keeps you current, answers your questions and gives you support. Current material can be accessed with amazing speed and efficiency with just a click of a button.

Blogging and Professional Development

Teacher-librarians who are isolated from others in their field benefit from blogging by keeping up with the latest research, sharing information and receiving support from others in the profession. "Blogs: Ending Isolation" (Aguilar and Rivero 2006) illustrates this. However, it reminded me of my distance learning EDES classmates, who were scattered all over Canada. Through blogging we connected, learned, shared and supported one another in our professional development.

According to Clyde (2004), blogs not only inform us of current trends and issues but also allow us to read and participate on library and information weblogs. I want to know what the latest developments are, how other educators use Web 2.0 tools in their schools, what issues they have to address and how they effectively deal with them.

One benefit of blogging for professional development is the opportunity to build a professional network of

colleagues. I can comment on their thoughts and links, and they can do the same for me. To learn more and share knowledge, teacher-librarians and educators need to start leaving comments and linking them back to our blogs. "Learning with others makes the difference, since learning is a social process ... and has now gone online with blogs. Learning with others means you take control of the flood of information and data coming into your life" (Guhlin 2006).

Examples of Blogs for Professional Development

Tobin (1998) notes the importance of developing a network or support system. Blogs give us access to a variety of information sources and to people who can coach and mentor us, and challenge or extend our thinking and our professional development. Several librarians and information specialists maintain blogs that provide valuable information. Here are a select few blogs that I find very informative.

- Anne Davis's *EduBlogInsights* (<http://anne.teachesme.com>) covers many topics of interest such as collaboration, conferences, evaluation, literacy, professional development, social networking, teaching, Web 2.0 and writing. She is well known, well respected and is cited in numerous articles. Davis has a lot of experience and knowledge to share.
- David Warlick's *2 CentsWorth* (<http://davidwarlick.com/2cents>) is a familiar blog to many of us. I appreciate Warlick's openmindedness, knowledge and ability to share. According to Warlick (2008), "It is a conversation. I blog to learn. I do not promise answers here. I will ask far more questions." I also blog to learn and ask lots of questions, and need to ask even more for my own learning.
- Doug Johnson speaks from the viewpoint of librarian and educational-technology leader in his *Blue Skunk Blog* (<http://doug-johnson.squarespace.com>). His amusing blogs encourage readers to think about libraries and technology in a different way. After reading his blog, I do exactly that. In a humorous fashion, he gives us inspirational ideas to consider.
- Jenny Levine, the blogger behind *The Shifted Librarian* (www.theshiftedlibrarian.com) is well known for her knowledge of technology gadgets. She often posts information about "cool tools," along with comments about how librarians can use them in their daily work. Sharing technology with your school staff and getting their comments and feedback would benefit

your learning, support their learning and benefit your library. Jenny Levine is very good at explaining our profession and the role of technology in it. As she keeps telling librarians, the time to shift is now, hence the name, the Shifted Librarian!

- The blog, *Hey Jude* (<http://heyjude.wordpress.com>), created by Judy O'Connell, an Australian, is an amazing site. She has a lot of practical ideas on her well-organized blog. I particularly like to access Judy's Web 2.0 tools. She has selected tools that she feels are beneficial to students and educators. Judy very deservedly was awarded Best Librarian Blog at the 2006 EduBlog awards.
- Will Richardson's *Weblogg-ed* (<http://weblogg-ed.com>) is another popular blogger. He dedicates his site to discussions and reflections on the use of various Web 2.0 tools. Will discusses the use of blogs, wikis, RSS, podcasts, social bookmarking and other read-and-write technologies. I would use his site with staff to help them learn various web tools and to successfully apply them in the classroom.

Closing Thoughts

Technorati (<http://technorati.com>), a blog tracking and searching site, published the following statistics in April 2007:

- 70 million weblogs
- 120,000 new weblogs each day or 1.4 new blogs every second
- 1.5 million posts per day or 17 posts per second
- Growth from 35 million to 75 million blogs in 320 days

I had no idea of the magnitude of blogging. The statistics are incredible and impressive. More and more educators are becoming active in blogging.

Stephens (2007) suggests that librarians join the blogosphere to participate in a community, share expertise and gain recognition within the field. According to Stephens, the library blog has become its own platform. We know that almost anything can be embedded in a blog from Flickr to audio (podcasts, voicethreads, avatar) to video (YouTube).


In *The Green Kangaroo* blog, Mary Ghikas discusses her amazement at the vitality and generosity of the professional exchange that takes place on blogs. Like her, I, too, have shamelessly grabbed references to other blogs and websites as well as to interesting papers and new books to read. She is also struck by the reflectiveness of many posts, the thoughtful consideration

of context, of related issues and concerns of evaluation. Last, she is amazed by the personal voice within the blogs, which reveal frustrations, happiness, anger and optimism. I, too, have read and felt these emotions in blogs and am learning to develop my own personal voice when blogging.

I find blogging quite gratifying. Accessing various educational blogs and blogging for professional development help me keep informed of the latest trends and developments in education and teacher-librarianship. Blogging enables me to share and reach out to others with questions and innovative ideas. "You have great ideas. You've done great work. Keeping your innovations and learning to yourself, won't let your light spread. Everyone can find 15 minutes a week to blog about something they learned or did that week. Share. Your ideas will spread, and learning and libraries will improve. "In times of extreme change the spoils go to the learners—not the learned" (Abram 2007).

I look forward to continuing to blog and access blogs for my professional development. Learning from others and sharing with my fellow educational bloggers has and will continue to be a part of the ever-evolving teaching profession.

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Let Me Poducate You

Cynthia Smyth

Have you listened to a podcast before? Do you know what podcasting is? The word *podcasting* is a combination of two words, *iPod* and *broadcast*. *The New Oxford American Dictionary* chose *podcast* as the 2005 Word of the Year and defined it as “a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program, made available on the Internet for downloading to a personal audio player.” Podcasting has quickly become a powerful Web 2.0 tool. Students and teachers can actively participate in creating and listening to info-rich podcasts.

Using Podcasts in Education

In “Podcasting: Just the Basics,” Gatewood (2008) discusses four educational purposes of podcasts: (1) curriculum augmentation, (2) professional development, (3) presentation of material by both teachers and students and (4) effective communication with the community and parents.

With regard to curriculum augmentation, podcasts supply a variety of content in audio form. According to Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, we all have different learning styles and strengths. Podcasts give teachers another instructional tool for use with students who positively respond to audio learning. In the classroom, podcasts can be used to introduce new material, support current lessons and review what was already taught. According to “Sound Off! The Possibilities of Podcasting” (Gordon 2007), some teachers record themselves teaching important concepts, which then creates an archive of information online for students to access when they’re stuck on a homework assignment.

Podcasts for professional development can be very effective. Podcasts allow teachers to select what, when and where students learn. If teachers require a particular professional topic, they can search for relevant podcasts and listen to any applicable ones at their own convenience. Podcasts can also be used as assessment tools. Teachers can listen to students read passages at various times of the year to assess changes and improvements.

As for the third educational use of podcasts—presentation of material to students—teachers can record lectures, lab directions, project overviews and review material, and make it available to all students. Students can then create podcasts to demonstrate their learning and understanding of the content. Podcasts allow some students to effectively explain something out loud rather than write it down. Writing is also supported through podcasting. Students write a script, edit, practise reading and perform, and take more responsibility for their learning through either listening or creating with podcasts. “Podcasting is yet another way for students to be creating and contributing ideas to a larger conversation, and it’s a way of archiving that contribution for future audiences to use” (Richardson 2006).

Podcasts can also be used to give parents and the school community information about current happenings at the school, homework, special events and sports reports. Podcasts effectively keep families and the community informed.

Connecting Podcasts to the Library

Teacher-librarians are in a unique position to be proactive in using podcasting with students and teachers. Teacher-librarians can access podcasts to supplement research or to get updated news and information and promote school library programming. Podcasts can be used for book reviews and reading programs as well as for assessing student achievement. Students can use podcasts in the library that include interviews, creative writing and readings to demonstrate their skills and observations about the learning process. Podcasts can be used to share library news by advertising library events like book fairs and student library club activities. Podcasts in the library can provide professional development; for example, writing book reviews, talking about copyright issues, holding book group discussions and bringing in other professionals.

In the article entitled, "Podcasting 101 for K–12 Librarians," Eash (2006) makes an interesting and valid statement when discussing the reasons for using podcasts in the library. Eash cautions that just because podcasting is a new form of technology isn't enough reason to use it. According to Eash, we must consider if podcasting is the best format for the task and if it supports our curriculum goals and enhances student learning. These are all valid concerns that teachers and teacher-librarians need to address in the face of new technology or new curriculum developments.

Planning and Producing a Podcast

The best way to learn about a web tool is to use it. First I listened to several different podcasts on YouTube and at various podcast sites (Podcast Alley, PodcastPickle and Podcasting News) and explored websites at poducateme.com. Then I gathered all the required equipment: a computer and a set of headphones with a built-in adjustable microphone. I chose the recording software application Audacity, because it is free and reasonably easy to use. It can be downloaded at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>. I also downloaded the free lame file, which converts the podcast into a more accessible MP3 format.

Before beginning a podcast, make a plan. Lamb and Johnson (2007) examined one teacher's decision to integrate MP3 players into the curriculum instead of confiscating the devices by having students create a podcast. They explain that to create a successful podcast, you have to ask certain questions: Who will your audience be? What will your topic be? What will be in your script? How long will it be? Have you checked for copyright issues? Do you have a quiet place to record? Will more than one person be doing the podcast? Will you be incorporating music or sound effects? How often will you rehearse? Does it need editing and how will you do this? How will your podcast be shared?

The first podcast I created was a reading of one of my own children's favourite picture book. I practised

many times and even included a sound of a tinkling bell. It was very impressive; however, it was fairly lengthy and copyright was an issue. Because it would be out there in the worldwide web, I could not publish it. Back to the drawing board!


I then decided to share a recipe. I planned the script, adding some background information of where it originated from, definitions of terms and the actual recipe itself. I practised several times to ensure a fluent reading. To begin the recording, I accessed Audacity and recorded, checking the wavelength and listening for controlled expression. I kept it short and simple, and had good results. The last challenging aspect of podcasting was uploading the MP3 file to a webserver to make the podcast accessible to the public.

Concluding Thoughts

Podcasting is a powerful Web 2.0 tool that benefits both the learner and the teacher. Explore the endless possibilities of podcasting for yourself—you will definitely be impressed.

"Podcasts are versatile, reusable, interesting and stimulating to the new generation of technology-savvy students" (Mikat, Martinez and Jorstad 2007) and teachers. Consider yourself poducated!

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Social Networking

Arlene Lipkewich

I started exploring social networking back in the middle of January as an online debate was taking place at the *Economist* (www.economist.com/debate/index.cfm?action=summary&debate_id=3). Within the first week, a flurry of blog posts related to social networking were coming across my Bloglines. This is what I wrote:

I would have never thought before a week ago that I would be spending Saturday evening catching up on my blog reading through Bloglines.

And there is an interesting conversation unfolding related to social networking. This particular discussion started at the *Economist* website in the fall. Will Richardson (2008) got in on the discussion on his blog in response to Danah Boyd's (2008) post. Then, David Warlick (2008a) made this post, in it referring to one of his previous posts (2008b).

Even better, Will Richardson, Joyce Valenza . . . and others are exploring this topic and others right now at Educon 2.0.

I want to take it back to where I started following the social networking debate, following well-recognized and reputable names in the world of education technology, or edtech for short.

Will Richardson (2008) says that we must acknowledge the importance of Facebook in the lives of our students. We can't pretend it doesn't exist. I agree wholeheartedly. To use a cliché, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. And so I did last summer. I had been hearing about Facebook repeatedly on CBC radio. I had visited the homepage on several occasions but couldn't find the nerve to sign up. One day, I just decided to jump in. Out of my circle of friends, I was first to join, and they joined because I invited them. My circle of friends has remained very small, because I don't use the word *friends* lightly, like some of the requests that I have received from former students who have amassed lists of over 500 friends. As Ellison, Steinfeld and Lamp (2007) suggest, the word *friend* can be misleading, because on Facebook, *friend* does not necessarily mean a friendship.

Richardson says this doesn't mean that we teach with sites like Facebook. Instead, we need to teach the

literacies of networking, the "ability to create and find and connect the dots" (2008). I also agree with this. He goes on to say,

Social networks as they are currently defined and delivered aren't for schools. But using social tools to teach our students to build their own network, networks that go beyond simply socializing with people they already know has to be.

I readily admit that I don't know enough about the use of Facebook in schools to be able to decide one way or the other. I do agree with Richardson that we need to start using social networking tools such as wikis and blogs; one could be used to scaffold to the other to help students build those connections based on curricular content rather than just socializing.

Will Richardson pointed me to a post by Danah Boyd (2008) that he had read four times and that was probably the most important one he'd read so far this year. On the one hand, Boyd says that social network sites (SNSs) are important because they allow students to congregate and socialize in a way that they can't do publicly in an unsupervised fashion, on the other hand,

SNSs do not make youth engaged educationally; they allow educationally motivated youth with a structure to engage educationally.

Further,

[T]heir value is about the kinds of informal social learning that is required for maturation—understanding community, learning [to] communicate with others, working through status games, building and maintaining friendships, working through personal values, etc. All too often we underestimate these processes because, traditionally, they happened so naturally.

I wonder why kids don't get together to socialize outside of school, or at least not as much as they used to. This is something I first questioned at the *getyourgameon* wiki (<http://getyourgameon.pbwiki.com/Question+%232>) where I wrote,

I remember a friend telling me about how their circle of friends used to play outside for hours and hours.

Now the parks are empty as kids retreat to their game consoles attached to their TV or computer gaming. Which caused which? Did the decrease in safety force kids inside or did the games draw them in?

Granted, kids don't hang out at the roller rink or burger joints (and haven't for a really long time) and seem to spend less and less time at the mall (which to me seem to be increasingly scary places) or in arcades (I never realized that the ones at the mall even closed until now), but they do get together in other places and spaces, both online and off. As Boyd points out, informal online socializing does have its place and is valuable. I also agree that it is the students who are motivated to do well in school who will use the online version of their offline social network to multitask and seek homework help from friends while IMing, using the pre-established network to assist them with school work. Yes, they connect with the people in their classes, they expand their "friends" lists, a form of status in itself (Ellison et al 2007), but not for the sole purpose of discussing the next essay topic. I don't see students independently creating a social network on Facebook to help them with their school work, at least not yet.

In discussing platform, David Warlick (2008b) sees three areas (e-portfolios, course management systems and social networks) overlapping like a Venn diagram. In the overlap, he sees student-centred, technology infused, constructivist, inquiry-based learning happening as a matter of course rather than by design. I like Warlick's (2008a) simple explanation of the distinction between social networking and a social network or a social network site, such as Facebook or MySpace:

1. "There is a difference (right now) between social networks (or social network sites), and social networking. In my mind, a social network is a single site with features that facilitate social experiences. Social networking, on the other hand, is what is done in social networks, but can also be done with smaller and personally combined tools, such as blogs, wikis, podcasting, aggregators, twitter and so on. Neither (at this time) fully encompasses the other." A visual of this is available at his blog.
2. "Facebook is an example of a social network site. They are not synonymous. What frustrates me about Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn is that their feature sets are way [too] limiting. I think a social network has enormous potential, especially to education, but not in its current form. I'm afraid that if we are limiting our notions of social networks to what's already been developed in FB [Facebook], MS

[MySpace] and even Ning, and dismiss them as a result, then we may just miss a wonderful opportunity."

When I first started using Facebook, I found it addicting, particularly for the status updates, a service that is replicated by Twitter. Now, I rarely check in. What turned me off follows:

- The lack of privacy controls (I thought I had set my profile to private only to find out that it was public)
- It is a money-making scheme of which I am the target of an obscene amount of advertising (no, I don't want to send someone a \$1 virtual baby gift)
- The disparity between what my friends and I believe to be appropriate content. Boyd and Ellison (2007) put it this way: "privacy options offered by SNSs do not provide users with flexibility to handle conflicts with Friends who have different conceptions of privacy"
- All the gimmick time-wasters (I have 13 pending requests right now including snowman, aquarium, jackpot and movie gift. Who has time for these things?)

I signed up for a MySpace account the same week I set up my blog. It never hooked me. I never felt compelled to fill in yet another profile, "Yet Another Social Networking Service" (YASNS), a term coined by Clay Shirky (Boyd and Ellison 2007). After creating only one profile at Facebook, I was already a victim of "consumer fatigue" (Olsen 2008). I was burned out recreating my social life on another new network. Because I was accustomed to the Facebook interface, I didn't find MySpace as user friendly and couldn't figure out the privacy controls so that my birthdate didn't appear on my profile. This frustrated me. If it's not easy to use, I'm not interested in using it. Had I started with MySpace instead of Facebook, I'm guessing the situation would be reversed.

Will Richardson commented on Warlick's two points saying, "SNSs are being used differently as we get older. The exclusively social use of SNS occurs in adolescents."

From my own observations of lurking while my "friends" message back and forth in the public Facebook space, all I have seen is the social side of Facebook.

Ewan McIntosh (2008) blogs on his proponent position in the *Economist* Debate Series:

A social tool without any networks to use them with is like turning up to a party where no one else was invited.... The tools need a network which needs the user to know how to network in the first place.


McIntosh goes on to say that whether you choose one social network like Facebook or a combination of blog and reader (which he refers to as social media at large or what I call social software, which falls under the umbrella of social computing) it doesn't matter because you get the same end result.

I disagree. My use of a combination of social media, as McIntosh calls it, which Warlick describes using as well, my blog, Bloglines, searches of the social book-marking sites Furl and del.icio.us, collaboration on a wiki are much more beneficial to my own learning, more fruitful academically and more engaging for me than any Facebook discussion I have ever had. Is that just because the right people aren't my "friends" in Facebook? Even if they were, as Warlick mentioned, the combination of smaller tools gives the user options that simply are not available in Facebook. I have joined the Facebook groups CANSCAIP, Young Alberta Book Society and Librarians and Web 2.0, but membership is relatively small and there isn't a space to contemplate ideas extensively, as there is with a blog or a wiki. The social aspect comes when I receive blog comments that spur my thinking and lead me to respond, negotiate wiki content, or share or benefit from tagged bookmarks.

In the end, Warlick, Boyd, Richardson and McIntosh all agree, as I do, that the use of technology must be student centred and not technology centred, something that Michael Bugeja (2007), who argued for the opposition in the *Economist* debate, doesn't see as possible.

Why is social networking so important? Citizens of the 21st century must be skilled in social networking. For educators to be able to prepare students for this expectation, we must have a working definition of what it is, and actively participate in and model social networking for students.

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Facebook: A Personal Reflection

Stephanie Ippen

Social networks are one of the Web 2.0 tools that I knew a little about before I began my first University of Alberta course, Information Technologies for Learning. Why, you wonder? Isn't Facebook more of a teen thing? Yes, indeed. Thanks to Facebook, teens are the real social networking experts.


Because my home has been full of teenagers for the last 11 years, I've been hearing and seeing little bits about Facebook and related things like IM (instant messaging) and MSNing. Our house was frequently the gathering place for a pack of teenaged boys, and interactivity was the theme. Our basement rocked to the sounds of teens playing multiplayer video games, hooting and hollering about every heroic conquest. Anyone not playing the game was on the computer sending e-mail, instant messages and, eventually, updating their Facebook profiles. I noticed that the more technology involved, the better. Soon all of the guys had cellphones, too, so texting, picture taking, bizarre ring tones—basically lots of noise—has always been connected to technology in my mind. What impressed me most was observing that it was crucial to the teens that the web of connections be maintained at all times. The kids always know where everyone else is, and they are masters of (human resource) organization. My teens can plan all kinds of activities through Facebook, from social gatherings to car pools for soccer. I think they prefer to plan on Facebook. They see it as a much more efficient use of energy.

All of my kids became involved in performing at some point in their high school careers. I think that is a natural fit because teens seem to spend so much time as the hero of their own story, documenting both everyday events and rites of passage. Facebook helps

them get their experiences out there to the audience of the larger world.

By contrast, I noticed while creating a VoiceThreads project for my technology course how difficult it was for me to record my voice and thoughts. I spent a lot of time rejecting the spontaneous me, revising and cringing in equal measure. I'm comfortable and engaged by visual and auditory interactions with real people but not so much with a machine.

My kids, part of the Facebook generation, can't seem to get enough technological documentation. They avidly share images, thoughts and tidbits of information that I would never put out to a large audience. In a strange way I think they are liberated by their lack of inhibition. There is such an ocean of information out there on the Web. Who really pays attention to all this stuff? Is the Facebook generation really doing something very different from the gossiping I did with my high school friends in person and on the phone?

Of course there are some significant differences. Anyone who wants to share personal details on the Web must be aware of safety and privacy issues. That kind of information literacy learning needs to begin as soon as a child starts using the computer, both at home and at school. Certainly school administrators, teachers-librarians and classroom teachers have developed lots of ways to protect students. The creators of the Web 2.0 applications also put tremendous energy and resources into security features, but cyberbullying is a real issue. I wonder, too about the long-term effects of inappropriate Facebook material that might be perused by prospective employers. Time will tell on that score. Studying the long-term effect of social networking may fall to the Facebook generation itself. 

The Tale of a Story Lover, Storyteller, Story Writer

Mary Woodbury

Notes from a talk to the teacher-librarians of Greater Edmonton given May 27, 2008.



Before I begin, I want to talk about my latest book and how I found that story. *Flight of the Tiger Moth* was published in 2007 by Coteau Books, in Regina. I have always loved stories. I'm probably addicted to them. And some stories that I dream or hear grab me and don't let go until I take them,

play with them and tell them to a wider and younger audience.

Finding the Story

My husband, Clair, grew up in southern Saskatchewan. He was born in Arcola, but when he was five his family moved to Caron, a village 20 kilometres west of Moose Jaw, so his parents could help run his maternal grandfather's general store.

He described for me the morning he and his mother woke early to a loud racket outside the house. They peered out the window and saw huge earthmoving trucks and construction equipment rolling down the main street.

I could imagine his excitement as he watched over the next few months. First an airstrip, aerodrome, maintenance sheds and housing were built. Then the train delivered Royal Air Force (RAF) personnel who would man the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) site just two miles from his village. Small bright yellow planes called Tiger Moths arrived by train, their wings folded up like large butterflies. These were assembled and flown to the airfield. In the winter of 1941/42, young British student pilots climbed off a troop

train on a bitterly cold night. Some of those students attended the United Church, sang at socials and came for Sunday dinners. He couldn't understand much of what they said—their accents were so thick. But they sure liked a good roast made by the housewives in Caron.

How could I capture this wonderful chunk of Canadian history and pass it on, I kept asking myself. The research was fascinating. I had to find out all about the BCATP. I had to pump Clair for more memories of Caron in the early forties. I visited the Moose Jaw archives. I toured the site and found the 10 graves of would-be pilots in a neat row beside Clair's grandfather's grave. Then I had to let my imagination loose.

A storyteller is like an archeologist in some ways. We gather all the pieces—the characters, the setting and the events—and stare at them, dust them off carefully and reassemble them. It all has to fit. The break came when I started imagining my protagonist as a 15- or 16-year-old youth named Jack, instead of a kid of seven. Would Jack make friends with the student pilots? Would he learn to fly? Would he have relatives overseas in the war? What if his parents were overprotective? What if he loved dogs and his mother didn't? Is there some family secret? Does he have dreams and ambitions?

Then I started to write. It took a long time, but it was worth it. I'm really pleased that *Flight of the Tiger Moth* fits so well with the Grades 7, 8 or 9 curricula in many provinces. It deals with the Second World War and Canada's part in it and covers elements of flight. As well, it is a coming-of-age story. Coteau produced an invaluable study guide written by David Glaze, a teacher-librarian and writer, and it's available free at their website (www.coteaubooks.com).

I've just sent another novel to Coteau for their consideration. I'm still following my dream life of being a storyteller and story writer.

I firmly believe that if we are to be truly human and civil creatures, we all need story. I want to tell you how it all started for me and then talk in more detail about why story is so important.

My First Winning Story

When I was in Grade 6, I remember struggling with a short story. I was sitting at the big oak desk in the dining room, and my mother was playing Scottish ballads on the piano. I stared at the page and sharpened my pencil. I rubbed out the title and stared out the window at the two horse chestnut trees in the yard. I usually liked writing stories but I was stuck.

Mom heard me sharpening the pencil the second time and came to my rescue. We went into the living room and brainstormed ideas. I don't know how much of the story my mother wrote and how much I wrote. I made a good copy—my handwriting was terrible, I am left-handed—and took it to school. Mr Mackintosh read it to the class. He gave it to the school principal, Mr Aberhardt, and he read it over the loudspeaker. It was about Hitler and Eva Braun escaping to Canada and being caught while getting off a train. It was a bit spooky; I was famous for spooky stories at the time. I think I caught a bit of the bug back then. When I went to art class at the London Public Library and Art Gallery as St George's choice, I realized after they hung my painting upside down that I better stick to words. I painted better pictures with them than with a brush.

I love story. I am a voracious reader of both adult and children's literature. I started writing poems when my sons were napping and my husband was studying for his doctorate. I wrote articles, short stories and poetry for years while I taught school, raised kids, and started preschools and Headstart programs, a women's group and cooperative daycares. I took evening courses and summer school in creative writing.

I write to tell myself stories and to help myself and others understand life and the way the world works. I have discovered that if a story is told well, the listeners do not really hear the story. It triggers their life memories and allows them to celebrate and share their own life journey. We need storytellers to release the buried treasures in our lives, because stories heal us.

At one point during our 50 years together, Clair was teaching and being chaplain at St Andrew's College in Aurora, Ontario. We had six children: two adopted teenagers, who ran away the next year, and our four boys. I don't need to tell you what my life was like. It was 1970. Liberation was everywhere. I knew I had a long way to go. My youngest boy was two; my oldest was ten. People had stopped having so many kids, but I never got the message. When I mothered, I was on a mission. I may be a little obsessive.

One day I saw a whole story or poem in my head. I told Clair that I had to have two days off or I was going to go nuts. I don't remember what I did with Peter and Ian. David, Robert, Jeannette and Robin were in school. I went into Clair's study and sat down at the typewriter. I wrote for two days nonstop. I revised the prose poem and sent it to Robert Weaver's "Anthology," a Sunday night CBC show in Toronto that played new Canadian literature. They bought it. I was thrilled. My family and friends gathered to listen. I think we recorded it on tape. I was overwhelmed and scared. How could I be an artist, a mother and a minister's wife? Something had to go.

I ventured into Toronto to a writers' meeting at the old Women's Press Club. Margaret Laurence was the speaker. She was such a gentle, soft-spoken person. I was overwhelmed again. The other people ignored me. No one welcomed me. I left and never went back. I turned my back on my writing and just talked to my journal. I went off to Chicago with Clair and the boys to work in the ghetto. I became an out-and-out activist.

It took me 10 years to get the courage to start writing for publication again.

When we moved to Edmonton in 1979, I finally built in some time for writing. I was a public affairs writer for the Government of Alberta by day and an author by night.

I wanted to tell stories and write poems that came from the heart, from my understanding of the world, and from my love of people and places. I had no idea what persistence, passion and practice it was going to take. I must have had more of an ego than I thought.

To learn to write, I read lots of how-to books and manuals, and quite a bit of philosophy on writing. I wanted to know the why as well as the how.

Teacher-librarians are probably as hooked on stories as I am—either factual or fictional. Scott Russell Sanders (1997) wrote an article that I found worth keeping and expanding on. He listed 10 reasons why we'll always need a good story.

1. Story is a playground for language, an arena for exercising this unique and extraordinary power. I thank God for the gift of language every day before I sit at my desk.
2. Stories create community. They link tellers to listeners, and listeners to one another. Perhaps that is why book clubs are so popular.
 - The strongest bonds are formed by sacred stories that unite entire peoples. The Jews rehearse the events of Passover; Christians love their bible stories. There is a danger in story, as in any great force.

- Some stories can be cruel, deceitful or silly. We need more true stories to renew our vision. That's one reason I try to write them.
3. Stories help us see through the eyes of other people. Through the gift of story we reach across the rifts not only of gender and age but also of race and creed, geography and class, even the rifts between species or between enemies.
 4. Story has the power to show us the consequences of our actions. One Apache elder said, "Stories go to work on you like arrows. They show you how to act and who you might become and why."
 5. Stories educate our desires. Instead of playing on our selfishness and fear, stories give us images for what is truly worth seeking and doing. Stories at their best lead us away from greed toward generosity, away from suspicion toward sympathy, away from obsession with material goods toward a concern for spiritual good.
 6. Stories help us dwell in place. They help us recognize that we belong to the earth—blood, brain and bone—and that we are kin to other creatures. I have been committed as a storywriter to placing my stories in Canada for the most part, because when I was growing up most stories were American or British.
 7. Stories help us dwell in time, not necessarily historical time but personal time, a flow of our memories, dreams and anticipation of what is to come. Our narratives rely on cause and effect. Stories teach us that every gesture, act and choice we make sends ripples of influence into our future.
 8. Stories help us deal with suffering, loss and death. From the scriptures to the comics, stories comfort the fearful and the grieving. They show the weak overcoming the strong, love winning over hatred and laughter defying misery. Those who have walked through the valley of the shadow of death tell stories as a way of fending off despair. Those of us who have not lived through horrors must still face losing all we love, including our own lives. Stories reek of our obsession with mortality.
 - Several years ago I lost my closest aunt, then had one son go through a divorce and lose his children (our grandchildren) to the States. Shortly after that we lost a young daughter-in-law to cancer. Those three events gave me a crash course in sorrow, pain and humility. I could not write a grocery list during that grieving time. I thought the creativity was gone forever. It wasn't. I have written several novels since, as most of you know.

9. Finally, stories teach us how to be human. As Ursula Le Guin said, "Story is our nearest and dearest way of understanding our lives and finding our way onward." Stories hold a living reservoir of human possibilities. We need a trail of stories to show us the way home.
10. The wisest stories and tales acknowledge the wonder and mystery of creation. A number of physicists have suggested that the more we learn about the universe, the more it seems like an immense sustained, infinitely subtle flow of consciousness—the more it seems in fact like a grand story, lavishly imagined and set moving. In a sense we human beings read only by the dim light of a tricky brain on a young planet near a middling star.

I strive to reach for the big picture in all of my novels. Our narratives must remain open to new vision, and when they touch on awe and wonder, they give us hope of finding meaning in the great mystery of life itself.

So now I see my life as integrated. I write pretty good books for children between the ages of eight and fourteen. I try to love my characters into being on the page. I want to give my readers hope in the future and faith in themselves. I try to give kids a sense of belonging in the universe and in a community, and I show them characters that make them realize that they have company on the journey of life.

Over the years I have been on the road for the Young Alberta Book Society and the Canadian Children's Book Centre, and have been invited to local libraries. Here are two stories that have kept me going as a writer during my career as a children's author and presenter.

Early on I went to a small mining town in western Alberta. After a day of presentations in the school, I went to the bookstore in the local mall to sign books. Several students showed up with parents to purchase copies. A few teachers sipped juice and nibbled cookies.

I noticed a tousled-headed boy in worn jeans, broken-down sneakers and a grubby winter jacket pacing up and down in front of the store. I waved him in.

"How much is your book?" he asked. "I've got \$4.50. I shovelled my neighbour's walk and took beer bottles back." He grinned.

I turned to the clerk who was adding to the pile of books for me to autograph. I took a copy from her and signed it for him personally. "The lady at the till will take your money. Thanks for buying my book."

The clerk looked puzzled. "But the book costs \$5.95."
 "Don't worry," I said. "I'll make up the difference.
 He worked for that book. He deserves it."

Soon the happy boy left the shop with his personal copy in a plastic bag stuffed in his snow jacket pocket. One of the teachers from the back of the store came up to me. She handed me a glass of juice and a cookie. "I don't think you realize what you've just done. I doubt if there is one book in that boy's home. The family is not readers and they haven't much money. I can't tell you how pleased I am that he bought the book. I'll pay the difference. It's worth more to me than anything to see him excited about reading." That story has fed me for years as I travel from school to school.

More recently I visited a school in a town not far from Edmonton with *Brad's Universe*, one of my novels for young adults. It's about a boy who lives in a dysfunctional family where the father in particular seems troubled and doesn't relate well to his son. A few weeks after my visit I received an e-mail from a Grade 6 teacher. She attached a book report from a boy in her class.

Evidently this boy lived in a home where alcohol was a real problem. After I had visited the library and read part of a chapter he asked the librarian if he could borrow the book "right away." Then he asked if he could write a book report. His comment was, "I really like him, the way he loves the stars and learns to have friends and is good at science. If Brad with his problems can figure out how to live his own life, so can anyone."

I'm convinced that stories heal us and keep us going. I send you out to your own stories and your own journey. Please pass that love of story on to your students, and any children in your family. Those stories will do more to inform, entertain, encourage and enlighten them than you will ever know.

Reference

Sanders, S R. 1997. "Top Ten Reasons Why We'll Always Need a Good Story." *The Georgia Review* (Spring). Reprinted in *Utne Reader* (September/October). www.utne.com/1997-09-01/TheMostHumanArt.aspx (accessed September 29, 2008).

The following poems were used during and following Mary's talk. They are from her poetry collection, *Fruitbodies*, published by The Books Collective, Edmonton, in 1994.

Before and After

Come home to Creativity, mother

We women act like immigrants
 To Creativity

We drag our used up bodies
 Onto the beach of Intuition
 And open our mouths

No sounds emerge

We lift handfuls
 Of sand and shells
 In the purple dusk

No movement shows

We soak
 In form and colour
 Curve and light

No canvas records
 It takes so long to trust
 Our art

What stops us
 No one shouts NO

One faint voice
 Echoes from history

After

After the race is secure
 After the man is proud
 After the child is grown
 After the neighbour is healed

If by then, one woman drowns

In trivial detail

Or callous waves

On the sea called Responsible
 Her sisters must sing write dance

Or paint for her

Better still

Her daughters

Must leave

The shores of Creativity

Swim back and whisper

In their mother's ear

Before

Before you die

Before the earth flattens

Before the sky thins

Before the Goddess weeps

Come home to Creativity, mother

One Size Miffs All

These panty hose used to be called nylons, pair of.
Now it's panty hose, one of. But
still we call them pair of. Should
be two. After all we don't buy a pair
of brassieres, even if we do own two cups,
38 "C" to place, put, prop or propel into
one brassiere. But that's not the point.

The point is these panty hose I will hide
in the bottom of my drawer
until a safe time comes to
donate them to the goodwill,
marking them "One size fits all."
My foot! I tried them on —

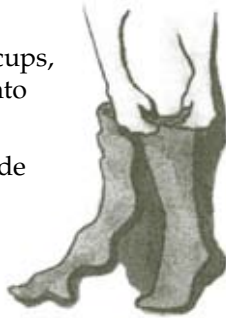
O what a ritual, hunkered naked in my chair
I unfolded them, felt the smooth, the silky texture —
Then because I'm an old hand at this
I stretched them out across my chest,
arms extended, bent to coax the
left toe into the rolled up left leg
of wild mushroom coloured fake fabric enclosures
called panty hose / bas-culotte, with reinforced
toe / pointes renforcées. Cheap? They were cheap

I told myself as I strained to pull
them to my knobby knee. They weren't
your better brand. No Whispers, Secrets
Cameos, Leggs, Silhouettes or Phantoms.

These were your no-name, store-brand,
basement-bargain panty hose for 99 cents,
on special, one-size-fits-all.

All pygmies or girl children of twelve.
By now I'd raised the right leg to the knee.
By dint of yoga exercise I managed
to bring my right toe up to buttock level
and insert said toe into the right leg
of these one-size-fits-all.

I paused to mop my brow. My
underarms dripping despite
unscented roll-on antiperspirant. Them's
the breaks, kid. Back to the task
at hand. The secret (and there's no
hidden advertising messages here).



the secret is standing and
coaxing—first the left and then
the right—inch by inch—millimetre
by millimetre—over the knees—up
the thighs to the crotch—excuse me
ladies—if any remain at this point.

The next question is the crotch.
Will it come up to meet mine
or will these panty hose / bas-culotte
fall short of possible. Now my hands
aching with the straining and pulling
bringing on early arthritis for the sake
of decent covering at the office,
or after hours sipping drinks at
Boccalino's. Will they make it up
the wide expanse of thigh to hip
all the way to waist? Or had
I truly wasted all this effort?

At least society is open and improved
these days. We don't bind feet,
lace corsets, girdle or gusset
our women. Beauty is not restraint.
Hobbling isn't wholesome.

Meanwhile back in the pale peach
room I stand before my bedroom
chair—humiliated. The one-size-fits-all
made it to my hips, halfway
to middle. What a muddle. I am
too tall, too broad, too long in the leg
or fat in the beam. I will
never make it as a one-size-fits-all
kind of woman. I disrobe sadly,
sodden with sweat, shower and find
an expensive pair of panty hose—New
age bas-culotte for today's pluraform, pluralistic woman.

I look at the package warily—race
to my open closet and pull on a pair—or is
it one-of-a-kind, unique like me, a pair of
slacks. No sweat, no tears.
I'm fully clothed and ready
to face my peers.

None of them are
one-size-fits-all
kind of women
either.

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2008 ASLC Awards

Jacquie Vincent

Award of Merit

On April 19, 2008, Wired for Words, the Calgary Board of Education's online book club for avid young readers (www.wiredforwords.com) was the recipient of the Alberta School Library Council's (ASLC) Award of Merit, in recognition of its promotion of reading literacy. Included in this honour are Pat Farley, teacher-librarian at Coventry Hills School; Irene Masciuch, teacher-librarian at Cappy Smart School; Linda Shantz-Keresztes, teacher-librarian at Forest Lawn High School; Linda Steen, former teacher-librarian at Hawkwood School; and Jacquie Vincent, former teacher-librarian at Langevin School, as well as Rose Bene and Sharon Howarth, Communication Services.



Left to right: Linda Steen, Jacquie Vincent, Linda Shantz-Keresztes and, in the back, Irene Masciuch.

Laurence G Wiedrick Award

Judith Sykes, principal and teacher-librarian at Calgary's Belfast School, is the 2008 recipient of the Laurence B Wiedrick Award in recognition of her work nationally on behalf of school libraries.

Judith's career has taken her from a junior high language arts/drama teacher, an elementary teacher-librarian for 11 years, school library specialist for the

Calgary Board of Education (CBE) and assistant principal. Judith serves as an administrator corps instructor with the Alberta Teachers' Association. She cochairs the 21st-Century Information Literacy AISI project for Area II in the CBE.

In addition to a BEd in English/drama, she has an educational diploma in curriculum and instruction in school libraries, and an MEd in educational leadership. Judith consults and makes educational presentations locally, provincially and internationally on school libraries and leadership. She cochaired the CBE Future of School Libraries Task Force, producing the document *School Libraries Supporting Quality Learning* (1999).

She has extensively published locally, provincially and nationally including being editor of *IMPACT*, the professional journal of the Association of Teacher-Librarianship (ATLC). She was president of ATLC and cochair and principal writer of *Achieving Information Literacy Through Quality School Library Programs: The Vision and Standards for School Library Programs in Canada* (2003). She is currently working on revisions for these standards.

Judith is author of *Library Centres: Teacher Information Literacy, Skills and Processes K-6* (1997); *Action Research: Practical Tips for Transforming Your School Library* (2002); and *Brain-Friendly School Libraries* (2006). Her interests include literature, writing, theatre and the arts and being the proud mom of Michelle, a graduating film director. She enjoys collaborative planning and teaching with all her staff and students in the Belfast School library. ✂



Left to right: Judith Sykes, winner of the Laurence G Wiedrick Award, presented by Linda Shantz-Keresztes.

2008 AGM Minutes

Lynda Smith

The following are the minutes of the ASLC annual general meeting, held April 19, 2008, at Sir Winston Churchill High School, in Calgary, Alberta.

Executive present: Fern Reirson, Lyle Krause, Betty Lou Ayers, Jacquie Vincent, Diane GallowaySolowan, Irene Masciuch, Lynda Smith

Council members present: Judith Sykes, Linda Steen, Linda Shantz-Keresztes, Gloria Guanghong Qi, Wendy Campbell, Shirley McGowan, Deana Adams, Cindy Smyth

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:20 PM

Motion: It was moved by Irene Masciuch and seconded by Diane GallowaySolowan to accept the agenda as submitted. Carried.

2. Fern Reirson welcomed those attending and announced the exciting news regarding the Alberta Education position for a resource manager with responsibilities for school libraries.

3. Current provincial executive members were introduced.

4. The minutes of the April 27, 2007, AGM were reviewed. Motion: It was moved by Linda Shantz-Keresztes and seconded by Irene Masciuch to approve the minutes as presented. Carried.

5. Reports:

5.1 President's Report: Fern Reirson; as written. In addition: Fern reported on her attendance at the CMEC Pan Canadian Literacy Forum on April 16. She made some valuable connections. Fern will be asking Alberta Education about their vision for literacy. We need to look at the CMEC Learn Canada 2020 statement on CMEC website: (www.cmec.ca/publications/declaration-horizon2020.en.pdf).

5.2 Past President: Irene Masciuch; as written. In addition: Irene highlighted her work with the Alberta Coalition for School Libraries. Progress with the coalition has been fairly slow; ASLC will continue to maintain connections with the coalition; however, we will not make a major commitment of effort at this time. More grassroots support is needed.

Members who are in contact with parents or members of the public, who are concerned about school libraries, please contact Irene.

5.3 Treasurer: Irene Masciuch on behalf of Donna Grove. Executive recommends approval of the proposed budget. Irene clarified that the amount under president's PD relates more to expenses of sending the president to meetings on our behalf, rather than PD she attends. Irene also mentioned our membership in the Library Association of Alberta and directed members to investigate the great PD opportunities available under the partnership (www.thepartnership.ca/partnership/bins/index.asp). We can provide all ASLC members with a password for access. Members should contact executive members for the password. Joanne to put link up on ASLC website with instructions to contact either Donna Grove or Fern Reirson for membership number. Donna to send executive the password. Motion: Moved by Irene, seconded by Lyle, to approve the 2008/09 budget as submitted. Carried.

5.4 PEC: Greg Jeffery absent

5.5 ATA Staff: Lyle Krause
Lyle reported that the new education minister, Dave Hancock, has accepted an invitation to attend the Annual Representative Assembly. He is offering an opportunity for a meet and greet on the Friday evening. Two of our ASLC executive will attend. Appreciation was extended to a number of members of this council for their presentations at teachers' conventions. Council members were encouraged to put their names forward to ATA staff officer Catherine Moir if they wish to be part of the speaker bank. Fern Reirson also encouraged council members to present, possibly at Beginning Teachers' Conferences. She also asked whether any members would be willing to allow their names to stand to serve on Alberta Education committees.

5.6 Publications: Diane GallowaySolowan: as written. In addition, Diane asked members to send links to exemplary school library websites so they can be added to the ASLC website.

5.7 Alberta Education: Terry Kernaghan absent

5.8 University Liaison: Jennifer Branch absent
Fern Reirson reminded members about the TLDL teacher-librarianship courses at the University of Alberta.

5.9 LAA: Wendy Gronnestad-Damur absent
Fern shared that ASLC will be approaching the Alberta Library Conference to join with them again in 2010.

5.10 Website: Joanne de Groot absent

5.11 Conferences

Kaleidoscope 9: Cathy Yusep absent. Members were reminded to buy banquet tickets, register for early-bird registration. Fern Reirson thanked the Kaleidoscope committee for their hard work. ETC/ASLC miniconference (today). Great job! Fifty-five in attendance. Thanks to the committee for their hard work and to those who helped publicize the event.

Spring 2009 super conference: Alberta School Library Council/Educational Technology Council and Distributed Learning Joint Conference.

5.12 Regionals

Southeast absent

Calgary: Jacquie Vincent. As written.

Edmonton: Betty Lou Ayers on behalf of Jill Usher. Betty Lou shared that Greater Edmonton has had success holding some PD during the school day. Peace River absent

6. Election of officers

Slate of officers:

President-elect: Betty-Lou Ayers

Conference cochair: Donna Grove

Publications editor: Diane GallowaySolowan

Treasurer: Donna Grove

Secretary: Lynda Smith

Webmaster: Joanne de Groot

Correction to slate of officers: Remove Joanne de Groot. Replace Diane GallowaySolowan as webmaster/publications editor.

No nominations from the floor.

Motion: Moved by Irene Masciuch, seconded by Shirley McGowan, to accept the slate as amended. Carried unanimously.

7. Awards

Laurence G Wiedrick Award of Merit: presented by Linda Shantz-Keresztes to Judith Sykes for her outstanding contributions to school libraries.

Award of Merit presented by Irene Masciuch to five key people responsible for Wired for Words:

Jacquie Vincent, Linda Steen, Linda Shantz-Keresztes, Rose Bene, Sharon Howarth. Joanne to post award winners to ASLC website.

8. Reconfiguration of regionals: Fern presented the executive's recommendation regarding the move to north/south regional representation.

Discussion ensued regarding a concern over the size of the new regionals. Use of videoconferencing, webinars and so on will be necessary to serve members' needs.

Motion: Moved by Irene, seconded by Diane that the executive recommend at the AGM a north/south regional configuration that consists of copresidents, a secretary, a treasurer and a member at large with representation from existing regionals, where possible. Carried by all members attending the AGM.

9. New business: Fern mentioned the support for school libraries by Maureen Wilcox of Northern Gateway. Fern will send a letter of thanks to Northern Gateway.

Fern also shared the visual model that she has been working on with Lois, Jenn and Diane regarding 21st-century learning. Council members were invited to view the document and be part of an electronic dialogue using Google Documents (<http://docs.google.com> password: aslc21st).

Finally, Fern shared the National School Library Month project that she has worked on with Cathy King of the Videoconferencing Regional Lead Network of Alberta Education. It involves using videoconferencing to bring Alberta students together with the Kaleidoscope 9 authors. A handout was provided to members.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 PM. ✂



Lynda Smith, secretary, and Irene Masciuch, past president, at the AGM in Calgary.

News and Awards from the Regionals

Calgary, *Jacque Vincent*

Calgary Regional's annual banquet, held June 5, 2008, honoured the contributions made to school libraries by teacher-librarians, administrators and library assistants and library technicians.

The recipient of the 2008 Bev Anderson Certificate of Merit for Teacher-Librarians is Irene Masciuch, who was presented with the certificate by her nominator, Barb McPherson, principal at Cappy Smart School.

The recipient of the 2008 Bev Anderson Certificate of Merit for Administrators is Greg McKenzie, who was presented with the certificate by his nominator, Nikki Coles, teacher-librarian at Chinook Learning Services.

The recipient of the Tom Colbens Certificate of Merit for Library Assistants is Fran Davies, the library assistant at both Rosedale and Arbour Lake Schools.



Tom Colbens Certificate of Merit for Library Assistants Award presented to Fran Davies (centre), who was nominated by Antigone Kollias (right), principal and teacher-librarian designate at Rosedale School, and Lynda Smith (left), teacher-librarian at Arbour Lake School.

Fran was nominated by Antigone Kollias, principal and teacher-librarian designate at Rosedale, and Lynda Smith, teacher-librarian at Arbour Lake School.

The annual banquet is also the occasion to honour the contributions of two current teacher-librarians and two principals who are former teacher-librarians, all of whom are retiring at the end of this school year. They include Fran Geitzler, teacher-librarian at Cecil Swanson School; Christine Spring-Gifford, teacher-librarian at Dr E P Scarlett High School; Judy Madge, principal of Dr Gladys M Egbert School; and Susan Stampe, principal of Penbrooke Meadows School.

Congratulations to all the honourees!



Greg McKenzie (right) receives the 2008 Bev Anderson Certificate of Merit for Administrators Award from Nikki Coles (left), teacher-librarian at Chinook Learning Services.

Greater Edmonton, *Jill Usher*

President's Report to the AGM, May 27, 2008

Our first meeting for the year was held September 10, 2007. Based on survey results, it was determined that we would provide three afternoon professional development opportunities for our membership over the 2007/08 school year. These sessions included Web 2.0 Tools, Videoconferencing, and School Library Websites and Web Links for Libraries.

Dennis Granlund, former teacher-librarian, now library manager and school library advisor for Catholic Schools in Canberra, Australia, visited Edmonton on October 15–16, 2007. On October 15, interested teacher-librarians joined Dennis at a dinner hosted by Drs Jennifer Branch and Dianne Oberg at the University of Alberta and were treated to a presentation entitled "ICTs, Digital Libraries and Information Literacy Programs—Observations from Australia, IASL and Canada."



Dianne Harke (left) receives Award of Merit from Todd Mekolay, teacher-librarian at Victoria Composite High School, Edmonton

Elk Island Public Schools teacher Donna Griffin presented our first PD session on Web 2.0 tools on November 5, 2007, at J Percy Page High School in Edmonton. Dr Sue Gibson and her team of teachers copresented on videoconferencing on February 11, 2008, at the University of Alberta. Pat Kimura, F R Haythorne Junior High; Rob Poole, Harry Ainley High School; and Fern Reirson, Jackson Heights presented our third and final PD session, "School Library Websites and Web Links for Libraries," on April 30, 2008, at J Percy Page High School in Edmonton. All three sessions were well received and attracted many new people.

After much discussion at the regional level, Greater Edmonton Regional submitted responses to an ASLC survey asking for input on the future of regional organization. Next year promises to be an exciting time as we adapt to meet new challenges in structure and delivery of services.

Encouraging new developments from Alberta Education with the appointment of Judith Sykes to a two-year secondment to update provincial school library standards and facilitate the writing of *Focus on Inquiry 2* should attract more attention to and interest in the area of school libraries and teacher-librarianship.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the entire executive for all their help and support this year. Your enthusiasm and willingness to share the load and tackle issues big and small certainly made my job easier. Thanks to Jan Jorgenson for hosting two PD sessions at her lovely school, to Lois Barranoik for arranging for the facility and meal for the AGM, and to Todd Bekolay for inviting our special guest to the AGM. ✂



Lois Barranoik (left) presents Award of Merit to Maureen Pelensky.

Guidelines for Contributors

Literacies, Learning & Libraries is published to

- enhance the competencies of school library professionals;
- increase knowledge, understanding and awareness of the role of school library programs in education; and
- stimulate thinking, explore new ideas, offer various viewpoints and share information about learning resources and school library programs.

Articles from all educators are welcome. Teacher-librarians are especially invited to write about aspects of teacher-librarianship and school library programs that interest them and to share ideas with colleagues. Submissions are requested that will stimulate personal reflection, theoretical consideration and practical application. Articles that present differing perspectives; innovative, cooperatively planned and taught programs; trends and issues in teacher-librarianship; research findings; or reviews or evaluations of learning resources in all media are appreciated. From time to time, the editor may identify specific themes or topics for special issues and invite submissions on these topics.

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