IN COMMAND!

Kids and Teens Build and Manage Their Own Information Spaces

And…Learn to Manage Themselves in Those Spaces

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(Titles in Garmond type are for adults; Titles in Arial are for students)

Introduction to the First Edition, 2007

For some years now, information professionals have been worried about the habits of young people who Google first as their preferred information source. The Internet, like a juggernaut, has clogged digital space with email, spam, and constant advertising, overwhelming even the best of us.

Enough is enough. It is time to get digital space under control. It is time to learn to manage what comes at us. That means us as adults. But what about children and teens? The answer from adults has been filters. Schools all over the nation regularly install barriers between those online and users with the hope that danger would be avoided. It is a faulty system. And it presumes that children and young adults are irresponsible.

After having pondered the world of information for young people for some years, a chance conversation between the two authors made us both realize that a quite different solutions was now workable. Instead of adults seeking total control of information spaces, what about teaching children and teens to rise to the challenge? After all, they have been involved in the Internet for their entire lives. Adults seem to presume that because kids and teens are connected, they are experts. Hardly.

So, the authors propose in this book that children and teens learn how to create and manage their own information spaces. And they learn to manage themselves. We are quite certain that adults who harness the ideas and abilities young people have rather than ignore these strengths, the result will be quite powerful and a major step for everyone.

We are well aware that many of the ideas here will be controversial and thought impossible. We say it is time to face the realities of Web 2.0. It is not going away.

We have also found that the idea is bubbling to the top of many adults simultaneously. We are concerned that the recommendations we give will be outdated instantly, so check for frequent updates.

Note to the reader

The authors have written pages directed at both adults and young people.

Pages for adults are in the Garamond font.

Pages directed at youth are in the Arial font. These pages are merely suggestive of messages and handouts that adults might create for children and teens.

Introduction to the Refresh Edition, 2008

True to our word just a year ago, the central ideas of this book have remained the same but a number of details have predictably changed. Such is the world of the Internet.

In discussing the ideas of *In Command* with teacher librarians across the country, we have faced a wall of resistance, not from teacher librarians, but from those who feel that tech directors stand in opposition to the opening of computing experiences to the World of Web 2.0. Yet, we have also noticed cracks in this wall in places where tech directors are changing and beginning to understand their first responsibility to education. This has pleased us greatly because we have felt from that beginning that when tech directors actually become involved in learning activities rather than the isolation of networks, they begin to see new possibilities.

For this refresh edition, we have updated terminology to terms such as teacher librarian and teacher technologist.

Major changes were added to chapter three with the additional emphasis that virtual school libraries and teacher blogs become channels of collaborative coaching on the part of classroom teachers and the specialists of the school and the learners themselves. This major move to a client-side strategy is the way of turning learners away from their cut and paste Google mentality; a way to require technology to become enslaved to the learner rather than the other way around.

We have updated various lists and added favorite Web 2.0 tools. And, have recognized that there are many ways to accomplish the strategies taught herein. The idea that learners can come into command of their own information spaces; the idea that we can assist them in learning how to manage themselves in these spaces; and, the idea that classroom teachers and the specialists in the school can transform learning by becoming coaches rather than commanders becomes the foundational ideas worth trying with young people who have advanced social networking skills but need to turn these skills toward their learning skills.

We would appreciate feedback about the central ideas expressed herein.

Chapter 1
Children, Teens, and the Construction of Information Spaces[1]

The school district's poll was over. It asked what students' favorite source of information was for schoolwork and for personal use from that digital world known as the Internet. The votes were tallied. To no one's surprise, Google won hands down. Over the past several years, the best of teacher librarians have made inroads into the popularity of Google by constructing excellent digital school libraries, some using the format of web pages and others using a variety of tools such as blogs or wikis.

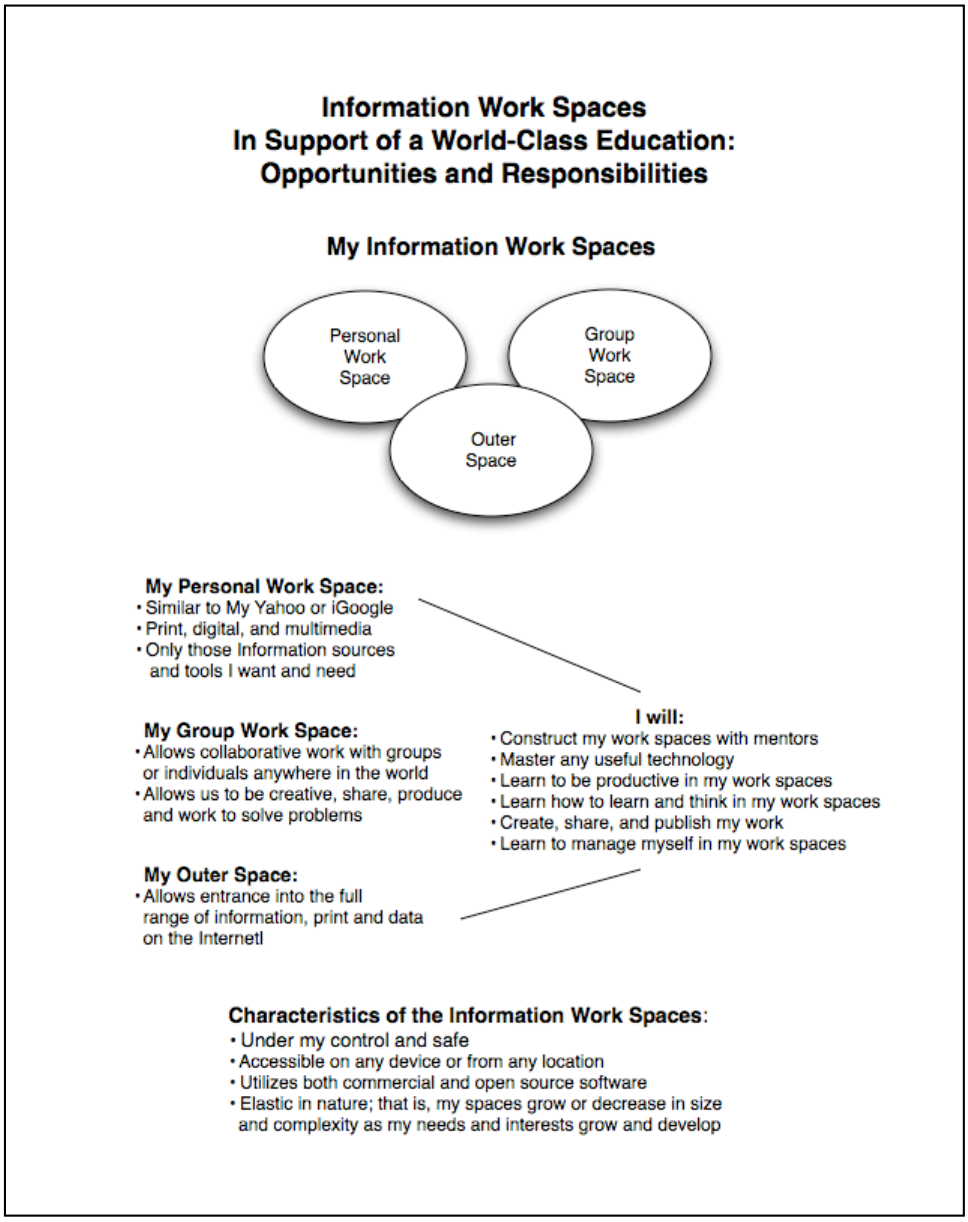
Teacher librarians have made a valiant attempt to attract young users on the basis that *quality* information online is a paramount issue. Yet, our students continue to trust Google even in the face of the overwhelming amount of documents retrieved for them by this ubiquitous search engine.

Let us take the student's point of view, which is probably very similar to our own. When we all sit down at the computer to do our work, we expect the organizations and services behind that screen will provide us with what we want and need instantaneously. Few care where the information comes from as long as it is what we need when we need it.

Suppose we turn the tables and accept the notion that the student should be in command of their own information spaces on the computing devices they have access to. And that our role as teacher librarians is to help students build the kind of information space that will benefit their needs rather than say to them, "You need to use the information space as we have designed it for you." Such a switch in perspective challenges us to have a whole new view of the digital world.

The following model assumes that each individual student, teacher, and even ourselves as information professionals would construct a "home page" or access interface to the world of information: a secure place, a safe place, a work space, a personal digital assistant that could be accessed 24/7/365 from any location in the world.

[1] This chapter appeared in the December issue of *Teacher Librarian*, 2007.



The model demonstrates the creation of three parts of "my" information space: personal workspace, group workspace, and outer space (the full world of the Internet). Each of these spaces has a function to allow users access, but designing such an engine requires that users learn to manage that space and that they learn to manage themselves responsibly in that space.

Why should students be encouraged to construct their own information space? The fact is, they already do, but probably not very well. It is reasonably safe to assume that most have a cluttered mess on their opening screen, and they seem to muck through with a few bookmarks and by searching for the source, folder, or document around the screen. Yes, operating systems encourage organization of the desktop, but it would be interesting to hold a discussion with kids and teens to see what the status of their home pages are. Perhaps we

should look at our own desktops, as information professionals, for a clue about how we organize our own information spaces. Perhaps the chorus of voices would unanimously state: "Well, it's quite messy, but I seem to manage." I would say this is not good enough.

Let's start with the basics as we consider the reasons, the whys, the wherefores, and the implementation of this turn-around idea.

Why should kids and teens build their own information spaces?

There are plenty of good reasons why kids and teens should have lots of control under adult guidance:

- The world of the Internet is getting larger, more complex, and overwhelmed with information. Kids, teens, and adults increasingly need skills to manage that space because it can overwhelm any of us at any time. Since it is not going away, we either manage it or are overwhelmed by it.
- It is the nature of digital space as it is currently constructed to vie for our attention, the major currency of this generation. Psychologically, all of us need to manage rather than be managed.
- To survive in a flat world, kids and teens need to realize the advantages of learning and knowing the major tools of productivity, both as individuals and collaboratively in groups. We usually think of productivity in terms of output of goods and services, but the same concept applies in digital space. Those who are well connected are proficient and productive. For example, a teacher's assignment, along with help from the teacher librarian, comes instantly to our desktop, is available 24/7, and connects us to the tools we need in order to accomplish that assignment. In fact, assignments actually turn into conversations between the adults and the learners.Those not in the loop suffer.
- In constructivist theory, if kids and teens build their own space rather than have others build it for them, they will acquire management skills, both of the space itself, and more importantly, management of themselves within that space. We teach kids how to manage themselves as they cross the street even though streets are a very dangerous place. The same care needs to be taken in the digital world. Adults need to assist kids in developing management skills because the adults cannot be there every moment.
- In the world of differentiation, varying abilities, differing learning styles, and individual skill levels (novice to expert), kids can construct basic spaces to manage their work and then construct more complex systems as they develop the management skills to handle those spaces and themselves. For example, from the digital school library students can pull onto their own pages a subset of tools and information sources rather than have everything—much of it irrelevant to them at any given time.

What are the essential elements of a personally-constructed information space?

The model illustrates three elements of information spaces: the personal space, the group or collaborative space, and outer space (the whole world of the Internet). Each requires some elaboration.

Personal Information Space: Here we construct the tools, the information sources, our school or work assignments, our calendars to keep us on track, and the personal safeguards needed to function well. Some parts of this space are pull technology—information or tools I purposefully "pull" onto my page from elsewhere and can use when I need them. Other features are "push" technology—information and tools that automatically appear on a desktop for attention. Assignments pushed to me from my teachers and teacher librarians are a good example of something I want to be informed about as soon as they are available. My personal space is my productivity space where I do much of my work, have the information conveniently at hand, and have constructed safeguards so I am not bothered by outside influences I don't care to encounter.

Group or Collaborative Information Space: The advent of Web 2.0 technologies allows for collaborative communication, collaborative construction, and collaborative presentation spaces. As a student, I may be in a number of groups from different classes—some of these are classes at my school, outside the school, outside the school district, or anywhere in the world. Examples of collaborative spaces develop, it seems, almost every day. The most well known ones are YouTube, MySpace, and Wikipedia. Both are admired and feared at the same time. We think of Skype to talk with small groups around the world for free. There are Nings that are closed communities where everyone has their own personal blog that can be read and commented on by all those in the Ning. Nings also have a discussion forum to work on planning or discussing issues. We think of wikis as places to do collaborative information gathering, writing, updating projects, joint planning, and a host of other group work. We think of Google Docs and Spreadsheets as perfect places for group writing and planning. The nice thing is that many of these tools are free. Others such as Elluminate or Blackboard require a considerable investment. In such group spaces, we go in and out of the groups we belong to as projects are completed or our personal interests and skills evolve.

Outer Space: The third world on our desktop is the ability to interact with and pull from the totality of the Internet, whether open or invisible. This is where the most crucial management skills are needed to protect ourselves, our privacy, and our work while taking advantage of the global information system. Can we, for example, subscribe to a major newsfeed without opening ourselves to a barrage of advertising? Can I connect to groups, information sources, libraries, organizations, activist groups, and global movements, as well as begin to build my own entrepreneurial forays into the global marketplace? Outer space is full of opportunity as well as dangers. How do I manage both?

What do you mean by students managing their information space and managing themselves in that space?

Computer operating systems have become much better at assisting users to manage their systems and the information on them. But in the Web 2.0 world, many new tools have emerged to handle large sets of information. For example, del.icio.us helps us manage favorite websites and RSS feeds make us aware of changes in our favorite websites. iGoogle turns the computer welcome screen into one's own centralized organizational system of the three different information spaces. Imagine both an information system building workshop and a tune-up shop where young people constantly learn new techniques for updating their own skills and pushing out their own frontiers as they juggle the millions of entities trying to get their attention, take their money, or even abuse them or steal their identity. Since there is not a foolproof safety net and there will not likely ever be one, students need to learn safety rules for managing their own behavior in digital space. We already have some concerns in this area, but users need to discover some important guidelines:

- Decide whom to trust in digital space.
- Have a work ethic and know how to be productive.
- Work ethically in collaborative spaces, contributing rather than destroying.
- Learn to discern harmful elements and know how to control them so they don't control the user.
- Discern when I am caught in addictive online behavior and know how to break it.

At present, schools often try to control bad behavior or lock down systems that threaten kids and teens. Wouldn't it be better to equip students with self-defense strategies? A famous person once said: "Teach them correct principles and let them govern themselves." Such an optimistic goal may not work for some kids, but it will work for many, many others, and it will become a lifelong skill.

What about content on these self-designed systems?

In the marketplace today, textbook companies are trying to capture the market of both printed and digital textbooks. Other companies have content-rich topical information systems they sell for a fee. Libraries subscribe to online databases for student research. In a student-run system, we need to have elastic content systems that kids flow in and out of as their needs change. If I am exploring a topic, for example, I may want to enter a content system at an apprentice level, and I would then want to push my expertise toward the expert level. In other systems, I might need specialized knowledge for one project that requires me to use a database for only a half hour. Content providers try to maximize both usefulness and profits. If they saw more flexible user-controlled systems emerging, they would design their systems to be useful across different platforms.

Would we abandon the construction of the digital school library or the public library information system? No. We would continue to build these systems but instead think of them in terms of a grocery store where our students can come and select apples, oranges or cereal to drag to their own home pages to nourish their information use. We will soon find them pawing through our wares and picking what they want and need, but not picking the spoiled apple or the yucky broccoli. Yes, that broccoli software might be "good for them,"

but they have probably already found something that works better and faster for their individual needs.

One of the best uses of Web 2.0 tools is to have students construct their own content as they learn together, do projects, read, write, and solve problems. Best of all, their content and writing can be shared with the world through blogs, YouTube, wikis, and Flickr albums. There seems to be no end to the self-publishing opportunities using technologies that engage and motivate. Learning has never been so exciting.

Who would teach kids and teens to create and constantly improve their information spaces?

Certainly the teacher librarian, the district technology coordinator or teacher technologist, and the building-level technology personnel need to collaborate to plan and develop systems and the needed channels to get students started and to provide the needed support. Instead of locking out all Web 2.0 applications, technology leaders need to find ways to include them. Much can be outsourced safely. For example, in a Ning, each member of a collaborative community must be invited, and no one from the outside can see any content. Thus, students and teachers can blog, add comments, show videos, discuss issues, and other things without interference. Once the channel is opened up, the software and storage of information on the Ning is free, maintained off-site, and available from any connected computer throughout the world. The owner of the Ning receives all comments posted to the Ning and can review and monitor what everyone is doing if mischievous behavior begins to develop. More and more Web 2.0 tools such as PBWiki make closed communities a reality so that these spaces are safe.

At the beginning of the school year, a construction session can be sponsored by the technology staff, teacher librarian, and interested teachers. Certified students can assist individuals and their friends to build, monitor, extend, and manage their information spaces. It is a community opportunity to share, help, and encourage. It already happens in the social networking world of kids and teens. We just need to extend the influence in another direction.

So What?

For years we have built computer information systems on the idea that "if you build it, they will come." Well, they came, but instead of staying, they did a work around because of their social networking nees. Instead, we propose that: "If THEY build it, they will LEARN." Learn what? Children and teens will not only learn how to construct a learning space, but in doing so, will surround themselves with tools that help them learn. The fishing pole of the technology world, as opposed to giving them a fish, requires students to begin to take command of their information spaces and their own learning within that space. It is a gift of a lifetime.

Some might panic with this proposal against the centralized, one-fits-all system, assuming that outsourced systems won't work for kids. The fact is they already do work. We are already at odds with the current generation who sees school as irrelevant and boring.

Technology is one place to build a bridge that crosses the chasm between students' seeming boredom and the exciting world of learning.

Learning Spaces and the Learning Commons

Helping learners build their own information spaces is a part of a larger concept of a school learning commons. Libraries and computer labs have most often functioned as organizational spaces where materials and information are pushed toward learners and teachers. We propose that the old model be replaced by a client-side organization known as the learning commons. Clien-side means that every part of the old library or lab idea becomes a two-way streat; a collaborative spac and service; both a physical and virtual oint construction. An example discussed here has been the teacher assignment that is constructed on a blog. Instead of a one-way communication, the teacher librarian, the learners, other specialists in the school, and even parents can enter into a conversation about a learning activity.

More about the learning Commons concept can be read in the book:

Loertscher, David V., Carol Koechlin, and Sandi Zwaan. *The New Learning Commons: Where Learners Win!: Reinventing School Libraries and Computer Labs*. Hi Willow Research & Publishing, 2008. Available at: http://www.lmcsource.com.

Chapter 2
Scenario of a Kid Working in the Information Space

Excellent, school's out, but I need to do my homework. I head to the library, which is great because it has computers that will make doing my homework a snap. We're limited to an hour online so I'm not wasting any time fiddling with CDs or flash drives. I immediately jump on the web and onto my personalized homepage. Everything I need is there. Perfect.

First thing's first. I check my to-do list and add Mr. Henshaw's assignments in by hand. He hates computers. I don't get that at all. I check my calendar. All my other teachers feed in all the important dates and I see that the P.E. project proposal is due tomorrow. I click the link to check out the teacher's blog to review the instructions and save the new tips to my virtual notebook. It's a group assignment and Alex is grounded and Martha is in Sacramento visiting her mom so we agreed to meet in chat in fifteen minutes.

I check the proposal RSS feed and see Alex made changes so it's time for mine. It's starting to look pretty good, so I make a couple changes and highlight a part that seems kind of lame and make a suggestion. Martha is pretty good at making basic ideas sound much cooler than I do so I put a giant "M" next to one part that is borderline caveman and save.

I've got ten minutes before the meeting, so I get an early start on a biology assignment. We were supposed to find an article on genetics. Or was it DNA? I click on the Bio RSS feed, clear that up, and check my Biology RSS feed headlines. There is one article that is pretty cool and catches my eye, so I clip it into my virtual notebook and use the citation machine to copy the citation. I open the virtual notebook and take notes on the side, "demonstrating synthesis" of the ideas and send it to the printer.

Time for our meeting. We're all looking at the proposal and I see Martha go to town on my caveman idea and we're all typing like mad and work it out. We're done with the whole thing 20 minutes later and it looks really good. Even Martha is impressed and we elect Alex to make it look cool in Word and print it for class. He's a good guy, but we're all happy that every time we finish an assignment, it's right there on the web just in case. Not more dogs eating our homework. Haha.

25 minutes to go and Geometry is next. I'm pretty good at math but I have a couple of tools on my homepage that help me remember and review formulas, so that's cool.

Done with five minutes to spare, so I get a head start on picking a book for English class. We're supposed to read some historical fiction book that happened during the depression. I'd like to find one that isn't depressing. Haha. I belong to a group that our librarian started that's pretty cool. It has forums where you can post what you have to read and they'll recommend cool stuff so you don't have to play Russian roulette in the stacks. I tell them what I'm after and add that I really like mysteries so if they could work that in, that'd be cool.

Before I log out I check my Spanish Group's YouTube video project. 200 hits! Crazy! Loco! I can't believe that many people watched it. I've got some ideas if we ever do another one. It'd be so cool to top 1000 views! Ms. Rodriquez added a comment; we got an A. Excellent. Time's up.

—The Next Morning—

Alex forgot the assignment so I race to the school library in the morning to print out another copy. While it prints I jump on my homepage, which gives me a quick link to our math wiki. I love not having to remember all the website addresses anymore. I just click once from one page. When we have questions on a certain problem we can post it in there and we all work together to help each other out. Someone else had a question on number 17 and the explanation clears up any doubt for me immediately. I close out, grab the hardcopy of the proposal, and head to class. Most of our work we can submit electronically, but the hardcopies are going be bound and put in our library for reference, which is pretty cool.

There's this school-wide career day coming up and all the Sophomores are working on bookmarking relevant links. It's great because although we all thought we were going to be policemen, firemen and teachers when we were kids, it's just not that way anymore. It's kind of cool too because you discover people you have something in common with that you never would have otherwise. When I saw Grace and I were both looking at nanotechnology I nearly fell over. The next thing you know we're sending each other, well, and everyone else, bookmarks on the best college science programs. Individually we came up with quite a bit, but what 200 of us did was amazing. The librarian set up this whole career area that feeds the latest into our homepages so we all check out the headlines. I don't know anyone who didn't follow the tattoo artist link.

The rules for contribution are really clear and we don't want to mess it up. If one person starts goofing in the posts then it kind of messes it up for the people who really are interested in it and expect to find real information when they click. It's like a global responsibility code, a do unto others kind of thing. We want our work to matter and it won't unless we all try to do a good job. It's all logged too so if someone tries to abuse it, they get caught. It's not like real life where you can goof and deny it, there's a record of it all on our sites and it's just not worth it.

I remember in the olden days, in like fifth grade, when people were complaining that the computers were so tough. Times must have changed because I just can't imagine getting instant access to so much information and knowledge so quickly and turning it into something the whole world could potentially benefit from without them.

Questions for Professionals:

- Is this scenario typical of the young people you serve?
    - How could you find out how typical it is?
    - How often, in this new information world, should you try to find out the information habits, technologies used, and impact you are having on their learning?
- Even if young people are using the latest technologies, how effective are they using them?
- Are professionals making any and every effort to serve young people in the information worlds they are comfortable with?
- What changes in our information and technology services should change immediately? In the short term? In the long term?

CHAPTER 3
Setting Up the Basics

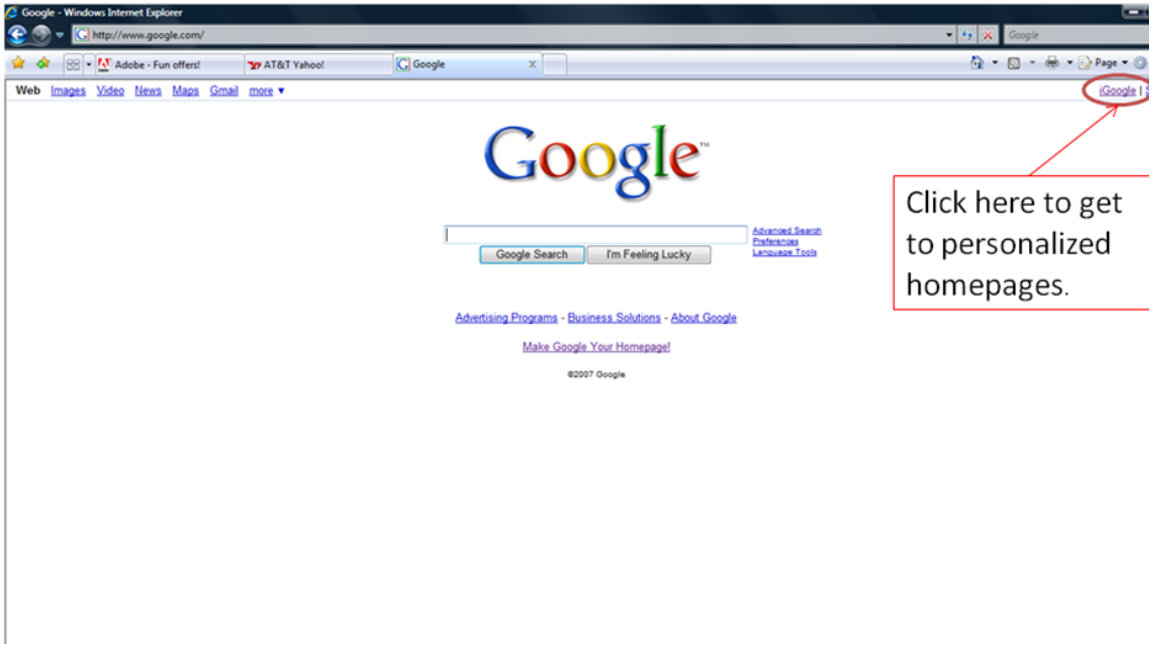
Step One: As a Professional, Create Your Own iGoogle Page

You might want to start with a sample student page, but it is difficult to understand the usefulness and potential of a personalized page if you haven't tried making one for personal use. The adage, "If you build it, they will come" no longer works with web page design. Users might visit your site but unless you give them a reason to return, it is unlikely they will. A personalized homepage allows a student or anyone to have your updated content delivered directly to them and makes it simple for them to follow a link back to your site when the headline is interesting or relevant to them. Remember that although Google also has an excellent website creator, that is not what we are creating in this section. We are creating an iGoogle personalized Homepage. We recommend that you create a personal site and then add two more tabs:

Personal Space: reflects the content you think a typical student would find relevant for day-to-day work
Group Space: houses collaborative tools and work with others on joint endeavors
Outer Space: has Internet tools and resources under user control

This is what the classic Google search page looks like. In the top right corner you can click the iGoogle link to take you to personalized pages.

Classic www.google.com

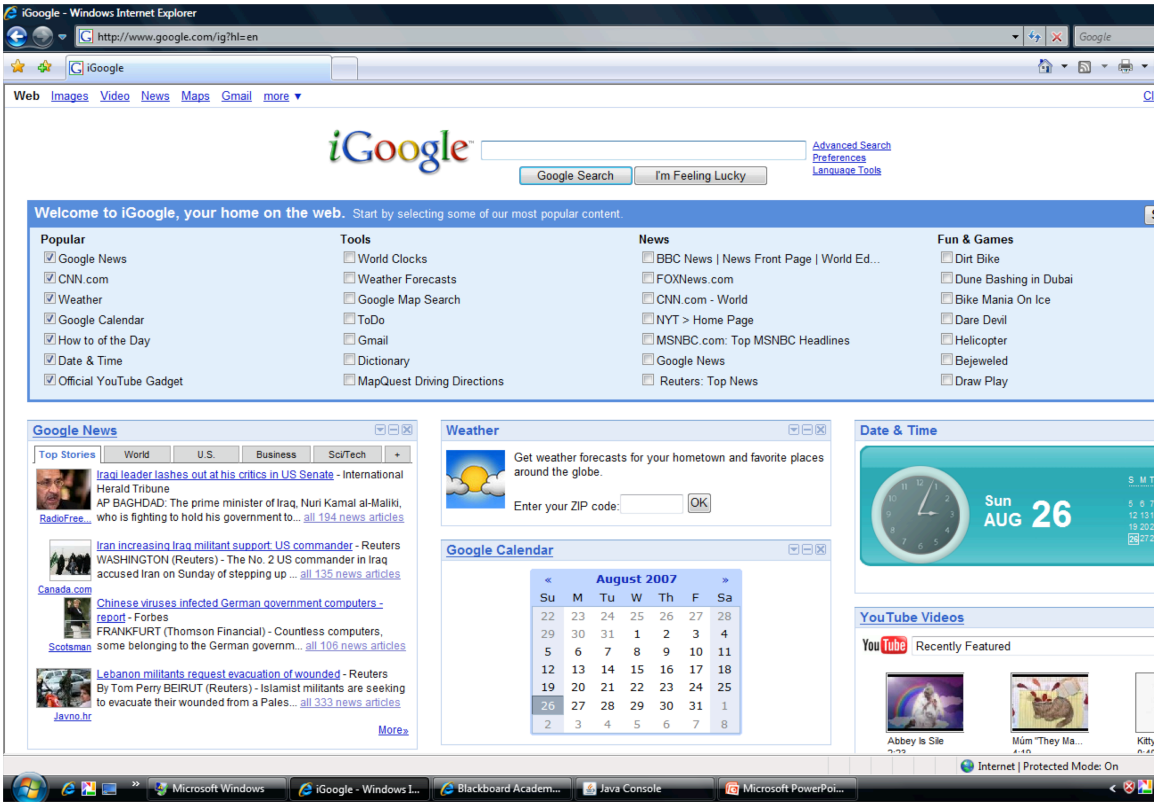


Signing In

When you click the iGoogle link and haven't yet made a page, it brings up a default, generic page:

Generic iGoogle page

We need to sign in to make it our own



If you have a Gmail account, you can sign into iGoogle with that account information.

If you do not yet have a Gmail account, you will need to create one in order to make your personalized homepage that will be accessible from anywhere.

After you have signed in, click on "Add stuff" at the top right of the screen.

Making it useful:

Start with your personal page

To truly appreciate the beauty and utility of personalized pages, first make one specifically built for yourself. You can name that page tab "Personal." You can change tab names at any time simply by right clicking on the tab and choosing "rename" and typing the name you want.

This screen displays different types of content that you can add to your page. You just click the "Add it now" button and it will add it to your iGoogle homepage. If you don't see it, refresh the browser and it should appear.

If you want more information about any of these tools you can click on their name, which is a link to more detailed information.

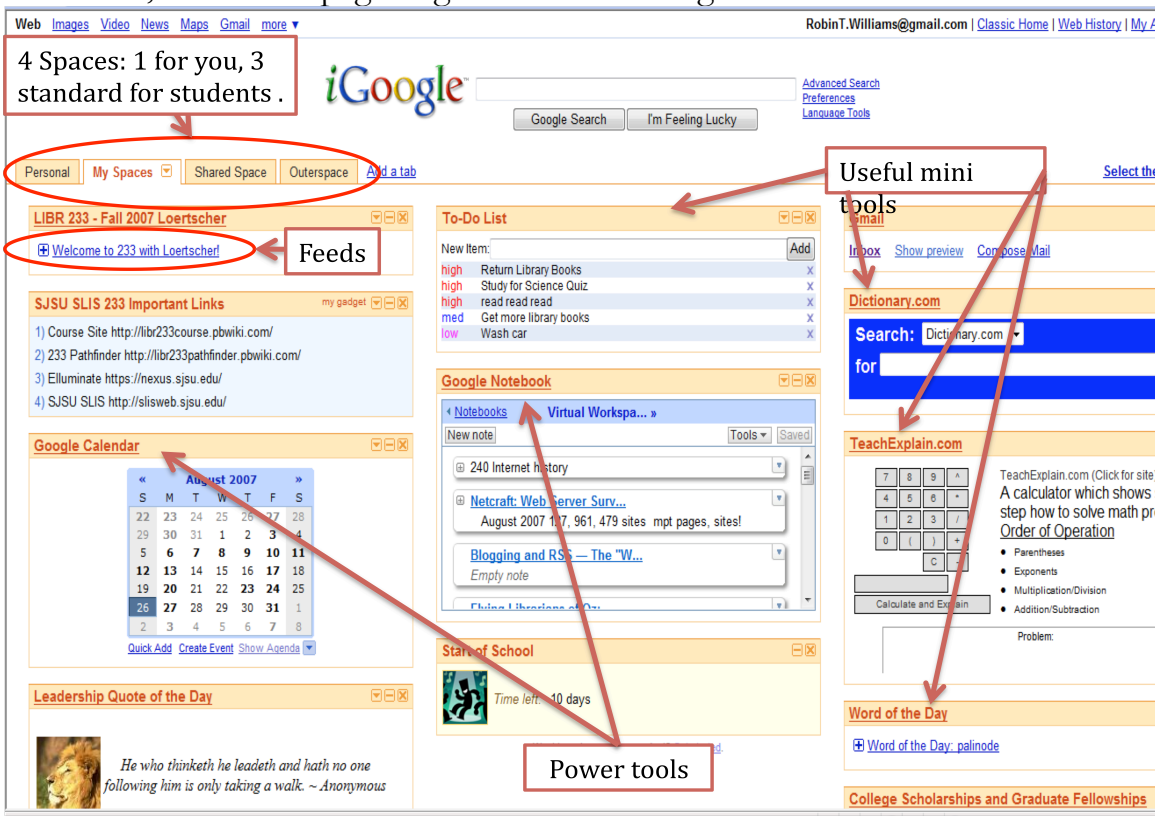
If you have an RSS feed address that you want to add, click on the "Add by URL link" and it will bring up a window in which you may type the feed address.

Do not worry about having too many tools, you can try them out and get rid of them in an instant, just like you would close an open window.

Create Your Spaces Tabs

On your iGoogle page, next to the tab you just made is a tab that says "Add tab." Click on it and create 3 more tabs:
Personal Space
Create a page that would be useful to a student at your school.
Group Space
This page is for group work.
Outer Space
Web based tools and resources.

Your new, über homepage might look something like this



You can change the location of any tools by dragging it by its top bar to the new location. Content or modules can also be minimized. Keep the most important items near the top.

In Review:
Create a Google account.
Create an iGoogle Personalized Homepage
Click "Add Stuff" to find things of interest to you to add to your page.
Click "Add Tab" to create "Personal Space" "Group Space" and "Outer Space" tabs.
Create the Personal Space page with everything that you think would be useful to a student in your school.

Summary Thoughts Thus far

If you as an adult have not used a personalized home page, then it would be wise to experience this concept before teaching it to others. The sense of ownership and being "in command" of your own information space s a foundational concept of a world plagued by an information glut. As teacher librarians, we have often considered ourselves experts in information and materials, dishing out our wares to users as needed and enjoying their respect as know it alls. That role now turns to information coach vs. information provider.

We have recommended setting up three tabs to control incoming and outgoing information. There could be others. For example, you might want a tab for church or civic club activities, another for extended family communication, still another for a professional organization, or, one connected to a favorite hobby. We become comfortable because everything we need for a particular function is in a single and convenient location.

As you become familiar with this concept, you will realize that there are many other systems out there that accomplish similar tasks. One is Facebook and another is Netvibes at: http://www.netvibes.com/#General. Within Google itself, check out Google Apps and Google Sites. Investigate the features of any rival system with the technology directors or teacher technologists who handle the various networks. They should experiment with this concept as individuals in order to appreciate the value to learners. The challenge is to provide a better solution if any of the current options are undesirable. To just say no to the proposal is unacceptable.

Step Two: Begin Thinking How You as a Professional Can Create a Virtual School Library

Setting up the Basics from the library/technology center
Students are already using the Internet and many of them have probably already used variations of many of the tools described in this book. We do not have to sell them on technology, but we do need to find quick and easy ways to give them access to content and tools that will improve their education. Setting up a website is an excellent first step for a

school library as a permanent location, but to really become relevant to students we need to integrate our services into their worlds. Personalized homepages increase student access to valuable tools and resources. If you look at television and one class, when the student leaves school, television is likely to win out. Now imagine that all of the best ideas, resources, and teaching tools are in the corner of the television screen, like picture in a picture viewing. Some students may continue to watch the TV program, but what if our segment catches their eye? We have this opportunity, to push quality information and resources, to make learning an anytime reality, with computers. The best part is that technology has reached a place where it is now not only possible, but very easy to do.

Create a Virtual School Library
A fancy name for a School Library Homepage, this is a permanent location where links to all of your tools, pathfinders and content for the entire school is located. You can link to all of your external tools, your content in "the cloud" from this home base. This site and its related tools work together to push information to students and provide them a safe, current and useful information center.

Create Public Calendars
Students and parents can easily feed in your calendar information to their own. It is true that some parents might not have computer access, but better to reach some than none.

Create an RSS Feed
A blog with Blogger takes minutes to set up and can provide and easy way to send out reminders, homework, and share pertinent information with your students and parents. They can subscribe to your RSS feed so that any changes you make automatically feed on to their home pages.

Share Brilliant and Relevant Widgets
And encourage your students to do the same.

Create Brilliant and Relevant Widgets
Google has created an easy way for anyone to "create content" without needing to know a thing about programming. You can create custom countdown counters and a variety of other tools. How long until the Science Fair?

Teach Students and Staff to Create and Maintain a Personalized Homepage
These pages don't require them to memorize any complicated website addresses or visit boring static link sheets. Most students start any computer search with www.google.com anyway so the iGoogle homepage is a fantastic way to insert our content into something they already use. It's fast and painless and, if done right, actually fun. You have to try a page for about a week to really get to know how it works and see its potential.

Now, Turn Your Virtual Library into a Two-Way Street of Collaborative Information Sharing

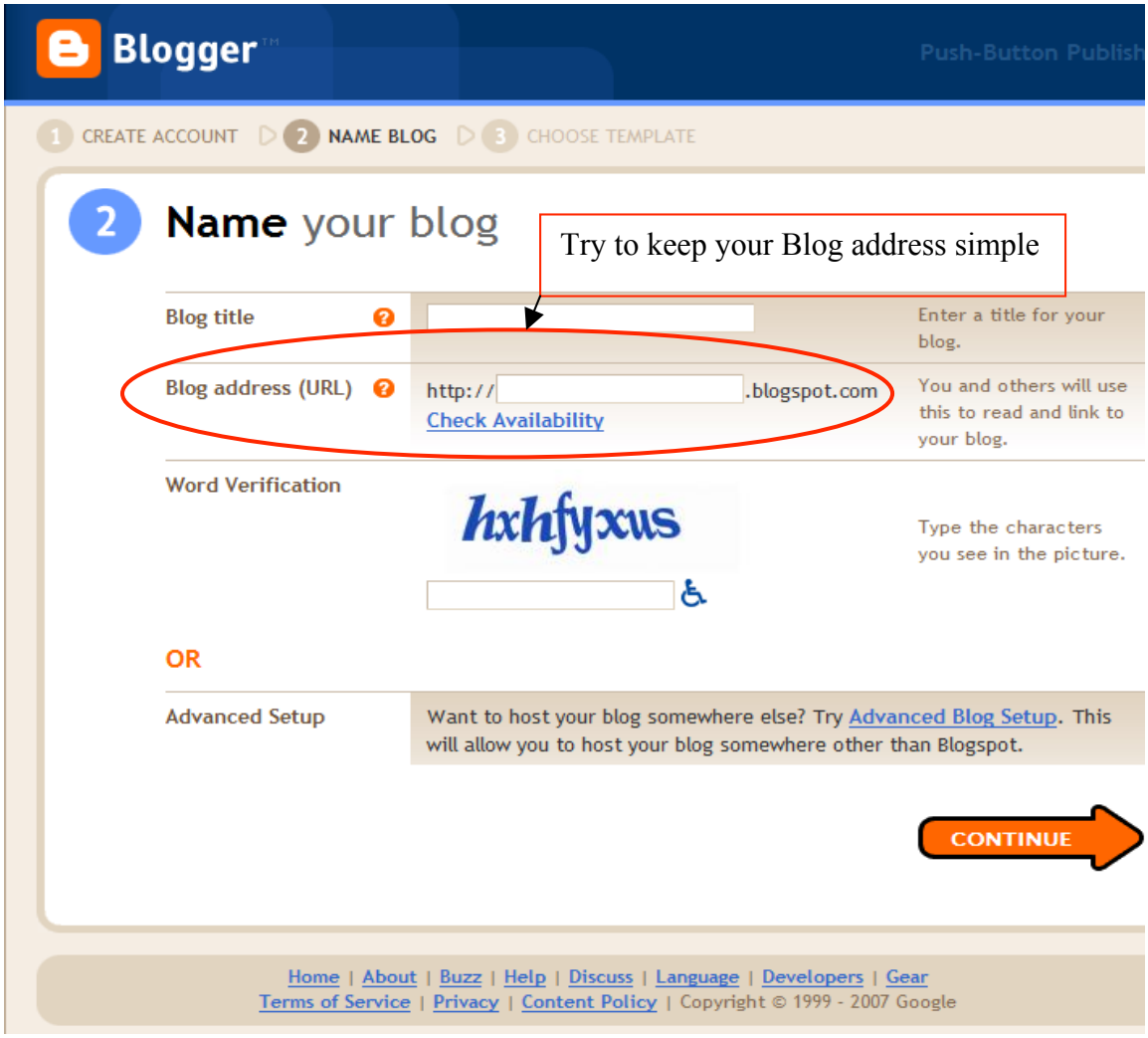
Pushing good information toward the users, both adult and young has its advantages, but unless our clients choose to link our sites through an RSS feed to their own pages, we generally get ignored no matter how many hours we spend or how rich our virtual library

becomes. Thus, the virtual library must become a two-way communication and sharing center if it is going to compete for attention.

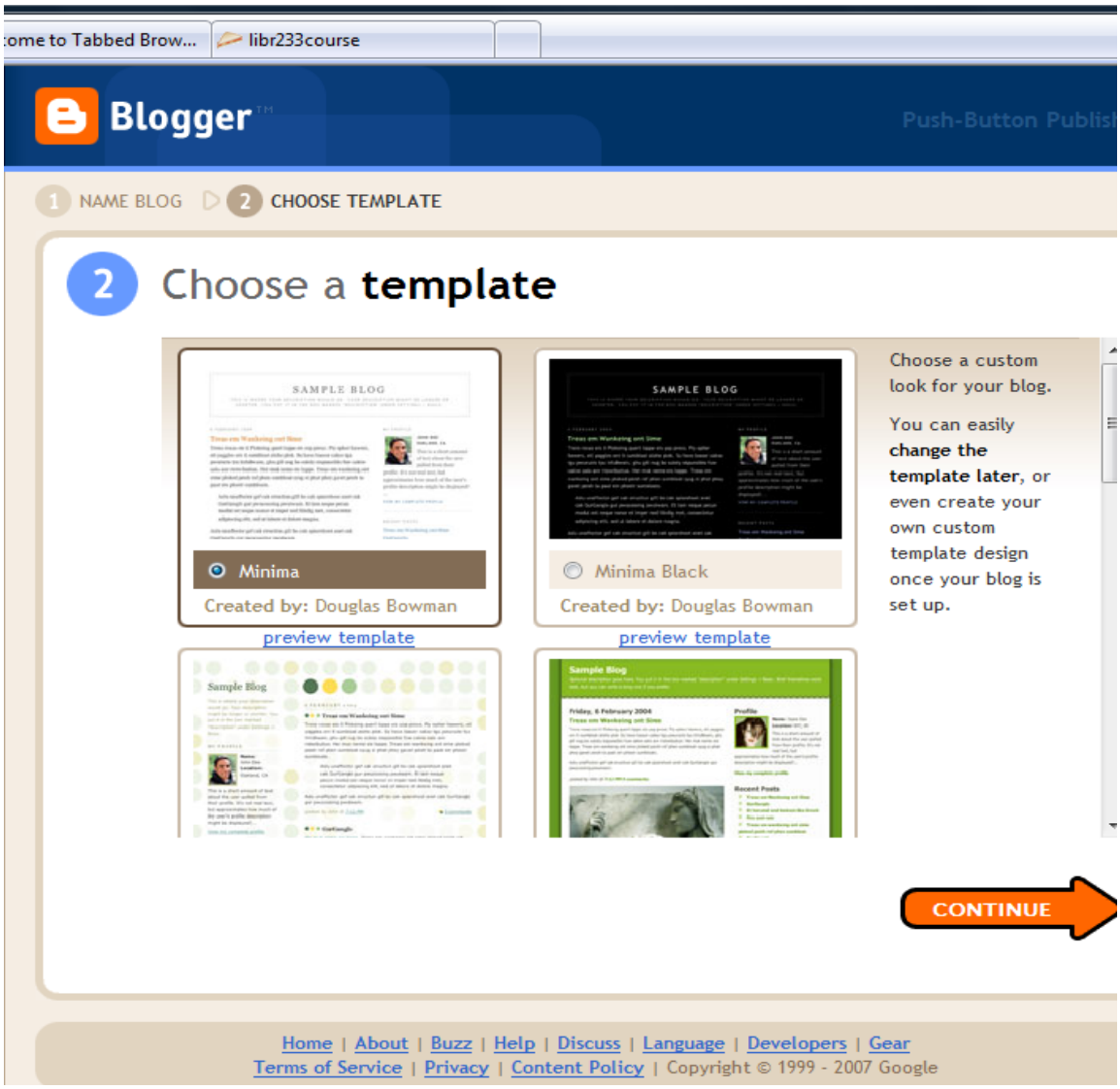
Step Three: Set Up the Library/Tech/Class Blog

CREATING A BLOGGER BLOG

- Go to www.blogger.com and sign in with your Google account information. If you don't have a Google account, make one.
- Then click: "Create Blog" and you will see this screen.



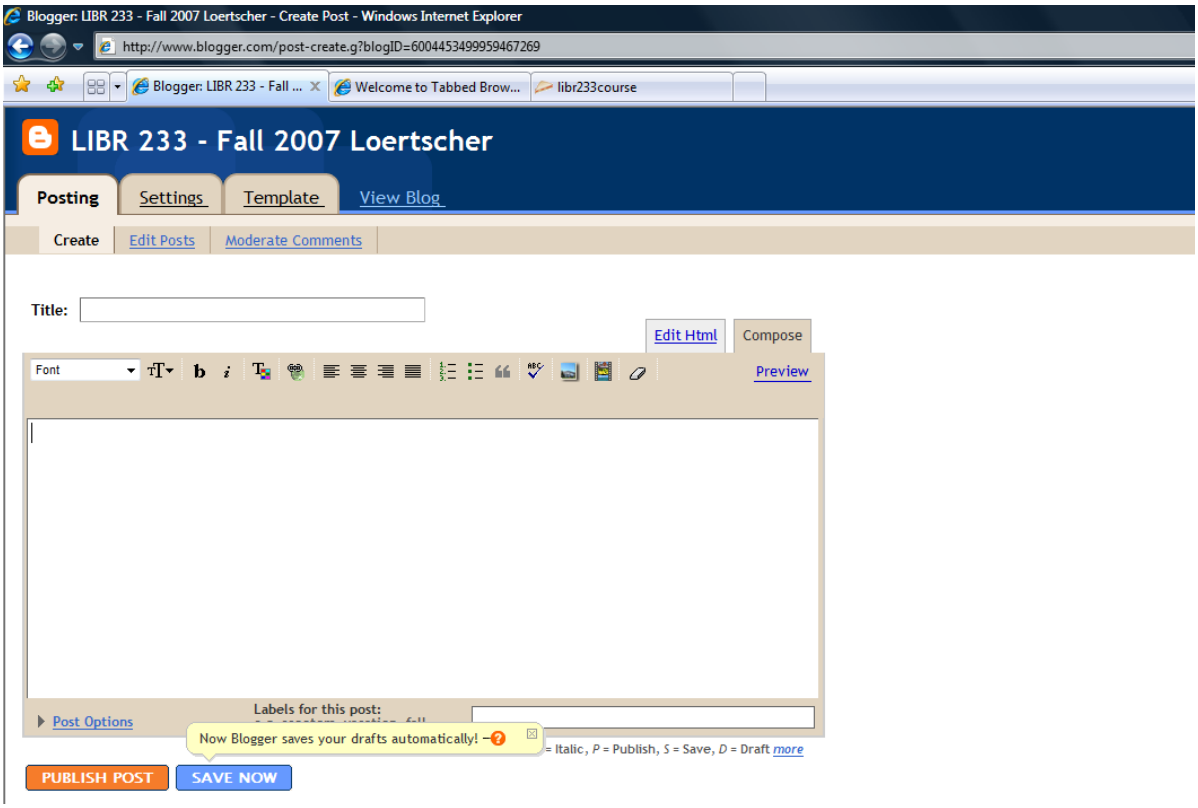
You could call your Blog "The Super Redundant Super Legion of Super Geniuses' Super Blog from Planet Nine" in the title section but make sure to keep the Blog address shorter. Supergenius.blogspot.com or something similar would be easier in case you ever want to write the address down for someone or print it on a business card. Once you have gotten your title and address approved and done the word verification, click the bright orange continue arrow. This takes us to the initial choose template page:



Do not worry about picking the right template for you the first time, you can always change it later and changing it will not affect what you have written. Sometimes you pick one that looks great with their sample content and find that a different one suits you better later. The new web is flexible.

Once you have browsed though and picked one, click continue.

Blogger will then give you the opportunity to create your first post.



You do not need to agonize over the first words spoken in your virtual space because you can always edit or delete them later.

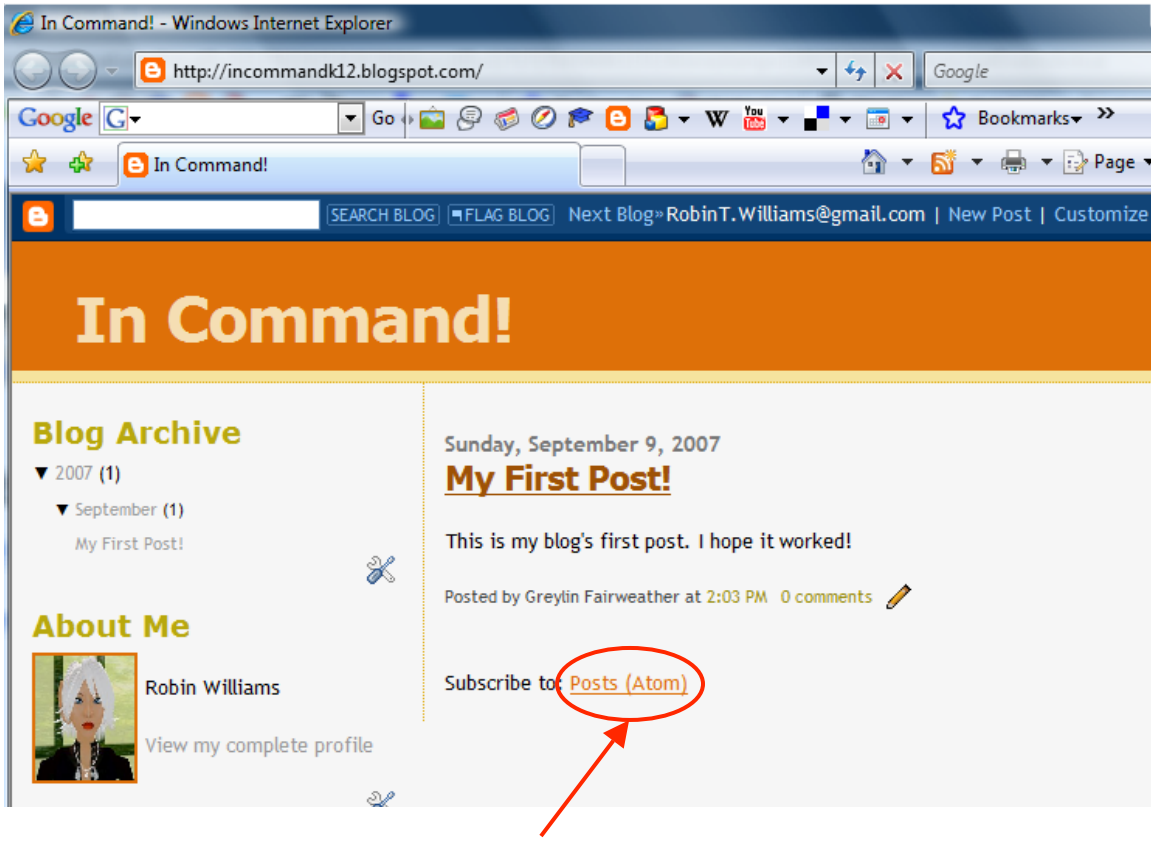
There are three tabs at the top:

The **posting** tab is the tab you will choose whenever you want to create and edit entries.
The **settings** tab helps control access to your blog.
The **template** tab allows you to add great content and change the formatting.

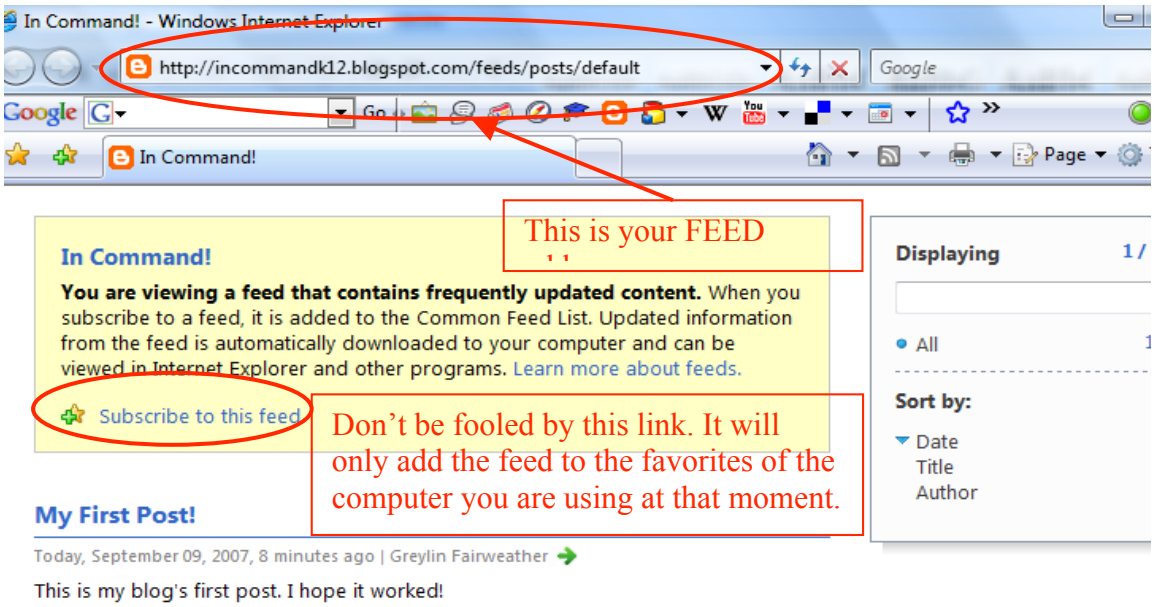
After you give your first post a title and type your brilliant words of wisdom, click "publish post." You can always edit later.

Then click "View Blog." Your blog is not published and you are seeing what any visitor to your blog would see. Congratulations! Now let's give people a way to subscribe to it so they can get your headlines right on their personalized homepage and follow a simple link to get to your site. Remember that the Web is less about the technology now than the content. "I have a Blog" might not impress too many students, many of whom have their own as well. It is the quality of the content that is key. If you Blog information that is useful and relevant to them, they will read it.

This is an easy, no frills blog:



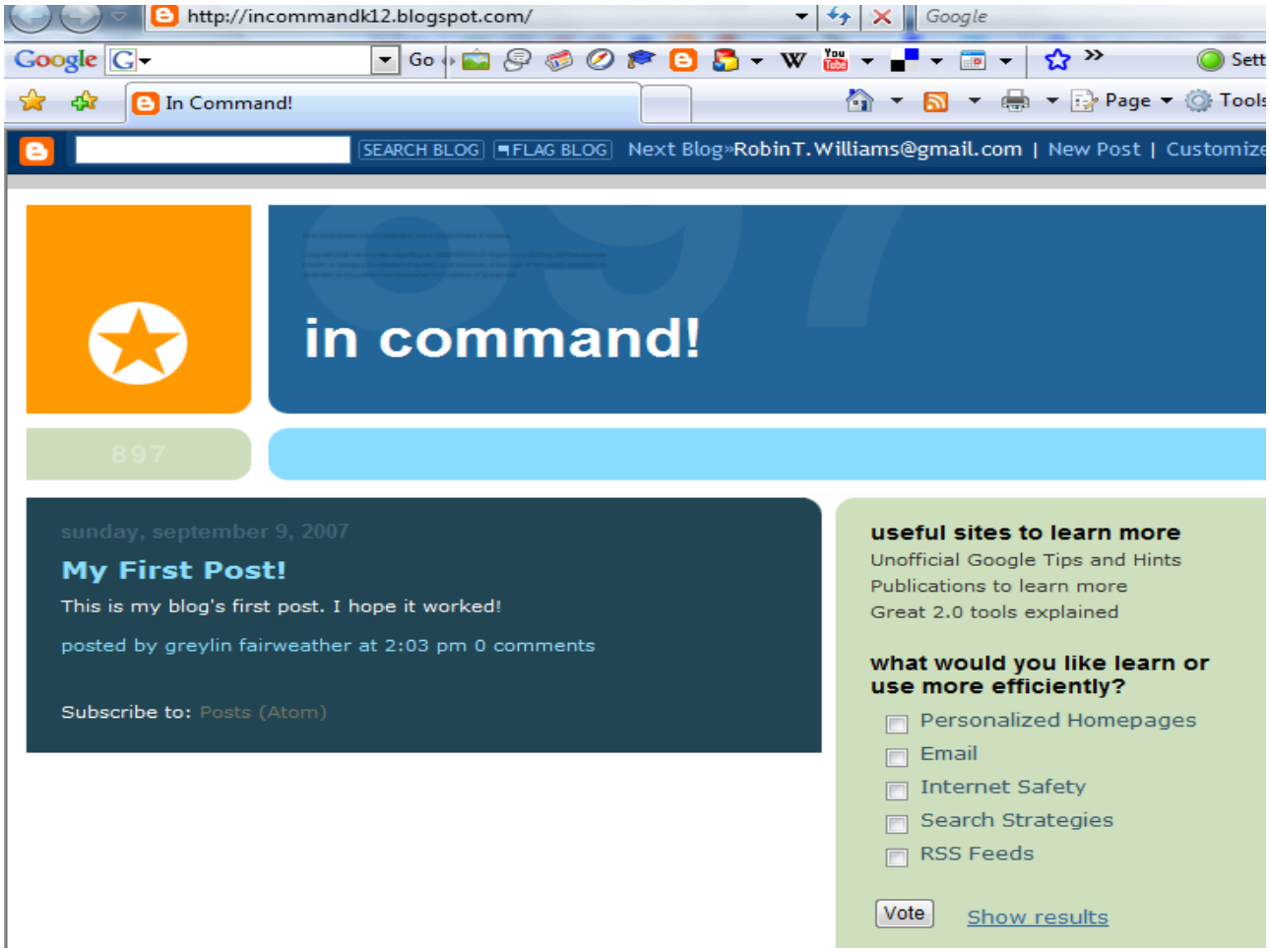
In order to get that content to them, click here and it will open the RSS feed page. Simple copy the URL (the web address in your browser) of the RSS page and add it to your iGoogle page to receive automatically updated information from that page with no further effort.



You clicked the "Subscribe to Posts Atom" which opened the new page that looks like a very simplified version of your blog. That is your Feed and the address that people can use to get your feed is at the top of your browser in the address bar. It will look something like: http://nameofyourblog.blogspot.com/feeds/posts/default

There is a sneaky link just under the Feed information that says, "Subscribe to this feed." Clicking that link will only put a bookmark on your favorites menu on the computer you are using at that very moment. Our goal is location free accessibility, so that students can access their information from whatever computer they happen to be near at any moment, be it in the library, computer lab, classroom, home, a friend's house, or an airport. No problem because their workspace does not depend on one computer but is web based. Their computer could die completely and these tools would still be accessible.

A Blog with a couple frills:



There are many ways to customize your Blog. Beyond the basic templates, you can change font color and type, and add html third party gadgets. All the gadgets in the world are no substitute for excellent relevant content.

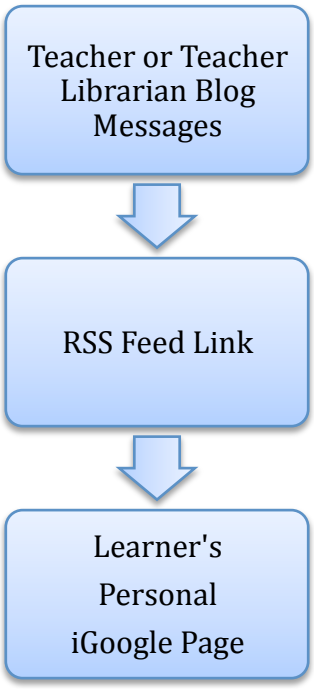
Step Four: Build the Link Your Students Can Use to Connect Your Blog to Their iGoogle Page

Imagine you are teaching a unit on Constantinople. You tell students that the topic is Constantinople and then open the door and say, "Go on then. The whole world has information, get out and find what you need." Should they travel to Istanbul? How easy will it be to get the information they need once they get there assuming they even find a way to get there?

An August 2007 survey by Netcraft located 127,961,479 individual websites. Asking students to run out into the vast world that the Internet has become with little preparation is equally inefficient, illogical, and potentially dangerous. In a classroom you use tools, handouts, books, the whiteboard, lessons that are more effective in delivering information. You can use those same tools, in their web based forms more effectively so that students can spend more time with content and less time wandering the crowded streets of the Internet aimlessly.

One of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal is Feeds. Most feeds are currently RSS (Really Simple Syndication) or Atom, but the type is not very important and most feeds are referred to as RSS Feeds (albeit sometimes incorrectly) or just "Feeds." Feeds are like the whiteboard in a classroom except that students and family can read it and access it from anywhere. They take no longer to do daily than it takes to type a paragraph and the side of your hand never gets smudged.

What is an RSS Feed? The illustration below demonstrates that it is a simple link between a message we want to send and only those learners to whom we want to send it. And, they receive it instantly.



There are many ways to set up a Feed, but the easiest, especially if you are using iGoogle, is by creating a Blog in Blogger, which you can sign into with your gmail account. It takes minutes to set up a blog and then when you want to add something, you just sign in, add a post to your blog, and Blogger automatically syndicates it. All you have to do is provide your students with the URL (web address) and they can get every gem of wisdom delivered right to their homepage.

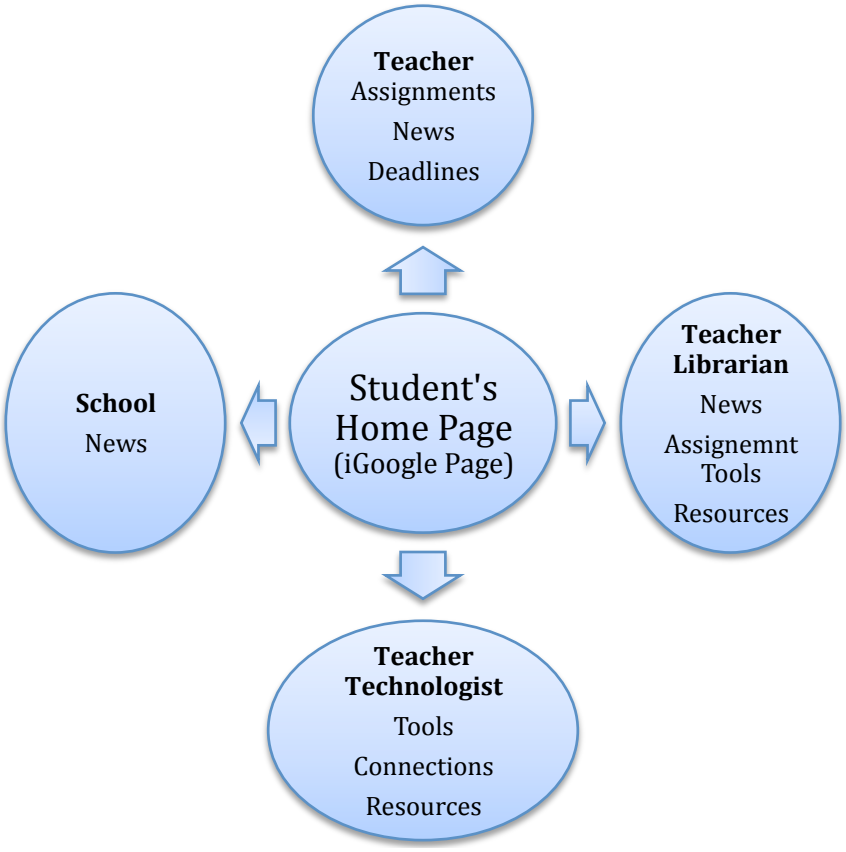
Sometimes when you buy a new car you suddenly notice that they're everywhere. The same holds true for RSS feeds. If you are using the latest version Internet Explorer, you'll notice at the top right of your browser at the bottom of the toolbar you will a little box with sound waves. On Mozilla Firefox it is at the top right and Safari displays a blue box to the right of the address if the site has an RSS feed. If the box is gray, sadly there are no RSS Feeds available from that page. If the box is orange (or blue in Safari) and has a star it means that there is an RSS feed on the page. You may be surprised by how many sites have feeds. Click the little drop down arrow and it will list the feeds available on that page. If you choose one you will see the actual feed page.

This site has an RSS Feed

The URL is the feed address, which is what you or your students can then add to your homepage or website. Simply copy, cut, and paste that URL from the address bar in the browser into your iGoogle or webpage content and sit back and enjoy the headlines. Under the title on that page will be a "subscribe to this feed" link. That link is an Internet Explorer link, and if you choose to subscribe to a feed on its feed page it adds it to your favorites. To access it from that browser, you click favorites, then feeds. The link is **only** accessible from that browser, only on that computer. Since our goal is anytime anywhere access, clicking that link is not the best way to save the feed. Web-based bookmarking (adding a site or feed to your "favorites") and social bookmarking will be discussed in more detail later.

One of the best things about RSS feeds for education is that the headlines that delivered to the homepage are advertisement free. In addition to creating Feeds of your own, if you are doing a particular project on a certain topic, like hurricanes for example, The National Weather Service National Hurricane Center offers feeds from the Atlantic and Pacific as well as one in Spanish, and one for any major hurricanes in progress. Students would not have to wade through virtual muck to get the latest news. It would be delivered right to their homepage as it happens.

RSS feeds would be an excellent way for any teachers or support staff to convey critical information: Librarians could announce new titles or special library events; high school counselors provide scholarship news, college registration deadline reminders and excellent advice; Principals could make important announcements; teachers could have assignment details and reminders; the school paper, in truly preparing future journalism professionals, should enjoy the benefits of digital syndication. Feeds can also be powerful in collaborative projects, to be discussed more in the section on collaboration.



Blogger is a great free tool to create your feed with because you can change the preferences to restrict access or comments and is fast and simple. What is the difference between a Blog and a Feed? A Feed is the syndication code that brings your headlines to someone's page. The Blog is similar to the newspaper stand on the corner: you have to go to it to get the

news. It is easy to drive past that newspaper box and forget to grab a paper. We often choose whether or not to buy a newspaper based on the headlines we see. A Feed provides a subscription to all the headlines at a site, delivered right to you and then you can easily choose whether or not to read that article or not without having to memorize an address or bookmark a thing.

Feeds are created with special code, but blogs, calendars and many other tools set it all up automatically for you.

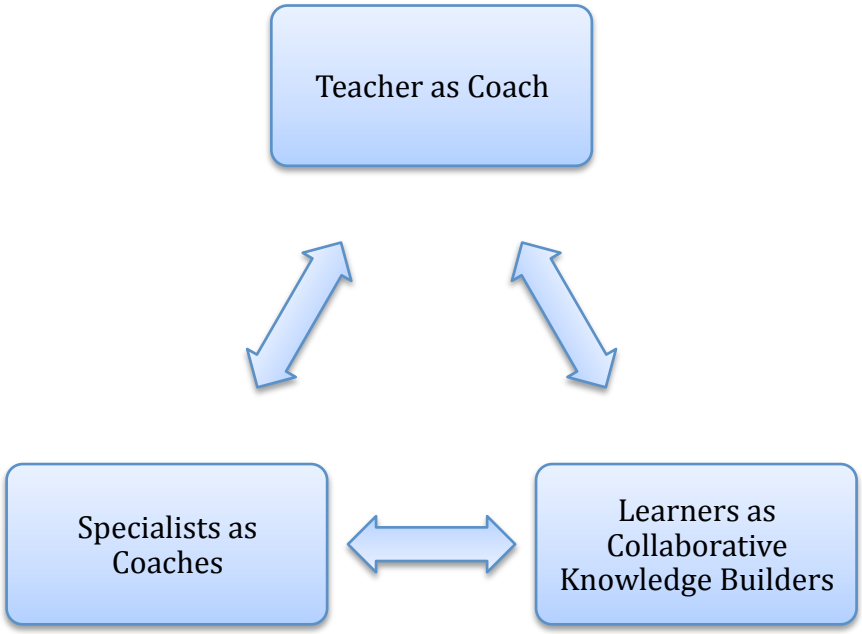
Step Five: Turn Learner's iGoogle Pages and Teacher Blogs into Conversations

Traditionally, we have pointed technology information systems into one-way streams toward the learner. They ignore our efforts. They find Google more attractive because it is always there and always returns something on almost any query.

The RSS feed link between the learner and the adults including the classroom teacher, the teacher librarian, and any other specialists happen when:

1. Each classroom teacher in the school has a teacher blog for each class. For example, elementary teachers would only need a single assignment blog; middle school and high school teachers would need a blog for each class they teach to a different group.
2. Each specialist in the school such as the teacher librarian, the literacy coach, the teacher technologist, or partners such as art, music, P.E. can comment on the various teacher's blogs.
3. The teacher makes the assignment, then the specialists can add comments about that assignment in a coaching stance giving hints, fielding questions, giving direct help, and providing encouragement as appropriate.
4. When each learner has the RSS feed in operation, then that learner can enter the conversation about the assignment by asking questions, suggesting tips to fellow learners, volunteering for various tasks for team projects, providing answers sought and found from specialized sources.

When set up in this fashion, a true collaboration between adults and learners becomes the norm rather than the exception. Such conversations happen not just during class time, but anytime day or night. Technology thus revolutionizes the teaching and learning process, turning adults from dictators to coaches.



Step Six: Assess the Impact of Building Information Spaces and Conversations on Teaching and Learning

Encouraging learners to take control of their own information spaces isa major change and departure from tradition. Such a change will require a monitoring effort to assess its impact. Here are a few recommendations for collecting evidence to assess the impact on learners:

Action research question: How does the introduction of a personal information management system to learners change their behavior?

- Select a range of learners to attend focus groups: savvy Internet users with social networking experience; those with some experience, and some with limited experience. Ask them to make a diagram for each type of user about how they use the Internet at the moment. Ask them to diagram how they as a group manage information either as "experts," somewhat experienced and as novices. Use this data as a base measure.
- Teach the iGoogle information management system, or other management system.
- Re-assemble the focus gtoups and monitor them several times during the school year. Ask them to diagram how they are using the system you have taught. What has changed? Ask them what impact it has had on their organization of their assignments. What are the problems associated with this system? How could it be improved?

- Respond to learner suggestions for implementing an information management system. Can they invent something better? Is there such a thing as a one-size-fits-all system?
- Report the evidence collected to administrators and teachers with a proposal of what needs to happen next.

Action research question: When assignments turn into conversations between adults and specialists such as the teacher librarian, the teacher technologist, or the literacy coach and the learners, what happens to the quality of the products, the dispositions of the learners, and the type of learner who succeeds?

- Ask a classroom teacher to furnish information on a similar learning unit taught previously concerning grades given, quality of product, success rates, and general attitudes of learners.
- For several learning activities in a row, teach students about the teacher blog and the idea of a conversation between adult specialists and themselves on line.
- As the learners actually engage in a true conversation, ask all the adults to watch learner behavior and results.
- At the end of every learning experience, ask learners about the conversations and how to improve them.
- Document progress both for adults who are collaborating and for students who are responding. Address each of the components of the action research question.
- Improvement or challenges can be trusted for the classes affected. Watch for patterns across teachers who participate.
- Report the successes and challenges to administrators and other interested parties.

Questions for Professionals. If you have followed us thus far, have you:

- Set up your own personalized iGoogle page for yourself, but also as an example of what a student might have on their own page?
- Set up a sample library/technology/classroom blog that could be filled with information a student would consider critical to success?
- Set up the link or RSS feed so that your students can link your blog to their page?
- Begun thinking about what type of content your students would consider critical enough to link into your blog?
- Set up teacher blogs so that all the adult specialists in the school can comment and coach learners as a particular assignment proceeds?
- Conducted action research as you implement this strategy in the school?

Chapter 4
Helping Students Set Up Their Basic iGoogle Page

The advantages of personalized homepages are many. Unlike with many search engines, the content is controlled so if you teach students how to use them well, they will provide quick access to quality sources, and tools without interference from outside advertising.

We do not generally toss a million random pages from books on the floor and ask students to search through them to find the information they need and yet we often require something similar when they use computers. There is nothing wrong with providing students with an excellent website rather than having them search for it on their own. They will have plenty of opportunities for independent searches without any guidance. How will they know what a good site looks like if we don't provide them with quality examples? The content that you provide to students online is similar to Internet handouts. It is not bad teaching to provide them with a handout that gives them excellent information or an exercise in class. It is good to do the same with the Internet. We have too many standards and expectations to meet to waste time wandering aimlessly in the Internet. Providing them controlled information, especially if you explain to them how you found and evaluated it, is excellent modeling and will help them make better choices when they search alone.

By giving students a means to organize key tools and concepts making them useful and easily accessed from any location you are teaching them to use the Internet and organize information effectively.

The first step is to introduce personalized homepages to your students. Combine general information on personalized pages with your specific links when they create the page, so that they are educationally relevant from day one. You can customize the following pages and ideas to introduce a standard way to set up pages and highlight target content.

Reminder from the authors:

On the following pages, done in Arial font, are our suggestions for what might be taught to students in their own language. We would not expect that these pages would be actual handouts, but sample pages of what might be given out. If you find them valuable, as the purchaser of this book, you can make copies of them for your students.

Homepage Headquarters

Where it all begins

YOUR OFFICE

Powerful executives have nice offices and as the CEO of your life you deserve one as well. Your personalized homepage will become your anytime, anywhere office built for efficiency. Customization will reflect your personality and style but not be so distracting as to keep you from getting your work done. Your secretaries (RSS feeds and widgets) will bring everything you requested right to you. Your inbox and outbox (email, RSS) will help you communicate with your project teams. You'll leave your office (homepage) to do research, collaborate (wikis, blogs, social networks, shared applications), and present your work (documents, presentations, blogs, vlogs, podcasts, videos, 3D representations) but your office is your castle, your home base. Set it up and use it well to make all your work faster and better.

The Office Building

There are several sites (or buildings to house your homepage office) offering personalized homepages. In a personalized homepage provider you want:

Ease of use

If your page is not easy to customize, you will have trouble keeping it current. Is it easy to position items? Does the page offer built-in content and tools and are they easy to add and delete? Is the layout customizable? Is it easy to read? It is often a good idea to get an email account with your personalized homepage provider of choice. Being able to access everything from one place will save you time

Customization

To get the most out of your homepage you need to be able to add not only the recommended tools but also quick links to things that your teachers, project teams and you have created.

Where to set up shop

Remember that technology changes quickly and while the providers may change, the features to look for are somewhat constant.

iGOOGLE

iGoogle is currently the fastest, most flexible and offers the most widgets (or "content"). A search for "school" yielded 74 results, the first page of which, were excellent and of use to anyone.

- **AOL**

Customizable similar to iGoogle but has giant advertisements you cannot delete. The same search for "school" yielded one widget for Business Week.

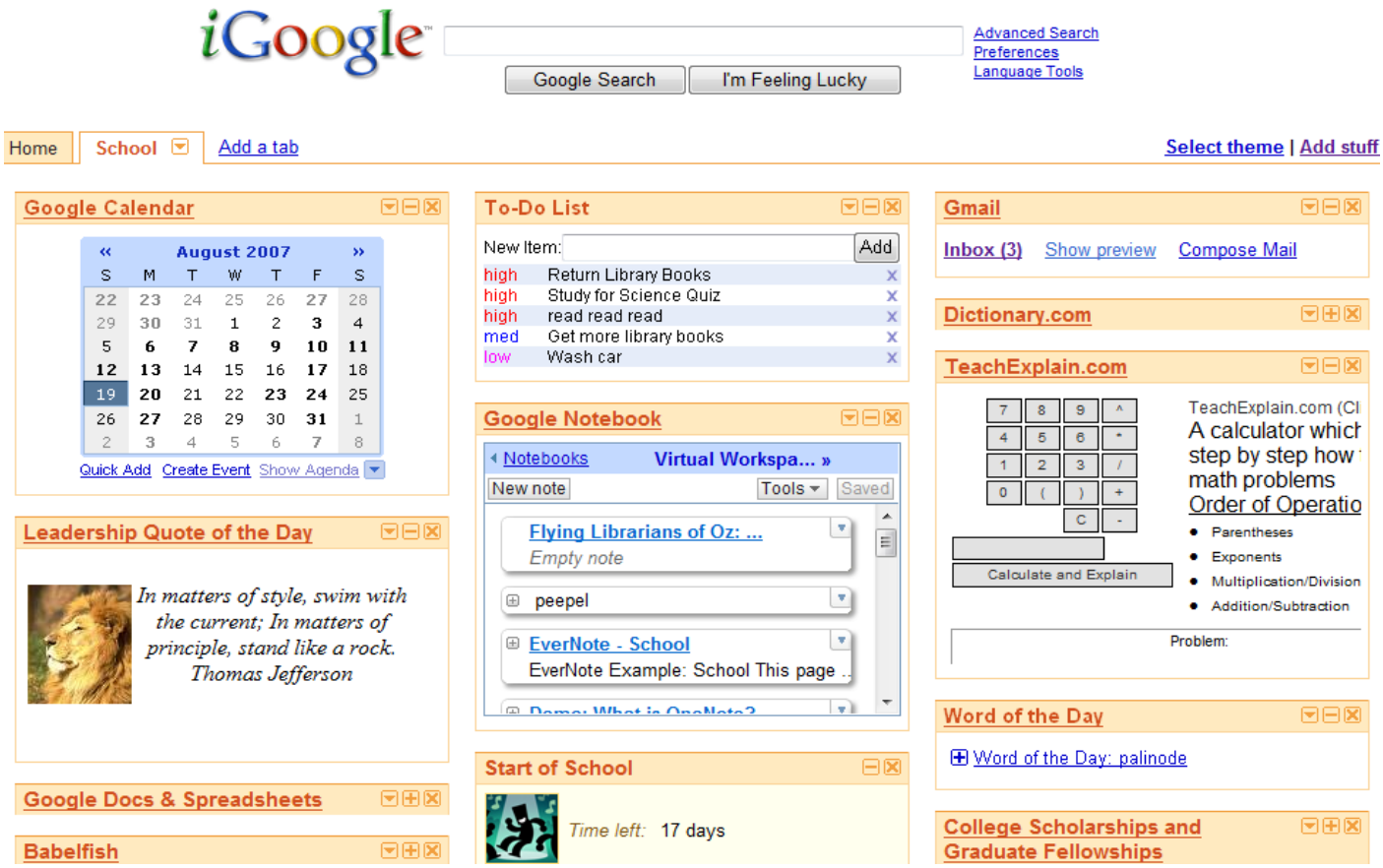
- **MY YAHOO**

My Yahoo also puts an advertisement right up top and the "school" search for content returned 9343 results! The first 20 were completely off mark, number one was "Bible School Park, NY weather." More results does not mean better results.

- **PAGEFLAKES**

Pageflakes is quickly becoming a favorite among users. It's very similar to iGoogle and very easy to share with an impressive variety of quality gadgets.

All offer the excellent option of having multiple pages so you can set up one for school and one for personal use. If a better one comes out, use it. Staying with lesser products gives them no incentive to create better ones



Everything you need to work and nothing you don't.

EXPLORER

iGoogle is currently the best out there because it doesn't have any advertisements on your page, so you control what you see. Wherever you make your page you must have these things, at the *top* of the page, because sometimes you just don't have time to scroll down.

Calendar

Most personalized homepage providers have calendars that you can customize and add and delete events easily and quickly. The calendar itself is a separate program, but an excellent homepage will allow you to make changes to it right from your page.

To Do List

In a To Do List we are looking for substance over style; if it has both, excellent. You want to be able to add and remove items easily. The one used above also allows you to rate each event as High, Medium or Low Priority and orders them based on your rating so you can focus on the most important things first.

Email

This goes at the top but you'll notice that it is minimized above rather than listing the messages. If you leave your email open all the time, your eyes will tend to wander to that section constantly in eager anticipation of more mail. Try to deal with everything else on your homepage first and then get to your email.

Do not feel like you have to respond to email immediately. Can you imagine running out to the mailbox and picking up one piece of mail every few minutes? It might be great exercise but it really wastes time. Our goal is to get our work done well, quickly so we can run over to our personal favorites page or do something else. Unless you are expecting an urgent message, checking and responding to your email once per day should be sufficient.

These three tools are the most essential and if you can master them, the others are just icing on the cake.

Feeds

If your school, library or classes have feeds subscribe to them. If they don't have them, help them set it up. Besides good karma, it will make everyone's life easier and looks great on a resume. Read more about Feeds in the RSS feed section.

SURFER

INSPIRATION

Leadership quote of the day at the top? Absolutely. Some martial arts use a short meditation at the beginning of class to clear the mind and focus it on the task at hand. Find a short quotation widget, something inspiring that is NOT a great distraction, read it at the beginning of your day and then minimize it. For some the inspiration may be in words of wisdom, for others some humor. Find whatever it is that makes you take a moment and think, "Excellent, let's get to work!" Forget everything else, and focus.

Countdown counters, like the one pictured for the first day of school, can also be motivational. Use them in moderation. You can always add a new one when one is finished. They take up too much space to be used in place of To Do Lists so try to limit them to one or two.

POWER TOOLS

Google Notebook and Google Docs and Spreadsheets are powerful tools that help you organize and give you access to your work from any location. No need to worry about a lost thumb drive if your work is stored online. These tools, and ones like them, are so powerful that they are discussed in more detail in their own section.

GREAT GADGETS

Also called *widgets* or *content* these tools are excellent for quick tasks. Online translators like Babelfish can translate words and phrases in 11 languages to or from English. It can also translate webpages while you browse. Dictionaries and calculator tools are useful and easy to use. After a month or two with your homepage, delete any gadgets you don't use.

In a nutshell

- Setup a personalized homepage with separate tabs for School Use and Personal Favorites with the same provider.
- Make your personalized homepage your default homepage so it opens as soon as you open your browser.
- Put the most important items at the top and minimize windows you won't need often.
- Combine power tools with great gadgets for maximum benefit.
- Keep your page simple, and delete anything you find yourself not using.

Name_____Date_____

My perfect desk has to have:

It would be great if it also had:

My workspace tabs are called:

My school tools:

The best thing I found was:

Something others might like on their page:

I didn't find but would like:

Chapter 5
Assignments: The Essential Part of Personal Space

Collaborative teacher/librarian/technology specialist projects and assignments pushing toward the students

Getting the correct assignments and information to the correct people is essential for maximum school benefit. Teacher librarians, teacher technologists and classroom teachers should work together to make sure that all of the feeds and recommended areas are easily accessible from central, virtual, and real locations. Provide hard copy instructions with screen shots for setting up required assignment feeds, calendar feeds, and supporting widgets.

The easiest way to push assignments to students is through a calendar. Calendars easily allow for collaboration and flexibility and they are easy to subscribe to.

There are several ways that collaborative online learning spaces can be created and made easily available. The teacher and the librarian could set up and moderate a group to which students are given access. They could collaborate in a blog environment to which students and parents could subscribe. Any web page has the potential to include RSS feed code. Ask your technology professional for help.

Remember that your technology professional is most likely an incredibly bright individual that spends the majority of their time in a room too small to be a closet, freeing jammed paper and patiently reminding people that computers work much better when plugged in and turned on. It's like being an English teacher and spending ninety percent of your time sharpening pencils. Recognize and respect their expertise and collaborate with them. Perhaps they already have a blog with excellent computer tips or advanced information tool ideas. It would be unfortunate to exclude these people from the process.

Setting up a blog for each teacher who wants to collaborate

Teachers can set up a blog with Blogger or WordPress in minutes. You can walk them through it step by step in the computer lab or create staff teams where at least one member per team knows how to create one and helps the others learn to create theirs. Once they are familiar with blog creation in one place, they should be able to transfer those skills to other blog hosts. All blog hosts have strengths and weakness. Find the one that best suits your school's purposes.

The next key step is bringing in their feed address to the library homepage and adding teacher librarian support. You will become a news aggregator, making all the relevant blogs available to students in one centralized location so that students may then subscribe to the blogs most relevant to them. Encourage students and staff to unsubscribe from blogs that are no longer useful or active.

Teachers can have their own blogs and the teacher librarian can post on it

Blogs usually allow for comments, so one easy way to collaborate on a project using the web for anytime collaboration is for the teacher to create a blog. The teacher librarian or other adult specialists such as the literacy coach, could add any extra help, support or ideas in the comments section. It is also possible to RSS feed teacher librarian created content into the teacher's blog. That way a teacher librarian that creates brilliant resources for anyone studying Rome could make their content available through syndication on other blogs. Every teacher needing anything to do with Rome could simply add the RSS feed in a section on their blog, thereby allowing the student to have the same access to the content without ever leaving the class page. Adding feeds is one of the best ways to keep a blog current with a minimum amount of work.

A group may elect to do a collaborative blog. The best way would be to elect the most tech savvy person to set up the main blog and set up the feeds for everyone else. This way everyone's content is being added to the main page and if one person makes a huge error the blog lives on. Blogs in their current state are generally individual presentation spaces rather than active collaborative documents. What we say about adults also applies to learners, that is, the learners themselves participate in the construction, monitoring, and the conversation on the blog for as long as it has a use.

Another method, although not recommended would be for the group to set up an email account for the specific project purpose and every participant would have access to the account information—the sign in and password. The group would then set up a blog that each member could contribute to equally. The advantage to this method is that every member has instant and full control. Members can contribute as much as able individually but visitors to the blog have no idea what is going on behind the scenes. Each member can promise to post something once per week, which lessens the individual maintenance workload. The visitors, however, will simply see a well-maintained site.

The disadvantage is that every member has instant and full control with no accountability or credit. The computer has no idea who is signing in with the sign in information and no record of it. The computer doesn't know that Andre is a beginner, and if he deletes everything, it will carry out his orders as given. This method should only be used with equally capable and responsible group members.

Getting the assignments on the student's personal space

There are many ways to get assignments on a student's personal space. One of the easiest ways is to have a blog that feeds in a calendar. Most calendars can be embedded into a website or blog often by copying and pasting the calendar code into an empty html section in the blog. This way the students have the benefit of a course calendar with holidays, tests and lessons as well regularly updated class news and reminders. Because we are hitting them with two tools that they can subscribe to, the calendar and the blog, the assignments appear on their homepage in two places. You are competing for their attention and you're more likely to win with more than one raffle ticket.

Creating custom gadgets fills a specific need. If your school has access to special databases, you could create a hyperlink gadget to those databases. A gadget priority list that has pre-entered critical tasks could be useful for projects.

The Professional Space

The personalized homepage can be incredibly useful not only to students but to anyone. Most of us are aware of the new wide variety of excellent Web 2.0 tools and would appreciate an easy way to see anything of interest to us as soon as we get on the Internet.

You can add and share many great different types of content, and your district professionals could collaborate and share the best professional tools for the Teacher Librarian's Space, the Teacher Space, or Techie Space. The easiest way to search for pre-made gadgets is by searching for terms like "library" or "librarian." Gadgets like book lists, book award lists, and daily tools like dictionaries and online reference tools would be excellent. There are many library related RSS feeds from professional journals, professional development and organization sites, and general education sites. Many professions now have popular blogs that explore Web 2.0 tools and other professional issues. Feed in conference news. Even if you can't go, a quick look at the agenda and offerings will keep you aware of the current hot topics, resources and techniques.

For example, Google has "Google Librarian Central," which has everything from information on library relevant tools and news to searching tip posters and handouts for your library. Teachers who have the state standards on their minds can create a quick homepage link taking them instantly to areas and specifics of interest.

We recommend that students have the three spaces. Teacher librarians could probably benefit from at least that many. They could use the shared spaces to organize collaboration with other staff within the school, district and world. Area professionals of all sorts could pool knowledge with collaborative tools. Links to teaching ideas and lesson plan sites will help you help your school. You may also want to create specific project-based pages as needed. Remember that deleting a tab is as easy as creating one, and that you can always email yourself an archival copy of the gadgets used for reference. Considering the rate at which the Internet expands, pages should probably be revitalized annually. New gadgets, widgets and content are being created daily, so make sure that you have the best by searching for new content at least once per year.

Using the Cloud

What is the cloud? The cloud refers to services where you store your work on their server, not your own or that of your school or school district. In other words, your work is out there, somewhere, you don't know where. A good example is Gmail. You are storing all your email on Google somewhere out there in the cloud. Another example is PBwiki, where the wikis you create for your class are stored at the PBwiki server site, not on the school's site.

Sample tools that use "the cloud":

- Gmail.com—keep your email handy an access it anywhere. Free.
- PBwiki.com or Seedwiki.com—collaborative document construction space. Free.
- Ning.com—a closed community by invitation only with personal and communal blogs, discussion forms, and document uploading. Free.
- Google Docs and Spreadsheets and Presentations—collaborative document building space, collaborative spreadsheet construction, and collaborative presentation building. Free.

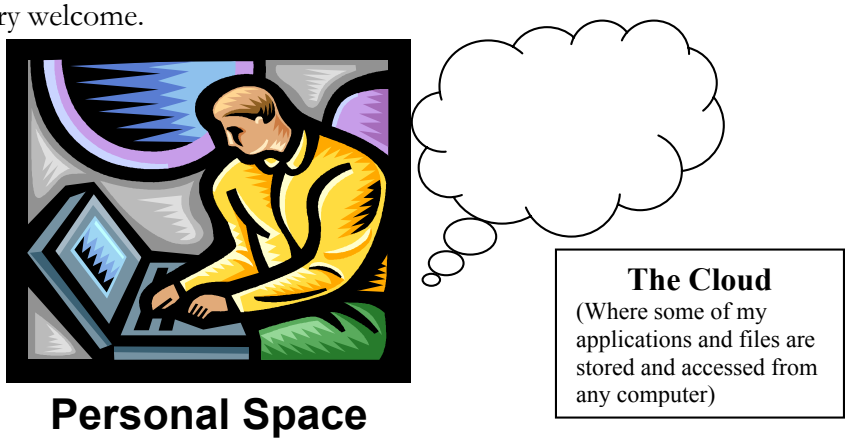
Advantages:

- Your information and projects are stored on a remote server accessible from any computer.
- Not subject, usually, to down time or seasonal breaks.
- Often free.
- Not under the control of school or district networks.
- Available from home 24/7/365.
- Usually more reliable than local networks.

Disadvantages:

- May be filtered and blocked by local network restrictions. However, can be unblocked by petition.
- May appear to put local networks out of business.

Facing challenges: At first glance, as stated above, panic sets in because these sites are out of control of local network administrators. We recommend that district or school tech directors help set up these sites so they see the educational value in them, see that someone else will worry about the 24/7 maintenance, and see that they are safe. At that point, these services will often become very welcome.



1. Assignments: The Essential Part of Personal Space.

In a perfect world every teacher would add your assignments to a Google calendar and add links from the calendar to their website or blog with the detailed instructions. The assignment site would include links to school library pathfinders and great sources. Here are some solutions for getting assignments into your personal space in a few different scenarios.

Ideal: Your teacher uses a web based calendar that you can easily subscribe to and all of the assignments are posted on the class group page.

What you need to do: Subscribe to their calendar and then add a calendar widget to your personalized homepage. Add a To-Do List widget to prioritize and view key steps at a glance. Add any additional class required or related widgets. Share any great ones you find with your technophile teacher.

Getting there: Your teacher posts assignments to a blog.

What you need to do: Subscribe to the blog feed. Double-check that the in-class instructions and dates are the same as the blog. Add assignment dates to your calendar or, better yet, start a public calendar for the class and share the load by inviting people you know are responsible to add dates and information to it. Don't forget the to-do list to remind you daily of the most important tasks to tackle. Make sure your teacher knows about web-based calendars and show them how easy it would be to embed one into their blog, which anyone could then subscribe to.

From Scratch: Your teacher is still making friends with the microwave and marvels over VCRs.

What you need to do: Take down assignments in your notebook. Offer to set up a calendar for them (extra credit anyone?) and ask your teacher librarian for help in making the feed address publicly available. Show them that the computer can make it very easy for them by showing them one, very basic program. If they are beyond help, set up a system like the one above to take charge and make it work. Don't forget your to-do list.

Turn Assignments into Conversations. When your teacher uses a blog to announce assignments, remember that you and your classmates can comment. Ask for clarifications, give tips to your classmates; suddenly, the assignment blog becomes a conversation between you, your teacher, and other adults.

Chapter 6
My Sources on My Personal Space
(Trusted sites students and adults need almost every day)

It's all about quality information. This applies to all ages whether students, teachers, teacher librarians, or teacher technologists. What voices do we allow into our information spaces? How do we help students recognize authentic and trustworthy sources?

A two-pronged attack against information overload and data smog needs to happen:

- As adults, we need to be exemplary in discerning quality information sources.
- As adults, we need to nurture young people in the selection and evaluation of quality information.

Our war begins on our own personal information space where we tune into the information sources we need to survive and thrive. As our own management expertise develops, we are in a better position to help our students be intelligent managers.

One of the easiest ways for a professional to make sure that every student has quick and easy access to essential and authoritative sites is to create a gadget that has links to those places. These are called link or hyper link gadgets or site lists. These lists of links go in a box on the student's or professional's iGoogle page. Although there are a plethora of excellent sites you would love to have on your own page or give your students access to, limit this gadget to your top five or six from which other sites may be easily reached. Help students learn how to select those few links that are essential for their own success. It should begin to dawn upon them that *they* are in command.

In addition to the trusted information links we have on our personal pages, we need to teach students the process by which they evaluate a source for its quality and reliability. One of the most useful ways to begin this process is to require that students defend every information source they use in their assignments. Traditional rules for acceptable sources have often been to use something like three books, two articles and only one Internet site. This rule needs to change to use "only defensible and authoritative sources" for the purpose at hand.

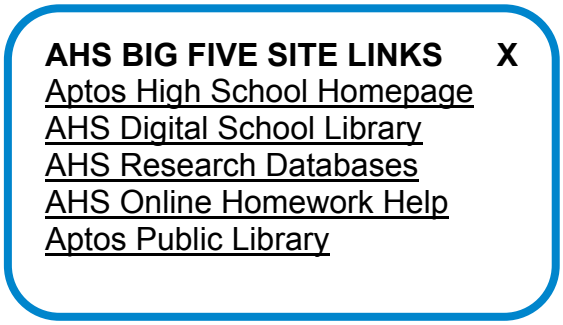
Teach students to ask questions of every information source: Who is saying what to me for what reason, with what authority, and with what currency? If I want the best information source on the size of the national debt, I go to the U.S. Department of the Treasury. If I want to get informed opinions about the consequences of the national debt being as large as it is, I might seek information from the chair of the Federal Reserve. Then, I might want to know the various spins put on this information by the various news media and various talk show hosts who have one or several axes to grind. If I wish to know what the reaction of skinheads is, I go directly to them, not what others think they stand for.

Questions for Professionals:

- Am I in command of my own personal space?
- Can I discern quality and flaws in information sources as I teach the idea of quality to my students?

My Sources (trusted sites I need almost every day—websites, school and public libraries)

The easiest way to have instant daily access to the key sites you'll need to visit for school and research is to create a hyperlink gadget for your homepage. These handy little boxes are simply lists of links.



Try not to add too many to the box or it will take up too much room. These are your essential school links and 2–5 of them will give you what you need without taking up too much of your screen.

You can also use social bookmarking, but that is usually best for a huge number of links and it will take you a few more clicks to get what you need. It's like the difference between sticking a note on the fridge and shoving one in a drawer.

Locating and Adding My Sources to My Personal Space

You were able to add a hyperlink gadget to your page that has your daily five. What about adding sources that you need for one class or one project? Start from the inside and work your way out. Begin with what you know and think of the sources you might need to support your previous knowledge.

If the assignment is "Discover the best car" and you know full well that the best car is whatever your favorite is and you could argue for hours about it. That's great. Now what you need to do is find evidence. Think about where you might find information that supports your claim. We all have opinions, but if you can back them up with facts from authoritative sources, your argument will be much more likely to win. It's harder to argue with facts.

You started with yourself, now move away a bit to your class. What information have you received in your class that will help you get the information you need? Did your teacher give you all a handout on future cars? Was there a section on designing the perfect car in your textbook? There is no point going on a wild information goose chase if the answer is closer to you than the wide world of the Internet. Check the information sources that your class has provided. If your class has a group page, website or pathfinder (a list of links for your subject), check that first. If your teacher pointed out a car RSS feed, add it to your site.

Don’t go hunting in the forest for food if they set it on your plate in front of you. Your time can be better spent. It might save you a ton of time as well to ask the question in class, “Is there a particular place that you would like us to look for information?” Teachers might create customized search engines to spare you having to wade through loads of irrelevant junk.

Next check the library. Does your library web page have a pathfinder? Teachers and teacher librarians often work together to design curriculum. Is there something your teacher librarian knows that could help? They are expert, professional information seekers and may be able to provide you with ideas and sources you never would have thought of. Teacher librarians aren’t about stamping books; they love to help people get the information and resources they need, it’s what they do. They might know of a great site, feed or have a customized search engine that you can add to your personal page.

There might also be a teacher technologist in your school who will have great suggestions for tools and personal help. Check this out.

Finally, the Internet. It’s often the first place we go but there is so much random stuff out there that it’s too easy to get sidetracked and waste time. Try specific search engines that narrow down results to educationally appropriate ones. Or use search engines designed for education for assignments because they will save you time and get you what you need. Try adding content to your homepage. A content search for “car” on an iGoogle homepage yielded 138 car related gadgets for your homepage. Many of them were more recreational than informational, but generally many of the ones at the top of the results list are the most useful. Deciding which gadgets are the best and most relevant is called “Evaluating Sources” and you do this every time you look at anything.

Evaluating Sources and Deleting Those That Are No Longer Useful

You are already good at evaluating sources, you do it every time you hear or see anything. You asked your mom what car she thought was the best and she provided her opinion. You looked out the window at her 1984 Pontiac Fiero on blocks and your mind quickly warned you that she might not be the most reliable source in this case. The funny thing is that when people see information on the Internet they often believe that it is good and reliable information. You have no idea what "Bob from Idaho" really drives or who he is, so how can he be a reliable source? Someone in a YouTube video might be amusing but you can't be aware of their motives for the spot, and, again, the Internet is essentially an anonymous place, so who can you trust?

Major new agencies, government sites and libraries have great incentive to tell the truth and can often be good sources of information. CNN releases a "best cars" report annually. AAA and Edmunds let you research and compare new cars online. If you find your search taking too long, you need to think about exactly what you need to make your case. If you know that you are basing your best choice on the fuel economy or design, focus on sites and articles that will give you that information. Still having trouble finding exactly what you need? Enlist the help of your librarian. Use a virtual notebook to manage your sites and information.

Teachers and librarians may ask you to defend each information source you use in your assignments. This may seem to be a pain, but make a regular habit of asking yourself:

- Who is telling me what? (A salesman?)
- For what reasons? (To make them rich?)
- With what authority? (Expert or novice?)
- When was this advice given? (Current or out of date?)

Of the hundreds of thousands of voices trying to get my attention every minute of the day and night, which do I trust? It is all about trust. Accuracy. Truth. Reliability.

Check your personalized homepage at least once a week and ask yourself if the RSS feeds or gadgets are still giving you useful information or is it time to move on? Like your best car, your personalized page runs efficiently when it's maintained well. Take pride in ownership and keep your virtual ride running smoothly or it will never get out of the garage and be used.

Chapter 7
My Tools for Managing My Personal Space, Information, and Projects

In this chapter, we present common tools for both professionals and students to consider as they build their personal space. These tools include:

- Gagets and widgets
- Calendars
- Virtual notebooks
- Google Notebook; OneNote
- 3D Virtual Workspaces

These are just a few of the available tools available. As a professional, thoroughly test these and others for use in your classroom, library, and computer lab. Add or replace the ones we illustrate with newer and better tools as they appear. They appear every day. But just because they appear, that is no reason to adopt them.

We encourage students to select tools that help them become more efficient at their daily tasks. It is a part of becoming a world-class learner and worker in the global economy. And we teach students to be flexible and to adopt better and better tools as they come along. It is all a part of becoming better and better at what we do and remaining competitive.

In this chapter, as with others, each tool is introduced to adults with accompanying handouts for students.

Questions for Professionals:

- What tools help me as a professional that increase my own productivity?
- Am I always on the lookout for better tools that help me in my work?
- Do I encourage students to introduce me to new tools I might find useful?
- Do I teach them about tools that will help them become more productive?
- Does everyone in the school subscribe to the notion that:
    - I teach you
    - You teach me
    - We all make everyone more productive

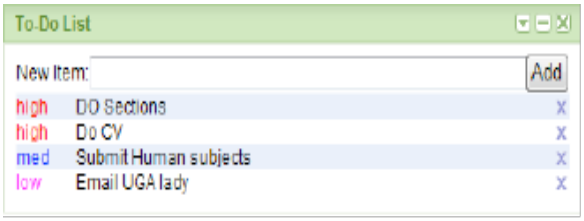
In the first section, we introduce students to various gadgets and widgets, currently the productivity rage of the Internet.

Mini Tools for the Personalized Homepage

Considering the speed at which the Internet moves, it would be pointless to try to assemble a catalog of all possible tools for your personalized homepage. This section will instead highlight some types of tools and give potential educational uses.

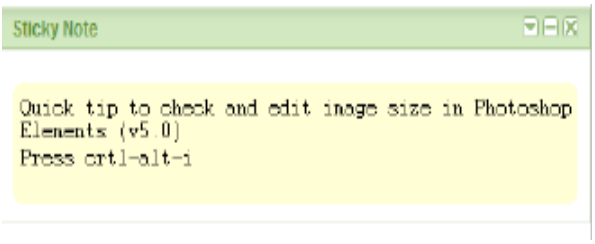
To-Do Lists

These handy tools help you prioritize and keep organized. It is easy to get overwhelmed and distracted by input from real life or online content. These lists remind you what must be done so that it may get done first. The best online to-do lists allow you to sort or assign a priority rating to the task.



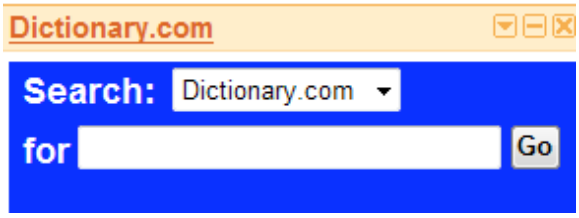
Note Tools

These behave much like a sticky note, allowing you to quickly jot down something and keep it right on your homepage.

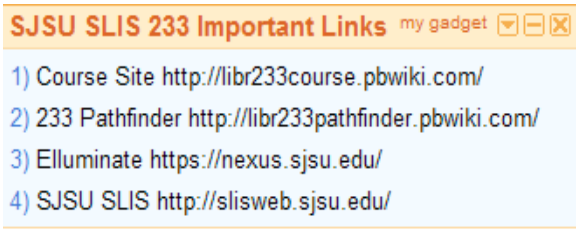


Dictionary, Thesaurus, and Calculator

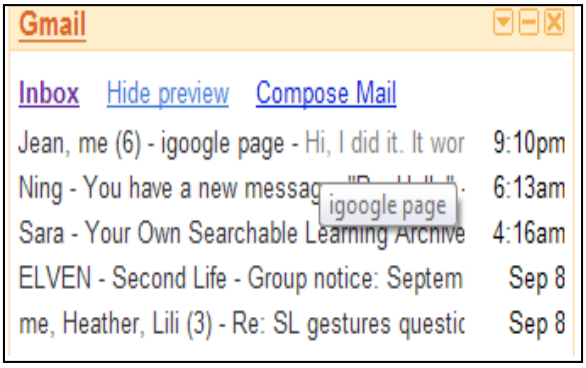
These tools are often used by students or adults and can be an excellent addition to any personalized page. There are many different types, sizes and styles of these. Add a few different dictionary tools to your page and try them both out with a couple words. Keep the one that you found easiest to use, and when they are no longer doing everything you want it to, check for a newer gadget.



Link Lists
Link Lists allow you to keep links of important sites on your webpage. Bookmark lists are very similar and generally created from a web based bookmarking service like del.icio.us or Google bookmarks. The best are kept short or allow you to easily categorize your links by applying a label.

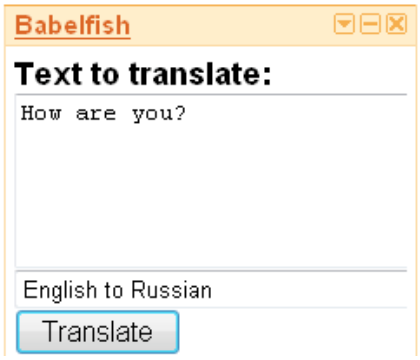


Mail
Most personalized homepages add your email automatically but you usually have the option of deleting it from your page. We recommend hiding the preview so you can get your work done first. For more about managing your email, please refer to the email section. Do not assume that just because you are on one homepage provider you will not be able to access your email from another provider. Yahoo, AOL and server based mail can all be accessed via content gadgets on your iGoogle page.

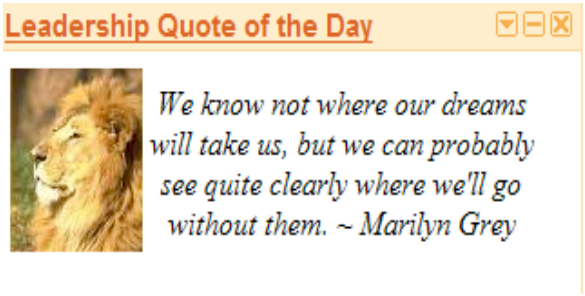


Countdowns
Used sparingly these tools are the greatest nags—reminders you could ask for. They come in a variety of shapes, sizes and styles and are great motivators for short-term goals.

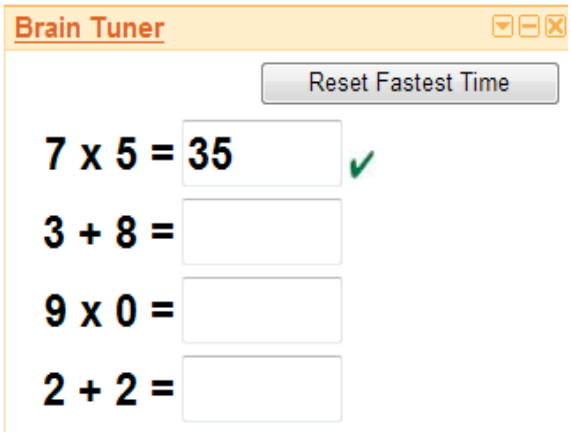
Translators
Try a translator if you need to translate from one language to another. Different translators offer different languages and degrees of success in any language. There are also translators that will translate Internet Slang so you'll be up to speed and ready to ROFL with the rest of them.



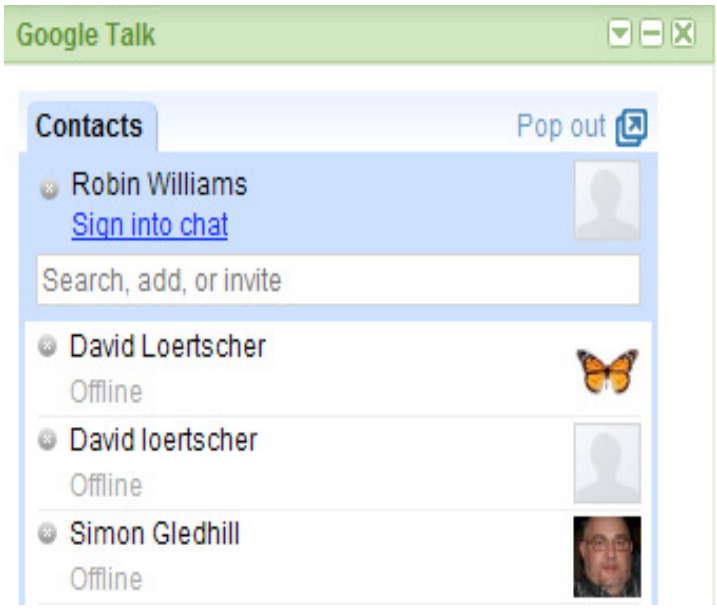
…Of the day
There are many different gadgets that feature content that is updated daily. They offer everything from quotes to comics, optical illusions to quizzes. Some are educational, inspirational and humorous.



Games
You might wish to have a non-distracting educational game on your page—something that will tickle your mind or help you learn something new. Use these sparingly and get rid of them if they are getting in the way of the important things you are trying to get done.



Live Chat Tools
There are some live chat tools that can enable people who know each other to chat instantly via text. Meebo and Gtalk are popular. Although it may be a good tool on the personal page if it connects directly to another student, teacher, or school librarian, it is not recommended. Generally, it is much and too easy for people to type in and interrupt your work. Chats can be used quite effectively on the shared and outer workspaces and tips on how to use them can be found in those sections.



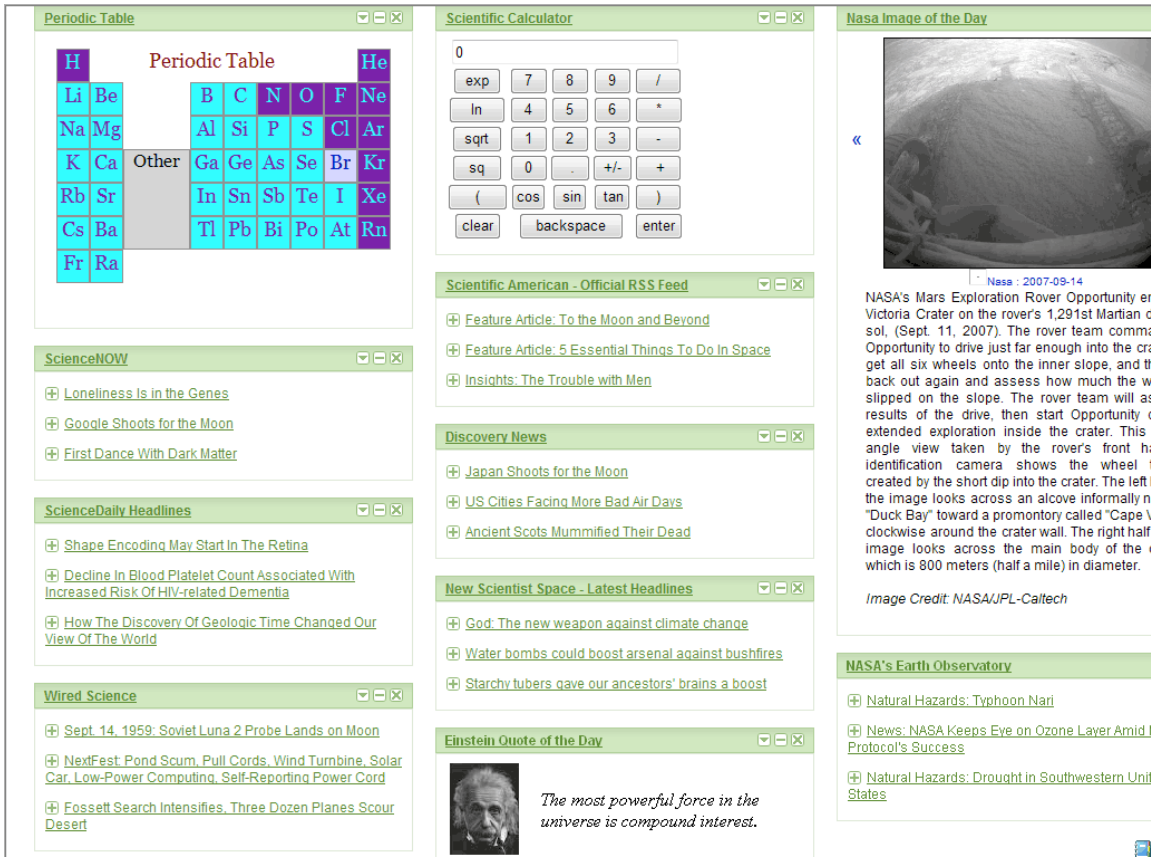
There are many subject items you can add to your iGoogle page that will keep you interested and informed about almost anything you choose. We have prepared two examples of just a few and suggest you find one or two that you like and add them. The nice thing is that there are hundreds available, so if you get tired of one, there are many others waiting to take its place. We are showing two examples. The first is for a fifth grader interested in reading, the second is for an older person interested in science.

Fifth Grade Reading Sample Page

The Children's Book of the Day provides full color children's books in a variety of languages for free online. Two fun daily tools follow that provide little reading snippets that you can read easily without leaving the page. To satisfy reading for informational purposes, I added Best Selling Children's Book List and the Best

Selling Toys list. I added the Bee Smart Math Table, and Science News for Kids. Story Nory offers free Mp3s of famous children's stories. You simply click on the title that interests you and it opens a page with the built in Mp3 players. There are hundreds of additional gadgets that resulted if you do a content search for "Kids" and "Reading" and a mix of instant daily reads and great linking ones is terrific.

High School Science Example



The high school science example shows a mix of gadgets and RSS feeds as tools. You can quickly glance at headlines and follow them to relevant or interesting stories. Should you have an iGoogle page for each subject? You could, but it might be information overload. It is really your decision.
Each of us has a different input comfort level. Beginners or people who are easily distracted or simply deal better with smaller amounts of information should stick to one personal space page that has one screen (without scrolling) of content. Build in the amount of information, and only that amount you can use.

Calendars

Calendars are an excellent way to notify and remind students and staff of a variety of events. Calendars are easily syndicated, which means you only have to set up one calendar and then copy a little code or use a widget to import your calendar in multiple locations. A student would be able to view it from their homepage, the school library website or blog and embed it into their own applications.

What do we look for?

1. **The best are easily modified.**

   If the calendar takes too long to add, delete, or move appointments, it is unlikely that anyone will go to the trouble to keep it current. Calendar makers can use recurring event features to automate events that repeat regularly. Most calendars feature an email notification option for events so that you no longer have to send out a separate email to remind people of an event. The calendar event will automatically send email event reminders at the time you specify before the event. Be careful not to overuse this feature. Too many emails can cause users to unsubscribe from your calendar. Generally, one reminder per week or less is acceptable.

2. **The best can be embedded into personalized homepages, blogs, websites, group sites or any web-based place where individual or group work may occur.**

   A calendar lost in a room someplace or buried under clutter will not get as much use or be as useful as one that is always completely visible with an attached pen. The web enables things to "exist" or be accessible from many locations. Create one calendar in one place and use mini tools or gadgets to make the calendar available from any spot that would be useful. These mini calendars link to your main one and are regularly remotely updated so you only have to edit in one place but all instances of the calendar will update as well and benefit from current information.

3. **Encourage colleagues and students to subscribe to multiple calendars and add the information and content to theirs.**

   The web trend is moving from users orbiting islands of web coding artistry to the individual as center. People have the opportunity to choose which satellites of information orbit their personal spaces. We must assume that each individual has their own calendar and that their personal information is most important to them. The best calendars allow users to have their own calendars as the main focus, yet are able to draw in important events easily as needed. With calendars that allow information added from multiple calendars, students can have their personal events, school assignments and extracurricular events all in one handy place. Many calendars color code the different content and allow one to easily switch different feeds on and off to make finding the next assignment or birthday easier.

The biggest names in free, web-based calendars:

- Google Calendar
- AOL Calendar
- Yahoo! Calendar
- AirSet
- Kiko
- CalendarHub

Questions for professionals:

- What calendars do you find most useful as a professional?
- What collaborative calendars could you use to share information with your students and other colleagues?

Action Research Question: What impact does virtual calendars have on individual adults and learners? Before teaching virtual calendaring, ask a group how they keep themselves organized and remember critical events. Teach the virtual calendaring system. Periodically, ask that group what impact the virtual calendars are having on their organizational abilities. Share good ideas from everyone and report progress and challenges.

CALENDARS

Web calendars are amazing because you can add anyone else's calendar dates and appointments to your own and add and change information with a click.

The first step is to create your own personal calendar. Google Calendars are easy to set up and easy to add to your iGoogle homepage. Add to your personal calendar dates that are important to you: birthdays, holidays, appointments. If your school calendar has a feed, add it to yours. Google Calendar will even color-code them for you.

Having trouble sorting your personal dates from the school ones? Just check or uncheck the box next to a calendar name to hide or show it. Most calendars let you search them as well. When was that Art project due? Search for "art" and find it quickly. Some calendars even display the weather and can be checked from mobile phones. Google Calendar lets you add public calendars, which have a wide range of content, including sports events, concerts, holidays and more. Remember that you can always click on and off any of them that are you aren't using. When you sit down to do your schoolwork, it's a good idea to hide all but the school related ones.

The Agenda tab in Google Calendars is great because it easily and instantly creates a color-coded to-do list from all the events on your calendar. The program assigns each calendar a different color, but you can change them if you want. You might want to change assignment related calendars to more eye-catching colors.

Do not forget the event description box. This is a great place to add additional information about assignment instructions, resources and notes.

Once you have your calendar set up, print out the month and put it in your binder. That way if the unplugged give you an important date to add, you can just jot it on your printout and add it to your web-based calendar later. You can often print different sizes and date ranges so you could keep a copy of the month in your wallet.

The biggest names in free, web based calendars: Google Calendar; AOL Calendar; Yahoo! Calendar; AirSet; Kiko and CalendarHub.

Virtual Notebooks

When we send students to collect ideas and information we need to provide them an easy way to capture and record what they find. Virtual notebooks have several features to allow students to easily capture, record and organize information as well as giving them an easy way to return to key visited sites.

The Best:

1. **Allow you to easily grab content from a site**

   The web is so large that it is difficult to remember where you've been and what you've seen. Students need a way to capture, record, and cite valuable web based information. It's confusing to have to go back and forth cutting and pasting between browser windows and other programs. Virtual workbooks allow one to capture pages, key ideas and other webpage content quickly and simply.

2. **Allow you to add comments**

   We never want anyone to cut and paste without thought. If the goal is synthesis, students must jot down notes and thoughts to take the information gathering stage to the next stage.

3. **Make the information you collect easy to organize**

   It is easy to grab an extra long wave on an Internet surfing trip and lose track of time and purpose. The best notebooks allow the searcher to review and organize the information quickly and effectively. Labels and tags can help keep information organized and easier to access later.

4. **Help with citations**

   This is, as of today, the biggest weakness with most online virtual notebooks. Most of them save the website address but offer no assistance with proper citation, and taking information without accurate citation is plagiarism. Know that your students will use web-based resources because of their perceived simplicity. Citation is not difficult and must be taught. Teach students to create proper citations in the comment fields in the format preferred by your school. There are several citation assistants on the web.

   The biggest names in free online notebooks: Google Notebook; One Note; NoteSake

   A popular commercial tool is: NoodleTools

VIRTUAL NOTEBOOKS

Have you ever found something useful on the Internet, and then been sidetracked by something not-so-useful, and then been unable to go back? Virtual notebooks help us capture what we need and make it easier to go back to, if needed.

A notebook like Google Notebook, for example, adds a little picture of a notebook right in your browser. When you're on a site, you just click the notebook picture and you can grab picture, words or the whole page and it adds it to your notebook. Once you clip stuff make sure that you add comments in the comment box so you can remember why you clipped it and the address. That way, when you go back to look at everything you grabbed on your topic, you can organize it and revisit any place needed to fill any gaps.

Let's say you have to collect information on Shakespeare. You go to a site and clip a picture of him and a biography. You note the site, which is important because you have to give credit where credit is due, and add the comment "Picture and overview." You go to another site and see that it says that Shakespeare didn't write a thing. Can you believe everything that you read? Not always, but this looks interesting, so you clip it making sure you comment the source and add "Shakespeare didn't write?!?!" You continue to follow this thread and find out that the one site wasn't just a lone cook, but that there are a lot of famous people, including Mark Twain, that argue that "Shakespeare" may not have been the writer of any of the writings attributed to him.

You go back and check the original assignment. Your task was to write a one-page biography of Shakespeare. You open your virtual notebook and although you could write a hundred pages now on the controversy that, sadly, was not the assignment. You dig through the source information and synthesize it to a one-page overview of his life, but your conclusion brings in a quote from Twain, cited of course, that brings in this exciting piece of information while staying in the boundaries of the assignment.

What you have just done is a far cry from the old days of copying something word for word out of the encyclopedia. You looked at different sources and got to think, and learn and share the end result. You cited your sources, giving credit where credit was due, in part because it was easy to record not only what you found but also where you found it. One of the best ways to learn is to connect what you learn with what you know. Make connections in your comments. It helps it all stick in your mind. Imagine someone finds your work 443 years from now. What will they be able to guess about you? Taking information from multiple sources, evaluating, synthesizing it and citing expert information will show them evidence of a true thinker and using virtual notebooks will help you spend more time thinking about what you've found and how it all connects and what it means.

Virtual Workspaces

Many people, without any knowledge or experience with virtual worlds, are sent into a panic when they hear the words. The phenomenon might be a defensive reaction, "*Virtual* World? What's wrong with the *real* one?!" You might live in a nice town, and when one person starts going on and on about how Springfield is the best city EVER, you may be suddenly filled with doubt and bring up a fantastic Italian restaurant in your city. This doesn't mean that Springfield is an inherently bad place. It's just a place and all places have good and bad aspects.

The first thing that surprises people about virtual worlds is that most of them look like games. The cartoon appearance seems to remove some of the credibility for many. This game look and feel is partially due to the fact that the technology was developed in the video game industry. A Mickey Mouse phone does not diminish the quality of the conversation and the cartoon look of games doesn't either. In 2006 mmorgchart.com put the population of active, paid for virtual world subscriptions at 12.5 million. With so many people proficient with the game interfaces of virtual worlds it should be no surprise that the new, more flexible, non-game-based worlds would learn from the highly successful industry and use similar interfaces and looks.

A huge misconception is that online virtual world inhabitants are not social. You must be social to be successful in these worlds. The whole point is that it is a social experience. These places allow people to come together and collaborate to solve problems. The great news is that problems able to be solved have moved from storming the castle and retrieving a troll knuckle to a wide variety of pursuits, including education.

These worlds are so attractive because they provide an immersive experience, without having to physically go anywhere. Virtual reality is not the helmet, goggles and tubes but now created emotionally for a tenth the price. When you first enter one of these worlds it is hard to see the forest for the interface. They are difficult to learn at first. You find, like a child, you can't walk or talk and have to relearn all these skills, which can be awkward. One day, almost magically, the interface fades into the background and you are able to focus on human interaction, the heart and soul of these places. What is the number one thing that these real people give up to play? Television. Virtual worlds are successful for the same reason Web 2.0 applications are—they are interactive. People are setting aside a predictable TV show to appear in one whose story lines are infinite and anything can happen.[2]

In a personal virtual workspace students can demonstrate content knowledge and synthesis through virtual displays. They are somewhat similar to dioramas, but each object within the diorama can be interactive and a joy to explore. The process mimics kinesthetic learning for your brain, as your avatar touches objects and experiences are easily retained because of the pseudo physical memory. It is the closest thing to actually being there. Into these virtual displays students can add RSS feeds, videos, text and pictures, and although it might not *feel* like work because it's so fun for so many, the results can be stunning.

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[2] Thanks for these ideas from: *Synthetic Worlds* by Edward Castronova. University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Groups can use these virtual workspaces to plan, create, and reflect on projects. Eye4You Alliance and Global Kids are two organizations on Second Life's Teen Grid for kids ages 13–17 that are doing amazing, educationally valuable things for fun. Eye4You Alliance currently has an interactive display of banned books. Global Kids have virtually tackled topics such as racism, genocide in Darfur, public diplomacy, and the digital divide. They created an educational maze that educated thousands of youth about child trafficking.

On the adult grid in Second Life there are virtual learning experiences like a virtual Guantanamo Bay where visitors can experience being processed as a detainee and learn about the facility itself. There was a virtual solidarity protest in support of the protesters in Burma, and virtual fundraisers for real life causes take place in Second Life regularly.

There are a few large barriers today to using these amazing interactive platforms for regular learning.

1. Even with a gaming background, being proficient enough in the platform to create high quality work is very time consuming. If you have students who are already proficient in this medium, it might provide them an excellent way to create an interactive educational display.

2. Virtual worlds require state of the art computers with 3D graphic capability. Not every computer will run them and they are often blocked by firewalls.

3. Adults are not allowed in teen virtual worlds (without a long and arduous process) and kids and teens are not allowed in adult virtual worlds. If students create interactive displays, you will need to watch over their shoulder as they give you a tour of their display, or they will have to film their display, a process called "machinima" to share their work with you. There have been talks of an educational grid for Second Life, but as of this printing, it is still only talk.

4. Like the Internet, everything can be found within these worlds. Treat searching in Second Life as you would searching the Internet.

Virtual worlds are growing in popularity and allow for socially dynamic, immersive, anytime, anywhere, educational experiences. Language and law classes and library professional presentations and networking opportunities are already available within Second Life. Take tableau and what-if historical figures dinners to a new level. Practice Spanish in a virtual restaurant or hotel. The possibilities are endless. Virtual worlds are becoming more common as an additional means of communication and social networking and are joining the telephone and Internet as additional ways to serve the needs of our patrons. You don't have to participate in or love virtual worlds to appreciate that many do and are doing productive, socially valuable activities within them. An excellent video of examples of Science Learning Activities going on in Second Life can be viewed at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfsSGBraUhc

Virtual Worlds

If you have played World of Warcraft or Final Fantasy X or Halo or Everquest, you know what a 3D Virtual Environment is—it's the world that you play in. No one has come up with a catchy name yet so they are often referred to as *Sims* short for *simulations*; immersive worlds; virtual worlds; MUVEs or Multi User Environments; or Synthetic Worlds. The name isn't important; what is important is that now there are worlds like this in which you can create anything you want. No more must you kill 237 trolls or find a missing piece of fish food to get a neat sword. In these worlds you can just make that sword and are limited mostly by your imagination.

The fewer rules in the worlds, the more flexibility you have in it. More rules often help eliminate rude behavior or *griefing*. Second Life is a 3D world where virtual workspaces can be created and currently offers the most flexibility.

Second Life looks like a game at first glance, but it isn't exactly. It's more like a 3D Internet where you can walk around and chat and interact with others while checking out sites. Just like the Internet, some sites or *Sims* can have games and many don't.

The fun part is that you can create your own look, style, and place to share with others. After walking around for a while you start to care about your little character, called an *avatar*, and start to feel like you're really there. Check out Eye4You Alliance and Global Kids and get involved in their projects or start getting ideas for your own.

I remember making a goopy paper mache model of an adobe in the fifth grade. With virtual worlds I could create an adobe that people could walk through and learn the history of the places by clicking on certain items. If I learned something from making it and you could learn something by walking through it, now that would make sense.

Second Life is free to join and has a grid for teens ages 13–17 only. Once you get in and create something brilliant, although your fellow teens may marvel at your brilliance, your teacher is not allowed on the teen grid. In order to make it accessible and get the A+ you deserve, you will need to document your work somehow. The easiest way to share your creation with your class would be to use a computer that has some kind of large display so you could walk the virtual you around your place, demonstrating it. Not everyone has a projector like that so another option is to "film" yourself in the world giving the same tour. Another, simpler, lower tech option is to take screen shots of your work and present them in a report.

Chapter 8
My Communication

It would be very difficult to find a student or adult that owns a computing device who does not have an email address or who has probably been learning how to text message. Yet, this ubiquitous form of communication has been a conundrum for school officials, technology directors, teachers, and librarians to handle in the school environment. We know that if they can communicate, they will. And we expect that most communications will be of a non-educational nature. The easy solution is to turn it off, shut it down, and forbid it. Easy, but hardly a 21st century solution.

Blogging in a number of popular spaces has become a major pastime as young people seek to build connections, friends, and appear to be cool.

Can young people learn how to operate responsibly in an instant communication world? The answer is yes, of course, but not one that is terribly popular. However, one disaster, one emergency, and we are all hoping that there are hundreds of cell phones, text messages, and other instant communications to call for help, figure out what is happening, and know what to do next.

The handout that follows is a beginning attempt to open the discussion on how to set up and use email accounts responsibly. Many teachers prefer to go paperless and have their students email all assignments. We, as authors, have done this for a decade or more and recommend paperless assignment submission and grading. Of course we have been dealing with graduate students and college students. Many of these adults have come kicking and screaming into our paperless world, but it does not take long and the advantages so outweigh the disadvantages, and the protests disappear.

How can we hope that children and teens will automatically learn responsibility in virtual space unless adults start talking, teaching, and negotiating? Right now, whatever responsible behaviors are happening are kid produced. Perhaps they already have solutions we as adults need to know, share, and encourage. How can we find out? As we all know, saying don't, don't, don't means do, do, do.

The second handout gives brief advice on blogging. Ask students to share ideas for how to use them safely. Also, develop creative ideas for using them in the classroom and the library. For example, students can blog meetings they attend, books they read, concerts they attend, school assemblies, interviews with experts, trips and vacations they are reporting for credit, quick writes, reflections, oral reports they are listening to, experiences with friends/family/parents/outsiders. The list could go on and on. It only requires adults to get the vision on how instant communication can assist in the teaching and learning process, then figure out the mechanics of how it will work and how students will be taught to responsibly use this miraculous 21st century tool.

Questions for professionals:

- Am I proficient at emailing, blogging, and text messaging?
- What safeguards protect me as an adult from unwanted intrusions?
- How can children, teens, and adults work together to behave responsibly and take advantage of instant communication?

My Communication

Keeping lines of communication open and running smoothly

EMAIL

Email is an excellent way for you to contact anyone else that has email, anywhere, anytime. You don't have to worry if the person you are writing to is sleeping or busy, they'll get the message when it's convenient for them. About 92% of teens aged 12–17 that use the Internet send and receive email (PEW 2001). When used well, email is a fantastic means of communication. You are able to communicate and have a record of that communication. No more discussions about lost homework; you can forward them the receipt and a copy of the original message.

Don't waste time sifting through junk mail; make your email efficient so it saves time, not wastes it.

EXPLORER

Anyone who uses email should have different accounts for different purposes. We recommend three accounts: one for school/professional use, one for personal use, and a third for spam. Some email providers let you create several accounts that you can access all from one place. Make it a habit to always check and answer your school or work email account first.

School/Professional Account

Keep the user name close to your real name, but relatively anonymous. If your name is Jacob Mangler and you go to Alvarez High School, JManglerAHS@gmail.com would be good. First impressions count, and you never know, a truly terrible email name might have an effect on the grade of the brilliant paper attached inside. Believe me that no teacher wants to receive an email from pimpdaddy@hotmail.com, so having a neutral email account name that gives them some clue as to who it might really be is important. People you write to are engaged in their own spam war as well, so be an ally, help them out.

Never use this email account for anything but school or professional work. Emails to your teachers, librarians, counselors or bosses fall into this category. The only students you should ever give this address to are group or project members. Think of this account as your money; if you wouldn't trust someone to hold your money, don't trust them with this address.

Personal Account

Think of this address as your house. If you invite someone into your house and they trash it, don't let them back in. Use the same idea with your personal account. You don't have to worry so much about your account name. I usually give my personal account a name that has nothing to do with my real name. If you have a handle or a nickname online this is often a great email address. If you don't, this is your chance to reinvent

yourself: Techgoddess@yahoo.com or whatever your muse recommends.

Spam keeps you from getting to the good stuff, so if you have a buddy who keeps filling your inbox with chain letters, give them a friendly message that you're not into them, and if they send them again, mark them as spam so your email provider will toss the trash right into the can.

Spam Can

You want to play a game on a site but they require an email address to play. Only use this account to confirm signup and avoid checking it at all if you can. Give it to anyone you never want to hear from again or aren't sure of. If they eventually prove trustworthy you can tell them you got a new address and give them your personal account address.

Surfer

You've set up your three accounts and want the next steps to make sure your email is efficient and effective.

Filters

To take you email to the next level, use your email provider's filter options to block emails that are obvious spam by blocking certain words that may appear in the subject line. You can block "mortgage" and other terms that often appear in spam.

Signatures

Add a little flare to your email by adding a custom signature. You should have different signatures for your school and work addresses. For school or work most people use their organizational affiliation. So Jacob's might say "Alvarez High School, home of the Brave Eagles." A favorite quote often follows contact or location information and can give readers an insight to your personality.

Übergeek

You've become an expert at using email well. Push technology can bring your email from multiple accounts to your Blackberry or handheld device. You can quickly and easily see emails as they come in and respond to them immediately without needing a computer.

Where to get an account

YOUR EMAIL PROVIDER

Yahoo.com, AOL and other Internet providers offer web based email accounts for free. Yahoo gives the option of having several accounts and account linking options.

GMAIL OR HOTMAIL

www.google.com offers Gmail, which is easy and fast. You can use your Gmail account to log into Blogger and YouTube as well. Microsoft offers Hotmail with 2 Gigabytes storage.

YOUR SCHOOL

Some schools provide free email account hosting

In a nutshell

- Have three accounts for: school; personal; and spam, and use each appropriately.
- Never open potential spam. Mark unwanted emails as spam to block the sender in the future.
- Always check and respond to your school account first.
- Use filters and signatures to further protect your account and give it a personal flare.
- Use a Blackberry or similar device for anytime anywhere access without a computer.
- Delete or archive email addresses at the end of the school year. Some email-based viruses spread by using your email contact list to send themselves to everyone on your list. Save them the hassle and yourself the potential embarrassment by keeping your contact list current and useful.

Blogging

Blogging is a way you can keep in touch and share and get the latest news and information. Web logs or blogs are like online diaries for the whole world to read. Teachers or teacher librarians might set one up and post key ideas that you can respond to through the comments. Blogs, like diaries, are best when updated regularly, and contain deep thought rather than what you ate for lunch.

Many bloggers create a network of blogging friends and each of them has a personal blog, and then they can check each others' to find out the latest news and thoughts. You probably want to keep your personal blog private, which you can do in the blog settings. Keep in mind that whether it is set to private or not, there is little on the Internet that is completely safe, and you want to make sure that anything written would not reflect badly on yourself or allow any psycho to find you in real life.

There are many free sites that let you create blogs in minutes. Blogger and WordPress are simple and fast for blog creation.

Chapter 9
Displaying My Work

Is there anyone else out there who is exhausted to death by PowerPoint? There are alternatives that are quite attractive, easy to do, and engaging. Opportunities abound but there are some cautions.

The normal pattern in schools is to have students research some topic, prepare a presentation, and then give that presentation to the entire class. Some nay-sayers and critics call this the crayola curriculum. The argument is that so much time is taken up by the construction and presentation of material that the time for real learning, high-level learning, is shortchanged. We could not agree more. We have witnessed students spending hours upon hours creating brochures, posters, charts, and displays with copied information from the Internet. It may be creative, glitzy, and use the fanciest technologies, but contain very little of substance and little learning.

In this chapter, we provide many alternatives to PowerPoint presentations, but we have rules for adults:

> **When viewing and assessing a technological presentation, always ask what was learned first. Then, if warranted, admire the production/technology features.**

Students will produce what you rate high and admire. What do you admire? What do you rate high?

1. Set up the assessment rubric so that content learning gets the highest rating and points.
2. Give points for the process learning (information literacy skills) used to learn the content.
3. Give some points for the presentation and effective use of technology.

There is another major problem worth considering. The production and presentation of a product is often considered the high point of a research project. After the oral presentations, the unit is considered over. Projects are graded and that is the end.

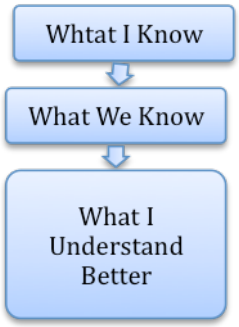
We would like to argue that when students research a president, a state, an issue, or an animal, their presentations, their mini-expertise at the normal end point should really be the beginning. Why? Most state standards are written more generally than the research topics address. The standard probably does not dictate in-depth knowledge of a single president, a single state, a single position on an issue. Rather, most standards require more general and deep understanding. To achieve such understanding, students should piece their own mini-expertise into that of other students for a much larger big idea, an Ah Ha!, or DEEP understanding. Oral presentations are good for the presenter who is active; listening to oral presentations is a passive learning activity unlikely to produce very much learning at all. Presentations are time consuming. They are often as much for the teacher, who uses the time to grade each one, as they are for anything other than incidental learning.

We recommend that at the point when every student is a mini expert, a major higher-level learning activity take place that will force the learners to combine what they know with what others know to build a big idea at a higher level of Bloom's Taxonomy. One of the authors has developed with two Canadian authors major examples and guidance on creating and using these types of culminating activities. Their book: *Beyond Bird Units: 18 Models of Teaching and Learning in Information-Rich and Technology-Rich Environments*[3] gives many, many examples.

In a second book by the same authors, *The New Learning Commons Where Learners Win!*,[4] the following advice about the culminating activity or big think is given:

The Big Think – Building Collective Intelligence

For learners to reach the full potential of their inquiries they will explore the bigger impact of their work. Often these concepts and ideas are essentially those targeted in learning standards. As individual or group inquiries are completed and presentations given, learners realize that they have considerable expertise in the curriculum topic they have just explored. They have heard, seen, and experienced the findings of others and are ready to examine the collective knowledge of the class. The products or presentations are not the end of the inquiry project but the beginning of a Big Think. Learners take this opportunity to transform their learning into something new through collaborative knowledge building. They might:



- Conduct an active discussion about what they now know as a group vs. what they researched as individuals
- Attack a more difficult problem or challenge using the expertise of individuals to create an inventive solution
- Challenge the group with a new question requiring combined expertise
- Create a new question that leads them into the next learning experience

- Write about larger ideas and concepts learned by the group
- Collaboratively build charts, diagrams, maps, mind maps,
- plans, or action items based upon both individual and collaborative expertise
- Interact with an expert in order to compare what they have learned with what the expert knows about a topic and ways they might

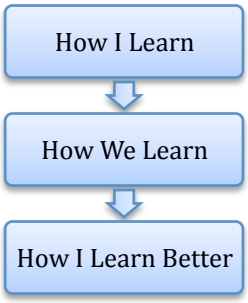
[3] Loertscher, David V., Carol Koeschlin, and Sandi Zwaan. *Beyond Bird Units: 18 Models for Teaching and Learning in Information-Rich and Technology-Rich Environments*. Hi Willow Research & Publishing, 2007. Available at http://lmcsource.com

[4] Loertscher, David V., Carol Koeschlin, and Sandi Zwaan. *The New Learning Commons Where Learners Win!: Reinventing School Libraries and Computer Labs*. Hi Willow Research & Publishing, 2008. Available at http://lmcsource.com

become experts themselves in various careers

- Take action on a problem or issue that surfaces during the learning experience
- Participate in related real world events that exhibits what they know, can do

The second part of the big think is to design an activity that will press students to think about the learning process they have just encountered. This activity could include reflection, questioning, and assessing techniques. A big think about the learning process should result in transference of skills and knowledge to other or new situations, self and peer evaluation, and goal setting. Together, they might:



- Develop a visual map of their learning journey and/or the information networks they used during the process.
- Chart individual emotions during the learning process on line graphs and layer the graphs to analyze for group or class patterns. Suggest learning tips for dealing with emotions, work habits, dispositions, and organization skills.
- Compare self-assessments and look for similarities or major differences. Use this data to set individual and class goals.
- Discuss and chart how their skill development applies to future work at school and in their personal lives.
- Explore careers that require inquiry process skills and begin a career database for future reference.
- Create a how-to presentation for another group of learners, e.g., best search strategies, note making techniques, presentation tips, etc.
- Develop questions to assess collaborative learning experiences and then develop criteria for better team work.
- Analyze the effectiveness of available time, resources, and equipment, and then prepare a needs assessment report for the Learning Commons.
- Reflect as a group: Are we getting better as learners? How can we learn more in less time? What technologies will help us learn better?

The third part of the big think is designed as a review by the teaching partners of data gathered from the learner, learning unit activities, and learning organization practices. Combined, this evidence will provide teaching partners with powerful data for refining or redesigning future learning experiences.

The bottom line is that the traditional end to a learning activity—passing in a paper, a project, or making a presentation—is now a springboard to keep the thinking and learning flowing.

One example here may give a clearer picture of what we mean. Students are given the problem: Your family has just survived a _____ (name a disaster). You have barely survived, but the damage has been extensive. As a family, you realize that you were poorly

prepared. Research that disaster and prepare guidelines for your family for how you could have been more prepared and would not have had to suffer so much. Students then research their disaster either as individuals or in small groups and prepare to present their findings using either conventional or fancy technologies as described in this chapter. Instead of having these presentations done in front of the entire class, the teacher proposes a new and more difficult challenge. She tells the class: In real life, if you study one disaster and are prepared well for it, some other disaster will happen. It seems to be just the luck of the draw. We will now jigsaw you students into new groups. Each group member will have a different expertise. Now, compare and contrast what you know about individual disasters in order to create a presentation to your family on: How we can be prepared as a family for any disaster that might happen to us? The students can be invited to create a booklet, hold a discussion with their families, compare what they know with the local disaster preparedness expert, and come away with much more understanding than they would have had if they had passively listened to boring oral reports.

Technology should be used to help learners learn more in less time; to increase the depth of understanding; to build expertise in converting information into powerful messages and important major ideas.

In this section, the following presentation technologies are explained to students:

- Webpages
- Blogs, Vlogs, and Podcasts
- Photo sharing
- Virtual worlds

As with other chapters and examples in this book, we only hint about the possibilities and a few of the many programs and software available. Ask students for their help and expertise in developing a wide repertoire of presentation technologies.

Displaying My Work

Select the Right Tool for the Right Job

Webpage: Static text, pictures, audio or video. Best poster ever.

Blog: Regularly updated text or pictures. Best journal ever.

Podcast: Regularly updated audio. You own personal radio show.

Vlog: Regularly updated video. Your own personal news broadcast.

Virtual World: Interactive displays with a social scene. Best diorama ever.

Photo Sharing Sites: Online photo collections storage and sharing.

Video Sharing Sites: Online video collection storage and sharing.

Webpages

You can create a great website for free and you don't have to know anything about html, or programming. GooglePages, Yahoo and others let you make a professional looking page in a matter of clicks. Easier than a multiple choice test, you pick the style and layout of the page and start adding content. The real task is not setting up the webpage, but deciding what to put on it.

Make sure that visitors to your site immediately understand its purpose as soon as they open it up, without having to scroll down. Do consider the layout and style of pages created for projects. Your personal pages can be more flexible, but you need to take into account your audience when you create them for others. You think pink text on a black background looks cool but if it gives your teacher a headache, your brilliant words might be lost to eyestrain and affect your grade.

Try to make your webpage more than a link warehouse by adding some of the calendars, gadgets, RSS feeds, pictures, video or other useful and relevant tools you have found. Webpage counters will let you know your page's traffic, or number of page visitors.

Blogs, Vlogs and Podcasts

You love using blogs for personal communication and now you want to use them to display your personal work. Blogs are the best places to display often-changing text. You could do a problem of the day or week on a blog. If you create a blog reading log you could synthesize what you read and your friends or others who are reading the same book could read your ideas and respond to them in the contents section. When creating a blog or anything that allows for comments, make sure in the settings to set comments as either moderated or not allowed. A lot of devious advertisers look for unprotected blogs to advertise their garbage for free. They usually do this with an automated program, so setting comments to moderated shuts them out and protects your readers from annoying spam.

Podcasts give you an easy way to create your own syndicated radio show. You can create audio files by recording your voice and the podcast host will give you an RSS feed address. Anyone wanting to subscribe to it just needs the feed address to keep up with your top stories. A lot of the free podcast hosts tag on a little five-second advertisement for themselves at the beginning of your podcast. It's an excellent way to share book reviews, or anything that you might have done in an oral report. It's a great way to spread the word.

Vlogs are Video Logs or video diaries. For the camera shy, or those of you that are smart about keeping your true identity safe on the web, there is a great tool called Voki that lets you create a cartoon character whose lips will move to a message you record. First you create the character, then you record a one minute audio message. Voki then gives you the code or address so you can embed it in your webpage, blog or wherever. Voki also lets you share them via email. They can be great for giving booktalks, reviews or for welcoming visitors to your webpages. For people unsure about or unable to use their own voice, Voki also gives creators the option of using a computer-generated voice.

With all of these tools, keep in mind that your audience is global. Employers often check the Internet these days to see what future potential employees have been up to online. Make sure that anything you post on them is always done with that in mind. Mind your P's and Q's on the WWW or it could come back to haunt you.

Video Sharing: YouTube and Blip.TV

YouTube and Blip.TV are well recognized as the biggest names in video sharing today. They allow you to create, upload and store video files to the Internet for free. There is a 10 minute and 100 MB file size limit on all YouTube Videos and currently no set limit on Blip.TV, which is important because video file sizes are generally HUGE. All video sharing sites have clear and strong rules regarding copyright and want you to submit original works.

You can create educational videos to share with friends, video presentations and original work. Whether you create videos or not, you can share excellent ones that you find with others by saving them to your favorites list. You can also create channels that have collections of different types of video. There are a lot of ridiculously bad videos out there but there are also some truly amazing ones as well. Most videos can be linked to from any of your other sites or blogs and many can be embedded, so that a little video player appears right on your site with the video you want.

YouTube and Blip.TV both allow you to create a blog on your channel site and Blip.TV allows for Cross-Posting. Cross-posting makes it so that anything you post on your blog will automatically appear on your Blip.TV site and vice versa. Both sites track your views, comments, and sites that link to your video and the number of times your video has been added to people's favorites. Videos on YouTube and Blip.TV are easy to share. YouTube videos are converted to flash and Blip.TV will convert your file into a variety of formats. Videos brought on the virtual big screen in Second Life must be in a Quicktime format so you can use Blip.TV to get your videos in there.

There are many ways to create a video. You could make slides in Powerpoint and edit them using a free video-editing program like the Windows Movie Maker. You could combine webcam shots with stills or record everything with a video camera and then transfer it to a computer. In the editing program you can add transitional effects, voice-overs, special effects, music and titles. Most editing programs will even help you burn it to DVD and create a DVD Menu. If you are looking for photos, sound effects or other things you can use in your videos, learn about creative commons attribution. Many web users apply a license to things they have made that allow anyone to use as long as they give them credit for their work. So if you make a great video and find an excellent guitar solo you want to add in one section, if the creator has applied the CC attribution license you can use it so long as you put something like, "Guitar Solo used with Creative Commons permission from Will Gorham." Librarians study copyright law and issues and can probably help if you have questions.

For all your creative commons questions check out: http://creativecommons.org/

Photo Sharing: Flickr, Picassa

Photo sharing websites like Flickr allow anyone to create photo or picture collections online. You can post individual photos and create virtual web photo albums or collections. It is possible to create groups in Flickr so that several people can add their photos to one general collection. If your class takes a trip you can create a group collection to which all of you can contribute.

Like with any web based sharing site, you might want to make your collection private so that only invited people may visit it. A Dallas teenager had her picture taken at a church car wash and posted it to Flickr. A telephone company in Australia used her picture, without permission or compensation, in bus stop ads for Virgin Mobile Telephones. Protect yourself and the people you take picture of by keeping your photos private and or making sure that when asked for copyright status you check “All rights reserved.” That means that no one can use your photo. If someone is really interested in it, they can always contact you and you can negotiate rights individually.

Virtual Worlds

Interactive displays in virtual worlds are a great way to demonstrate understanding of a topic and share it with your peers. The banned book display in the picture below is on Eye4You Alliance Island on the teen grid in Second Life. Visitors climb down into the belly of a pirate ship and can examine these famous banned books. Each book, when clicked on will give you a note card explaining why the book was banned and a trusted source for finding more information about the particular case on the web.

Greylin Graves on the Teen Grid at the Eye4You Alliance Island Banned Book Display

In the virtual world of Kaneva you can create virtual apartments for free and those apartments can have YouTube videos playing on virtual televisions and pictures on the walls. You could easily and quickly create a virtual art display or museum in your apartment. Second Life, Active Worlds, There and Kaneva are the current leaders in virtual (non-game) cyberspace.

Documenting and Saving My Work

One of the difficulties of all web-based work is that the Internet is a constantly evolving entity. You and millions of others from all over the world shape it and help it grow by adding and visiting content. Because of this evolution you cannot count on your work being permanently housed on the Internet forever in one place. Here are a few tips to help you keep some sort of record of your online work.

Screenshots: You can take screenshots of your work on a Website, blog, or virtual world. To take a screenshot on a PC simply hit the shift key and the Prt Sc (Print Screen) button. That doesn't actually print your screen out, but saves the screen view to your clipboard. In order to see and save the picture you need to open a word processor, or paint program, and hit control and V to paste it onto the page.

On a Mac you have the same basic idea, just different keys. On a Mac:

- Press Command (Apple)-Shift-4. The pointer turns into a bull's eye.
- Select the area of the screen you wish to capture. The screen is captured and saved as a PDF file called Picture 1 on your hard drive.
- If you hold down the Control key and the Command (Apple)-Shift-4 while clicking the bull's eye, the image is stored on the clipboard
- Alternately, you can press Command (Apple)-Shift-3 to take a picture of the entire screen.

These screenshots take pictures of everything on your screen, which might not be necessary. You can remove the toolbars and other unwanted items by taking the image to a paint program and cropping it. This method will not capture a complete webpage unless the webpage is no larger than the visible screen. In virtual worlds use built in program picture tools to save images.

Copy and Paste: You might be able to copy and paste all of the content from your webpage into a document. Word processors sometimes have trouble showing all of the objects for some websites but the advantage is that if it does work, you get the benefit of all the content from the page.

Save a Webpage or Copy the Code: Many browsers allow you to save a complete website which creates a file for you. In your browser you can also choose to view the source or code of a website. The code is just text that tells the browser what to do and where. You can copy the code of your webpage. If you open the code in your browser it may show your webpage.

Audio, video and pictures should already be available to you since you had to have them as files initially to get them onto the Web.

Machinima in Virtual Worlds: Screenshots are fine, but the best way to save and share virtual work with people who can't get in and to still capture the action is with machinima. Machinima, or machine-aided cinema, is the process of capturing action from games or virtual worlds and then editing it to make it a movie. It sounds difficult, but as far as filming goes, it usually just requires pushing a button to start and stop the camera. Second Life has a built-in video capture program so you can just go to File and choose *Start Movie*. It asks you where you want to save the file. Remember that unprocessed video files are really big. Thirty seconds can easily take up one Gig, so try to keep your shots short and then edit them together in an external program. Your editing program can compress your video so that you don't lose too much quality from the original files but the file size will be much smaller. Remember that YouTube has a 100MB maximum file size and Blip.TV recommends not going over that amount.

If the in world capture isn't working out for you, there is an amazing free program for the PC that you can use to capture virtual world video called Fraps. Download and install Fraps, and start the program, which runs on top of your screen but is not recorded. The default key to record and stop recording in Fraps is F7, which is kind of funny because that is the hotkey for dancing in Second Life. To keep your avatar from dancing a little jig every time you start and stop the camera, wasting your valuable film (hard drive space), change the default record key in Fraps to F9. Unless you have added something to F9, it won't activate your character. If you have added an action to F9, just deactivate it while you film.

Here is an example of a machinima I made for the Knowville 3D:

http://blip.tv/file/325444

You might want to create a folder to save your work. Every semester or year, depending on the amount of work, backup the folder to a DVD or other storage outside your computer for safekeeping. You might also make printouts of your best documented work to save for future portfolios. You can spend the rest of your life convincing people that you're smart, but one glance at your work can do all the talking for you.

Chapter 10
Managing Myself in My Personal Workspace

Of all the ideas we explore in this short book, the notion of children and teens learning not just to manage information space but also to manage themselves within that space is the most novel. Certainly, we expect many readers to dismiss the idea totally.

We've decided to stick to our guns.

The fundamental premise of most technology systems in American education at presence is to build a system where adults are in control. And yet we face a generation that already behave outside whatever controls we have or can build. It now becomes the problem of herding cats. The idea that we can build a system that no one can crack and locked down so tight is saying that no one can or will use it. So why build a system no one can use? Why build something our patrons don't use? Why build a Wal-Mart store and lock the doors?

Total control of information systems presumes that its users are irresponsible. Yet an anarchical system is hardly a viable alternative. Traditional education vs. constructivist education is really the issue here. Adults need to move from being sages on the stage to guides on the side.

To produce a student who has been in an information system for 12 years under total adult supervision and turn them out into the cold cruel world of the Internet is unthinkable. They have no defense mechanisms. However, they are already there. They are in the cold cruel world without any adult guidance. Perhaps they will develop it on their own. Perhaps we only take responsibility for the eight hours a day over which we preside. Nonsense.

Let us begin to teach kids and teens how to manage themselves in information space. Let's give them a fishing pole, not a fish.

In this section, we approach this subject. It is just a start. And, after looking at our advice given here, perhaps we have violated our own rules. Perhaps kids and teens need to help us build the self-management tools they need. Yes, we have said elsewhere:

- I'll teach you,
- You teach me,
- Together, we will figure it out.

Perhaps the concept of self-control is antiquated. Let's reintroduce it to a generation of unsuspecting kids who might just learn a lifelong skill.

There are a plethora of Internet safety lessons, resources available to begin the conversation. Here are a few. Add to this list those you think appropriate for your students:

- iSafe at: http://www.isafe.org/
- I Keep Safe at: http://www.ikeepsafe.org/?gclid=CMXH7pnUvZUCFQ77iAodIXoMQQ

- NetSmartz from the Center for Missing and Exploited Children at: http://www.netsmartz.org/
- Wired Kids at: http://www.wiredkids.org/
- Kids and Teens Internet Safety bibliography at: http://www.dmoz.org/Kids_and_Teens/Computers/Internet/Safety/
- Google Directory for Internet Safety at: http://www.google.com/Top/Kids_and_Teens/Computers/Internet/Safety/
- Webwise Kids at: http://www.webwisekids.org/

We have developed three topics here. Please add to them.

- Manage ourselves in the information system we build
- Filtering
- Privacy

Sites I and my Colleagues Like and Use:

Managing Myself in My Personal Workspace:
Zen and the art of achieving balance between my social and work selves

The Internet is vast and there are a lot of fun and interesting things to explore. Links in every nook and cranny call out to you vying for your attention. It's easy to get sidetracked because your mind would love to find something more interesting behind that next link. At the same time, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, who loathes computers. The way to become proficient and efficient with computers is to achieve a balance of online work and social activities.

When you're doing something you enjoy, time flies by, and if you're doing something you hate, it seems to last forever. If you learn to use the Internet socially and for fun, your mindset will be better when you get on the net to do work. Attitude has a serious impact on the way you approach a task. If your friends teach you how to make a blog or use Flickr, these programs will be easy to learn, and then you can use that fun knowledge and those skills and apply them to schoolwork.

We recommend that you get your schoolwork done first. Computers are designed to make the work better faster. If you are spending too much time on an assignment, you need to think about why it's going so slowly and try a different technique or get help. All of the outlined tools are designed to help you organize and access what you need faster. If getting your assignments is slowing you down, think of ways to make the process faster. If searching isn't working out for you, consult an information-seeking professional like your Librarian to give you tips to speed it up. The skills go both ways. Online skills you learn for schoolwork will also improve your online social life.

It is probably best to get going on your schoolwork first, but if you're one of those people that has to eat dessert before dinner, use a timer. It's easy to think, "I'll just answer some quick emails" and the next thing you know two hours have gone by and you're in this crazy chat with your friends that you just can't get out of. If you have to check the social first, you can buy a little oven timer for under ten dollars at grocery and other stores. Don't get anything fancy that needs batteries (another thing to forget) but one that you just turn to start the timer that makes a really horrible sound when it goes off. You can also set online timers or cell phone alarms, but they can be too easy to ignore. The head-rattling bell of these beauties will get your attention and remind you it's time to get to work. Get your work done and it's back to the social scene. Fifteen minutes should be enough to check and answer the important emails; the rest can wait. If you do need to add an extra five minutes, set the timer again, for five minutes.

Professor Enid Irwin at San Jose State University gives some of the best advice regarding schoolwork:

1. Do the assignment—So many people get bogged down in the details and trying to make something perfect that they never actually get the assignment done and turned in. An F is usually 50% but not doing it at all is 0%. If you have an F and an A, the average is a C. If you have an A (100%) and a zero, the average is an “F”. Priority number one is good or bad, get it DONE.

2. If you still have time, go back and make sure you did it right. Recheck your work. Does it make sense? Does your work do what was asked? Are there any obvious errors that need fixing?

3. If you still have time, make it perfect. Is there anything you could add to improve the assignment? Could someone give you a second opinion before it goes live? Sometimes a fresh pair of eyes can spot things more easily and make good suggestions.

To keep yourself productive and happy, you might allow yourself a half an hour online socially after each of those steps, for balance. Think of them as well deserved mental power naps. Use the timer to keep you honest.

You can tell you have achieved a perfect balance when you are able to approach web-based activities school or social without trepidation and know that on the web, you are in command.

In command. In control. Productive. Responsible. These are all very sought after personal qualities that help us all get ahead and become successful in life in our chosen careers, in our families. As a young person, remember that you are now competing with people from all over the world for jobs, financial security, and a productive life. It is a much different world than the one your grandparents and parents grew up in. Establishing your work habits early will contribute a great deal to your success.

There’s this old man on the street I pass every day.
Stinky. Unkempt. Grizzled. With cup in hand.
I try not to look. I wonder where he sleeps.
I wonder what he ate and when.
When he is sick, what then?
He spoke to me one day.
“I wish I was like you. Starting off new.”
“Go for it, kid!”
I hurried off.
But it got me thinking.
I wear only what my friends wear.
I speak like my friends speak.
I do what they do.
I act like they act.
I am like a mirror of them.
Who am I?

Filtering

Why do folks lock their homes? Why do tomcats “mark” their territory? Why did the Chinese build the great wall? Why do we have missile defense systems? Why seal packages so tightly that only kids can get into them?

It is all about unwanted intrusions.

If you have an email account, then you know about spam. Recently, in the Seattle area, a spammer was arrested. It was said that he sent out billions of email spam messages every day around the world. Unfortunately, there are those who find satisfaction in destroying systems, peace, security, and even societies. Some of it is done in jest or fun. Others have malicious intent.

In an attempt to keep us safe, schools often set up filtering systems for the Internet. Friends you know may find it a game to get around those filters just for the sport of it, or to get perfectly legitimate information we need.

Filters are useful to all of us. We want to ignore scammers who want to steal our money. We want predators to leave us alone. We want advertisers to bug out.

There is no such thing as a perfect filter. So what? There is no perfect house key. So what? It just means that we all work to protect our safety.

Many email programs allow you to report spam. Your parents may require a filter on your Internet connection. We may block unwanted television shows. It is a matter of personal protection.

The first line of protection on the street is yourself. The same is true online. When something potentially dangerous makes its appearance on our computer monitor, the best line of defense is the power to not click; to report; to get out.

When faced with a grizzly bear, you’d better know what to do in advance. No time to do research on that one.

Learn about filters. Learn to protect your computer against viruses. Learn how to protect yourself and your computer. In this case, what you don’t know can hurt and hurt badly.

Adults know some things about protection online. You know some things. Your friends and geeks know about other protections. It appears that we all have to share in the responsibility to keep ourselves safe and keep those around us safe. It is just one of those facts about the online world we all have to deal with.

Privacy

You have probably seen those crime shows on TV where the police or private investigators are tracking down the criminals. Through cell phone records, credit card charges, email, and computer investigations, they seem to know your every move. What's private? Your grandmother may have kept a personal diary and as long as she could find a special hiding place, her writing and personal secrets were for her eyes only. In the world of the Internet, those days seem to be gone forever.

A fact of life is that:

- Email is a public place
- Blogs are public places
- MySpace is a public place
- Facebook is a public place
- Almost all social networking sites are public places

But you protest. I can limit who are my friends. I direct an email to a friend and to no one else. What I do online is private. Well, reconsider.

Many movie stars find that what they considered was their private life is now being splashed all across the world in chat rooms and on Internet sites. If folks can find out that much about them, they can find it out about you.

We can be paranoid about being watched. We may be upset and help fight for more privacy in our society. However, the reality is that you and I are being watched. A better way of putting it may be that the potential for being watched is always present.

Knowing this requires that we behave as if someone else could find out much of what we are doing online, perhaps everything we are doing online.

The laws of various states put the responsibility of parenting and mentoring upon certain adults. Our society expects adults to mentor children and teens through the tough times of our early years and expects those adults to keep you safe until some point that you are mature enough to make your own decisions and shoulder the responsibility for providing for yourself and those you care for.

We all have those who are "assigned" to look out for us. And we have others we trust for advice and protection. These are the people who need to know what is going on in digital space as well as in real life. Sadly, there are enough predators out there, enough dangers, enough destructive paths, that it is not only good to have, but essential to have adults who can mentor us through what can quickly become overwhelming. Who are your adult mentors?

Chapter 11
Group Space

Collaborative groups are as much the rule as they are the exception in the 21st century world. Business, industry, medicine, governments, the military, and the entire R & D communities are powered by groups. Why? Because it seems that in our more complex world, no one person can know enough, cannot have enough expertise to solve the problems at hand or invent what needs to be invented. One may have a job with a company over some years, but those years are filled with project teams that are task oriented. So, one might engage and disengage with several teams over a few years doing quite different things under a single umbrella.

Kids and teens are often introduced very early to group work in school. They become group wise rather quickly. They generally divide into doers and slackers. Slackers won't have jobs in the collaborative world.

The world of collaborative Web 2.0 provides many tools that make efficient group work possible. Instead of one's individual Excel spreadsheet, I opt for the Google Spreadsheet that allows 30 different kids to be working simultaneously on a single spreadsheet. One person may have command of a particular cell, but everyone automatically knows what cells are busy and which can be worked on. It is quite a different world. It is group generation of, clipping of, copying into a single location and then we are ready for the important stuff of analysis, synthesis, and generating big ideas.

In the pages directed at students that follow, there are a variety of tools and information sources that are listed to contribute to what "my" group is trying to accomplish at the moment. This group may be within a classroom across classrooms, across schools, or spread around the world. No matter. I can control it from my iGoogle group space page.

Thus, the group space tab becomes a separate place in which to work rather than mixing everything together on my personal space. I am dividing my work into separate pigeonholes so that I can manage and be organized.

But personal preference is always present. What one person might put in a group space, another might have in personal space. It is all part of the notion that I am in control, in command, and I can build my information space to serve me. I control it. I learn to manage it. I learn to manage myself in that space.

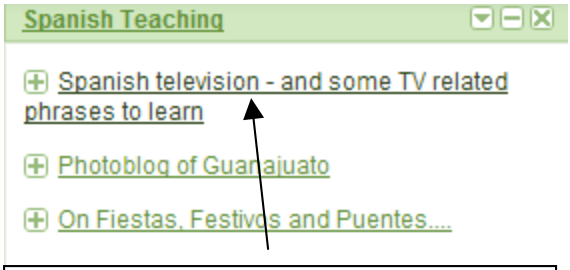
We gave a number of options in the following student handouts. You will want to recreate these pages for your work with individuals.

Group Space—Mini Tools for Group Spaces

These tools help you make sense of the vast and ever growing expanse that is the Internet. These mini tools will help you quickly find what you need and want and make sense of it all.

RSS Feeds

The shared space is a great place to use feeds from Teachers, Group Blogs, relevant groups and news aggregators and document or file updates, explained in more detail later.



Subscribing to RSS feeds makes them come on to your page automatically

Subject Specific Tools

If your group is doing a report on Spain, for example, in Spanish class it couldn't hurt to add a Spanish word or phrase of the day tool or a translation tool. There are great blogs for Spanish Teachers that provide great information that could be of interest and used by students as well. You might use a periodic table for a Chemistry Group, or a Calorie Counter for Physical Education. One of our current favorites is the amazing Google Earth tool, pictured at the right, that lets you virtually explore the Earth and its history. Visually stunning and educational "Today's Exploration" not only offers this amazing fresh content but also allows users to create their own so educators or students could create their own exploration for others. A tool and potential project all built into one!

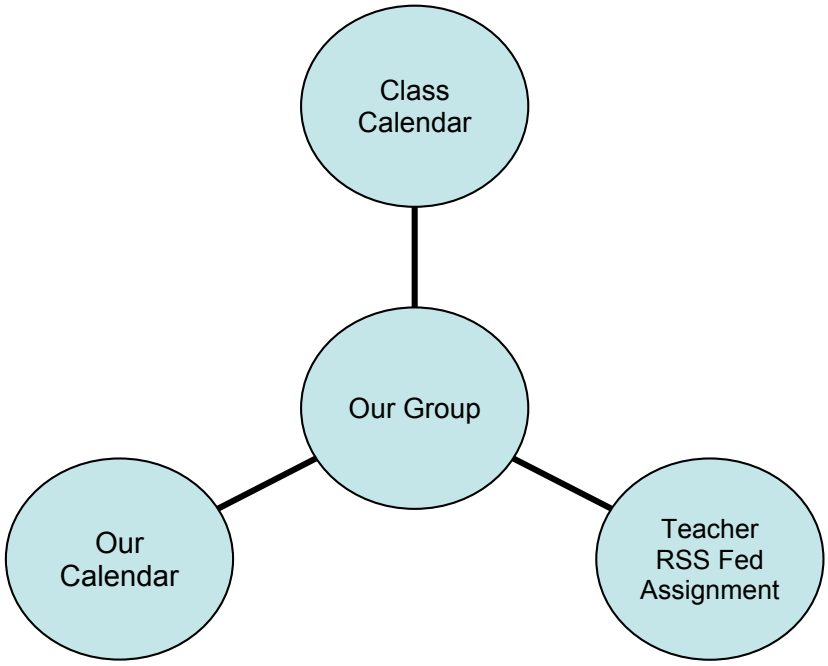
Recycling is Good for the Planet and your Time

It would be rude in a group meeting to be doing a Sudoku while the rest of the group works. Try to keep all of the content on your group page related to the group work and the fun extras for your personal page. When the group work is done, you might want to take a screenshot of it for a future portfolio of your work and then delete it. You can also click the "share" link and email it to yourself for safekeeping. That way, if you do delete it, you simply go to the link in your email and open the page anew. The gadgets will be empty and not have your stored information but they will be the same gadgets in the same spots. You can also use this emailed link to easily bring up a template for future group work and customize it as needed. Why reinvent the wheel?

Group Space—Our Assignments

You know how to access control your assignments, but how about group assignments? Group assignments can be brought in the same way as individual assignments with RSS feeds and calendars onto your personal homepage. Use group to-do lists and create a group calendar to keep group members on task and aware of critical dates.

If your group creates a group site, it is a good idea to copy assignment information into the discussion forum and upload a file to the shared file area so that everyone can reference the original instructions.



Chapter 12
Our Sources

In group space, young people and adults might think about groups of resources that keep us informed that make good companions for the collaborative tools that help us do our work. For example, we might think of a group of experts who blog regularly who would be helpful in constructing a vision statement for a 21st century school. We might be using GoogleDocs to have drafts of the document the group is working on, but we want informed experts pushing ideas at us constantly. Thus, we think of social bookmarking as a source of constant input by authorities we trust.

Social Bookmarking

Depending on whether you are a glass-half-empty or a glass-half-full kind of person, social bookmarking, also known as "folksonomy" will either be one of the most amazing Web 2.0 tools you will come across, or one of the worst. If you believe that the majority of people on the Web have good intentions and that the few that won't spoil it for everyone else, Social Bookmarking is for you. Social bookmarking allows people to bookmark sites on the web and share them with others. They are usually organized by assigning tags, labels or keywords that describe the bookmarked content. Some social bookmarking sites also allow for ranking and comments.

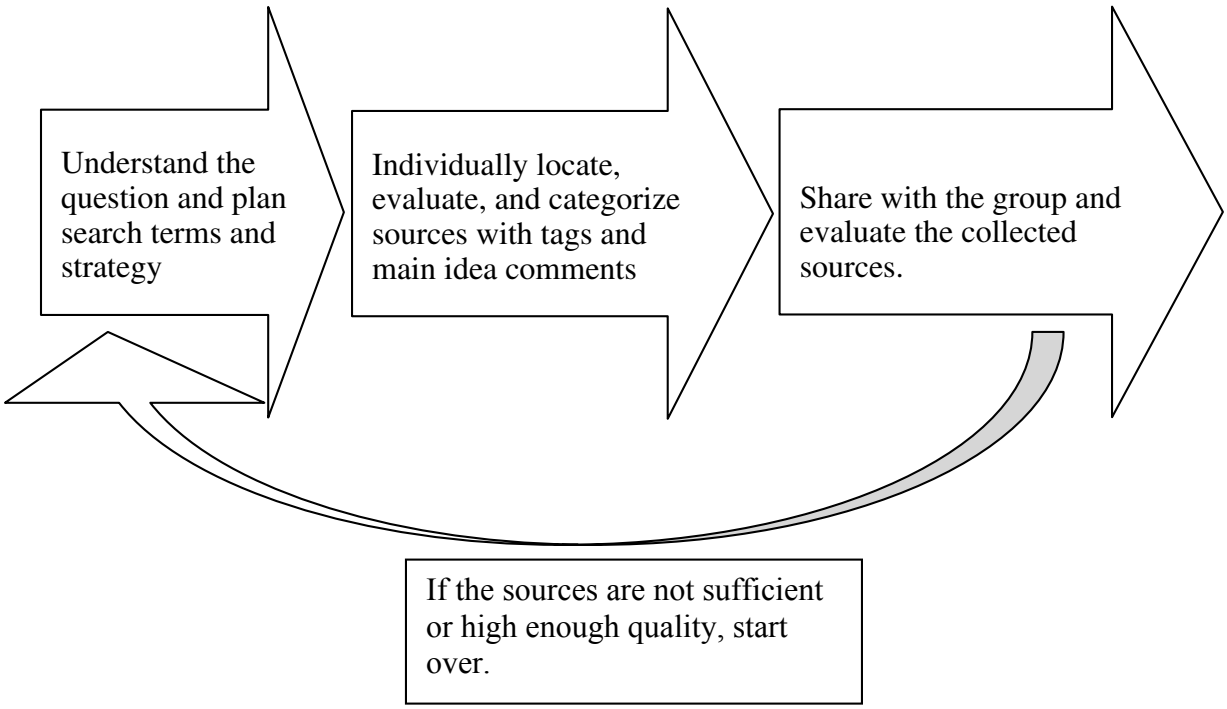
The educational advantage is that students or staff could work collaboratively to evaluate and recommend quality sites related to a particular theme or concept as well as learn skills to evaluate and categorize information. The simple process of creating and commenting on bookmarks requires that students evaluate and understand main ideas and key elements as well as related terms. Ideas don't exist in a vacuum and understanding the hierarchical relationships between ideas will help them become better bookmarkers and better searchers.

The disadvantages of social bookmarking are the lack of controlled vocabulary or standard terms and the potential for misuse. I might tag this section "socialbookmarking" and you might tag it "bookmarking." Users with ulterior motives might label something as often as possible incorrectly or try to apply every tag imaginable to increase site visibility.

Our opinion: The process in and of itself is educationally valuable and the product may provide excellent pathfinder materials. We are stronger when we work together and if we encourage those who wish to use social bookmarking "for good" and train people to do it well, we will make it better for everyone.

Our Sources

When working together you want to share source information to alert the other group members to excellent sources and help them avoid lousy ones. Social bookmarking sites like del.icio.us allow you save bookmarks on the web with a comment and tags and share them with people in your network. Remember to always check sources provided to you by the teacher and librarian first.



Chapter 13
Group Tools

Of all the tools available on the Internet, group tools are likely to be the most controversial with tech professionals because of the paranoia about potential trouble in these social networking applications. In this chapter, we review a few group tools that have great potential for teaching and learning. Their potential is amazing and can be either open or locked down tight so that only a chose few can gain access.

Technology specialists are becoming more and more aware of the educational potential of group tools. We suggest they participate in the design of learning where group tools match the objectives of learning more collaboratively in less time. Details and techniques of locking down or opening up the tools follow the design of what we need to happen.

Many of these tools can be opened up for a few hours or days or even only for a class period. The likelihood of someone discovering a wide open group tool's existence for only a 45-minute class period is so remote that the threat of intrusion is essentially zero. Open tools require just a few minutes to set up. Closed tools required invitations to users and getting them in—taking up precious time in mechanics rather than time spent working and learning. Tech specialists can help figure out for each tool the best way to make the tool instantly available to the users who need it at the time they need it and then opening network access at the appropriate times. These strategies change, however. An example is the 20 version of PBWiki where the adult can set up a wiki with as many users as needed for a particular session and the program generates user names and passwords so that students do not need email addresses to access the wiki. It keeps getting better and better.

If students understand how to protect themselves from unwanted intrusions, then they will begin to bear more and more responsibility to be safe while taking advantage of the tremendous potential of group tools.

In this chapter we discuss grouss, Nings, Google Docs, and Google Spreadsheets followed by a brief introduction for young people. Each tool requires very brief training to use. And, that is their advantage—they are so easy to use that the technology becomes transparent quickly and the concentration is on using the application to learn more and more quickly. Transparent technology. It keeps appearing more and more frequently.

Group Sites and Nings

Group Sites and Nings provide excellent enclosed platforms to host groups for short periods of time. They usually have discussion boards, a closed chat room, good for class use only, file and photo sharing and other features. Keeping any virtual community active for an extended period of time is a monumental task, but project groups or new annual class groups can be very effective in supplementing classroom teaching.

The Best:

1. Allow you to invite and eject people

   Group sites and Nings differ from the larger social networking sites like MySpace in that they are generally closed communities, which are perfect for education, because member information is kept private. In Yahoo! Groups, Nings, or other group hosts, group owners get to create a closed area where members can discuss topics, share files and calendars and have a personal space of their own. In some group platforms each member must be initially invited via email. Once they are invited they may also be "banned" for bad behavior. Students need to understand that group discussion forums are like classrooms where every word is recorded, so they must be thoughtful with their words.

2. Provide discussion forums and some sort of personal area

   Nings combine the features of discussion forums with quick and easy video sharing and personal blogs. Every Ning member gets their own personal blog page so they get a personal space within the group space. Virtual real estate like this is important because it turns lurkers into active participants. There is pride in ownership and customization, and if a person is reticent to join the group discussion, they may be willing to become a part of it in their "own" space. It is this pride of ownership that draws people so heavily into immersive worlds like Second Life. In Second Life the "property" that everyone begins with is their avatar.

3. Allow for file sharing

   A group moderator may want to send out important files to members of the group. Generally this is accomplished either through email to all of the group members or through some online group file storage. When setting up a group, be sure to explore all of the possible group options and permissions. Do you need your group to offer video sharing, photo sharing, document sharing, task and calendar tools, live chat, polling (voting) and other tools? Determine the tools you need for your group and find the easiest platform.

Group Sites

Group Sites like Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups are fantastic temporary spaces for group work and projects. They are enclosed, private and safe places you can create to work together and get the job done.

Many groups let you create personalized homepages for your group and create group calendars. Group sites have an area where members can upload files to share. Most groups have a discussion board where anyone can post ideas anytime and a private chat room for the group.

Nings are a type of group site that also gives each member their own blog and allows for easy sharing of online videos. Groups and Nings allow you to subscribe to changes so you are notified by email when something has been added or changed. Many allow you to subscribe to group content on your personalized homepage as well through a feed. There are personalized homepage gadgets that add your group links to your homepage as well so you don't have to remember their often-complicated names.

Make sure that you keep your group set to private or invitation only to prevent site vandalism or advertising, which are often hard to tell apart.

Document Sharing and Collaboration

Everyone in the school has free places waiting and available for them to work collaboratively. Document sharing platforms like Google Documents allow people to selectively share documents and edit them together online.

The Best:

1. **Are easy to share with others, and easy to restrict**. Document sharing and collaboration tools allow users to post documents and spreadsheets on the web so that they may be viewed or edited. Equally important is to have the option to restrict access. Someone may want to share a rough draft with a select group of people before releasing it for public consumption. Things move quickly on the Internet and everything with public access must be considered material for the public stage. Wikis are commonly used for reference materials or collections of information. Wikis tend to be more open sharing than exclusive document engines, but they can be restricted for small groups or expanded for global cooperation, like Wikipedia.

2. **Allow real time changes**. Having to wait for a page to update before changes are allowed or only allowing one user at a time to edit can slow the creative process down. Some document sharing programs like Google Documents allow users to edit simultaneously. You can watch others' edits as they happen and it doesn't cause errors.

3. **Let you subscribe to changes**. No one wants to have to check every few minutes if a document has been updated to know whether or not they should review it or make changes. Most document sharing systems send email notifications or allow for feed syndication of changes. Wikis, like PBWiki, allow contributors to subscribe via email of document changes.

Wikis are rather common now and students will not be impressed with the technology. They will be impressed with the process and result of excellent instruction and content. A good use for wikis in any subject is to have collaborative smaller group investigations contribute to a collective informational document or resource. In an investigation of California missions, for example, pairs of students could each prepare highlights and synthesis of their investigation of individual missions. Each investigation could include references for further study and the collaborative effort would provide complete coverage of them all. Reflectively, the class could collaboratively create a guide on best tips and hints for research, collaboration and production of reference materials. Students should be taught to create permanent copies of any web-based projects for future portfolios.

The biggest disadvantage to document sharing platforms today is the lack of advanced formatting features that are standard in Word for Windows. The biggest names in free document sharing: Google Documents & Spreadsheets, PB Wiki and Seed Wiki

Shared Documents: Google Documents & Spreadsheets and Wikis

It has become much easier to work together on one document online with the help of shared document sites and services. It's kind of like when a teacher gives you a big piece of paper and everyone a marker and has you all work in groups to fill the paper with some great ideas. You can do that now online in real-time.

One person creates a document in Google Documents and then invites the others to collaborate by adding their emails to the list of people allowed to make changes. As with every collaborative project, keep the document settings private or by invitation only. Once invited, everyone can log in at the same time and start making changes. You can actually see them typing as they do it. Skype is a free way for a group of people to chat with voice, and if you combine Skype with online documents you can create dynamic brainstorming sessions and get work done faster because you'll immediately see what others are writing and can ask them what they are thinking.

These shared documents keep a log of changes and accountability in group work, which is a good thing. Many shared document sites also let you subscribe to changes, so if you're waiting on Ty to make changes, there's no reason to keep checking the document site. Go on about your virtual business and you will get a note or new feed when he's done his part. Wikis are the same idea but it's like you're all working on the same website and they usually don't let you type simultaneously.

Chapter 14
Displaying Our Work

Like the display of individual work, we are looking for tools that will help groups of students to share what has been learned efficiently and effectively without an inordinate amount of time and effort. We would rather that the display not be the end but actually the beginning step in high-level thinking.

Perhaps the best illustration of what we mean is part of every serious coach's repertoire already. After the game, the product is the video. The players "act" out the content and the camera catches the result. The product is viewed and reviewed during analysis and synthesis sessions to "learn" what has to happen next.

This is the same purpose products of research should be used. They are the beginning of learning, not the end. This idea seems to be novel in a classroom setting but commonplace on the sports field. Why? We'd like to convince teachers, librarians, and tech specialists to adopt sports practices to get better and better at the mastery of content knowledge and the processes by which that content knowledge is mastered.

In this chapter, we review a few tools that lend themselves to group production and creation of work accomplished. These are:

- Blogs, vlogs, and podcasts
- Video
- 3D virtual worlds

Tools continue to appear with the same or superior potential. Discover others and add them and introduce them to the students. Better yet, ask them to introduce their favorites to you and the rest of the group. Again, look for those that become transparent very quickly. That is, they require very little instruction to use, are reliable, and produce a satisfactory to superior product with a reasonable and time-sensitive investment.

Displaying Our Work

- **Web Pages**

Web pages can be built collaboratively using wikis. If your group wants to create a regular website, assign content sections to each of the members and elect one member to add it all to the site.

- **Blogs, Vlogs and Podcasts**

Group blogs are generally personal but nings help you create a collection of blogs or a blog network. The easiest way to do a collaborative blog is to have one person create it and everyone share posting responsibilities or divide responsibility for specific blog page elements amongst the group.

Group Podcasting creation is very much like creating a radio show. You can take turns creating episodes or work collaboratively by dividing and sharing research and writing responsibilities, and segment on-air talent.

Group Vlogs are like news shows and work can be divided like podcasts. If any of your websites, blogs, vlogs or podcasts are public, add a traffic counter and start it from zero. Watch your site and think about what changes would be necessary to increase your traffic.

- **Video**

Your online video is going to need research, scripting or a plan, content (play, movie, slides), editing, encoding and posting. Divide tasks to make sure that everyone is involved in production. YouTube has a ratings system and one way to make sure that your video gets a little more attention is have every group member watch it once it's posted, rate it, add comments, and add it to their favorites and encourage their friends to do the same. Encourage everyone to link to the video from their blogs and web pages as well. It's like at school when everyone starts running in one direction and no one is quite sure why, but since everyone is going you just have to join in. The same thing happens in YouTube and people search out most played items. Only the greatest videos will make it to the top, but this marketing campaign for your video will get it headed in the right direction.

- **3D Virtual Worlds**

Virtual worlds are perfect for group work because you can plan, talk and work inside the world. Every group member can be involved in the collaborative creation process. You can plan together and bring your strengths together. Often there are *builders*, people who have great style and attention to detail and enjoy creating. *Scripters* are your programming, computer and mathematical geniuses. Builders make pretty things, but scripters make them work; they put the engines in the concept cars. *Leaders* are the project managers that understand what

needs to be done and can clearly explain what must be done and in what order. The best are great motivators so they can keep everyone on task and boss without being rude. *Socialites* understand what would make the display not just beautiful and functional but FUN. They are creative idea sharers whose constructive input can make all of the individual parts flow in a logical way. In a perfect virtual world, we would all do all of the above equally well, but if you aren't sure what needs to be done, those are the general roles needed for project creation and people might find an activity that they would like to do more than another.

For help documenting your work, use the same techniques outlined in the individual section and make sure that everyone has a copy. It is also nice to keep or record the group process, not just what you did, but how and suggestions for improvement if you ever had to do a similar project.

Chapter 15
Managing Myself in Group Space

Young people may be able to manage their own tasks rather well, but when groups form, things might fall apart quickly. Adults may post the rules and try to enforce them, but a better plan is to include behavior in groups as a part of initial group planning. That way, everyone knows the expectations and guidelines before the project begins. Offenders can be dealt with by the group leader or adult supervisor better when roles and responsibilities are clearly understood.

In virtual worlds such as Second Life or World of Warcraft, there is either a leader or anyone that can call the "police" to eject the offenders. Regular game players report that extreme action is rarely required, but it does happen. This is probably because the players are engaged and motivated. Perhaps group project planners should consider redesigning onerous assignments into more attractive and engaging tasks. However, not all tasks can be thus designed. Some just required work, work, work and every group member must do their part.

The student page that follows discusses normal management concerns. However, there is one more topic that deserves attention if ugly situations arise.

Cyberbullying

According to the Pew Internet Study called "Cyberbullying and Online Teens" published in 2007, about one third of all online teens have experienced online harassment. We would not tolerate harassment in the classroom and it should not be tolerated online either. Cyberbullying activities may include receiving threatening messages, having private emails or text messages forwarded without consent, having an embarrassing picture posted without permission or having rumors spread about them online. The most common form of cyberbullying is making private information public. The majority of teens in the study reported that bullying and harassment occurs more offline than online and girls reported experiences with cyberbullying more than boys.

Students need to be reminded that the Internet is not private and they should save sensitive personal information for real life conversations with trusted friends. Read the PEW study, make them aware of the statistical reality of these activities, and give them strategies to deal with them. Teach them how to take a screenshot and encourage them to report any inappropriate incidents related to online coursework. Students who violate the trust of online space must be dealt with quickly and appropriately. Teaching students to recognize and report destructive online behaviors will help protect them against greater potential online threats as well.

Model the steps involved in web-based projects and collaboration. Give them email etiquette resources and model closed educational chat room behavior. Allow them to report inappropriate activities via email and take their concerns seriously. Virtually "sit in" on occasional group sessions, offer support and suggestions, and model appropriate online behavior. Help them understand that everyone who disseminates misinformation or disrupts online activities is taking something away from the global virtual community. The online

realm can be a fantastic realm for anytime, anywhere collaboration, but just as we work hard to create model citizens, we must educate our students so that they can become model citizens of an online global community as well.

The full PEW report on Cyberbullying and other online reports can be found at: www.pewinternet.org

Lenhart, A. (2007). Cyberbullying and Online Teens. Retrieved Feb. 14, 2006, from Pew Internet & American Life Project, Washington, DC. Web site: http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP%20Cyberbullying%20Memo.pdf

Managing Myself in Group Spaces:
Group Rules of Behavior and Shared Responsibility

When you get on the Internet you expect to find accurate and useful information. Millions of people all over the world have worked together to create Wikipedia and other projects. When working in a group online there are some very compelling reasons to do your best to create excellent work.

Your work is a reflection of who you are online. People won't know if you're an ace football player or have mastered the violin, and even if you tell them, they might not believe you. You will be judged by the work you do and the contributions you make to your group and to the online community at large.

People on the Internet are judged by their work and actions online. There is written proof of much of what you do and "say" online. If you do not contribute to a shared document, one glance at the document log will confirm your lack of participation. Hiding in a group in a class can be easy because you are physically there. Online you only exist mentally, and if there is no proof you are there mentally, for all intents and purposes, you are absent. Give the group and your project your full attention when working on a virtual or collaborative space. If a live meeting is not working out, agree to disband and try another time or collaborate another way, like through discussion boards.

Words are strong online and can be misinterpreted. Things that you might say jokingly in real life might look terrible on paper when presented to a teacher, principal or authorities. When we read something online our mood can affect the tone that our mind uses as it reads the words. This is called "reading tone." Do not be quick to take offense but instead try to clarify the intention and meaning of questionable words. Resist the urge to "flame," put down or scream at someone online. There will be plenty of times you will have to work with people you don't like, but you have to set differences aside and focus on getting the task done. Anything typed can be used against you and being negative does not help anyone get anything done any sooner. Remind others that there is a written record of everything said and try to get them to focus on the task so you can all move on. Try to be a part of the solution.

Creating Group Rules

It's best to have some group rules from the start. Then everyone knows their job and can commit to the group goal. Here are a few suggestions. Each group needs to have a rule creating session. Take the lead and create your own list.

General Plan

- Our goal is _____
- Our deadline is _____
- Who will do what tasks?

Group Behavior Rules

- I will do the job assigned.
- I will complete my part on time.
- I will do my best work for my part.
- If others need a helping hand, I will help.
- I will do my part to “get along”
- I will report regularly to the group leader so everyone knows my progresss.
- I will attend all group meetings.
- I will not harass other group members.

Your list:

Chapter 16
Venturing into Outer Space

They are already there. They have established patterns of behavior. What hope do adults have of urging them toward better and more efficient uses? Many are not likely to make any changes unless their friends are and improvement becomes a part of their culture.

This should not deter us, however, in teaching, coaching, and encouraging better and better uses of that gargantuan space known as the Internet. We have as our student pages here given some encouragement to selecting various types of search engines that return the best of what we need right now For younger kids, that is a different set than older ones.

Since this is already the most familiar space for adults, our advice is brief, but we do have a warning. As we all know, the Internet keeps growing and habits of searching, favorites, and the aging of the information already on the Internet continue to remind us that we cannot stay in one place with our tried and true "solutions" without becoming outmoded.

We recommend once again, a policy where everyone is collaborating on ways to control the whole of the Internet—kids, parents, and school professionals. None of us can know it all. We have a better chance by listening as much as telling; considering change instead of directing; demonstrating humility rather than arrogance.

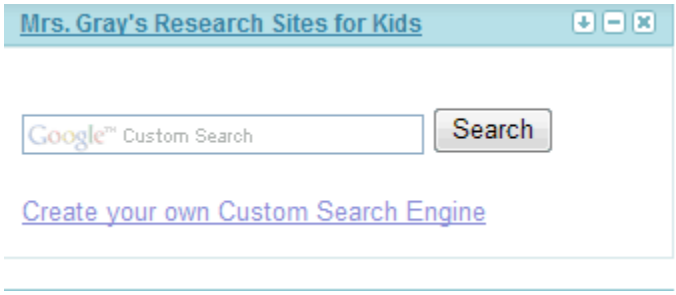
Venturing into Outer Space

Mini Tools for Outer Spaces

These tools help you make sense of the vast and ever growing expanse that is the Internet. These mini tools will help you quickly find what you need and want and make sense of it all.

Search Engines

Not all search engines are created equally. Once you find your favorite, learn how to create custom searches that search sites that you specify. Some popular sites like YouTube and Amazon have tools that allow you to search them right from your homepage.



Research Guides and Pathfinders

Make a list of the best links to sites that you know are the best sources. School Librarians often provide research pathfinders, and if your school is missing an excellent one that is available on the web, linking to existing ones is simple with hyperlink lists. See the Subject Specific Tools in the Group mini tools section for great general subject ones.

RSS Feeds

RSS Feeds from news aggregators, community information and activities in your area. Use the virtual world to connect with the real one.

The Global Community—The Social Web

The Internet offers great ways to connect with other kids and teens. There are collaborative book review sites where you can review and read other reviews of books written by people your age. Rather than go into a random free for all chat room situation where the intentions of the other visitors are unclear, aim for communities that reflect your interests. Closed communities are best, ones where you have to get permission to become a member, which generally just involves signing up, because the owners of those groups can kick people out right away that don't belong. When you join, read through their forums and if these people seem like the right people, generally a short introduction post is a good idea. In your introductory post, try to focus on the topic without giving away too much personal information.

Search Engines

Using specialized search engines is like having a trusted friend go through your mail and toss all of the junk mail out. If you can find an appropriate, trusted specialized search engine it will save you loads of time and effort.

Giant search engines like Google do a great job of taking on the monumental task of organizing and categorizing everything that is on the Internet. The best thing is that they find nearly everything. The worst thing is that they find nearly everything. In order to get your attention a lot of disreputable sites try to make sure they'll turn up in a search that really has nothing to do with them. A terrific solution to these time wasting searches that return 4,238,524 results when you really just wanted one page, are search engines aimed at kids and education. For schoolwork purposes these search engines are more likely to find the information your teacher wants, quickly.

Search engines, like www.Kidsclick.org, will save you time by searching trusted sites and leave the junk behind. They make it easy to find resources by letting you browse by subject. Have a country report due in Geography? No problem. Just click on Geography and the country and you get a list of sources with a one sentence description and the reading level.

Teachers and librarians can create gadgets that search specific sites to reduce the irrelevant. There are some new gadgets that create a custom search engine on a page based on the page's content. So if you create a page that is all about genetics, these gadgets will limit the results of any search to those having something to do with genetics. On your personalized homepage, if you add content, you may find that another teacher has created a specific gadget for their students that would give you exactly what you are after as well. With any search engine or tool you need to reflect afterward about the time it took you to find relevant resources. If your search is taking too long, try another search engine. When you find a search engine you like, find a way to get it on your homepage so you can search from the comfort of your own office.

Local, state, national news/issues/projects

The Internet makes you aware of your global citizenship, and as you go forth and create great work for global community online, use the Outer Spaces tab on your homepage to add important local, state and national news gadgets and links to keep you in touch and help you make a positive difference in the real world. You can learn different ways to connect and get involved with projects and issues.

Chapter 17
Managing Myself in Outer Space

Outer space, or the world of the whole Internet, has become an issue for governments world wide. Governments such as China and Iran fear an invasion of Western culture. Democracies fear the use of the Internet by terrorist organizations. Parents worry about predators. School officials fear lawsuits by parents if students gain access to chat rooms, drug dealers, or a host of other dangerous sites.

Filtering has generally been the answer for many school district officials, even though the best filters do not block everything undesirable and block much that is useful. Among teens, it is well known that tech-wise geeks can get around filters and they do.

In such a world, the only hope for a truly safe outer space is to teach the principles of safety to children and teens and enlist their assistance and even their leadership in protecting themselves, their class, their school, and their families.

Internet Safety Issues

There is almost panic and paranoia in some quarters about the dangers that lurk on the Internet for kids and teens. Admittedly, they do exist in the form of predators but also from sellers of pornography and the major marketing that targets kids and teens.

Any search of Google or other search engines on the topic of Internet safety reveals a plethora of sites and organizations dedicated to helping adults help protect the young. However, one major line of defense is the young person themselves as we teach them strategies for safety as we would in protecting themselves from strangers, unwanted advances, crossing streets, driving defensively and a host of other educational efforts to inform.

Make Internet safety issues a regular topic of discussion, alerting kids and teens not only to the problems, but invite them to help in sharing strategies they use. The first defense is self-defense and that should be the focus of the discussions and teaching.

Below are just a few of the sites we recommend on Internet safety. There are hundreds of others.

Sources and sites:

1. Safekids.com (http://www.safekids.com) sells Internet safety software but has many free resources for kids and teens.
2. ISafe (http://www.isafe.org) provides training and teaching materials for teachers, parents, and law enforcement.
3. FBI safety rules (http://www.fbi.gov/kids/k5th/safety2.htm) as a poster or handout. Check out their site for parents at: http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm

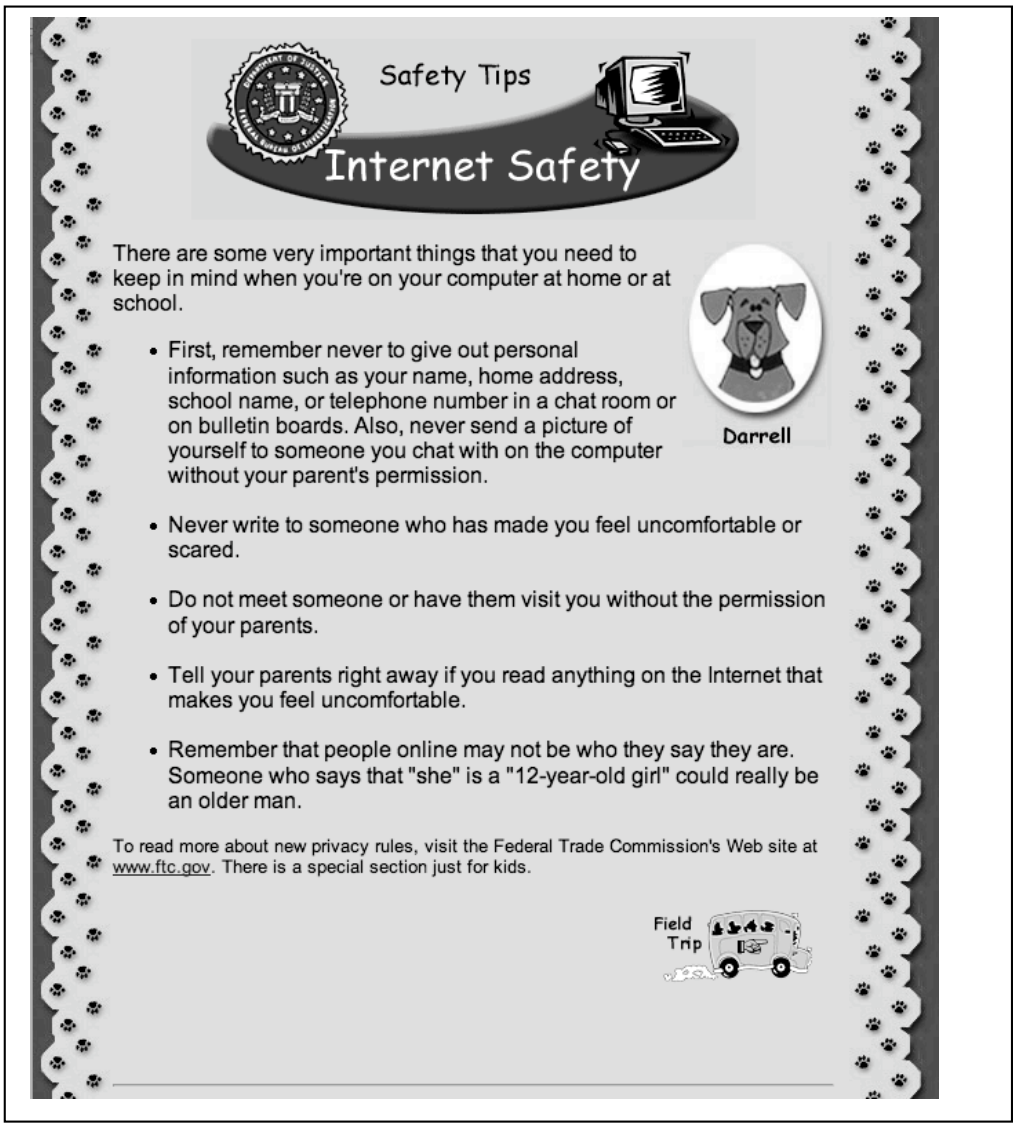
4. Wired Kids, Inc. (http://www.wiredkids.org) is a site for kids and teens that provide many resources, tips, and sites that are safe.

Many solutions now center on filtering and blocking various sites. Any kid or teen with computer savvy, however, can usually get around the filters and often share their knowledge with others as a badge of pride. Such individuals can help, if enlisted, to teach protection. They can help alert friends and adults when they see attacks on their own security and recommend solutions. More and more programs such as Gmail from Google have spam reporters built in to help everyone recognize and report unwanted intrusions.

We urge the inclusion of young people in the creation, and continued vigilance campaigns rather than the restrictive adult-threat approach. The word "don't" is often an invitation to explore.

Managing Myself in Outer Space (The World of the Internet)

Here are some tips from the FBI on Internet safety. Use these tips to build a list for yourself, your class, and your family.



Safety Tips

Internet Safety

There are some very important things that you need to keep in mind when you're on your computer at home or at school.

Darrell

- First, remember never to give out personal information such as your name, home address, school name, or telephone number in a chat room or on bulletin boards. Also, never send a picture of yourself to someone you chat with on the computer without your parent's permission.
- Never write to someone who has made you feel uncomfortable or scared.
- Do not meet someone or have them visit you without the permission of your parents.
- Tell your parents right away if you read anything on the Internet that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Remember that people online may not be who they say they are. Someone who says that "she" is a "12-year-old girl" could really be an older man.

To read more about new privacy rules, visit the Federal Trade Commission's Web site at www.ftc.gov. There is a special section just for kids.

Start your list here:

Chapter 18
Who is saying what to me for what reasons and for what gain?

There is a fairly strong movement afoot to teach media literacy to the nation's children. Faced with hundreds of voices crowding into all our heads from television, radio, Internet, billboards, and every other imaginable space, we try to teach children and teens how to recognize advertising and faulty messages coming at them from all sides. Pick up any newsstand magazine aimed at teen girls and the messages are clear: thin and things.

We fear that if children and teens stop consuming, the economy will falter since they are such a large part of Christmas season buying. Even in the poorest of neighborhoods, certain things become the standards of coolness.

Media literacy advocates promote the recognition of the voices crowing into our heads for what they are. We educate young people to recognize the difference between an advertisement and an authoritative message. There are a wide variety of resources available to pursue this goal. Here are just a few:

Books:

- *Media Literacy: Keys to Interpreting Media Messages.* 3rd Edition by Art Silverblatt
- Media Literacy by W. James Potter
- *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture* by David Buckingham
- *Popular Culture, New Media and Digital Literacy in Early Childhood* by Jackie Marsh

Web sites:

- The Center for Media Literacy at: http://www.medialit.org
- The Media Literacy Clearinghouse at http://www.frankwbaker.com
- Media Literacy at http://www1.medialiteracy.com
- Media Literacy Online Project bibliography at: http://interact.uoregon.edu/medialit/mlr/home/

Speakers:

- Peter DeBenedittis (Peter D.) at http://www.medialiteracy.net

Commercialization is just one of a host of messages kids and teens need to recognize. What about propaganda, political spin, conspiracy theorists, organizations and governments with an agenda? The list goes on and on and on.

Who is saying what to me for what reasons and for what gain?

With your group, track ads on TV, radio, in magazines, or the Internet for a few days. Categorize each you encounter, then discuss your results:

Who is saying it?

What reasons are they giving me for why I should do or buy something?

What's in it for them?

What's in it for me?

So what?

Chapter 19
Administrators, Technologists, Teacher Librarians, and Classroom Teachers: Working Together to Make It Happen

- Web 2.0 technology is here.
- It's not going away.
- Kids and teens are already using it.
- Its potential for teaching and learning is enormous.
- Now is the time to come to terms with it.

In every school district across the country, there needs to be a meeting of the minds about Web 2.0 applications. A simple NO; NOT HERE: TOO Risky is not any kind of solution.

One suspects that many classroom teachers, teacher librarians, and teacher technologists are already experimenting. Those who are not, should.

How do we begin?

- Decide to experiment.
- Do small tests and open the networks to those tests
- Evaluate the result.
- Before saying NO or NOT NOW, make other trials with other software or adjust the experiments and try again.
- Remember that one test of an application is not enough because the application itself generally keeps improving.
- Use of the cloud, or off-site servers and services, should be investigated for cost savings. This is particularly true in schools or school districts that cannot afford to hire full technology staffs to handle increased use of technology in the district. Overloaded and overwhelmed teacher technologists burn out over time and use of the cloud provides one solution to a growing reliance and need for ubiquitous access to computers in the schools.

Key players in the schools, school districts, and in particular, the students should be at the table to discuss the issues, the plans, the progress, and the assessment of impact.

We have said over and over that decision makers of technology policy need to be involved in the design and experimentation of Web 2.0 applications with real students with real projects who need access to computers and networks 24/7/365.

This is a continual planning, negotiation, and important issue that needs constant attention. If policies are not evolving every year, then there is something wrong with the decision system in place.

Chapter 20
Making It Happen for Kids:
The Opening Day Orientation and Tune-Ups

Here are a few suggestions on how such a system might be put into operation in a real school.

- We would recommend that a group of geek students be assembled who would serve as the test team for any Web 2.0 applications in the school. This group would be under the mentorship of the technology, library, and teaching staff.

- Have this team test out the iGoogle spaces linked through RSS feeds to the library and classroom blogs.

- Have this teem work with the implementation of applications in real classrooms.

- Ask this team to assist in working out the bugs and testing the application again.

- Ask this group to make a recommendation to the leadership team of the school.

- Do the work to see that the tech systems are in place and that the application is reliable.

- Have the group give themselves a name such as the Geek Club – something that makes them proud to serve.

Roll out the In Command program complete with various Web 2.0 applications. Here is how we envision this happening.

- During the first week of school or the first day a new student comes into the school, every student creates iGoogle pages with the three tables for personal space, group space, and outer space. This would replace the traditional library orientation and computer lab orientation classes.

- Once a month, a tune-up session would be held school-wide to help every student with problems, updates, tips, and operational helps. This should be conducted by cadre of informed students, teacher librarians, teacher technologists, and adult volunteers who are knowledgeable.

- Between tune-ups, have it understood that everyone helps everyone else learn In Command tricks to promote equity, access, and efficiency in the control of technology and information spaces.

- Don't give up.

Chapter 21
The Library Home Page; The School Home Page; And Other Systems Pushing Information to the Student

The idea was: If we build it, they will come. Thousands of schools and school libraries have web pages in various states of usefulness. Long ago, students made the Google choice and bypass most of what we built.

It is time to get back in the ball game. The technology is now in place to push to the student critical information and tools that make them better and more efficient learners. This can be done by adults without the need to learn html or other fancy codes. It can be done almost instantly to fit into new units of instruction as they develop. But more than a one-way push of information, the library web site or now the virtual library must become a two-way conversation and support system.

For example, Mrs. Smith's class will be coming to do research on the Civil War in an hour or so. In just a few minutes, the teacher librarian sets up a blog with an RSS feed for that assignment with the complete assignment, suggested resources, and available tools. As the class comes into the library, they spend the first five minutes linking their home pages into the new blog. Then it is down to work. The blog becomes a conversation between the adults and the learners. This system stays in place until the unit is over when a new one is created to take its place.

In this way, the student becomes accustomed to work and assignments automatically coming down on to the personal home page. It is available 24/7 from any location, whether at school at home, or from a vacation site or even hospital room. And, the learner begins to understand the benefits of collaboration as everyone shares tips, asks and answers questions, and makes clarifications.

There is no reason to bypass the best information system; it's the one I create for myself. I am in charge. In command. I am a world-class learner and the technology serves me instead of me it.

Then what of the plethora of resources that teacher librarians have traditionally lodged on their websites? What about links to state or local databases? What about links to tools both the free ones and the ones that the school has licensed? They are all still there. Some will need to be pushed toward the students. Others will be there for the discovery by visitors to our sites.

The best way to test the system is to have counters on the various parts of the virtual school library, the school's home page, or other sites you expect students to visit. Traffic analysis both day and night will give an idea of penetration into the consciousness of the students.

Chapter 22
Equity

Who has access? From where? On what devices? From what locations? At what times of day and night? The answer, of course, should be everyone from anywhere at any time.

Affluent parents are more likely to see that their children have the needed access than poorer caregivers. It is a conundrum. Access must be provided. Taxpayers must realize that access is as necessary as utilities in every home. It is the cost of creating world-class education for every child and teen.

How can this happen in your school? District? Community?

Exemplary model sites can be created to model what needs to happen followed by large-scale rollouts and implementations. However, sustained efforts must happen, not the short put put grant spurts and starts and fizzles pattern so common around the country.

One on one computing is becoming more and more common. What is needed is that effective teaching and learning with kids and teens in command of their own information spaces needs to accompany such initiatives. If not, the initiative will fail. Just to hook kids up and turn it on is no solution to anything.

Major business organizations that claim to have education at the center of their agendas want to see some return for the investment. They want to see results when poor kids gain access. Giving access without kid involvement is almost certain to fail.

Chapter 23
Making Connections

The idea of empowering young people to begin building and managing their own information space seems to be dawning on everyone at the same time. Every time we mention the notion, we find people interested and wanting to discuss how they are moving in that direction. This means that there are many natural partners out there who are willing to participate in the construction of the system.

For example, in a recent visit to Oregon, we found that the statewide database folks were transferring their resources and database system into Web 2.0, so the potential of RSS feeds linking those resources directly to student home pages is very close to a reality. And, if you begin to notice the number of RSS feeds out there on the Internet, suddenly a new world of possibilities begins to dawn.

Our advice is to talk to potential partners about their plans. They might already have created their system to be compatible with your idea. And there is another source that cannot be ignored. That is Google. With their billions, they have hired the best and the brightest. They keep rolling out new applications that have direct implications for education. In fact, you can subscribe to their educational news and join their conversation about what's coming down the pike. They also hold educational seminars around the country, introducing educators to various pieces and parts of Google and how to use them in the classroom.

What is true about the systems, companies, organizations, and commercial folks out there is that they are not standing still. So, what you know today may be and probably is out of date tomorrow.

Finally, a word about commercial applications. Attendance at major educational conferences such as ISTE or AACD will reveal many vendors who are most anxious to sell information tools and systems to school districts. Some of these try to make themselves known to teacher librarians or tech directors. Many try to go directly to the top and push their products to superintendents. There are many schemes out there that "only cost a dollar per child per year." Everyone wants a constant revenue stream.

In this book, we have preferred to exhibit free or open source systems that are instantly available, easy to use, and ones kids probably already know about. We are all aware of the technique of getting us hooked on a service and then working us into a fee basis. Fee or free is an idea continuing to evolve as the entrepreneurs of the world try to figure out how to get rich. In the meantime, we will claim access to those that suit the purpose of making teaching and learning more productive at the least cost with the least effort.

It's a new world out there. Many of the kids and teens are already there. Join hands and heads with them to explore and harness the possibilities. Like everything else, they need and want mentors by their side.

Finally, we attach a list of popular Web 2.0 applications to investigate. Happy hunting and probing.

Popular Web 2.0 Applications

Finding Out

Find out about lots of stuff at PCWorlds top lists. At:
http://www.pcworld.com/article/146161-12/the_100_best_products_of_2008.html

Concopt mapping

CMap at: http://cmap.ihmc.us/ is a concept mapping tool that several people can be editing at the same time. You can also take a central map and have every kid create an individual one using the central copy. As you know, this has the advantage of multiple editors in contrast to Inspiration where only one person can be editing at a time.

Bubble.us allsows easy brainstorming. At: http://bubbl.us/

Gliffy allows for the creation of flowcharts. At: http://www.gliffy.com/

Freemind is concpet mapping software. To download it, you have to go to Wikipedia at:
http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Download

For a list of other concpet mapping software both paid and free, go to Wikipedia.
At:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_concept_mapping_software and
at:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mind_mapping_software

Wikis

PBwiki at http://pbwiki.com is familiar to us all.

Good article about wikis. At: http://www.iterating.com/productclasses/Wiki-Engines

World processing

Google Docs has three sections at the moment: Documents that can be edited by many but only one person at a time; Spreadsheets that can be edited by a group at the same time; Presentations that can be edited by a group but one person at a time.

Spreadsheets

Google Spreadsheets as a part of Google Docs

Presentations like PowerPoint

Google Presentation as a part of Google Docs

Slideshare at: http://www.slideshare.net/ "SlideShare is the best way to share your presentations with the world. Let your ideas reach a broad audience. Share publicly or privately. Add audio to create a webinar. Take a quick tour or start uploading now!" There are hundreds of presentations logged here that can be searched by topic. There is a fee to watch but this is one way to get your shingle out.

Screencast-o-matic allows you to turn screen captures into a video presentation. At: http://www.screencast-o-matic.com/

Freesoun Project has sound effects and music that can be used in backgrounds. At: http://www.freesound.org/

Sony Acid Express. Download songs for videos.. At: http://www.sonycreativesoftware.com/download/trials/acidxpress

Freeplay Music has downloadable music for presentations. At: http://freeplaymusic.com/

Sounddogs has sound effecgts for your presentation. At: http://www.sounddogs.com/

Mixwit will help you create a presentation. At:http://www.mixwit.com/

Author Stream is a place you can upload and share PowrPoint presentations. At: http://www.authorstream.com/

Online Meetings

Dim Dim at: http://dimdim.com now has unlimited users in its meeting softward. It has a paid version that is better.

Skype at: http://skype.com where up to five can talk on a conference call.

Acrobat.com: see review at: http://forums.techarena.in/showthread.php?t=979550 is free but can only have three people in a meeting at any one time.

Elluminate has a free three-person online meeting service. At: http://www.elluminate.com/

Website Creators

Weebly at: http://www.weebly.com/ is a free website creator and free blog creator

Email

Think.com at http://www.think.com/en/ provides email and other features and is popular in Austrailia. I could not determine quickly whether it is affordable.

Bookmarking

Diigo is a Social bookmarking website which allows signed users to bookmark and tag web-pages. More exclusively, it allows users to highlight any part of a webpage and attach sticky notes to specific highlights or to a whole page

del.icio,us is the most popular bookmarking took that allows one to keep control over and share web sites, tools, etc. at http://del.icio.us/

Blogs

Here is an example of good collaborative space use: http://
www.alatechsource.org/blog/2008/06/uncommon.html

Blogger (Blogspot) is part of the Google family

Word press at http://wordpress.com/ is a bity more sophisticated thean

Cover It Live provides and easy way for students or adults to blog live adding pictures and other stuff to the blog. At:http://www.coveritlive.com/

A free tutorial on blogging by CSLA including practice with 23 tools is available at http://schoollibrarylearning2.blogspot.com/

Chats

Chatsy is a chat room that allows only invited guests. At:http://www.chatzy.com/

Other Stuff:

Comiclife at: http://plasq.com/comiclife/ has a free version that allows the creation of comics and graphic novels. Just think of the possibilities for writing and sharing. It is for the Mac. Not sure if there is a pc version.

"Game Maker's primary development interface uses a drag-and-drop system, allowing users unfamiliar with traditional programming to intuitively create games by visually organizing icons on the screen. Game Maker comes with a set of standard action libraries, covering such things as movement, basic drawing, and simple control structures. To extend the drag-and-drop functionality of Game Maker, users can use custom-built action libraries to add new actions (drag-and-drop command icons) to their games. These can be created (generally by more advanced users) using the official special library builder tool." Quote from Wikipedia

Voice to Text software to help anyone needing that assistance. At: http://jott.com/

Jing does screden captures and records videos. At: http://www.jingproject.com/

Create a beautiful word cloud at http://wordle.net/

Podcasting

Voki at: http://www.voki.com/ allows the creation of podcasting with fun avitars talking.

Voicethread at: http://voicethread.com/#home allows the creation of podcasting.

Audacity is a great place to create and edit soundtracks. At: http://audacity.sourceforge.net/

PodOMatic softwared to create music with lots of free music. At: http://www.podomatic.com/

Gcast helps you create a podcast. At: http://www.gcast.com/?nr=1&&s=56998528

Programming

Alice at http://www.alice.org teachines students how to do computer programming in a 3D environment.

Drawing

TuxPaint at:http://www.alice.org is an open source drawing program for kids.

Open Source

News of the open source movement is at: http://opensource.org/

Open Office is a suite of word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software at very low cost. at: http://www.openoffice.org/

OpenDisc is a source of open sourcde software for the PC. At: http://theopendisc.com/

Open content curriculum resources can be found at Open Educational Resources Commons at http://www.oercommons.org/

Math open content curriculum available at Math Open Reference: http://www.mathopenref.com/

Early Literacy/reading intervention curriculum sources for K-3 at FreeReading: http://free-reading.net/index.php?title=Main_Page

Reaference Questions

Ask a reference question and the answer will be text messaged to your phone. Chacha.com at: https://www.chacha.com/

Video

Teachertube is a great place to upload teacher and student video that teach something. at: http://www.teachertube.com/index.php

Ustream is another open place to uplaod videos. Not my favorite. at: http://www.ustream.tv/

Vimeo allows for the creation of videos to upload to the popularbraoadcasts. At:http://www.vimeo.com/

Jing does screden captures and records videos. At: http://www.jingproject.com/

Software Distribution

Eduforge allows for the distribution of free software At: https://eduforge.org/

Music Videos

A N I M O T O is software to create music videos. At: http://animoto.com/

State Standards

Standards Toolbox allows you to find standards and store lessons, etc. for teachers. At:http://www.standardstoolbox.com/

Global Projects

Taking It Global allows a class or group to connect across the world on worthwhile projects. At: http://www.takingitglobal.org/

Kiva is a way for students and community members to invest and make small loans to persons in thrid world countries. At: http://kiva.org/

Chapter 24
In Command and Learning

Readers may be asking, so what? This book has concentrated on helping kids and teens develop a system for managing information spaces, but not enough has been said about what difference this all makes in teaching and learning.

Readers may be acquainted with the changeover from the typewriter to word processing. You learned a new tool. It made you more efficient. It made you more productive. But did it make a difference in what you know and understand? Because you are a more efficient learner, you can learn more in less time. Do you take that to heart and are you smarter and wiser?

The Educational Testing Service has published their first national test of ICT literacy, now called the iSkills test. This test, designed for high school and college students, assesses the ability of students not only to utilize technology efficiently, but how they use that competence to problem solve and to use the information they find.

Several national organizations are calling for new and higher-level learning through technology:

- The American Association of school Librarians (AASL) has published its new learning standards for students. Find them at: http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslindex.cfm
- The International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE) recently published new NETS standards for students. See them at: http://cnets.iste.org/students/s_stands.html
- The Partnership for 21st Century Learning has recently revised their standards at: http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/
- The Association for Supervision and Curriculum and Development ASCD) has recently published an initiative for The Whole Child at: http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd

Since 1988, school librarians have been interested in "information literacy" an have taught young people not only how to find and locate information but also to understand it, judge its authenticity, and analyze and synthesize it. Finally, they have taught them to communicate that information effectively and then reflect on the entire process of "doing research" in an information-rich environment.

We have noticed, however, that the professional literature of education has not often taken into account that a new environment exists and that teaching and learning must adapt to an information-rich and technology-rich environment. Rather, the same old assignments are made and students now revert to the cut and paste mentality.

We propose that with the new management skills afforded by *In Command!*, new expectations should be created for deep understanding, critical thinking, creative thinking, media literacy, and a host of other higher-level thinking strategies. Such competencies should push toward a

world-class education rather than the mediocrity now present in the national tests all student take and that schools seem to live or die by. The struggle to meet minimums should be replaced, we think, by the push beyond minimums toward excellence.

To do this, we propose that teaching and learning activities take quite a different direction than just the learning of scattered facts regurgitated on worksheets, short reports, PowerPoint presentations, or even research papers. The potential of the tools in this book should promote higher-level learning.

We recommend that the reader obtain a copy of: *Beyond Bird Units: 18 Models for Teaching and Learning in and Information-Rich and Technology-Rich Environments* by David V. Loertscher, Carol Koeshclin, and Sani Zwaan. (Hi Willow Research & Publishing, 2007. Available from http://lmcsource.com). This book outlines 18 models where quantities of information are assembled on a topic and then the class works with that information, manipulates it, builds expertise in understanding, uses only authoritative information, analyzes that information and then engages in a Big Think or So What? Activity to look at the broad implications of what has been found and discovered.

In Command is also one foundational element in the creating of an entirely new conceipt of a learning commons for the school. Check out the same author's book: *The New School Learning Commons Where Learners Win* (Hi Willow, 2008).

For too long, information from books, magazines, and now the Internet is just being passed from one place to another without any transformation. The excitement about Web 2.0 applications discussed in this book provides new opportunities to learn more deeply in less time. And the experiences of the authors in using such technologies as wikis to read and synthesize large bodies of professional literature have been more than successful. It has been our experience that when wiki technology has been applied and used properly, that the amount of learning by our students does not improve incrementally, it improves exponentially.

This exponential rise in deep understanding and critical thinking has caused us to become more excited about teaching and learning than ever before. However, much has to change in teacher's assignments. The emphasis must move from the mastery of a body of facts to using that body of facts to understand larger concepts and use that higher-level thinking to achieve excellence.

It is time to move forward.

About the Authors

Robin T. Williams has been a computer geek since childhood largely due to both her parents being computer teachers in high school. She taught High School and Elementary School for 13 years in California and Moscow, Russia. She is a graduate of San José State University in the School of Library and Information Science MLIS program with an emphasis in school librarianship. She has been a technology consultant and leader since 1984. This year she co-presented for ISTE in Second Life, was a project manager and builder for Knowville 3D, and was a builder and leader on San José State University's School of Library and Information Science Virtual Campus. Robin has been a virtual world resident and leader since 1997 (that is not a misprint). Currently she works for Sun Microsystems and teaches the beginning technology source for students in the school of Library and Information Science, San Jose State University.

David V. Loertscher received his Ph.D from Indiana University and has taught at Purdue University, the University of Arkansas, and the University of Oklahoma. He is currently a professor in the School of Library and Information Science at San José State University. During his career, he claims to have used almost every distance education technology invented, beginning with amplified telephone linking in Fayetteville, AR with Little Rock. He swears that students at the remote end always had a party during class while "listening." Then there were years of various television systems linking remote sites that were rejected because of their unreliability. However, the major event occurred over a decade ago when he went paperless with his protesting students. Listservs, email, early websites with attaché documents, a very early user of the free Blackboard system, blogs, wikis, Nings – and now… (fanfare)…Elluminate. His goal, as it has always been, is to squeeze more learning in less time from his unsuspecting new students who look at the array of technologies they have to conquer that they think will overwhelm them but…(they survive rather well). Loertscher is so ancient that he remembers the 2200 silent and sound filmstrips, the 500 phonograph records, and the impossible-to-thread 16mm projectors in the elementary school where he was librarian in Elko, Nevada. Those were the days…