Connect 2.0
A collaborative partnership for creative change

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The use of Web 2.0 has fostered a major shift from the dominance of independent study to more collaborative and interactive learning. This is reflected in the curriculum expectations in Victoria, Australia where students develop as creative, active and inquiring learners. Web 2.0 technologies provide an ideal medium for this curriculum model to be realised.

This presentation illustrates the journey made possible through the ongoing partnership and shared objectives of the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and the School Library Association of Victoria in identifying, sharing and exploring best possible online resources and tools for 21st Century learning.

Web2.0, collaboration, interdisciplinary learning

Rationale

The use of Web 2.0 has fostered a major shift from the dominance of independent study to more collaborative and interactive learning. This is reflected in the expectations of the Curriculum currently being implemented in Victoria, Australia known as the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/about/index.html . The focus of the VELS is to enable students to develop as expert learners –creative, active, enquiring, independent thinkers.

This curriculum therefore focuses on the learner and their capacity to apply a range of interdisciplinary skills which underpin traditional, discipline-based learning. http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/essential/interdisciplinary/index.html

Within this curriculum, it is expected that students learn within an ICT-rich environment, work in a collaborative way, create new knowledge and share it with each other and with a real audience. The emergence of web 2.0 technologies provides an ideal medium for this curriculum model to be realised.

This paper outlines and illustrates the journey made possible through the ongoing partnership and shared objectives of the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and the School Library Association of Victoria in identifying, sharing and exploring the potential of the best possible online resources for 21st Century

learning. DEECD supports these with a variety of online spaces, programs and resources (http://www.education.vic.gov.au/connect/) and (https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/). SLAV likewise supports these objectives through the provision of professional learning for its members in school libraries (http://www.slav.schools.net.au/downloads/13others/prolrnMM.pdf).

The Project

In order for this journey to be mapped out, planning, research and direction were required. SLAV offered a number of presentations at conferences about podcasting, wikis, blogs and how students were using the Web 2.0 environment. An example by Education and ICT Consultant, Cecilie Murray is available on the Past Papers section of the SLAV website. See: http://www.slav.schools.net.au/downloads/08pastpapers/28web20/web2_murray.pdf .

SLAV and DEECD worked together to establish a safe blogging environment which was to operate as the collaborative community in which teachers shared their learning, successes and challenges. Demand was there from SLAV members to 'have a go' and many teacher-librarians were leaders in establishing web 2.0 learning opportunities for the rest of their staff.

These elements along with commissioned research focusing on the effective use of online collaborative software in learning and teaching provided the evidence-base and rationale for the ongoing project. The commissioned research was carried out by Pam Macintyre and Ric Canale, (2008) The University of Melbourne, and studied teachers and students in a number of schools involved in DEECD Global Teacher and Global Student Projects. The findings indicated that these collaborative online communities were highly successful in terms of student engagement and learning.

The project focused on the delivery of "learning with web 2.0" a self-paced, program to over 600 teachers and teacher-librarians, many working in collaborative school groups led by the teacher-librarian. Emphasising learning through play and providing the support of online mentors, the program immersed participants in the social networking and interactive online environment with which their students are so familiar and find so engaging.
This "learning with web 2.0"program was based on the success of the phenomenon of "the 23 things" that everyone should know about web 2.0. This web-based program was created by Helene Blowers of the Charlotte and Mecklenberg County Public Library in the USA for her own staff's professional development and then made available to all via a creative commons licence. http://plcmclearning.blogspot.com/

Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) in Melbourne, Victoria had taken it up for their own staff, municipal employees and for all public library staff across Victoria. Through the SLAV partnership with the State Library of Victoria, we were able to talk with YPRL about the possibility of working with us on the delivery of web 2.0 a program suitable for schools. SLAV took on the responsibility of adapting the program for schools in Victoria and, recognising schools' concerns in relation to cybersafety and that blocking of social networking and web 2.0 sites was common in Victorian schools, identified alternatives such as Teacher Tube. The program *Victorian School Libraries Learning with Web 2.0…Re-imagine…* was staged between April and August 2008 with the support of mentors and tracking by the Yarra Plenty Regional Library team. This program is available at: http://elearning.globalteacher.org.au/

The DEECD blogging environment, Globalteacher (http://globalteacher.org.au/) and Globalstudent, (http://globalteacher.org.au/) became the space to deliver the program and facilitated the shared learning. This space has since evolved to include thousands of both teachers and students blogging.

This environment has provided opportunities for global connections in terms of collaborative projects for schools, but is also a freely available professional learning resource which can be used and modified by educators and educational systems across the world. A tried and true success for teachers new to the digital world it provides a scaffold to learning, with the application and potential of these web 2.0 tools explored and available for the global education community.

Upon completion of this online program, participants offered reflective comments acknowledging that this initiative was a timely means of encouraging change in teaching practice. (see: http://docs.google.com/Doc?id=dc42qjnq_3fv9w8cc5) Participants' enthusiasm has not only ensured the sharing of further initiatives in the ever-changing web 2.0 environment, but teacher-librarians now see themselves, and are seen, as taking a vital role in changing teaching practice – in fact in many cases, are leading the change.

This vital leadership role is reflected in the SLAV blog, *Bright Ideas*, (http://slav.globalteacher.org.au/) which was established following the *Victorian School Libraries Learning with Web 2.0...Re-imagine…* and has been an outstanding success in providing an opportunity for Victorian teachers to continue their learning journey and create an online collaborative community for the sharing of best practice, ideas and showcasing examples of school libraries using web 2.0 for learning. *Bright Ideas* has enjoyed over 40,000 hits since its establishment in October 2008. The clustr map also highlights the global nature of the response to this collaborative resource.

See: http://www4.clustrmaps.com/counter/maps.php?url=http://slav.globalteacher.org.au/

Conclusion In conclusion, the successful partnerships involved in our learning journey have provided Victorian teachers and school libraries (and educators across the world) the means to collaborate in way never previously possible and in a way that has changed teaching practice to become truly creative and positive.

References

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Biographical Notes

Mary Manning is the Executive Officer of the School Library Association of Victoria in Australia. In this role, Mary initiates and manages the development of an innovative professional learning program and a range of resources which support the vital role of teacher-librarians, the effective use of ICTs in school libraries and the integration of interdisciplinary learning across the curriculum.

Sandy Phillips commenced her career as a classroom teaching and now manages the development of a globally accessible portal for teachers called FUSE, an initiative of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in Victoria, Australia. FUSE will be a place for global educators to find, use and share educational resources to support teachers in the education of 21st Century learners.

Statement of Originality

This statement certifies that the paper above is based upon original research undertaken by the author and that the paper was conceived and written by the author(s) alone and has not been published elsewhere. All information and ideas from others are referenced.