



Killer Apps

Sometime in a past newsletter, I mentioned my plan to see if I could really “live” online. In other words, is it possible to do everything online? I’m here to report that it is...from email to calendars to word processing, I can use online tools to create and communicate.

So what? I hear you asking. Because using web-based tools frees me from being tied to a particular computer. It means that instead of giving every kid a laptop, we give every kid a Google (<http://www.google.com>) account. And, using web-based tools promotes collaboration in a way that stand alone applications do not.

I have joked to a few people that I hope Google isn’t some kind of evil empire because I am certainly one of its minions. I used Google Docs this semester to share drafts my dissertation proposal with my advisor and fellow classmates. I keep my calendar there and have all my email, no matter what the account, dumped into gmail where I am most enamored of the way it organizes email exchanges into conversations. The tagging feature and search function help to make it the best email readers I’ve ever used.

The only thing I don’t use Google for is as a news reader. I got started with Netvibes (<http://www.netvibes.com>) a long time ago and have developed a pretty extensive portal page. At a glance, I can see if there’s any new email for me, check the weather and stocks, and read my favorite blogger’s newest posting. Now I can share my Netvibes tabs, too. Here’s a link to the education blogs I read:
<http://www.netvibes.com/subscribe.php?preconfig=8fc928385b47b1a9f5f993de5ace09e7>

Not every web-based application has to be public, however. As part of my coursework this semester, I started a reflexive journal that I will continue to use as I work on my research project. Because it contains confidential information, I could not use a typical blog but I knew I wanted the ease of using weblog software. Fortunately, livejournal (<http://www.livejournal.com>) allows users to set up private blogs that can be shared with select individuals, such as my advisor. Because it was so easy to use, I think the technology allowed me to focus more on the content I was creating.

Conference Calendar

The best place to look for educational technology conferences is at T.H.E. Journal (<http://www.thejournal.com/>). Their searchable calendar is a comprehensive guide to national and international conferences. In this space, we'll be featuring conferences of particular interest to Virginia educators. This month, I've added a few online events, often called "webinars."

National Educational Computing Conference: June 24-27, 2007. Atlanta, Georgia.

Thousands of educators come together once a year to talk about technology. Just amazing! And this coming year, it is close by. Plan now to send a team to this premiere educational technology conference. Visit the website for more information:

<http://center.uoregon.edu/ISTE/NECC2007/>

ED-MEDIA: World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia, and Telecommunications: June 25-29, 2007, Vancouver, BC.

ED-MEDIA--World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia & Telecommunications--is an international conference, organized by the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE). The conference spans all disciplines and levels of education and annually attracts more than 1,500 leaders in the field from over 70 countries. <http://www.aace.org/conf/edmedia/default.htm>

Innovate-Live, June 5-9, 2007. Online

The Innovate-Live Seminar Series is a series of webcasts covering timely issues that arise when educators attempt to use information technology tools to enhance the educational process. The webcasts are free but do require a registration. The 2007 spring Seminar Series sessions will be held the week of June 5 - 9. Topics include asynchronous communication tools, online teaching and learning, and electronic portfolios. Visit the Innovate Live Portal for more information. <http://www.uliveandlearn.com/PortalInnovate/index.cfm>

K-12 Online 2007, October 22-26, 2007. Online

The Call for Proposals for this innovative new conference idea has just been published. Deadline for proposal is June 18. The second annual conference will be held in October and feature keynotes, podcasts, and more. All online...so you can attend a conference without getting out of your fuzzy slippers. <http://k12onlineconference.org>



Summer Means Gardens!

My office window at home overlooks the back yard where, this year, my husband put in an extensive vegetable garden. My mouth starts watering as I think about vine ripe tomatoes and crisp green beans. Growing your own food is challenging but rewarding and something I think every child should experience. This month, we explore a variety of web-based resources related to gardening.

The American Community Gardening Association (<http://www.communitygarden.org>) supports community gardeners by providing a place to share ideas, experiences, and resources. The site includes a list of community gardening programs and tips for starting new programs.

iVillage's GardenWeb (<http://www.gardenweb.com/>) is a gardener's paradise online. There's a large glossary of gardening terms and a searchable plant database. The site encourages users to become part of the community by posting to the forums or using the plant exchange to share their bounty with others. Finally, the site includes a wide array of expert columns on almost any gardening subject from African Violets to Woodlands.

If you've ever looked at a plant and asked yourself, "Is it a weed?" then the National Gardening Association's Weed Finder (<http://garden.org/weedlibrary/>) is just perfect for you. There are good pictures and the weeds are divided into categories to make them easier to identify. The association also features a website dedicated to kids' gardening with lots of great ideas for teachers and students (<http://www.kidsgardening.com/>). They are sponsoring a gardening with kids photo contest. The deadline is September 15.

Finally, sometimes it is just relaxing to look at other people's gardens. I'll admit that it's best to do it in real person, but if you're stuck in the office, you can visit lots of famous gardens virtually. For instance, while I will get to actually walk through Butchart Gardens (<http://www.butchartgardens.com/gardens/>) in Victoria, BC, this summer, I won't be able to visit the Biddulph Grange in Staffordshire, England. The National Trust's website (<http://tinyurl.com/2q9dqqs>), however, includes information and a photo gallery for not only Biddulph but also others gardens throughout England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The Crescent Bloom website (<http://www.crescentbloom.com/II/F/default.htm>) includes lists of famous gardens in the United States and Canada.



Good Reads



We can't be good technology ambassadors if we aren't well-informed. And with the Internet, keeping up to date has never been easier. Each month, I'll be highlighting interesting, relevant sources from research projects to government reports and ezines to bloggers.

Making the Grade: Online Education in the US

Making the Grade: Online Education in the United States, 2006 is the fourth annual report on the state of online learning in U.S. higher education. The study, supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and conducted by the Babson Survey Research Group in partnership with the

College Board, is based on responses from over 2,200 colleges and universities and examines fundamental questions related to the nature and extent of online education. There are regional reports as well. All four annual reports and the regional reports are available for free download at the site.

<http://www.sloan-c.org/publications/survey/survey06.asp>

Just for Fun (and maybe some learning, too!)

BBC Virtual Gardens

*Take thy plastic spade,
It is thy pencil; take thy seeds, thy plants,
They are thy colours.
~William Mason, The English Garden, 1782*

I am a somewhat haphazard gardener, putting flowers here and there where I think they will be happy without too much thought to height or color. Maybe I can use this Virtual Garden planner to organize my efforts a bit better. You can try it out online or download an offline application. The database includes lots of different kinds of plants including grasses, biennials and shrubs. You can work in the planning view, then switch to 3D to see what it will look like when the flowers are in bloom. Lots of fun!

http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/design/virtualgarden_index.shtml