



## What Google Can Teach Us

In case you haven't figured it out, I'm a big fan of Google. I use Gmail, Google Maps, Google Docs, and Google Scholar on a daily basis. But, besides specific applications, Google offers us lessons in how to engage users, lessons that might help us deal with the teachers with whom we work.



The first lesson is that Google builds on previous applications, supporting things we've always done, but in innovative ways that increase our productivity. For instance, Google Docs is really nothing more than an Office-style suite that includes word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software. And, in terms of bells and whistles, Microsoft's Office wins hands down. What Google has done is added the online, collaborative component. Which is more important to you? For me, being able to access and share my documents online is priceless. When we work with teachers, we need to be careful that we offer them features that they really need to support the teaching and learning in their classrooms rather than focusing on bells and whistles that don't have much content or pedagogical significance.



The second lesson is that Google offers lots of customization. I've been using Google Scholar to do research for my dissertation. With a quick setting change, I was able to link Scholar to the online databases at William and Mary. When I do a search, the results included a "Find It At WM" link that drills directly into the electronic databases to find the specific article. It has become my preferred research portal; if I am looking for a specific article, I start with Scholar. Using technology in the classroom should offer similar levels of customization for both teachers and students so they can make the best use of the technology to support their own learning. In addition, we should be sure that our suggestions for technology use are both efficient and effective.

I guess the main lesson from Google is that it is client-centered. I have heard how carefully they consider new applications; it's clear from an application like Google Maps that they spend a lot of time considering user needs. Then, they create an easy-to-use, common sense application to meet those needs. When we work with teachers those two criteria--easy-to-use and common sense--are essential if we are to help them make the best use of technology to support the teaching and learning in their classrooms.



# 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."

## **Educational Technology Leadership Conference: December 5-7, 2007, Roanoke, Virginia.**

Now in its 13th year, the Educational Technology Leadership Conference is co-sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Society for Technology in Education. This year, the conference will provide a wealth of presentations designed to align with and explore the goals and objectives of the five major components of Virginia's long-range educational technology plan: integration, professional development, connectivity, educational applications, and accountability. Presentations related to Internet Safety will also be included. Presentation proposals are still being accepted. Visit the website for more information:

<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Technology/OET/conf.shtml>

## **Virginia Society for Technology in Education, February 24-27, 2007, Roanoke, Virginia.**

Come see how technology rocks in Virginia! This state-wide conference is now in its 22nd year. With over 1,200 attendees and a full two-and-a-half days of presentations, hands-on workshops, and the always popular extravaganza, this conference is high energy. Co-sponsored by the Virginia Society for Technology in Education and the Virginia Department of Education. Learn more at the website:

<http://www.vste.org/conference.html/>

## **FETC, January 25- 28, 2008, Orlando, Florida**

It's really a mini-NECC, and it's in Florida in the winter. What could be better? While the conference is a bit Florida-focused, it has a national reputation and caters to many different audiences from teachers to administrators to media specialists to technology directors. Registration is open now. Learn more at <http://www.fetc.org>.

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

The second annual conference is over. But, I'm leaving this one up because you can still attend! And, you can attend last year's conference, too. It's archived at William and Mary. Go on, check it out. You can attend a conference that is over from your own desk. Don't you just love the web? Learn more at

<http://k12onlineconference.org>.



# Good Reads



We can't be good technology ambassadors if we aren't well-informed. Each month, I'll be highlighting interesting, relevant sources from research projects to government reports and ezines to bloggers.

## Technology Review

MIT's online version of its print journal reminds me of Popular Mechanics on steroids. Calling itself "The Authority on the Future of Technology," Technology Review takes a wide view of technology. Recent stories focused on making oil from wood, using a new software tool, and building the world's smallest radio. New articles are posted almost every day, and there is an extensive archive.

Do a search on education to find a list of great articles on everything from science education to homeschooling. Visit the site: <http://www.technologyreview.com/>.

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

### A Shakespeare Murder Mystery

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.*

*~William Shakespeare*

This game from the BBC takes players through an interactive theater experience. It requires a free login and takes about two hours of playing time. Visit the game site to learn more: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/game.shtml>. Then, be sure to browse the BBC's Shakespeare homepage: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/>. Your students can take the 60-second challenge and create a video or audio production of a Shakespeare play. There are quizzes and screensavers as well. You can even learn Elizabethan insults, you jackanapes with scarves!



# More of the Bard Online

The web is home to lots of information about William Shakespeare including copies of the plays, discussions of the real author, and quizzes and other interactive experiences. I've highlighted just a few below.



## The Shakespeare Fellowship

The original fellowship was founded in 1922. This newer version was created in 2001. The objectives of both groups, however, are the same: to encourage research in the authorship of the plays. The original group was founded by Thomas Looney, famous for his theory that the plays were actually written by the Earl of Oxford. Their interactive "Shakespeare Hall of Fame" quotes a plethora of scholars who believe that the Earl is the real bard. They publish a newsletter with an online subscription fee of \$20. This year, they are sponsoring an essay contest as well. Visit the website to learn more about this interesting group and find out why the portrait on the left is so controversial. Learn more: <http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/>

## Shakespeare Online

This website--part of about.com--is a compendium of everything Shakespeare. There are synopses, timelines, and other features like quizzes and a glossary. I found the timeline particularly interesting and detailed. There is also an excellent introduction to the theatre's of Shakespeare's time and extensive biographies of Shakespearean scholars. In an interesting twist, the author of the site does not mention the authorship controversy at all. Visit the website: <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/>



## Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet

Yet another compendium of digital Shakespeariana. This one is geared towards educators and includes links to online educational resources such as syllabi and other course materials including lectures and an American Sign Language version of Twelfth Night. The Mr. Shakespeare Weblog is active and up-to-date with posts related to new editions of the works, upcoming movies and plays, and quotes from other authors on Shakespeare including John Milton's epitaph. Subscribe to the RSS feed and get Shakespeare updates every day. Here's the link: <http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>. If you're a Shakespeare fan, be prepared to spend some time here.

