



The End of the VITAL Era

It was 2001 when Virginia was awarded over 3 million dollars to develop professional development for school administrators related to their role in the use of educational technology. While other states bought laptops and handhelds and held “big box” workshops, Virginia took another approach.

That approach became known as the Virginia Initiative for Technology and Administrative Leadership and for the past seven years, VITAL representatives have travelled across the Commonwealth, working with individual school divisions. With its wide diversity of school divisions, meeting administrators face-to-face where they lived seemed the only way to best address this training, focusing on the resources they had available to them as well as the concerns facing their schools.

I speak for all of us when I say it has been a wonderful experience. We have learned so much about education in Virginia; in fact, I would say I’ve learned much more than I’ve actually taught. It has been exciting to see the changes that have taken place. And, our program has experienced its own changes. In the beginning, we often talked about tools: laptops, handhelds, personal response systems and so on. Now, many of those tools are commonplace in schools, and rather than demonstrating their use, we talk more about how to use them to support instruction. We’ve added new vocabulary words like flat world, social networking and digital natives. And, with the rise of Web 2.0, many of the tools we do discuss are network-based rather than hardware, things like wikis and blogs. Our fundamental goals, however, have remained the same: to help school administrators learn about their role in the effective, efficient use of educational technology.

Other changes are taking place as well. The original technology standards for administrators that formed the basis for the VITAL program will be refreshed in 2009, bringing new challenges and opportunities for talking with administrators about their role in the technology integration process. While the grant has ended, which means this is the last *VITALNews*, our commitment to working with administrators remains. Just contact Chris O’Neal (onealchris@gmail.com) or me (witchyrichy@gmail.com) to let us know what we can do to help further the conversation. Meanwhile, you can find us online. Chris blogs at The Spiral Notebook (<http://www.edutopia.org/spiralnotebook>) while I blog at Ivy Run (<http://www.ivyrun.com/wordpress>) and post news items of interest at Virginia’s Community of Learning (<http://vcol.blogspot.com>). You can also find both of us at VSTE’s Ning Community: <http://vsteonline.ning.com>.

Best wishes for a wonderful summer and we’ll see you online!

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.

National Educational Computing Conference, June 29-July 2, 2008, San Antonio, Texas

This is the biggie! Thousands of people from all over the world, more presentations and events than you can imagine, and technology everywhere. Registration is open and there is a tentative schedule posted at the website. If you're planning on going, now is a good time to make your hotel reservations. Here's the website for more information: <http://center.uoregon.edu/ISTE/NECC2008/>

ISTE Webinars

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) is currently sponsoring two webinar series. The first, Innovative Educator' Express, features leaders in the field discussing emerging technologies and they can be integrated into the classroom. The Technology in Practice Webinar Series focuses on Web 2.0 tools specifically. You can learn more about these online meetings at <http://tinyurl.com/3dcj64>.

K-12 Online 2008, October 20-31, 2008. Online

The third annual conference will be held in October and the request for presentations is currently open. You can also revisit the content from the first two conferences, which is archived at William and Mary. Go on, check it out. You can attend a conference that is over from your computer wherever that might be. And, you'll be able to send every member of your faculty to the conference in October for free! Don't you just love the web? Learn more at <http://k12onlineconference.org>.

Educational Technology Leadership Conference, December 10-12, 2008, Roanoke, Virginia

The 14th annual conference will be sponsored by the Office of Educational Research and Outreach (OERO) at Virginia Tech. If you have questions about the 2008 conference or need additional information, please e-mail Ken Potter with OERO at kpotter@vt.edu.

Florida Educational Technology Conference, January 21-24, 2009, Orlando, FL

With an attendance almost as big as NECC, this is much more than a state conference. Plus, who could turn down Florida in January? Chris and I have presented often at this conference and are always impressed with the energy of everyone in attendance. Calls for proposals are currently open. Visit the website to learn more: <http://www.fetc.org>.

Virginia Society for Technology in Education, February 22-24, 2009, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Early bird registration is open. Plan ahead for next year in Virginia Beach now. Visit the website to learn more: <http://www.vste.org>. Don't forget that VSTE membership is free and puts you in touch with educators from all over the world. Meanwhile, visit the VSTE Ning Site to read blog entries, listen to podcasts and experience the power of social networking: <http://vsteonline.ning.com>.

Good Reads



Over the years, I have featured lots of reports and websites. The *VITALNews* is archived at <http://www.virginialearning.org>, and you can find links to all the featured Good Reads. For this final edition, I just have a few links to share where you can keep up with current information.

Keeping Up

Pew Research Center (<http://pewresearch.org/>): THE place for numbers with polls, survey results and research reports. In particular, Pew Internet and American Life provides details about how Americans are using the Internet. More statistics can be found at the National Center for Educational Statistics:

<http://www.nces.ed.gov/>.

For the latest news in all areas of education, I read the ASCD SmartBrief everyday. It includes technology news and is delivered to my inbox first thing each morning: <http://ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/index.jsp/>

Finally, much of what I find on the web is guided by the bloggers I read. I certainly can't list them all here but I can point you to my Netvibes public page where I have links to many of them:

http://www.netvibes.com/witchyrichy#EdTech_Blogs

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

PMOG

I am new to this game and already hooked. PMOG stands for Passively Multiuser Online Game, and it is all about finding new, fun, useful websites. Essentially, you earn points by the surfing the web. Finally, a game I'm good at that doesn't require shooting at something. Users create missions for others to follow. I've been introduced to unusual animals, great book websites, and places to find good deals. When I finish this last newsletter, I'm going to create my first mission. You'll need a free account, and the game works best with the Firefox web browser. Other than that: a mouse and a sense of adventure will get you far. Visit the website to get started: <http://pmog.com>.

The Last List

I've featured lots of websites over the past six years. Here are my all-time favorites, the websites I would take with me to a deserted island.

LibraryThing

I know, I know, I've written about this site many times. And, you still don't have an account? It's the perfect place for an online library. You can add your books and reviews and then get recommendations from others based on your library. No English teacher should be without one. And, they are now cataloging the libraries of famous people so you can see what books you share with folks like John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Susan B. Anthony. Visit the website to get started: <http://www.librarything.com>.

The Internet Archive

It's tough to describe this website. It's the home of the Wayback Machine, a tool that allows you to browse old versions of websites. It's also a place to find copyright-friendly images, audio, and video. There are live concerts to download and interactive books to browse. The site bills itself as providing universal access to human knowledge, and while I don't think it's gone that far, it provides a model for how that might happen. Don't get started unless you've got time to get lost: <http://archive.org>.

YouTube

Youtube (<http://www.youtube.com>) is sort of the site you love to hate or maybe hate to love. There are certainly plenty of stupid videos available. But amongst the dross, you can find gold such as Sir Ken Robinson on creativity and Tom Friedman on globalization. TeacherTube (<http://www.teachertube.com>), the education equivalent, is becoming increasingly robust and it features lots of work by kids as well so you may want to start there. As an aside, I completed a PMOG mission on tubes and discovered there is also a "mewtube" (videos of cats) and a "shoetube" (you guessed it, videos of shoes). I love the web.

Wikimedia

The folks who brought us Wikipedia also sponsor a collection of web-based resource sites including Wiktionary, Wikibooks, and Wikiquotes. There's even a Wikiversity! Are you looking to read and learn? Start here: <http://www.wikimedia.org>.

Wikispaces

Speaking of wikis, I must point you to wikispaces. It's where I keep most of my content on the web including the syllabus for my course at William and Mary and handouts for my presentations. It makes it easy to create websites with text, images, audio and video. There is a free version as well as several for-cost alternatives that offer different features. Here's the site: <http://www.wikispaces.com>.