

Technology Toolbox for Media Specialists

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In an increasingly complex, demanding and competitive 21st century, students need to learn more than the 3R's they are tested on in school. It's time to help them go "above & beyond", by embracing the 4Cs – communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity.

- Partnership for 21st Century Skills

The following tools are free and all require basic technological proficiency. These factors will make it easy for everyone to explore all the items on the list. Media Specialists will find tools to help with professional development, instruction, and library operation. Enjoy!

Professional Development

Twitter <http://twitter.com/>

Brevity is a must with this social network; users have only 140 characters to communicate their ideas. With 230,000,000 tweets per day and over 100,000,000 active users, Twitter is joining the ranks of the top social services. While the most well-known tweeters are celebrities; this tool can also serve as professional development network. Look for users with shared interests. Also try searching for people you know in real life. Remember, twitter is more effective as a conversation than a broadcast (Stuart, 2010, p. 46). Stuart suggests a few tips for beginners: follow those in your professional community and those who follow you, and retweet comments you find helpful or interesting.

Twitter's FAQ (<https://support.twitter.com/groups/31-twitter-basics>) is a great place to for new users to learn the basics.

TED Talks <http://www.ted.com/>

TED Talks are videos of "ideas worth spreading." Originally video presentations focused on sharing knowledge related to Technology, Entertainment, and Design. Now there are over 700 videos spanning topics related to technology, entertainment, design, business, science, and global issues. All school media specialists should be familiar with TED Talks - the videos present viewers with information about innovative topics or innovative approaches to topics from diverse perspectives. If no other benefits are received, in the least, TED Talks are a source of inspiration that can be watched at the end of a busy day. Instead of zoning out to the latest episode of *House* or *30 Rock*, minimize those brain-dead feelings by zoning out to TED Talks.

LISnews.org (2011), "TEducation: 5 TED Talks Librarians Should Watch (and Why)" explains why TED Talks are a useful resource for librarians and identifies five TEDs that every librarian should watch.

Sources for Instructional Videos in general:

- YouTube
- TeacherTube
- SchoolTube
- CommonCraft

Virtual Conferences

Attend free conferences without leaving your computer. Virtual conferences allow users register and meet over the web. The two requirements are an internet connection and time. Sessions are typically archived, so schedule conflicts will not prevent attendance. Just remember to be patient, as technology problems can create disruptions for these events.

Library 2.011 (November 2-4, 2011) and the Global Education Conference (November 14-18, 2011) are recent examples of free virtual conferences. Both have archives and active communities. The websites provide many resources, including blog posts and wikis which are ongoing. Look for announcements for other conferences at these sites as well.

- <http://www.library20.com/>, #lib2011
- <http://gloaleducation.ning.com/page/2011-conference>, #gloaled11

Instruction

SymbalooEDU <http://www.symbalooedu.com/>

With Symbaloo, users can organize and efficiently access web content and tools. A variety of content can be added, including links, RSS feeds, widgets, search engines, and radio. Pages can be shared using direct web links or published through social media. Symbaloo maintains a searchable gallery of published mixes which can be added to user's personal accounts.

SymbalooEDU grew out of the ways educators were using the service. A video of one students' Personal Learning Environment (PLE) led Symbaloo to create a version for education (Ruffig). PLE's are a collection of web content used by an individual in their learning process. Dianne Reese's post "Create a personal learning environment with Symbaloo" is a tutorial for first time users. Also of interest is this video from a 7th grader explain how she uses Symbaloo as a PLE:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/wdrexler?feature=watch#p/a/u/2/YEIs3tq5wIY>.

Related resources for investigation:

- Netvibes

Popplet <http://popplet.com/>

Popplet is a service where users can create mind maps of various topics. Popples can be shared between users and can include text, images, videos, and links to outside sources. This tool can be used to plan papers or presentations, and it is a great resource for projects that require collaboration.

In *Adding Spice to Library Instruction*, mlpatrick (2011) notes, "I really enjoyed reading about what some librarians are doing to engage and motivate students during the usually short time that librarians have to show what the library has to offer and to teach and facilitate research skills. Among the ideas offered in the postings, three in particular caught my interest: Animoto, Popplet, and Prezi."

Related resources for investigation:

- Prezi
- Animoto

CC Search <http://search.creativecommons.org>

Finding media for school use can be difficult, especially with the need to respect copyright at no cost. Instead of searching on the open web, try using tools that only search content licensed for reuse. Many content sites like Flickr and YouTube have advanced searches to filter results according to copyright, but these features are not always easy to find. CC Search is a tool that "provides access to an advance search features of 10 sites, including Flickr, Google images, and YouTube."

Looking for music? Try <http://www.freeplaymusic.com/>.

International Children's Digital Library <http://en.childrenslibrary.org/>

The International Children's Digital Library is a collection of 4,468 freely accessible children's books. There are 55 different languages represented in the collection. The site is easy to navigate and has a child-friendly interface with large icons for selection. This digital library is a great resource for school media specialists to share diverse cultures and languages with all students and teachers. It is also a great resource for families of English-language-learners.

ALSC (the Association for Library Services to Children) Children and Technology Committee included the International Children's Digital Library in their August 13th blog post, *iPad Storytime Tools*. Jennifer Hopwood, a guest blogger for the committee, explains, "[the ICDL] has a free iPad app that features hundreds of international children's stories some of which have been translated into English" (2011).

Video Conferencing

With video conferencing, experts can visit your library via computer. There are several is a web-based video conferencing services requiring only a free account and a webcam. Students can visit with authors, scientists, and museums without leaving the library. This technology also enables collaboration with classrooms across the globe.

Kate Messner suggests several tips for Skype video conferences in her blog post "Virtual Author Visits: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly, & the Awesome." The post focuses on an author visit, but the tips apply to any video conference. She also maintains an extensive list of authors who are willing to do 20 minute Skype conferences for free:

- <http://www.katemessner.com/authors-who-skype-with-classes-book-clubs-for-free/>

Video conferencing services:

- Skype
- Google Chat

Library Operations

Goodreads <http://www.goodreads.com/>

Goodreads is a resource where users can create a virtual representation of their own bookshelves, listing what they have read, what they would like to read, and what they are currently reading. Recommendations for book titles to read are provided based on "liked" materials. Goodreads members can also follow other users for book suggestions. This tool is useful for school media specialists for finding popular new titles, browsing books by subject, and searching by title, author, or ISBN. Members can also form book clubs through Goodreads.

In Crowdsourcing RA, David Rapp explains the popularity of Goodreads, noting it as the "biggest player around" in comparison to LibraryThing and Shelfari.

"Goodreads doesn't have statistics on how many librarians use the site, but recently it conducted an informal poll, asking its members, "Do you work as a librarian for a living?" About 1900 people out of more than 26,000 respondents said yes--about seven percent. And many libraries run reading groups through the site, including the San Diego Public Library and Salt Lake County Library Services" (2011).

Related Resources for Investigation:

- LibraryThing
- Shelfari

Wikis <http://www.wikispaces.com/>

Wikispaces is a resource that allows users to create, share, and maintain their own wikis. Wikis are another great tool for project planning and collaboration. They are useful for school media specialists because they can be used to share content with students, teachers, administrators and parents and families in the school community.

Kathy Fredrick identifies Wikispaces as a starting point for building wikis in "A Fleet of Freebies: Choosing Web 2.0 Tools for a School Community" which appears in the May 2011 issue of *School Library Monthly*.

Wikis (continued)

Related Resources for Investigation:

- <http://wikkawiki.org/HomePage>
- <http://www.wikia.com/Wikia>
- <http://www.wikiidot.com/>
- <http://pbworks.com/>
- <http://wikisineducation.wetpaint.com/>

Further Reading

Education Technology Blogs

- <http://etechlib.wordpress.com/>
- <http://www.emergingedtech.com/>
- <http://mediaspecialistsguide.blogspot.com/>

And the award goes to...

- <http://www.ala.org/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/bestlist/bestwebsites2011>
- <http://edublogawards.com/>

Partnership for 21st Century Skills

- <http://p21.org/>

Teacher Experience Exchange

- <http://h30411.www3.hp.com/>

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