NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

There is a great deal of rhetoric in the education and business communities about 21st-century knowledge and skills: the knowledge and skills necessary for today’s learners to be successful, productive workers and citizens in the ever-evolving global economy. As with many terms, 21st century skills and 21st century learning can mean different things to different stakeholders. So, there is a need to begin with a common definition so administrators, educators, students, professional development providers, and families can work together to educate students in different ways to prepare them to be flexible, lifelong learners capable of adapting to the rapidly changing world they will be living and working in. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills provides a common framework. “The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has emerged as the leading advocacy organization focused on infusing 21st century skills into education. The organization brings together the business community, education leaders, and policymakers to define a powerful vision for 21st century education and to ensure that students emerge from our schools with the skills needed to be effective citizens, workers, and leaders in the 21st century” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2008).

For a complete list of 21st century knowledge and skills that will be the basis of upcoming professional development opportunities, visit the organization’s web site at http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/ There are also numerous reports and articles available that explain the concepts for 21st century instruction.

As Cal U’s TPS professional development program moves to Level 2, it weaves in many of the concepts associated with preparing students for success in the 21st century. We look forward to working with teachers to demonstrate how primary source–based instruction can be useful for 21st Century knowledge and skills development among students.

FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

One of the newest sections of the Library of Congress website is myLOC (http://myloc.gov). Combining many of the same types of resources offered across Digital Collections (e.g. American Memory, Prints and Photographs Online Catalog) as well as The Learning Page lesson plans, myLOC provides an all new look and feel to past visitors of the LOC web site.

The myLOC site features brilliant exhibitions, tours of the art and architecture in the Library of Congress, educational resources, and “Interactives,” the name given to online activities in which users interact with primary sources on display in DC.


One of the favorite interactives seems to be an activity with the draft of the Declaration of Independence. Located in Creating the United States is a tool that lets users “connect particular phrases and ideas set down in the Declaration of Independence with texts that preceded it.” Additionally, users can scroll a box over the historic document to translate the difficult cursive as well as the scratched-out changes that were made to it. All of the interactives are educational in nature. Other examples are word searches and zoom-in maps.

The myLOC website is also customizable. Users can easily register to customize the display of content and save their favorite features—a valuable tool for teachers.
TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES AT CAL U

ANNEMARIE SAYS!

AnneMarie Walter,
Associate Director, LC/TPS
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101 Things you can do for the first three weeks of class.
Developed for college instructors for use in freshman classes, many of these suggestions will work for any age. These methods focus on helping students make that transition to the next grade after summer holidays, directing students’ attention to learning, sparking intellectual curiosity, encouraging the students’ active involvement in learning, and building a sense of community in the classroom. Get the semester off right! For more information; http://hnl.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/
teachtip/101thing.htm

EDUCATIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

Ushered in with the new school year is this new and timely newsletter column. In this section, educators and students of all academic disciplines will find tips and resources regarding the use of social media technologies in education and academia. If you automatically think of blogs, wikis, podcasts, and RSS feeds, then you’re on the right track. (Those are just a few of the particular social media technologies that we’ll be exploring in future articles.) And, even if the last sentence left you puzzled, this column—and especially this article—is for you, too! The purpose of this month’s column is to spread awareness of the 21st century computing term, “social media,” in general. There’s currently no entry for “social media” in Merriam-Webster. In fact, any close examination of what is meant by the term will reveal definitions that vary among users of these technologies. But such variance rests in the margins of what social media are or what they can do for users. There are really two elements to understanding social media: For a starting point, first think of traditional media (e.g., newspapers, television, books, radio), except add that social media are online. Secondly, social media consist of internet tools that facilitate the production and sharing of digital content. Implicit in the word “production” is an important notion—that is, that social media permit—and encourage—“user generated content.” Whereas traditional media merely provide the consumption of top-down content, social media are “grassroots,” generating and sharing content from the bottom-up. The educational and research uses are rather infinite. To learn how to use—or better use—these various social media technologies, tune in to this new column all school year.

RESEARCH AND CURRENT THINKING

Featured in this column are summaries of and links to online resources, articles, research findings, helpful web sites, and white papers. Material will center on critical thinking, application of Bloom’s Taxonomy, higher order questioning, field testing and assessment of primary source-based lesson plans and course activities. This month, we offer briefings on the following three resources:

(1) What Does This Picture Say?: Reading the Intertextuality of Visual Images, Werner (2004) explores, in the International Journal of Social Education, how the interplay of written and visual sources are interpreted. One source is always interpreted in the light of another to produce new meanings and the implications for educators. The full-text is available by searching for the title at Eric at http://eric.ed.gov

(2) What Happens When Students Read Multiple Source Documents in History? Stahl, et al. (1995) examines processes students use when presented with multiple source documents to study history. The authors explore which teaching strategies will enhance students’ historical thinking. The full-text is also available by searching for the title at Eric. (Visit http://eric.ed.gov)

(3) The last resource brief is The Knowledge Loom Web site, which was designed especially for educators. Knowledge Loom provides a forum for educators worldwide to review research that identifies promising practices and contribute knowledge about those practices. The site’s In the Spotlight features adolescent literacy in various content areas with links to strategies, research, and real stories of application. To experience Knowledge Loom, visit http://knowledgeloom.org/index.jsp

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