

## e-Update April 2009

Welcome to the 49th edition of e-Update, the monthly electronic bulletin from the Buckinghamshire ICT Curriculum Support Team.

The purpose of this bulletin is to keep you informed with the latest developments in ICT.

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The information in e-Update has been taken from Becta and other information sources. Details on how to subscribe to these can be found at the end of e-Update.

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e-Update can also be found on the Buckinghamshire ICT Curriculum Support Team's website at <http://www.bucksict.org.uk/e-update/> and on the Buckinghamshire Grid for Learning website at <http://www.bucksgfl.org.uk/resources/course/view.php?id=126>.

If you have any comments on e-Update, please send them to [adickson@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:adickson@buckscc.gov.uk).

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### **Sherston Channels – Free Trial**

#### **Andy Dickson, ICT Consultant**

The ICT Curriculum Support Team has arranged for a free trial of the Sherston Online Channels for half a term for Buckinghamshire LA schools. The two channels are Gogglebox and Crystal ICT. BLi Education, who own Sherston, describe these:

- *Gogglebox: structured, topic-based content with top quality video footage. Unique Interact section for whole class use and inbuilt pupil ePortfolio.*
- *Crystal ICT: high quality, curriculum mapped content covering key areas of ICT in a stimulating rainforest context. Subscription includes comprehensive classroom guide full of teaching ideas.*
- *Easy to use, no training required.*
- *Ideal for interactive whiteboards.*
- *Will work with your Learning Platform.*
- *Flexible pricing plans to suit your school size.*
- *Full access for all pupils at home is included at no extra charge.*

If you would like a free trial for the second half of the summer term, then email Matt Williams [m.williams@taglearning.com](mailto:m.williams@taglearning.com) **using a school email address**, expressing an interest in the free trial.

### **Latest Google Earth has oceans and historical data**

#### **Becta**

The latest version of Google Earth adds an ocean layer to its geographical data. Users can now 'plunge' into the oceans and travel along an ocean canyon or the edge of the continental shelf. The map layers include sites of ocean wrecks, pictures and video of marine features and creatures, and journey information that you can follow for 'geotagged' marine predators. The latter is based on the new Touring feature, through which you can record and play back tours in any part of Google Earth. A number of terrestrial locations also have historical views, so you can examine the development of urban areas. The historical imagery is variable, dependent on the data available to Google.

UK teacher and blogger Ollie Bray gives a range of possible uses for Google Earth in the classroom. (Click the 'Google Earth' tag in the Categories cloud for more entries.)

*Dive into the new Google Earth* <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2009/02/dive-into-new-google-earth.html>  
*New Google Earth Version 5.0...* <http://olliebray.typepad.com/olliebraycom/2009/02/new-google-earth-version-50-oceans-historic-layer-and-new-easy-way-to-make-google-earth-tours.html>

### Inspired Issue 3

#### **Futurelab**

Welcome to inspirED - a collection of news and stories to inspire anyone interested in innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The website is updated three times a year; Issue 3 is now online.

#### *News*

News stories covered in this issue include: the 'Shadow an Entrepreneur' programme, a handbook of bright ideas published by Which?, Learning Launchpad's investment opportunities, another social networking site from Channel 4, more resources from Film Education, and the national Tellus survey which is gathering the views of children and young people about their lives, schools and local areas.

#### *Cool stuff*

Some educational possibilities for Google Street View, news from the Greener Gadgets Conference, the world's first 'soft-robot', new ways of searching with Kosmix, and how to create your own virtual online world.

#### *The dust settles...*

Children's Plan updates, news of the Co-location Fund, Classroom Quality Standards for gifted and talented students, a review of how play can contribute to children's well-being, and some comments on the Rose Review interim report.

#### *Video*

This issue's video explores the development of Dream Catcher - "a magic PSP that can capture young children's dreams by recording their creative play and imaginary worlds".

<http://inspired.futurelab.org.uk>

### **Becta E-safety update**

#### **Becta**

The sixth European Safer Internet Day on 10th February 2009 brought a range of linked announcements from various agencies and suppliers. Research by MSN among 20,000 14- to 19-year-olds across Europe found that half had completely unrestricted internet access and over a quarter had experienced online bullying. The European Commission estimates that use of social networking sites has increased by 35 per cent in the last year and will further double by 2012.

A group of 17 major social networking and internet search organisations has signed an agreement with the Commission, through which they undertake to limit risks to under-18s by:

- Providing an easy to use and accessible 'report abuse' button on websites, which would lead to clear procedures for dealing with inappropriate content
- Setting the full profiles and contact lists of under-18s as 'private' by default and ensuring such profiles are not searchable
- Guaranteeing that privacy options are prominent and accessible at all times
- Preventing under-age users from accessing their services.

Actions under the last point include clear notifications and labelling, refusal to re-register users who attempt to change dates of birth, and other unspecified 'technical and legal constraints'.

Mobile operator O2 has announced, in conjunction with Childnet International, the availability of a free book for 8- to 12-year-olds called *who wnts 2 no?* Written by children's authors Steve Barlow and Steve Skidmore, the story embeds an internet safety message, but is designed to be read for enjoyment. The book will be published on 5th March.

Safer Internet Day <http://www.saferinternet.org/ww/en/pub/insafe/sid.htm>

Teens targeted in net safety push <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/7879755.stm>

Safer Internet Day 2009: Commission starts campaign...

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/09/58&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Social Networking: Commission brokers agreement...

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/232&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Safer Social Networking Principles for the EU

[http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/activities/social\\_networking/docs/sn\\_principles.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/social_networking/docs/sn_principles.pdf)

Social-networking sites pledge to make web safer <http://www.pcpro.co.uk/news/247002/socialnetworking-sites-pledge-to-make-web-safer.html>

School children get web safety advice [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/7880772.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/7880772.stm)

O2 announces free internet safety book for UK schools

[http://www.o2.com/media/press\\_releases/press\\_release\\_14345.asp?archive=yes](http://www.o2.com/media/press_releases/press_release_14345.asp?archive=yes)

## **Analysis: Micro-blogging in education**

### ***Becta***

#### ***At a glance***

- Micro-blogging encourages users to regularly update their status in short (often 140-character) posts.
- Posts can be used to pose questions, seek views, find leads for research or publish information for other users.
- Tools can be used to aggregate posts on particular themes, while 'hashtags' signal posts that belong to a particular thread.
- Twitter is one of the most popular services, receiving much media attention, but it is also a very public and potentially insecure environment. Many learners need guidance on using such tools.
- Teachers can use micro-blogging tools for their own professional development, to further research, to engage learners or to receive feedback from learning activities.
- Many of the same advantages can be achieved through other tools, such as instant messaging, chat rooms and forums.

#### ***More than Twitter***

The initial invitation of micro-blogging was for users to chronicle their daily lives in short 'status' updates: 'What are you doing now?' However, this has led to an explosion of interaction ranging from the trivial to the enlightening.

One of the most publicised services has been Twitter, but there are many others. Each message - or 'tweet' in Twitter terminology - is constrained, often to 140 characters. This has not proven as limiting as might be imagined, forcing users to condense thought, observations and questions into a brief but meaningful form. URL compression services, for example TinyURL and Bit.ly, can be used to shorten references to 25 characters or less, allowing users to point out web sites and make a comment within the defined limit.

Traffic to Twitter has increased 1000 per cent in the last year, putting it in the top 100 UK sites, and has drawn a lot of attention through celebrity endorsement from media favourites like Stephen Fry. Each person has their own Twitter identity, such as @StephenFry (who has over 200,000 'followers'), while topics can be formally tracked using 'hashtags', like the recent #uksnow.

Updates to micro-blogs can normally be posted through the service's own website, using a separate client, sending an SMS from a mobile phone or updating via an application installed on a mobile.

There are many services trying to compete in this market, with some specifically aimed at education.

#### ***Traditional blogging***

There are several differences between 'traditional' blogging (covered in TechNews, September 2005) and micro-blogging:

- The length of a blog post permits more detailed description, gives space for reflection and encourages writers to embed links to referenced articles
- Micro-blogging forces users to be concise and convey a single, main point
- Comments can be added to most blog posts, drawing a contributory stream around a central text
- Micro-blogging is more fragmented, making it harder to follow a thread, but comments arrive rapidly and are more spontaneous
- Blogs leave a permanent record, whereas a separate application may be needed to capture the stream of micro-blog updates.

#### ***Education***

Many educators are looking at ways to use micro-blogging in the classroom. Tom Barrett has posted a collaboratively-developed presentation with suggestions (currently 19) from teachers, such as compressing the plot of a story into 140 characters; following updates from NASA scientists; seeking instant points of view on a topic; and building on a sub-plot within a literary work studied, by tweeting in the 'voice' of two

characters involved. This list gives something of the diversity of potential uses rather than a 'good classroom guide'.

A recent blog post from Ollie Bray shows how the immediacy of Twitter can be combined with Google Earth to bring an instant perspective on weather to a classroom in Scotland: a 'shout' was sent via Twitter asking users for their location and a picture of the weather, leading to plotting locations on Google Maps and a discussion on spatial differences.

Some micro-blogging services offer closed environments to businesses and educators, for example:

- Yammer - is a service that requires a 'business' email address to sign in, based on master accounts set up by that organisation.
- ShoutEm - allows anyone to create a community, which may be either public or closed.
- Edmodo - focuses on education communities, with teachers able to set up classes and other groups.

Nik Peachey has written about Plurk in language teaching. This tool describes itself as a 'social journal', so posts are arranged on a timeline and grouped into threads.

### ***Real time feedback***

Conference organisers are beginning to use micro-blogs as a tool for direct, real time feedback during keynotes. There is a danger that the stream of updates becomes the 'star attraction', but it can form a way for the audience to engage with the topic, to ask for clarification, to expand on the point or to supplement it with relevant internet links.

Ira Socol refers to this as the 'back channel' and argues that it is better to have it explicitly recognised rather than secreted behind seats as students whisper or text each other or, worse, drift off into unrelated online activities. While recognising that such feedback could be threatening to the teacher, he also considers the opportunities afforded to the more hesitant student, to the one who has trouble speaking good English, or to the reflective type who wants to consider an answer before contributing. The tool he used was Today's Meet.

### ***Personal learning networks***

Many educators are now stressing the importance of their personal learning networks (PLNs) - contact webs drawn from a range of offline gatherings and social tools - who act as peer mentors and information repositories related to that professional's work. Faced by a pedagogical, research or technical issue, a quick 'shout' brings back a set of immediate answers or starting points.

Micro-blogging can be used to create 'crowd-sourced' wisdom. While the crowd may not always be correct, it can often contribute to a process of knowledge co-construction, which may be formalised using other tools such as wikis.

### ***Tools, add-ons, widgets***

There is a range of add-on services and tools that can enhance or structure the output from micro-blogging services. The precise nature of these will depend on the application programming interface (API) exposed by each tool, but many are written to work with the Twitter API. Tools include (for Twitter):

- Desktop clients (such as Tweetdeck or Twhirl, both written using Adobe AIR).
- Picture and video publishing (for example TwitPic and Twiddeo).
- Aggregators and search tools (such as Twitterfall, Twitscoop or TweetVolume).

These tools add to the Twitter environment, but may demand log in details and could be prone to all kinds of unknown vulnerabilities through the way they have been coded.

### ***Other messaging technologies***

Micro-blogging has caught the popular imagination - or at least the media's attention - but does it offer anything new? The functions mentioned above could all be carried out using tools which are, arguably, more robust and secure.

Instant messaging (IM) carries well-known risks, but can be used for direct conversations in real time, while chat rooms can draw such discussions into a central location that can be moderated and logged. For asynchronous debate, forums offer threaded conversations with embedded archives.

These tools are often provided as features of virtual learning environments (VLEs) and learning platforms (LPs), allowing teachers to experiment with these approaches using applications already available in school or college.

### **Security and other issues**

Recently, a new Twitter user caused a stir: @OHHDL purported to be a Twitter feed from the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, but proved to be an impersonator. Such instances may cause some to distrust the environment, but they also open up discussion around identity and authenticity.

Teachers must be wary that the Twitter 'stream' (in particular) is a public environment with few controls, leading to increasing levels of spam tweets and a recent (apparently harmless) 'Don't Click' clickjacking attack. Blogger DigMo suggests ten e-safety tips, which generally accord with the e-safety advice given to young people.

### **The future of micro-blogging**

This article has concentrated on text-based services but others, such as Seesmic and 12seconds, offer similar features for video updates. The short comment also forms the basis of reviews and reflection in Blippr and Blip.fm, both of which could be carefully used in an educational context.

Most of the companies running micro-blogging services are recent start-ups that have yet to prove their long term viability. It is likely that popular services will endure and will increase levels of security, offering more embedded tools for grouping and threading conversations. In common with many social technologies, micro-blogging tools are subject to a degree of 'fashion' which may place them in the category of 'un-cool' in the minds of young people within a couple of years, but educators can use these tools in a controlled manner to engage students now.

### **References**

Twitter <http://twitter.com>

TinyURL <http://tinyurl.com>

Bit.ly <http://bit.ly>

Twitter traffic up 1,000 percent <http://www.pcadvisor.co.uk/news/index.cfm?RSS&NewsID=109807>

Twitter enters the UK Top 100 sites <http://uk.techcrunch.com/2009/02/10/twitter-enters-the-uk-top-100-sites>

Nineteen interesting ways to use Twitter in the classroom

[http://docs.google.com/Present?docid=dhn2vcv5\\_118cfb8msf8](http://docs.google.com/Present?docid=dhn2vcv5_118cfb8msf8)

Using Twitter and Google Earth in the classroom to make the most of the weather!

<http://olliebray.typepad.com/olliebraycom/2009/02/using-twitter-and-google-earth-to-make-the-most-of-the-weather.html>

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Microblogging for EFL with Plurk <http://nikpeachey.blogspot.com/2008/07/microblogging-for-efl-with-plurk.html>

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Today's Meet <http://todaysmeet.com>

Tweetdeck <http://www.tweetdeck.com>

Twhirl <http://www.twhirl.org>

TwitPic <http://twitpic.com>

Twideo <http://beta.twideo.com>

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Twitter security: There's still a lot of work to do [http://news.cnet.com/8301-17939\\_109-10162649-2.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-17939_109-10162649-2.html)

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Seesmic <http://seesmic.com>

12seconds <http://12seconds.tv>

Blippr <http://www.blippr.com>

Blip.fm <http://blip.fm>

## **Ictopus – April's Lessons2go**

### ***Ictopus***

Ictopus (ICT online primary user support) is a support service for primary education. Anyone can sign up for the service (free of charge) and will then receive each week a six page printable magazine and a set of activity suggestions. There will also be a regular newsletter or e-bulletin. These resources (and more) will be archived on the ictopus website <http://www.ictopus.org.uk> where there will also be access to classroom activities and a variety of other resources and projects. Ictopus builds on the Becta Direct2U service and also the legacy of MAPE (Micros and Primary Education).

Login first, then access the activities via Resources and lessons2go.

*Available on 1st April 2009*

The next batch of lessons2go is now available. No April Fool's Day tricks, just the second bumper batch of brand new lessons on Outdoor Learning. Like last week, these lessons are intended to enable the use of ICT in activities which get teachers and children out of the classroom. This is the last week before the Easter break, so don't forget the Early Years lesson on Easter Colouring in week 60 (4th March 2009).

This week they have activities for the following age groups:

- **Age 5 to 6: A Local History Trail**  
In this activity, which is best done in small groups, the children will follow a simple trail around the local area looking for evidence that people lived there in the past. Children will use digital cameras to take pictures of the evidence. The pictures will later be printed and added to a simple plan as a classroom display. The sort of evidence that your children collect will depend on the locality where you live. Examples include churches, dated buildings, different styles of buildings, pillar boxes, street names etc.
- **Age 6 to 7: Outdoor Maze**  
This activity involves constructing an outdoor maze/obstacle course and manoeuvring vehicles around using commands. The activity can be completed with floor robots or with remote controlled vehicles.
- **Age 7 to 8: Field Trip Sensing**  
Data loggers are used to record readings in a variety of locations. Digital photographs are taken as the sensing is done, so that conclusions may be drawn as to why there are differences in temperatures. This is used to make children aware of the use of technology for sensing.
- **Age 8 to 9: The Built Environment**  
In this activity children will use digital cameras to photograph buildings in the local environment. Back in the classroom the children will open the pictures in a simple painting program and create pictures of buildings silhouetted against the setting sun. Depending upon the school's provision of cameras you may wish to undertake this task with small groups.
- **Age 9 to 10: Continuity and Change**  
In this series of activities children will look at photographs of the local area taken in the past, identify the location and use digital cameras to take pictures of the same location today. Children will compare these and identify aspects of continuity and change. Later they will consider why some of these changes have taken place.
- **Age 10 to 11: Local Area Study**  
These activities are designed to be incorporated into a larger study of the local area. Children can look at street or place names, pub signs or building names that point to evidence of local history, geography or even local dignitaries. These files are zipped for your convenience.

*Available on 22nd April 2009*

The next batch of lessons2go is now available. This week there is a bonus lesson for those pupils in England who are getting ready for their SATs. It is an activity for science revision. Teachers might like to look at the link in the age 5-6 activity for use in all age ranges and for use by adults. There are online activities and support materials for teaching and learning keyboard skills. As well as the simple one to be used by the younger pupils there are links to other more advanced materials.

This week they have activities for the following age groups:

- **Age 5 to 6: ICT, Keyboard Skills**  
This new activity is based on a link to a BBC site. There are also links to various supporting materials. The activity is aimed at stretching the children who are ready to try and use the keyboard more efficiently. Some of the links could also be used by adults to improve their keyboard skills.

- Age 7 to 8: English, A Smuck of Jellyfish  
Children will use a spreadsheet to contribute to a list of collective nouns and sort it into alphabetical order by different criteria.
- Age 9 to 10: History, Celebrating the Life of...  
This activity will take two lessons to complete. Initially the children use the internet and other sources to search for factual information about a famous person who lived in the period they are studying, for example Sir Thomas More, Robert Stephenson, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Alexander Graham Bell or Alexander Fleming. After they have assembled their information they use a desk top publishing (DTP) package to write a newspaper appreciation of their subject's life.
- Age 10-11: Science, Revision  
Children use the BBC KS2 Bitesize Revision website to revise for the KS2 SATs tests in Science. The website contains sections covering the curriculum for English, maths and science as well as support material for teachers. Code is provided for teachers who wish to set up the activities for direct access on the school learning platform or website.

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4. In the Course Categories section on the main page, click on **ICT**, then click on **e-Update**.
5. You will be asked if you would like to enrol on the e-Update course. Choose **Yes**.

Once you are enrolled, you will be emailed each edition of e-Update to your BucksGfL email address when they are posted on the BucksGfL website.

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7. Click on the **Login** link in the top right corner.
8. Login using your BucksGfL username and password (your BucksGfL username is the first part of your BucksGfL email address i.e. the bit before the @. Your password is the same as for your email).
9. In the Course Categories section on the main page, click on **ICT**, then click on **e-Update**.
10. On the left, click on the **Unenrol me from e-Update**.

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