What I Learned (And Didn't) At NCSS 2009

C. Frederick Risinger

This is the fourth or fifth time I've written a column about the NCSS Annual Meeting, usually held in November. In 2009, it was in Atlanta. As usual, I had a great time—talking with colleagues from around the country, and other nations, too—attending sessions and presentations (such as the wonderful presentations by Congressman John Lewis, a hero of the civil rights movement, and Greg Mortenson, author of *Three Cups of Tea* and *Stones into Schools*). I shed some tears in both presentations. But it was when I attended regular sessions of NCSS and the affiliated groups that I realized how technologically advanced many classroom teachers and other educators are. I was blown away by how teachers are using free Web 2.0 software and resources (particularly the social networking sites) to design wonderful projects, courses, and curricula. I've been writing this column for several years, taught the introductory computer course for the Indiana University School of Education, and my friends often ask me for advice about their computer problems. But, at NCSS 2009, I realized how far behind I am with technological advances applied to classroom instruction.

Many school districts and individual schools prevent students from using cell phones in school. Even more schools block social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. But many of the presentations I saw in Atlanta and have read about during research for this column are based on websites and software such as these. I decided to sign up for Facebook and—it's ok—but it can be a great way to waste lots of time.

This column will provide many links to some of the software and other resources that I saw described and demonstrated at NCSS. I think that most classroom teachers will find some interesting information and potential lesson/project development tools. But I want to be honest: I'm not certain that I learned enough to implement them in the classroom if I were still teaching. Still, it would be fun to learn the technology and try it out. (I'm certain that if I asked my students, they could help me.)

But I need your help, too. In my last column, I mentioned that I was going to write a column on newer Web 2.0 applications and how they were used in the classroom. Here's a quote from that column: "If you use or if you know how a colleague is using resources such as Facebook, Animoto, wikis, Moodle, Skype, or even Twitter in the classroom, please send me an e-mail at my address at the end of the column." I'd like to repeat that request again. When I get enough good examples, I'll have a column that features classroom teachers and illustrates what they do with Web 2.0 resources. I'm looking forwarded to hearing from you.

So, here we go … on an adventure with Web 2.0.

Top 25 Websites for Teaching and Learning
www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/guide linesandstandards/bestlist/bestwebsites top25.cfm

I know that this is a ridiculously complicated URL, but it's the only one available. The impetus for this column came from Jeff Johnson, a former methods student of mine who is now teaching at Park Tudor School in Indianapolis. He and I collaborated on a column long ago on using Internet radio in the social studies classroom. Jeff sent me a column from the American Association of School Librarians (part of the American Library Association) website. Many of the websites and software I'll discuss are in this article. They are divided into six categories: (1) Organizing and Managing; (2) Content Collaboration; (3) Curriculum Sharing; (4) Media Sharing;

(5) Virtual Environments; and (6) Social Networking and Collaboration. This site should be your starting point.

Edutopia: How to Teach With Technology: Social Studies

www.edutopia.org/digital-generation-social-studies-lessons

Edutopia, founded by Star Wars producer and director George Lucas, promotes itself as knowing "What Works in Education." It's a website that all teachers should have on their "Favorites" list, because it presents useful research about teaching and resources based on this research. This article describes how teachers have used both Facebook and MySpace in the classroom, and links to those teachers' classes and programs. It also describes how teachers have used such collaborative software and websites as CoveritLive (a blogging tool), Skype, and wikis in the classroom. Check out the link to "Ms. Parisi's Blog" for some neat ideas from a 5th grade teacher.

Classroom 2.0

www.classroom20.com

If you really want to learn about all of Web 2.0's programs and resources, this is one of the best sites. You have to sign up to belong, but all resources and, more importantly, the support from colleagues are free. Their home page says that they "especially hope" to attract "beginners" in using Web 2.0 resources. Links to just about every educational resource are provided. They also have free workshops and a weekly Saturday "webinar" where you can listen, read, and learn about all the programs. I was so impressed that I signed up immediately.

Speaking of History: Discussions about Education, Technology, & History

http://speakingofhistory.blogspot.com

This is an excellent example of a teacher-created blog that focuses on history instruction and current technology, such as Web 2.0 resources. I went to Eric Langhorst's presentation at the 2007 NCSS Annual Meeting and was quite impressed with his work. He's an 8th grade teacher in Liberty, Missouri, who has developed a blog that not only provides some outstanding resources for other teachers, but makes him a bit of money on the side. If you search around you'll find a link to a video of his 2007 presentation. He has an entire library of podcasts that include teaching tips and resources on many topics in history and instructional strategies. There are some well-chosen links to other sites that will be useful to both classroom teachers and teacher educators.

Social Studies Central

www.socialstudiescentral.com

Here's another wonderful resource for social studies educators. Glenn Wiebe, a former middle school teacher who is now a social studies specialist for the Educational Service & Staff Development Association of Central Kansas, has developed a website that includes both "pre-Web 2.0" resources as well as links and information on the latest technology. One unique feature on the site is a set of links to his presentations and workshops. Glenn generously provides all the handouts, slides, worksheets, and other items from workshops such as "Blogging for Educators"; "IPods, IPhones, & Handhelds, Oh, My!"; and "Websites and Technology for Social Studies Teachers." They would make great professional development tools for a school or school district looking to expand the use of technology in the social studies classroom. You can be certain that I'll be using some of his ideas. Thanks, Glenn!

Teaching History with Technology

http://thwt.org

I'm going to conclude this column's recommendations with another outstanding website. Teaching History with Technology is part of EdTechTeacher.org (http://edtechteacher.org) and, although it focuses on history, it will be useful for teachers at any grade level and in any social studies subject. It discusses (and provides links to) such topics as blogs, webquests, podcasts, lesson plans, and more. For example, under the "Blog" topic, it has (1) Why Blog?; (2) Three Choices for Blogging sites; and (3) Ten Things to Do with Your Blogs. It has a topic titled "Activities," and clicking on it will take you to several websites that have social studies activities that employ Web 2.0 resources. You'll like this one.

As I said earlier, I'm amazed by what many social studies teachers are doing now in their classrooms with technology. I rank myself in the "beginners" category and plan to spend some time on the Classroom 2.0 site. If you know of teachers using these resources effectively, let me know and provide an e-mail address. There are many more sites I could have included. If you want to find more, use the search phrase I used—"teaching social studies with Web 2.0." 🌐

C. Frederick Risinger *is retired from the School of Education at Indiana University, Bloomington. He currently is trying to learn more about Web 2.0, completing a new website, and works two shifts a week as a bartender at a local microbrewery. He can be reached at* risinger@indiana.edu.