

Web 2.0 – Educational Technology

Moderator: Scott Rubin, Google

Panelists:

Bruce Van Nice, Nominum

Liz Butterfield, Hector's World

Tessa Jolls, nooView

Scott Rubin began the proceedings by stating that the aim of the panel was to discuss the practical applications of Internet technology in the classroom, and ways in which it is possible to incorporate the Internet across the curriculum. Rubin first asked the panelists exactly what 'educational technology' meant to them? Bruce Van Nice responded that what was important to him was that ISPs built safeguards for Internet users into the structure of the Internet itself. This would help teach people when they get misled by malware disguised as a legitimate site instead of just getting attacked by the malware. Liz Butterfield discussed the creation of software that is a primer for Internet use, to be used by first-time Internet users before they are simply "let loose in cyberspace." Tessa Jolls stressed the importance of critical thinking while using the Internet, that is to say teaching people how to engage with Internet content.

Later, Butterfield urged people to have rational conversations about Internet technology instead of simply fearing its negative aspects. Van Nice explained that the software his company is developing would allow for Internet users to have a second chance when they made a mistake i.e. click on a virus, which would make the Internet a less daunting place for the unfamiliar. Jolls said that we need to start thinking in terms of networks because the world is now a networked place. She said that we can no longer compartmentalize information into separate units. This sentiment was echoed by Butterfield.

When it came to practical application in the classroom, Tessa Jolls related an anecdote about a school district where teachers were forced to use new Internet enabled whiteboards, and could no longer rely on the old whiteboards because of construction delays. In that environment, the teachers quickly adapted to the new technology, and in some cases the children taught the teacher how to use the new media more effectively. This created a more interactive environment for the technology to become integrated into the classroom. Both Jolls and Butterfield stressed the importance of learning from children about the Internet owing to the fact that kids are savvier about how to use the Internet than many adults. In terms of curriculum, the panelists discussed the fact that our ideas about child development may not be correct, it may not be as linear a process as we tend to believe. Thus it is difficult to come up with a broad, linear curriculum to teach kids how to use the Internet. Tessa Jolls again stressed that we need to value the knowledge of children on the subject of the Internet.

Butterfield and Jolls discussed media literacy and digital citizenship, and ways in which the school and the home should work in harmony to teach the same lessons about being a good digital citizen. Liz Butterfield believes that in order for that to happen, both schools and parents need to be better educated about using Internet technology. In her view, this is the first step towards opening the lines of communication between adults and children about the Internet. Rubin wrapped things up by saying

that school is like a second home for kids, and relating the idea that the messages kids receive about the Internet should be the same in both places.