

Integrating the Internet into School Projects

This session covered some examples of how the Internet can be utilized in a high school environment. The presenters are both teachers from North Battleford Comprehensive High School. Owen O'Donovan, the Computer Science teacher, is responsible for computers in the school, and Gallene Fenwick is an English teacher who has integrated the Internet into some of her students' assignments.

The session began with a description of the Internet situation at North Battleford Comprehensive. Accessible on 20 networked computers throughout the school, the Internet is increasingly a part of the curriculum; the teachers expect students to be able to do research involving Internet resources, especially the World Wide Web (the Web) and gopher sites. Students learn to use electronic mail (e-mail), newsgroups, File Transfer Protocol (FTP), Telnet, and the Web. The school also has a home page on the Web.

The Internet has proved to be very popular with the student body at the North Battleford Comprehensive. Computers with Internet access are in constant use during the day and the students are particularly fond of newsgroups, email, mailing lists, and electronic penpals.

Three specific examples of applications of the Internet to school projects were discussed during the presentation including live demonstrations of the "final product" on the Internet.

In an English class, the teacher took book reviews created by the students and put them on an internal gopher. Later, the same teacher took book reviews written by a different class (the following semester) and put them on the World Wide Web. An English class also combined with a biology class and used the Internet to do research on bioethics.

Lastly, in a lengthy project that began in 1993, students at North Battleford Comprehensive created an Internet-based resource dealing with endangered species. Data on various aspects of endangered species (eg. common name, scientific name, habitat, status, etc.) was collected, along with images. This information was compiled and placed on a gopher site within the school.

The final section of the session dealt with the problems related to having the Internet in schools. These included:

- Copyright—it needs to be made clear to students what they can and cannot appropriate for their

Internet projects.

- Gender—at least at the beginning, boys tend to use the Internet much more than girls.
- How reliable is the service of your Internet provider? Will the cable companies provide as good a level of customer support as Sasktel?
- Schools probably need dedicated lines, if not into their building, then into the community. How does a school pay for this, especially since Sasktel's school rate will double next year (and there will be no more unlimited access)?
- Infrastructure is a key issue; the computer and technical knowledge of school staff is often quite limited.
- There can be pressure to shift from written to electronic resources.
- Expectations of the Internet run far ahead of budgetary resources, e.g. students like e-mail but providing each pupil with his or her own private e-mail account is beyond the means of most schools.

Many of these concerns were discussed further in the audience questions that followed the formal presentation.

Andrew Waller

The SLA/SLTA 1997 Conference is coming.

Plans are underway for the SLA/SLTA 1997 Conference—April 17-20, 1997, in Regina.

The theme for the 1997 conference is "Convergence, Sharing, Renewal—The Future of Library Services in Saskatchewan."

Watch for details.

Ludd Meets Zarkon—Impression of SLA '96

by Frank Winter, Director, University of Saskatchewan Libraries

My impression of this year's programme compared to others was that academic librarians played a larger part as convenors and presenters than perhaps was typical of earlier conferences. If true, what might this mean? Although there is surely more than one explanation perhaps the overreaching one is that Ludd has indeed met Zarkon. For reasons arising out of the history of the Internet as a university-based testbed telecommunications network academic libraries have had a head start in the application of certain types of information technology to information services. But public and school libraries have rapidly closed the gap.

Perhaps what I observed in North Battleford was a transfer of knowledge and experience from academic librarians to their colleagues in other library sectors. We have moved well beyond the time when Internet was exclusively a playground for techno-nerds and the lessons learned from meeting the challenges posed by user populations of other library sectors can be applied in academic libraries. As SchoolNet, the community networks and SaskTel's Sympatico permeate the province we should expect a reciprocal transfer of knowledge back to the academic library community—perhaps at next year's SLA!