

Technology Update 2008

Google Desktop

Remember back when you spent the day or week at your local library researching your latest need-to-know? Then the Web came along and you discovered that the best way to find out anything on the Web was to Google it. In the not-too-distant future, you may be remembering back to when icons for files and programs were on your desktop and not on the Web. If Google has its way, that future will be sooner than you think!

Google Desktop was originally introduced in October, 2004 to bring Google web search technology to the desktop. With the release of subsequent versions up to the latest, Desktop 5.0, in March 2007, Google has added more sophisticated tools. Now you can use Google Desktop to locate your files, emails, past IM

chats, web pages you've viewed and more. By making your entire computer searchable, Google Desktop puts your information easily within your reach and frees you from having to manually organize your files, emails and bookmarks.

Google Desktop doesn't just help you search your computer. It also allows you to collaborate in authoring and editing documents on the Web. Google Gadgets can be placed on your desktop to show you new email, weather, photos, personalized news, and more. Google Sidebar is a vertical bar on your desktop that helps you keep your gadgets organized. It's free, easy to download and to use. To learn in-depth about your new desktop, simply click on <http://desktop.google.com>!

A Podcasting Primer

Have you thought about podcasting as a way to communicate with your students and colleagues, but thought it would be too hard? If you have ever used a tape recorder, podcasting is within your grasp. It is fun and your users will enjoy the format.

What is It? "Podcasting" is a term inspired by Apple's iPod. The term no longer refers specifically to the iPod, but now refers to any software and hardware combination that permits automatic downloading of audio files for listening at the user's convenience. Unlike traditional radio or other Web-based media, podcasts give listeners control over when they hear the recording.

Why Should I Use It? Podcasting allows education to become more

portable than ever before. Podcasting cannot replace the classroom, but it provides teachers with one more way to reach today's students on the Internet and their audio players.

The tools to implement podcasts are simple and affordable. You need a PC, a microphone and a downloaded voice editing program. Because students are already familiar with the technology, podcasting broadens educational options in a non-threatening and easily accessible manner. It allows students to use their iPods and MP3 players for educational purposes. For example, you can podcast your lessons to students who have missed class. Beyond missed classroom time, podcasting can provide access to experts

Caveat Emptor

Although most Google Desktop users are satisfied, you may be interested in these provisos.

Lauren Weinstein, co-founder of People for Internet Responsibility says, "When data is sitting on computers other than your own, it becomes a tempting target. I really do believe Google wants to protect their users' privacy. But I think they are creating something that will have the vultures circling."

Palo Alto High School junior Danielle Kim said that Desktop's flexibility was particularly helpful when her debate team jointly worked on a presentation. But she also saw a downside to Google's approach. "It requires you to have Internet access. What happens when you are in a place that doesn't?"

through interviews. Students can create their own podcasts as a way to collect verbal notes, reflect on their learning, or create an oral presentation.

Teacher Resources. Here are four reliable resources to learn more.

<http://www.epnweb.org/index.php?openpod=10>. The Education Podcast Network brings together in one place a wide range of podcast programming helpful to teachers.

<http://www.websitesource.com/tutorials/podcasting.shtml>. Learn the steps to start your podcast.

<http://www.toolfactory.com/products/page?id=2121>. Download a free 30-day podcasting demo.

The well-reviewed *Educator's Podcast Guide* by Bard Williams can be found on Amazon.com.

Dealing With The Paper Flow

At this time of the year many teachers may be saying things like: that work best for them in each area.

- I started the year organized, but I can't seem to stay that way. How can I keep from getting bogged down?
- How can I catch up when I'm so behind and have lots of piles to go through?
- My papers are exploding all over my desk! How do I manage my time more effectively in order to find time for organizing the paper explosion?

A successful system for dealing with the paper flow allows us to find what we need when we want it. There is no one right way to organize the thousands of pieces of paper that are a part of teachers' lives. Some teachers prefer three-ring binders, some prefer colored file folders, and some of us know exactly what is in each of our many piles. We need to seek alternatives to our current practice when we cannot find what we need, feel overwhelmed by the inadequacies of our current systems, or experience a loss of instructional time searching for needed paperwork. The strategies offered below may help you deal effectively with the paper flow.

1. Get staff members involved in a **Paper Flow Graffiti** at a faculty meeting. This is a lively activity in which participants brainstorm their ideas about how to organize in the areas of paper management that are posted on charts around the room. The chart headings might include:

- Memos and bulletins from the school and district
- Professional papers
- Forms to be completed
- Completed forms
- Instructional materials
- Lesson plans
- Communication from parents
- Communication to parents
- Papers to be reviewed and graded
- Papers to be returned
- Personal papers
- Generic tips

Collect the suggestions that are listed and e-mail the list to all (be sure to e-mail, so as not to create yet another piece of paper to add to the pile!). Teachers can then pick the ideas

2. Identify three main paper categories; professional, instructional and personal. Identify a storage space for each category and upon receipt of each paper, immediately file or toss it in that space. Further organize the categories into action items and information items. Note the date received on all documents. When copying, highlight the title of the original document with a yellow highlighter, thus minimizing the risk of throwing away the original.

3. Organize a tour of classrooms to see what organizational systems other teachers are using. Create a visual catalog of organizational systems by photographing bookcases, desks, files, crates, etc. that are organized to satisfy the teacher using them. Ask the teacher using the system for a brief statement explaining the thinking behind it. Place the photographs and explanations in a binder left where it is accessible to all, particularly new teachers.

4. Arrange an after-school work session with another teacher and help each other to organize. This is particularly effective if you are mentoring a new teacher who is in organizational distress. Bring plenty of organizational aids such as file folders and labels, three-ring binders, tabbed dividers, hole punches, highlighters and even some trash bags!

5. Use the method proposed by Stephanie Winston, author of **The Organized Executive**. She declares that there are only four things you can do with paper! You can Toss, Refer, Act, or File. "Just sort all incoming papers through the TRAF system, moving them from your desk to wastebasket, referral folder, action folder, or file folder."

6. The simplest solution — rely on technology. Use Google Desktop to create and edit collaboratively and to share and store documents on the Web for all to view. Could it really be that easy?

This article is principally excerpted from "Dealing with the Paper Flow", November 2007, from Mentoring in the 21st Century by Paula Rutherford. Reproduced with permission from Just Ask Publications and Professional Development, Inc.

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