

# Social Studies through Technology and Creative Expression

The more technology that enters your room, the more tools you have to create an immersive atmosphere of student self-directed learning. Many of the things we can do with technology today were unheard of even five or ten years ago. I never had a chance to visit a history museum as a child because there were none within our typical traveling distance. In school, our maps were static and textbooks were king. The way we were most often asked to express ourselves was in writing on paper. Today however many things have changed. Museums can be accessed via distance learning and virtual field trips. Mapping sites allow you to spin the globe and zoom to incredible views. And now you can record a commercial, blog, create a web page, text, tweet, etc. to communicate your ideas effectively. Technology really has changed the way human beings access, create, and share information. These same technologies can help to influence how we teach a number of subjects and enrich the curriculum to meet the needs of more students. Technology, at least the technology of today, excels in several areas: interactivity, interest and enthusiasm, and access to resources. Social studies, like most school subject matter, can benefit from these characteristics of technology integration. Personally, as a child, I wasn't into social studies or history at all. Even when I entered college my art history course was my least favorite. In both situations I was expected to memorize a bunch of stuff and then spit it back out on a test. I think I would have been much more interested if we had the technology then as available as it is now. The whole idea of social studies is to study people and the way the world has evolved. What little contributions can technology make to the social studies classroom though? Well, let's look at a few ideas:

1. Use tools such as Google Earth to plot a trip, and look at the locations along the way. Infer with the students from the geography what life would be like in a geographic area of such and then hyperlink to websites revealing the region's history.
2. Explore media through places like <http://www.mapsofwar.com/> which use maps in new ways, discussing war and motivation.
3. Use flip cameras and phones at home over break to video interview a relative about a certain year or time period. Have students bring the videos to school on a USB stick or other means and compose video timeline of current history. Enhance the experience with a video editing lesson in programs like iMovie or Windows Live Movie Maker.
4. Pose social questions to students and discuss through blogging or teacher page discussions where the world can see and encourage parents to participate.
5. Use unique sites like <http://www.packagemuseum.com> to discuss consumerism and the ideas behind packaging and advertising.
6. Or explore other sites like <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu> and see how you might be able to use them to enhance what the textbooks say.
7. Set-up distance learning or a web meeting with a trusted associate on the other side of the world and see history from a whole new perspective using Skype or another telecommunications program.

Using tools and ideas such as these are just the beginning. There is literally a whole world out there waiting to be explored in new and exciting ways. And, after all, isn't that what social studies and history are all about?

## After School NetTrekker:

A short time ago the Corp. offered NetTrekker training during the school day on a first-come-first-serve basis. Well, I am glad to say that after talking with many individuals, they are finding the search engine to be very worthwhile.

I will be offering an hour long after school training two times next week. Each session will last only an hour, and if you want to come, create an account, and pick up some tips on how to use the interface, I would encourage you to attend one of the sessions. The two offerings will take place on Wednesday and Thursday of next week and will last from 3:30-4:00. Wednesday's session will be held in the lower lab at the high school and Thursday's will be held in Mrs. Rust's computer lab at the elementary. If you are at all interested in NetTrekker, come and join in the conversation. Since this is an evaluation period for the Corp. subscription we would like to get as many people to try the service as possible. Who knows, you might just find it to be the tool you've always needed to make internet searching for school easier.

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## Tech Deal of the Week:

Tiger Direct is hosting a pre-black Friday sale this weekend (let's face it, when is Tiger Direct not saying it is having a black Friday sale). However they do have a really good deal on a 37" Samsung internet ready hdtv. The regular price on their site is \$719 (msrp \$799) but today they have a coupon code that brings the set down to \$499. Still a bit pricey but it is a good deal. Especially since you can connect it to your home network with Ethernet to access and stream files from any computer in your house. (opt. wireless add-on available) Enter code NRR10828 at checkout.