

2nd Annual Internet Survey for Art Teachers: Summary of the Results

As a follow-up to a 2005 survey, I posted a new survey on the Web in November 2006 that was designed to collect responses from K-12 art teachers regarding their use of the Internet and other digital technologies in the classroom and home. A total of 225 teachers participated in the second survey, which ran from November 12, 2006 to February 13, 2007.

Limitations of the survey

Since this survey was conducted online, it cannot be used to make generalizations about technology use among all K-12 art teachers. The survey was limited to online respondents, and hence may actually exaggerate the use of the Internet among art teachers. Despite this limitation, the findings of this survey offer an interesting glimpse into the digital lives of a sizable group of art teachers and the ways in which they use the Internet as a personal, professional, and teaching tool.

Reporting the results

When reading the results of this survey, keep in mind that percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number and that some items allow for multiple answers. Thus, percentages do not always add up to 100%.

Who responded to the survey

Respondents were asked to indicate what grades they currently teach, from Pre-K to high school; whether they teach in a public or private school; whether they are a full-time, part-time, or itinerant art teacher; and the number of years they've been teaching. 36% of the respondents reported that they teach grades K-2, 41% teach grades 3-5, 51% teach grades 6-8, and 45% teach at the high school level.

85% of the respondents are public school art teachers, whereas 15% teach in private schools. 43% reported that they've been teaching more than 15 years, while only 4% were in their first year of teaching. Other responses were distributed between 2-3 years (14%), 4-6 years (12%), 7-9 years (12%), 10-12 years (5%), and 13-15 years (10%) of teaching experience. 76% of the respondents are full-time art teachers, 15% are part-time art teachers, 7% reported they were itinerant art teachers (i.e., they teach at more than one school), and 2% checked "other" to describe their teaching position.

Level of computer expertise

An overwhelming 94% of the respondents rated their computer expertise as “intermediate” or “advanced,” while only 6% considered themselves “novices.” When asked how prepared they feel to use the Internet in the classroom, 59% checked “very prepared” whereas 34% checked “somewhat prepared” and 7% checked “not at all prepared.”

Art teacher use of digital technology tools and devices

When asked to indicate which technology tools they typically use during the week, 100% of the respondents indicated they use a computer, 91% use a still or video digital camera, 88% use a cell phone, 75% use a CD or DVD burner, and 67% use a scanner. Far fewer respondents use a MP3 player like an iPod (35%) or a personal data assistant (13%).

Art teacher use of Internet tools and services

When asked how many hours a week they are online, 41% of the survey respondents chose “more than 10 hours,” 19% chose “9-10 hours,” 20% chose “6-8 hours,” 14% chose “4-5 hours,” 5% chose “2-3 hours,” and 1% chose “1 hour or less.” Over two-thirds of the respondents (68%) access the Internet primarily from home whereas one-third (30%) go online more frequently in their school office or classroom. 12% of the respondents use a dial-up Internet connection at home, while some 70% use either a high-speed cable or DSL connection, and 14% are wireless.

When asked what Internet tools and services they use in a typical week, nearly all of the respondents checked e-mail (99%) and a search engine (96%). Over three-quarters (77%) of the respondents indicated they use an online reference site like Wikipedia. About the same number (76%) participate in online forums like listservs or e-groups (76%) and a little over half of the respondents (52%) use a portal site like MSN or Yahoo! Less popular Internet tools and services among respondents include photo and video-sharing sites (31%), instant messaging (22%), weblogs (18%), Internet phone service (10%), social bookmarking sites (8%), and chat rooms (5%).

In a related question, art teachers were asked to identify the areas of their personal and professional lives where the Internet has had an impact? Not surprisingly, 99% of the respondents checked e-mail communication as the area where the Internet has had the most significant impact in their lives. Another area where the Internet has had a significant impact among these art teachers is in classroom

research with some 97% of the respondents saying they “frequently” go online to gather information and images for classroom use. In fact, 86% of the respondents said they “always” or “frequently” use images or information from the Internet in their lessons and classroom, whereas 11% said they do so “occasionally” and 3% (or 6 respondents) said they “never” do.

Other popular areas of online activity among respondents include conducting personal research (87%) such as finding health information, creative uses such as collaborating with others or collecting images for artistic purposes (84%), online shopping (73%), and professional development like taking an online course (49%). Less popular activities include using the Internet for personal entertainment (39%), instant messaging (28%), and blogging (21%).

When asked whether or not they have a website for their school art program, 52% checked “yes” and 48% checked “no.” Among those who responded in the affirmative, 40% said their department website includes a student art gallery, 38% said it contains art curriculum information, and 32% said it includes links for student use. Fewer art department sites include teaching philosophy statement (25%), class assignments (23%), or a school calendar (23%).

Art teacher attitudes toward Internet use in the classroom

When asked how important classroom use of technology was considered at their school, 40% of the respondents said it was a “high priority,” 45% said it was a “moderate priority,” and 15% said it was a “low priority.” When asked how important they personally felt it was to have students use the Internet in their classrooms, 29% of the respondents marked “very important,” nearly half or 48% marked “fairly important,” and 23% marked “not at all important.”

Some 52% of the respondents indicated that the Internet has significantly changed the way they teach, whereas 38% said that the Internet is a good resource, but has not changed the way they teach, and 1% (3 respondents) said that the Internet takes away from they try to accomplish in the classroom. 8% of the respondents said they’d like to learn more about how to use the Internet in their classrooms, whereas 1 respondent (or .4%) felt there were too many dangers associated with Internet use in the classroom.

Student use of technology in the art classroom

When asked what technology tools were available in their classrooms, 8 out of 10 art teachers (82%) said there is a still or video digital camera available, while slightly over half said there is a scanner (54%), a CD or DVD burner (52%), and a video projector (53%) available for use. 70% the respondents said that there is a color printer in their classroom, while 60% said there is a black-and-white printer available for use. Less common technology devices found in art classrooms include Elmo video presentation cameras (17%) and smart boards (14%).

When asked how many Internet-connected computers are in their classroom, 5% of the respondents chose “none,” 44% chose “1,” 27% chose “2-3,” 8% chose “4-5,” and 16% chose “more than 5.” In reporting how often students used the Internet in their art classes each week, a quarter (25%) of the respondents chose “frequently” or 3 or more times per week, almost half of the respondents (49%) marked “occasionally” or 1-2 times per week, while a little over a quarter (26%) of the respondents chose “never.”

What do students do while they’re online in art classes? 70% of the respondents said their students have used the Internet for individual research in art classes since the beginning of the school year, while 36% said their students used the Internet for group research projects this past year. A majority of art teachers in the survey (58%) pre-select the Web sites their students visit while in class, while 12% have their students participate in WebQuests and 6% have their students go on virtual treasure hunts in class. Less popular uses of the Internet in art classrooms include having students publish their artwork on the Web (12%), collaborate with students in another school on a project (7%), build their own Web sites (5%) and exchange email with students in another school or country (5%). Moreover, some 20% of the respondents checked “none of the above” among the choices given to indicate how students used in the Internet in their classrooms over the past year.

Obstacles to Internet use in art classrooms

Teacher often lament that they don’t have enough computers or what hardware they do have in their classrooms is often outdated. Such is the case with the respondents in this survey. When asked what obstacles they have in trying to use the Internet with students in their classrooms, two-thirds of the respondents (66%) said there were not enough Internet-connected computers available and slightly less than a third (31%) said the computers and software they do have for students to use is outdated.

In schools with computer labs, some 36% of the respondents say that their students' access to such labs during art class is inadequate. Time is another serious obstacle with over half of the respondents (53%) saying there wasn't enough time in the school day to schedule Internet use by their students. Other obstacles to Internet use by students in art classes cited by respondents include school filters or firewalls (33%), lack of technical support (24%), concern over objectionable online material (23%), restrictive school policies regarding Internet use (16%), limited knowledge of how to integrate the Internet into an art curriculum (14%), lack of administrative support (10%), limited knowledge of how to use computers (4%). 19% of the respondents checked "other obstacles not mentioned," and 5% chose "no obstacles."

When asked what they consider to be the biggest obstacle to Internet use by students in their classroom, 45% chose "not enough Internet-connected computers" and 21% chose "not enough time in the school day."

Discussion

When comparing the results of this survey with the 2005 survey, a similar picture emerges of a group of art teachers that are comfortable with technology in general and with using the Internet in their daily routines at home and at school. As with the previous survey, the majority of teachers in the 2006 survey go online 9 hours or more per week from their homes using high-speed connections. They make frequent use of such Internet services as email and listservs to communicate with family members, friends, and colleagues, as well as search engines and online reference sites to gather materials for classroom presentations.

Likewise, when we examine how students are using the Internet in art classrooms the same pattern occurs that was evident in the 2005 survey. The most common student use of the Internet in art classrooms is to gather information and images for individual and group research projects. This finding is consistent with other studies that have reported that students most frequently use the Internet in classrooms for information gathering (see, e.g., VanFossen, 2001; Becker, 1999). As was shown in the 2005 survey, the potential of the Internet as an innovative learning tool with which students publish their work online for peer feedback, design their own Web sites, contribute original content to a group-sharing site, or collaborate with students in other schools or countries on school projects continues to be unrealized in many art classrooms today.

The findings of this study raise the question of whether the Internet will ever have a transformative effect on art teaching and learning, instead of simply serving as another informational resource in the art classroom. The past few years has witnessed the emergence of new ways to experience the World Wide Web. The term “Web 2.0” has been coined to describe the Web’s transition from a collection of static Web sites to a more dynamic, interactive, and sharing environment. Web 2.0 tools and services like blogs, wikis, podcasts, photo- and video-sharing sites, social networks, and virtual worlds are now being used daily by millions of people around the globe to connect, communicate, collaborate, create, care, and share with others. However, if the results of this survey are any indication these new capabilities of the Web have yet to be widely adopted or explored by art teachers in their classrooms.

Why the lack of interest or engagement in the more creative, collaborative, and social networking aspects of the Web among art teachers today? While the present survey doesn’t provide empirical answers to this question, other authors have proposed possible reasons.

Cuban, et al. (2001) reported that teachers more frequently use technology to support, rather than change their existing teacher-centered practices. This finding is consistent with Prensky’s (2007) claim, “When a new technology appears, our first instinct is always to continue doing things within the technology the way we’ve always done it.” He proposes a four-step process of technology adoption that includes: (1) Dabbling; (2) Doing old things in old ways; (3) Doing old things in new ways; and (4) Doing new things in new ways.

Prensky suggests that we have mostly been “dabbling with technology in our schools,” until recently. Now, the prevailing trend is to pass around documents—only in electronic form. Although the methods of creating and exchanging information might be new, the result is not very different from what we have always known. We’re still doing old things in old ways!

Some teachers are currently using technology to provide their students with new ways to retrieve and manipulate information through interactive simulations and video or Flash demonstrations. But, students today are much more adept at using technology to do old things in new ways like buying school materials online, exchanging music, participating in online multiplayer gaming, posting their

own creative work online for peer feedback, and so on. The problem is teachers have yet to fully understand these new ways of doing things or to figure out how to integrate them into their instruction. Prensky argues that if schools want to move the useful adoption of technology forward teachers need to learn to listen, to observe, to ask, and to try out all the new technologies and methods their students have already figured out and use on a daily basis—outside of school.

According to Prensky, two things stand in the way of making significant progress in technology adoption in schools. First, there is a dire need for one-to-one computing in schools where teachers and students have their own personal computers customized to their particular academic needs. While some school districts have instituted one-to-one computing programs, most art teachers today are faced with a severe lack of technology (typically one or two outdated computers) and a classroom full of twenty-five students or more.¹ The second and perhaps more challenging obstacle to overcome is opposition to new technologies and methods. As Prensky and others (e.g., Hubbard, 1995) have argued—schools (meaning administrators and teachers) are notoriously resistant to change.

Resistance to today's digital technology can be seen not only in schools' restrictive Internet policies and the blocking of useful Websites and tools (e.g., Wikipedia, Google Image Search, and blogs), but also in teachers' reluctance to change their teaching methods to accommodate the learning styles of today's students—who are “digital natives” born into a world of digital technology.²

Delacruz (2004) suggests that teachers' resistance to technology adoption should be viewed in terms of a “practicality ethic,” in which they attempt to determine whether a reform initiative is (a) worth their time and effort, and (b) feasible within the particulars of the teaching situation. She argues any effort to assist art teachers in introducing technology innovations into their curriculums must take into account the teachers' values, work conditions, time constraints, and school cultures.

Conclusion

While the results of this survey offer encouraging signs that the Internet has found a place in many art classrooms today, there is still much work to do if we are ever to realize the full benefits of the Internet as a teaching and learning tool. Schools need to make a greater commitment to providing their teachers (in all subject areas) with technical support and professional development

opportunities focusing on creative uses of the Internet in the classroom. Just as importantly, teachers need to move beyond thinking of the Internet merely as an information repository and begin exploring the Web's capacity to empower students to take a more active role in their own education, to engage students in meaningful cultural exchanges with students from other countries, and to enable students to demonstrate their knowledge and creativity before a worldwide audience.

Notes

- 1 Cross-tabulation of results of this study suggests that having more computers in the classroom will not necessarily lead to more innovative uses of the Internet by students. 33 out of 35 respondents (94%) who reported they had more than five Internet-connected computers in their classrooms selected “to conduct individual research” to indicate what students use the Internet for in their classrooms, whereas only 6 of the 35 respondents (17%) chose “to build their own web sites” and 3 out of 35 (9%) chose “to exchange email with students in another school or country.”
- 2 Marc Prensky coined the term “digital natives” in a 2001 article, *Digital natives, Digital immigrants*, to refer to today’s students who are “native speakers of technology and fluent in the digital language of computers, video games, and the Internet.”
http://www.ascd.org/authors/ed_lead/el200512_prensky.html

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