

Title of Session: Targeting Librarians-Managing Tech

Moderator: Lesley Farmer

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LesleyF: So, Emily, you've been at my sessions before, right?

EmilyW: right

LesleyF: What's your take right now in terms of managing technology, and what do you want to talk about relative to that issue?

KarenL joined the room.

KarenL: Hello everyone!

EmilyW: not sure

LesleyF: Hi, Karen, are you here for the librarians' discussion on managing tech?

KarenL: yes I am.

LesleyF: I'll ask you what I asked Emily: what's your take right now in terms of managing technology, and what do you want to talk about relative to that issue?

JeffC: Managing tech is a rather broad topic.

LesleyF: Also, remind me of where you work, Karen.

KarenL: Thank you Jeff. I was getting ready to type that same sentiment.

KarenL: I work at an elementary school in Detroit, Michigan.

LesleyF: it sure is, Jeff. So the discussion can go several ways. I guess I'm thinking about administrative issues: inventory, keeping labs in order, troubleshooting, etc.

JeffC: Right now... in my district managing it seems to be figuring out ways for schools to get the laptops in so they can do mandated testing. Virtually all the resources for tech now are focusing on NCLB related tests. They're also having a tech meeting today, but since I'm not an employee of the district, they haven't invited me... keeping me out of the loop, which is very frustrating.

KarenL: My "managing" technology may [be] different because the technology seems to be handled through our central office.

LesleyF: What do you mean getting laptops in, Jeff?

LesleyF: so what is YOUR tech managing issue(s)?

JeffC: I'm personally more interested in how to get *good* tech practices going in the face of all these other issues... in other words... how do you integrate tech with curriculum, when most of tech is reserved for testing.

KarenL: Jeff I share your frustration on a different level. I would like to recommend software, but run into problems with getting approval.

JeffC: they have a couple laptop carts in the whole district, and shuffle them from school to school to do the testing.

EmilyW: what do you mean by managing tech?

LesleyF: OK, Jeff, but that's not really managing tech.

LesleyF: ...when you say integrating it into the curriculum.

LesleyF: Sounds like your district has a very small budget -- and no computer labs, Jeff

JeffC: I think it is... I think that's what the basic problem with tech in schools is, that "managing" it is considered more along an administrative route, rather than an educational one.

LesleyF: well, that was sort of what I was aiming at for this session...

JeffC: Oh... there are a few labs, but not in the elementary schools... although the libraries have some. It's the way that time is managed with tech.

JeffC: or mismanaged should i say.

LesleyF: so I'm hearing that people aren't making good use of the hardware/software.

KarenL: If you mean when something happens to a computer, I call our "help desk", get a ticket number and wait for the technician to fix the problem.

LesleyF: do you deal with any tech problems? jammed printer? stuck disk? No power?

KarenL: Okay a jammed printer, I can manage that. A stuck disk, there is someone else in our building I can call on. No power, I wait. Now, I should also tell you that our right click

LesleyF: sometimes no power just means a plug has been pulled.

KarenL: oops was disabled by the central office because too many folks were abusing the privilege of using the right click.

KarenL: True, and I will check that first before I call.

LesleyF: that sounds interesting -- what was the problem?

KarenL: It seems that either teachers or students were trashing important files so the district made a unilateral decision to disable our right click.

KarenL: As much as I have tried to convince the powers-that-be that our school is supposed to be a state of the art tech school and the right click should be enabled, it has fallen on deaf ears.

LesleyF: There are several actions that anyone dealing with technology can do to minimize problems resulting in fewer calls to tech services. that's what I'm thinking of (besides the documentation issue...)

SusanR: . o O (no right click!)

KarenL: I know. . .unbelievable, isn't it?

LesleyF: Some starters: Cover your equipment at night (use sheet), Use canned air to remove dust/lint,

LesleyF: Clean mouse with denatured alcohol, Make a boot disk for PCs, Run ScanDisk weekly for PCs/Rebuild desktop on Macs

LesleyF: Back up files

LesleyF: Install anti-virus software

LesleyF: Can you folks think of some others?

JeffC: buy optical mice so students won't steal the mouseballs?

LesleyF: Yes, that makes sense these days...

SusanR: don't have to build desktop on the newer macs

LesleyF: Nice

JeffC: personally... I'd like to see everyone who uses computers have a login, not just generic student logins... with histories recorded and sent to parents/teachers/admins...

JeffC: of course... also... if you have money... NetOp School is a nice program.

SusanR: the mice are all optical on the G5s

LesleyF: Some security software automatically "cleans up" the desktop, etc., which is great in schools where lots of students explore...

LesleyF: Absolutely, Jeff. TEN years ago my school did that, and it's been great; each student gets a directory and file space too.

LesleyF: Tell me about NetOp, Jeff.

JeffC: well... yes... there are also ways to ghost computers on reboot, which is what our district does. Unfortunately, this also means that it's impossible for teachers to add Favorites to browsers, making it virtually impossible to surf the web... so... security and curricular use often at odds.

JeffC: <http://www.crossteccorp.com/netopschool/> is the homepage for netop

JeffC: it allows teachers to view all student monitors, and also has a remote control feature.

JeffC: but it's not cheap

SusanR: both teachers and students get their own login password and storage space here

LesleyF: Yes, there are several products out there for that. Even setting up the physical systems for easy eyeballing is a good start.

LesleyF: Another way to deal with fave URLs is to store them remotely (BackFlip, I think, is one such program).

LesleyF: Another way to minimize problems is to buy standard systems and set-ups so it's easier to reconfigure or do troubleshooting.

LesleyF: Sounds as if your school is pretty up to date on their systems; is the management issue pretty much under control there?

LesleyF: What do they do about inventory, licenses, regular upgrades?

SusanR: I believe so..the entire school district has imaged computers

SusanR: with the same licensed software on all computers

LesleyF: that certainly makes it easier -- what about the teacher who wants specialized software?

SusanR: she sends in a request to the tech department

SusanR: same with blocked sites

LesleyF: at least that way they're kept aware

LesleyF: are there many schools these days that have pirated software?

LesleyF: or is the problem now downloading of music?

LesleyF: Sometimes it seems that the way that schools deal with tech management problems is to tighten/constrict use -- be it right clicks, email, downloading privileges, printing options, etc.

SusanR: listening to music and watching online videos was a problem today in the lab

SusanR: these were being incorporated into their PowerPoint presentations

LesleyF: so did the students know what was Fair Use in including these sources?

SusanR: However I was getting a clear picture since I was subbing for the afternoon

SusanR: correction..I wasn't getting a clear picture

SusanR: not sure if they were aware of fair use

LesleyF: it's hard when you haven't been working with the students steadily. Fortunately, most student use in class for their projects is usually ok as long as the products STAY in class.

SusanR: some very interesting Jeopardy PowerPoints from grade 7/8 students

LesleyF: Neat!

LesleyF: do students or teachers get any training in tech management or preventative measures?

LesleyF: In some schools, before a teacher can use a computer lab or laptop cart, s/he has to be trained. That really cuts down on problems.

SusanR: I was surprised to find that tech training is minimal...although Computers in Education is offered for additional qualifications

LesleyF: why do you think that is the case?

SusanR: a part 1, 2 and 3

SusanR: time constraints...it may be integrated into the subject area training

LesleyF: the latter alternative makes sense. Training needs to be either 1) very convenient (something one would do anyway), or 2) just-in-time training (targeted, specific). Or else mandated...

LesleyF: I created a list of web tutorials to address our faculty's tech questions. Not sure they'll use it -- unless they HAVE too (either because they have a problem or because their chair says they need to...)

KarenL: can we see these tutorials?

LesleyF: Let me see if I can pull it up. In the meantime, here are some good suggestions from Harvard:

LesleyF: Seven Habits of Successful Computer Users (from Harvard School of Design)

LesleyF: Success in computing is not simply a factor of experience; more important is to start with realistic expectations, and a willingness to understand (at a deeper than merely superficial level) what you are doing.

LesleyF: The following tips have been assembled based on several years of watching users_in_trouble. If we can save one person the heartache of lost projects, or late night last-minute, review-busting glitches then the time spent in reviewing these tips will be well worth it.

LesleyF: 1. Expect problems and plan to accommodate them

LesleyF: Don't assume anything is going to be easy until you've done it at least once. Don't leave printing or plotting until the last minute. Know your alternatives in case of an emergency.

LesleyF: 2. Understand the differences among storage options

LesleyF: Store and save work-in-progress on the hard disk while you are working on a particular machine. If you are using a public machine, use the "Users" directory. Don't leave important files on public hard drives. They are as good as gone the minute you leave the computer. Store current projects in your home directory and back them up on portable media. Your home directory has a limited quota. Mysterious things can happen when you go over. If you exceed your quota while saving a file, you may silently lose it! Work locally, and copy files to your homedir when finished! Floppies and Zip Disks fail -

- a lot -- when being read from/written to. Use them for back-ups and transfers, don't work on files while they are on zips or floppies!!!! Files on public hard drives are only secure as long as you are sitting in front of them. It's foolish to trust strangers with your important work. Archive past projects on CDs and take them out of your limited on-line file space.

LesleyF: 3. Save your current document as soon as you have something new worth saving.

LesleyF: Computers and applications can hang up on you at any time. make sure that you don't lose a whole night's work when this happens! When you save your work (and save often) save versions so that you have a history in the event that you discover a mistake that was made two saves ago.

LesleyF: 4. Understand the processes being represented by the nice, but abstract interfaces offered by the operating systems and applications.

LesleyF: Dragging icons around is fun, but do you understand where your files actually are? Menus are convenient, but what will this button actually do to your work?

LesleyF: 5. When encountering problems, or the unknown

LesleyF: Break down your processing goal into steps, and try to imagine how an application designer would provide the solution. Look at on-line help, or the manual. Ask a colleague or TA. Make a backup of your work and try lots of things, use controlled experiments to isolate the cause of the problem.

LesleyF: Save your work, log off, take a walk, get something to eat, go to bed, take a shower, come back, try again.

LesleyF: 6. Organize and archive your work thoughtfully

LesleyF: Disorganized and redundant files lead to tragic accidental losses.

LesleyF: Clever folder organization and naming conventions can be great time and sanity savers. Keep your current working folder on the hard-disk. When finished copy it to your home directory and your back-ups. To be safest, rename the previous version of your work in case the current version turns out corrupted somehow.

LesleyF: 7. Guard your login sessions:

LesleyF: Make sure you restart any public pc, or at least unmap any network drives you may have mapped.

SusanR: our school district has some interesting tutorials on their site, Karen and Lesley

SusanR: http://www.ocdsb.edu.on.ca/teacher_res/techres/

SusanR: ie Photoshop Elements
http://www.ocdsb.edu.on.ca/teacher_res/techres/software/pse.htm

LesleyF: Great. I'm not finding my file of web tutorials at this point. I do have one sheet that's kind of interesting. I'll upload it.

SusanR: I have seen the "collage" one used with middle school students in creative ways

LesleyF: you can now see one set of tech URLs that might be useful; it's in the file section of this site.

LesleyF: I'm not hearing lots of questions so perhaps this isn't a big issue. What do you folks want to talk about next month?

LesleyF: Perhaps training for teachers?

KarenL: That would be a good topic. I have missed so many of your sessions, I would have to check the archives and see what topics have been covered.

SusanR: yes, Lesley

SusanR: . o O (Technology Training for Teachers)

KarenL: I do like the idea of tutorials when one cannot physically do a training session.

LesleyF: well, we haven't touched the idea of training in 3 years, and the last time it was just in terms of librarian training.

KarenL: So this would be librarians training teachers?

SusanR agrees with Karen

LesleyF: So we'll do TTT -- with an emphasis on ways to do asynchronous training, OK?

LesleyF: yes, emphasis on librarians training, but it can be other teachers as well. OK?

LesleyF: since I don't hear otherwise,

LesleyF: I'll tell BJ to make that the topic. See you then!

SusanR: Thank you Lesley

LesleyF: Too late for chatting though, folks. See you on May 17 when we'll talk about librarians teaching teachers about technology, including methods that can be used asynchronously.

KarenL: Okay. . .

LesleyF: I also uploaded a couple of files that talk about tech tools and tech management, so you can take a look at those.

CarolN: Saved one file. Thanks.

LesleyF: bye!

KarenL: Is this the problem-solving and technology file I see?

LesleyF: that's an earlier one, Karen, which you're welcome to look at.

KarenL: Thanks!

LesleyF: see that new featured ones.