Title of Session: Social Studies Forum: The September Project
Moderator: Michael Hutchison
Guest Speaker: David Silver
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Room: Social Studies Forum Group

MichaelH : welcome to tonight's Social Studies forum, everyone

MichaelH : tonight, we have a great topic that we can all hopefully get some good information on

MichaelH : we have some guests with us who will discuss the "September Project"

MichaelH : let's start tonight's session with some introductions

MichaelH : would everyone like to say who they are and where they're from?

MichaelH is a social studies teacher in southwestern Indiana

BJB2: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania

DavidMS: I teach communication at the University of Washington and live in Seattle.

JeffC: Jeff Cooper... Helpdesk here at Tapped In, Forest Grove Oregon.

HerschelS: Herschel's newly retired social studies teacher who now produces history powerpoints for teachers

MichaelH is envious of Herschel

MichaelH looks to see if Brian wants to say "hello"
BrianPC: Brian Collins Michigan State/EASE History site

MichaelH : David, I think we're all set...

MichaelH : would you like to take a minute and tell us about the September Project?

DavidMS: sure, in a nutshell tsp is a grassroots project; it

DavidMS: is based in libraries; and it encourages events about freedom and democracy;

DavidMS: all on the same day or near that day: September 11.

DavidMS: (actually, do people prefer if I write in chunks or in one post?)

JeffC . o O (whatever you prefer David.)

MichaelH : doesn't make a difference to us, David... what ever you are comfortable with

DavidMS: so the basic question is: is it possible to have people come together in public spaces, all over the place, on the same day. and if so, is it possible to have them engage in issues that matter.

MichaelH : that's a cool idea, David

DavidMS: while the project's heart is public libraries, a huge development is academic libs and school libs ... not to mention military libs, jail libs, etc.

SusanR joined the room.

MichaelH : is this the first year for the project, David?

DavidMS: we began the project last year. it was largely US-based and generated over 450 public events in 8 countries. this year, it has grown considerably and is currently in nearly 650 communities in 35 countries.

MichaelH : that's cool. I'm sorry I didn't hear about it in 2004.

DavidMS: yes, it was quite exciting last year because we had no idea if it would work. =)

MichaelH : So, if I want to sign up my library of school, how would I go about doing that?

DavidMS: well, first, you'd agree or have a librarian agree that some kind of event about freedom and democracy will happen at your school. then ...

DavidMS: you would sign up your lib: http://www.drizzle.com/~klockner/cgi-bin/tsp/2005/venue.cgi (seeing what urls look like)

MichaelH : reminds everyone that they should check the site, but scurry back here for more of David's explanation

DavidMS: one of the key events is that everything is free: it is free to participate, free to sign up, free to attend all events.

MichaelH . o O (you may also need to turn off your pop-up blocker)

DavidMS: I can add a few more things ... should I, or wait for a bit of digestion?

MichaelH : and everything is going on during the entire month, right,. not just on 9/11

MichaelH : well, this might be a good time to check and see if anyone has questions, or wants to chime in with anything

MichaelH : David, you might also share the main URL for the September Project when you have a chance...

SusanR: no venues in Canada..that is surprising

DavidMS: that is correct. And that is strategic. Last year, the majority of events were on Sept 11. This year, 9-11 fell on a Sunday, a day many libraries are closed. So we simply said, have an event anytime during September. The beauty of this is two fold: a) the focus is not simply on 9-11, it just takes place on or around that day, and b) it encourages events throughout September which is, after all, the beginning of schools around the world.

DavidMS: www.theseptemberproject.org

BrianPC: can you give us some examples of events that were held this past weekend?

DavidMS: Susan, actually there are some events that happened in Canada. a map of all participating libs can be seen here: http://www.drizzle.com/%7Eklockner/cgi-bin/tsp/2005/map.cgi

MichaelH saw several in Vancouver

DavidMS: sure Brian. (Sarah, the project's co-director, has been great at blogging the events she has attended; you can see that here: http://theseptemberproject.blogspot.com/)

MichaelH : David, the blog site is coming back as it can't be found

DavidMS: on Saturday, I attended a film screening of UNCONSTITUTIONAL, a powerful film about the patriot act made by the aclu. It was shown at my local library (Seattle public lib: Ballard branch) and followed with a discussion. about 20-24 people showed up and the discussion lasted for an hour. It was great.

DavidMS: let's see: blog url: http://theseptemberproject.blogspot.com/

MichaelH : sorry to interrupt, David.. try http://theseptemberproject.blogspot.com/

SusanR: Good..perhaps I can get my school involved so eastern Canada could be represented

DavidMS: Susan, that would be beautiful.

SusanR: or local library

MichaelH : David, not to change the subject, but where can I get a copy of "Unconstitutional"?

DavidMS: on Sunday, I attended two events. One was at a community college lib and was an interfaith dialogue about conflict and humanity. I am not religious, yet I'm spiritual, and I learned a ton, mostly from a Muslim Sufi leader. He said things about Islam that I believe and hope all Americans knew about the religion.

DavidMS: ooh, good idea. I believe you can order it through the aclu's web site but if you can't I can make some inquiries to find out ...

MichaelH : thanks David... I'll send you an e-mail if I can't find it on the ACLU site (we're getting ready to do civil liberties in my government classes)

DavidMS: finally, later that day, Sarah and I attended another library, Seattle's central library, where a second showing of unconstitutional was held, this time in their large auditorium filled (100-120 people). we spoke about democracy, about the war, about civil liberties. being Seattle, it tilted to the left, yet there was some balance of perspectives.

DavidMS: one thing, and then I'll quiet down, is that Sarah has compiled a beautiful list of events: http://www.theseptemberproject.org/events.htm these events mostly take place in the US, but also in Israel, Lithuania, Cuba, etc etc.

MichaelH : it's interesting that you got some response from Cuba

BrianPC: Why did you decide to have these events at libraries?

MichaelH : that's an interesting question, Brian

DavidMS: Brian, that's an excellent question and goes to the core of the project ...

DavidMS: we wanted all events to be free and public. We wanted all events to be open to everyone: black, white, rich, poor, etc. We believed that the only remaining *true* public space in the US is libraries.

DavidMS: but there's more ...

DavidMS: the great thing about libraries is that they are networked. Libraries work with each other, work with other branches, work with other libraries. Moreover, librarians are truly the most information sharing people I know. In other words, in public libraries we witness: a) a nationally distributed network, b) true civic centers, and c) safe spaces that are devoted to the free exchange of information.

MichaelH : that's an interesting view, David

DavidMS: yes, what we didn't want was a move-on, where the left congregates and talks among themselves, or the equivalent of that on the other side, with the right talking amongst themselves. We wanted dialogue, and we wanted it to be non-partisan. political? yes. partisan? no.

MichaelH : That's good...

MichaelH : I noticed that in the announcement about the project you forwarded to me last week

BrianPC: Librarians have felt the effects of the Patriot Act and are probably very interested in having citizens talk more about the protection of civil liberties.

MichaelH : I wondered, David, are there representative projects that the audience could look at on the web site, or something you could point to as an example of how a school or library has developed an event?

DavidMS: Brian: totally. The majority of librarians we spoke to immediately "got it" and said, "we're on."

DavidMS: Michael, before i got cut off, I posted a link to our events page. this is a list of 100+ events that took place last weekend or are taking place in September (or October). Unfortunately, the majority of them are events at public libraries. But there are a few examples from school libs. one idea would be to go to the page http://www.theseptemberproject.org/events.htm and do a search for "school"

DavidMS: something I should mention ...

DavidMS: many of the events were not talks, or roundtables, or discussions, or film screenings. They were book displays. Displays smack in the middle of a library with a theme of freedom and democracy. I love this idea because it is not that much work (although we are all busy, esp librarians) and yet it allows patrons a goldmine of ideas for further learning.

DavidMS: in some cases, the displays/reading lists were curated by librarians; in other cases, students got involved; in still other cases, teachers and faculty contributed their "must reads".

BrianPC: I've gotten positive responses too from librarians when I have asked them to include a link to my site on their website. Librarians seem to be looking for new ways to support learning/discussion.

BJB2 . o O (they even use Tapped In!)

MichaelH smiles

DavidMS: Brian, can you post a link to your site?

MichaelH noted a substantial number of book displays, etc listed on the "events" site David just shared

DavidMS: the great thing about librarians is that they believe all information should be free. That sounds like democracy to me. =)

BrianPC: EASE History can be viewed at http://www.easehistory.org/

MichaelH is hoping Brian will be a guest in an upcoming SS forum sometime in October

DavidMS: thank you, I will visit this after our session.

DavidMS: one thing I'd like to mention ...

MichaelH : It's a cool site, David

MichaelH : go ahead, David

BrianPC: Brian is hoping for the same thing.

DavidMS: is that we didn't enforce (or HAD) any cookie cutter model of what should happen. We said from the start, and throughout, that the best kind of event is an event that engages their community. The events that happened in, say, Ohio, were very different from those in NY, which in turn differed from those in Iceland and India. All we said was engage your community about issues that matter. We see this as an interesting and somewhat new form of civic engagement: one that is national and international in scope but that is focused locally.

MichaelH wonders if David had any feedback regarding the project from government officials? It seems like a great way to interact and learn ...

DavidMS: not directly. We had some feelers from some high ranking US politicians. But each time, we said the same thing: if you are interested in participating, visit your local library and offer your services.

MichaelH : did they?

JeffC: David... would you consider setting up a group room here in relation to the project?

DavidWe: Pardon me for asking...what was being offered?

DavidMS: eeks, lots of questions. sorry, I'm still new to this. I'll try to answer all of them.

MichaelH : David, answer David WE's question first, and you can come back to me later

JeffC: me too

DavidMS: Michael: yes. We are still compiling all of the events, but we know of at least 8-10 politicians (ranging from mayors/council people to state reps and state senators).

DavidMS: Jeff: what would the group room look like?

JeffC: this one

JeffC: except with info about your project

DavidMS: hello David. can you rephrase your question? Offered by the September project? Offered by the politicians?

MichaelH : David, I gave David We the URL and he's checking it

DavidMS: great, thanks Michael.

BrianPC: Did you model the September Project after another project?

DavidMS: Brian: no. We have learned from other projects but it came out of nowhere.

JeffC: It would be open to the public... linked to from this group... there is lots of help available to set it up... it's all free here.

MichaelH : David, what Jeff's saying is that you could have a separate group for the project, and invite teachers, librarians, etc. to join... similar to what I do with the Social Studies forum

MichaelH : You and I can discuss this via e-mail later if you want more information

DavidMS: Jeff, I'll certainly talk to Sarah about this. It would be interesting to pursue. One of the things that we're sort of particular too is that we encourage the events to be face to face. I'm not a neoluddite and make my career off of teaching new media. But there's something about face to face events that we felt strongly about. That said, two nights ago, one of the events was a chat between a lib in Illinois and two in Singapore ...

DavidMS: Jeff, Michael: let's discuss this more in the future as the dust settles from tsp 2005. =) I look forward to talking more about this.

MichaelH : David, you might be able to use TI for the chat you mention.... and even post messages...

BrianPC: David: this is a terrific project. Congratulations.

JeffC: I was thinking along the lines of expanding upon what you're doing with f2f. If you're in a roomful of librarians... one could be online (who type 90 wpm) giving a transcript as things progressed. Plus... this room could act as a resource for those who can't attend f2f meetings... and would also increase the likelihood that you'd get more librarians involved with the project I'll shut up now.

DavidWe: David, do you know Andy Carvin (or know of him)?

DavidMS: thank you. I wish Sarah were here because she has so much to say about it. Also, I want to give kudos to our director of technology, John Klockner, who developed the database, the map, etc. He's been an inspiration to work with.

DavidMS: Jeff: totally. We are very interested in figuring out how to have multiple events connected. Events that are happening physically that can be -- via digital media -- connected. We are on the same wavelength. =)

JeffC: thanks David... thanks for coming (goes back write graffiti on the whiteboard)

DavidMS: he is interested in digital democracy, is that correct? I believe I know him through his work on the digital divide. is that correct David we?

DavidWe: Yes.

DavidWe: Andy's been a "young voice" of educational/democratic uses of technology for over 10 years

MichaelH : Andy hosts the "WWWEDU" (World Wide Web in Education) listserv

DavidWe: He works at EDC, now

EmilyW: there are lots of librarians on the digital divide list

MichaelH . o O (I think Andy approved the post announcing this session about three minutes after I sent it to him)

DavidWe: His mailing list WWWEDU is the oldest (that I'm aware of) mailing list for discussions about using the Web in education

JeffC: There are 534 librarians registered at Tapped In.

DavidWe: That's pretty cool.

DavidWe . o O (way to go Jeff!)

DavidMS: Michael posted a message about tsp to a list or two, and within 2 hours, two school libraries signed up to participate. It's really interesting the way that our technologies develop at such a rapid pace but there's something about listservs that makes them so relevant and effective!

MichaelH : BJ is there still a strong Librarians group in TI?

DavidWe thinks librarians are generally very cool

DavidMS: may I ask a question?

MichaelH : sure, David, go ahead

DavidWe listens

MichaelH : right... I had thought though we had a librarian chat going at one time... just school librarians, etc

JeffC: only 8 groups here for librarians... and three of them are K-12 classes.

MichaelH listens for David MS's question

DavidMS: well, we are still riding out this year's events, but we are always thinking of the future. One thing I'd like to see is more libraries in more countries outside the US; another thing is more libs at community colleges, colleges, and universities. The other thing, and perhaps the most important to me and Sarah, is to see if more schools can get involved. This is a big question but: is this something that may interest schools in the US?

JeffC . o O (great question David)

DavidWe: Is WHAT something that will interest school libraries/librarians?

DavidWe . o O (TSP?)

DavidMS: is having an event about freedom and democracy sometime on campus in September (= tsp) at their school.

MichaelH : Well, David, in my case, I was just returning to the classroom this year, and I didn't really have a feel for the interest here. However, next year I'll have a little firmer grip on things and hopefully can get my school interested

DavidWe: I would think most school libraries/librarians would be interested

MichaelH agrees with David

DavidWe: September can sometimes be a TOUGH time to do new things - start of the new school year, etc.

MichaelH : David you might also try to contact government teachers, building principals, etc.

DavidMS: exactly David we, that's why we have to think now, or at least in a few weeks.

DavidWe: We've often waited until things settle down in October to begin projects with teachers, in my experience

SusanR agrees with David..most libraries worldwide would be interested...

MichaelH : there's a new law this year that says that all schools who receive federal funds have to teach about the constitution on or by September 16

DavidWe . o O (getting administrators on board, or at least informed, is KEY!)

DavidMS: you know, in many ways, what we are encouraging schools/school libraries is to do what social science teachers do all the time. What is exciting, I believe, is that the events would be connected to an international chain of participants doing similar things. once we figure out how to share information, share ideas, it could be quite powerful -- for students and for teachers!

MichaelH : I agree with that, David

DavidMS: Susan: you are from Canada?

JeffC: Susan is in Ottawa

DavidMS: we learned something very interesting with Canada ...

DavidMS: at first, when we approached Canadian librarians, they seemed to think that we represented the us gov't, or Bush, or the military. They seemed to believe that we were asking them to be American. After they studied the project, however, they saw that it wasn't merely a 9-11 thing; it was a freedom and democracy thing. That was nice to witness.

DavidMS: =) I really enjoyed this and want to thank all of you. I hope to do this again. And one day I hope to meet all of you.

MichaelH : David, we sure appreciate you taking time to join us

DavidWe: Thanks, David, for being available for this discussion

BJB2: thanks, David

BrianPC: Thanks David. Nice to meet you.

DavidMS: my pleasure. thanks to all!

MichaelH : David, thanks so much, it was a great session... feel free to join us any time

DavidMS: thanks Michael. I'll be in touch on email. TI is a great interface with great people. Thank you, and have a great evening.

MichaelH : David, before everyone leaves, do you want to leave some contact information?

DavidMS: oh sure, here it comes:

DavidMS: David Silver, dsilver@u.washington.edu the September project www.theseptemberproject.org

MichaelH : thanks, David!