Chapter 11
Multimedia, Oral History, and Teacher Education: From Community Space to Cyberspace

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ABSTRACT

The study took place at a Catholic PreK-8 school/parish where two faculty instructors taught undergraduate methods courses. At the parish site, the pre-service teachers worked with elementary students to create a range of multi-media projects. These projects showcased the oral histories of the people, places, and events of the school and church community and allowed the pre-service teachers to integrate technology into their teaching. The researchers analyzed observational, interview, and textual data and found a range of behaviors that reflected the pre-service teachers’ familiarity/unfamiliarity with technology, teaching, and the community in which they were learning. As a result, their attempts at learning through and teaching with technology, along with our attempts to teach with and learn through technology, revealed a multiplicity of enactments of fast literacies (Schneider, King, Kozdras, Minick, & Welsh, 2006). In this chapter, we share examples from the themes of our analysis, which reflect Kinzer’s (2005) notion of the “intersection” between school, community, and technology.

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INTRODUCTION

We have observed pre-service teachers’ innovative uses of technology, from their personal use of text messaging to their completion of coursework using a variety of word processing programs. However, when faced with the stresses of teaching (an emerging skill) with technology (an emerging skill) they may fall back on their personal classroom experiences as students and gravitate to the familiarity of traditional literacies. Within the habitus of required school literacies, we pondered how we could convince teachers to make their teaching real and engage students in communication for real purposes. Kinzer (2005) pointed to a space for teachers’ authenticity at the intersection of schools, communities, and technology. He suggested that “one cannot help but be struck that technology can extend the boundaries of classrooms” (p. 66). In order to extend the boundaries of the pre-service teacher experience, we engaged pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and their students in face-to-face literacy learning within and beyond their community spaces. We used cyberspace as a virtual communication medium to showcase oral histories of the people, places, and events of a parochial school community. In this paper we report the results of this project and in particular, its impact on our teaching and the learning of our pre-service teachers.

BACKGROUND

Literacy researchers, theorists, and organisations have called for changes in educational curriculum to include “New Literacies” (e.g., Alvermann, 2002; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; National Council of Teachers of English, 2005; New London Group, 1996). In order to promote these new digitally-based, multi-mediated literacies, The International Reading Association has stated, “The Internet and other forms of information and communication technology (ICT) are redefining the nature of literacy. To become fully literate in today’s world, students must become proficient in the new literacy of ICT” (International Reading Association, 2001). Our current project is undertaken in the context of newer, media-based literacies, shaped by suggestions from Kalantzis and Cope (2004) and Kinzer (2005) to connect real-world experiences to school literacies.

Problems with Integrating Technology

In response to the call for the integration of technology into schools, Hobbs (2006) reported a problematic trend in teachers’ implementation of digital literacies - the resistance of literacy teachers to infuse technology into their lessons. While many science and mathematics teachers have readily adopted technology into their programs, literacy teachers tend to choose print in preference to multimedia applications. Hobbs speculated that teachers may view technology as a threat to the tradition of print literacies. In addition, other researchers have found that educators may refrain from using technology because they consider it an “out-of-school” literacy. For example, Bromley (2006) found that teachers are suspicious of the increasing informality of Internet writing as a form of non-school literacy. Similarly, Turbill and Murray (2006) found that primary grade Australian teachers viewed technology as play, and therefore not what traditionally is considered to be literacy. McKenna (2006) also noted that teachers might resist technology because they associate it with popular culture, another non-school literacy. Discounting literacy on the grounds that it fails the standard of literacy is an argument that is counter to newer theorizing in what are called the “new literacies” (Knobel & Lankshear, 2006; New London Group, 1996).

Turbill and Murray (2006) proposed that teachers may be reluctant to use technology because they are afraid of what they have not tried. They suggested that the problems might emanate from