

A Technology Coordinator's Bookmarks

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At this time of year many educators are beginning the new school year with a new job, or at least a new title. Some of us remain in the same position but need to re-evaluate the way we do things and the resources we use. Regardless of your situation as a new or returning technology coordinator, it is important to take that annual look at the methods to your madness and new (and old) ways to achieve your goals that you might be overlooking. Here we will explore some of the many resources available to the technology coordinator. Some resources have been mentioned before in this column and others are new, but they all have great potential to assist you with your daily activities as a technology coordinator. The below-mentioned resources and many more are available for download as a Netscape bookmark file from www.sccs.santacruz.k12.ca.us/edtech/techcoord.

Networking 101

Possibly more important than knowing the difference between a router and a switch or how to crimp an RJ-45 end onto a Category V cable is to have access to a viable network of other technology coordinators who have tackled, or at least thought about, issues similar to your own. This network would be filled with active technology coordinators who not only have the answers, but also are willing to share them. As you become familiar with this network, you would not only ask questions but also volunteer resources and share your ideas with others. Sound good? Well this network already exists and is easily attainable by any technology coordinator. The Technology Coordinators Listserv is managed by the Education Technology Department of Santa Cruz City Schools, and you can join by simply sending an email to: macjordomo@sccs.santacruz.k12.ca.us and in the body of the email type: Sub techcoord. Once subscribed, you will be privy to pertinent and interesting resources, late breaking news and will have the opportunity to ask questions of, and share your ideas with, over 225 other technology coordinators (site, district and county level) from around the nation. The list generates between one and about twenty email messages a week, depending on the topic being discussed and there is a digest option available as well.

Keeping Above Water

Moving from networking into web resources takes us to a web site that assists technology leaders with networking (both kinds) as well as many other resources. The Snorkel web site (www.thesnorkel.org) was developed and recently revamped by Doug Prouty of the Contra Costa County Office of Education to be a support forum for K-12 technology leaders. The Snorkel, a metaphor for technology leaders who need a survival tool when they are in over you're their heads, has a searchable database of other technology leaders that are willing to assist with most anything technical and curricular. There are pages of categorized links to relevant resources for the technology leader, a bulletin board, a location to post or search for employment opportunities, a chat room, and the all important successes and humor area for the overworked technology coordinators' weekly dose of positive anecdotes and humorous tales. Speaking of humor, you may be interested in the "More than 300 Business and Computer Cartoons" web site at www.glasbergen.com/cat.html to assist you with the icebreaker for your next presentation to the school board. There are other sites designed especially for the technology coordinator, specifically the "technology coordinators Web Site" at www.ac.wvu.edu/~kenr/TCsite/home-frames.html and the NetTech's Technology Coordinators site at www.nettech.org/tc.

Technical Support

The many technical links at the Snorkel lead us to the multitude of technology support web sites. Apple manages a site for Macintosh computers at www.apple.com/support, but I find that third party web sites are more useful such as "20 Steps to a Happy Mac" at

www.minot.k12.nd.us/happy_mac.htm, Kline's Macintosh Korner at <http://209.162.2.35/stan>, the MacInTouch Web site at www.macintouch.com and finally, the MacFixIt web site at www.macfixit.com. PC technical web sites are also abundant. Begin with the PC Hell web site at www.pchell.com, then check out Ziff-Davis' "Help and How-To" web site at www.zdnet.com/zdhelp and ComputerHope at www.computerhope.com. The number of good technical support web sites continues to grow and change so for an up-to-date listing, download the above mentioned bookmark file.

Your Professional Development

Because Barbara Bray (www.compstrategies.com) does such a great job of covering staff development issues in this publication, I will focus only on the need for technology coordinators to keep up-to-date with the latest technologies and curricular issues. Don't sacrifice your own professional growth because your job keeps you too busy. We all need to keep posted on the latest changes in the field of educational technology in order to do our jobs well. Be sure to read educational journals and technology magazines. MacWorld (www.macworld.com) and PC World (www.pcworld.com) are two techie magazines that will cover much of the latest technological developments. The educational technology journals such as the CUE newsletter (www.cue.org), Technology & Learning (www.techlearning.com), Converge (www.convergemag.com) and many others are well worth the read. However reading will not cover all your needs so the technology coordinator should also attend conferences and workshops. MacWorld Expo (www.macworldexpo.com) happens twice a year with the January event held annually in San Francisco, and Comdex (www.comdex.com) is an annual event that features everything tech. Large computer expos are a great place to talk with the developers of a particular application or to see what is new on the tech horizon. Combining technology with curriculum is the focus of many other conferences such as the fall and spring CUE conferences held in Sacramento and Anaheim respectively, and Classroom Connect's Connected Classroom Conferences (www.classroom.com) held in southern California and in other states in the nation. Although originally with a community college focus, Technology in Education – TechEd (www.teched2000.org) - has become a K-12 conference as well. For the technology coordinators who have to deal with student record systems, financial systems and other school business applications, the California Educational Data Processing Association (www.cedpa-k12.org) conference has grown in size and become a valuable conference for many technology coordinators. Possibly one of the largest and most exciting educational technology conferences is the National Educators Computer Conference (www.neccsite.org). Whichever conferences you attend and journals you read, be sure to connect with other technology coordinators to share resources.

Purchasing

Most technology coordinators find themselves in the position of assisting others in purchasing technology for their classroom, site, and/or district. Somehow the technology coordinator is expected to know who has the lowest RAM prices, where one can get the best price on the latest Dell server, and what is the best digital camera or data projector for the money. Because all these items seem to change so quickly, it is not possible to know the answers to all the questions, but you can know *where* to look. All California public schools are part of a statewide purchasing agreement for Microsoft, Claris, Apple, Adobe, and other name brand software manufacturers. For example, Microsoft Office (Word, Excel and PowerPoint) costs just under \$50 for a license to place the suite on one computer. The retail price for MS Office is close to \$500. You can access these discounted prices from a variety of vendors such as Educational Resources (www.edresources.com) or 800-860-7004) and the Software eSource (www.softwareresource.com/education). Technology prices fluctuate so quickly that you need a web site to help you find the low prices. Price Scan (www.pricescan.com) and Price Watch (www.pricewatch.com) are two of the many web sites that

scan the major vendor's prices for everything from watches to RAM and list them for you to view. But perhaps you are still in the investigative stages and don't yet know which product you need to purchase. If this is the case, then a site like PC World's web site (www.pcworld.com) can offer you an exhaustive listing of reviews and comparisons that their magazine has done on a great number of computers, software and peripherals. Use these reviews to narrow down your search and then move on to the price sites and search for a particular product.

Now many of you are amazed that I have left off your favorite technology coordinators web site, technical support or other site. I am not able to list all of the great resources in this column but feel free to send your suggestions to me via email. In any case, use the above resources to get you going with the job of technology coordination or to review your process of accomplishing your goals. No matter what, we are all in this together!