Supersizing Social Studies Through the Use of Web 2.0 Technologies

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This article seeks to demonstrate how social studies has come to be an all-inclusive subject: it has become supersized. When supported by Web 2.0 technology, social studies enables students to address multifaceted problems that require the deep understanding necessary to arrive at both wise and timely solutions. We discuss how curriculum integration and emerging technology applications can support the supersizing of social studies. Two instructional projects and two instructional tools are presented as examples of how social studies can be supersized through the use of Web 2.0 technologies.

Key words: social studies; technology; Web 2.0; technology integration; education; curriculum integration.

Introduction

We are living in a world that is smaller, more connected, and better informed than ever before, yet, in some instances, social studies instruction looks and feels like it did 50 years ago (Crocco & Cramer, 2005; Holcomb & Beal, 2010). We believe social studies today needs innovative ideas and bold approaches to address the new conditions for learning. In this article, we suggest supersizing social studies by taking advantage of emerging technologies. The use of these tools and related 21st century skills will allow social studies to position itself in the curriculum as the "go-to" core subject. In supersized social studies, multidisciplinary issues come together, enabling students to engage in authentic learning by using real world problems and issues. Although the term supersize generally is associated with fast food and may bring to mind transactions driven by greed and excess, we intend something entirely different. We want to offer a vision of supersized social studies that reflects how this subject has evolved over time. Today, social studies teachers should address complex global issues by challenging students to use knowledge of social studies and 21st century skills to address and solve the world's problems.

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Social studies has played many pivotal roles since its inception. In the early 1900s, it was used as a means to educate new immigrants about the meaning and obligations of democracy. During the Progressive Education Era of the 1930s, social studies helped facilitate society's efforts at social reconstruction. Its charge in the 1960s was collective action, social change and addressing social problems. In the 1980s, social studies began to emphasize disciplinary skills in fields such as history, geography, political science and economics. In all of these periods, social studies responded to the special needs of society, while at the same time emphasizing the development of caring and competent citizens (Ross, 2006). In our world today, one must understand and act on the national and global issues that affect our well-being. Given the history of the subject, the question now is, how will social studies respond to this new challenge?

As educators can attest, social studies is indeed already on a path towards being supersized. No longer a subject simply valued for preparing students to spit back concrete facts, social studies has grown to include a focus on disciplinary skills and inquiry. As we teach social studies, we use tools in related disciplines to inform research, promote understanding and guide our practice on the national and global stage (Crocco & Cramer, 2005; Holcomb, Beal, & Roberts, 2009; Jonassesn, 1994). Today's global scene is unstable and ever-changing, and it is through social studies that we can construct plans and responses to meet the needs of the world community. Using new technologies, students today can access information in amounts and in ways that are constantly changing (Castek, Coiro, Hartma, Henry, Leu, & Zawilinski, 2010; Leu, 2000). Developing the skills to access and use online information is critically important to the development of citizenship. No other subject requires students to retrieve information from so many fields, including history, civics, geography, literature, economics, philosophy, sociology and even science and mathematics.

We seek to demonstrate how social studies, paired with technology, can become the "go-to" core subject. A supersized social studies supports the merging of multidisciplinary issues, thus enabling students to engage in authentic learning through real world problems and issues. Our claim here is that curriculum integration and emerging technology applications can support an expanded social studies.

Social studies traditionally has included many areas of study: anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, and sociology (Beal, Bullock, & Martorella, 2008). It is no wonder that with such a broad field of study, social studies has come to be thought of as all things to all people, a catch-all subject, a little bit of this and a little bit of that. But, times have changed. Social studies must now reflect the global realities of interdependence and the immediacies of today's challenges. Social studies can no longer be a holding spot for other disciplines or the first subject eliminated from the school curriculum. It is no longer acceptable that social studies be devalued because it is not part of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2002) standardized testing program. Rather, social studies should be a subject that teachers and students embrace. In its new supersized form, made possible by technology and problem-based learning, social studies allows in-depth examination of timely issues and global problems. Using curriculum integration as its means of examination, students can ask big questions and deal with critical issues of interest to them (Beane, 2005). Students take on real world problems, engage in intensive research using methods suited to their style of learning and share their findings with their collaborators and colleagues.

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How Technology (Web 2.0) is Driving the New Social Studies

Social studies educators have spent and given a considerable amount of time and effort thinking about how technology tools can be used in the curriculum. For example, *Social Education*, a publication from the National Council for the Social Studies, has published hundreds of articles over the last 15 years on using technology in social studies. It is now time to effectively use what we have learned. For social studies, this means that we should develop and integrate technology tools and resources that enable students to explore problems facing our nation and the world.

Social studies educators today work with students who are awash in information, much coming through Web 2.0 technologies. Teachers must help students use new approaches to learning, while attending to the purpose of social studies (i.e., to provide students with experiences that both reflect and represent democratic life). Web 2.0 tools work in concert with social studies' purpose, while reflecting and representing democratic life. Just as in a democratic world where citizens engage in open discussions of differing views, Web 2.0 tools support a two-way digital bridge that enables multiple sides to express their views and let their voices be heard.

If the purpose of social studies education is to prepare students for democratic life, and if Web 2.0 technologies are to aid in this process, we suggest that schools replicate the democracy that exists in society. This is easy to say but difficult to do for public school teachers who struggle every day in their efforts to create authentic and fair democratic classrooms and experiences (Kesson & Ross, 2004). The challenge for teachers who seek to create a democratic classroom is the difficulty of situating social studies experiences in authentic contexts. A lack of authenticity may result in what Peter Doolittle and David Hicks (2003) call the "drudgery" of social studies, a practice that good social studies educators constantly work to avoid. Web 2.0 technologies offer a way to authentically represent democratic society in students' lived school experiences. These tools enable students to interact with others on a level playing field that does not prioritize cultural status or previous accomplishments. Cost-free collaborative tools such as blogging, wikis, social networking web sites, video production, audio/video mixing, Internet communication and multiplayer gaming enable interaction among people and across spaces with little regard for the structures or socio-economic inequalities that separate them. At the same time, these democratically constructed playing fields require more sophistication and critical analysis on the part of students who must make judgments about the authenticity and accuracy of the information.

Web 2.0 Technologies: Resurgence of Democracy in the Classroom

Web 2.0 technologies have quickly become essential tools for teaching and learning in social studies. These technologies foster reflective and active learning environments that support and promote democratic life. Using Web 2.0 tools, students have the ability to access and research information from a variety of web resources, while collaborating, creating, and sharing what they have learned with others on the web (Richardson, 2005-2006).

Also known as the "read-write" web, Web 2.0 is characterized by its no cost, collaborative, user-centric content production and interactive content access (O'Reilly, 2006). Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis, and podcasts support active content creation while extending teaching and learning beyond the traditional four walls of the classroom. Using Web 2.0 tools, students and teachers can collaborate with others and access resources that are not readily available in the classroom (Grant & Mims, 2009; O'Reilly, 2006). Teachers and students, for example, can use blogs to expand their work to reach other audiences. Wikis can enable

collaborative writing projects among groups of learners all over the world. Social networking resources can help students share ideas and extend creative projects outside the classroom. This ability to connect, communicate, collaborate, and share empowers students while anchoring learning in active, real-world contexts. Web 2.0 technologies not only enhance and support learning but they also foster interactive democratic life, which is a core component of social studies education.

As we mentioned earlier, we believe social studies teachers should seek to provide the same democratic environments in schools as exist in society. Using Web 2.0 tools that enable students to produce, manipulate, and create knowledge, social studies teachers can promote the democratic purposes of social studies through critical and active student learning (Grant & Mims, 2009). Web 2.0 technologies enable authentic contexts and experiences for students that are also representative of the cultures in which they live. Students can use Web 2.0 tools to produce reports, manipulate data, and create knowledge, thus shifting the balance of authority regarding who gets to verify knowledge as "truth" (Gray, Thompson, Sheard, Clerehan, & Hamilton, 2010). No better example exists than Wikipedia. As a collective effort to represent knowledge, Wikipedia carries democratic tendencies that de-center old authorities and enable contributors at all levels. Supersizing social studies, however, also means that teachers have to help students learn that everything on the Internet is not necessarily factual. Learning which websites can be relied upon and which ones cannot is very important.

Examples of Supersized Social Studies from the Field
The following examples highlight Web 2.0 tools and instructional resources that we believe can supersize social studies. From exploring Russian history using Internet collaborative tools to creating web-based digital historical resources, these curriculum integrated tools and lessons pair Web 2.0 technologies with specific instructional goals and aims that are central to social studies' democratic aims. These examples showcase the importance and relevance of supersized social studies in education. In the next sections, we present two projects and two tools as well as instructional ideas for using materials featured in the projects.

Project 1: The Russia Project
The Russia Project (see Web-Based References) is a Web 2.0 embedded project that provides students with an opportunity to examine big questions while being self-directed in their learning. At the core of this project is the examination and exploration of Russian governance over time. Students, for example, are asked to explore St. Petersburg, Russia and identify examples in history, architecture, literature, etc., that depict and explain the cause of the downfall of czarist rule and the adoption of communism. Students must identify key and relevant events and explain the influence these events had on the evolution of Russia's governance. Various Web 2.0 tools, such as VoiceThread, Gliffy, and Google Earth provide students with the tools to explore, manipulate and analyze information. No longer restricted to the traditional classroom and textbook, students are able to travel to St. Petersburg and view images of the city, including historic buildings, such as The Church on the Spilled Blood and the Hermitage. In addition, primary documents, political cartoons and pieces of Russian art provide a rich, comprehensive learning environment. Students utilize various Web 2.0 tools to share, discuss and communicate their ideas and understanding. This interaction enables students to reflect on their learning, engage in discussions and collaborate with peers. Web 2.0 technologies create and foster a

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strong, problem-based learning environment that affords students the ability to access an ever-expanding array of resources and information.

Project 2: The Lincoln Telegrams

The Lincoln Telegrams project (see Web-Based References) presents telegram memos written by President Abraham Lincoln between March 10, 1864, and April 12, 1865. Scanned images of these memos reproduce the telegraph messages on the day they were written. The telegram memos, scanned by teacher education students, are complimented by related historical analysis on a project blog and wiki. The Lincoln Telegrams blog and wiki extend the possibility of project collaboration to K-12 students who are invited to use the content to investigate a wide range of topics related to 19th century United States history. Teachers in civics, economics, English/language arts, geography, history and science can use the content to introduce curriculum topics as well as study parallel issues of today. English teachers, for example, might examine the communicative forms of writing that were used in telegram writing and compare those to the texting practices of 21st century students. History teachers might explore the way Lincoln used telegrams to manage the Union war effort during the Civil War, and in the context of today's Wiki Leaks, study information security during Lincoln's time and in the 21st century. Science teachers might examine the technology of the telegraph and the use of dielectric electrical insulators on telegraph wires. After a dielectric properties study, a teacher might ask students to prepare a time line that traces the development of electronic communications from the mid-19th century to today. What scientific discoveries have enabled us to go from telegraph to emails? (See Tool 2, Interactive Time Lines, appearing later in this article.)

The possibilities for use of the Lincoln Telegrams project are endless. These unique documents, all but overlooked for classroom use until they were digitized, enable students to discover an interesting resource from the past that will help them achieve a new level of historical understanding. At the same time, students can juxtapose that earlier era with their own, allowing them to speculate about how far society has come since the days of Abraham Lincoln and the telegraph. The Lincoln Telegrams project is online (see Web-Based References) as well as available through a related iPad™ application on the project website. Below, we present a specific approach to using the Lincoln Telegrams project in the classroom.

Integrating the Lincoln Telegrams into the classroom: Examining the complexity of Lincoln

In this activity, students explore the leadership traits of President Lincoln through an analysis of selected Lincoln telegrams. The activity makes use of an historical thinking heuristic called SCIM-C (Summarize, Contextualize, Infer, Monitor, and Corroborate), which was developed, by Hicks, Doolittle and E. Thomas Ewing (2004) to scaffold historical thinking for novice learners. The SCIM-C scaffold includes specific questions designed to support five cognitive activities inherent in historical thinking, including summarizing historical content, contextualizing the content, inferring from that content, monitoring these processes and corroborating emerging historical findings.

The activity begins with students brainstorming leadership traits that they think Lincoln possessed. Students will need some prior knowledge, so, it is important to either assign a reading in advance that describes Lincoln's qualities as a leader and/or support students as they suggest leadership traits. After this collaboration, students select a specific trait from the class

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list and scan the collection for telegrams that address that trait. After students have identified at least five telegrams, they can begin the SCIM-C process. The SCIM-C process begins with students summarizing the content of a telegram and creating contextual understandings that help situate the telegram in its appropriate historical time and place. The process continues as students make inferences aimed at filling in gaps in their historical knowledge and answering lingering questions. The final product for this activity is an historical essay on the leadership trait. The essay writing requires that students weave their inferences together into a larger historical interpretation. While composing this interpretation, students should look for multiple sources of information that corroborate their findings. All along, students monitor their work by returning to the SIMC-C questions. Topics that have emerged from this activity include the tensions between Lincoln as a humanitarian and Lincoln as an authoritarian leader, Lincoln's suppression of civil rights in the defense of liberty, Lincoln's political savvy, Lincoln as commander in chief and Lincoln's relationship with his generals.

This lesson on the Lincoln telegrams makes use of a unique, specially designed online resource. However, in super-sized social studies classrooms, most of the activities in which teachers and students will engage often make use of widely available, "off-the-shelf" online tools. In the next section, we review three such tools and consider some applications for super-sized social studies.

Tool 1: Primary Access© and Fold3©

Primary Access© is an innovative online video production tool developed by researchers at the University of Virginia specifically for kindergarten-12 social studies educators. This online tool allows students to create video in a documentary form. Students can select images from an online catalogue tied to the Library of Congress or upload their own images using *Flickr©*. *Primary Access©* allows students to write scripts to match their images and narrate the scripts using a variety of editing tools. Students can use *Fold3©* as an additional resource for retrieving documents and information to include in their videos. *Fold3©* is a commercial web-based provider of original source documents from various archives. This tool merges historical documents with social networking. Students can access primary and original source documents while sharing, communicating and connecting with others. The social networking feature within *Fold3©* allows students to share their content, insight or personal accounts and family histories. *Fold3©* is composed of documents from events such as civil and world wars, the landing on the moon, and the evolution of the United States. Original documents include census reports, newspaper clippings, photos, and service records among many other documents. Students can also annotate images or documents. Teachers can use *Fold3©* as a means to facilitate discussions as well as provide students with first hand accounts and documents that can support and enhance learning.

Tool 2: Interactive timelines

Using *Dipity©*, a free digital timeline website, students are able to make creative and interactive timelines. *Dipity©* enables users to create, share and collaborate on interactive timelines that integrate video, audio, images, text, links and social media. It allows students to embed *YouTube©* videos, *Twitter©*, RSS feeds, *Blogger©, Flickr©,* and more into their timelines. *Dipity©* can be used to create timelines for both teaching and learning purposes. Teachers can use *Dipity©* to build on prior concepts and skills, while also presenting students with a graphical organizer.

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Students can utilize *Dipity©* to conduct research, complete assignments and/or engage in interactive and collaborative discussions. The construction of interactive timelines on *Dipity©* requires that students use reflective thinking, engage in connection building and achieve an understanding of causal relationship between events. Additionally, students can search for and review existing timelines previously created in *Dipity©* on a given topic. Students, for example, can review, evaluate and critique interactive timelines on the Great Depression. Working collaboratively, students can review these timelines and discuss how the events during that time period impacted the country, economy and government. *Dipity©* is a tool that can be used across content areas that provides students with the venue to explore and discuss historical events. In the next section, we present an instructional idea for using *Dipity©* to learn about a recent event in U.S. history.

Integrating Dipity into the Social Studies Classroom

The following activity is an example of how *Dipity©* can be used to support problem-based learning in the social studies classroom. For this activity, students create an interactive timeline that includes audio, video, graphics, and text documenting the events and the impact of the recent British Petroleum (BP) oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Through the activity, students indentify and utilize multimedia to document the key events, people, and places connected to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Students also discuss the environmental, political, and economical impact of the oil spill, now and in the future. As a culminating experience, students reflect on the interactive timeline and provide recommendations and constructive criticism of how the oil spill was handled.

To complete this activity, students should construct an interactive *Dipity©* timeline that includes 20 items featuring key events, people, and locations, as well as three different forms of multimedia (e.g., audio, video, graphic, text). Students should write annotations for each item that document the environmental, political, and economic impact of the oil spill. The timelines should be shared with the class for a whole class discussion that focuses on the oil spill as well as their solutions and recommendations for future clean-ups. The lesson provides students the opportunity to engage in authentic learning while also supporting creativity, collaboration, and problem solving.

Going Forward

Supersized social studies provides the platform needed to inquire about the highly complex problems of the world today. By using curriculum integration, supersized social studies provides opportunities for students to address multi-dimensional national and global issues. Critical to this process is the use of Web 2.0 tools. These tools are not only useful in the classroom, but also can help level the playing field outside the classroom. A social studies curriculum that is robust with timely topics and the means to research and examine those topics, enables reflective, active, and meaningful learning. Empowered by technology, learning in an all-inclusive, supersized environment fosters and promotes democratic life.

As the field of social studies moves forward using digital content and tools, further research is needed to provide guidance and direction (Lee, 2009). Researchers must carefully examine how Web 2.0 technologies can best be utilized in the social studies curriculum while also supporting collaboration, creativity, and learning. Similarly, future research needs to address the impact Web 2.0 technologies have on students' attitudes students toward social studies. By teaching so that students can make a personally meaningful connection to their

work, teachers can support the development of skills and dispositions that enable students to become practicing democratic citizens. As with any use of technology in education, research will determine the contexts supportive of, and effectiveness for the use of, Web 2.0 tools. It is important that we continue to push the limits of technology to help students address the multi-facetted elements of the new supersized social studies. Such work is critical for informing our practice as we work to enhance teaching and learning in the social studies classroom.

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Social Media for Web 2.0 Professional Use[edit | edit source]. Social media is the next big step in communication for the professional world. But how do you decide which social media networks are appropriate for the workplace and which should stay at home? Take a look at the following guidelines. Â The term most often refers to activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio." Social media are becoming increasingly popular in the world, and this obsession is slowly transforming the workplace. Â The site suggests a Twitter user can stay connected with their place of work through updates on important information about their colleagues. Twitter can be a useful type of social media in the workplace. Web 2.0 (also known as Participative (or Participatory) and Social Web) refers to websites that emphasize user-generated content, ease of use, participatory culture and interoperability (i.e., compatible with other products, systems, and devices) for end users. The term was coined by Darcy DiNucci in 1999 and later popularized by Tim O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty at the first O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 Conference in late 2004. Although the term mimics the numbering of software versions, it does not denote a... Search inside document. Learning Through Web 2.0 Social Technologies. March 2012 University of Northern Colorado Kangdon Lee. Contents I. Trends of Web II. Denition of Web 2.0 III. Educational Dimensions of Web 2.0 IV. Features of Web 2.0 V. Learning theories of Web 2.0 VI. Contextual examples of Web 2.0 VII. Conclusion and Prospects. Â A review of current and developing international practice in the use of social networking (Web 2.0) in higher education. A report commissioned by the Committee of enquiry into the Changing Learner Experience. Retrieved from http://www.franklin-consulting.co.uk/. The term "Web 2.0" describes the changing trends in the use of World Wide Web technology and web design that aim to enhance creativity, communication, secure information sharing, collaboration and web functionality. Web 2.0 concepts have led to the development and evolution of web culture communities and hosted services, such as social-networking sites, video sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and folksonomies. Social-networking Web sites, such as Facebook and MySpace, now attract more than 100 million visitors a month [2]. As the popularity of Web 2.0 has grown, companies have noted the intense consumer engagement and creativity surrounding these technologies. Many organizations, keen to harness Web 2.0 internally, are experimenting with the tools or deploying them on a trial basis. Reference [3] admits that Web 2.0 could have a more far-reaching organizational impact than technologies adopted in the 1990s (e.g., enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer. relationship management (CRM), and the su...