

## Learning 21st century style

Can you MOO? Have you blogged any time lately? Or maybe you know someone who gets all this Boolean logic?

While it may seem like gobbledegook, students and teachers are increasingly using these terms.

Schools around the country are turning to information and communication technologies (ICTs) as teaching and learning resources.

Rather than replacing what students learn at school, ICTs are providing students with new learning tools.

Computers, digital cameras, data projectors, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and the Internet have the potential to become today's blackboards, textbooks, pens and paper. Schools are making a quantum leap in their ICT capacities including an increase in Internet access allowing for a range of ICT initiatives.

### Teachers boost ICT skills

To support this new technology teachers are becoming increasingly expert in teaching through ICTs.

Increasingly, teachers have undertaken professional development in using ICTs, specifically as teaching and learning resources.

Teachers are embracing ICTs as it puts them in a much better position to foster the types of skills that students need to embrace the digital world.

### How the classroom is different today

From literature to the study of history, ICTs are opening up an exciting new world of discovery for students.

In English classes, schools are going online to break down geographical boundaries. Students are connecting with other students, teachers and experts from throughout the world, bringing new meaning to the term pen pal.

For example, the Online Literary Festival is a yearly event that connects students with their literary heroes.

Through email, chat rooms and online forums, participating students peer into the lives of leading Australian authors, publishers and illustrators.

In turn, the artists encourage students to explore their own opinions about novels, poetry and other literary pieces.

### History comes alive with ICTs

History teachers use ICTs to explore medieval times. One teacher reports that students create 'choose-your-own-path' adventure stories using digital presentation and word-processing software, the Internet, email, scanners, digital cameras, sound recordings, drawing software and video editing software.

'The Internet is perfect to research dragons, for example,' the teacher commented. 'Students can use the information to create three-dimensional clay replicas of mythical creatures.'

'To further develop their ICTs skills, they also use Lego Robotics to create robotic knights, which then participate in a jousting tournament.'

'Throughout the process, the students use digital cameras to create visual diaries of their experiences. It's an exciting, hands-on way to learn.'

### **Stepping stone to work**

A multimedia teacher from a High School, takes the concept a step further.

His Year 12 students, who are thinking about careers in the world of film, animation and the Internet, develop training DVDs for nurses at the local Hospital.

The teacher reports that giving his students real-world experience in creating digital resources is boosting their confidence in using new technologies.

‘ICTs are for students the stepping stones to employment in the 21st century.’

### **Modern approaches to reporting**

ICTs are also modernising the way teachers file classroom information for reviewing and reporting.

Primary teachers at a number of schools now use PDAs and digital cameras to record students’ learning achievements.

‘During interviews with teachers, parents get to see photos of the children achieving so many different things,’ said a classroom teacher.

‘At the end of the year, we give parents compact discs featuring electronic portfolios of their children’s work.

‘The portfolios feature photos of the children’s learning achievements throughout the year accompanied by written explanations from their teachers.

‘We provide them to Prep teachers so they can make the transition easier for students. ICTs are making a real difference to the quality of our students’ education.’

### **Glossary**

MOO: A Multi-user Object Oriented (MOO) environment; combines the uses of chat rooms, discussion lists and media to simplify Internet communication

Blog: abbreviation of ‘web log’; like an electronic diary

Boolean logic: A way of combining terms such as ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘and not’ to find webpages through search engines

