

Reading, Writing, Reload: New Three Rs for a New Millennium

Organizer

Sarah Feldman

Thirteen/WNET

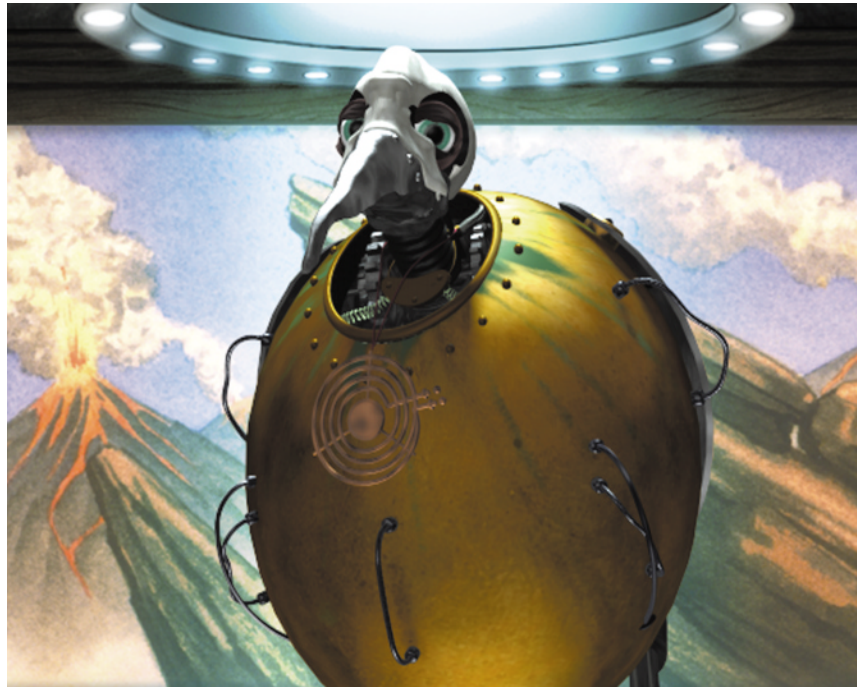
Somewhere between pariah and panacea lies the fact that, when used strategically and creatively, interactive media can be an invaluable tool for instigating thinking, investigation, and creation. This panel explores the opportunities and myriad uses online and interactive media provide educators, students, and parents. Topics include: designing and using graphic media to maximize its educational potential, exploiting online interfaces to shape thinking and spur constructivist curricula, using multimedia to facilitate “sneaky learning,” the importance of promoting media literacy, and encouraging girls to use technology.

Context, Hypertext, What Next?

Sarah Feldman

Much of the discussion surrounding classroom use of multimedia and the World Wide Web focuses on issues of availability. While access to resources is undeniably important, assessing their value is just as critical. Too often the question “Are we using technology and media in the classroom?” overwhelms our investigations into “HOW are we using technology and media in the classroom?”

As National Project Director for WNET in New York City, I work with teachers and media professionals across the country on the strategic use of visual media and technologies in the classroom. For nine years, our National Teacher Training Institute for Math, Science and Technology (NTTI) has provided thousands of educators with the vision and techniques needed to integrate a range of media into their curricula. I'd like to share our strategies for maximizing online and multimedia's creative and instructional possibilities.



Specific strategies include how educators can:

- Instigate media literacy activities in classrooms, teaching children how to filter and evaluate information for accuracy, priority, and relevance.
- Add depth and context to curricula. While new media are (theoretically) inherently interactive, educators, users, and authors can look at ways in which content can be better contextualized and expanded – maybe even understood – through hypertextual media.
- Shift the way students grapple with information. The inherently conjunctive role of hypertextual environments presents whole new possibilities for researching, perceiving, synthesizing, and communicating information. Where once information was organized in linear or encyclopedic formats,

now information is often presented and understood by way of its connection to other information. Educators can maximize hypertext's power to bring multifarious elements together with a more comprehensive, deeper sense of the associative and interdependent world of ideas.

As we look toward more student-centric and technology-enhanced classrooms, it's important that educators (content developers) examine interactive media's unique capacity to help transform how we learn, communicate, and think.



Panelists

Henry Bar-Levav

OVEN Digital

Design for Education

Henry Bar-Levav

Designing interactive educational media involves weighing two priorities that frequently appear to be in conflict: ease of use versus short attention spans. In other words, building a Web site that is easily navigated and understood is often overshadowed by the need to feature “fun” bells and whistles to keep children’s attention on the learning tasks at hand.

Designing for education means thinking about learning – as a process – in a new way. I believe that quality information and interface design instruct users on several levels as they proceed through the product. Web-based learning programs, whatever the subject matter, can simultaneously teach organizational skills, since as students learn to navigate the product they are developing an intuitive sense of its organization.

I feel strongly that, in the “digital age,” we must cultivate a design-sensitive culture as part of the emerging multidisciplinary curriculum. We all agree that students should have some understanding of the basic scientific principles of the world they inhabit, such as gravity, the composition of matter, and the water cycle. I believe they also need to have basic knowledge of design issues in the world around them, not merely in terms of aesthetics, but more significantly in terms of “design” in a deeper, structural sense, as a system of organization. Interactive learning programs, when designed with these factors in mind, can be a primary vehicle for conveying this important general knowledge.

Anthony Chapman

Thirteen/WNET

Bridging the Gap Between Games and Education

Anthony Chapman

- How many more animated films can be recycled into educational titles for kids?
- Making dresses for Barbie using a color printer has proven to be commercially viable, but what is it teaching the next generation of women?
- What does the future hold for children who need to ask mommy and daddy for new retinas for Christmas because the VR version of DOOM has fried their old ones?

In my opinion, the state of kid’s software titles, especially educational titles, is at a low point. Why not just watch TV? Where are the new products that utilize the potential of today’s technology? In the past two years, I’ve worked with educators, children’s writers, and software publishers developing and producing two projects that I hope will shed some light on the topic of “sneaky learning.” I would also like to explore new ways to help software find its way into children’s rooms at home and in schools.

New software products could bridge the gap between games and education. It’s important that educators and developers be aware of software that is currently available and being used in schools, current statistics on the level of technology in schools, and plans for making better use of technology in the classroom.

Aliza Sherman

Cybergrrl Internet Media

The Importance of Gender Equity in Multimedia Instruction and Production

Aliza Sherman

When girls reach puberty, their use of and interest in technology often wanes as boys become more aggressive with computer or technical equipment. Teachers need to be better equipped to insure that girls are not left behind as these changes occur. Parents also need to become better educated about ways to encourage their daughters to use technology and computers.

Luckily, a wave of new Web sites for teenaged girls is appearing, giving girls a voice and community via the Internet. Teachers need to integrate the Internet, particularly girl-specific resources, into their curricula to help encourage girls to embrace technology. Engaging girls in technical activities as early as possible will help position computers and technology courses as more interesting and accessible. Since women comprise less than half of the student enrollment in the computer sciences, it is important to find innovative ways to encourage girls to pursue more technical curricula and careers.