



connect

A Newsletter for High School Religion Teachers, Campus Ministers, and Principals
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featuring

The Buzz About the Theology-Technology Connection

Kat Hodapp

"What's the buzz? Tell me what's happenin'!" I'm sure many of you recognize those lyrics from *Jesus Christ Superstar*. I think of that song whenever the topic of technology comes up, which is often. In-services, workshops, and professional journals feature presentations on technology in the classroom regularly. High schools have information technology or computer science departments that offer not only electives, but required courses for students. Technology is not a fad or an example of the educational pendulum swinging one way; the information age is here to stay. So, what is this "buzz" all about?

A Product or a Process?

Technology is an interesting term. If you look at its Greek roots, the word means "the systematic treatment of an art or craft." Many times *technology* is used to refer to hardware: computers, scanners, and other "tools" that can be purchased. Yet, the etymology suggests applications, methods, and processes. When we think about those applications of the word, software, the Internet, and e-mail may come to mind. All these provide exciting opportunities for the classroom. How can we use some of this potential in our theology courses?

Enhancement and Creativity

I used my first computer primarily for its word-processing capabilities—creating and saving documents for my classes. I still create templates for frequently used forms (a great time-saving technique) and design high-quality handouts for students and parents. Adding graphics and word art to a form or presentation can make communication effective and interesting. Patrick Daniels, a high school theology teacher at Saint Francis High School in Mountain View, California, uses graphics as discussion starters, asking students to try to identify why he chose what he did.

Efficiency

Grading programs are available that average midterm and final grades. One of my colleagues regularly hands out reports to students showing

(see *The Buzz*, page 2)

this issue

- **featuring**
The Buzz About the Theology-Technology Connection . . . 1
- **in touch** 1
- **from the classroom**
Social Justice on the Internet . . . 4
- **from the press** 6
- **resource reviews** 6

in touch

Dear Readers,

I need a new dictionary. The one I use was published in 1994, but it doesn't include *cyberculture*, *telecommute*, *MP3*, or even *Webmaster*. Our vocabulary is changing so fast that we can hardly keep up. And so is the teaching profession. What changes in the use of technology have you witnessed in your school? Teachers, especially those of us who once used filmstrips and Spirit Masters, can feel overwhelmed by the new technologies and methodologies invading our school buildings.

In this month's issue, contributors Kat Hodapp and Patrick Daniels both recognize the need to proceed one step at a time, beginning from wherever we find ourselves. Most of us who have waded into these new waters have had someone to hold our hand as we got our feet wet.

(see *in touch*, page 2)

The Buzz (continued from page 1)

missing assignments. In many schools, teachers download class lists, set up grading procedures, and enter grades directly into the school's system, where administrators, counselors, and parents can access them.

Research

The information superhighway is taking us to a new frontier more quickly than we could have imagined. Consider that corporations now have information officers and engineers to manage the increasing amount of data generated each day. And as satellite, cable, and DSL lines become more readily available, the information will be arriving even more rapidly. How will we view all this information, and what will we do with it?

I have never heard a theology teacher exclaim, "I do not have enough content to cover!" With more information and resources available, theology departments face tough curriculum choices because we cannot cover everything in a given semester or a four-year program.

Many high-quality Web sites deal with every theological content area imaginable. You can type in a key word and have thousands of hits come up from a search engine. Learning how to sort through the hits and find useful information for a given purpose is a sophisticated skill that takes some practice. Verifying that the information is authentic can also be a challenge.

Meeting Needs of Diverse Learners

Rick Blackwell, a member of my theology department at Mercy Academy in Louisville, Kentucky, has set up test reviews and practice tests on older computers. Students of every ability level have benefited, and their confidence has grown in taking various assessments in his

class.

Patrick Daniels makes the point of using a larger font size with students who have learning differences, such as dyslexia. Personalizing instruction in this way is so simple, yet it goes a long way in meeting the individual needs of students.

Highly motivated students may want to explore concepts in more depth. The wealth of information on the Internet makes this quite easy to do. Suggesting that they make use of technology in presentations can also be a way for these students to go above and beyond the minimum requirements.

Integration

Moving to the point where technology is fully integrated into a school, a department, and a specific course is a process that takes time, but the potential is amazing.

The Tools

The Internet. Teacher Web pages are an effective way to nurture faith community. I have designed *sites.net-scape.net/kathodapp* for the classes I teach at Mercy Academy this year. I spent about eighty hours over the summer putting it together and imagining how I would use it with my students. I have posted my syllabus, expectations, and contact information, as well as a weekly calendar for my courses that includes topics and activities covered in class and homework for the week. I've also included reflections and quotes to ponder, study hints, links, online homework, and extra credit opportunities.

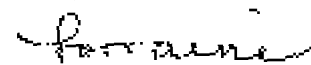
Mary Jean Erb, a teacher from Archbishop Spalding High School in Severn, Maryland, told me about a Web site designed for a course based on *Jesus of History, Christ of Faith*. With content supplied by

in touch (continued from page 1)

Teachers love to . . . well . . . teach, so don't be surprised if you find a colleague who is actually eager to show you a new program. The computer teacher may be looking for projects and would jump at the chance to assign a theology-based research or presentation project. One of my own mentors was a senior who was flattered when I asked her if she would tutor me after school a few times.

As we do our best to keep up with the exciting, fast-paced changes in our schools, may God continue to bless our efforts and make our work fruitful. As for a new dictionary, I'll probably buy one online; or maybe I'll just add *www.webster.com* to my favorites list!

Live, Jesus, in our hearts forever!



Lorraine Kilmartin
Senior Editor for High School Curriculum

the theology teachers, the school's technology specialist put together "The Holy Land WebQuest" (available at *www.archbishopspalding.org*). This self-directed Web site focuses on Jesus' life in his particular time and culture. Using reading assignments from the text and links to other Web sites, students read and research to learn more about the geography, housing, food, diversity, and religious practices of Jesus' time.

Gregg Costanzo, a theology teacher and campus minister at Elyria Catholic High School in Elyria, Ohio, conducts study sessions in the evening in his site's chat room. He noticed that one of the benefits of doing this is that parents become more involved. If

(see *The Buzz*, page 3)

The Buzz (continued from page 2)

they know when their teen is having a test they can spark conversation on the content. Gregg even has a function on his Web site that allows students and parents to view grades. Parents appreciate the prompt response, and it goes a long way in building the partnership between school and home.

Gregg's Web site *echs.faithweb.com*, helps students find appropriate sites to use for research. In the library section, Gregg includes links to various theological sites. Another helpful feature of the site is a section entitled Academic Tools, where he includes general reference materials, hints on giving a great presentation, and information on how to cite online sources.

Raymond Riddick of Saint Mary's Ryken High School in Leonardtown, Maryland, developed *religion4.tripod.com*, a Web site that supports his course in spirituality, worship, and sacraments. What strikes me most about this site is Raymond's use of artwork and photography. He has included vivid, colorful, and moving art to develop concepts in a way that brings a faith perspective to the forefront. Besides art, Raymond has included prayers and links to sites that feature readings, meditations, and saints of the day to bring a spiritual dimension to the site. Prayer requests can even be made through postings.

Presentation programs. Classroom presentations, whether done by students or teachers, can be media-rich with the capabilities of programs such as PowerPoint, HyperStudio, Adobe Illustrator, and PhotoShop. Instead of chalky white dust streamed on a blackboard, presentations can be filled with color, pictures, video, sound, animation, and artistic expression. Patrick Daniels posts his PowerPoint presentations on his Web

sites *teachers.sfhs.com/padaniel*. I also know teachers who put presentations together at home and e-mail them to school to use in class the next day. Tracy Hammond, the Spanish teacher at my school, takes class time to teach students some basics in PowerPoint and then requires them to do class presentations.

E-mail. Learning to set up folders to file important e-mails is definitely a time-saving technique. Best of all, e-mail can serve as a way to nurture and develop relationships. Early in the school year, Anna, a conscientious sophomore, e-mailed me around 7:30 in the evening to ask a few specific questions about the first content quiz in my Scripture class. I e-mailed her back a while later, identifying some of the points I had reviewed in class. The next day Anna thanked me for my reply and told me that it helped her study. It did not take a lot of time on my part, but it made all the difference in her confidence level.

It is important to set clear expectations regarding the proper use of e-mail. Students may need examples of what is appropriate and what is not. I do want students to e-mail me with questions about work and with requests to schedule a conference or a make-up test. I also want students to share exciting Web sites they discover when doing online research. But I do not want forwarded copies of surveys, jokes, and chain letters in my inbox. I also do not want students to e-mail me with personal and family issues that are best served by a counselor. Establishing these parameters helps keep e-mail a healthy and appropriate means of communication between teacher and student.

Getting Started

Moving toward an integrated use of technology in your classes will take time, support, and some investigation. Regardless of where you are on the technology continuum, the best place to start is by setting a realistic goal for yourself. Decide to get in touch with your love of learning and begin by focusing on one thing you can do this year to enhance your courses. You might start by simply improving the quality of your class handouts by adding clip art.

Opportunities for learning and networking are limitless. A good place to start is with Saint Mary's Press Faith Community Builders Web site, *www.smp.org/hs*. Designed specifically for high school teachers and campus ministers, a wealth of resources (articles, links, teaching strategies) are available. The site is also a place for teachers to network with colleagues all over the country.

I would encourage you to use the Internet to research the topics that you are interested in and to learn how to maximize the power of a search engine. Learning what is out there and how to use it takes time, so be patient with yourself. Ask questions of the computer teacher or the computer-savvy students that sit in your classroom.

Attend evening classes at local junior colleges. Courses are available in major software applications, Web design, and the Internet. These courses are relatively inexpensive and are offered throughout the year. It may also be possible to audit a course at your high school during your planning period.

I have found that the For Dummies books are helpful, and that some Web sites provide free tools and instruction on how to build Web pages. I used Netscape Site Central to build my site, where sample pages are available and no HTML is required. (Knowing some

from the classroom

Social Justice on the Internet

Patrick Daniels

Over ten years ago, I began using my home computer to file and create documents for my students. My high school, located in the heart of Silicon Valley, already had a very well-developed technological infrastructure. Internet searches, e-mail, PowerPoint presentations, and Web page development were all possible. I wanted to use the available technology to do more than create handouts with interesting graphics, but I couldn't find any software or specific suggestions for using technology in religious education. Frustrated, I found my own way to adapt the technology to my needs—and I discovered new ways to teach.

The following assignment makes use of the Internet to expose students to Catholic social teaching and works best if students work in groups. The four levels represent increasing degrees of sophistication in the use of technology.

Student Objectives

- Use the Internet to identify the seven themes of Catholic social teaching.
- Articulate an understanding of the themes.
- Create a visual representation of the themes.

Level I

Teacher-Student Skills

- Internet search skills and Web page navigation.

Equipment

- Computers with Internet access
1. Go to www.osjspm.org and take notes on the seven key themes of Catholic social teaching (outlined in the 1998 pastoral letter, "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching").

2. Find three key quotes for each theme.
3. Choose one of the following documents to read and outline. (Use the everyday language version if available.)

Document	Rating
A Call to Action	Moderately Challenging
On Human Work	Moderately Challenging
Peace on Earth	Challenging (Bonus 10)
Economic Justice for All	Very Challenging (Bonus 15)

4. Evaluate the message of the document by briefly answering the following questions:
 - What was your overall reaction to the language and structure of the document?
 - Which key point did you strongly agree or disagree with? Why?
 - If you had never heard of the Catholic church, what impression would you have of it after reading this document?
5. Submit an essay of at least 300 words, summarizing one of the themes of Catholic social teaching. Include in your essay three ways that the document you read applies or interprets the theme. Use at least three key quotes and three Scripture passages from the church document to augment your essay.
6. Print one Web page that you found on your own that relates to Catholic teachings on justice or justice activities by Catholic agencies or affiliates.
7. Create a mini-poster, using items from newspapers or magazines that represent each of the seven themes of Catholic social teaching.

8. Be prepared to share the results of all your work in small groups or in a class discussion.

Level II

Teacher-Student Skills

- Advanced Internet search skills and Web page navigation
- Clip art placement in a word processing program
- Graphic design and layout program, such as PageMaker

Equipment

- Computers with Internet access
- Clip art, design program, scanner

Use the level 1 assignment with the following changes:

1. Instead of providing a Web site for the students to use, provide examples of search engines like Yahoo.com, Ask.com, or Google.com, and explain how to do advanced searches.
2. Instead of printing one page on social justice, students print one Web page relating to each of the seven themes.
3. Instead of creating a mini-poster, the students use clip art or a graphic design program such as PageMaker to design a report cover that portrays all seven themes.

Level III

Teacher-Student Skills

- Advanced Internet search skills and Web page navigation
- PowerPoint or other electronic presentation program
- E-mail attachments

Equipment

- Computers with Internet access
- Clip art or scanner

The Buzz (continued from page 3)

HTML basics allows for more options when designing your site.) AOL, Hometown, GeoCities, Tripod, Angelfire, and other sites online also provide free Web site hosting.

Troubleshooting

What are potential problems when using technology in the classroom? Equipment failure! I am the first to say that I believe in Murphy's Law: "Whatever can go wrong, will." Like what? Not having a cord for the computer projection device, the server being down (and so no Internet access), computers freezing up . . . you name it. Making sure everything is up and running, ready *before* class begins, is the safest way to avoid problems. Also, when I plan a computer-based activity, I always have a backup plan in mind in case something goes wrong.

There will always be students who procrastinate and then run into unexpected problems at home. The most common difficulties tend to be with links that cannot be accessed (server problems on the Web site's end) and printer difficulties. I encourage students to complete work ahead of time (extra credit for turning in early) and to contact me as soon as they have a problem. Nothing new for teachers here.

Need for Reflection and Constant Evaluation

"Begin with the end in mind." This adage from Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990) is a critical one to keep in mind when thinking about how technology enhances student learning and achievement. Using technology for technology's sake is not the most effective way to reach the heart, mind, and soul of our students.

There will be times when there are better ways to teach a concept in a theology class.

Being aware of the dark side of the Internet is also critical. There are literally millions of sites that are filled with pornography, violence, hate, lies, and deception. We have all heard of stalkers in chat rooms that prey on the insecurities of young people. Students must learn how to decipher and critically reflect on the information they encounter on the Internet using Gospel values.

There must be discussions involving fair use and copyright laws. Plagiarism is more of a concern now than ever before. How do we teach students what is fair use and what is simply stealing? If we do not do this, then we are not preparing students for life in the twenty-first century, and we most certainly are not contributing to their development into faith-filled adults. A college professor of mine frequently spoke of the teacher as reflective learner. In using technology, we must teach our students to be reflective learners as well.

The Bottom Line

My principal, Michael Johnson, has a framed print in his office with a quote that reminds me of my most important responsibility as a teacher: "Our greatest contribution is to be sure there is a teacher in every classroom who cares that every student, every day, learns, and grows, and feels like a real human being" (Donald Clifton, SRI Gallup, Inc.).

“ . . . ”

Keep on beginning and failing. Each time you fail, start all over again, and you will grow stronger until [you] have accomplished a purpose—not the one you began with perhaps, but one you'll be glad to remember.

—Anne Sullivan
(www.bemorecreative.com/home-cq.htm)

Technology is a wonderful tool that can bring exciting new possibilities in our classes, but it will not replace the teacher; students want to connect to teachers and feel that they are valuable human beings. Technology is not going to motivate or nurture our students. We must take the time to get to know our students as individuals to find ways of doing that. As we learn to use technology in more meaningful and effective ways in the classroom, we must remember that the teacher-student relationship still is the bottom line. That is what needs to be happening in classrooms that are faith communities. That's the buzz!

Kat Hodapp is a theology teacher and department chair at Mercy Academy in Louisville, Kentucky. She is also the development editor of the Faith Community Builders Web site and a writer for various Saint Mary's Press teaching manuals.

from the press

More Scripture Resources

In keeping with our commitment to bring the Bible to life for youth, we are introducing a variety of resources, not just for teachers, but for everyone who plays a role in fostering the spiritual development of young people.



The Building Biblical Spirituality, Scripture Theme Posters are guaranteed to add pizzazz to classrooms, meeting rooms, or homes.

Each of the six,

full-color posters (19 x 25) encourage young people to read the Bible by presenting scriptural spirituality in a very appealing light. Everyone at Saint Mary's Press seems to have their own favorite, but we also notice that our favorite changes from day to day! Purchase price for a package of six posters is \$10.95.



How do Catholics approach the Scriptures? How can you present the Scriptures to youth? Nine biblical experts and veteran ministers share wisdom gleaned from

years of experience in **Bringing Catholic Youth and the Bible Together: Strategies and Activities for Parishes and Schools**, edited by Brian Singer-Towns. You'll find lots of strategies and activities to use with both junior high and high school youth, and you'll also gain insight into what it means to be biblically literate. Contributors include Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart, Carole Goodwin, Joseph Grant, Maryann Hakowski, Margaret Nutting Ralph, Brian Singer-Towns, Bishop Richard J. Sklba, Tony Tamberino, Michael Theisen. You get their combined expertise for the purchase price of \$14.95.



A great way to help young people see the relevance of the Scriptures is to integrate Bible study into other courses. **Scripture-Walk Senior High: Discipleship**, by

Nora Bradbury-Haehl, uses separate components, including a Bible-study process; an activity; and a prayer service for sessions on death, discipleship, fear, happiness, prayer, sadness, sexuality, and witnessing. The individual parts make up complete 90-minute sessions, but you may wish to use components on their own for a 10-minute prayer service or a Bible-based activity. However you use this book, you will challenge young people to grow in their faith while engaging them in fun and meaningful activities. Purchase price is \$19.95.



Still another approach to exploring biblical themes is to start with a song from the *We Are Fire!* music CD and add an innovative activity or

prayer service from **We Are Fire! Resource Manual: Discipleship Activities and Prayer Experiences for Teens**, by Cheryl Miller Drivdahl. Readings from *The Catholic Youth Bible* tie it all together. Each session can stand alone, or you can choose activities or prayer ideas to add a Biblical touchstone to your lesson. This book, enhanced by black and white photos, sells for \$12.95.

Finally, a resource for parents. **Know It! Pray It! Live It! A Family Guide to "The Catholic Youth Bible,"** by Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart, actively involves the whole



family in the faith development process. Seven chapters explore major biblical themes related to basic life questions such as Why are we here? Why do we die?

Who is God? Each theme includes a prayer resource and a suggestion for action. This is a great way to bring families together around the Scriptures; you could even use it to create a family retreat. Purchase price is \$12.95.

resource reviews

Destination Vatican II, an interactive exploration of the Second Vatican Council is a great resource for teachers, researchers, historians, and nearly anyone interested in studying the Second Vatican Council. This CD-ROM for Macintosh or Windows offers insights on the inner workings of the Council as well as modern scholars' perspectives on this historical event. The main menu offers five broad choices for research and investigation: Destinations (locations related to Vatican II), People (biographies of key individuals associated with Vatican II and identified in the program), Text (four complete Vatican II texts), Themes, and Timeline. Teachers may find the video clips, text, interviews, and still photos useful in helping students find connections among ideas at the Council. The Text section offers a look at the documents in language that is easy for the average student to understand. The search tool offers references from several documents and sources on specific topics. Executing a similar search using the Internet or printed copies would take significantly more time. This resource is easy to navigate and will be helpful to beginning students and experienced scholars. Order from

resource reviews

(continued from page 6)

Resources for Christian Living; 877-ASK-4-RCL; fax: 1-800-688-8356; Web site rclweb.com.

Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Kindness and Courageous Acts of Service, edited by Marianne Larned is a small book that collects one hundred stories about famous and not-so-famous people whose action and compassion has made a difference in the world—from Mother Teresa and Nelson Mandela to thirteen-year-old Isis Johnson, who started distributing food to the hungry at the age of five. Although these stories are not explicitly religious, they are appropriate for illustrating concepts for courses in justice, service, morality, and Christian lifestyles. Phone numbers of related organizations follow each story so that readers can take action of their own, and inspirational quotes are scattered throughout the book. Order from Conari Press; 800-685-9595; \$15.95.

In a similar vein, **All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our**

Time, by Robert Ellsberg, editor-in-chief of Orbis Books, collects the stories of 365 people whose lives “point in the direction of God.” The collection includes some of the better-known canonized saints, such as Saint Agnes and Saint Anselm. But it also includes lesser-known saints, Catholics who have not been canonized but probably should be, non-Catholic Christians, and people of non-Christian faiths whose example nonetheless exemplifies Christian virtue. What this mixed crew has in common, Ellsberg says, is the intent with which they strove to become “authentic human beings, endowed with the capacity to awaken that vocation in others.” As Ellsberg points out, we often learn more about the Gospel from studying the lives of holy people than we do from studying theology in books, and that may be the ultimate value of these fascinating, grace-filled stories for students. Order from The Crossroad Publishing Company; 800-395-0690; \$19.95.

“ . . . ”

Brenda A. Dyck describes her experience of returning to the classroom after a hiatus of twenty plus years:

I left teaching in 1978 to have my first child. At that time I mistakenly believed that I would be able to return at some point and more or less pick up where I had left off. No one could have predicted the total restructuring that education would encounter thanks to the technology revolution.

(“The Rebooting of a Teacher’s Mind,” techlearning.com.)

from the classroom

(continued from page 4)

- Equipment to run and show presentation on TV or computer screen

Use the Level II assignment, but instead of writing an essay, students create a PowerPoint presentation using no more than seven slides to present their findings. Or each of seven groups creates a church document-based PowerPoint presentation around one of the key themes. Limiting the presentations in size would enable the students to turn in their work on a disk or send it to the teacher by e-mail.

Level IV

Teacher-Student Skills

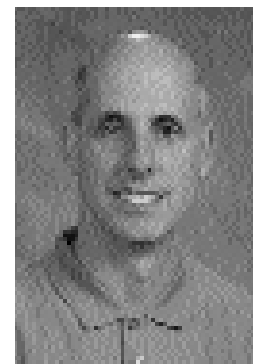
- Advanced Internet search skills and Web page development

Equipment

- Computers with access to Internet or school network
- Web design program
- Clip art or scanner

Take the best of the students’ Level III work and create a Web page attached to the school’s Web site, perhaps organized around the seven themes of social justice. This could also be the start of your school’s own Catholic Social Teaching page, associated with the school’s service program. An ongoing project could involve adding photographs of students doing service and providing suggestions for community service. This could be a great resource for the school and the wider community.

Patrick Daniels has taught theology



for twenty-four years, thirteen of them at Saint Francis High School in Mountain View, California. He serves as his department’s technology

guide and has also been a presenter for the Saint Mary’s Press workshop for teachers, “The Catholic High School as Faith Community.”

Faith Community Workshops

Our workshops for Catholic high school teachers, campus ministers, and administrators continue to grow and evolve. Here is this summer's schedule:

- "The Catholic High School As Faith Community"
- "Nurturing Spirituality with Faculty and Staff"
- **NEW!** "LIVE IT! Peace, Justice, and Service in the Catholic High School"

See our Web site, www.smp.org, for dates and locations. The cost is \$425 per person, with discounts for two or more from the same school.

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