

Highlighting Technology - VoiceThread

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In continuing to highlight some of the great Web 2.0 tools that are available, I would like to draw attention to VoiceThread. VoiceThread is a free on-line program that allows users to record their voice to go with images that are stored on the VoiceThread site. The uses of this tool are unlimited, and I found it to be a great avenue for storytelling assignments, book reports, as well as a tool for teaching constructive criticism.

In order to better understand VoiceThread's capabilities, I used it with an Art 20 class to record stories based on original artwork created by the students. First of all, students were required to take pictures of their artwork using digital cameras. We then loaded the images into the school computers. Students were able to sign up for individual VoiceThread accounts using their email addresses, and we then uploaded the pictures into these new accounts. The only small snag that we ran into during this process was that some students did not have active email accounts needed to register a VoiceThread account.

The second step of our VoiceThread experiment was to actually record the stories corresponding with the images. For this step, we used small microphones for the students to speak into, and took turns recording so the words were clear. One of the issues we faced in this step was that students aimed for perfection in their recordings. Similar to trying to get that "perfect" answering machine message, many students spent too much time re-recording their stories.

Although this was the extent of the assignment, it could have naturally progressed to students sharing comments with each other based on the VoiceThread images and stories. VoiceThread allows registered users to record voice commentary on images in others accounts. Like blogging, this would be a great way for students to participate in creative criticism.

In addition, I believe that VoiceThread could be a fantastic and fun method to promote library collections. If you signed up for a library VoiceThread account, you could share stories about your favourite books, have students record book reviews, and even have great "conversations" revolving around those reviews. Image going to an online school library catalogue searching for a good read, having a direct link to VoiceThread reviews done by students in your school, and being able to listen to what they have to say!

In conclusion, I found VoiceThread to be exceptionally easy to navigate, use, and teach to others. Students of all ages and abilities (e.g. ESL students) would be able to use this tool, and the possibilities are only limited by your imagination. You can find out other ideas by going to <http://voicethread.com>.