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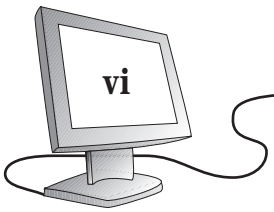

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CHAPTER

1

The Ultimate Teacher Resource Centre

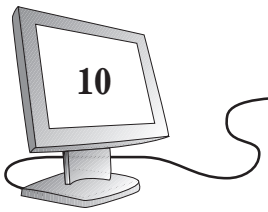
Creating the Future

Mrs. Johnson had been studying the 20th century with her Year Five class. Using co-operative learning methods the class had role-played the move from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, even going so far as to perform a ceremony marking the occasion and dressing up in clothing reflective of the time.

As the students were winding up their look at the century, one of the students said the class should be trying to find out where the best celebration for the beginning of the new millennium would be and what will be happening. They thought that they could enact their own interpretation of the scene.

The class agreed that it was an excellent idea. The students immediately searched through the school library for this material, albeit to no avail. Disappointed, they went back to their work and simply wrote some material about what they imagined would occur. Troubled by her students unsuccessful and disappointed search, Mrs. Johnson went onto the Internet. Mrs. Johnson had an inkling that Sydney's celebrations would be enormous, so using MATILDA—another Australian search engine—she typed in Sydney 2000 and immediately found a number of internet sites related to Sydney. She targeted one in particular called CITY OF SYDNEY—Millenium Event 1999. Within seconds she was viewing the site.

* All names of teachers are fictional.



Integrating the Internet

The Internet is truly a remarkable and accessible innovation, and its greatest strength lies in the area of education. It places everyday resources and relevant information at a teachers' fingertips, accessibility once unheard of for even the most wealthy of private or public schools. Using the Internet, teachers at schools with lower budgets can now provide their students with up-to-the-minute photos taken from the space shuttle just as rapidly and inexpensively as teachers who have almost unlimited resources at their disposal. In this respect, the Internet is poised to become the great educational equaliser. With the right planning, that day is actually closer than anyone has previously imagined.

Realistically, it is highly unlikely every student will have his or her own personal computer very soon. However, the Internet can be a valuable resource today, for every classroom and every student.

Lack of Money

Lack of money to wire a school or purchase computers for students is a problem many teachers experience. However, lack of access to the Internet in the school is actually a relatively easy problem to solve. This book is geared towards showing how teachers who may not have a fully stocked and fully accessible computer lab with Internet hookup at school can still use the Internet as a valuable resource. For all of the talk of having all students on the information superhighway, it is just not a reality for many teachers.

Even if teachers are lucky enough to have their schools wired for the Internet, be it a lab, classroom, or library, student access may be limited to only one or two computers or one or two hours at a time. With this type of limited Internet access, the fully networked Internet computer lab becomes more of a special event time, rather than an integrated part of the curricular and educational process.

In view of the limitations, how can teachers bring the wonders of the Internet into their classroom curricula? There are a number of possibilities, at least one of which can suit every teacher.

A possibility for teachers who do not have Internet access at schools is to hook up a computer (either one the school owns or a personal

laptop) into a school phone connection and then dial up their personal Internet server. This is a fairly easy and inexpensive way to have students experience the Internet directly. The major costs involve installing a phone connection in the staffroom or some other accessible location, such as a library media centre, and getting one computer into the classroom. When a person connects to the Internet, in most cities, the phone call is a local number. The cost of the individual calls is usually not an issue in this situation.

Many teachers are actually more likely to have access, and the time to use it, at home than they are at school. Therefore, the easiest way to implement this innovation is for individual teachers to use their personal access to the Internet to retrieve resources and then to incorporate those resources directly into their teaching. This last option is both less expensive and much more common. Even though the students themselves do not have direct access, they do have access to the information and resources of the Internet. It is in this particular area, teachers personally accessing the Internet regardless of their technological situation at school, where the future of the Internet and education is *now*. The next hurdle is finding information and integrating it into a lesson.

Quick Find

Quick Find with the Internet is just one of a multitude of ways teachers can make curricular use of the Internet. The majority of possibilities fall into two basic categories: the Internet as a megasource of curricular material and the Internet as an opportunity to network with other teachers nationwide and worldwide.

Quick Find with the Internet

My son announced at dinner he needed a copy of A.B. Paterson's 'The Man from Ironbark' for his English class. As with many year sevens, he informed me that he needed it the next morning. Since it was too late to go back to school and I didn't want to run out to a library, I decided to try the Internet. Excusing myself from the dinner table, I went to my computer. I did a search for 'Man Ironbark' and was given many different Internet sites referring to the poem. The fifth site down the list was noted as: The Man from Ironbark by Banjo Paterson. Following were the first words from the poem.

I went directly to that site. There I found I was presented with an opportunity to conduct a further investigation of the poet and his work. I was able to locate a full text of the poem. I clicked on the print button and had a copy of the poem in my hands. My son was still complaining to his mother that he had to have the poem as I handed him the printed piece only five minutes after I had connected to the Internet.