

Computers in Classrooms

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~ For colleagues who teach or manage information and communication technology (ICT) in schools ~

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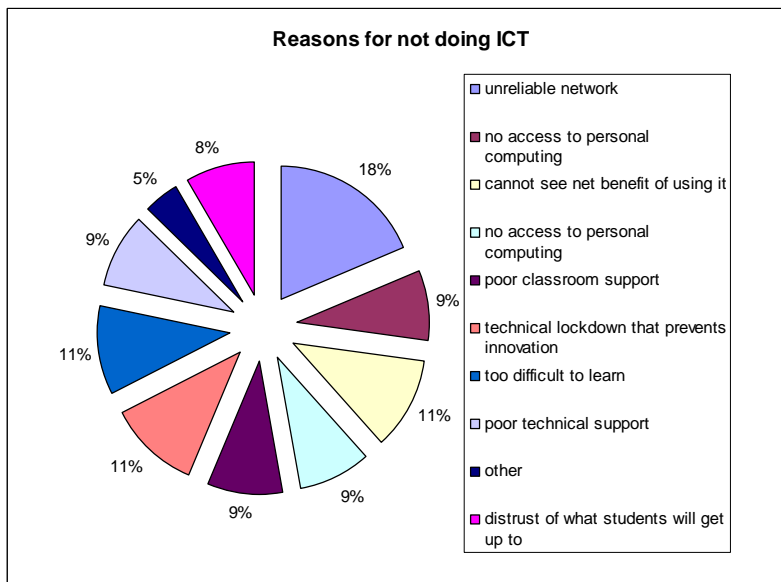
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Reasons for resisting...

... ICT (educational technology), that is. The poll I set up on the website, at

<http://www.terry-freedman.org.uk/db/polls/> indicates the following reasons that teachers have not fully embraced computer technology in their lessons.



This is not a scientific survey, but hopefully it will provide people with a starting point for discussion and exploration. For example, if you aggregate the support issues, they account for nearly 20% of the reasons given.

If you factor in the “unreliable network” and “technical lockdown” reasons, that brings the total of support-related issues to a whopping 60% – even more if you decide to include “no access to

personal computing”, which might itself be construed as a support issue.

I'd also go further, and say that what matters is not just whether the network is reliable, but whether it's **perceived** to be reliable. Food for thought, eh? You can read the original article at http://terry-freedman.org.uk/artman/publish/article_917.php, and a follow-up article here: http://terry-freedman.org.uk/artman/publish/article_921.php.

An interesting complementary article appears on Ewan McIntosh's blog: http://edu.blogs.com/edublogs/2006/11/dear_head_of_ed.html. Writing about the factors that impede progress in getting teachers to use the internet etc, Ewan identifies fear, ignorance and time factors.

What can we learn from all this? Whatever you're going to introduce, there are some factors you need to take into account before you even start, such as:

- **Support.** How do people find out how to use it? Is there a CPD programme in place? Help sheets or videos? What if something goes wrong? Are there trouble-shooting guides? A phone number for a technician?
- **Scale.** Things get more complex as they get bigger, even though there are economies of scale to be gained. For example, running an equipment loan scheme for 10 digital cameras may involve logistical considerations that aren't evident when lending just one camera. So, start off small, get to know what the issues are, and scale up methodically.

User group

I have started a user group to try out various products and aspects of the



Educational Technology: ICT in Education website. If you'd like to join, drop me an email saying who you are and what your role is. The benefits are that you'd get first look at up-coming features, and all e-products free, and free electronic versions of new books or booklets. In return, your commitment will be to provide me with feedback on ideas and products in a timely manner, and observe the usual rules of confidentiality. Obviously, I can't take everyone on board, so I'm looking to restrict membership to around 6. So, please get in touch ASAP if you are interested:
terry@ictineducation.org.

5 Minute Tips

If you're the subject leader educational technology in your school, you probably don't have the time to get to grips with important management issues. For that reason we've devised a series of briefings known as "5 Minute Tips", for subscribers to our Leading an Managing Educational Technology service (apart from one fee one so far about using Paintshop Pro). Titles so far are:

- Managing Negativity
- Managing Positivity
- Managing Initiatives.

The subscription to the service, which includes free access at the moment to a range of e-books as well as hundreds of articles, costs £21.15 pa or USD equivalent (approximately \$40). Pay online or with an official order from your school. Contact us for details: terry@ictineducation.org.

Working with dates in Excel

"Hmm", you may be thinking. "Why would anyone want to treat dates as numbers?". Ask anyone in business, and they'll tell you. There is a non-stop procession of dates: display until, sell-by, use by, invoice by, pay back by. In education, of course, there are assignment deadlines, marking deadlines, preparation deadlines, report deadlines....

Wherever you look there is a date lurking somewhere behind the scenes. And what do all these dates have in common? They all start from today. So, the first port of call is to see how Excel deals with **today!**

There are three ways in which you can insert today's date in a spreadsheet: the Today function, and the Now function (I'll come on to the third method in a moment). These are entered like this:

=today()



for (ICT) time

=now()

The main difference between them is that the Today function only returns the date, whereas the Now function returns the date and time. So for very high precision work, or just for the sake of having a kind of one-stop shop perhaps, use the Now function. Otherwise, Today will do.

It doesn't take a great leap of imagination to realise that the Today function could be very useful when dealing with new orders: simply insert a formula that adds 30 to today's date, and you have the date by which the bill should be settled. As you've probably realised, if the Today formula is in cell A1, you can insert 30 into B1, and then in C1 enter the formula:

=A1+B1

| | | | | | |
|---|----|------------------|----|------------------|---|
| | A1 | fx =TODAY() | | | |
| | | A | B | C | D |
| 1 | | 29 November 2006 | 30 | 29 December 2006 | |
| 2 | | | | | |

Figure 1: What you see on the screen...

| | | | | | |
|---|--|----------|----|--------|--|
| | | A | B | C | |
| 1 | | =TODAY() | 30 | =A1+B1 | |
| 2 | | | | | |

Figure 2: ... and what's behind the scenes.

There is a bit of a problem with all this, however. Being a dynamic formula, the Today function will update itself every day, and the Now function will update itself every second! You don't have to be a mathematical genius to work out that at that rate, you'll **never** be paid!

So, here is the third approach. Forget those functions, and insert a static date (or time) instead. To do so, click on a cell and hold down the Ctrl key and tap the : (colon) key. That will insert a date that will never change. To insert the current time, without the danger that it will change every second, do the same again but this time hold the Shift key down as well.

So when **would** you use the Today or Now functions? If you want the user of your spreadsheet to know what the current date or time is, those functions can come in handy. They also come into their own when combined with other functions, such as the IF function.

Suppose you are running your own mail order business, and you'd like to offer your customers a 10% discount if they place an order before the 25th of the month. By using a string of functions you can instruct Excel to determine whether or not the current date is before the 25th, and if it is to apply a 10% discount to the order.

Now, you'll need to use the Day function for this task. That converts a date, which Excel thinks of as a serial number, into a number that you can run calculations on or evaluate in some way. So, with no further ado, if you've put the Today or Now function in cell F4, the formula you insert will look something like this:

`=(IF(Day(F4)<25,10, 0)`

That means: if the day of the date in cell F4 comes before the 25th day of the month, the discount is 10 (percent), otherwise it's zilch.

OK, now here's a challenge for you. Devise a formula that will award a bonus mark to students if they hand in their essay before the deadline, and deducts a penalty mark if they hand it in late. Send me your solution: terry@ictineducation.org.

Every Child Matters

As you may know, in England there is a policy known as Every Child Matters (ECM). Unlike the USA's No Child Left Behind (NCLB), ECM is all about joined-up local services with the child at the centre. About a year ago now I was concerned that nothing much was being done at a classroom level, and this was confirmed by some initial research I did and the response to my paper, Every Child Matters and the ICT Teacher.

I'm pleased to be able to report that this now seems to have gained a much higher profile. A couple of months ago I attended the Annual Conference of ASPECT, where I bemoaned the fact that my sending the ECM paper to them had met with no response at all. Well, these things happen: emails go astray, and sometimes things just get overlooked – I'm guilty of this myself occasionally. To its credit, ASPECT invited me to submit an article about ECM for publication in its journal, which goes out to every member.

That's the article I needed some information for. Thanks to everyone who responded, and I'm sorry to have not yet replied to everyone personally.

I've been informed by ASPECT that as soon as the article has been published they will send me a pdf of it that I can publish on the website. Look out for that because it contains new material. It considers

ECM from a wider perspective than the ICT teacher, as it was aimed at colleagues in the social services and elsewhere. There are also quotes from some of the people who responded to my request for information. Sorry if I was not able to use yours directly, but I did in fact take all responses into account. Although the way ECM has been implemented differs in different areas, the issues faced by people have tended to be similar. For example, many schools do not seem to have thought about it at all, from what I can see.

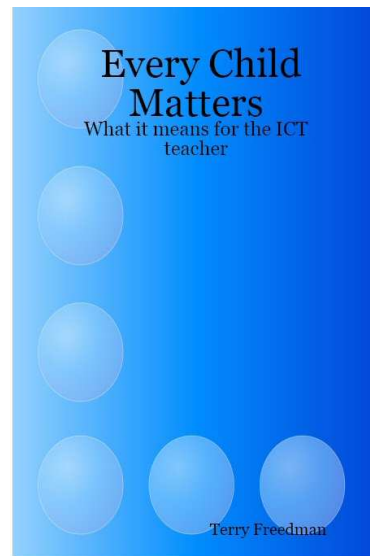
The original paper "Every Child Matters And The ICT Teacher, v2" is available free of charge in pdf format from here:

http://www.terry-freedman.org.uk/compic/ecm_and_the_ict_teacher_v2.pdf. It looks at how teachers can address the 5 outcomes of ECM with or through or as part of the school's ICT (educational technology) provision.

I've also published a booklet about it called Every Child Matters: What it Means for the ICT Teacher. This is an updated version of the paper referred to in the preceding paragraph, and contains important new material, such as guidance on how to get

parents involved. It's going through a final proofing at the moment, but should be available soon for \$9.05 or around £4.99 plus postage and packaging. In the UK, that's about £3.50, but it doesn't vary that much if you buy more copies. So, if you're stumped about what to buy people for Christmas....

Seriously, though, read the next item....



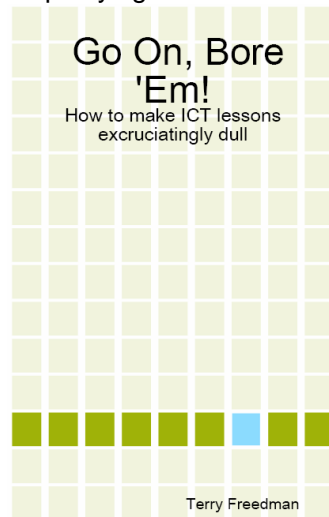
Bored to tears

It's hard to make educational technology boring, but some teachers do a pretty good job. I encapsulated the factors that caused some lessons to be boring in the rather boringly-titled Characteristics of Boring ICT Lessons, which was (and is) available as an e-book.

I've updated that slightly, given it a facelift, and published it as a booklet with the rather more exciting title of Go On, Bore 'Em! How to make your ICT lessons excruciatingly dull. That's also \$9.05 or around £4.99 plus p & p. But like I said earlier, the postage doesn't vary much when you add more to the purchase, so why not buy one of each, ie the Every Child Matters booklet and this one?

Incidentally, the reason I keep saying "around" such and such a price is that although I have set the price at \$9.05, the GBP price varies slightly from time to time. At the moment, it's £4.99.

Now, you might ask how I know about this, bearing in mind that it's not exactly my hobby to seek out opportunities to be rendered comatose by champion boremasters. Well, it is based on my experience of undertaking inspections, looking at schools' ICT provision and advisory work.



These books will be available for purchase soon.

If you'd like an independent assessment of how you're doing in terms of ICT, get in touch for a chat to discuss how I can help.

Review of French Maid TV

<http://www.frenchmaidtv.com/>

It is with some trepidation that I write this, in case I lay myself open to suspicious glances and snide asides. After all, why would a respectable fellow like me be looking at video podcasts under the title of "French Maid TV"?

Believe it or not, it was all part of some research (howls of ribald laughter). Yes, yes, I know. But it happens to be true. I've been commissioned by a magazine called Micro Mart (www.micromart.co.uk) to write a series of articles called Terry's Podcast Centre, in which I focus on a different category each week. As part of my trawling through the podosphere (if such a word exists), I came across this.

Now here's where it gets interesting, because of the inherent contradictions. The series is filed under "Comedy", but is not really that funny apart from the basic silliness of some of the fill-in activities. It could just as well have been classified as

"Technology" because of the subjects dealt with, such as how to make a video podcast and how to register a domain name.

In terms of pedagogy, the shows can't be faulted. They tell you right at the start what you will need, and then take you through the process in a succinct, logical and efficient way – it's astonishing how much they are able to convey in just a few minutes.

Unfortunately, however, the show is spoilt in this respect by the fact that it's obviously intended to appeal to the somewhat baser male instincts. Why else would it feature 3 girls wearing very short, low-cut dresses whose idea of fun is jumping up and down on a bed or having pillow fights?

In fact, this is a classic example of the opposite of what we try to get students to do, namely to ensure that illustrations are appropriate to the text. It's a show that isn't quite sure whether it's an instructional video or whether it's meant purely for titillation, the subject matter being irrelevant.

You certainly couldn't draw it to the attention of students, which is a great pity because from a teaching perspective the episodes are very good indeed. Oh well, back to my research....

Feedback

What do you think of this format for the newsletter? Please let me know: terry@ictineducation.org.

Disclaimer

Good morning, Judge. I wasn't even there; it wasn't my fault; he made me do it, etc. Seriously, though, all the information and links in this newsletter have been checked, and offered in good faith. For the full text of the disclaimer, please see:

<http://www.terry-freedman.org.uk/about.html>.

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