



MCCE NEWS

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A look at Nicenet.org

by Tamara Scott

If you have been looking for a free web site on which to post assignments or allow students to conference through threaded discussions, then Nicenet.org may be just what you need.

I have been using Nicenet.org with my 7th and 8th grade students in a creative writing elective class. As the administrator of the site, I can post material or assignments for the students; they can contribute assignments



or post comments online. In fact, I have one student in creative writing

who is actually enrolled in band class. Her teacher and I have allowed her to attend my class two days a week because of her desire to work on her writing. Three days a week, she is able to connect to the class through Nicenet.org. It works, because she participates like any other student, yet she NEVER receives a grade for her work since she is enrolled only as a band student that period. She is doing what she loves for the love of it, not a grade, and technology greatly enhances her learning. This site is also great for students who have extended absences as well as those who begin typing a piece at school, but don't have time to finish during one class period. They love the opportunity to place their docu-

(Continued on Page 4)

Entering the world of the blog

by Vince Long

Over 200 years ago, as they grappled over the issue of freedom of speech, it would have been difficult for our Founding Fathers to envision the world of today. For them, including freedom of the press in the list of basic freedoms still limited that freedom to those with access to the printing press itself. The press of the 18th century, like its 21-century version, was an expensive contraption, requiring specialized knowledge for its setup and operation. It was a voracious



consumer of paper and the documents it produced still faced

the distribution hurdle. With these challenges, it is a wonder that writers like Thomas Paine ever saw their works achieve any level of popularity.

Today, technology has changed the balance of the equation and revolutionized the entire world of publication. When a real paper or a book is needed, complex documents can be produced in any quantity on-demand. Have you written the great American novel and been overwhelmed with publisher's rejection notices? Self-publishing is one of the fastest growth areas today among new technologies and that is no wonder as there are 3,000 new books published worldwide every day. It is as easy as uploading a PDF of

(Continued on Page 5)

In This Issue

A look at nicenet.org

Educational website for teacher and student use. Page 1

Enter the world of the blog

Blogs for educational use Page 1

President's Message Page 2

Password Recovery Page 3

Video editing review Page 3

Membership information Page 7

by Staci Auck

Once again it is time to begin thinking and planning for the 2007 MEA-MFT Educators' Conference in Belgrade on October 18-19.

I am excited to tell you that we will have a returning nationally known keynote speaker, Patrick Crispen. Patrick is the Instructional Technology Coordinator for the California State University in Long Beach. At Cal State Long Beach, Patrick manages the day-to-day operations of BeachBoard Services [formerly the Faculty Technology Center.] In the fall of 1994, Patrick created a free, 27-lesson Internet training workshop called "Roadmap." Over 500,000 people participated in Roadmap, making it the most popular Internet training workshop in history. Patrick also co-authored two classroom textbooks, *Atlas for the Information Superhighway* (1996) and *Web Page Design* (1999), and is the co-author of the Internet *Tourbus*, a free semi-weekly Internet newsletter read by over 100,000 people in over 130 countries. *Tourbus* celebrated its tenth anniversary in the Summer of 2005, and PC World recently rated *Tourbus* as one of the Internet's 15 best newsletters. Since October of 1997, Patrick has been an invited, weekly panelist on a call-in radio show on WGN Radio in Chicago. The show, the "Website Wednesday Night" portion of the "Steve and Johnnie" show, is broadcast live to 38 states and most of Canada on AM 720 and is also simulcast over the Internet. Callers from around the country ask computer- and technology-related questions.

Believe me, I know how busy every one is this time of year but I would seriously like to encourage you or someone else you know to present at the conference. MEA-MFT will pay a stipend of \$30 per hour for sectionals and our own organization will pay a flat \$20 stipend to those that present under the MCCE curriculum group. There isn't a professional conference anywhere with as much to offer as our own MEA-MFT Educators' Conference for only \$25! The stipends alone for presenting will more than cover this cost.

It is easy to apply. The online application is at www.mea-mft.org. Go to the bottom of the page under "Other info" and chose the "2007 MEA_MFT Educators' Conference." From there, click the "Online application" link. You will need to register first, but once done, filling in the application and submitting is slick. Please hurry, as the **deadline for applications is May 11**, only a month away!! Again please help us to provide and share technology information with our fellow educators across the state by encouraging someone to present or presenting yourself.

MCCE NEWS

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**Next Submission Deadline:
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<http://senior.billings.k12.mt.us/mcce/>**

WANTED

Newsletter Articles for MCCE News

Software Reviews,
Classroom Technology Tips, Student-
Written Stories, Web Site Reviews



**Join ISTE, the national voice for the
Montana Council for Computers and
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<http://www.iste.org>

Website worth a look

The Fischbowl - Did You Know?

<http://thefischbowl.blogspot.com/2006/08/did-you-know.html>

This educator put together a PowerPoint presentation for a staff development session that addresses the exponential rate of change in the world and how it effects schools. The presentation is also in video format and is making the rounds including on YouTube. It's definitely worth a look.

Password recovery a snap with Ophcrack

by Vince Long

Let's face it. We've all done some pretty dumb things with our computers. We've failed to backup important files ahead of a hard drive failure. We've click on things we shouldn't have online and unleashed a torrent of malware. We've saved over documents because we forgot to give our new document a new name. It happens to us all. However, one of the most frustrating experience is to be locked out of our computer because we've forgotten our username and password or someone has changed them on us.

It is in this latter situation that it's nice to have a copy of ophcrack lying around. This useful utility can retrieve forgotten usernames and passwords on Windows computer in a matter of minutes. The software, free from <http://ophcrack.sourceforge.net>, comes in several versions, depending on how you plan to use it. The easiest method is the LiveCD version and works great as long as the computer is configured to boot from the CD. You first download the ISO disk image file, which is about 500 MB in size, so even with a broadband connection this will take a few minutes. Next, burn the disk image file to a blank CD using your favorite burning software. Be sure to burn as an "image," not just as a data file.

Now you are ready to go. Turn on the computer you want to recover the password on and place the CD in its drive. The computer should boot off the CD instead of the hard drive. The CD has a copy of Linux, a free operating system, on it along with the ophcrack program and other files that help it do its job. You have to do nothing but sit back and wait as the program goes out to the hard drive and works it way through the user and password files. Once complete, you will see the user names and password on the screen. Write them down, then reboot the computer, removing the CD as you do so. Once prompted to enter your user name and password use the information retrieved by ophcrack.

For those interested in how it works, I recommend the ophcrack homepage, <http://lasecwww.epfl.ch/~oechslin/projects/ophcrack/>, where the authors discuss the use of rainbow tables as well as other topics in the area of cryptanalysis.

The software is Vista and Mac OS(X) Windows compatible.



Video Editing with Pinnacle and Adobe Premier: A Student's Perspective

By Josh Burnham

For the last two years I have been taking a video editing class as independent study. I don't have a teacher to sit with me and show me through all of the different features so it's up to me to teach myself how to use everything in the programs. When I first started video editing I used Pinnacle Studio Plus and I liked it a lot because it was very easy to use but once I got more advanced there were just some certain things that I couldn't do because the program wasn't advanced enough. For example, with Pinnacle it was impossible to put videos in reverse. I was also unable to really adjust effects like I can on Premier such as a simple dissolve effect that you can apply many different effects with.

Using Premier it is harder to accomplish what would be simple tasks in Pinnacle, but I'm still new at running Premier and after time it will be just as easy. Another good thing about Premier is that it's very compatible with all other Adobe programs such as Photoshop and After Effects which comes in handy quite often when video editing.

One thing I didn't really like about Pinnacle was that everything was set up in an almost kid like style with little picture icons and names for all of the tools. With Premier everything is in a very professional style of program and is almost identical to Photoshop except the tools and pallets are different. Even though Premier was much harder to learn I believe it's a much better program and I would recommend it to anyone using Windows.

I am glad that I started with Pinnacle to learn the basics but now that I am at a higher level for my video production I think Premier is more of what I need. The next video editing software that I plan to learn is Final Cut Pro.



Nicenet.org

(Continued from Page 1)

ments online so they can continue from home.

The site allows the teacher to create any number of classes; each has a specific class code which is then given to students who will be allowed to join the class. I decided to have small groups in separate classes to keep it manageable the first time around. Each small group of students can post their pieces for the other group members to read and comment on. While I still prefer to have students in face-to-face conferences whenever possible, the technology aspect excites students and gets them writing and conferencing outside of school hours, too. When I am crunched for time during class, I can read and comment on student pieces any time of day.

Administrator Features:

- The teacher is automatically included as a member of each class s/he creates. Only students who receive the class code are allowed to enroll in the class. The administrator has the ability to delete student users and set their privileges.
- Assignments can be delivered, and students can be instructed to upload responses online.
- Links can be posted so students can read assigned online material available at other sites.

Student Features:

- Once students receive the class key, they sign themselves up for the class.

- They are required to create a username and password.
- They will also be asked to include their email addresses; however, it is optional. If they use an email address, then students in their online class will be able to send personal messages to them.
- Students can be allowed to upload links, start new topics, and post documents. Those options may also be turned off by the administrator.

Site Features:

- HTML is allowed, but not required.
- Documents are posted using copy and paste; uploading documents is not supported.
- Documents maintain their formats when posted.
- No advertising.
- Free to the public, but classes are not available to the general public by searching; users must enroll with a class code.
- Requires only a web browser and Internet connection.
- Helpful FAQ section; easy interface.

As with any web-based activity, you'll want to check it out for yourself. I recommend sending home a parent notice about the site and its purpose. Because it is impossible to monitor the content of personal emails they can send to each other, I ask that parents acknowledge this and give their permission for student use. Maybe you'll try it out with a few motivated students, as I did. Or maybe you'll just use Nicenet.org for yourself and a few colleagues.



Make your plans for NECC 2007

With its sessions, symposia, exhibitors, and registered attendees, NECC is the largest and most comprehensive Ed Tech event in the world. NECC has been providing PK-20 education professionals with an annual forum to learn, exchange information, and survey advancements in the field for nearly three decades.

Participants have the opportunity to discover and share through more than 700 workshops, lectures, and interactive

sessions; discussion with key industry speakers; and a huge vendor exhibit.

NECC 2007 is presented by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Education, Georgia Public Broadcasting and Georgia's Leadership Institute for School Improvement.

<http://center.uoregon.edu/ISTE/NECC2007/>

The world of the blog

(Continued from Page 1)

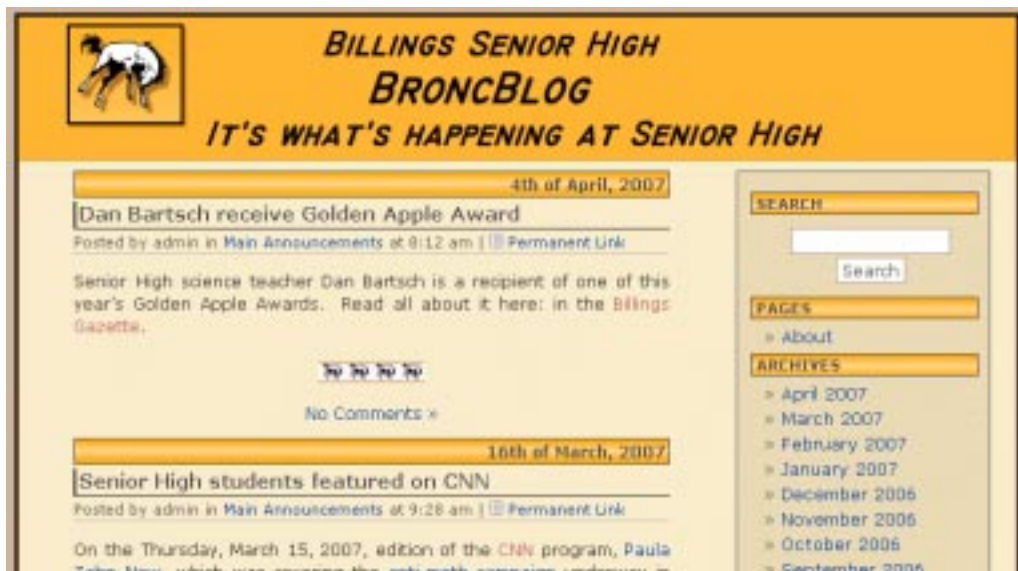
your manuscript to the publisher's web site, selecting your cover art and binding options, and setting your royalty price. For about 3-cents per page, plus a cut of your royalty, your book is printed and mailed to your customers on-demand, with no minimum orders or warehousing required.

While less expensive printing options have increased access to the printing press, those innovations pale in comparison to what has occurred in the virtual world of the Internet. Publishing online is free, or nearly free depending on how you approach it. Today, with the nearly free approach, you can buy your own domain name and web site hosting for under \$4 per month from large providers like www.godaddy.com and publish online in any format you wish. Free options, supported by online ads, include hosting sites like Yahoo's GeoCities (<http://geocities.yahoo.com>).

can set up a blog and become the moderator of that blog.

There are blogs of so many types that it is nearly impossible to assign genre names to categorize them. They focus on politics, technology, hobbies, UFOs, and pretty much every other imaginable topic. What they all have in common is that the blogmaster will post a comment or article and readers may post their feedback under that article. Feedback on some blogs is moderated, that is, postings do not show up on the site until approved by the site owner. Some blogs allow users to insert pictures and most blogs allow contributors to insert hyperlinks in their comments.

It is estimated that by sometime in 2007, the number of blogs will hit 100 million. That number may already have been achieved if <http://www.MySpace.com> is counted as a blog with its 106 million users. Love them or hate them, blogs are here to stay and our Founding Fathers would be amazed at the democratization they have provided much like a printing press in every home.



As technology-using educators, we might ask, "Do blogs have a place in education?" As a technology, blogs provide some unique opportunities for teachers. For one, there are hundreds of education-related blogs run by teachers themselves and, in our quest for good ideas for the classroom and a place to share them, these blogs provide

An innovation the Internet has spawned that has no real equivalent in the publishing world is the blog. A contraction of "web log," blogs, as we know them today, originated with the world wide web itself when users created web pages where they chronicled their lives or their musings about the world around them. It was not long before sites added a "guestbook" feature that allowed visitors to provide feedback and engage in dialog with other users. While online discussions on the Internet are nothing new and go back to the development of USENET in 1979, the blog differs in that anyone with Internet access

a versatile tool for making this happen. The challenge is to winnow your way through the massive list of what is available down to what is actually useable. A good place to start is Kathy Schrock's list of Educational Technology Blogs: <http://kathyschrock.net/edtechblogs.htm>. As usual, Google will provide a good starting point as well. A search for educational blogs turns up over 13 million hits and first on the list, as of this writing, is <http://educational.blogs.com>. Try any of those as an entry point into the world of educational blogdom. Finding additional

(Continued on Page 6)

The world of the blog

(Continued from Page 5)

sites is easy since once you are on one blog you will find that most blog sites feature a “blogroll” on their front page. Blogrolls are links to related blogs that the site owner has selected to include.

If you are interested in educational news and policy, although not always flattering to the profession, I enjoy checking out The Education Wonk at <http://educationwonk.blogspot.com/>. They feature links to some of the best teacher blogs out there.

Blogs also have a place in education as a discussion tool for student use. I’ve used several types of blogs in the classroom and, in my recent experience with high school and graduate students, this generation of instant messaging texters, adapts quite readily to the world of online discussion. An initial result was that students who are quiet in class can be quite verbose online when given the opportunity to thoughtfully compose their responses without the pressure of immediacy found in the classroom. All students found blogging a natural way to augment what we were doing in the classroom and a relevant way to interact with their peers.

I’ve used two blogging tools with students and have explored several others that provide similar features. In my high school classroom I use Moodle, an online course delivery system that I reviewed in MCCE News, October 2006 (<http://senior.billings.k12.mt.us/mcce/newsletter.htm>). Moodle provides a variety of online activity types and the online discussion is just one of them. Using Moodle, I gave students time in class to respond to prompts I had posted on various vocational topics. I require them to post at least one response to my posting and one to another student’s response. What surprised me was the number of students who logged in from home to continue the discussions initiated in the classroom. Moodle provides extensive information for the teacher as to who logged in and how many times they posted. Inappropriate postings, of which I had none, can easily be deleted.

The other blogging tool I used, and this was in the graduate education class I was teaching at MSU-B, was Blogger. This is a free service (<http://www.blogger.com/>), owned by Google, that allows anyone to quickly set up their own blog. The blogmaster has many options for setting how the blog will look and function. For my blog, I opted that it be private and only shared its address with my classes, which prevented non-members from dropping on the conversa-

tions. The results were similar to what I had experienced with my high school students, that is, even the quietest students blossomed, shared, and contributed to the discussions.

One of the impediments to using blogs in the classroom is that many, if not most, blog sites are blocked by school content filters, which do not differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate blogs. If this is the case, you can request that your blog’s address be allowed to pass through the filter. If that is not an option, you can, if you have access to your school’s web server, run your own blog site there. There are several good blog server packages available and most are free. A good place to start in your selection process is the Blog Software article at Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog_software). Most of these applications require that your webserver has PHP and MySQL installed, both of which are free.

While I am not using it to solicit user feedback, I have WordPress installed on our server at Billings Senior High. I am using it as a one-way blog where assigned users can post articles or announcements to our site (<http://senior.billings.k12.mt.us/broncblog/>). WordPress (<http://wordpress.org/>) is very easy to set up and configure and offers a host of options. Allowing users to comment or not was easy to set up with a few mouse clicks. WordPress also host free blogs on their site at <http://wordpress.com/>. You can try it out there before you download and install it on your own server or leave your blog hosted with them. In preparing this article I setup a blog for MCCE in less than five minutes. You can find it here: <http://edtechmt.wordpress.com/>.

In a variation of the blog, I was looking for a way to collect questions and answers about our school to compile a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) in various categories.. Sure enough, there was an application, free, already available, PHPMyFAQ (<http://www.phpmyfaq.de/>). This application functions much like a blog except that anyone can post a starting question as well as answers. Neither the questions nor the answers posted appear on the site until approved by the moderator(s). I have assigned volunteer teachers to help with the project. When a question or answer is posted to the site, I receive an email notifying me, and I can forward the mail to the appropriate volunteer for editing. It is hoped that, over time, we will compile a useful list of information for teachers, students, and parents.

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