

The Biggest and Best Schoolbook of the World: The Internet; Homeschooling and Global eLearning Experiences

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Abstract

The Internet offers many resources for Homeschoolers and the eLearning Community independently from time and location. To school children at home is getting more and more popular around the world. eLearning will form schools of tomorrow.

A wide variety of learning-materials are offered in the internet for good money or free of charge. We will have a closer look to some very good free learning resources we are already using daily with our Homeschoolers and eLearning participants around the Globe at IMCT.

- *Google Earth, Video, Maps and more*
- *Wikipedia*
- *Project Gutenberg*
- *Kindersite.org*
- *iBiblio.org*
- *and more...*

What do we need to school our students through the internet? How and where could the internet material be integrated into a curriculum and lesson plan? Will it be possible to assess students with these learning resources? and more ... - Questions parents asked ...

Examples of our daily practice at IMCT will show you how easy and motivating teaching could be and how much fun it is for students.

❖ *Part 1: Recommendations*

- *Hardware, Software*
- *Internet-Connection*
- *Place and Time*
- *Personal (Teacher/Tutor/Parent/...)*

❖ *Part 2: Global Resources*

- *What is it? For whom?*
- *How can it be used for schooling?*
- *Assessing the students?*

❖ *Part 3: Communicational Goals*

- *eMail, Forum, IM, VoIP*
- *Video-Conferencing*
- *Person to Person, Global Teamwork*

❖ *Part 4: Future Developments*

- *School without Frontiers*
- *Travelling School – Global Student*

Part 1: Recommendations

• Hardware, Software

Hardware prices drop and more and more open source material is offered to customers.

For parents and teachers it is difficult to make a right choice and to setup a good running system. At IMCT all students are able to use a Laptop with WLAN Access and they have a WOS¹. It is a Web server on a stick with an integrated ABC-Typo3² environment. We are still using Windows as it is in Thailand the most common OS.

• Place and Time

Students can access and create their private WOS at any time and place, as long as they have a computer to plug in the USB stick.

• Internet-Connection

To get their created content online an internet connection is needed. We are using mostly ADSL 1024/512 which gives us enough bandwidth to work together.

• Personal (Teacher/Tutor/Parent/...)

Students should be guided by an adult or advanced learner during their online researches. In our multi aged groups at IMCT students are helping each others very intensively. Educators need to be responsible for a well organised, save and prepared eLearning surrounding.

• Safety & Security

It is very important to use well configurable Firewalls and Anti-Virus programs. It is nothing more frustrating for students as they won't be able to surf because of a Trojan, virus or any other software problem. To reduce complications we recommend to setup all student devices in the same way with the same software and best same hardware.

¹ <http://www.chsoftware.net/de/useware/wos>
developed by Cornelius Herzog

² Special Typo3 TV Package for educational purposes

• To start with

Computer/Laptop 1GHZ and more WLAN, LAN, USB, 256MB+ RAM – ADSL would be good but a fast modem connection will also work.

MS-Windows XP, OpenOffice 2.0, USB Stick 1GB (256MB recommended) with installed WOS and ABC-TYPO3, Browser – best Firefox (features) or Opera (fast).

Part 2: Global Resources

- What is it? For whom?
- How can it be used for schooling?
- Assessing the students?

Wikipedia.org



It is a worldwide accessible online encyclopaedia. It is written from people for people, everybody can contribute material to Wikipedia.

At IMCT we are using the daily refreshing front page of en.wikipedia.org as warm up. It offers us lots of material to be discussed and explored. History, Math, Language, Science and Social Themes open us a broadband education. Teachers have to learn too. Instead of opening a schoolbook they opened already years before, instead of using lesson plans from the years before they have to be ready at any time with a good.

It is important to keep a record about what has been discussed. Therefore “kee-

book³” is a very good and affordable program. Simply drag and drop pages into a keebook and students can find it again later on to revise material and study it for their assessments. At IMCT we use also our WOS ABC-Typo3 and the DR Wiki Extension to save Media Wiki content from Wikipedia for lateron.



Joel Josephson (UK) initiated this project. He is collecting multimedia content from all kind of sites and categorises them in three groups – Games – Music&Songs - Stories. It is suitable especially for children in Kindergarten and Primary School. At IMCT we experienced that non English spoken parents like to use those materials also for learning English. All materials are provided free of charge.

- **iBiblio.org**

iBiblio provides students and teachers with wide variety of free learning content for nearly all subjects.

At IMCT we use iBiblio material in our normal lessons and for further student studies and homework. I.e. we compare theories about the ice ages and students have to compare those theories. Afterwards they will create a report about their ideas in ABC-TYPO3. This content can be presented

online or internal and students are even able to share their content with others.

Instead of buying books students and teachers are creating their books by themselves. An idea Waldorf⁴ schools, founded by Rudolf Steiner, are using in their traditional teachings too. Another 100 year old educational idea from Freinet⁵ could be used in lower grades. Students can even print their books by themselves and learn the ABC, reading an writing.

- **Gutenberg.org**

Named after the German inventor of the printing machine who delivered the first printed bible and developed by Michael Hart, Project Gutenberg offers more then 18000 Books free of charge. Great Literature is available for students to read. It is also good for learning a language as many books are available in several languages. The digital format of the books enables students to integrate them in own reports and materials.

At IMCT we are also using the “Devotional Journal” Extension to store scheduled learning content for the students and they can make notes while reading the stories. It is a great resource for intensive literature studies.

- **Discovery Channel.com**

A wide range of video multimedia content is provided free of charge. Unfortunately it is often very difficult to connect to the site as to many cookies come with the pages which are blocked.

- **Video.Google.com**

It is big source for all kinds of video. Content can easily be found with using search words and lost of useful material can also be downloaded free of charge. A Broadband Connection is advised. At IMCT we are using this site to enrich our curriculum with visible multimedia content and also to pro-

³ <http://keebook.com/>

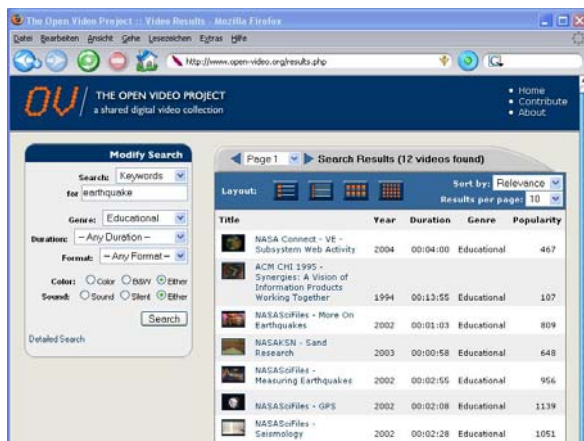
⁴ <http://waldorfschule.info/>

⁵ <http://freinet.paed.com/news/>

duce own material. Students can integrate video material into their personal WOS ABC-Typo3 to create own reports.

- **Open-Video.org**

A wide range and well sorted educational video material is available free of charge here. It is a bit better organised than video.google.com and for students it seems to be easier to find relevant educational material.



- **Librivox.org**

Free Audio books read by native speakers are offered free at librivox.org. It is a good resource especially for students whose mother tongue is not English.

- **Vorleser.net**

It is the German comparison to Librivox.

IMCT is using Librivox and Vorleser material to help to get a better pronunciation of English or German.

- **Curriculum Online.gov.uk**

Since our first IMCT learning group started we are using curriculum online, which is based on the British curriculum. It is a huge center of resources for students, teachers and parents.

Part 3: Communication

- **eMail, Forum, IM, VoIP**

Students enjoy chatting and communicating with their neighbours and it can be a horror for teachers and even a disciplinary problem. There is absolutely no difference if they are working in an eLearning surrounding or in a traditional school setting.

At IMCT, our experience is that it is good to have times for free chatting and communication integrated in the regular schedule like rest in a traditional school setting.

We are using a forum for our internal discussion. It enables us a asynchrony discussion. For synchronic discussion we are using skype⁶, sip-phones or spread⁷. We try to avoid other messenger software like ICQ or MSN Live Messenger as they are a real security issue.

- **Video-Conferencing**

Video-Conferences are helping us to monitor students over longer distances. It is more personal than a VoIP calls or chats. Teachers can see the gestures of their students and react more easily.

- **Person to Person, Global Teamwork**

A key role in our eLearning Classrooms is our teacher. He is responsible to prepare a self learning surrounding with lots of online "materials" and additional course or book ware (pdf/OO/Word). He has to evaluate material, websites and other online available resources to put them on the right place in an individual curriculum and lesson plan of our students. We made the experience that even the best eLearning surrounding won't be satisfying for a student long term if no personal contact to teachers and other students can be

⁶ <http://skype.com>

free VoIP Solution incl Video

⁷ <http://spread.com/>

free solution incl. whiteboard, VoIP Video, Screen Sharing, PowerPoint Presentations and more.

established easily. A blended learning environment helps all participants to assimilate better with the whole team and group of learners and tutors.

Part 4: Future School without Frontiers



Do we really need more schools, more school-buildings, more schoolbooks which only serve one purpose – to be renewed every second year, more teachers⁸ which never worked in another profession and more? ... IMCT answers this question with a big NO!

A school should have an educational vision and ours is a school without any frontiers. No time no space-limit, “education for all⁹” at any time and any place. School buildings could be used as learning centres with meeting and seminar rooms, an accommodation section for travelling students and an internet café and library. No more factories of “yes” or “no” Sayers are required.

Some Universities already drew consequences out of the traditional school’s miseries and are preferably open for home scholars.

- **Traveling School – Global Student**

To understand our world we have to go back to roots of schooling at all. It has been travelling people – traders, sailors,... - tell-

ing stories, who started to educate students in a school surrounding. Even Comenius (Orbis Pictus – the world in Pictures) travelled before he started his school.

Nowadays everybody can travel nearly anywhere he wants. We can join “teachers” wherever they are on our blue planet. The internet opens up new dimensions of schooling at all. The Global Student learns basic knowledge, communicational and self learning skills and computer skills in their home countries. He starts travelling to other places all around the world with about 14 years and older. Maria Montessori had a similar vision about 100 years ago as she developed the earth-child plan. A Global Student could be reality. The Internet will connect him to his personal educational institution and he will be assessed with regular standardised tests online to ensure his progress. An individual curriculum is set up by qualified online teachers around the world who operate together in a global network.

A teacher will be much more than only a teacher. He will be like a companion for students who are discovering the world in their own pace and in their own way.

A Boat sailing around the world could be an ideal place for such experiences. Modern satellite technologies enable internet use on a boat. Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts could report about travels and their “Discovering Learners” A traditional school year features two or three terms. One or two of them could be spent on “expedition”-trips for students around the world. Another one at home to prepare travels. For sure those students would be really motivated to learn more and more! Disciplinary problems, known from traditional school types will be decreasing. The exploring learning sense will come back!

The biggest schoolbook of the world will then be again the world and its people itself.

⁹<http://www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=19H>
UNESCO Bangkok Education for all