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Exploring the Frontiers of Educational Technology

Why a theme issue on computer technology when Adventist schools are so diverse? When there is such a difference in available resources? Asking the division directors of education about use of technology produced varying answers. We have world divisions where “the heaviest technology might be the occasional use of tape recorders.” In others, technology is prominent in our schools because “we want to be balanced and practical in our educational approach,” and every graduate is expected to be conversant with technology.

I discovered that *technology* is interpreted as broadly as “woodwork, metalwork, technical drawing, engineering science, home management, and agriculture or rural technology.” It is also interpreted as narrowly as language labs, telephones, and computers. One division director said, “We use telephones, e-mail, faxes, and video. In our six schools we do not use computers yet, as we cannot afford them. I really do not understand your question, so if the answers I give sound trite, please forgive me.” Trite? Never! Diverse? Yes! Each response reinforced my conviction that this theme issue is really about communication. Computers can help a world church achieve a greater understanding and appreciation of different perspectives. As the world shrinks, Adventist education can become a global lab school.

Two years ago David Thornburg, author of *Edutrends 2010*, wrote that we have entered the Communication Age—having come through the Information Age. What does that mean for Seventh-day Adventist educators? It can mean learning to use information technologies to communicate the gospel, to reach out and try to understand other points of view. It may also mean connecting our network of schools (of which we are so proud) for meaningful learning experiences. A few weeks ago, I read in *USA Today* an invitation for students to share Native American pupils’ culture online. My mind tingled with possibilities for Adventist schools. What would happen if American SDA students communicated with pupils in Europe about Sabbath observance? If children in Australia “talked” with their peers in Africa about family life? It’s time to put computer technology into the context of our global educational system. And that’s part of the vision we hope you will gain as you read the various articles.

Another thread you’ll find running through this journal is the conviction that computers can help us “train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought” (*Education*, p. 17). How does this happen? It occurs when students use computers—especially those with multimedia capacity—to communicate information that they have manipulated and organized into a meaningful whole.

You’ll notice that several of our teacher-authors view their task as facilitators rather than dispensers of knowledge. Traditionally, if they used computers at all, teachers have seen them as tools to access more information faster or to make their presentations more appealing. But at their best, computers communicate information, not just process it.

In this journal, you’ll also find numerous e-mail addresses. We hope you will make contact with many of them and initiate an informal network of Adventist computer users.

In producing this issue, we have used e-mail, faxes, telephones, and regular mail. The result is a collaborative effort by many individuals. I especially want to thank Marilyn Eggers, the Director of the Model Technology School in Santa Cruz, California, and her associate, Jack Carey, for sharing their expertise and time.—
Shirley Freed.

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Shirley Freed

Shirley Freed, the coordinator for this issue, is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. E-mail address: freed@andrews.edu.



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