Five provocative items have come together to bring this March message to you:

- an iPhone 3GS
- a Fischbowl
- an education arcade paper from MIT
- a resurrected committee
- a booklet from the American Society of Association Executives

I was given one of the Top 10 Gadgets of 2009 according to Time Magazine (Grossman & Ha, 2009): an iPhone 3GS. I have been wondering ever since why I waited so long to be convinced of the magnitude of the change this would make in my world. More importantly, I came to a quick epiphany as to why and how students are so hooked on this smartphone, because “hooked” is what happened to me.

I had already been affected by the “Did You Know/Shift Happens” presentations (http://thefischbowl.blogspot.com/2009/09/did-you-know.html) and the Fischbowl blog itself, which I could previously access only where an electrical outlet was available, but which I now access anywhere my iPhone screen and I can be together. My office and educational experiences have greatly expanded.

Thinking about a similar blogging resource, I used my iPhone to access the NABT blog (http://www.nabt.org/blog/) and resources from our own NABT bloggers, especially the posts by “rheyden.” These seem to me to be on the cutting edge of innovation while being totally practical to today’s teachers. As an example, check out this post from 10 June 2009: “Then be bold. Select an interesting student project to take advantage of these new, participatory media tools.”

Next add the research from a paper that begins with:

…every day, many students are spending countless hours immersed in popular technologies – such as Facebook or MySpace, World of Warcraft or Sim City – which at first glance may seem like a waste of time, and brainpower. But these genres of technologies – Social Networking, Digital Gaming and Simulations – deserve a second, deeper, look at what’s actually going on…they impact the way we think, learn, and interact. They have helped shape the new ways in which people are communicating, collaborating, operating and forming social constructs.

This paper from the education arcade (http://www.educationarcade.org/) is called “Using the Technology of Today, in the Classroom Today: The Instructional Power of Digital Games, Social Networking, Simulations, and How Teachers Can Leverage Them,” by Eric Klopfer, Scot Osterweil, Jennifer Groff, and Jason Haas of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). It’s an easy read that doesn’t attack an educator’s current practice but builds and applies strategies that are critical to educators, including modeling, collaborating, experiential learning, problem solving, networking, generating multiple correct answers, teaching simple and complex science concepts along with habits of mind – all critical 21st-century skills.

Students are using these technologies now, according to the education arcade:

We can say that the capacity for digital games, simulations and social networking technologies to facilitate and leverage deep learning is evident enough to warrant further exploration and the development of new best practices.

Where does an association like NABT go to explore and develop new best practices for its membership, for the Annual Conference, ABT, and regional resources? NABT goes to its committees. There is a brand new Media and Community Networking Committee ready to advise the board on how to answer a question posed by the authors of the MIT article: “Why aren’t these technologies used more in education?” This truly distinctive committee can best be appreciated using this description from the American Society of Association Executives (Schlegel, 1994):

If the board of directors is the “brain” of an association, committees are the central nervous system. When they operate well, they accurately sense the environment, process information, and provide valuable guidance to the “brain” so that it can make good decisions. When they do not operate well, the association suffers.

Almost everyone, from politicians to community members, realizes the importance of infusing 21st-century technologies into our educational system. This infusion process may be nebulous, seemingly unattainable, frustratingly time-consuming, and certainly less intuitive than described to many teachers. However, we need to set the stage for beginning the talk sooner rather than later – to be on the cutting edge, as we are in the case of stem cell education.

To truly identify whether these technologies are positive influences, we need to look at the research. That is what the Media and Community Networking Committee can provide. Are these technologies truly effective in the classroom? We have research, but who pulls this information together and examines the research to see if it’s valid? How is the research done? Who does this analyzing for our members who attend the conference and read ABT? Members depend on NABT to provide them with insights. This committee can advise NABT on the value of technologies.

From the President

Bunny Jaskot
NABT President-2010
Are you one of the people who want to do this? If so, I invite you to advise me and/or your Board of Directors (Dan Ward, John Moore, Bob Melton, John Fedors, Robert Dennison, Dennis Gathmann, and Harry McDonald) of your desire to explore answers to this question, among others, using your experiences. Who knows, the Media and Community Networking Committee may “grow up” to be a new Section, but that is another message!

Bunny Jaskot
NABT President — 2010


References

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Also, please identify the areas listed below in which you are comfortable reviewing manuscripts:

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• Teaching Strategies: inquiry, lab, field, reading, media, computer, discussion, and group.
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