

Introduction

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The book, *Interactive Technologies and the Social Studies: Emerging Issues and Applications* (ITeSS), is an original analysis of the expanding and evolving role of technology in the social studies curriculum. As such, it fills a significant void in the existing literature relating to the social studies and technologies, especially those that are computer-based.

ITeSS includes contributions from seven authors with diverse backgrounds, whose specializations embrace the areas of social studies education, software development, computer science, and visual design. A common fundamental interest binds them: the development and application of emerging technologies that can be used to enrich and enliven social studies instruction.

Chapters within ITeSS address the creative applications of emerging interactive technologies that are computer-based, such as distance learning, the Internet, interactive multimedia, and intelligent tutors, as well as the social and practical issues they have spawned. At the same time, the authors nest their analyses within the context of the key question: How can technology contribute to the development of the effective citizen?

In the first two chapters, Lynn A. Fontana and Charles White, respectively, offer examples of how technotools can be used to enhance the quality of instruction for both K–12 students and preservice social studies teachers. Fontana urges the creation of what she characterizes as “on-line learning communities.” She sees these as a way to bridge the gap between the artificial world of the school and the dynamic needs and interests of young citizens in a technological society. On-line learning communities, Fontana argues, require collaboration of teachers and students, use of resources and personnel beyond the school, and an emphasis on integrating learning.

How can we best prepare the next generation of social studies teachers? White responds to this question by offering numerous examples taken from his and others' preservice social studies education classes. He also includes specific step-by-step examples of how to perform such tasks as downloading files from ftp files.

In chapter 3, Peter Martorella discusses the nature of existing interactive multimedia and related emerging technologies. He illustrates applications of technologies, such as laserdiscs, CD-ROM units, and distance learning, for the social studies classroom. Martorella also explores new developments related to the Internet: low-cost two-way video and audio conferencing systems (e.g., CUSeeMe), and the evolution of friendly graphical interfaces that can access sound with still and motion video (e.g., Netscape Navigator). Also, he includes selected lists of social studies resources for teachers and students.

Milton Kleg explores what he describes as the "darkside" of cyberspace and the implications for social studies teachers, in chapter 4. He recounts in exacting detail the alarming evolution and particulars of the growing list of groups that spew out hate using telecommunications. He underscores with concrete illustrations that the same technotools used to further desirable instructional ends in the social studies can be used equally easily to advance the goals of racial and ethnic hate groups.

In chapter 5, Richard Diem examines the relationship between civic education and the technologies described in the preceding chapters. He observes that, despite the wide acceptance of technology throughout our society, we still lack a clear understanding of its impact on civic education.

In his analysis, Diem skewers the crucial social issues that an ever-increasing array of sophisticated technotools have spawned. Further, he examines the roles that social studies teachers will play in a computer-intensive democratic society. In doing so, Diem also shares his vision of how computers can enhance the lives of all citizens.

The concluding chapter, by Patrick Fitzgerald and James Lester, peers into the future. Extrapolating from informed analyses of current developments relating to cutting-edge technologies, Fitzgerald and Lester intrepidly speculate on what social studies instruction in the twenty-first century will be like.

They project the emergence of technology-rich educational communities known as "immersive knowledge-base learning environments." More specifically, they hypothesize dominant roles for technologies based on advanced artificial intelligence (e.g., 3-D images, complex, human-like electronic mentors that pose and solve problems and offer advice).

Hopefully, ITeSS will serve as a key resource for both social studies teachers and academicians exploring emerging issues and applications concerning technology and the social studies curriculum. Also, the book may

be used as a resource in selected graduate social studies education courses and workshops. Additionally, instructors involved with undergraduate elementary, middle grades, or secondary social studies education classes may find ITeSS a useful supplement to class readings.