

ACCE Study Tour to ISTE2011

(San Francisco, New York, Washington, Philadelphia)

By Donna Gronn and Geoff Romeo



In June/July this year a group of 28 educators from across Australia travelled to the US on the 2011 ACCE ISTE Study Tour. The Tour started off very shakily thanks to volcanic action in Chile. After a few days of anxiously watching volcanic ash clouds drift across southern Australia, the majority of the group arrived in Sydney in time to depart for Los Angeles on the first leg of the journey.

The fantastic diversity of the group of like-minded educators was obvious from the start. Everyone was loaded up with laptops, ipads and cameras, or the money to pickup bargain hardware whilst in the US. The flight to LA was long, but it allowed people to finish off those last minute work commitments, get to know each other, and catch some sleep before landing in the US. We cleared customs in LA and headed for San Francisco for the first stop on our tour.

The group comprised a very broad section of educators - primary, secondary and tertiary classroom teachers, ICT coordinators, managers, private consultants and regional office managers. The government, catholic and independent sectors were all represented. The networking within the group was one of the most beneficial outcomes of the tour. Many new colleagues were gained and friendships formed.

The Tour offered fantastic opportunities to further our knowledge and develop connections with a broad range of practitioners in the area of ICT in Education. As well as attending a conference of more than 17,850 educators and exhibit personnel across five days, there was also the opportunity to visit schools and corporations, and to network whilst travelling and over meals.

Networking with world recognised practitioners



Many of our meals on the tour were organised around guest speakers and sponsored by corporates. This gave participants the opportunity for networking with each other as well as with invited guests in a relaxed social atmosphere.



In San Francisco we ate at the Franciscan Crab Restaurant. Right on the Bay in a place that retains its 1950s movie star style. Our guest speaker was Bernie Trilling, co-author of 21st Century Skills: Learning for Life in Our Times. He

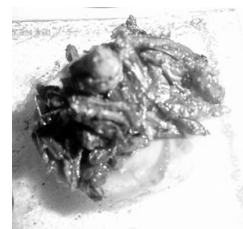
spoke briefly to the group as a whole and spent the rest of the night conversing with individuals. We also had the opportunity to speak with to Andrew Hiskens, an Australian librarian working in the US who has some wonderful ideas on how 21st Century libraries should work.



In New York we shared a meal and lively conversation with Gary Stager at Patsy's, a traditional, family-owned and operated Italian restaurant located in Manhattan. Gary is an internationally recognized educator and consultant. He has spent almost 30 years helping teachers on six continents make sense of their roles in the age of personal computing and making schools more constructive places for children.

In Washington, we were hosted by Pearson at Cocina Mexicana. With the presenters from the day joining us, this was an excellent way to digest both a great day of presentations and some more casual conversations, in the perfect atmosphere, over a beautiful meal. Just ask Geoff Romeo, the grasshopper legs were particularly delicious!

In Philadelphia, the celebrations and meals with new friends and delegates were continuous. From the breakfasts, lunches and snacks at the Reading Terminal Market to the International, Alabama and various sponsor related receptions, culminating, for the three lucky Aussies (Meg, Dawn and Sue), in attendance at the Google Party at a Philly museum.



San Francisco, New York, Washington, Philadelphia

Visits to leading schools



Urban School San Francisco was an eye-opener for us to see how city buildings could be repurposed into teaching and learning spaces. This was very different from an Australian inner-city school. Marg Lloyd was particularly interested in the “independent” schools not having to pay attention to district syllabuses and being able to do pretty much as they like.



PS234 Queens was exciting because there were kids still in classes. Although it was their last week, we got to see some teachers and students in action. Both children and teachers were very eager to show us their Promethean Interactive

White Boards and the different uses they had for them in their learning. Of course the range of teaching styles was, as in Australia, very diverse.

Mary Mount New York

was located in three interconnected mansions on 5th Avenue. They also have a permanent classroom over the road at the National Art Museum and could walk across Central Park to the National Museum of Natural History. From



this Apple Exemplary Program School, we saw video footage of ICT use and production throughout the school. One teacher spoke of the charming scene on a school field trip to London where the girls read Shakespeare on their ipads while sitting by the river Cam.

Visiting corporate ACCE partners



Visits to various corporate partners provided a diversity of unexpected knowledge and ideas. Particularly valuable was the opportunity to ask questions.

At **Apple** we had a hands-on session with the ipad2.

No future secrets shared, but plenty of apps and ideas for use in our classrooms. Practical, just like it should be!



Computer History Museum

This Museum took us all back to our childhood, some further than others! Roland was particularly excited at recognising so many computers that he once helped to throw out. As Marg Lloyd said, this place was nerd heaven. We loved it.



Google

Google is well known by all, but a visit to the Google Campus is something that has to be seen to be believed. The company has an organisational structure that encourages staff to have one day working on their own interests. This “20% time” has inspired a large amount of the fantastic products that now bear the Google name. Of course the free food, gyms, lap pool, haircuts, dry cleaning, etc. also add to a great working environment. Anne Scott particularly loved the atmosphere of the precinct and the fact that you could bring your dog to work every day! Amazing the ideas some companies can operate in their workplace. As well as a campus tour and lunch, we also saw an introduction to various Google Apps for Education. This gave us all something to investigate further, when we find the time!



Oracle Education Foundation

Oracle is the founder of the ThinkQuest International Competition. We were welcomed to an information session about ThinkQuest whilst enjoying a fantastic breakfast. This was a good opportunity for those who did not know about ThinkQuest, but also a chance for those who did (particularly Paul and Roland) to discuss the impediments related to the participation for Southern Hemisphere classrooms.



Intel

At Intel we saw the ways they assist in education as part of their philanthropic program. We learnt about the free online courses that Intel now offer to teachers in the Intel teach elements.

SIIA – Software & Information Industry Association

The study day in Washington with top level briefings from Karen Billings (Software and Information Industry Association), Keith Kruger (Consortium of School Networking) and Gideon Sanders Director of Partnerships & Internships McKinley Technology High School was a fine example of the difference between a study tour and being an independent conference delegate. This day really opened some windows into what happens behind the scenes. With ACCE’s great contacts stimulating events like this were organised throughout the tour.

Attend the ISTE Conference, Philadelphia

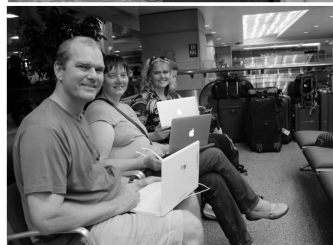
Officially the conference is three full days, but some study tour members attended weekend sessions for Affiliates and Leaders, as well as pre-conference workshops prior to the official opening on Sunday night. Study tour members were treated like royalty at all of the keynote and reception functions. As a registered Study tour, the Aussies were seated with the VIPs at every keynote session.



Keynotes are generally lock out sessions for over 5000 people so it was great to be a part of these spectacular welcomes (both human and robotic) and keynotes. As well as the already compact schedule at ISTE2011, Tony had also organized a Study Tour Briefing with ISTE luminaries including: Holly Jobe - President ISTE, Don Knezek - CEO ISTE, Howard Lurie - Associate Director, Educational Productions WGBH Boston, Julie Lindsay - Director Flat Classroom Project, Karen Cator - Director, Office of Educational Technology, US Department of Education, Sarietjie Musgrave - Head, ICTISE, ICT Innovation in School Education, Univ. of the Free State, South Africa, Gavin Dykes - Associate

Director, FutureLabs, UK, Larry Johnson - CEO New Media Consortium - K-12 Horizon report. All with something interesting to report from their own sphere of ICT in Education. Overall ISTE2011 had 1,152 presenters and 940 international attendees from 63 countries.

As well as the many excellent lecture and hands-on sessions throughout the conference there was a trade show that had to be seen to be believed. The exhibit hall was the size of 5.5 football fields, it featured 1,423 booths, and 501 companies. Some of the group made it their mission to visit them all!



One of the key benefits of any conference is the networking. This happened in sessions, between sessions in the various lounges around the conference centre and at the social events.



Planes, Trains and Automobiles (and buses, cabs and pushbikes)

One of the highlights of the tour was realised as soon as we boarded a bus in San Francisco. Free Wi-fi on the bus!! – a real bonus for the self proclaimed web-tragics in the tour group (and those catching up with friends, family and work along the way). The trains were not wi-fi equipped but the major stations were. The trains though did have power sockets for recharging, so the hundreds of appliances across the group could be charged as we travelled between New York, Washington and Philadelphia.

Many thanks to Steve Doyle, from Apple Australia, for his impromptu, ipad lessons on the train.

Sightseeing in four great cities



San Francisco is a beautiful city and offers much for the tourist, but Tony had the schedule so tightly packed (to assist us to get over our jetlag) that after an initial two hour bus trip of the sights, it was a couple of days before we could catch our breath and take a real look at what San Francisco had to offer. Of course the trolley cars were a feature. Alcatraz was also a highlight for the organised (book before you travel or you may miss out), especially those who ventured there after dark. Others took the scenic bike ride across the Golden Gate Bridge and were physically relieved to catch the ferry back to San Francisco after a day out in the sunshine.



New York was the next stop where many of the group started with a night of comedy at Caroline's on Broadway. Being a large group we were placed right in front of the comedians so that really gave all something to joke about: Teachers, Australians and Techies. We copped it all night! The following day was a free day so it was great to be able to get our bearings in New York and visit some tourist spots, and shop. June is premium sales time in the US and some of our group certainly knew how to shop. As suitcases started to bulge, second cases were bought to hold all of the US bargains. The most popular item was the Muppet character created and purchased by Meg. Many hours of fun to be had in her Queensland classroom!



Washington was the shortest stop on the tour, but we managed to pack in some great sightseeing, starting with the after dark bus tour. One full day free allowed us to explore the Washington museums and monuments of our choice. Whether by hop-on-hop-off bus or by foot, a big day was had exploring the US capital. Dawn Clark was very please to see the 'I love DC' slogan everywhere.

Philadelphia, the conference city was the base for the rest of the tour. It was good to be able to unpack a suitcase and really get into the focus of our study tour, the ISTE2011 conference.



Of course we also had to familiarise ourselves with Philly so a large group spent a few hours on Saturday on the Free Philly Historical District Walking Tour. This tour took us to some important landmarks in Philly and was expertly led by a great guide.

The majority of the time in Philly was spent at the conference or at conference events. There was not a lot of tourist time here, except for a trip to the baseball for some.!



Finally a few memories for the study tour group (you had to be there!): The 3D photo sessions, creating bogus wifi spots on the train, puppets at the Alabama reception (Roland); bodyless photographs from Anne and Dawn, cable car handbag hijinks (Sue), the bike spills (MargM & Paul) in San Francisco, Richard Gere, the techno addict, the creepy guy at the comedy show in New York; Dawn and Meg's surprise 2am visitor, Tony kicked out of Donna and Anne's session, the easy run up the Rocky stairs, the long (Meg) and the short (Geoff) of ribbons in Philadelphia; and the impromptu Muppet show on the bus to JFK.



The Study Tour was very capably led by the current president of ACCE Tony Brandenburg (AKA Richard Gere), and our ISTE's International representative, and the immediate past president of ACCE, Ralph Leonard. With trainee for ISTE2012 Trudy Sweeney capably assisting whenever necessary- it was a great team. Our overwhelming thanks goes to all three.

Tour group participants:

- Victoria: Tony Brandenburg, Roland Gesthuizen, Paul Chandler, Anne Scott, Donna Gronn, Mark Richardson, Geoff Romeo, Jenny Romeo, Lynne George, Sue
- Tasmania: Margaret Meijers
- NSW: Jason Arruzza
- South Australia: Ralph Leonard, Trudy Sweeney
- Queensland: Karen Swift, Meg Saunderson, Marg Lloyd, Janet Cochrane, Sue Monteath, Karin Tanzer, Tina Haylock, Jess Oram, Dawn Clark, Sally Elsby, Michael Ritter, Janine Ritter
- Steve Doyle from Apple for some of the journey

For more insights into the 2011 ACCE ISTE Study Tour read **Read Mark Richardson's :**

My Top Ten Take Outs from the ACCE Study Tour & ISTE 11.
Available at <http://tiny.cc/spl8c>

In 2012 the ISTE Conference will be held in San Diego - <http://www.isteconference.org/2012/>

Interested in the 2012 ACCE ISTE Tour? Watch this space <http://acce.edu.au/>

