List communities - a way of using Internet for your professional development

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ABOUT LISTS
Internet means many things to many people and when teachers tell their stories about how they use Internet for themselves or with their students, they invariably tell stories about colleagues they met on Internet, messages that were passed to them about unusual or interesting ideas or how they found out things. Often, it is mailing lists that were the means by which these things happened.

Like Internet, mailing lists can be described a number of ways. A simple way of thinking about them is to consider them as a convenient way to mail the same message to a group of people. In the physical world, it is the equivalent of preparing a memo for a group of colleagues, photocopying it and distributing it to each of them. By mailing to a list, each member of the list receives the same message. Lists therefore are used as a convenient and efficient way of emailing notices, newsletters and calls for help. Lists are maintained by a person, called the list owner, who keeps the wheels turning but the boring work of sending all the mail is done by a piece of software. Some lists also have a list moderator who only forwards 'approved' messages submitted to the list. However, most lists are open or unmoderated.

Another way of thinking about lists is in terms of the communities of people who converse and support each other via the list. The dialogue in list communities can seem like a conversation at conferences and in staffrooms: people with common interests chatting about their experiences. Sometimes, lists can distribute the formal conversations of the community through newsletters and electronic journals. The list communities of Internet are increasingly becoming significant ways for teachers to experience the collegiality of the online educational communities of Internet. They are becoming a source of professional support for teachers as well as a method for locating classes for online projects.

The online educational communities beginning to form in Australia complement the professional communities in which many Australian teachers participate. Many of these have emerged from the projects of State Computer Education Groups and State-based University projects which have been concerned to connect teachers and schools to Internet. These lists meet important local needs, solving connection problems, sharing technical experiences and promoting local events and initiatives. In some states, list communities provide ways for teachers to participate in a professional association's activities and state based community projects irrespective of their geographic location.

Internet lists are usually managed by a piece of software, sometimes called a List Robot. These robots allow people to add their email addresses to the list, take them off, find out who is on the lists and also find out which lists are managed by the robot at a site. There are two kinds of list robots: majordomo and listserv. It is possible to interact with these robots by sending them email messages with commands in them. The examples below show how to send a subscribe command to a list robot. Commands such as subscribe and unsubscribe are sent to the list robot. Mail to the list community is sent to the list.

NATIONAL TEACHER LISTS

Some national lists have been established to collect teachers across the country. These lists are in their infancy and the communities created by them are beginning to frame the purposes through discussion and use. To date these communities have been less concerned with technical and local issues and tend to focus on professional and curriculum issues of interest to their members.

There is a general list called Australian Teachers Community which complements the specific agendas of the specialist national lists and is intended to provide a number of important coordinating functions.
Australi an Teacher Librarians Community
OZTL_NET@listserv.csu.edu.au

The list provides a forum for teacher librarians and other library staff in school libraries as well as others interested in school libraries to meet, gain assistance and share with colleagues throughout Australia. Topics of discussion include Internet resources, library automation, events and children's literature.

To join OZTL_NET, send a message to
OZTL_NET-request@listserv.csu.edu.au
in the subject line
subscribe
do not include any information in the message field
(ie leave it blank)

To mail to this community address mail to
OZTL_NET@csu.edu.au

Australian Computer Studies Community
Oz-csc@owl.qut.edu.au

This list has been formed to help computer studies teachers share resources and computer studies curriculum ideas across the states. In the first instance, this community is planning online projects for computer studies classes. In a future project, this community will be developing professional links before hosting a stream within the Computer Studies stream at ACCE'96 in Canberra in April.

To join Oz-csc, send a message to
majordomo@owl.qut.edu.au
with a one line message
subscribe Oz-csc

To mail to this community address mail to
Oz-csc@owl.qut.edu.au

Education al technology list
edtech-aus@cleo.murdoch.edu.au

The Australian Society for Educational Technology (ASET) is a national association for people with professional interests in educational technology. ASET defines educational technology as the design, development, implementation and evaluation of systems, methods and materials to achieve effective outcomes and improve the process of human learning.

To join edtech-aus, send a message to
Majordomo@cleo.murdoch.edu.au
with a one line message
subscribe edtech-aus

To mail to this community address mail to
edtech-aus@cleo.murdoch.edu.au

Australian Teachers Community
oz-teachers@owl.qut.edu.au

This list has been created as a central device to collect teachers nationally. This national community of teachers can discuss national initiatives, seek partners for national curriculum and professional development projects, and act as a brokerage site for international contacts seeking Australian contacts. The list is a way to advertise Internet lists, projects and educational sites of interest to all Australian teachers.

To join oz-teachers, send a message to
majordomo@owl.qut.edu.au
with a one line message
subscribe oz-teachers

To mail to this community address mail to
oz-teachers@owl.qut.edu.au

History - New Zealand and Australia
H-NZ-OZ@MSU.EDU

This list is for academic study of Australian and New Zealand History, including political, military, economic, social and cultural themes. Its subscribers comprise university-level scholars, public historians, school teachers, librarians, archivists, postgraduate and honours degree candidates, and independent researchers. This is not a general chat list, but serves active researchers and teachers.

To join send a message to
LISTSERV@MSU.EDU
In the body of the message type
subscribe h-nz-oz your name

To mail to this community address mail to
H-NZ-OZ@MSU.EDU

STATE-BASED LIST COMMUNITIES FOR TEACHERS

ACT-Schools@freenet.actein.edu.au

This list began as a way of providing technical support and advertising local events for teachers in the ACTEIN Project in Canberra. It is becoming an important way for many local teachers to discuss local issues and projects and organise local professional development activities.

To join ACT-Schools, send a message to
majordomo@freenet.actein.edu.au
with a one line message
subscribe ACT-Schools

To mail to this community address mail to
ACT-Schools@freenet.actein.edu.au

Internet in Western Australia
internetwa@cleo.murdoch.edu.au

The list for discussion of regional and local issues concerning Internet users in Western Australia. It is provided mainly for organisations and community sectors in Western Australia at present lacking a high level of participation in the Internet.

To join internetwa, send a message to
Majordomo@cleo.murdoch.edu.au
with a one line message
subscribe internetwa

To mail to this community address mail to
internetwa@cleo.murdoch.edu.au
Echalk@cleo.murdoch.edu.au
This list supports teachers who have accounts at Murdoch University on Cleo and welcome subscriptions from any Western Australian teachers, schools and related organisations who have accounts on other hosts. Echalk is concerned broadly with professional development and curriculum issues in schools, including but not limited to use of the Internet and other technological innovations in education. It has lively discussions of curriculum issues, national initiatives and state-wide concerns.

To join Echalk, send a message to majordomo@cleo.murdoch.edu.au with a one-line message subscribe Echalk

To mail to this community address mail to Echalk@cleo.murdoch.edu.au

QSITE-Community@cc.uq.edu.au
This list collects Queensland teachers who are gaining Internet access across the state and draws them into the professional development and training activities of the Queensland Society. The list advertises local events, provides online technical and curriculum support and provides information about educational Internet sites and communities. It is an integral part of a range of Internet activities in Queensland.

To join QSITE-Community, send a message to majordomo@cc.uq.edu.au with a one-line message subscribe QSITE-Community

To mail to this community address mail to QSITE-Community@cc.uq.edu.au

TAS-IT@asgard.clare.tased.edu.au
This list is to encourage and facilitate general discussion about computers in Tasmanian schools.

To join the TAS-IT list, send a message to Listserv@asgard.clare.tased.edu.au

Send the one-line message in your text: subscribe tas-it

To mail to this community address mail to TAS-IT@asgard.clare.tased.edu.au

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Internet sites I visit often

FRANK JAMES
Sacred Heart College Senior School,
Somerton Park, South Australia 5044
email fjamess@nexus.edu.au

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ELECTRONIC SITES
The 'site' I use most is where I log on to get my email, and I visit it every day from home. 'A friend in need is a friend in deed', and a good site is one that gets me something I need for a lesson that I'm preparing. Modern software enables me to 'browse' the best sites to select information items for myself and others, for teaching and personal and professional development. The same software emails what I got back to my email address.

I subscribed to Edupage by sending an electronic mail 'subscribe EDUPAGE' to listproc@educom.edu.au so a summary of news items on information technology also arrives as email in my electronic mailbox three times each week. Today, a Wall Street Journal item is about measuring 'audiences' on the web. Edupage gets me 'balance', and I find email easy to 'cut and paste' for use at school. Doesn't all this make my electronic mail box a sort of 'virtual internet site'?

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K12ADMIN@LISTSERV.SYR.EDU
This is the email address of the discussion list called k12admin, but it needed my 'SUBSCRIBE K12ADMIN Frank JAMES' emailed to LISTSERV@LISTSERV.SYR.EDU to enable me to subscribe and listen in. K12admin emails to me abundant information 'posts' about issues ranging from tardiness to timetabling, and occasionally I also post something to k12admin's email address above. All posts get emailed to the 'list' of 'Educators Interested in Educational Administration', so if the thread is 'tardies' policies, and I personally want to hear about policies to manage tardiness of post-compulsory school students, I'll also hear what works in a kindergarten, and I value being told what happens at any level, if you ignore student tardiness, here or on the other side of the World.

I have to remind myself that in the USA they say 'faculty' where I say 'staff' and 'schedule' where I would say 'timetable', and some words like 'dollar' mean at least currency conversion factors and quite possibly different accounting procedures. 'Communication' is a major challenge and the word itself can have a special meaning! In this article, I'm using the words of oracy, of talking and listening to remind myself that discussion list 'conversations' only look a lot like reading and writing. I can research a 'favourite site' in a 'post' to the k12admin list!