

Our story “WI Schools Ban Facebook, IM Fraternizing Between Staff, Students” (tinyurl.com/c5xz7g) inspired readers, who weighed in on all sides of the debate over social media use.

“Our independent school recently came to the same conclusion [as the WI district], arvind s grover, director of technology at the Hewitt School in New York City, wrote on *SLJ*’s site. “Our policy says that faculty and students should use school-sponsored online spaces to communicate. That means e-mail, Moodle, blogs, and wikis. Creating appropriate boundaries seems reasonable to me. Would you contact a potential employer or current employer via Facebook?”

Meanwhile, teacher librarian Carol VanHook, uses Facebook to share book club information with her students at S. E. Polk High School in Pleasant Hill, IA. “I value this tool as an open line of communication,” she wrote. “Many students have sought homework help from me on Facebook, 24-7!”

LM-NET (www.lm-net.info), the popular discussion group for media specialists, hosted its own lively debate. Here, too, comments ranged, from one that characterized social media use with students as “unprofessional” to another considering the possibilities of networking in elementary school.

“If we block access to Facebook and MySpace during school and create policies (tinyurl.com/c5xz7g) about who can contact students, how on earth can we expect kids to learn responsible use?” wrote Shannon Walters on LM-NET. A teacher librarian at C. P. Smith Elementary School in Burlington, VT, she says it’s important to demonstrate ethical and appropriate use. “I wouldn’t consider friending my students, but I would consider friending parents with a professional FB page to get the message out about new books and school events,” wrote Walters, who also manages a Twitter feed for parents.—K. I.



For more comments, visit the online version of this article at www.slj.com/facebook_debate.



BY STEVE HARGADON



The Best of the Web—for Shutterbugs

Share, fix, and style your images with these free tools

I picked up my digital camera the other day to find that my teenage daughter had taken several hundred photos in just a few hours, as she does with some regularity. Whether it’s trying to capture midair poses with a friend jumping on her bed or a field of flowers that caught her eye, she cares not a lick about the number of pictures she takes, and why would she? Back when I was her age, I carefully rationed myself to snapping one or two shots of a subject until the roll of film was finished. Then I took it to the photo shop for developing and printing.

What a far cry from today. While I have fewer than 10 photos of my grandparents, our family has amassed more than 20,000 images in just the last three years. Opportunities for both creating and sharing photographs have exploded in the Digital Age and the fun, free tools below are among the best on the Web. So go forth and get “snappy.”

Flickr (www.flickr.com). No longer the only photo-sharing game in town, Flickr still offers unique features with particular appeal to educators. The prominent use of the Creative Commons license (www.flickr.com/creativecommons) lets you easily find and use images licensed for sharing (search.creativecommons.org). Moreover, Flickr can help students learn the concept of licensing—as they determine which of their own photos they want to share and under what restrictions. With 5,000 photos a minute being uploaded to Flickr in a self-policing community, there are content concerns. So some educators download images at home for use in class.

Picnik (www.picnik.com). This amazing online photo-editing program makes it easy for beginners who are learning to crop or eliminate red-eye, but it’s also sophisticated enough for the more advanced user, offering some cool artistic effects even in the free version.

GIMP (www.gimp.org). A full-featured, high-end “image manipulation program.” Similar to Photoshop, GIMP is open source and free to download and use. It’s also great for advanced techniques. Place the program on a CD or memory key for students to take home.

Cooliris (www.cooliris.com). A browser plugin that transforms searching for photographs into an amazing visual experience. Check it out.

David Jakes’s Flickr in Education Page (www.jakesonline.org/flickrsites.htm). A great one-stop resource with links to all kinds of Flickr-based tools, presentations, and educational applications.

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