

Editorial: Discourse on Technology in Social Education

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Research and Scholarship in Technology and Social Studies

Research and scholarship in social studies and technology has taken two basic forms over the past decade and a half. Early scholarship on social studies and technology focused on theoretical arguments about how to integrate technology into social studies practice. This first wave of scholarship tended to tout the potential of technology to transform social studies teaching and learning. Accompanying these uplifting and theoretical works were descriptive accounts of how technology could be or was being used in the social studies. Seminal works in this wave of scholarship by researchers such as Diem (1983), Ehman and Glen (1991), Berson (1996), and Martorella (1997) laid a theoretical base of research on technology and social studies.

A second more empirical strand of scholarship and research on technology and social studies emerged out of these early theoretical considerations of technology and social studies. Over the last 6 years this journal has been active in publishing work in this second area. Although our first publication, "Guidelines for Using Technology to Prepare Social Studies Teachers" (Mason et al., 2000) fits within the more theoretical line of scholarship, subsequent publications have focused almost exclusively on empirical research.

As the field as a whole proceeds into a third decade of sustained scholarship on digital technology and social studies, conceptualizations and a more fully formed research agenda appear to be emerging. There is a need to begin to examine clearly and to detail how technology influences student learning in both K-12 and teacher education settings. This effort will require a sustained focus on specific technologies used in social studies classrooms. Some of the areas requiring additional attention within this area include visualization of knowledge, digital historical thinking, scaffolding in Web environments, children in virtual social space, technologically enabled collaborative environments, geographic representations, and graphical simulation. Research in all of these areas must be done in the contexts of the diversity learners bring to their uses of technology, as well as considerations of the availability of technology particularly for minority and disadvantaged groups.

In addition, research is needed to improve social studies educators' understanding of how the knowledge base and subsequent activities of teachers with regard to using digital technologies in social studies classrooms develop. Again, work is just beginning in this area, as researchers start to operationalize and unpack the concept of technological pedagogical content knowledge (Mishra, & Koehler, 2006). Research in these areas is developing but not without the typical problems associated with scholarship in education, including the difficulty of maintaining dense collaborative networks between researchers, the continued existence of balkanized and disassociated efforts of individual educational and social science researchers within and across academic institutions, and the subsequent slow turnaround of educational research in academic journals (see Burbules & Bruce, 1995; Deem, 1996; Donmoyer, 1996; Tuire & Erno, 2001).

Expanding Our Emerging Knowledge Through Discourse

One way to foster more dense and collaborative networks of educational researchers is to encourage discourse about research process and outcomes. Discourse should be a vital part of the social studies research experience. Whether the experiences are formalized in the classroom or are part of our everyday life, the serious conversations we have about topics, events, and issues relative to our social lives frame our scholarly life. Engaging in such dialogues and with various narratives provides a space for new meanings and understanding to emerge. Participating in such activities requires us to be "conscious of how we come to our knowledge and as conscious as we can be about the values that lead us to our perspectives. It asks we be accountable for how and what we know. But it does not insist that there is only one way of constructing meaning, or one right way" (Bruner, 1990, p. 30).

Discourse is vital to any emerging field, and technology can facilitate vibrant and meaningful talk about the structure and substance of emerging research ideas. The reality of scholarly work is that many scholars do not engage in active and meaningful discourse about scholarship outside of the closed communities of their classes and conferences. Both of these environments are ultimately limited and not necessarily suited to the systematic, sophisticated, and scholarly development of new knowledge. Although discussions in the halls at our national conferences can be meaningful, it is often hard to reconnect in meaningful ongoing ways when faced with the limitations of time and space.

We need to stretch our discourse outside the bounds of singular research agendas. Such rationalizations are important because we are trying to compel people to act in a mostly unnatural way. By unnatural we mean that social studies, despite its subject matter, is a field that does little in the way of extensive collaborative scholarship. Other scholarly areas have extended their scholarship in meaningful ways through technologically enabled collaborative environments. The Carnegie Foundation's efforts at a Scholarship of Teaching discourse have been facilitated through resources such as the Visible Knowledge Project (<https://www.georgetown.edu/crossroads/vkp/index.htm>). Closer to social studies, the discipline of history has opened new forums for discourse through projects such as History Now (<http://www.historynow.org/>) and the History News Network (<http://hnn.us/>).

A Call for Discourse

Over the last 7 years, *CITE Journal - Social Studies* has published 26 research or scholarly articles and five research commentaries. The commentaries have focused specifically on concurrently or previously published articles. Commentaries have served the purpose of advancing dialogue and discourse around the central findings or claims of published *CITE Journal - Social Studies* articles. In an effort to extend the scholarly

discourse initiated with these commentaries and, in more practical terms, to facilitate needed discourse on particular themes, we have created an online environment for discourse on specific journal-related topics. This online resource will host discourse on specific topics emerging from *CITE Journal - Social Studies* articles, as well as general topics in the areas of social studies and technology research and scholarship. An initial discussion will focus on a revisiting of the first publication in *CITE Journal - Social Studies*, "Guidelines for Using Technology to Prepare Social Studies Teachers" (Mason et al., 2000), given subsequent research findings in related fields. Additional discourse might relate to a host of topical areas, including some of the following.

- The impact and implementation of state and national standards and guidelines related to technology use in social studies.
- Evidence of the impact of technology on student learning and student attitudes, including teacher education-related program reviews, specific research agenda, anecdotal evidence.
- Examples of wise practice and specific examples of technology use from the field.
- The impact technology integration on teaching, both in-service and preservice, including discussions of case studies and descriptive work.
- Innovative uses of digital technologies in social studies.
- The conceptual idea of a shared space for research and collaborative work.

The Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education (SITE) – publisher of *CITE Journal - Social Studies* – has established an initial Web site for discourse on technology and teacher education related topics at <http://www.SITEblog.org>. SITEblog exists to "promote dialog and interaction among SITE members as well as non-members about a variety of issues relating to our mission." An opening *CITE Journal - Social Studies* strand is on the SITEblog and open to all readers. We hope our efforts to facilitate talk about research in social studies and technology will provide new understandings about how knowledge is created around scholarly activities. We plan to report periodically about our process and invite all interested readers to join us in our exploration.

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