
Book Reviews

Using Technology Wisely: the keys to success in schools

HAROLD WENGLINSKY, 2005

New York: Teachers College Press

102 pages, ISBN 0 8077 4583 9, \$21.95

In *Using Technology Wisely*, Harold Wenglinsky sets out to study the worth or value of digital technology in education. He begins by discussing two opposing views of pedagogy: a didactic view (a traditional pedagogical approach whereby the teacher is viewed as 'the sage on the stage' transferring all knowledge to the students), and a constructivist view (a pedagogical approach whereby the teacher is viewed as 'a guide on the side' providing opportunities to facilitate the construction of knowledge in the student). Wenglinsky uses qualitative research findings to exemplify both approaches to technology use (i.e. didactic versus constructivist). Wenglinsky comes down squarely on the constructivists' side, and this orientation frames the remainder of his analyses.

Wenglinsky's view of the constructivist approach to teaching revolves around the fact that learning is not linear, as viewed by practitioners of the didactic pedagogical approach (i.e. first *x* must be learned before *y* can be learned). That is, learning is a dynamic process whereby the learner is encouraged to engage in the analysis and synthesis of knowledge. Teachers practising a constructivist pedagogy are encouraged to customise their teaching in order to facilitate – rather than direct – students' *construction* of knowledge. As part of this process, teachers 'reframe' concepts to assist each learner to see things from different perspectives in the search for knowledge. In contrast, within a didactic pedagogical approach, teachers merely present the 'truth' to students and count that as 'learning'. If a learner 'doesn't get it', the teacher merely repeats the facts until they are learned. In short, the student is not active in his/her learning.

Wenglinsky emphasises that constructivist pedagogy acknowledges how students should think abstractly while at the same time be exposed to concrete examples from various relevant contexts. From this perspective, all learners will gain knowledge once the concept is 'framed' in a manner that is understood by each individual learner. It is up to the teacher to utilise the necessary tools (e.g. organise field trips, conduct experiments, create a slide show on computers, etc.) and provide the necessary contexts within which to solidify concepts being taught. In short, where the didactic approach merely hands facts and established ideas to students, the constructivist approach allows the students to do most of the work – mistakes included – in order to meet with success and go beyond basic understanding of concepts.

The focus of the book centres on three key areas:

- Issues to do with digital technology in the school system (primarily within the USA)
- The manner in which technology is used by teachers in the classroom (pedagogy)
- The subsequent results of student learning with the technology in schools

Wenglinsky usefully questions the 'value' that technology adds to good teaching. He begins this critique with a discussion of learning. For him, learning comprises three dimensions: 1. The teacher; 2. The learner; and 3. The medium.

Computers are another means for learning and are utilised by teachers to guide students and are for students to utilise in their search for knowledge. At times there are constraints to learning when computers are the medium, but Wenglinsky also acknowledges that computers can provide many learning opportunities as well. He goes out of his way to repeatedly stress how computers are tools and how this means that computers provide teachers with a whole bunch of 'tools' to help define concepts for students. Computers can provide 'teachable moments' like other tools do in a

good teacher's arsenal. If, however, computers are simply used in a manner analogous to the 'drill-and-kill' worksheets that are so common within present-day classrooms, Wenglinsky argues that little in the way of worthwhile learning will result from their use.

Wenglinsky describes how in recent years in the United States there have been three distinct movements regarding the improvement of the education system grounded in the introduction of digital technology into classrooms. He goes into some depth explaining these three movements: the Standards Movement, whereby student performance expectations are clearly stated, and the bar is raised regularly with regard to what counts as acceptable performance; the Educational Technology Movement, whereby technology is introduced into classrooms, with plenty of incentives and funding poured into the school system to assist students to achieve (the 'no child is left behind' policy is aligned with this movement); and the Movement to Improve Teacher Quality, whereby teachers are provided with a range of in-service and classroom-based opportunities to learn various ways of using digital technologies in their classrooms.

Wenglinsky argues that the desired effect of each of the various movements is to develop and significantly raise academic standards, and to utilise technology to further improve student performance. In the end, this would develop a United States twenty-first-century workforce to be reckoned with on the world stage.

Wenglinsky takes advantage of substantial quantitative data to support his own position and to make a number of convincing assertions regarding the use of technology in classrooms. He appears to have no problem with the premise of a strong twenty-first-century workforce. However, he does state quite clearly that there has been inconsistency in the approach to achieving such a goal. He argues out that the weak link in developing a strong workforce lies with teachers themselves. Student performance standards can be in place, technology can be purchased and installed, but the pedagogical approach can remain inconsistent with national goals. Wenglinsky asserts rather convincingly how the 'didactic' teaching style of US teachers has not worked in terms of achieving policymakers' goals. For example, he provides data measuring student performance in reading, mathematics and science at the ages of 9, 13, and 17 in 1988 and 1999, taken from the National Center for Education Statistics, to show little to no real improvement in student performance in reading and mathematics, the only improvement being for 17-year-olds in science (see Table I; the statistics range in scale from 0 to 500; taken from Wenglinsky [2005], p. 15).

	Mean score in 1988	Mean score in 1999	Change in mean score from 1988 to 1999	Note
<i>Reading</i>				
9-year-olds	212	212	0	Insignificant changes in performance
13-year-olds	257	259	+2	
17-year-olds	290	288	-2	
<i>Math</i>				
9-year-olds	230	232	+2	Significant but modest increases
13-year-olds	270	276	+6	
17-year-olds	305	308	+3	
<i>Science</i>				
9-year-olds	229	229	0	Only 17-year-olds being statistically significant
13-year-olds	255	256	+1	
17-year-olds	290	295	+5	

Wenglinsky states that given the efforts by the policymakers and key pundits within each of the three 'improvement' movements described above, the achievement scores are rather unimpressive and says that 'the majority of students are not proficient in reading, math, or science, at the 4th, 8th, or 12th grades' (p. 15).

Furthermore, Wenglinsky directs the reader's attention to comparisons of student performance on the international stage. According to figures released by the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) – which tests and surveys students around the world – describing student performance and achievement in math and science, 'U.S. students are somewhat above average in the 4th grade, in the middle by the 8th grade, and among the lowest performers by the 12th grade' (p. 15). Wenglinsky goes on to point out other similar statistics and studies to drive home his point (see Chapter 4 in particular). In the end, it is rather clear that the three movements

have not done what they set out to do; that is, despite the influx of millions (if not billions) of dollars to create technology-rich classrooms, students 'learned little more than their counterparts did in the late 1980s' (p. 15).

It is noted by Wenglinsky that the teaching workforce of the United States is primarily didactic in its pedagogy. In contrast, the pedagogical approach of one of the highest-performing countries, Japan, is a constructivist one. Wenglinsky states rather clearly that pumping millions of dollars into technology in classrooms will not result in significant performance improvements – what is needed is a 'constructivist' approach. In short, he states, 'The workforce of the twenty first century values independent decision making, complex problem solving, teamwork, and ongoing performance appraisal – all components of a constructivist, not a didactic pedagogy' (pp. 14-15).

Some of the most important topics, issues and themes addressed in this book – to which some have already been alluded – include:

- Examination of historical and present educational policies in the United States
- Movements in the field of education (Standards Movement, Technology Movement, Teacher Quality Movement)
- What anecdotal research has to say about technology and student success
- What the data show regarding technology and student learning in schools
- Recognition of other factors in the research of technology and schools (e.g. socio-economic status, urban versus suburban, minority status versus dominant status, quality of access to computers, teacher preparedness)
- A call to arms for policymakers and other interested parties in the school system to make wise and informed decisions. Wenglinsky asks policymakers to implement a constructivist pedagogy in order to fully gain and benefit from technology in the classrooms.

In short, the scope and purpose of this book is to provide the reader with a clear and easy-to-follow historical understanding of two opposing pedagogical positions and then to relate these views to classroom practices using technology. Furthermore, the book not only focuses on why computers are used the way they are (e.g. policies, teacher training, money issues), but also provides an in-depth examination of how computers are utilised pedagogically in US classrooms. Wenglinsky clearly outlines his own views on computer technology and student learning, and – drawing on a constructivist model of teaching and learning – shares key points, examples, and opinions on how computers should be most appropriately utilised in classrooms in order for students to fully benefit. In so doing, he provides the reader with ample evidence to support his position and with suggestions for classroom practice (see especially Chapter 3, 'Tales of Educational Technology').

Wenglinsky explains that policymakers, government agencies, teachers, and private organisations are all in the mix when it comes to ensuring effective student learning. The role of each of these players is examined, and a road map for the development of an engaged, higher-order thinking, problem-solving student is plotted out by the author. For Wenglinsky, teachers must be taught both about using computers and about using the pedagogy found to be most productive with computers - that is, constructivist pedagogy. To back up this claim, he draws on several case studies to illustrate didactic teaching practices that have little or no effect on student learning or test performance (e.g. where computer labs are used as a dumping ground for unsupervised drill-and-practice activities). He contrasts this with several examples of schools where a constructivist approach is taken and shows how computers are just one part of the learning fabric of these schools. Each of the schools in these examples demonstrates increased student achievement and high levels of performance. Wenglinsky succinctly uses an entire chapter (i.e. Chapter 4, 'The Effectiveness of Educational Technology') to back up his claims by providing additional educational research evidence that clearly links the effectiveness of constructivist pedagogy, computer use, and high levels of student performance. Although statistic-laden, this particular chapter is neither dry nor laborious reading. Moreover, this chapter appears to be the 'cherry on the cake' as it convincingly plots a course for the education system's use of technology – should there remain a shred of doubt in the reader's mind as to which pedagogical approach best produces significant student academic achievements.

Wenglinsky clearly addresses his stated aim of examining the questions: is technology good or bad, why is it so, and how is it so? Indeed, the author responds to this framing sequence of questions quite early on in the book with: 'It depends.' That is, Wenglinsky argues, '[i]n the end,

educational technology needs to be understood not as an isolated event, but as a piece of the puzzle of how teachers teach and students learn' (pp. 4-5). In short, teachers need not only ask themselves *why* computers are a necessary option and *what* they need to know about computers (e.g. software/website), but rather (and most importantly), teachers need to know *how* they are to appropriately use such tools (i.e. pedagogical approach). Wenglinsky goes on to explain 'these pieces of the puzzle' in more detail, and addresses several issues to this end, including those concerning:

- The 'best' pedagogical approaches
- The impact of policies of governing bodies (i.e. federal vs. state vs. local vs. school district vs. private sector/business)
- Teacher preparedness (i.e. learning the technology and learning how to use the technology as a tool and not just as a drill-and-kill device replacing worksheets)
- Access to computers (i.e. providing all students with equitable technology and instruction – not differentiating between race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, etc.)

After all is said and done, Wenglinsky is convincing in his important and repeated assertion that the overriding factor in determining student success boils down to the pedagogical approach utilised by the teacher. Teachers are called on not only to 'learn the technology', but to use it as a tool in an appropriate manner (e.g. not falling back on drill-and-kill approaches). For Wenglinsky, teachers' understanding of how instructional practices and curriculum need to be integrated appropriately is the key to student success. Teachers are encouraged to think beyond covering expected or required content in their classes. Moreover, strong suggestions are made for using technology in the classroom as a tool with which students can demonstrate creativity (e.g. encouraging them to write stories, enhancing presentations, allowing teachers to learn different technologies from the kids, allowing for the learner to 'steer the ship'). When teachers acknowledge that they don't know it all and that the students have something to offer, computers are a perfect tool to encourage and empower the students. In doing so, the teacher becomes a learner too. Doing otherwise nullifies any gains achievable by means of using technology in the classrooms. Wenglinsky provides well-supported arguments for the claim that the 'sage on the stage' must be replaced with 'the guide on the side' if student achievement and effective learning is to take place. The constructivist approach looks to be – both qualitatively and quantitatively – the road to take in order for academic success to be achieved in schools.

Using Technology Wisely raises many questions regarding policies, teacher training, technology issues, and issues regarding the keys to student success in school. The issues are both theoretical and practical in nature and they are timely and undeniably relevant in today's society. Stakeholders in education (i.e. parents, government, school districts/boards, policymakers, and teachers) would all find this book to be a worthwhile and satisfying read. It deals with relevant issues in a clear and concise manner, taking into consideration historical, political, educational, and theoretical dimensions.

This book clearly provides insights into the 'what' (what is pedagogically correct, what is technology, what are the policies) and leaves it up to policymakers, school boards, government agencies, professional bodies, industry leaders, and teachers to provide the 'how' (how to use technology appropriately). If the 'what' and the 'how' are combined, according to Wenglinsky, students will become creative, independent thinkers, team-oriented, complex problem-solvers, and will construct their own knowledge in order to be active leaders in the twenty-first century.

I have taken the constructivist road myself in my own pedagogy and although the road signs were not always clearly marked for me, the places I've gone with my students have been amazing, varied and always engaging on a deep level. As the teacher, I may not always know the route to our desired destination, nor can I accurately estimate our arrival time, but the adventure is getting there ... and the process is called learning, and involves everyone - including me.

Indeed, I personally found this book to be so relevant and thought-provoking that I have placed it on the required reading list for an additional teacher qualifications course that I instruct in Canada. This course – Integration of Information Technology in Instruction – deals with issues and concerns raised and succinctly addressed by Wenglinsky, including examining the keys to successfully and wisely using computer technology in schools. That being said, this book should be on the required reading list for *all* teachers in pre-service and in-service training. I give this book a

rating of 9 out of 10, with my only regret being that the research data are drawn solely from the United States. I would be curious to see the results of similar studies from other countries. Nonetheless, despite the US-centric scope of this book, as a teaching practitioner and an instructor to teachers, I see much of truth and value in what Wenglinsky has to say. The information presented is real, relevant, and pertinent to all classrooms everywhere.

John Masciarelli

*Toronto Catholic District School Board,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

The Uses of Blogs

A. BRUNS & J. JACOBS, 2007

New York: Peter Lang

267 pages, ISBN 978 0 8204 8124 1, \$32.95

The Uses of Blogs is a compilation of 22 chapters that deal with the different ways in which blogs have been utilised. These uses include newsblogging; scholarly, political and educational blogging; blogging as a tool in editing and publishing; fictional, corporate and subcultural blogging, and many more. The number of chapters and the breadth of topics might indicate a massive and somewhat fragmented volume, but this is not the case. The chapters are relatively short – around ten pages each – and the editors have made the important (and often neglected) effort to ensure the individual contributors were aware of the content of each other's chapters. This, together with boxes in the margins highlighting and explaining important terms appearing in the chapters, gives the book a more unified and discursive feel than typically found in compilations. The book manages to convey an overall impression that resembles the open, spacious and generous feel of the blogosphere (the term itself being one of those first explained in the book, on page 5).

The book is divided into three sections: blogs in industries, blogs in society, and the future of blogging. In the industry section, two chapters, by Axel Bruns and Jane B. Singer respectively, are devoted directly to newsblogging, with a third chapter concentrating on PR and spin. Importantly, blogs have become one of the main tools in circumventing the gatekeepers of mainstream media. As Bruns notes in his chapter, 'The Practice of Newsblogging', the traditional tasks of editing, gatekeeping and gatewatching are not simply disappearing because of the emergence of blogging. Rather, these tasks and functions are distributed more widely, resulting in a less hierarchical and much more complicated media landscape. Interestingly, the claim that newsblogging provides a genuinely new outlet for otherwise neglected voices has recently started to receive some confirmation from studies not directly dealing with new media. For instance, in his ethnography of direct action, the anthropologist David Graeber devotes a lot of attention to how the creation of the global justice movement's 'own media' has influenced the direct action of this movement since the anti-WTO protests in Seattle in 1999 (see Graeber, 2009). According to Graeber, for the activists, the possibility of getting one's own story out has been a crucial moral and social moment without which the global justice movement would not exist in the form it does today. Furthermore, the actual uses of blog-aggregating sites like Indymedia.org constitute in Graeber's analysis one of the focal points in the day-to-day functioning and social interaction of the movement, thus giving their own distinctive twist to the identity, structure and goals of the movement as a whole.

A proliferation of perspectives and voices is one of the benefits to be found among newsblogs, but this same proliferation also contributes to the relative weakening of professional fact-checking and exploration of backgrounds, which has been seen both as a problem and as an opportunity for a culture of reflective uncertainty. Here both Bruns and Singer are cautiously optimistic, trying to strike a balance between the wildest utopias of a full-scale 'communications renaissance' (best exemplified in the book by a chapter by Joanne Jacobs and Douglas Rushkoff) and a view seeing only the inevitable decline of hard-won journalistic clarity and integrity. The term 'produser' (p. 6), coined by Bruns to describe the simultaneous production and consumption roles of users of collaborative forums, captures this balance in one word. Quite rightly, Bruns and Singer each emphasise not only the complementary but also the symbiotic relationship between blogs and

traditional newspapers. Both mediums feed on each other and benefit from cross-pollination. Blogging and digital media certainly bear some of the blame for the recent hardships that newspapers are facing, but at the same time the economic downturn is a much bigger culprit in terms of negative effects on the quality of digital news services and, indeed, of blogging, too.

As noted above, despite the breadth of topics covered within the three sections of this volume, the book manages to present a number of observations on the uses of blogs that can easily be generalised further than the contexts in which they are presented. One example of such an observation with wider purchase is John Quiggin's description of how monetary motives seem to push out or overshadow other motives for blogging. Quiggin is writing about 'economic blogs and blog economics', but the following crystallisation describes blogging in general: 'Although non-monetary motivations for blogging are diverse, they tend to reinforce each other, or at least tend not to contradict each other. By contrast, market rationality tends to crowd out non-monetary motivations' (p. 76). This observation is reinforced by two other chapters that deal with blogging environments that are not entirely comfortable with diverse non-monetary motives: blogging inside a corporation, and blogging in academia (or 'Inside the Ivory Tower', as Jill Walker puts it in the title of her chapter). In these environments the *ethos* of blogging encounters friction and limitations that can be overcome, but that at the same time necessitate a more conscious approach from the individual blogger. Fortunately, both Walker on academic blogging and Suw Charman on corporate blogging provide helpful pointers and how-to tips on how blogs can be fruitfully used in these more limited and restricted circumstances. One of the delightful strategies suggested by Charman is called a 'Trojan Mouse' (p. 63), meaning a small piece of software or a Web 2.0 application used behind a company firewall and without managerial approval.

Pedagogy and education also receive attention in two chapters. Given the often-repeated fact that the younger generations are generally more at home with tools of new media compared with older generations, it is quite important to pay attention to the kinds of experience presented by Jean Burgess in her article 'Blogging to Learn, Learning to Blog'. According to Burgess, one should not expect that students are previously familiar with, let alone willing to engage in, social media in their studies: 'While most undergraduate students these days are very comfortable using computers and the Internet for interpersonal communication (chat, email) and information retrieval (Google), the creative, 'producerly' use of technology requires a perspectival shift that presented a significant challenge to many of the students' (p. 108). The crux is the 'perspectival shift'. Many students have through their years in the gears of formal education internalised a model of learning where they act as receivers and expect from the teacher – and the system in general – precise information on what needs to be received and remembered and how that reception is going to be controlled in exams or tests. Called the 'banking model' of education by Paulo Freire, and discussed by James Farmer in his chapter in this collection (p. 92), this is unfortunately everyday practice in schools around the world. If the students are then presented with the possibility – let alone the demand – to start producing informational resources, knowledge and cognitive interaction, they face a task that is unfamiliar to the point of feeling unreasonable. The demand is expecting a shift not only in informational practices, but one in sociality and even identity. Again, this seems to be a feature of blogging that transcends the educational context. There are contexts and identities that are structured in ways that are blog-resistant if not blog-repellent. One should be aware of these constraints, and not overstate the universal appeal or 'naturalness' of blogging.

All in all, the book is a rich and well-edited trove of information that both provokes thought and offers fresh insight into what is happening in the blogosphere. As a teacher working inside higher education, using blogs in teaching and trying to understand their impact, I found this book very valuable and useful. The tone is relaxed and informative. The phenomena taking shape in the blogosphere and discussed in the book are so varied that all but the most dedicated bloggers will find something helpful here in terms of hands-on practical advice. At the same time, the articles together form a prismatic overview of recent developments, prompting a more reflective mode.

One may feel sympathy with some of the doubts expressed in the book on the future relevance of blogs. For instance, Jill Walker (p. 128) fears that blogs may go the way of email discussion lists that have often degenerated into channels for conference announcements and random ramblings. Some structure and management of criteria of relevance may be necessary. However, this caution should be based on an understanding of the vitality of pluralism and on a concern for the public sphere. When Bruns & Jacobs evaluate the effects of blogs and collaborative

media on the future of culture as a shift from consumption to production, they write: 'At worst, [the shift] may generate more debate and disagreement, as long-standing values and traditions are questioned' (p. 7). If this is the worst, then we are in for a treat indeed. As several observers from Nietzsche on have emphasised, it is not at all clear that the goal of public argument and democratic process should be the diminution of disagreement and the disappearance of conflicting views. Quite the contrary. Take, for instance, the definition of 'deliberative journalism' as journalism that does not only enable different viewpoints but aims at developing rather than merely expressing participants' opinions (p. 17). We should not be predisposed to a development that is convergent rather than divergent. Doing that would pre-empt the radical promise of digital tools. More debate and more disagreement might just be the goal of a pluralistic media.

Tere Vadén

University of Tampere, Finland

Reference

Graeber, D. (2009) *Direct Action: an ethnography*. Edinburgh: AK Press.

A New Literacies Sampler

MICHELE KNOBEL & COLIN LANKSHEAR (Eds), 2007

New York: Peter Lang

251 pages, ISBN 978-0-8204-9523-1, \$29.95

New information and communication technologies engender new forms of literacy that impose great implications for education and learning practices. These implications must be considered carefully, as new innovations are being easily and hastily introduced into the classroom and integrated into pedagogical practices. The way we engage students with texts and other mediums are being reconsidered and challenged as new media technologies are introduced in the classroom. The emergence of text-heavy new media tools such as Twitter and blogs, as well as social networking technologies such as Facebook and MySpace, has provided new venues for young people to engage in writing and reading. To simply say that today's students are not reading and writing is to ignore the myriad literacy activities around these new technologies (Jenkin, 2009). Twiku, for example, is a popular activity among young people where they 'broadcast' original haiku poetry to the Twitterverse. Today's young people are no doubt reading and writing; but the type of literacy and skills that these activities prompt and promote remains a scholarly question and matter of interest for many researchers. Knobel & Lankshear's *A New Literacies Sampler* 'samples' a range of essays that critically examine what it means to read, write, and learn with and through new technologies; in essence, these essays redefine what it means to be literate in the twenty-first century.

As a new field of research, the study of new literacies requires a careful articulation of aims, definitions, and methods. As such, the book begins with Knobel & Lankshear's explication of the 'new' in new literacies, and this marks it as one of the book's greatest contributions to the study of new literacies. They propose a sociocultural framework that distinguishes two aspects of new literacies: new 'technical stuff', and new 'ethos stuff', and they separate analysis of new technologies from analysis of literacy practices involving new technologies. New literacies, they argue, consist of both new technologies and new practices, and must mobilise new values, sensibilities, and norms. Out of this new 'stuff' emerges a new mindset that values the collective and sees the world as fluid and ever-changing. Without this new mindset, conventional literacy activities that leverage new technologies are not per se new literacies.

Kevin Leander's chapter further illuminates how 'technical stuff' without new 'ethos stuff' can hinder new practices and thus is the antithesis to the new-literacies framework. Leander attributes many of these pedagogical mistakes to the 'keep doing what you're doing' attitude where teachers place new technologies into classrooms simply to adhere to or 'enhance' already existing pedagogical and contextual characteristics of the traditional classroom. Many educators, he argues,

may adopt new media technologies, but their practices and attitudes are not congruent to the ethos of new literacies and so their efforts amount to what he calls a *technology refusal*. In order for educators to truly consider the application of new literacies in the school, significant educational reforms must go hand in hand with the introduction of new technology and new practices. But what types of reforms are necessary for new literacies to impact the school?

Through a number of essays by prominent literacy scholars, the book as a whole comes together to define literacy as a process concerned with engagement in affinity groups (Gee, 2004, 2009). Rather than asking, 'How can we engage young people in reading and writing?', the question really becomes, 'How are new literacy practices encouraging young people to participate in affinity groups?' Reforms in literacy pedagogy must consider the latter question for literacy practices to make an impact in learning and education. Each chapter analyses a particular literacy practice in a new media example, ranging from websites to video games to fan fiction to blogs. Underlying these analyses is the theme that new literacies focus heavily on production (such as fan fiction) as an entry to an affinity group (such as a fan fiction social network website). Affiliation and participation becomes a motivating factor and a rationale for literacy activities. The various examples and analyses presented throughout these chapters convincingly assert that young people are indeed engaging in a range of literacy activities. Young people are writing and reading a lot if we account for literacy activities that are beyond the confines of the school classrooms, and they do so in order to enter and participate in the affinity groups that they care about. A student might not seem engaged when completing a creative writing assignment, but the same student could be an active and prolific member of a role-play forum board. For researchers, this warrants a careful examination of how existing, attractive affinity groups are engaging young people in writing and reading. And for educators, we need to reassess whether our classrooms are creating spaces that invite young people to participate, and how we fold literacy practices into their participation in affinity groups.

One important element to consider when reading this edited volume is that technology and teaching practices are dynamically interacting domains (Koehler et al, 2005). In the existing literature, much of the discussion around new technology and literacy has taken a relatively reactionary stance – educators *respond* to new trends in media technologies and *make room* for these new activities in the classroom. However, as this book illustrates, new literacies do not begin with new technologies, even though new technologies are a requisite. The classroom needs to first provide meaningful social spaces that engage young people, and through this engagement that is mediated by new media technologies, new mindsets and new practices would then become relevant and necessary for students.

Clement Chau

*Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development,
Tufts University, Medford, MA, USA*

References

- Gee, J.P. (2004) *Situated Language and Learning: a critique of traditional schooling*. London: Routledge.
- Gee, J.P. (2009) Digital Media and Learning as an Emerging Field. Part I: how we got here, *International Journal of Learning and Media*, 1(2), 13-23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/ijlm.2009.0011>
- Jenkin, H. (2009) *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: media education for the 21st century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Koehler, M., Mishra, P., & Yahya, K. (2005) Tracing the Development of Teacher Knowledge in a Design Seminar : integrating content, pedagogy, and technology, *Computers & Education*, 49, 740-762. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2005.11.012>