TechMatters: Keep on Keeping Up: Resources for Monitoring Developments in Educational Technology

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Educational technology, situated within one small corner of the much larger information technology landscape, is in a constant state of change and evolution. Information about new instructional tools and ideas for their effective use in the classroom seems to appear on an almost daily basis. With the field in such a state of flux, how can a busy instruction librarian keep up with the latest in educational technology? To help answer that question, assembled below you will find a sampling of some useful online sources to let you know what's new, what's next, and help you gather new ideas that you might want to incorporate into your own instructional environment.

Educational Technology for K-16

Edudemic
http://www.edudemic.com/

Edudemic is a resource-sharing blog designed to "cover teaching, learning, and how technology positively shapes our education" (http://www.edudemic.com/about/). Authored primarily by a team of staff writers, Edudemic produces posts covering a broad spectrum of news and trends in educational technology. The site's "Tools" section is the most useful for discovering new online resources and ideas on how to use them in the classroom (http://www.edudemic.com/category/new-tools/) where topics covered run the gamut from apps to desktop software to online tools, from tablets to laptops to multi-touch displays, and everything in between. The site also has a "Teacher's Guides" section, which gives an overview of various technologies and methods that instructors might use (e.g., Pinterest, Badges, Twitter), along with additional sections such as "How To," "Social Media," and "Trends." Edudemic offers a robust set of options to allow you to follow and keep up with their content including Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google Plus, and an RSS feed.

EdTech Magazine
http://www.edtechmagazine.com/

Published by CDW (a company that sells integrated hardware and software products to businesses, government, and education), EdTech Magazine provides news, case studies, practical advice and guides, as well as resources such as white papers and reference guides for those working in the field of educational technology. Although much of the content is aimed at information technology managers and staff, site visitors are able to filter by topic such as "Classroom" and "Hardware" which often contain useful and relevant information for instructors.

Two versions of EdTech Magazine are produced: one with a focus on K-12 and the other with a focus on Higher Education. Users are prompted to choose their version of choice from the site's home page. Once on your sub-site of choice, you can sign-up to receive a regular e-newsletter, or follow EdTech on Twitter, Google Plus, or via RSS feed.

EdTech Digest
http://edtechdigest.com/

Started in 2010, EdTech Digest is an edited blog, containing stories and columns authored by a group of regular contributors. Submissions from educators and researchers are also accepted. Content in EdTech Digest is divided into three main categories: Cool Tools, Interviews, and Trends. The Cool Tools section contains brief introductions to "the latest learning-related technology" such as apps, interactive whiteboards, smart phones, and assessment technology (http://edtechdigest.wordpress.com/cool-tools/). The Interviews section features in-depth interviews with instructors, administrators, educational leaders, inventors, and even students discussing how educational technology can impact and influence learning (http://edtechdigest.wordpress.com/interviews/). Finally, the Trends section contains reports and research findings that demonstrate "technology's impact on schools and learning" such as colleges using the cloud and mobile devices in education (http://edtechdigest.wordpress.com/trends/). To receive notifications of new articles, readers must provide their email address.

eSchool News
http://www.eschoolnews.com/

eCampus News
http://www.ecampusnews.com/

eClassroom News
http://www.eclassroomnews.com/

Aimed at "education decision makers", including both administrators and classroom teachers, these three publications from eSchool Media (http://eschoolmedia.com/about/) aim to "provide the best news, information, and resources to help…discover, evaluate, and procure technology to transform education and achieve educational goals". ESchool News, covering developments in educational technology across the K-20 spectrum, is the most comprehensive. Topics areas covered range from online learning to administration and management and from policy to professional development. ECampus News covers a similar variety of topics but with a focus on higher education, while eClassroom News is targeted specifically at classroom teachers and so articles focus on practical methods to use technology in the classroom.

SmartBrief on EdTech
https://www.smartbrief.com/news/edtech

SmartBrief is a company that produces curated e-mail newsletters for a wide-variety of professional fields and topics (over one hundred in all). Editors select relevant industry news, for which they provide brief summaries along with links to the full source (which may or may not be freely available online). The SmartBrief on EdTech subtopic was started in 2010 and is targeted at "education stakeholders with an interest in the educational technology world" (https://www.smartbrief.com/news/edtech) and is distributed daily. Articles cover a wide-variety of topics within the field of educational technology, including e-learning, social media, mobile devices and apps, and technology funding to name just a few.

Educational Technology in Higher Education
EDUCAUSE
http://www.educause.edu/

EDUCAUSE is a non-profit association for higher education institutions and the corporations and organizations that serve them. As such, EDUCAUSE services and publications focus broadly on information technology at every level within higher education. Of course, the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning falls squarely within this mandate and so you will find whole sections of the EDUCAUSE web site dedicated to this topic including sub-sites within "Focus Areas and Initiatives" and "Research and Publications."

One particularly useful publication for keeping up with emerging technologies for teaching and learning is the ELI (EDUCAUSE Learning Initiatives) "7 Things You Should Know About …" series (http://www.educause.edu/eli) which provides short overviews of new classroom technologies and practices for their effective use in the classroom. The "Know" series has a less-prolific companion series called the "7 Things You Should Read About…", which provides links to articles for those who want a more in-depth overview of a topic.

To keep up with EDUCASE, subscribe to one (or more) of their many e-mail newsletters or twitter feeds (see: http://www.educause.edu/about/educause-news-and-updates).

ProfHacker
http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/

ProfHacker is an edited blog, hosted by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, authored by and for teaching faculty with a focus on "teaching, tech, and productivity." Although not exclusively focused on educational technology, many of the contributions to this blog describe specific tools and how they can be used to improve efficiency and effectiveness in both research and teaching. Recent relevant posts include discussions of cloud storage for backup and file sharing,

using a Kindle to deliver a conference presentation, and video annotation tools for teaching film analysis.

Educational Technology in Libraries
ACRL – Keeping Up With…
http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/keeping_up_with

Produced by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), "Keeping Up With…" is a monthly digital publication that provides "concise briefs on trends in academic librarianship and higher education" (http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/keeping_up_with). Although these briefs are not strictly limited to instruction and/or technology topics, the trends in our profession are such that these two areas are frequently covered. Recent issues have covered digital writing, MOOCs, and flipped classrooms. Each brief includes an overview of the topic and then delves into specifics demonstrating the relevance to librarians. This is a good source for getting an overview of emerging trends that you can then use as a jumping off point for further research if a topic sparks your interest.

ACRL Instruction Section – Tips and Trends
http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/directoryofleadership/sections/is/iswebsite/projpubs/tipsandtrends

The Instructional Technologies Committee members of the ACRL Instruction Section author a quarterly "Tips and Trends" publication that "introduces and discusses new, emerging, or even familiar technology which can be applied in the library instruction setting." Each issue provides an overview and definition of the technology under discussion (e.g., Social Media or Citation Managers), followed by a description of applications in academic libraries and higher education, and also in library instruction. Each paper concludes by outlining the potential value of the technology, as well as an overview of possible barriers to implementation and/or use.

Conclusion

Although these resources represent only a few of the options for keeping up with trends in the field of educational technology, they are among some of the best of which I am aware. Check them out, and follow a few for a month or two and I guarantee you'll discover some new tools and teaching techniques for use in your library instruction classroom.