

West Beyond the West: BC Digitization Symposium

User Panel

Penney Clark, Associate Professor, UBC Faculty of Education

Penney Clark uses digitized materials both as a researcher and as an instructor. As a researcher of the history of education, she uses archival materials to study the historical, political and economic contexts of textbook production. As an instructor of Social Studies Teaching and Learning, she prepares pre-service teachers to interpret the intended learning outcomes of the provincial social studies curriculum using available resources, including digitized resources.

As a researcher, Penney welcomes the possibilities presented by digitization. She gave an example of a research project working with a particular early Canadian journal that was only available in print from various libraries in the United States. The logistics of mailing 4-5 print volumes at a time stretched the project out to two years. Penney noted the importance of digitizing pan-Canadian resources, rather than focusing solely on provincial resources.

Penney remarked that there are few digitized archival materials available on the history of education in BC. However, she noted that *The Home Room* <<http://records.viu.ca/homeroom/>>, developed by Patrick Dunai, a professor of history at Vancouver Island University, is a good start. She gave examples of resources that need to be digitized, including programmes of study; textbooks; lists of authorized textbooks; Department of Education Annual Reports, circulars and correspondence; Royal Commission and Commission of Inquiry Reports, as well as briefs to these investigations; newspaper articles, columns and editorial cartoons; School Board meeting minutes; and ephemera such as parent teacher association notes, newsletters, teacher daybooks, teacher and student journals and photographs of school activities such as reading groups, science experiments, recess activities, school plays, Spring Teas, field trips and Sports Days.

Penney pointed out that digitization has huge potential for teachers of social studies. British Columbia archival sources are pertinent to the secondary social studies curriculum at grades ten and eleven, as well as to Civics 11, First Nations Studies 12, Social Justice 12 and Law 12 courses. She and other instructors in the pre-service teacher education program prepare teacher candidates to use archival resources. Students engage in such activities as virtual field trips, webquests and simulations, and podcasts. They also use digitized resources in their instructional planning.

Penney asked a group of teachers for their input around digitized materials. The following points were emphasized:

1. There is a disjuncture between the technology available at universities and colleges where teachers are being taught and the technology available to them when they begin to teach.
2. Teachers would like more digitized resources of all types available in archives, including print, visuals and music.
3. They would like resources made more accessible, with key words from the social studies curriculum, and reading levels taken into account (for example technology where clearly readable print text is presented when you hover over a handwritten text).
4. Teachers would like instructional plans to accompany resources. Penney suggests working with the Ministry of Education and other user groups to develop plans that relate directly to the curriculum. She gave the example of the Archives of Ontario website, which provides lots of instructional plans to accompany resources, where grade level, subject area and curriculum outcomes are provided.
5. Partnerships are critical. An example in BC is *Historians in the Schools*, a program developed by the North Vancouver Museum and Archives, that brings local historians into schools and acquaints teachers and students about what resources that are available and how to use them.

Penney closed by mentioning the *History Education Network/Histoire et éducation en réseau (THEN/HiER)* <<http://www.historyeducation.ca/>>, a SSHRC funded pan-Canadian network of academic historians; history educators in faculties of education; public historians at museums, archives and historic sites; history and social studies teachers; and curriculum policy-makers. The 28 partner organizations include five provincial social studies teacher and consultant associations and national organizations such as Historica, Canada's National History Society, the Canadian Museums Association and the Association for Canadian Studies. In terms of British Columbia, the BC Historical Federation, the Museum of Anthropology, the Critical Thinking Consortium, the Great Unsolved Mysteries of Canadian History project, the BC Social Studies Teachers' Association, and the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness at UBC are involved. She noted that librarians were not initially invited, but that it was not too late to join. All partners are interested in history education reform; this includes the development of curriculum materials online, and the promotion and dissemination of research related to the use of history in the classroom.