Virtual Field Trips

Presented by Dr. Pixita Del Prado-Hill

A virtual field trip (VFT) is a guided exploration through the web that organizes a collection of pre-screened, thematically based web pages into a structured online learning experience. (Foley, 2003). It is an inter-related collection of images, supporting text and/or other media, delivered electronically via the web in a format that can be professionally presented to relate the essence of a visit to a time or place. VFTs started appearing around 1995 but greatly grew in popularity starting around 2000. The VFT was seen as a way to organize the educational potential of the internet in a coherent, appropriate fashion, particularly for P-12 settings. A VFT can contain a selection of topic-specific web pages that are strung together into a grade-targeted, organized package. Often these types of VFT are provided by commercial distributors, such as Tramline.

There are a number of different formats used for VFTs and if you do a search on the web, you will find thousands of trips. Some trips simply consist of a list of links on one web page, while other trips use some type of navigator (or buttons) to move through the tour. Following current pedagogy; in its best implementation, a VFT is a real time guided field trip that is supported by interactive pages on the web that have been selected by educators and arranged in a "thread" that teachers and students can follow in either lineal or broad searching. The live links with experts on-site in real-time is a key aspect in creating a "real" experience for students. For example with LEARNZ virtual field trips students have asked questions of scientists in Antarctica, mining staff underground and even electrical engineers on the top of wind turbines.

Real-time VFTs involve the use of video and audio conferencing technologies to permit students in one location to virtually visit and learn about people or places in another location. (Definition posted on wikipedia by Ray, Zanetis in 2004).

References:

- Online field trips boost reading scores http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/showStoryts.cfm?ArticleID=5671 From eSchool News staff and wire service reports May 19, 2005
- Nix, R. (1999). A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF SCIENCE-RELATED VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS AVAILABLE ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB in partial fulfillment of the requirements in SMEC-708 Curtin University of Technology Western Australia June 10, 1999

Some possible sites to explore:

http://www.uen.org/utahlink/tours/
Take a field trip or make a field trip within the US or globally across all content areas. Dozens of trips are available to study the past or present.

http://www.field-trips.org/trips.htm

Information included about the book, *The Big Pocket Guide to Using and Creating Virtual Field Trips*. Discussion boards, permission slips (as a way to increase school-home communication), and a printable list of possible trips are also included on this site.

http://www.techtrekers.com/virtualft.htm

Dozens of possible national and global trips available at this site organized by content area and location.

http://www.internet4classrooms.com/vft.htm

Helpful information about planning, guidelines, and evaluation for virtual field trips as well as links to field trips.

http://www.uh.edu/~jbutler/anon/anontrips.html

Geology field trips are included on this site.

http://www.learnz.org.nz/

The focus of this site is on New Zealand and Antarctica. Free, fully supported, interactive student experiences are included, some of which are live.

**Ideas from the group:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website address/name</th>
<th>Information about the site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>