5. The social media as research objects and subjects

Several categories of communities co-exist in schools. Some have taken over the social media to use them as work tools. The vast majority use them for communication and exchange purposes. Following a strong movement of activism led by some personalities of the teaching world (teachers of literature, history/geography, primary school teachers and teacher librarians) social media use in class has become more frequent. Besides, teachers have also created communities based on their subject matters. The social media are a privileged support of collaborative work.

1. Social networks for teachers of the same subject matter

Disciplinary communities have gone beyond blogs and wikis and created social networks for teachers of maths (Sesamaths¹), Hist/geo/civics... They exchange examples of practices, lesson plans and participate in discussions. The success of these networks is not so much due to the advanced and multiple functions of the tool but to the capacity of their members to share the same interests and ask themselves the same questions. Just like on any platform you can distinguish between active members who give impetus, share ideas and manage the networks and more transparent members.

Being administered by peers on non-commercial platforms is one of the important commitments of such communities. But it is not the only one. Their success is due to the fact that they answer a need, the need to communicate, share, pool, compare outside the sphere of their own school, in a sphere open to their community but closed to the non-educative world, not accessible to parents and students. Communication is above all centered on exchanges of practices. It originates in a need to be reassured, to fight isolation, to find mutual aid, to validate practices, to find new approaches to ever changing situations.

2. Communicating, publishing: the social media as tools

Communication uses

Schools are opening Facebook pages for their School Documentation and Information Centres and school activities. Anne Sandova explains that “to promote cultural initiatives choosing a tool much

¹Sesamaths : http://www.sesamath.net/
²Look at Isabelle Quentin work : http://www.stef.ens-cachan.fr/annur/quentin.htm, 2011 10 28
used by the young made sense”. These pages list the cultural activities of a school, provide information on school clubs and so on. They are managed by either students or teacher librarians/school supervisors or by both, locked and moderated.

To fulfill the same objectives some schools also use Twitter school accounts. They do push information but their main aim is to redirect students to school web pages so as to increase their visibility.

Twitter and Facebook pages are essentially developed by teacher librarians in their schools and used to make information available to networks of colleague/students/parents/the community of teacher librarians... (see the Eduscol file).

Projects carried out at different school levels and for different subject matters highlight the fact that their interest mainly depend on digital identity (as concerns informational competence) and the command of the language. It is to be noted that economic and political issues are also starting to be addressed in Science and Technology classes, Economic and Social Science classes and Post A-level classes. Collaborative practices in education have been examined in an Eduscol file.

This is the Facebook page of Lycée P. Doriole. Their objective is to use the platform as a communicating tool. On the wall the students-who manage the Facebook page explain the approach. They set limits and restrictions which shows that the issue of how to use a publishing space has been discussed.

Lycée.... The official page of the Lycée is managed by the “classe de Tle Bac Pro logistique” under the responsibility of their French/history teacher.

This page is for information only and by no means designed as space for exchanges or discussions.

This is a Facebook page of the Documentation and Information Centre of Lycée Jules Fil, fed by teacher librarians. The information is provided in an attractive way, it is regularly updated and so encourages reading.

Watch activities and curation

The Netvibes universes

A lot of teacher librarians have built a Netvibes universe to facilitate information circulation. Sometimes they are really thought out as learning tools, with explanations on RSS stream data, tools to write out bibliographies with ...).

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A lot of Netvibes Universes are used for school websites, in the Documentation and Information Centre tab because of their high visibility and efficient push of information.

Twitt - lycée St Louis: http://twitter.com/#!/CDILTSTLOUIS


Scoop.it CDI - lycée St Louis: http://www.scoop.it/u/cdi-lt-st-louis

Portal of the Goas Plat “collège” in Paimpol with a feed aggregator but the teacher librarian associates using the tool with pedagogical considerations.

Curating content selected from an internet watch means filtering then editing and finally sharing content collected from the web on a given theme. It helps give content more visibility. Curating is an almost automatic process. It associates different types of documents on a page. It does not generate information but by assembling some resources it gives coloration, it permits discussion between sources and confrontation.

The curator gives added value to information available on the web since he sifts through and selects items. He can also add a short text to present his objectives. The result is a strong aggregation of information which, if you trust the curator, saves time spent on information watch. Of course one has to choose the curator who is an expert on the subject.

On the portal of Lycée technique St Louis... you can find a series of information items about the social media used before accessing tabs that are more or less disciplinary. Several tools are presented ... The Twitter thread, when added to, triggers an immediate alert. Reading is linear. Paper.li, which originates from Tweets, enhances information thanks to an attractive layout, the integration of different types of media and the use of sections by the watch person. Members of a mailing list therefore receive a document originating from the watch that has been edited and can be read as a whole. A series of Tweets received one after the other does not necessarily add up and provide global understanding whereas Paper.li gives a meaningful panorama. Quality depends on the editorial line set by the watch person and his choice of people or information.

Sharing tabs via Pearltrees

Pearltrees is a platform enabling collaborative watch. It is more a web page bookmarking tool than a proper watch. What is interesting is that it shows the collective building of a tree whose meaning appears as it grows. It is useful at the stage when a work topic is outlined or to gather resources. It is interesting to present such a different platform and to get students to use it so as to underline the function of networks and the co-construction of a corpus of internet pages.

Extracting information from the net is important and so is posting information: “this new way of learning daily and from networks has become its own new university” says F. Guité.
Exploiting the information originating from the curation

There is so much contents on the web from so many authors that curation through networks is a stage in the selection of information. Choice is based either on popularity or reputation but one has to define one’s need for information.

The teacher librarians participating in TraAM (mutualized group work at the level of the “Académies”) this year are focusing on information watch. Teams are searching for new ideas to help students implement a thorough watch but also understand the key points of the different tools available to curate in accordance with their work objectives (elaborating a personal or professional project, curating in the context of vocational training, establishing work themes for the school year...). Of course the goal for students is to master a tool but above all to think before choosing it and to establish its suitability.

See one of the computer graphics elaborated by the TraAM team

In this research activity the complexity of the production and delivery of information and the simplicity of the production of its results are made apparent. The key question, just like in any activity using the social media, is that of visibility: public? Private? Professional? To be shared with whom? Not to be shared with whom?
Les marques aussi peuvent se prêter au jeu de la curation. Les outils existants suggèrent néanmoins des utilisations différentes.

Quel outil de curation pour votre marque ?

Vous avez trouvé du contenu, vous souhaitez
L’éditorialiser
Simply l’agréger
Vous préférez
Vous souhaitez agréger uniquement les contenus de votre marque
Oui
Non
Oui

L’annoter
Rédiger des analyses
Et interagir avec une communauté
Oui
Non
Oui
Non
Oui
Non

Vous préférez
Vous préférez
Vous souhaitiez une mise en forme du contenu type

Dans le cadre d’une réelle collaboration
Oui
Non
Oui
Non

Pour la mise en forme de votre contenu, vous préférez

Raconter une histoire
Mettre en valeur des visuels

Vous souhaitez une mise en forme travaillée de votre contenu
Oui
Non

http://curioser.fr/prospetive-digitale/outil-curation-marque/
Of course, pedagogical guidance is necessary. During the selection of information stage teachers can use the social media as a teacher librarian did to work with disciplinary teachers on TPE (Personalized Guided Research Work) in “classe de 1ère” (sixteen-seventeen). She used the Diigo bookmarking platform to create a work space for a group of students (http://groups.diigo.com/group/tpe-bts-fee-2011_2012). The students selected their internet resources, stored them and at the same time justified their choices. The teacher librarian commented on their work.

3. New tools, new competences, a culture of information to build

Who “makes” information? The issue was asked during the latest SPEM but it also applies to the social media.

A critical use of tools

Within EAM one can find comparative analysis of different platforms and analysis of the circulation of information. The teaching program for “Littérature et Société.”, includes the theme of social networks.
“Education à la citoyenneté” also includes the study of the social media, it participates in the acquisition of a critical view on what is at stake when using and subscribing to different platforms.

In Economics, free versus paid models provide an entry way into the culture of information. The informed choice of the platform to use for a specific project is a stage that is necessary to understand the different publishing systems. Similarly, during TPE or in the context of the study of a professional theme for Bac Pro for instance, setting up an information watch on a theme encourages students or groups of students to master a social media but also to rank available platforms according to the objective of the work they have to do.

**Twittclasses**

Assessments have been done on 2 main points: mastering language and managing digital identity and point to good effectiveness.

The teachers who have opened Twittclasses can identify some work relating to several competences but the essential competences are mastering language, managing digital identity and cultural opening. The classroom is a closed space. Twitter enables students to find answers to their questions outside school, sometimes in faraway places and sometimes in another language than French. Primary school children do not post before the teacher has approved of the Tweet. They pay great attention to the way they express themselves and are fully aware of using a public space. Little by little they realize that they are read by other people. A very important point is that participation of children to Twittclasses always follows a presentation to their parents. Through these projects parents too are trained to a responsible use of the Internet when they share school issues with their children.

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The step-by-step experiments carried out by Laurence Juin who teaches French literature, history and geography are an example of the use of the social media in the classroom with older students since she is a secondary school teacher. Her classes use platforms such as Twitter, Tumblr, géotwitt, produce publishable material and increase their mastery of the language. From a pedagogical point of view she thinks it enables her to better individualize guidance.
If the media have evolved towards the social media or from “one to many” to “many to many”, integrating the collaborative dimension should not be reduced to the mere use of the social media in the classroom. The issue of information curation will have to be addressed. These platforms introduce a complexity to which pedagogy is confronted. Students must be given the tools necessary to find and choose the information, the tools necessary to improve their knowledge from the “information overload”. Students must become able to elaborate their own learning strategies. The activities above mentioned, linked to the use of the social media, will help them do so.

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This document is online :

http://eduscol.education.fr/cid58481/medias-sociaux-et-usages-pedagogiques.html