

Meet the Editor

Dave Hoffman and MMIS: Bringing Tech to School

by LAUREE PADGETT

Joni Mitchell was right when she wrote the lyrics to “The Circle Game” more than 40 years ago: “We can’t return, we can only look behind from where we came and go round and round and round in the circle game.”

If we look back from where we came, we almost always find a connection to where we’re going and where we end up. That’s certainly proven to be the case with Dave Hoffman. After getting his B.A. from Dartmouth (he later added an M.S. from Georgetown), Hoffman taught in the U.S. and overseas.



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After that, he switched gears and went into publishing, working as an editor for *Technology and Learning* and then *Learning Magazine*. In 1995, he was hired by Tom Hogan to join the editorial services department at Information Today, Inc. and to assume the editorship of ITI’s flagship publication, *Information Today*. He was editor/managing editor of *IT* until 1998; he also later served as editor of *Computers in Libraries* from the time ITI acquired it in 1995 until Kathy Dempsey took it over in 2000.

By 2000, Hoffman and his family (wife Becca and two daughters, Tali and Lana) had moved across the country from southern New Jersey to Vancouver, Wash., where Becca, a physician, joined a family medical clinic. Hoffman continued to work for ITI on web initiatives and as a managing editor for *MultiMedia Schools*. When the magazine’s editor, Ferdi Serim, left ITI in 2003, Hoffman took over as editor. This also led to his involvement with two of ITI’s conferences: He’s the conference chair, with help from

high school librarian Susan Geiger, for the two Internet@Schools conferences each year, one concurrent with Internet Librarian, the other concurrent with Computers in Libraries. “Susan and I put together the program of speakers for each show, then act as moderators during the events,” says Hoffman.

The ABCs of MM(I)S

MultiMedia Schools, as it was called when it first rolled off the presses in 1994, started its life as an Online, Inc. publication. When ITI purchased Online, Inc. in 1996, it continued publishing *MMS* with freelance editor Susan Veccia at the helm. Veccia also worked for the Library of Congress (LC) at the time. Once under the ITI umbrella, “The magazine continued its role as a K–12 complement to the other Information Today, Inc. library publications,” says Hoffman. With her role at the LC continuing to expand, Veccia stepped down from being *MMS*’s editor in 1998 and was replaced by Serim. In his 5-year tenure with *MMS*, Serim helped to broaden the magazine’s focus beyond the K–12 library media specialist to all teachers who were employing technology within the classroom.

When Hoffman took over as editor, the magazine underwent a facelift, including the adoption of the modified title of *MultiMedia & Internet@Schools*. The editorial focus was expanded again to “include other groups of technology-minded K–12 educators such as technology coordinators while still keeping the core readership of K–12 librarians firmly in our sights,” according to Hoffman. “The first issue of the redesigned and renamed *MultiMedia & Internet@Schools* was published in January 2004, and we’ve been crankin’ ’em out ever since.”

The web counterpart (www.mmischools.com) was created at about the same time as an outlet for publishing “newer news,” according to Hoffman, to enable online access to the magazine’s features, columns, and reviews. The mention of the reviews spurs Hoffman to acknowledge managing editor Kathie Felix, who has been with *MMIS* since the beginning and brought “her inside knowledge of the companies in the education and education technology sector to bear in getting news, reviews, and product- and service-focused features written and published for the magazine.”

Today’s MMIS

Today, *MMIS* has once again expanded its editorial focus. The goal is now to make the publication appeal to K–12 educators on the administrative side of the school sector, and Hoffman explains that this is



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in part “because the ‘buying’ decision in education has migrated to the various administrative positions, having moved up from the trenches, for better or worse. *This*,” he adds, “is partly a function of the fact that the impact and size of technology, curriculum, and information purchases has grown enormously over time. [There are] no more ‘software in a box’ purchases, but huge, districtwide technology purchases.”

As a result, *MMIS* has a new subtitle: The Educators’ Guide to Electronic Tools and Resources for K–12. And with the new subtitle, the magazine also now features news and stories on the important areas of K–12 education where technology plays a role. Hoffman says that while the magazine still provides the information, curriculum, and technology resources that are the “purview” of the library media specialist, it also covers the resources that aid educators in such areas as assessment, professional development, and safety and security.

Some of the big topics Hoffman wants to cover are assessment, electronic textbooks, professional development, “21st-century skills,” and what he refers to as “good old library automation/library systems.” For 2010, he is looking for a columnist to write a series for school administrators. The advertising end of *MMIS* will also be soliciting vendor-supplied white papers on several subjects throughout the year.

Hoffman also has quite a long list of columns and features as well as “movers and shakers” who are regular contributors. First mentioned was Stephen Abram, who Hoffman says writes “a sort of ‘futurist’ column called The Pipeline on what’s coming up” in library, education, and information circles that educators need to know. He also mentions longtime library media specialist Mary Alice Anderson, who writes her

Media Center column on the many aspects of being a school librarian, a job that continues to change.

Library and information science professor Mary Ann Bell’s Belltones column focuses on current technology trends in K–12 education, whereas former librarian and teacher Johanna Riddle writes about the schools where teachers are “successfully leveraging the most current, relevant technology tools, integrating their use into the fabric of learning” in her Tech Effect column.

Sleepless in ... Vancouver?

Not much keeps Hoffman awake at night these days. “I’m sleeping OK, for being the aging father of a teenager and a preteen,” he says. But he also points out that the “‘industry,’ which responded strongly to the No Child Left Behind legislation at the beginning of this decade with a complete retooling of their products and services to help meet schools’, districts’, and states’ needs in addressing federal mandates for assessment and, it was hoped, school improvement, is no doubt wondering what changes and educational reforms may be in the making under a new federal administration.”

But this time, any sleeplessness is not from worry. “Truth be told, we’re all lying awake at night, happily, I’d say, noodling out how to leverage all the fantastic new internet-based collaborative tools that keep coming along in the service of our kids’ education.”

Circle (the Globe) Game

Hoffman has certainly circled the globe since his start in Evanston, Ill., having lived in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates and in the San Francisco Bay area. Even so, he gives Moorestown, N.J., the title of “nicest town” of all.

But at the top of his list of people to be admired are “the many movers, shakers, opinion leaders, and writers—mostly bloggers these days—who are carrying on thoughtful conversations with those in the education and ed. tech. profession about how best to apply current and future technologies to our national educational efforts.” Thanks to their efforts, we’ll be able to prepare today’s students for life in the 21st century, and Hoffman and *MMIS* will certainly be there to help.

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