12-1-2021

Effective Digital Tools that Enhanced My Educational Experience

Alyssa G. Sultanik
West Coast Baptist College

The Christian Librarian is the official publication of the Association of Christian Librarians (ACL). To learn more about ACL and its products and services please visit //www.acl.org/

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl

Part of the Higher Education Commons, Information Literacy Commons, and the Online and Distance Education Commons

Effective Digital Tools that Enhanced My Educational Experience

✛

Alyssa G. Sultanik, Director of Library Services
West Coast Baptist College

When I began teaching my first class, it was the Spring 2020 semester. Because of COVID-19, West Coast Baptist College had to switch to a 100% online platform just before midterms. Because the focus of my class was on classroom technology, I got to experience using the tools as a remote educator in practice instead of only demonstrating the tools in theory. I got to use Canvas more extensively than I had originally planned and loved being able to share these tools online.

The class content was divided into tools for the educator and students, presentation tools, and classroom management. While this article is by no means exhaustive, I will share a small portion of the tools covered in the class, and why I love using them for any teaching opportunities, be it for classroom technology or library information literacy sessions. This curation of tools can be used in a browser, so they can be used on any operating system.

ToDoist (https://todoist.com/) – I thoroughly enjoy using ToDoist to help plan my tasks, assign myself deadlines, and in the premium version, include comments with content and links to websites for additional research when I have more time to dedicate to that task. Users can create multiple projects, assign priorities to individual tasks, and color code projects as needed. Individual lists can also be shared and used to collaborate with others. Because users can schedule tasks and reminders in advance, ToDoist can help educators stay current with grading and productivity.

Toggl Track (https://toggl.com/) - This tool helped me when I had to work from home to track how much time I was working on different projects and to ensure that I did not allocate too much or too little time to certain projects. It is capable of generating reports, including a chart to see an overview of the time spent on projects. Toggl can help educators create a better balance between priorities.

Trello (https://trello.com/) - This digital software uses boards and a Kanban productivity system by using columns and cards within the columns. I use Trello extensively for longer-term planning, including brainstorming goals into columns

representing several years, collaborating with other instructors (including over all stages of planning a maker camp), developing curriculum, and curating information. Cards can hold helpful information, such as text, links, graphics, to-do lists, labels, and deadlines. I like that I can visually create a system using the cards that help me know where I stand for large ongoing projects. Using these features on Trello can help educators with planning and collaboration.

Adobe Spark (https://spark.adobe.com/) – I enjoy using Adobe Spark for making fun five-minute videos using graphics, text, music, and even audio dictation if desired. If I need to make a screen recording on Windows, I use Screencast-o-Matic (https://screencast-o-matic.com/), which is free, but is limited to fifteen-minute recordings. When I switched to Mac, I used the built-in software QuickTime to record any desired portion of my screen. These tools are helpful for educators to create video content for their classes.

Evernote (https://evernote.com/) and **Wakelet** (https://wakelet.com/) both work well as curation tools. Each has its strengths, including how each tool is designed for a unique user experience. I like using Evernote as a personal database and for its tag system, allowing me to search my own tags and find specific content (whether it's an article I saved on censorship or a recipe for chicken salad). Wakelet is fantastic for creating an outlet to share curated content with students and make it look beautiful and fun to use. I will allow students to use other curation tools for my classroom assignments if they already have a system set up using another platform, but these tools are my current favorites. These tools can help educators with curating and sharing their class content outside a learning management system.

Google Workspace (https://workspace.google.com/) – I use many of the Google tools such as Google Drive, Docs, Sheets, Forms, Slides, and others, for creating and storing my academic content using cloud storage. This enables me to access materials anytime and from any device and to collaborate with students and faculty. One benefit of using cloud storage is that I can use it as a backup instead of relying on one copy on my device. This enables me to be able to access content, such as slides for an unplanned presentation, right away when I need it. Educators can use Google Workspace to create and share content and collaborate with other users.

Each of these tools were selected because they are free to students or educators. Some may have premium features using a subscription, but the basic versions work well for both students and educators. These tools have helped enhance my educational experience, and can be beneficial for other educators to consider using as well. ✠