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Welcome!

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JOINING EFFORTS
From Communication to Collaboration over the Internet

The ThinkQuest Program

A Tutorial

by

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Program for Morning Session

1. Presentation
2. Question time
3. Discussion

ThinkQuest for Teachers & Students

Program for Afternoon Session

1. Web sites as resources
2. Exploring the TQ Library
3. Comparing web sites
4. Identifying key features of sites
5. You be the judge!
6. Question time
7. Discussion

Presentation Outline

- IT in Education
- About ThinkQuest
- How a ThinkQuest Contest Works

IT in Education

- IT: indispensable part of life
  - Information management
  - Communication
  - Publishing

ThinkQuest for Teachers & Students

IT in Education

- Role of IT in schools today
  - Skills for the modern world
  - Learning resources
  - Teaching resources
  - Distance learning
  - (International) collaboration

ThinkQuest for Teachers & Students

IT in Education

- ## IT in schools
  - ### Differences in IT resources
    - Financial & organizational constraints
  - ### Students and IT
    - Haves and have nots
  - ### Teachers and IT
    - Knowledge gap / lack of motivation
  - ### Integrating IT in education
    - Bridging gaps

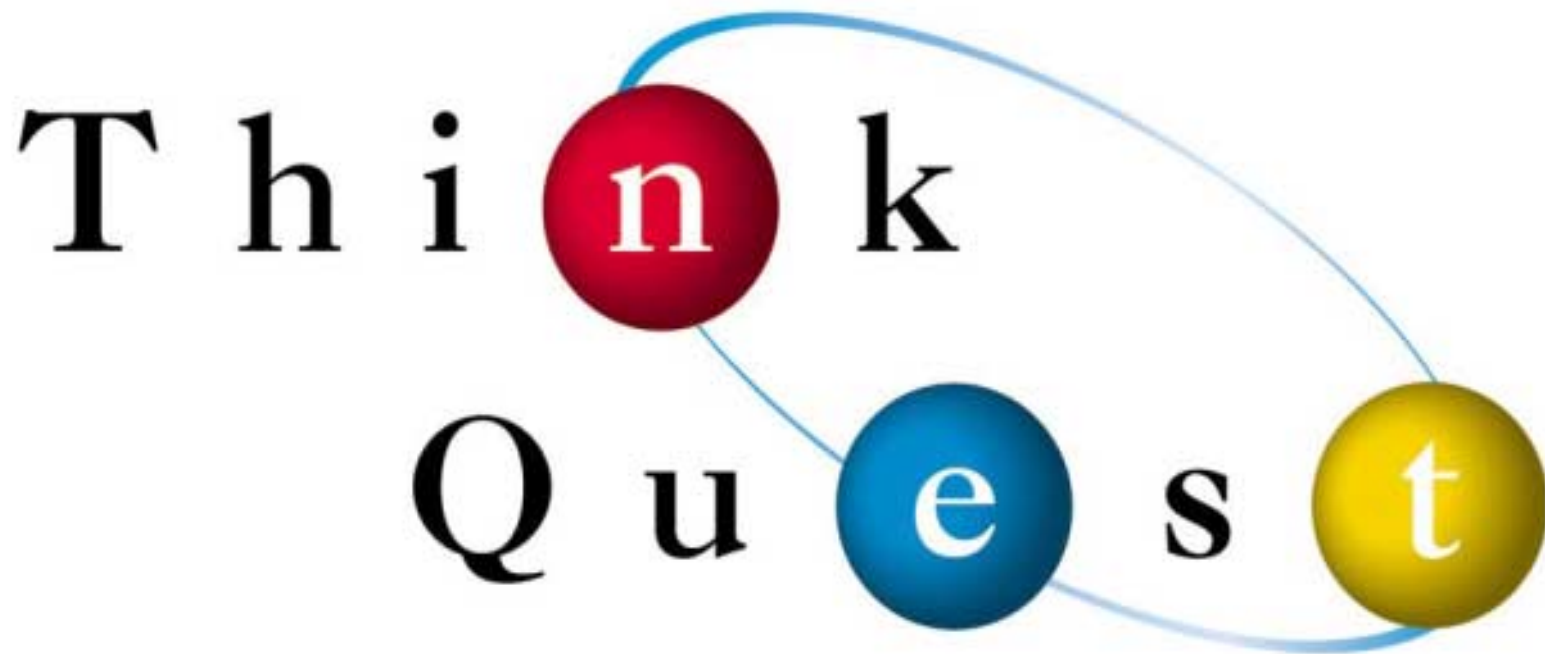# IT in Education

- The Internet: a boon or a curse?
  - For and against
  - Responsible use
  - Scope in education
  - Internet-based programs and activities
  - ThinkQuest

About ThinkQuest

About ThinkQuest

- What is ThinkQuest?
- Why is it such a good program?
- ThinkQuest contests

About ThinkQuest

- ## What is ThinkQuest?
    - A global Internet-based platform for educational collaboration
    - An online global community
    - A program of Internet-based contests

About ThinkQuest

- ThinkQuest contests/activities - 1
  - Primary school children: 6 – 12 years
    - Junior TQ

  - High school students: 12 – 19 years
    - TQ Internet Challenge

About ThinkQuest

- ThinkQuest contests/activities – 2
  - Students in Higher Education
    - ThinkQuest for Art Students
  - Teachers
    - ThinkQuest for Teachers
  - Other Interest Groups
    - ScienceQuest

About ThinkQuest

- Why is ThinkQuest such a good program for students?
  - ➢ *Because it enables and encourages them to:*
    - Work together and have fun together
    - Use Internet-based resources and technologies wisely and creatively
    - Learn to do research, organize, plan and think critically
    - Communicate with and understand peers with a different background
    - Create something special and win an award!

About ThinkQuest

- Why is ThinkQuest such a good program for teachers?
  - *Because it enables and encourages them to:*
    - Explore new ways of working together with students
    - Guide and stimulate students' research and critical thinking
    - Expand students' awareness of the world they live in
    - Learn new technologies from students
    - Share new technologies with other teachers

About ThinkQuest

- Challenges for the future:
  - Reaching out to a broader range of students and schools
  - Increasing involvement of school management
  - Extending reach to libraries, museums
  - Industry-sponsored web sites on specific topics
  - Involving other age-groups
  - Better maintenance of sites
  - Greater acceptance and active use of sites by publishers as supplementary course material

About ThinkQuest

- The ThinkQuest Internet Challenge

  The Rules
    - Contest open to international participants
    - Team composition
      - 2 or 3 students, boys and girls mixed
      - 1 to 3 coaches (teachers or parents)
    - Student age: 12 – 19 years
    - Students can be from the same school, from different schools in the same city or country, or from different countries

About ThinkQuest

- The ThinkQuest Internet Challenge

  The Rules
  - Students cannot participate in more than one team
  - A student who has been a finalist in a previous contest year cannot form a team with other finalists
  - A coach can coach one or more teams

About ThinkQuest

- ## The ThinkQuest Internet Challenge
  The Time Path
  - January through May: signing on
  - June through August: building web site

About ThinkQuest

- The ThinkQuest Internet Challenge

Some judging criteria

1. Diversity of Computer and Network Resources among Student Team Members
2. Team Collaboration
3. Educational Value
4. Entry Quality
5. Internet Style of Learning
6. Entry Usage

About ThinkQuest

- ## The ThinkQuest Internet Challenge
  Awards
  - In the beginning very large sums of money, for abot 40 teams, according to ranking
  - Now much smaller amounts for the 10 best entries and no ranking + a very small compensation ($100) for each student team member of the 90 top scoring entries

Participating in a Contest

- How to form a team
- How to choose a topic
- The student's role
- The coach's role

ThinkQuest for Teachers & Students

Participation

- ## How to form a team

  - ### Major considerations:

    - Team members with diverse skills and talents
    - International team
    - Multilingual site

  - ### Finding teammates:

    - By asking around in class/school
    - By publishing interests, skills and preferences in "MyThinkQuest"

  - ### Finding coaches:

    - By asking teachers or parents

Participation

- How to choose a topic - 1

  Topic ideas

  - Personal interest or preference
  - Via team brainstorming session
  - Suggestions from teachers or parents
  - Based on a school project

Participation

- ## How to choose a topic - 2

  Criteria for final choice of topic

  - Not offensive to anyone
  - Suitable for an *educational* web site
  - All team members should agree/identify
  - At least one coach or teacher who can guide research in the chosen topic
  - Not an over-used TQ topic or a unique approach to a topic used before
  - Good match between topic and student skills
  - Not too ambitious

Participation

- What role does a student play?
  - Contributes his/her specific skills to the site
  - Works with full commitment on allocated task in terms of time and effort
  - Encourages and helps other team members
  - Takes an active interest in the work of the other members
  - Makes good use of the support coaches can provide

Participation

- What role does a coach play?
  - Takes an active interest in the work of the team and acts as a sounding board
  - Guides research activities by suggesting sources
  - Advises the team on matters such as copyright and plagiarism
  - Helps resolve conflicts among team members
  - Boosts morale and provides constant encouragement

Teamwork

- Students and coaches
- Appointing a team leader
- Appointing a head coach
- Deciding the strategy
- Allocating tasks
- Planning the work
- Choosing a communication protocol

Teamwork

- Students and coaches
  - The student team members carry out the actual work of researching, designing, programming and building the site
  - The coaches may not work directly on the entry; they fulfill only a supportive role

Teamwork

- Appointing a team leader

  Each team has a team leader *who*
  - Organizes team meetings and leads team discussions
  - Submits the entry proposal and finalizes the entry at he deadline
  - Coordinates the project and monitors team work

Teamwork

- Appointing a head coach

  A team may have a head coach *who*
    - Acts as the team spokesman towards TQ officials in case of problems
    - Takes decisions in case of disagreement

Strategy

- Setting a clear goal
  - What do you want to achieve with the site?

- Knowing exactly what your topic is
  - Do you have a clear idea how narrow or broad you want your topic to be?

- Agreeing on a general approach
  - What design, programming and interactivity features do you have in mind?

Teamwork

- Allocating tasks
  - Research and content writing
    - In case of a multilingual site, more than one writer needed, or translation work required
  - Design
    - Good cooperation needed with both content writer and programmer
  - Programming
    - Choices need to be made regarding the structure of the site and the technology to be used
  - Site promotion
    - An essential part of participating in the TQ contest

Teamwork

- ## Planning the work
    - ### Always take into account / allow for:
        - Students' school commitments (e.g. exams) or family plans (e.g. holidays)
        - Coaches' other commitments (e.g. school trips, exam marking, holidays)
        - Sequence of activities: design may depend on content, and programming on content and design
        - Unexpected setbacks: e.g. computer crashes, server problems, parental restrictions, falling in love
        - Sufficient time for testing the site before final submission

Teamwork

- Choosing a communication protocol
  - Mode of communication
    - Email, chat, phone, fax, in person (at school)
  - Language
    - Often underestimated communication problem
  - Frequency
    - Every day, every week, etc.
    - Regular team meetings
  - Time
    - Allow for time zone differences
    - Allow for long sessions at the beginning and towards the end of the project

Highs and Lows

- What problems can you encounter?

- What fun can you have?

Highs and Lows

- What problems can you encounter?
  - Lack of motivation
  - Team member dropping out
  - Conflict regarding content, design, etc.
  - Clash of personalities
  - Bad planning
  - Project too ambitious
  - Time-zone drawbacks
  - Language problems

Highs and Lows

- What fun can you have?
  - Getting to know new people worldwide
  - Interacting with people of different backgrounds and cultures
  - Trying to cope with linguistic misunderstandings
  - Exploring new ideas and new fields of interest
  - Learning new skills
  - Learning to communicate creatively online
  - Winning awards
  - Meeting teammates in person at events

Web site features 1

- Topic
- Language versions
- Content
- Design
- Programming

Web site features 1

- Topic
  - Five TQ categories:
    - Arts & Literature
    - Science & Mathematics
    - Social Sciences
    - Sports & Health
    - Interdisciplinary

Web site features 1

- Language versions

    - English
        - Obligatory for international TQ contest

    - Additional languages
        - Promotes wider use of site

Web site features 1

- Content
  - General:
    - A web site is _not a book_ on the Internet
    - Acknowledge sources !
  - Text
    - Pages should not be too long (scrolling)
    - Include hyperlinks to other sources on the Internet (make the most of the medium)
  - Illustrations
    - Photos, graphs, etc. make pages attractive

Web site features 1

- Design
  - Compatible with topic
  - User-friendly
  - Simple, intuitive navigation
  - Not too many gimmicks
  - No offensive design elements
  - Remember goal: *educational* web site
  - Don't overdo it!

Web site features 1

- Programming
  - First aim: the site should function smoothly
  - Server type, server usage rules
  - Databases
  - Scripts
  - Clear, intuitive navigation
  - Remember: different audiences, different technological resources
  - Text-only version
  - Different browsers
  - Meta tags

Web site features 2

- Multimedia
- Interactivity
- Classroom usage
- Site growth
- Site maintenance
- Site promotion

Web site features 2

- ## Multimedia
  - Advantages
    - Makes site attractive
    - Vital role in elucidating some topics
    - Maximizes fun
    - Balanced mix of content elements

- ## Multimedia
  - Disadvantages
    - May slow down the site
    - PC crashes in less developed infrastructures
    - May overshadow main content features
    - Often copyright problems

Web site features 2

- **Interactivity**
  - *Fun features*
    - Guestbook
    - Feedback form
    - Greeting cards
    - Quizzes
    - Downloads
    - Counter

- **Interactivity**
  - *Practical features*
    - Content contribution
    - Discussion forum
    - Classroom simulation
    - Opinion polls
    - Tests
    - Search engine

Web site features 2

- Classroom usage
  - Features
    - Student / teacher account
    - Projects
    - Focused assignments
    - Tests and marking
  - Advantages
    - Integration of web sites into schoolwork
    - From extracurricular activity to classroom activity
    - Teacher guidance / supervision
    - Integration of school subjects

Web site features 2

- ## Site growth

  - ### Encouraging growth

    - Include well designed contribution features
    - Invite all visitors to add experiences
    - Invite specialists to add specific content

  - ### Controlling growth

    - Monitor user contributions
    - Organize / categorize contributions
    - Remove offensive / irrelevant contributions

Web site features 2

- Site maintenance
  - Handling errors / problems
    - Broken links / script errors
    - Effect of user contributions
    - Problems due to server change
    - Access slowdown
  - Handling user response
    - Queries
    - Complaints

Web site features 2

- Site promotion
  - On the Internet
    - Meta tags
    - Internet awards
    - Search engines
    - Targeted mailing (no spamming!)
  - Local
    - Friends
    - School
    - Newspapers

Points to remember

- Coaching
  - ➤ *Any teacher can be a coach*
  - ➤ Technical skills: useful but not essential
  - ➤ Important: enthusiasm, interest in how young people think, work and interact
  - ➤ Opportunity to reverse learning process
  - ➤ Remember: you can influence the way students use the Internet

Points to remember

- Students
  - ➢ Can lose interest in a project
  - ➢ Can *seem* uninterested
  - ➢ May hesitate to bother you
  - ➢ Look at things differently
  - ➢ Can be very creative
  - ➢ Can be fun to work with
  - ➢ Can teach you new skills
  - ➢ May forget they also have school work

Points to remember

- Teams
  - ➤ International teams are fun, but demand good communication
  - ➤ Keep an eye on team spirit
  - ➤ A very dominant team member can undermine others' fun and motivation
  - ➤ *Encourage girls to join teams*

Points to remember

- Other teachers
  - Can discourage you
  - May ridicule your IT involvement
  - Can help in your project
  - May get inspired by you

Points to remember

- Schools
  - May ignore what you are doing
  - May not have the adequate IT resources
  - May consider TQ participation to interfere with school performance
  - Will praise you when you bring in awards
  - May get inspired by your efforts and provide extra IT facilities
  - May even integrate TQ-like activities into the school curriculum!

Points to remember

- Parents
  - ➤ May worry about the effect of TQ participation on performance at school
  - ➤ May complain about huge phone bills
  - ➤ May complain their son/daughter is becoming anti-social
  - ➤ May not like TQ work interfering with the family's holiday plans
  - ➤ May discover new qualities in their child
  - ➤ Will be grateful you guided their child

Points to remember

- Technology
  - ➤ Can do wonderful things
  - ➤ May fail you at crucial moments (PC crashes, overcrowding on Internet, server downtime)
  - ➤ Should be used to serve a purpose
  - ➤ Is only part of the story

The End

Thank you!