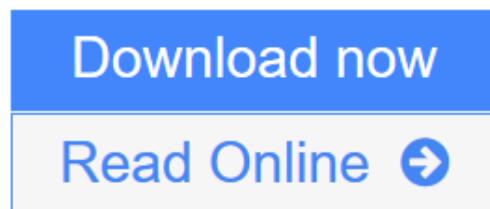


# Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms

*Will Richardson*



# **Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms**

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**Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms** Will Richardson

For both novice and experienced "techies," this practical resource shows how to use blogs and other new Web tools for innovative, interactive teaching and motivated learning.

## **Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms Details**

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## **From Reader Review Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms for online ebook**

### **Courtney says**

This is a great resource for teachers who want to implement technology, but aren't sure how. The author walks the reader through the legal implications of getting a "connected" classroom as well as the pedagogical benefits as he links them to NCTE standards. This informative book gives teachers easy how-tos and shows that there is nothing to fear when using the Web to collaborate and grow effective and reflective learners.

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### **Claire says**

I was skeptical of this when I got assigned it for a teaching w/ technology class. It's hip to write about technology, but usually USE-TECHNOLOGY-IN-YOUR-JOB!!! books are boring or silly rush jobs trying to make bank on a trend, and taking advantage of people feeling too old or clueless in this fast-changing world oh no!!! This is a little more thoughtful and philosophical than that, while still including some really helpful practical advice. I generally feel like I know what's goin on in the Internets, but some of these applications, tools, and sites were new to even Generation [Whatever(?)] me.

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### **Ryan says**

I'm using this book for one of my classes this semester, but it's definitely not a textbook. This book provides in depth analyses of various Web 2.0 technologies and appropriate ways to integrate them into the classroom. Even though I was familiar with most of the content discussed, I was really amazed at how these technologies are being used by teachers and students across the world. The best thing about the book were the ways in which Richardson provided new ideas for using technologies that have been around for awhile.

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### **Jason says**

It's great to read someone who gets web 2.0 and how it can be effectively used in the classroom. His target audience is obviously, but I think his applications can be applied to higher ed as well. Consider how his students, who were studying the book, *The Secret Lives of Bees*, were able to interact with the author through their course blog. Outside of blogs, Will also talks about how Flickr is his killer online app because of the extendability of being able to include picture notes, titles, captions, and comments. By far the biggest theme I took away was that students (heck even us old foggies) need to learn how to read and write in this new online medium.

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### **Jodie says**

This professional title provided me with a more open mind in using Web 2.0 technologies in my classroom.

The author did a nice job explaining how wikis work and how to best implement this tool in which students are encouraged to edit and add their thoughts. The author also clearly explained RSS feeds and how to set up a classroom blog. I think this is a very informative, easily understood guide to learning about and implementing Web 2.0 technologies for those that are apprehensive. I would definitely share this guide with colleagues interested in incorporating Web 2.0 technologies into their classrooms.

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### **John says**

What stood out most for me in the book was the author's big shift idea of Open Content. "It used to be that schools and teachers owned the content they taught in their classrooms. Most curriculum was taught from a textbook with a few added resources copied from various sources thrown in...students had limited access to additional information about the subjects they were studying." Richardson contrasts the old style of learning with the new, in which "everyone contributes to the curriculum." Technology makes it possible for students to not only find information but to refine it and synthesize it into new products for learning.

This passage stood out for me because it really hits home why technology needs to be used in the classroom. Too often we hear the explanation of "it prepares students for the future" or "they need 21st century learning skills." The problem with these explanations is that they are vague statements lacking any substance. The passage quoted above from Will Richardson is a wake up call for educators, explaining the new dynamic of information flow in the classroom. Instead of all information coming in one direction from the teacher, the entire class contributes to the pool of knowledge.

The implications this will have on students and learning is that students will be more actively involved in the classroom. Instead of being merely consumers of knowledge, students will be producers as well. Learning time will be extended beyond the school day through the use of technology. Students will be able to collaborate with groups without being in the same physical location. Every student will also be able to use their strengths and creativity while achieving the same content goals.

The theme of the book is how to get students to learn and create more by using web tools such as wikis, blogs, Flickr, and podcasting. An explanation of what the web tool is and how it works is given. The book provides many examples of how these tools are used in the classroom. The examples are in a wide range of grade level and content area. Practical tips for getting started with the web tool and using these tools are provided as well.

Another theme of the book is how to get students to create more by using web tools and sharing their creations with a world wide audience. Wikis, blogs, Flickr, and podcasting are all ways that students can create content and share that content with a large audience via the web. Students are not limited to creating works for only the teacher and their classmates to see. Publishing content to the web will motivate students to try harder and to reach further, as they not only complete a project for a grade, but try to keep their audience coming back for more. Parents, relatives, and community members can also see what students are doing in these various forms of creativity. These technologies break down classroom walls and allow student learning to truly expand and grow.

I agree with Richardson that these technologies should be used in the classroom to motivate, enrich, and challenge students. Creating content for an unknown audience is exciting for students and highly motivating. It lets students feel that their ideas and creativity are valuable and important. His argument was so convincing that it inspired me to dive into podcasting. While reading this book, I decided to begin a podcast

of my own for the staff that I work with. The podcast, which I call Tales from the Trenches, will highlight teacher success stories of integrating technology with effective instruction. I interviewed two middle school teachers that I work with to talk about how they use wikis in the classroom. Our interview focused on the instructional reasons for using wikis. The podcast went well, and other staff members have already asked me when I would interview them for a future episode. The motivation and excitement Richardson writes about concerning blogging and podcasting is applicable for students and teachers.

With the economy continuing to be a major concern, school districts are faced with the challenge of demonstrating the quality of their performance. Student podcasts and blogs are a way for schools to proudly showcase student work, made available for relatives and community members to experience for themselves. This type of demonstration of excellence should foster support for the school district, even in times of economic difficulty.

I would give this book 4 out of 5 stars. The only reason it is a 4 is because some of the information is a little dated, like the part on Delicious. Delicious now requires a Yahoo ID to create an account, which makes it impossible for a teacher to create several student accounts. I would recommend this book to all teachers and administrators. For teachers, the book is full of different classroom ideas for utilizing technology. Administrators should read it so that they understand why they should support these types of activities and not allow fear to block student access to these types of tools.

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### **Kristen Effinger says**

Richardson has built a scaffold as good as any carpenter. This book introduced, explained, and suggested various ways of incorporating web tools (blogs, RSS, Ning, etc) in life and in the classroom--in a reader friendly manner. Anyone can follow this book and no doubt with a computer at hand it becomes even more powerful. Unlike other professional development books, this was not riddled with academic language nor complicated content. It can be read a piece at a time, from end to start, or in one sitting.

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### **Michael says**

This I had to read for a class at Kent State University. It is an interesting view I did wonder why the author did not start the book with RSS feeds for people that did not know what they were instead of over and over saying "we will get to RSS feeds in Chapter 5". Only way I recommend this book for reading is if you're in the education field and are looking for ways to work technology into the education process. The author share a lot of good ideas to use podcasting, Flickr, and other sites in the classroom.

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### **Cogi Howard says**

#### **Book Chat**

Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms  
By: Will Richardson

Classmates, I must admit, that I for one enjoyed my book selection. After reading my selection, I have taken more of an open mind when it comes to new millennium web tools, and their place in education. I guess one would do that when something that was once perceived to be so difficult, turns out to be the complete opposite. If over the course of the summer, or even the coming months of the fall, that you have time to read this insightful piece of literature, do so. I can assure you that you will never look at web tools and their contribution to education the same way ever again.

I think the section on wikis stood out the most to me. In this section, just like all the others, Richardson breaks the tool down like a mathematical equation (into the simplest form). Since my introduction to wikis, I have always been fascinated with their operations, but I have never been well versed, or totally understood their infrastructure until now. Richardson explained wikis in a brief but thorough manner. He also introduced the reader to different wiki variations and how they work. It is indeed evident that his opposition on this tool, as well as the others is very entertaining and opinionated, and yet he still conveys a sense of factuality. Richardson talked about wikipedia, one of the world's largest and most widely recognized wikis. Richardson briefly explained that wikis as such as wikipedia are very informative, but very easy to be tampered with. In spite of possible blemishes on the credibility and validity of information wikis embody, he did not discourage students and teachers from using them as sources of information. He merely suggested to use them as brainstorming tools and starting points for their work; not main sources. To some close-minded educators, the fact that wikis can be edited or tampered with, would throw any consideration of their use in the classroom out of the window, but Richardson turned the tables. He turned that negative editing/tampering aspect of wikis into a positive collaborative learning opportunity. Richardson said that, "If your student produces a great research paper on global warming, why shouldn't she add what she found to the global warming entry at Wikipedia? (p. 60)" As an educator on the brinks of technological optimism, ask yourself....what valid reason does she have, to not add her findings? Hopefully the implication of wikis in the classroom will promote peer-to-peer collaboration in a healthy way. I also hope that the implication of wikis in the classroom will also teach students web ethics and morals, so that they understand that their edits can and will affect everyone's learning. Most importantly, the students need to know that any entry they make in local or global wikis should be used for the betterment of education, or otherwise they would be doing a great disservice to themselves, their peers, and anyone else that comes in contact with that wiki. I think that Richardson was going for an informative introductory theme. In each section, whether it catered to blogs, wikis, podcasts, or feeds, Richardson narrowed each scope and explained what each category was about. He introduced the popular tools related to that category, and how they could be used in everyday instruction. Richardson addressed wikis, and how beneficial collaborative learning could be for the teachers as well as the students. For teachers who taught a specific discipline, he introduced feeds, and how they could help prepare teachers for lectures, with current relevant information being provided to them on a frequent basis. He took a true educators approach, where he made you feel okay about not fully understanding these web tools. He broke down each of the tools, and how they could be used in an educational setting as if this was the first time you had ever been introduced to them. The overall main objective of Richardson's book was to introduce the web tools of the new millennium to underserved populations of technology; people with little to no experience with technology. He took the fear out of using technology in the classroom. In almost every segment of the book, he tried to convey how simple instruction could be if these web tools were implemented. His approach worked well for me, because it did not make me feel incompetent or incapable of anything, like most people who are not well versed in a particular aspect would feel. It did, however, spark my interest in learning more about the different web tools and how I could possibly use them with my new job at the Georgia Aquarium.

I agree with the manner in which Richardson wrote his book. Even though he was pro web tool use in the classroom, he did what most people who try to persuade you into conforming to their views would not do. He gave both sides of the story; giving the reader both pros and cons of each web tool. He kept a sense of honesty throughout the book, and that is something that I have to respect him for. I respect anyone that has confidence in what they believe in, and that they do not have to hide behind fallacies or ambiguous bogus

arguments in order to gain favor, but show validity and legitimacy with truth and facts. In the section about podcasts, and video streaming, Richardson was very upfront and honest. He mentioned how costly those tools can be. He said,

“...video requires a bit more of investment than with podcasting, but you can still produce some great videos on a shoestring budget. And remember while quality is important, what’s crucial are the writing, producing, and publishing skills that the students learn in the process. (p. 120)”

In that respect, Richardson had to let us know that in route to a better education, sacrifices must be made, and I could not agree more. I think that is a problem that most administrators and school districts have with implementing these tools, but like Richardson, they must see the bigger picture, and know that the financial sacrifices will provide future gains, and its efforts will not be in vain. Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms was an excellent read and it provided a solid stance on the classroom use of the new innovative web tools that are out there. Anyone interested, or just the slightest bit curious about them would want to know more after reading it.

One thing that most new bandwagon supporters of technology do not understand is that it takes a lot of time and effort to effective implement these web tools into instruction. Richardson was definitely not shy in mentioning the time and money it would take to provide professional development to the teachers, so that they can successfully implement these tools in their daily instruction. Without professional development, the purchasing of equipment, licenses, and software for any of the web tools would be a waste. Ignorance in their infrastructure and operations makes for dysfunctional instruction, which would most certainly damage the world class education we have tried, and are still trying to give our children.

In conclusion to this chat, I would have to say that Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms is a great book for emergent technology users. If your school district does not have the budget to provide professional development for the use of these web tools, the book does offer numerous resources in which you can develop your own skills in regards to using the web tools and how to properly implement them into instruction. I would definitely recommend this book for elementary school teachers. Even though the text maybe too advanced for the students, its good practice for teachers to exhibit instructor-led projects, and its never too early to introduce some of the tools. I would definitely also recommend this book for students and staff for middle grades through collegiate/university levels as well! Nothing is perfect so I would not rate this book as a 10, but it does truthfully deserve a solid 9. This book was positive, informative, and comprehensible.

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### **Cathy says**

I bought this book in a class I took about four or five years ago and read it this fall (reread?) for our PLN group. I had reservations about reading it now, figuring all the information would be outdated, but it was still as relevant now -- maybe more relevant -- as it was then. It gave me food for thought on how much more I could be doing with blogs and wikis, particularly, in my English 8 classroom. I am intrigued by the idea of an online portfolio and am appalled that our students don't have them yet. Our district has a long way to go to catch up to 21st Century opportunities.

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### **Wolfman says**

There is so much in this book that it is overwhelming to read it and imagine trying out all the Read/Write web technologies he talks about. I don't see how you could dedicate so much time to all the things he talks about and still have a life outside the classroom. In fact, that is what I think will be the next great crisis of the web: people will not be able to use everything that is out there, so they will have to pick and choose and/or someone like Google is going to have to find a way to put it all in one "app." Clearly, we also have to redefine education. When all the answers are only a click away, knowing facts isn't going to mean much. Kids will have to think and solve problems. And collaborate. This book should be required reading for every district tech specialist who spends all his time working on programs that the students never get to use. This gets at how technology **SHOULD** be used in education.

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### **Seth says**

This is a little dated at this point (it was written when blogs, wikis and podcasts were new-fangled ideas, lo these many -- well, three or four -- years ago). However it does do a solid job of articulating what the pedagogical advantages of these tools are and gives concrete examples of how and when to use them. I found that it pushed me to rethink my own relationship with blogs and wikis in a very useful and positive way. I'm not 100% sold on everything he says, but there's far more than just a grain of truth here...

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### **Jay Wassell says**

What stood out most for you in the book? Use a quoted passage if possible.

During the last chapter Richardson makes note of ten Big Shifts. These are the shifts occurring in regards to how we teach our students and how content and curriculum in constantly changing. One of the shifts that I felt most essential was #9-Mastery is the Product, Not the Test. We have been conditioned to think of education and learning as collecting and memorizing facts, passing tests and earning acceptable grades. The Read/Write Web allows students to exhibit mastery through project-based assignments which allow them to delve deeper into their coursework and get away from focusing on facts that can be later referenced on the Internet.

Why did this passage stand out for you?

This passage stood out because the concepts presented are still changing day to day in our society. It is such an exciting time to be a technology teacher and to introduce these tools and new way of learning to our students. Richardson presents shifts that go against tradition ways of learning and thinking. I guess as technology teacher you often feel as if you are step ahead and perpetually pulling everyone along with you to see the light these new tools. I was interesting to speak of these shifts so matter-of-factly.

What implications do you think this will have on students and learning?

This will greatly influence the way that students and teachers view education. Some students are only motivated by grades; some students are held in high regard because they can memorize facts; however these skills are not going to be valued as much in the future. Each student will be connected and be able to reference any factual information in seconds. We must prepare our students to find the information, and show them how to apply this information to solving problems and using it work collaboratively. The 10 Big Shifts are revolutionizing not only education but the world as we see it today. I have linked to the Big Shifts here.

Discuss the theme of the book. Give us some background on what the book addresses. Try to highlight the main idea and the supporting details of the book.

The book addresses essentially 5 current Web 2.0 technologies in blogs, wikis, podcasts, social bookmarking and online digital photography. Richardson takes a chapter per tool to explain the tool in detail and how to implement these technologies in the classroom. The book provides numerous links to tutorials and his suggested sites within each tool domain. In addition to explaining the tools Richardson provides tips on how to maintain a safe classroom. Also, he addresses the social changes that are, and will occur when these tools are used in the classroom. For example, Richardson examines the classroom as a 24/7 location where student can learn, interact with each other and those located around the globe.

Write your response to the book and be specific about why and how you agree or disagree with the author's point of view.

I firmly agree with Richardson's view of education and the changes that are going to take place. Some predictions that he made in 2006 are now commonplace in the classroom, so Richardson is a futurist in some regards. The book is essential for anyone foreign to the somewhat new tools; for a teacher who has embraced technology this may provide a nice review to them and offer some new ways to utilize these technologies in the classroom.

Make connections between the book and current educational issues.

Education as we know has been changing for the last 5-10 years as we become more dependent on the Internet and the latest Web 2.0 technologies that exist. Richardson goes into detail explaining these web tools and how they will transform your classroom. It is commonly recognized that public schools and their teachers have fallen behind in regards to utilizing current technologies to assist learners. If every teacher read this book and implemented one or two of these tools in their classroom they would witness personal as well as student growth in their classroom. I feel most teachers are too scared and often too lazy to embrace these new tools; we will most likely make a leap forward when the baby boomer generation retires and new teachers enter the school; some of the teachers will be Digital Natives.

Conclude – Give the book a rating and recommendation for what audience(s) might benefit from reading this book.

Out of 5 stars I give this book a 3. This book was published in 2006 and it definitely feels like it was written 5 years ago. While the information is still pertinent there is mention of certain tools that failed to make it to the forefront of Web 2.0 tools. Furthermore, some of the tools mentioned in the book and Richardson's detailed instructions no longer apply. For example, he mentions on numerous occasions downloading these tools to your school server. All these technologies are now web-based with little to no fees. This the only minor setback of the book as all of the tools mentioned are still very pertinent. I feel anyone in education could benefit by reading this book.

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### **Nightowltoo says**

Clear cut technology for classroom teachers. Technology is not going away, in fact it's becoming more pervasive. It is also evolving at ever increasing speeds. Richardson's book cuts to the chase and helps teachers to understand not only what things are (blogs, RSS feeds, etc) but why you need to understand them and how using them can work in the classroom. He updates every few years so be sure to look for the most current edition

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**Regina says**

I just finished an online book study of this book with other teachers in my district, using Wiggio. There is a lot of information here and it has really helped me to go out and try new things on the Read/Write Web 2.0. The message is that teachers must become comfortable with blogs, wikis, podcasts, etc., if we are to use them with our students. I really like how Richardson explains blogging as a new genre, where people write for an audience, read critically, synthesize information, make comments, and contribute to a greater understanding of topics. Good balance of theoretical and practical information here.

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