

# MEMBER profiles

Gordon Dahlby

## Ed Tech Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow



**M**uch has changed since 1982, when Gordon Dahlby became an ISTE member. He was a grad student at Northwest Missouri State University when NECC came to nearby Kansas City that year. “We were programming in the schools on fancy new \$3,000 Apple IIs with disk drives and using BASIC and eventually some assembly language,” he recalled.

Dahlby, who is the director of curriculum and technology at West Des Moines Community School District, has been with ISTE longer than most of the 20,000+ members on the rolls today. In fact, Dahlby was one of 91 members who signed the charter in 1989 after the name ISTE was born from the merger between the International Association for Computers in Education and the International Council for Computers in Education.

His history of support for educational technology is apparent in his longstanding commitment to ISTE.

“ISTE represents an opportunity to stay current and to contribute to the field of computing and technology

in education at a local, state, national, and international level,” Dahlby said.

PSInet, FredMail, bulletin boards, Hypercard, and Mosaic are all tools that Dahlby has watched come and go as they have given way to Web 2.0 and even 3.0 technologies.

“With all the ‘hot trends’ came the how to use it with kids and how to improve teaching and learning,” he said.

Telecommunications tools, including video on demand, are on his list of “transformative” collaborative technologies.

“The whole concept of time-shifting is fascinating to me. Whether it be podcasting audio or video or streamed video libraries, they’ve all moved the role of technology forward. It may have started with ‘old’ technology such as books on tape and/or videotaping, but the digital world has transformed the portability and access.”

He marvels at how Web 2.0 has allowed teachers and students to become both consumers and authors. “Thinking out several years, imagine the student being able to access a dozen different methods of learning a given math topic or literature analysis. We have all experienced a lesson that only became clear to us after another person besides the teacher explained it to us in their own words.”

Dahlby envisions a world where a new generation of teachers, principals,

and superintendents will learn to use technology tools to remove the barriers and inefficiencies of districts and schools struggling to improve and modernize in isolation.

“Colleges will help smooth the path as states get out of the way,” Dahlby predicts. “Software companies will join the process by developing learning software that will lead students through the equivalent of e-textbooks, but with the formative assessments and re-teaching that are able to help students become successful and continually move forward. I think the barriers between high school and college will start to fall, certainly more than they have already.”

Ultimately, Dahlby expects that students will start learning how to learn from a variety of sources in their own time and space.

“I would like to see students become owners of their own transcript in the sense of a personal résumé,” he said. “I hope students will be able to weave together their own personal transcripts with all the due recognition of the rigor and relevance of the classes they choose, but with less emphasis on where they are when they learned the content. This customized and personal record of learning is what post-secondary schools and employers will have to learn to analyze when they look at entrance or hiring.”



*ISTE and NECC are marking 30 years of ed tech excellence in 2009. In recognition of this milestone, I&L will spotlight three members over the next few issues who embody ISTE's commitment to honor the past, celebrate the present, and envision the future of educational technology. We start with longtime member Gordon Dahlby.*