



By Anita McAnear

This issue, *L&L* debuts a new column: Point/Counterpoint. We asked whether we should replace bound paper textbooks with electronic media. An interesting related question is: Have we digitized all the accumulated knowledge of the world yet? Probably not, but we sure have a lot of content in digital form. We should challenge our teacher educator members to see how much of their curriculum area is available online or in some other electronic medium. Could you teach biology, algebra, world history, world literature, or how to read and do simple math without a textbook? Would you like to if your students had 24/7 access to an Internet-connected computing device? I suspect that you would also like access to a library of electronic media in addition to the Web.

Currently, many young adults are getting their news from the Internet rather than paper newspapers. The growth in electronic books suggests that people are getting used to reading screens as tiny as phone and handheld displays. Clearly, the Millennials (those born between 1980 and 2000) will handle reading elec-

Electronic Knowledge?

tronically much better than the older generations.

Are tech coordinators ready to manage the infrastructure for that level of use? Are curriculum directors ready

to coordinate full-scale curriculum development and articulation processes across subjects and grade levels? Are the best business models in place for affordable electronic textbooks for schools? Alice Owen and Renee Krupp present the pro and con issues for this question (p. 6).

If teachers could teach without bound paper textbooks, then school districts could rethink the allocation of resources in a dramatic way. Delivering both content and testing electronically could dramatically free up dollars to support the electronic infrastructure. Perhaps including providing computing devices to students. Widespread purchase of student computing devices by schools could dramatically lower those costs. According to Susan Patrick of the U.S. Department of Education, that kind of systemwide rethinking is necessary to take full advantage of the benefits of technology. The National Educational Technology Plan (NETP) asks us to consider innovative budgeting and to move toward digital content. The NETP has nine major focus areas:

- Students Today: The Digital Generation

- Leadership for Systemwide Rethinking
- Technology's Role in Teacher Quality
- E-learning Opportunities
- Broadband for Education
- One-to-One: Universal Computing for Education
- Data-Driven Decision Making and Accountability
- Budgeting and Funding Models for the 21st Century
- Special Education

Find out more about the NETP at <http://www.nationaledeotechplan.org/>.

It's clear that doing away with bound paper textbooks would cause dramatic changes in curriculum development and teachers' day-to-day lessons and lesson planning. That change wouldn't necessarily lead to more interactive learning environments for students, but the learning models are there and would, I hope, be put to more extensive use.

Working in the educational technology field does tend to put you out on the bleeding edge. In almost 20 years as acquisitions editor of *L&L*, I can't think of one article that mentioned a textbook. This issue is no exception. We hope you will let us know where you are on the continuum in developing the learning environments our students probably think they should be in already!

Anita