Organize with Google Web Applications

Theresa McGee

Each year, I resolve to get more organized. Despite my continued struggle to maintain a clutter-free desk, I have been able to get a handle on my digital organization using Google Web applications.

To get started, you will need to set up a Google account. For a step-by-step tutorial go to **tinyurl.com/GoogleGet-Started**. Teachers with older students will be able to have their students sign up for their own Google accounts, while teachers with younger students can create content for instruction or interaction.
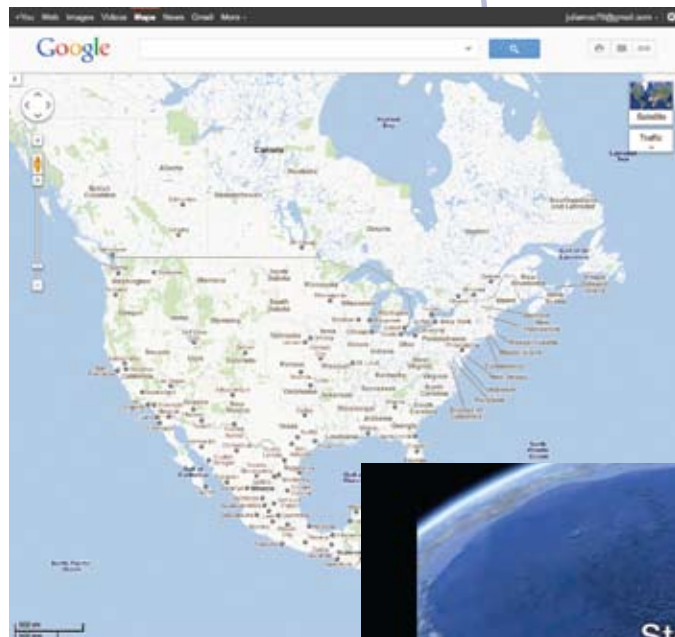
Google Docs

Collaborating on a project with colleagues can be challenging. Avoid e-mailing text documents back and forth and work together using a single shared Google Doc (**docs.google.com**). Google Docs allow multiple people to easily work on the same document simultaneously or leave notes and comments for colleagues to view later. The chat feature is particularly useful when several collaborators are online at the same time. Learn how to start collaborating using Google documents with this video walk-through: **tinyurl.com/DocCollaboration**.

Google Forms

Google Forms are found within the drop-down menu of Google Docs. Forms are useful for conducting surveys or collecting information. I have used Google Forms in class to gather information from my students such as artist statements and self-assessments. Other Google Form uses include lesson plan creation (**tinyurl.com/FormLessonPlan**), student assessment (**tinyurl.com/AdvancedArtTest**), or survey creation (**tinyurl.com/ArtworkSurvey**). Learn how to create a Google Form with this video tutorial: **tinyurl.com/GoogleFormsAssessment**.

Google Reader

There must be a new art education blog created every day, with creative teachers sharing amazing ideas. But keeping track of everything can quickly send you into digital overload. Instead of bookmarking a great blog, use Google Reader as your digital newspaper (**google.com/reader**). Just visit your Google Reader page and scan for interesting articles from blogs you follow. New blog posts are easy to identify, while favorite articles can be marked to visit later. Learn how how to start using Google Reader at **tinyurl.com/GoogleReaderTutorial**.

Google Maps

I am a huge fan of using Google Maps (**maps.google.com**) to present lessons. (See my October 2010 article at **tinyurl.com/SchoolArtsMap**.) But I have also used them for other professional purposes. For example, at the National Art Education Association conference in Seattle, I created a map that displayed my hotel, the conference center, and other sites to see. Create your own Google Map by following this tutorial: **tinyurl.com/34dmd69**.

Picasa Web Albums

Free up computer space by storing images of student work or curricular visuals in one place online using Google's Picasa Web Albums (**picasa-web.google.com**). Picasa is also useful for hosting images that you can later embed in a Google Map. (To learn how to embed a picture in a Google map, follow the tutorial at **tinyurl.com/PicassaMap**. Picasa is also a great way to display artwork online. If you have a school website, link to the album with an embedded slide show of student work. Learn how to use Picasa here: **tinyurl.com/LearnPicasa**.

Google's Web applications can help us get digitally organized and make teaching easier. Spend a few minutes and test out one of these Google tools and discover how it can help you. ✑

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