

AUGMENTED REALITY

WHIZZ-BANG! WOW! NEXT?



It's often a struggle to keep up with our standard reality, never mind enhancing it. So is AR just another flash in the pan, or is there educational substance to it?



Choosing the right technology to use in the classroom is fraught with issues. Many times as teachers, we are presented with something that surely must be worth using. But then...

How many schools have voting handsets tucked away somewhere in a store cupboard, or a class set of PDAs?

Many of these technologies and approaches have genuinely fantastic and enthusiastic cheerleaders with positive case studies to match.

However, the educational landscape is littered with technologies and software that promised much but delivered little.

So when asked to innovate with technology, a careful strategy is needed to ensure it doesn't eat that precious budget, all for limited impact.

WHY AUGMENT?

One technology that could easily fit this profile is augmented reality (AR).

It has the wow factor, and the tablet devices and infrastructure required are no longer barriers to presenting this in schools.

While it isn't hard to produce an AR 'wow', the question is: why bother?

In LGfL's Prehistoric Britain, an extinct virtual Megaloceros Giganteus (Giant / Irish Elk) appears before the student's eyes and walks around the page (or your hand, if you shrink the trigger image on the photocopier!).

Any teacher who witnesses the reaction will attest to the undoubtedly wow factor. The appearance of the animal on the page has far more impact than a static image.

It disrupts the standard pedagogy and creates a powerful learning experience. The animal is not in isolation, but interacting in full context within the materials.

It is this cognitive attractor that separates the use of AR like this from the standard use of the technology, which is invariably wow-only.

The rigorous LGfL editorial process ensures all resources enhance effective teaching and meet curriculum requirements. But best-practice use of augmented reality requires the development and application of further principles.

Central to this is the concept that AR is only used to show or demonstrate something that cannot be seen or experienced without it.

This avoids the obvious pitfall of creating objects that merely look 'cool'. A Megaloceros Giganteus is extinct, so pupils could not experience it in any other way.

Further, this must be coupled with subject and curriculum context. If experience and curriculum are ever separated, then the potential for immediate learning is lost, and perhaps more importantly, the desire to learn can disappear.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Augmented reality is a simple concept. A 3D model, video, sound or image (sometimes a combination) is shown overlaid on the real world.

This is achieved via the camera lens of a mobile device and shown on the screen. The effect is generated by programming the tablet to recognise a 'trigger' or 'tracker' image.

The tricky bit is to maintain the illusion as the device is moved around, leaving the 3D object still in place.

WHAT NEXT?

Writing this a couple of years ago, we would perhaps be envisioning a classroom where everyone was wearing Google Glass type devices and experiencing an augmented layer across many aspects of school life.

The future, as ever, is unclear. But one thing we do know: thousands of London schoolchildren are already being engaged and drawn into deep learning by using augmented-reality resources from LGfL.

prehistoric.lgfl.net
maya.lgfl.net
ww1.lgfl.net