



Technology and New Media

THE LAST FEW decades have witnessed a tremendous increase in the availability and affordability of technology. While in the late twentieth century many schools would have been unable to afford the sophisticated tools required to edit film or video projects, today video can be recorded on a smart phone, downloaded to a computer, and edited with free shareware programs. High-quality digital video projectors are now readily available for \$400 or less, enabling many schools to incorporate multimedia into theatre productions.

To assess the impact this explosion of technology has had on high school theatre programs, teachers were asked if they used a variety of digital and online resources in their classroom teaching and/or production work (**Chart A**). Teachers' overall use of technology and new media was relatively limited, considering its widespread availability. In fact, the only tool that at least 50 percent of teachers reported using was video-based websites (such as YouTube and Hulu), usually in the classroom, though 41 percent of teachers also employed them in productions.

Very few teachers reported using Computer-Aided Drafting programs, which may be partially due to the fact many programs lack access to a scene shop in which set pieces can be built. Another factor limiting CAD use might be the teachers' lack of training in design, as was suggested in the Faculty and Training section of the 2012 survey. Use of Smart Boards is likely influenced by the availability of these more expensive tools at each school. However, the

relatively rare use of free and inexpensive tools such as blogs, wikis, social media, etc. is more difficult to explain. Future research might explore teachers' comfort or familiarity with such tools, their views on the role of technology in the classroom, and interest in incorporating new media into productions.

One factor that may limit teacher's use of web-based media is restricted internet access. Most teachers (56 percent) indicated that their schools limited their access to online resources, and even more (84 percent) indicated that their students' access was restricted. The present study did not explore the specific restrictions in place or if teachers had attempted to circumvent them in order to use internet resources in class, but given that many sites could be used both for legitimate school business (e.g. using Facebook to advertise an upcoming show), they could also be used for personal activities. As many schools would likely have difficulty monitoring exactly how students and teachers were using such sites, it seems reasonable to suspect that many of them are prohibiting or limiting access.

Film and video

While the 1970 and 1991 studies did not assess the availability of courses in video or film, the 2012 survey asked both teachers and administrators about the availability of such courses in order to assess anecdotal evidence suggesting they had become commonplace over the past several years.

There was a large discrepancy between responses from theatre teachers

and school administrators on this question. While just fewer than ten percent of teachers indicated that their schools offered discrete courses in film/video, approximately 58 percent of participating administrators indicated that their schools featured these courses.

This gap might be explained in part by the observation that very few administrators who indicated that film/video courses offered reported that they were taught by theatre arts faculty. In fact, only seven percent of the schools offering these courses assign responsibility for them to the theatre department. In most cases, school audio-visual, business/career/technical education, or English departments were responsible for the school video/film program (**Chart B**). As the chart suggests, responsibility for these courses varies greatly. As a relatively new field of study at the high school level, it appears that video has yet to find a clearly defined home in secondary education. The National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, the partnership of eight national arts and education organizations revising the 1994 National Standards for Arts Education, is creating discrete media arts standards apart from dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. The role these standards might play in shaping the future development of film/video courses remains to be seen, and future research may be needed to assess how they bring secondary school courses in media arts closer to or further from live performing arts programs such as theatre.

Chart A: The variety of digital and online resources used by theatre teachers in their classrooms and production work.

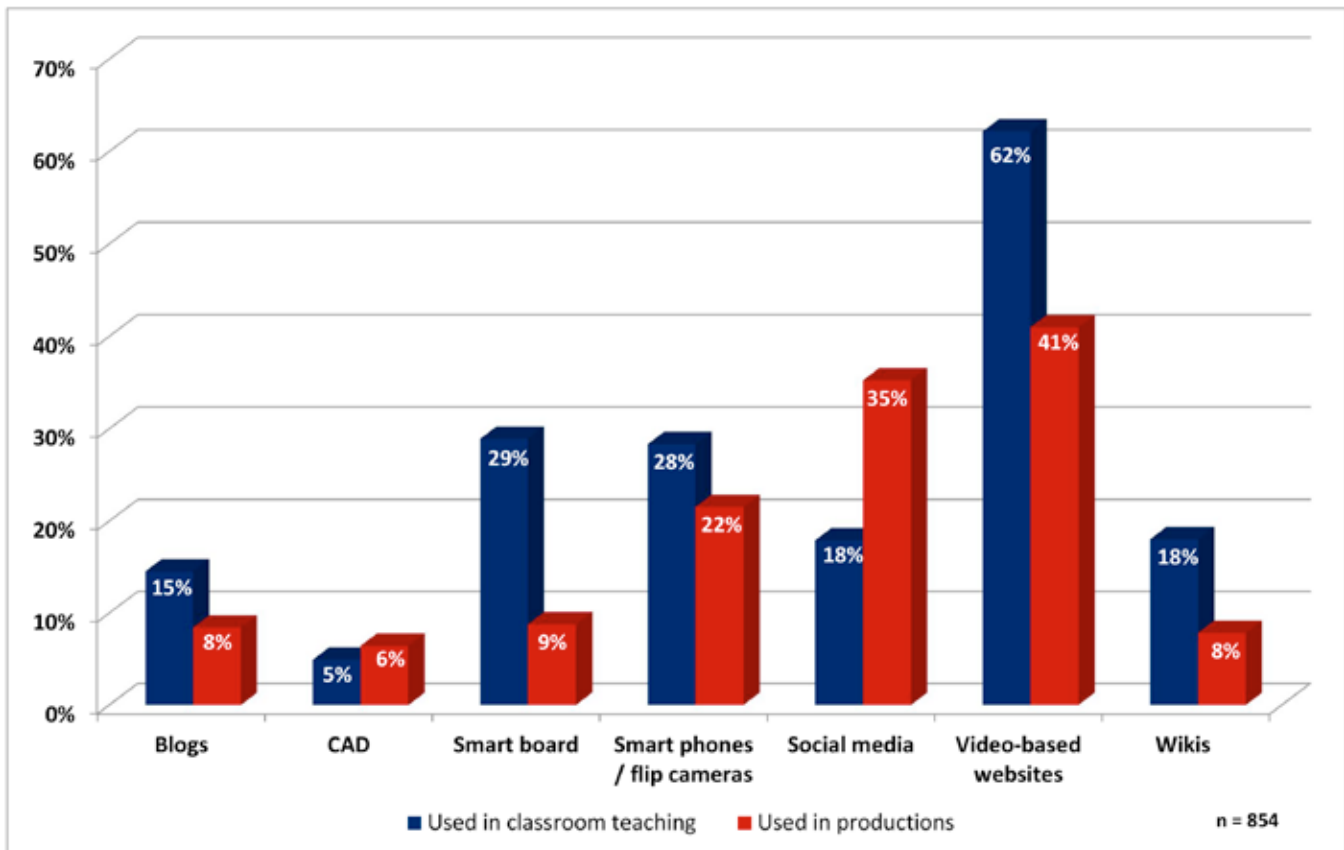


Chart B: The range of departmental responsibility for film/video courses.

