Future Watch – Augmenting the Classroom

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Every so often, a new technology debuts which transforms how we do things. Email, the internet, smart phones, and social media have all changed the way we communicate, and educators have found it necessary to adapt and innovate to integrate these technological advances into the classroom. Augmented reality (AR) may be next on this list.

AR refers to the blending of the real and virtual worlds. An AR app uses a smartphone or tablet to layer virtual content over a view of the real world as seen through the mobile device's camera lens. Apps such as Pokémon™GO, Play a Coke®, and the IKEA® catalogue are examples of how AR has already been used in the gaming, advertising, and design industries. With Apple, Google, and Microsoft investing heavily in bringing augmented reality and mixed reality into the mainstream, the future of AR promises to be very exciting.

The ability of augmented reality to engage, expand, surprise, and transform suggests a role for AR in education and it is not too early to begin thinking of how this emerging technology will impact teaching and learning. Applications of AR to education will likely use interactive features to enhance the physical learning environment and print-based resources. Here are a few ideas for how AR can be applied to the classroom:

- display 3D models

- animate images or objects

- annotate objects or spaces with labels and information

- reveal hidden features or inner components

- simulate activities

- challenge perceptions and present alternate views

- link printed resources to video, audio, social media, and online content

- provide mobile access to your favorite tech tools

- showcase student work

- and much more!

AR is a rapidly changing field and new advances are literally just around the corner (heads up iPhone users!). For those who can't wait for the new developments and want to begin with existing technology, several AR companies currently offer free educational subscriptions to web-based software for the creation of custom AR content. These easy-to-use studio applications allow you to link your videos, pictures, 3D models, and other virtual resources to a printed photo or a specific object. Students access the content by installing the corresponding viewing app on their mobile device and scanning the photo or object.

Interested in learning more? Have an AR idea for the classroom that you want to develop?

Contact the Teaching & Learning Centre, participate in an upcoming AR workshop, or explore one of the following tools:

- Aurasma Studio

- Blippbuilder

- Augment

What's in your coffee? Augmented reality can transform spaces and objects into learning opportunities by layering 3D models and other virtual content over the real world.

View the Fall 2017 issue of the Academic Newsletter.

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