

## Are the times a-changin'?

*And you'd better start swimming  
Or you'll sink like a stone  
For the times they are a-changin'*  
- Bob Dylan

When I initiated the echalk emailing list in December 1994, new subscribers were welcomed with a message headed by this "ASCII graphic" created by Scott Smith, who also conceived the list's name.

The 1994 welcome message included this sentence, "The main purpose for this list is to be a channel of communication for teachers who have accounts on cleo."

One of the first day messages to echalk on 5 December 1994 included reference to "...the new list being "launched" at the forthcoming Flexibility in Schools Project Professional Development Day, "Superhighway or goat track", at Murdoch University, Fri 9 Dec, from 9.00 am".

One of the second day messages to echalk concerned a Virus Alert for the "Good News" (or Good Times) virus hoax, including the quotation of this advice:

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>>There is a warning circulating on the Internet,  
about a virus that seems  
>>to be transmitted via e-mail. I am aware that  
this is said to be  
>>impossible, but I have received some evidence  
that it has actually  
>>happened.
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Do the snippets from the echalk 1994 archives quoted above give you a mixed feeling that the "times they are a-changin'", but in some ways are not really changing? The "ASCII graphic" is a forgotten art, because email users now have much fancier ways of fulfilling those unchanged desires to tart up their messages. The notion of a channel of communication for teachers endures, but the focus on a particular host which provided Internet access changed very quickly as the Internet Service Provider industry matured in the mid-1990s. The catchcry "Flexibility in Schools" has been replaced by something else, but the mixture of optimism and despair that we may sense in the phrase "Superhighway or goat track" hasn't really changed. As for viruses and hoaxes, they certainly haven't gone away.

The need for the "PD Day" and other forms of continuing professional development is not "a-changin'", as is evident from PD constituting the core basis for ECAWA. It seemed to me we were very fortunate in the 1990s to have a strong group of teachers who felt that they had "better start swimming" on their own professional development and IT implementations for their schools, because otherwise there was the prospect of sinking "like a stone" in the turbulent flood of changes accompanying the new technologies. Echalk's questions, answers, announcements, pronouncements and chatter reflected this mood, and thus contributed to PD and IT developments, and to coping with

"the times they are a-changin'". It seems to have become an enduring contribution, as echalk will soon be eight years old, a truly venerable age in Internet terms.

Echalk is also an informal link between diverse groups concerned with PD and IT - between public and private schools, between primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, between central management and classroom teachers, and between schools and suppliers of software and hardware. In accord with that tradition, it was great for us to find a new home for echalk at Curtin University's SMEC when the old server on cleo was retired. For advice on how to subscribe to echalk and other details, see <http://learnt.smec.curtin.edu.au/echalk/> (in particular, note the advice on how to unsubscribe - echalk delivers a lot of email and many subscribers quite sensibly take an occasional break or frequent breaks, by unsubscribing and resubscribing later on :-)

There is another Dylanesque feature about echalk as an informal channel of communication. Do you sometimes forget the dictum about thinking twice before hitting the Send button on your email? Well, in the case of echalk, the milieu is mostly easygoing, *Don't think twice, it's all right...*

Roger Atkinson

## Free Professional Development - 2003

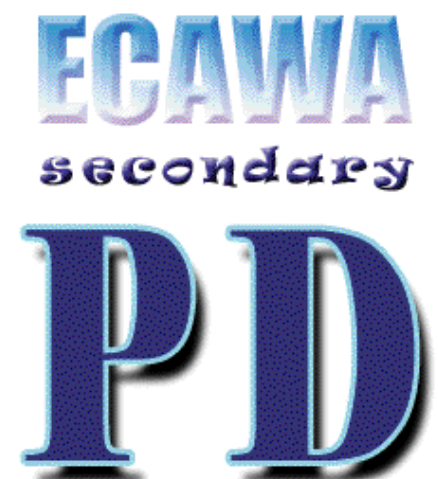
Please check the ECAWA home page at <http://www.ecawa.asn.au/> and my myinternet page at <http://www.ecawa.asn.au/home/mleishman/pd.htm> to get the latest information that relates to Secondary Professional development.

### Topics include:

Logical Data Flow Diagrams using Chartist  
Portfolio creation in Digital and Interactive Media  
Planning for effective use of ICT in schools

Please email me if you would like to attend any of these workshops  
Regards

Mike Leishman  
Secondary Coordinator



<http://www.ecawa.asn.au/home/mleishman/pd.htm>