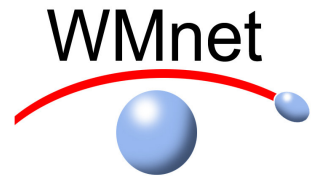


WMnet Update

News from the West Midlands Regional Broadband Consortium
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www.wmnet.org.uk

Coventry school makes the news

Year 13 Media students at Caludon Castle School, Coventry, were winners of the Best Local News Story category in the Making the News competition. Their story focused on Coventry's Ricoh Arena and its bid for the first super casino licence. The award was presented at BETT 2006 by Robin Cousins, the 1980 Olympic gold medallist.



Terri King and Olympic figure skater Robin Cousins

To help students gain a practical understanding of news production, Media teacher Steff Hutchinson signed the students up to Channel 4's Breaking the News project. The students had to create a local feature and they decided to investigate the super casino bid. Student Terri King explains "We had to find a local story that would be interesting to the rest of the country. We chose the Ricoh because there were enough resources and a story for us to research. We interviewed Ricoh's project manager and our local MP and got vox pops in the city centre and at the football ground, and we caught MP Bob Ainsworth as he happened to pass by, so we interviewed him too! We gathered facts about the story from other news organisations and the Ricoh itself and took footage of the city centre and the Arena. When we got back, we edited it down so that it would fit the amount of time we had. Phil, who had been chosen as the reporter, had to add his voice-over at the end."

For the competition, the students had to re-edit the story, cutting it down even further to create a 5Mb file. This turned out to be just over 2 minutes of reporting from an original 3½ minute story. Even more editing decisions had to be taken, honing the story as tightly as possible. This, of course, replicated what

happens in news production as an item slips down the news agenda, and has its airtime cut.

What were the benefits of the experience? "We learnt how to construct a news story. It was surprisingly hard it was to edit, trying to pick out the best bits and trying to cut it, but still get in all the information. We gained a lot of experience. Those of us who want to work in the media have now got a real understanding that things have to fit to time, that there are real deadlines, and that we've got to get all our information beforehand. We had to rush at the end to meet the deadlines, because we were doing all our other lessons as well."

Terri's advice to other students Making The News? "Plan the time. Try to get as much information as possible. Make sure that everything you've got is relevant and enjoy the experience." See the winning entry at <http://tinyurl.com/avs8e>.

Bill Giles launches Climate Change Pledge

Former BBC senior weatherman, Bill Giles OBE, launched the West Midlands Climate Change Pledge website at BETT 2006 in January. He explained that climate change is happening and that it will have far-reaching effects on our lives. "Average annual temperatures around the world are increasing," he said, adding, "Action is needed to reduce the negative impacts of this global warming by reducing the emission of gases that contribute to the greenhouse effect. Schools can play their part by pledging to reduce carbon dioxide emissions."



Bill Giles as many know him

The Climate Change Pledge website identifies a range of actions that school communities can undertake. It also gives guidance on what these might mean in practice and sources of help and advice. By pledging to undertake some or all of these actions, schools will be making a significant contribution to local, national and international targets for reducing greenhouse gases. They may well find that they save money, too! Have a look today at

www.climatepledge.wmnet.org.uk and encourage your school to take the pledge.



Bill Giles launches the climate change pledge

Learning platforms

To support the DfES target for all schools to provide access to a learning platform by early 2008, the ten Regional Broadband Consortia are running a series of events for schools to help school leaders plan for their introduction and use in teaching and learning. With DfES funding WMnet are producing video clips filmed at our learning platform conference on 22nd February. They will be part of a set of resources available in the new elearning in action area of the WMnet portal (www.wmnet.org.uk/17.cfm). This section includes case studies of broadband in use in schools, useful guidance and resources.

Climate Change webcasts

Video conferencing has given students in the West Midlands a unique opportunity this term to talk directly with scientists about climate change. In a series of five Ask the Expert events, students listen to a scientist explaining how climate change is having an impact and gain expert answers to their questions. Each of the videoconferences is webcast live to schools and a recording is placed on the climate change portal for later viewing. Topics include weather, food production and the countryside, oceans, transport and impacts on the UK. Also webcast was a debate on climate change on 3rd February at the Young People's Parliament with more than 150 students taking part. Find out what actions they considered important by viewing the recording at www.climatechange.wmnet.org.uk, where you can also take part in the live webcasts.

Rock Idol goes national

Following last year's hugely successful regional Rock Idol competition, WMnet are pleased to be launching a national competition to find this year's Rock Idol top band.

There are two strands to the competition running side by side. Established bands compete for one set of prizes whilst new bands compete for another set. In the autumn, both categories of entrants will perform

an original piece, live via a video conference link, to a panel of experts from the music industry. An innovative band blog will be available so that supporters can follow the progress of their favourite band. On the day of the finals students will be able to vote online to support their band. Regional finals will be held in late autumn, culminating in a national final at the end of November. Details are being finalised and will appear at www.rockidol.org.uk. This promises to be an enormously exciting event!

Digital film making

One of the key aspects of the Beyond Pathe project was to engage schools across the region in digital film making. All schools were invited to pitch an idea and, of those, several were visited and then four selected to take part. The films were to be inspired from the Pathe archive, based on the Second World War and involve children and staff in the school and be supported by media charity One Small Barking Dog in terms of filming and editing.

The six short films produced are now available online at www.beyondpathe.org.uk/festival/shortfilms:

- Finding Jack by Lutley Primary School, Halesowen
- Mr Hodges Returns and The Corridor by Alcester Grammar School, Warwickshire
- Evacuation and An Unforgettable Day by Holbrook Junior School, Coventry
- Gerald's Story by Crestwood Secondary School, Dudley

Another key aspect of the project was to explore the possibilities of using the archive to inspire art work. Visual artist Stuart Mugridge has been commissioned to work in a number of WMnet schools as an artist in residence to work with students to produce works in response to the Pathe archive. Stuart will be in residence during the spring and summer terms and all works will be published on the web site.

Screen Online

More and more content and services are available free over the National Education Network. Schools now have free access to Screen Online (www.screenonline.org.uk) and its library of TV and film archives. Access works in the same way as for the Pathe Archives and Audio Networks and is free from computers connected to the NEN.

Why not ... ?

- **Take part** in National Science week, 10-19 March, with a focus on activities related to climate change?
- **Encourage** students to be the West Midlands Climate Change Champions competition at www.climatechallenge.gov.uk?
- **Submit** digital or analogue art work related to biodiversity to Green Week, a European competition at www.greenweek2006.eun.org?