TECH TIPS

At this time of year, we often reminiscence about holiday or family traditions. That makes it an ideal time to help our students discover the meaning of traditions, whether at school, at home, or in the community. Librarians can collaborate with social studies, history, and English teachers to explore ways to use technology to document personal histories and traditions.

Here are few digital resources that will enable students to create audio, visual, or textual records of their families and traditions—and perhaps provide the foundation for creating new traditions for future generations. These tools can be used in collaboration with teachers to create engaging individual and group projects that teach vital research, writing, and speaking and listening skills.

Word Clouds for Kids

www.abcya.com/word_clouds.htm

ABCya.com's Word Clouds for Kids is a free program that provides a graphical representation of word frequency. Like other word cloud generators, the program allows users to type or paste text into a box; it then generates a word cloud with the press of a button. Students can change the color, font, layout, and word density of their clouds by using the graphics buttons, and the clouds can be downloaded and printed.

Librarians can work with English teachers to have students write about their family or holiday traditions in a text document so that the students can easily paste their stories into Word Clouds for Kids. The word clouds can then be used to teach students about vocabulary, narrative structure, and revision.

W.K–6.3, W.K–6.5, and W.K–6.6

Chirbit

www.chirbit.com

Chirbit is a free, web-based program that enables students to record, upload, and share their audio recordings. Students can record directly from the web browser or upload existing audio clips to share on the library or classroom website. Each audio recording is accessible via an embedded player or on any mobile device. Another free program, Embedly (*http://embed. ly*), allows librarians to embed content from Chirbit to the library's website for easy access by parents, teachers, and friends.

Chirbit allows users an unlimited number of files but restricts the length of the files to five minutes each. Students can record their family or holiday traditions, tell stories, record original songs, or even create a radio show by using their computer or device's built-in microphone.

SL.K–6.4, SL.K–6.5, SL.K–6.6

Biteslide

www.biteslide.com

With the web-based program Biteslide, teachers and students can research, create, and present school projects in virtual scrapbooks, or "slidebooks," by uploading images, videos, and text. The basic plan is free to educators and allows one teacher with up to thirty students to create one project; the Teacher Basic premium plan, which costs $5 per month, allows one teacher to create unlimited slidebooks and projects with up to 300 students.

With a drag-and-drop interface, Biteslide is easy for younger students to use, while older students can create and customize slidebooks across the curriculum, using preloaded backgrounds, borders, and stickers. The slidebooks can be published to the web or downloaded to print and share in the classroom and at home.

By combining text and images, the slidebooks provide a great platform for students to present research on holiday traditions or family history while meeting core standards for integrating visual information and using technology to publish work.

The developers of Biteslide use a "walled garden" to secure students' project from being accessed by anyone outside of project group. Once completed, only the teacher can authorize the content to be published to the web.

W.K–6.6, W.K–6.7, W.K–6.8, and RH.6-8.7

Padlet

http://padlet.com

Educators have used Padlet (formerly known as Wallwisher) to collaborate with their peers. But it can also be used to create a classroom collaboration by having students add images, videos, documents, or text relating to their family or holiday traditions.

Padlet works from most devices, on both the iOS and Android platforms. Librarians can work with classroom teachers to assist students in customizing their wall with titles and descriptions, background images, and posts. Educators can set the level of privacy (completely private, password protected, hidden links, or completely public), and posts submitted by students can be moderated by the librarian or teacher before they appear on the wall. Students are able to edit, delete, and reorganize only their own notes.

W.K–6.6, W.K–6.7, W.K–6.8, and RH.6-8.7

Audio Memos

https://itunes.apple.com

Audio Memos, a professional voice recorder for the iPhone and iPad, is easy enough for even the youngest elementary student to use. The cost for the basic app is $0.99, with extension apps available for purchase (at prices between $0.99 and $1.99) that provide enhanced recording options, as well as additional ways to share recordings. With a simple but intuitive interface, Audio Memos features volume boost, volume normalizing, editing, and more.

Recordings can be stored on the device or backed up to a computer. Audio Memos uses the widespread .wav format to store recordings, so users can transfer and use them on any device. Advanced metadata for recordings, including name, date, length, and size information, are also available.

Librarians can collaborate with history or social studies teachers to create an oral history project. Using Audio Memos, students can record themselves or others talking about holiday traditions, download the audio file to a computer for editing, and share their recordings through programs like Chirbit or Vocaroo.

SL.K–6.4, SL.K–6.5, and SL.K–6.6

Audioboo

https://audioboo.fm/about/education

If you've wanted to try podcasting but don't have the time or money to invest in the equipment needed, Audioboo provides a fast and effective method to record and share audio files. Available for both iOS and Android, as well as on the web, Audioboo is simple to use. Students or educators can record short audio clips (three minutes per clip) and upload it to an Audioboo account. Students, parents, teachers, and others can then listen to the most recent "boos" by accessing the Audioboo website. Audioboo can also automatically update Facebook and Twitter feeds with new recordings.

SL.K–6.4, SL.K–6.5, and SL.K–6.6

Shonda Brisco, *MLIS, is the district librarian for Newkirk Public Schools (OK) and a career librarian at the K–12 and academic levels. She is a contributing author to* No Shelf Required: e-Books in the 21st Century Library *(ALA, 2010) and* Curriculum Materials Centers and Collections: Moving from the Past to the Future *(ACRL, 2011).*