

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

# SOCIAL MEDIA



### Social media is ideally suited to:

- **provide a showcase for enjoyable and relevant RE;**
- **celebrate RE and its contribution to education and pupils' personal development;**
- **raise public awareness of RE's contribution to society and social cohesion;**
- **develop and maintain a strong presence for RE in the online community and news media;**
- **encourage creativity and excellence in RE.**

## What are social media?

The term 'Social Media' is a loose phrase used to refer to a range of recent 'Web 2.0' technologies which can be used for data generation, sharing and collection.

A web 2.0 type technology is one that is interactive, allowing for the generation of content to come from those accessing the media as well as those producing it. So, a webpage or a report is a **Web 1.0** passive technology as the user cannot change the content of the material and cannot comment, in a way that is available to all users, on the content. A Blog, or a discussion, is a **Web 2.0** type technology as the users and contributors shape the development of the content.

Probably the most useful of such technologies are the two most used networking sites, **Twitter** and **Facebook**. These are both 'push technologies' in that, rather than a user having to visit them, they will themselves keep the user informed of changes and development. Many teachers regularly use the **TES Teachers'**

**Forum** (<http://www.tes.co.uk/forums.aspx>) to keep up to date and to enter into discussion with others.

**Twitter** is a social announcement and networking system. Users register and then can follow other Tweeters / be followed by anyone they allow to follow them. All Tweets are public and contain 140 characters. Information given is therefore succinct and to the point. Twitter is now used by a number of organisations - e.g. Number 10, The Foreign Office, The White House, charities and museums, journalists and newspapers – to announce daily activities and, importantly, to provide links to external, related websites. As well as 'information bullets', Tweets can also follow a thread – indicated with a # sign - which continues a story or issue of interest.

**Facebook** is also a 'friends' based system with the Facebook server sending notifications to friends when new content is added. As well as its messaging facilities, Facebook allows members to share media.

A system like **Google Maps** allows for the creation of advertising space for events and allows followers to see where events are happening in their geographical region. This has already been developed for the RE Trails Site ([www.retrails.org.uk](http://www.retrails.org.uk)).

## The use of social media for producing material and creating legacy

**Flickr** and **YouTube** are very useful resources, as these are places where people can share reports and results of an RE event or project that they have undertaken in their locales.

**Flickr:** [<http://www.flickr.com/>] is a photo-sharing site where, as well as posting images, these images can be tagged by those posting them so that they can be found by others, and then commented on.

**YouTube:** [<http://www.youtube.com/>] is a video-sharing site where, as well as posting video, comments and responses can be posted. There is already an RE Teachers' user group (see article by Hopkins, P, (2008) – *My Tube, Your Tube, Our Tube* RE Today Vol 26:1) where there are also some imaginative posts by RE students.

Facilities such as **SlideShare** and **GoogleDocs** allow people/groups to share resources that they have produced. In that text, image, graphic and video can be hosted, these facilities can also be used for those who are producing materials for competitions.

**Slideshare:** [<http://www.slideshare.com/>] is a facility for sharing presentational materials which can be left open for editing or can be locked.

**GoogleDocs:** [<http://www.google.com/docs>] allows for the sharing of documents, which can then be downloaded and edited by the recipient. These can be in word-processed, spreadsheet or presentation format.

## The use of social media for encouraging collaboration

Networks such as **Ning** or **Blogger** could be used for collaboration between local / national groups. **Skype** and **Today's Meet** are also useful tools.

**Ning** [<http://www.ning.com/>] is a Networking tool including a Forum and Blog tools to allow groups to plan joint events and celebrations.

**Blogger** [<http://www.blogger.com/>] is a similar tool.

**Skype** [<http://www.skype.com/>] is a Voice over Internet Protocols (VOIP) system that allows free point-to-point calling and cheap other telecommunications as well as an Instant Message system.

**Today's Meet** [<http://www.todaysmeet.com/>] is a short term Twitter-based messaging system very useful for short collaborative meetings between groups.

## Examples of how social media might be used in RE



A teacher has run a great poetry competition in his class and the children have then produced their poems as image files. The teacher loads these images up to the

**Facebook** wall and adds a message; another teacher is inspired by this and gets her children to undertake a similar project.



A class has been developing a series of 30-minute 'adverts' for GCSE RE and the teacher has decided, after some peer assessment, to load the best of these to the school RE

**YouTube** channel so that others can see and comment on them. A teacher in another part of the country sees these and asks for permission to use these in her school's Y9 options evening.



A primary school is very proud of the competition it held to design a logo for their RE workbooks. They want to share the best of these and so upload the images to **Flickr** and produce a presentation which they put onto **SlideShare**.



A cluster of primary schools is keen to develop a Philosophy for Children (P4C) activity rooted in a religious question and so they decide to use **Ning** to run a virtual community of enquiry around the question – How does faith change your behaviour?