CHAPTER 1

Introduction

I sat, staring at my computer screen. Working on a lesson centered around the periodic table, I was struggling to find a video that I had seen in a training session just a week earlier. I poured over my notes, looked back in my Evernote, and even tried searching the Web for some key phrases from the video.

Nothing.

I spent hours like this in my classroom when I was teaching. I would encounter so many great resources from the web, documents from professional development sessions I had attended, notes from meetings—I had information and data scattered all over the place and no real sense to how it should or could be organized.

I saw the same with my students.

I taught middle school students. To me, these are the best students to teach. Watching them transition from elementary to high school was great for me. But their skills at finding good information and storing it for later were haphazard at best. After assigning a project, I'd have to spend more time helping them find and save the best information to suit their needs than they spent doing the actual project. Granted, those skills are important, but they should be emphasized long before middle school.

I encounter this same problem when I talk to educators from across the globe. We have access to a great deal of information for planning lessons, engaging content for our students, and resources to help us be better educators.

We are inundated with vast amounts of information each day. Daniel J. Levitin, in his book entitled *The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight In An Age Of Information Overload,* noted that we took in five times as much information in 2011 as we did in 1986. That is the equivalent of 175 newspapers of data, each and every day![1] And those numbers are sure to get larger with the ever-increasing use of social media and other Internet sources.

If you were to take all of the information attributed to you (your own knowledge, information about you, information related to you, etc.) and wrote it down on 3 × 5 index cards, front and back, you'd have enough cards to cover the entire states of Connecticut and Massachusetts. Try organizing that information in a logical way. Quite the task, if you ask me.

There is a great need for better organization and retrieval of all information, but, for educators and students, there is a specific need for better management of digital assets. During my time using social media, I have discovered that finding information is not a problem. Again, I am inundated with resources whenever I sign in. Using Twitter or reading blogs, it is easy to find

the information and data that I am looking for. What is needed is a great system for organizing all of these resources and then, more importantly, an easy way to share this information with others.

Think about the job of a museum curator. The curator's task is to find and build exhibits that tell some sort of story. The curator scours the research to find the best information and then presents it to the public in a logical way. To boil it down to three parts, the curator's job is to collect, organize, and share information.

The same is true of educators and students. We are all researching, reading, and collecting massive amounts of data that we ultimately will want to use for some purpose. As educators, for example, we might want to save a particular video to use in a lesson on the periodic table. Similarly, students need to learn the most effective ways to organize and retrieve their research so they can create new knowledge.

Take Problem-Based Learning for example. Both the teacher and the student have a need to better organize and share information. The teacher needs to find sites, examples, helpful resources, and so on., that will assist students as they navigate through their problem. Students will gather many resources on their own that they will need to recall later or will apply different resources to different solutions. Both the teacher and the students also need an easy way to share these resources with each other because the information does no good if it is simply hoarded.

In this book, we will explore what curation is and how it is done. We'll examine the role that curation plays in professional growth and learning for educators and how curation can be done in the classroom. Most importantly, we will look several digital tools in depth to help make curation and sharing easier.

TIME TO REFLECT

1. Consider how much information you receive daily. How are you currently organizing all of it?
2. How will having a curation strategy help you be a more effective educator?

Note

1. Levitin, D. J. Chapter 1. *The organized mind: Thinking straight in the age of information overload.* New York: Dutton Adult, 2014. p. 6.