

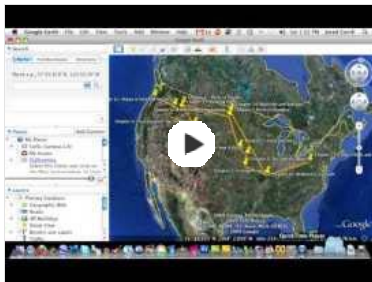


Arts, Business, Schools

Google Lit Trip Creator Takes Lafayette Audience Around the World

Jerome Burg says we're all on a journey. Tuesday night, he took an audience at the Lafayette Library on the ride of their lives.

By [Lou Fancher](#) | [Email the author](#) | April 21, 2011



At *Science Cafe*, a [Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation](#) event on April 19, an appreciative audience of approximately 45 people traveled to Madrid, Santiago, Boston and Ghazi Stadium in Afghanistan, all without ever leaving their seats.

Jerome Burg, a Microsoft Education Award Winner and founder of [Google Lit Trips](#), made the virtual become actual with lively descriptions of the little idea that grew to be an enormous part of his "retirement."

"Google Lit was a joke when I first thought about it," he admitted. "I had started working with the Apple group of teacher activists — piddling around with Google Earth and exploring. 'I'd read a book and say, 'I'll Google it!', if I wanted to learn more. Google it: Google *Lit*....Get it?"

With that, Burg had a pun, and the beginning of a new product.

Google Lit uses Google Earth to take readers on visual adventures through modern and classical literature. The treks combine full color, realistic imagery with links and leading questions: expanding the connection students and readers make to books.

"*Candide* and *Grapes of Wrath* were the first books I did," he said. "One of the teachers at a conference I was at leaked the information about my site. A blogger, Will Richardson, picked up on it, wrote about it, and within days, I had 1,200 visitors."

Like any English teacher worth his salt — after 38 years as a high school English teacher in the East Bay, Burg is practically crusty — he would like to add a letter to President Barak Obama's favorite educational program: STEM.

"Science, Technology, Engineering, Math. STEM is old news. I'm going to bring in a new idea, *STEAM*," he said, adding *Arts* to the acronym. "Wouldn't it be nice if we integrated art and ethics into business and technology?"

Zooming in on the Lafayette Library moments later, Burg wowed the audience with the Google Lit Trip's ability to bend and arch the viewer's perspective.

"It's an environment. I'm actually *in* the place," he said, transporting everyone to the *Museo del Prado* in Madrid in less than a minute. "Technology is even more real than reality."

Roger van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross* appeared. Flat. Tiny. Not moving. With one click, the program travelled deep into the museum and took the audience up to the painting; ending nose to nose, just inches from the actual canvas.

"Imagine what an art teacher would do with this!" Burg exclaimed. "Science brings to the arts things we couldn't do without this technology."

And art brings to science something Burg believes is vital: wisdom.

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"There's a whole new wisdom in getting information from the internet. There are ethical and social responsibilities: great literature teaches us those things." he concluded.

Teachers are using Google Lit Trips to march students down the virtual streets of Selma, Alabama, before listening to Martin Luther King's *How Long, Not Long* speech. Kids are comparing maps drawn by Sir Francis Drake to actual geographic images of the area. Book lovers of all ages are joining their favorite characters; hitching a ride West with the Joad's in *Grapes of Wrath*, following a family of ducks through Boston in *Make Way for Ducklings*.

Burg, in the meantime, is waiting for his 501-C status, so he can generate backdoor funding and hire people to help him run the site.

"I've been late ever since I started," he said.

Comments (2)

Patricia Cridland

8:42pm on Thursday, April 21, 2011

Sounds really interesting!! Proud of you

patty

Whitney Burdo

6:43am on Friday, April 22, 2011

Great article, Lou did a terrific job capturing how exciting and amazing this technology is in terms of bringing literature alive.
whitney

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