

Approaches to using webcams

November 2007

The group planning meeting in November 2006 identified ways in which webcams could be used to learn geography. Some of these approaches were developed and trialed in the classroom. The reports of these outcomes will be available on the webcams area of the GA website in September 2007.

We have identified two key approaches to webcam development:

1. Using existing webcams on the internet
2. Using our own

We shared a number of websites we already know and concluded that webcams with the following characteristics are of most use for learning:

1. A rapidly changing landscape
2. People
3. High resolution
4. High refresh rate

The former is likely to engage more teachers immediately, but there is much scope for innovation in pedagogy in the latter (e.g. effective video conferencing, micro-scale studies around the school, field work)

Our brainstorm suggested the following could be good uses of webcams already existing on the internet:

- A virtual map of the UK/ Europe/ world to check on a place, give an immediate sense of place, global village...a long term approach, the virtual map can be accessed again and again through the year as different places come up through the curriculum
- Screen grabs of a frequently changing landscape (e.g. weather/ sky, mountain side, volcano, wet glacier)
- Prediction & confirmation/ sense of anticipation
- Putting screen grabs into movie maker/ PowerPoint etc to make a movie of the changing landscape
- A 'spatial narrative' e.g. the story of coffee told through webcams in real time e.g. the farm, the port, the processing, the retail outlet (comic relief?)
- Virtual fieldwork, e.g. audit of people walking through Time Square (New York) to look compared to an LEDC city to look at social patterns, weather in different parts of UK related to passage of a depression, even traffic counts!!
- 'My place' look at well known places in a different way, e.g. London through webcams
- Safety Perception of different urban environments
- Field sketching (live)
- Linking webcams to experience (e.g. after a field trip, holiday, follow up with webcam visits to that place similar environment, e.g. capture interest in mountains, the sea, a city)

And making use of own/ new webcams

- School to school conference/ linking
- Sponsoring a web cam in an extreme environment or expedition
- micro-scale studies around the school
- field work