# Scoop.it

*By Heather Bailie*

I first heard about *Scoop.it* when it was still in Beta release and I was lucky enough to score an invite early on. In essence *Scoop.it* is a tool for collecting, organising and sharing online content – similar to social bookmarking sites, like *Delicious*, *Diigo* and others, but with different features.

*Scoop.it* describes itself as a way to "easily publish gorgeous magazines" and I have to agree – the curated content looks very attractive and appealing and it is very easy to customise.

*Scoop.it* differs from other social bookmarking sites in that it also trawls the web searching for content which it suggests for you to add to your topic. Other *Scoop.it* users can follow your topics and suggest new resources for



you too. This is a great way of expanding your resources with minimal effort on your own part and is particularly useful for new and emerging topics. Exploring the Scoops that others create can also be very rewarding.

There were various things which attracted me to *Scoop.it*. The current buzz around 'curation' being one; my desire to find new and attractive ways to share professional learning resources  was another, and the ongoing commitment to providing students with access to quality resources, a third. Mill Park Secondary College libraries have had *Delicious* accounts for years – we have used them effectively to provide access to curriculum resources on the web by tagging and bundling into logical groups, but we were disappointed in some of the changes that occurred when it was sold last year.  As teacher-librarians we are always on the lookout for ways to improve our pathfinders – in *Scoop.it* we have (almost) found the perfect solution.

## How it works

Simply register for an account at http://scoop.it – you can use your *Twitter* or *Facebook* ID or an email address – and start a new topic (or scoop). The title must be unique as it becomes part of the URL. Add some keywords, the more specific the better. The power of *Scoop.it* is the content it suggests to you – the better your keywords, the better the suggestions will be.

You can add a *Scoop.it* bookmarklet to your browser bar making it super easy to add new content as you browse the web. For each new resource you can edit the included text, add your own text, select from the available images and add tags.

As new resources are added to your topic you can share them via *Twitter*, your *Facebook* account or page, *LinkedIn*, *Tumblr* or your *Wordpress* blog. I share our

new library scoops via our library *Facebook* page and use *Twitter* to share professional learning resources.

You can also add other content to your scoop by creating a post without a URL. I've done that on our library *Study Skills* scoop, adding a photo and information about the homework club the senior campus library runs each week.

## How I use Scoop.it

I'm using *Scoop.it* in two ways, reflecting my two roles:

• Firstly: to collect and share resources for students. Topics so far include *Study Skills*, resources for study of the novel *Of Mice and Men*, resources for our year 10 subject 'Most Wanted' (a humanities subject leading to VCE Legal Studies and/or Psychology). To publicise the site I have printed posters with screenshots and added a QR code and a shortened URL for students to use as a quick link. I've also linked them on the Pathfinders section of our library Ultranet space.

• Secondly: to collect and share professional learning resources as part of my ICT Coach role. Currently I am curating two topics in this category – 'The Ultranet' and 'Web 2.0 in the Classroom'. It has been interesting seeing the level of interest in both

these topics through the connection with *Twitter* – the Web 2.0 topic had 72 visitors and five followers within a couple of days of creation.
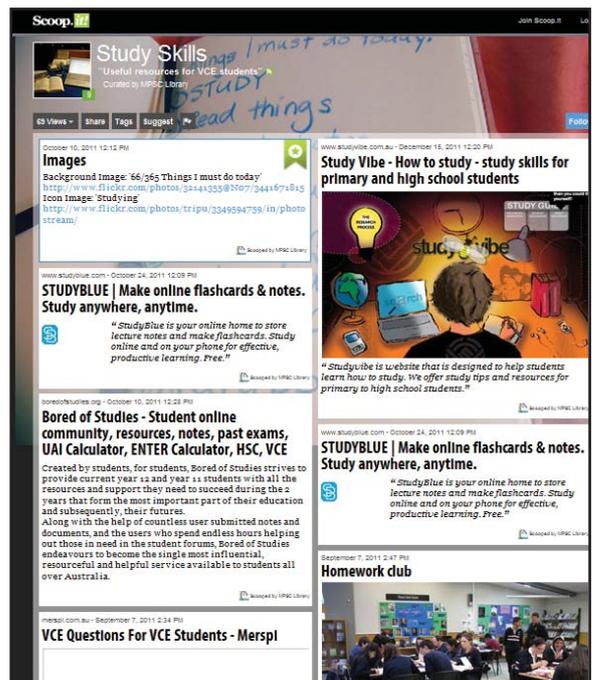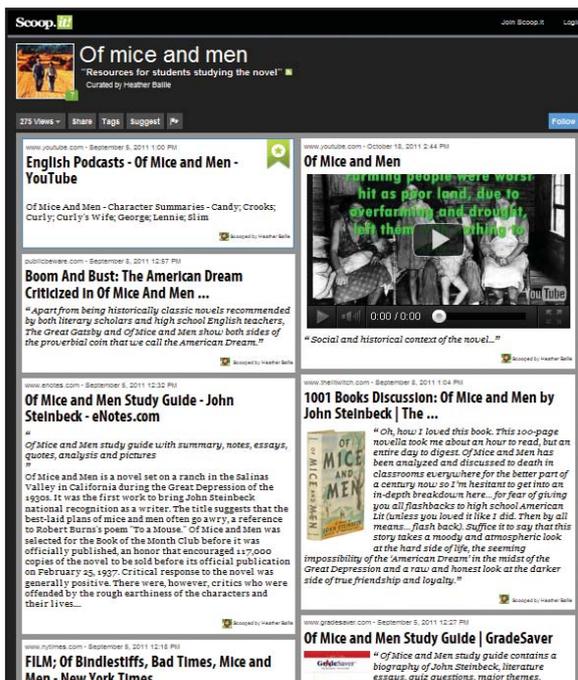
An interesting feature of *Scoop.it* is the way it keeps score of your visitors and followers. You can elect to be emailed each day with an update. I'm not usually one for checking out leader boards but I've actually found it quite gratifying that others are interested in what I do.
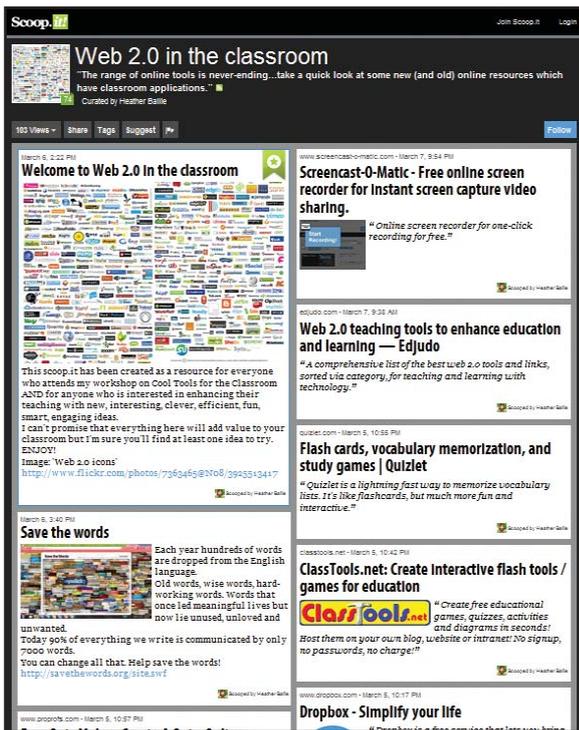
## Limitations

Here's the bad news . . ..

Like any website, *Scoop.it* must pay the bills. Your free account is not unlimited; in fact you are only able to curate five topics. At a personal level that is fine, but it won't be enough for my library to use it as a replacement for *Delicious*.

The alternative is an Education account at US$6.99 per month. With this account you can have 20 topics and up to 30 co-contributors per topic. While this compares very favourably with their pro account (US $12.99 per month, 10 topics, no co-contributors) it is an expense we will have to think carefully about. Twenty topics will not be enough unless our Scoops become more general. We would not, for example, be able to maintain the Scoop on *Of Mice and Men*; instead we would need to create a Scoop for Novel Studies or

English, give each resource a tag of the particular novel's title, and train our users to refine what is displayed via tags to locate a particular title's resources.

## Conclusion

*Scoop.it* is a well-designed and easy to use Web 2.0 tool for content curation. If you have a few specific interest areas for which you wish to find and share resources, *Scoop.it* will enable you to do so quickly, easily and give you an attractive and dynamic product. As a means of creating library pathfinders it would be perfect if not for its limit of topic numbers.

## Some of my Scoops

Of Mice and Men
http://www.scoop.it/t/of-mice-and-men
Ultranet
http://www.scoop.it/t/ultranet
Web 2.0 in the classroom
http://www.scoop.it/t/web-2-classroom
Study Skills
http://www.scoop.it/t/study-skills

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## Cloud computing (cont. from page 6)

students to help with assessment of current knowledge or simply to get a majority vote on a particular issue. Others have also introduced the students to the Google calendar. Here the children booked times to work with other classes throughout the school. This way, when groups went in to make a booking, they could avoid doubling up on times and on buddy classes. And yes, I can hear those rumblings that these activities are more for Year 5/6 classes, but I see no reason why Foundation classes (aka Prep for Victorians), could not vote on their favourite colour or, later on in the year, use Google docs to write a class chain sentence. (Here the children take it in turns to write the next letter or word when constructing the sentence.)

Then, of course, there are the teachers. We are encouraging staff members to join Dropbox as another way to back up their work. Slowly this message is getting through, and at least one colleague has admitted to being hooked on this. We have used Google docs with the staff for surveys, and the leadership team develops their meeting agenda in this arena, so that all members can add to the agenda without having to send emails back and forth.

Admittedly this is not much, but we are on the way.

Then there is the future, and many possibilities are swimming around in my head for our school. Surely this would be the perfect forum for communicating with parents. Couldn't the school newsletter become cloud-based? Couldn't students upload their work to the cloud to share with family and friends far away? Maybe there is even the place for collaboration on a story with a sister school in another country!

In closing I acknowledge once again that cloud computing is not without its drawbacks, but with attention to educating all about safe cyber practices, I believe the possibilities are probably endless.

So, my brothers and sisters in education, I call on you to be daring, believe in the impossible and step bravely into the world of cloud computing!

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