

Independent Schools

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Strathcona girls are behind Melbourne's first school internet television station, learning valuable career skills in the process. **TIM KITCHEN** reports.

Lights camera action



The crew behind one of Melbourne's first school internet television stations is a team of girls aged from 12 to 17.

The station, STV, is run by students at Strathcona Baptist Girls Grammar School. Since the station began screening in 2006, the girls have been responsible for everything from developing program content to filming and editing and ensuring that the station is always available to its audience.

STV screens stories from all year levels as well as a fortnightly news bulletin. Students record and edit events such as camping trips, concerts, presentations by guest speakers and drama productions.

The chance to generate, record and screen their own stories has helped make multimedia a popular choice. Year 10 students can choose electives on how to make television, digital animation and websites, while years 11 and 12 have the option of studying a VET/VCE media stream alongside their other VCE subjects.

Students say that working on STV gives them an edge, whether they actually want to work in media or simply see the skills they are learning as providing an advantage in a competitive world.

Their familiarity and ease with technology opens up careers in marketing, media, education and communication. Even budding entrepreneurs will find that being

able to do their own web design or advertising videos will save them the costs of outsourcing.

STV is generating considerable excitement among education and ICT professionals when it is presented at conferences. As technology becomes ever more affordable, the option of setting up a simple broadcast system is potentially available to many schools.

Strathcona set up STV using relatively basic equipment, but has upgraded this significantly. The school's new Creative and Performing Arts Centre is equipped with Macintosh computers that can run Windows and therefore almost any software. Some of the most popular packages used by the students in and out of normal class time include Garage Band, for producing digital music, and Final Cut for editing video.

The new centre also has a television studio with a green 'infinity wall', the type of curved floor-to-ceiling used by professional photographers and camera operators. It's a backdrop that lends itself to being replaced ('Keyed Out') by any still or moving image.

Strathcona has invested strongly in preparing students for the new jobs and ways of communicating that will emerge in the years ahead, but recognises also that the many benefits of new communications technology are accompanied by new risks.

The popularity of social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, as well as text messaging, can be a



From top: Dr Tim Kitchen watches a Strathcona team recording the STV News; everyone in the TV studio has a role to play.

wonderful way to network with friends and family. However, publishing material online has its dangers. Late last year, Strathcona was one of 40 schools involved in a survey on internet and mobile phone use.

As a result of the findings, there is an intensive cyber-safety awareness

program at the school and students are encouraged to be responsible with the way they publish online.

— Dr Tim Kitchen is head of learning technologies at Strathcona Baptist Girls Grammar School. He is a Doctor of Education in ICT (University of Melbourne).