**Reflection 10th July 2013**

Now that I’m about half way through marking the final writing exercise based on the ‘Sport v Library’ debate, I’m starting to try to summarise the benefits that the writing project has brought, and also consider any comments or questions that have been raised in my mind.

On the ‘plus’ side, once again I’m reading some very well-structured pieces of writing from the year 8 students. While a few have simply gone for the ‘three-pronged’ strategy of ‘for/against/summary’, they have done so with some skill and used good expression and explanation. It maybe that they answers could yet have been more adventurous, but we had to put a word limit of 300 onto the exercise as it was the last teaching week of term and we needed them to be finished. I think answers of up to 500/600 words would have given us more useful evidence to evaluate the impact of the process.

There was no ‘exemplar’ material this time, so the responses are not ‘uniform’, but the most successful of them do link paragraphs and shape their arguments in a more sophisticated way. However, it would be good if we could find a way to help students of all abilities to use a more sophisticated structure; paragraphs that are both extended and linked, and that perhaps create a narrative argument, rather than simply an alternating ‘pro versus anti’ style. I think this would be more likely to be achieved at the stage where their findings are translated into plans, where they create paragraphs that are based on a selection of bullet points that are subsequently linked by suitable connectives and/or statements. Is there any way we could incorporate comparison **between** points into individual paragraphs? Could they then identify and integrate their comparisons and connectives **within** the paragraphs? Could we create a plan that would allow the students to plan paragraphs that contained the material that would normally be organised by means of a comparison tool/Venn diagram for example? Some students will do this anyway because they are able, but some kind of prompt could help others to achieve this as well.

I don’t know how feasible this is, but I would be interested to know if the software can be adapted to the needs of the particular assessment objectives of curriculum subjects. In the case of English, the students themselves annotated the evidence to show how each could fit in to the elements of persuasive texts. (i.e. anecdotes; facts; opinions; statistics; expert evidence; emotive language; rhetorical questions etc.) In the case of Media, it would be good to highlight evidence related to key themes such as Representation or Audience etc. and I believe this would also be useful for History.

The lack of exemplar material in this exercise may also have contributed to any confusion the students had about the genre of the text they were writing; I believe this was a problem with the previous ‘Greek Mythology’ mystery as well. In instances where the topic studied cannot be easily fitted into a ‘narrative’ (e.g. writing to argue, studying a particular culture etc.), would it help to flag up the genre of the written outcome more clearly during the drafting of the initial question?

I think some of these questions have already cropped up in our conversations, but I just thought I’d make a note of them now in case I hadn’t done so elsewhere. I’ll continue with the marking and record the levels and comments that are generated.