

Editor's Notebook

The contributors to this issue of *Social Education* highlight opportunities to engage students actively in social studies subjects by using currently available instructional technology. The articles abound with teaching suggestions on topics ranging from early American history to contemporary presidential election campaigns.

Our opening article deals with the ever-increasing challenge of protecting the environment. Marisa A. Martin's Looking at the Law feature examines an important hurdle that parties filing lawsuits to protect the environment have to clear: the need to demonstrate "standing"—i.e., that they have suffered some kind of personal injury that is directly traceable to the actions of the defendant. Martin offers an up-to-date review of court decisions on this issue, while James Landman offers accompanying teaching suggestions.

The piecemeal concessions made to women in their struggle for the vote led to an unusual situation at the start of the twentieth century in which women in a number of states were allowed to vote for certain offices and issues but not for others. Since the casting of ballots was secret, but states wanted to use the same ballots for men and women, this raised the question of how to ensure that women adhered to the voting restrictions. Inventors were quick to come up with technical solutions. In our Teaching with Documents column, Michael Hussey explores a patent application by the Ohio inventor Lenna Ryland Winslow for a voting machine that would limit the ballot choices offered to women. The accompanying teaching suggestions offer activities that will enliven classes studying the road to women's suffrage.

Most of the contents of this issue comprise a special collection edited by our Technology Department editors, Michael J. Berson and Cheryl Mason Bolick. In its opening article, Caroline C. Sheffield, Kenneth T. Carano, and Michael J. Berson take a historical look at America's first science fiction series, "The Frank Reade Library," which made its debut in 1882 and is notable both for its anticipation of future inventions and its reflection of the mindset of the Gilded Age, in which fantasies about the potential of the future blended with social, racial, and ethnic stereotypes.

Teachers interested in giving their students an inside view of the challenges of the presidency can now access almost 5,000 hours of taped recordings of presidential conversations from 1940-1973 at www.whitehousetapes.org. Stephanie van Hover, Marc J. Selverstone and Patrice Preston-Grimes introduce this resource, provide examples of its constructive use, and identify the kind of background preparation and questions that enhance class activities based on audio recordings such as these.

Ilene R. Berson invokes the famous image used by Lyndon Johnson's presidential campaign in 1964 of a little girl counting flower petals against the background of a nuclear countdown, and points out that images of children have become a regular feature of presidential campaign commercials. Investigating the use of images of children by political campaigns can make for lively

class discussions in this election year. She recommends useful online resources on the topic, and identifies questions that will help frame students' thinking in the right direction.

It is a remarkable result of the Internet that "What was once beyond imagination is now commonplace: a student sitting in his or her own home or classroom in Nome, Alaska, or Key West, Florida, can access a vast, dispersed 'national archive' of more than 8 million historical documents." (140) Daisy Martin, Sam Wineburg, Roy Rosenzweig and Sharon Leon point out, however, that students are not able to read these documents with historical sophistication. They introduce a website, www.historicalthinking-matters.org, that has been specially designed to stimulate inquiry by students and show them how professional historians evaluate documents.

The challenge of developing the concept of a 'wiki' into a tool of cooperative learning in the classroom is the subject of the article by Jeremy D. Stoddard, Mark J. Hofer and Molly G. Buchanan. The wiki is based on a belief in open, collaborative knowledge-building in which users can add or edit material accessible to all of them. The authors offer blueprints for an inquiry-based wiki (a "Wikinquiry") in which students investigate a focused question about a historical event, review the account of the event presented in their textbook, and then edit that account.

Catherine Snyder advocates the benefits of electronic discussion boards in which students post information and exchange ideas about subjects they are studying. Her article shows how these can improve students' knowledge and give teachers a better idea of how their students learn and think. In illustration, she provides lively examples of discussions her tenth-grade students posted while studying the French Revolution.

Election campaigns need to raise and spend extraordinary amounts of money, and Scott K. Scheuerell points out that "students can learn a great deal about our political system by examining how politicians are financed." (153) He provides a detailed introduction to an Internet site, www.opensecrets.org, that records financial contributions to political campaigns and also tracks expenses spent by institutions on lobbying, and the costs of travel by members of Congress.

Our Internet columnist, Fred Risinger, has often been asked to list his favorite websites. He reveals some of these in this issue. They range from excellent Internet resources for teachers to current affairs websites and the "fun, interesting, creative and genuinely magnanimous" www.freerice.com, which poses vocabulary questions to users, and is supported by advertisers who pay for donations of rice to poor people in Africa and Asia when users get the right answers. Tip off your English teacher colleagues!

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at socialed@ncss.org. 