

Editor's Notebook

The last three years have demonstrated the vital economic role played by the Federal Reserve in the U.S. economy. Much of this issue of *Social Education* consists of a special section offering information, analysis and resources for studying the role of the Fed. The guest editors of the special section are Mark C. Schug, Mary C. Suiter and William C. Wood.

Ben S. Bernanke, chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, is also an economic educator and scholarly expert on the Great Depression. In the opening article of the special section, he emphasizes the importance of economic education in developing a well-informed citizenry, and describes the historical and contemporary role of the Federal Reserve, noting how mindful its governors were of “economic lessons from history” as they dealt with the recent crisis. (75)

The open market operations of the Federal Reserve have now acquired an importance that is often not reflected in typical textbook descriptions of the Fed. In an article describing the Fed's recent role, Andrew T. Hill and William C. Wood compare the traditional tools of monetary policy with those initiated during the recent financial crisis, presenting teaching suggestions that will help to explain these initiatives in the classroom.

Two Federal Reserve Banks (St. Louis and Atlanta) have prepared standards for teaching about the Federal Reserve that are freely accessible on the Internet. William D. Bosshardt, Paul W. Grimes, and Mary C. Suiter introduce these standards and outline their objectives.

The Federal Reserve System is also actively involved in promoting student understanding of banking and personal finance. Sara Messina, Amy Hennessy, and Caryn Rossiter describe a rich variety of resources that will facilitate the teaching of these subjects. The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis has also developed FRED (Federal Reserve Economic Data), a significant database with more than 24,000 data series and an important selection of primary documents. Mary C. Suiter and Katrina L. Stierholz describe the database and the tools that enable students to generate impressive graphic displays of historic and contemporary data.

A year ago in *Social Education*, M. Scott Niederjohn, Mark C. Schug, and William C. Wood depicted the challenges of economic policy in 2010 by imagining a dream in which Ben Bernanke was visited by the ghosts of Adam Smith and John Maynard Keynes, who offered advice from their differing perspectives. In an intriguing sequel, the same authors present another more recent dream in which the ghosts of Keynes and Milton Friedman interrupt the nighttime slumber of the Fed Chairman to advise on the direction of the economy following the latest round of the Quantitative Easing (QE) program.

This issue of *Social Education* also includes a special section on instructional technology in the social studies classroom that has been organized by our technology editors, Michael J. Berson and Meghan McGlinn Manfra, and focuses on imaginative and cutting-

edge uses of technology. Manfra and Robert M. Coven open the section with an article on the use of digital historical sources and modeling pedagogy to teach about the Great Plague in Europe in the 14th century and its consequences.

Jeremy D. Stoddard and Meg Hoffman describe the use of mini-camcorders to examine social history in middle school classrooms. They believe that activities integrating mini-camcorders in history classes have the potential to engage underachieving students in at-risk schools.

Ilene R. Berson and Michael J. Berson recommend Google Lit Trips as a means of integrating literature and the social studies. By using Google Earth and other tools to introduce students to the geographic journeys of characters in books, teachers can bring the literature in their classes to life.

Megan L. Webster and Andrew J. Milson describe the use of ArcGIS Explorer to compare economic data for different countries in the world. They find that the program offers a graphic perspective on economic development that enhances student understanding of global and regional patterns and relationships.

In his Internet column, C. Frederick Risinger identifies “important national efforts to upgrade and transform the use of technology in schools.” (118) He highlights some exciting uses of technology made by presenters and exhibitors at the last NCSS annual meeting in Denver in November.

Outside the special sections, we present two differing views on the use of Wikipedia, as well as our usual columns. This issue opens with a Teaching with Documents feature in which Megan Jones describes the pathbreaking decision of the Supreme Court in *Weeks v The United States* in 1914 that overturned the conviction of an illegal gambler because evidence used against him had been seized from his home without a search warrant (a practice that was common at the time). Jones and Lee Ann Potter offer teaching suggestions for classroom discussion of the case.

With more than three million articles freely available, Wikipedia has become the first resort of many social studies students. Because anybody can post or edit a Wikipedia item, many teachers have reservations about its use. Mark Kissling maintains that it “can become an important resource for good social studies teaching,” (62) and suggests teaching strategies that enable students to evaluate Wikipedia critically and acquire the skills that are needed to use it effectively. Ann Claunch, writing from a different perspective, expresses caution about the uneven quality of Wikipedia, points out that “not all knowledge is created equal” (65), and offers suggestions to help students avoid pitfalls.

Our Looking at the Law column features an interview with Edward Biester, an attorney who recently led an initiative of the ABA Section of Antitrust Law to develop a curriculum for high school students. Biester reviews the history and current challenges of antitrust law.

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

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