

Links to Learning: Recommended Websites for your World History Class

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Technology offers three major benefits to world history teachers: an online supply of supplemental resources; access to creative tools; and the opportunity for students to collaborate. These three positive contributions vary in the degree of involvement they require of students. Supplemental resources offer or display information, but often lack a meaningful interactive component. Creative tools and collaborationist technologies, on the other hand, encourage active involvement and collaboration among students. Here are some sites that enable teachers to take advantage of this range of benefits.

1. Online Supplemental Resources

The types of resources that are most important for world history include visual aids, maps, video clips, and audio files. The sites that are available range from the obvious, History Channel, PBS, or YouTube, to less-well-known but equally valuable sites such as Qur'an Explorer (an online, searchable, bi-lingual audio text of the entire Qur'an), Documentary Heaven (more full-length documentaries than you ever knew existed, about just about everything you ever imagined), the Atlas Collection at the United States Military Academy (mostly battle maps, often showing various stages of engagement, troop movements, boundary comparisons of pre- and post-conflict areas), and Cartographic Images (a huge repository of digitized historic maps, global in scope and extending back to Mesopotamian and Harappan civilizations, with extensive background information).¹

An additional wealth of resources and artifacts can be found on the websites of any of the major museums in North America, and most major museums in the rest of the world will have at least the highlights of collections or special collections online, usually with com-

mentary available in English. Even the National Museum of Mongolia has an English web component, with a lot of really unique artifacts. And, of course, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has fabulous resources online, including timelines, essays, and artifacts.

Libraries, too, are great places to get ideas and visual aids. At the Library of Congress, there is an interactive Gutenberg Bible. The Vatican Secret Archives has digital images of many of its most interesting documents, such as the letter to Great Khan Guyuk from Innocent IV. This is a document which appears translated as a resource in many world history textbooks. How much more interesting for students to see the actual document as they are reading! Especially when they begin to realize how much more information can be gained from examining the artifact itself. This may sound like show and tell. But having students take an artifact or image and deal with it in some meaningful way, alone or as a class, is a good way to develop critical thinking skills.

2. Tools

Tools are computer programs that can be used to learn or create with a greater degree of interactivity than the types of

resources discussed in the previous section. Because they are interactive, tools require students to think in a different way about what they are learning. The Macintosh program *Comic Life*, for example, is a great way to get students to identify key elements of a historic narrative and then create a graphic novella summarizing it. Word processing programs can serve as tools for students creating newspapers or travel brochures for a specific place and time, such as 13th-century Mongolia, Renaissance Florence, or the British Raj. Integrated video cameras on computers make it easy to have students create interviews of historic figures, or create dramas about a historic event. Literally, there is no limit to the creative opportunities available.

3. Collaborative and Integrative Technologies

By collaborative and integrative technologies, I am mainly referring to the kinds of technologies that include games, blogs, chat, and wikis. Gaming in the classroom is an idea that seems to be gaining a following. There are teacher supports and lesson plan ideas online for incorporating these into your teaching. Obviously, games cannot be completely historically accurate—history is just too complex, and there are always anachronisms and oddities. Games also require teachers who use them to be active in ensuring that they are enhancing student learning. Games can, however, get students thinking about history in some very important and significant ways.

Blogs are another interactive technol-

ogy that can add a lot to the classroom. They are excellent for getting students to interact with each other in a dialogue, and to develop writing and thinking skills, and they also offer a good way for a teacher to check for understanding of a concept. Similar to blogs, a wiki is a website on which multiple contributors can add to or modify the content. One way in which blogs and wikis can be really useful, especially in World History, where each unit has a large vocabulary that is usually new for the students, is in building a collaborative glossary. Students can add terms to the list as they progress through the units, with definitions, and other students can elaborate or make clarifying suggestions to definitions already posted.

One great asset is the number of teacher resources that are available online. Media

sites such as the BBC and PBS have lesson plans and teacher resources, many of which correspond to their programming. Many professional organizations like the World History Association or the Consortium for Teaching the Middle Ages (TEAMS) have pedagogical materials and lesson plans in their online publications. Universities, too, often have educational outreach programs designed for middle- and high-school teachers, such as the University of Chicago's "Ancient Mesopotamia" and "Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators." Consulting these kinds of sites for ideas can serve as an easy way to begin to use and to integrate technology in the classroom.

As you can see, there are really infinite possibilities to bring technology into the world history classroom. The key

benefit in finding and using resources appropriate for your classroom is to think creatively. What would best illustrate or complement your lesson? Chances are, there is something great online waiting to be discovered. 📖

Note

1. Links to all sites referenced in this article are presented as part of the recommended list at the end. The list is not intended to be comprehensive, but to give an idea of the broad spectrum available on the Internet. While these are programs and sites that I have found useful in the classroom, I do not make any endorsement beyond that.

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Some Suggested Sources

Educational Programming Sites and Teacher Resources

BBC Online <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>
 Discovery Education <http://community.discoveryeducation.com/>
 The History Channel <http://www.history.com/content/classroom>
 The Once and Future Classroom: Resources for Teaching the Middle Ages in Grades K-12. <http://www.teamsmedieval.org/ofc/index.html>
 PBS Online <http://www.pbs.org/teachers/>
 TEAMS: The Consortium for Teaching the Middle Ages <http://www.teamsmedieval.org/texts/index.html>
 The University of Chicago: Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators <http://teachmiddleeast.lib.uchicago.edu/>
 The University of Chicago: Ancient Mesopotamia <http://mesopotamia.lib.uchicago.edu/>
 World History Association www.thewha.org
 World History Connected e-Journal <http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/>

Useful Online Texts

Internet History Sourcebook <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/>
 World Civilizations Online Textbook and Anthology <http://wsu.edu/~dee/WORLD.HTM>

Museums, Archives, and Libraries

Art Institute of Chicago <http://www.artic.edu/aic/>
 Cartographic Images <http://www.cartographic-images.net>
 CBC Digital Archives <http://archives.cbc.ca/>
 Detroit Institute of the Arts <http://www.dia.org/>
 Field Museum <http://www.fieldmuseum.org>
 Library of Congress Interactive Bibles <http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/Bibles/Interactives/index.html>
 The Louvre Museum (Paris) "Thematic Trails" http://www.louvre.fr/llv/activeite/liste_parours.jsp?bmLocale=en

Metropolitan Museum of Art <http://www.metmuseum.org/home.asp>
 Museo Nacional del Prado (Madrid) <http://www.museodelprado.es/en>
 National Museum of Mongolia <http://www.nationalmuseum.mn/index.php/home.html>
 The State Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg) http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/html_En/index.html
 Vatican Libraries and Museum http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm

Programs and Games

Age of Empires <http://www.ageofempires3.com/>
 Civilization III & IV <http://www.civ3.com/> & <http://www.civ4.com/>
 Comic Life www.plasq.com
 The Education Arcade <http://www.educationarcade.org/> (an MIT site committed to exploring learning through games)
 Gladiator: Dressed to Kill Game http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/launch_gms_gladiator.shtml
 Historical Simulations in the Classroom www.historicalsimulations.net
 Rome: Total War <http://www.totalwar.com/>
 Stronghold (medieval European simulations!) <http://www.fireflyworlds.com/>
 Third World Farmer Game <http://www.3rdworldfarmer.com/>

Some Random But Really Useful Selections

De Imperatoribus Romanis: An Online Encyclopedia of Roman Rulers and Their Families <http://www.roman-emperors.org/>
 Qur'an Explorer <http://www.quranexplorer.com/>
 Essential Norman Conquest <http://www.essentialnormanconquest.com/>
 Digital Scriptorium <http://www.scriptorium.columbia.edu/>
 Newberry Library <http://www.newberry.org/exhibitions>
 Bartleby.com <http://bartleby.com/> (searchable, full texts of invaluable aids like Gray's Anatomy, The King James Bible, the complete 70 volumes of the Harvard Classics, the Oxford Shakespeare, Bartlett's Quotations – you name it. Poetry, prose, and everything else)