

From Sea to Shining Sea

Online Resources for States Projects

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From the twenty-two volumes of World Book Encyclopedia to the nearly 5 million Wikipedia articles available online, school children of all ages rely on encyclopedias for quick access to information for their state projects.

When they need more depth, they head to the library's 970s shelves for rows of trade books from Alabama to Wyoming. However, in the past few years a growing number of high-quality, online resources have emerged that provide an alternative to this traditional approach.

KnowLA: Encyclopedia of Louisiana <<http://www.knowla.org/>> represents the new generation of social science encyclopedia that provides "a comprehensive, dynamic online reference guide to the history and culture of Louisiana." Created with the support of the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities and other organizations, this reference source provides peer reviewed, in-depth entries by top scholars in the areas of architecture, art, folklife, history, literature, and music. KnowLA plans to expand these categories to include archaeology, business and industry, education, ethnicity, foldaways, geography and the environment, government and politics, languages, law, media, religion, science and medicine, sports and recreation, and travel and tourism.



A NEW GENERATION OF REFERENCE RESOURCES

These accurate and engaging information sources go beyond the basic material found in the traditional reference sources often used by youth for reports on states. They introduce students to primary source materials including public documents, images, audios, videos, and multimedia features that bring the unique aspects of a state alive for learners.

Although a high-quality online encyclopedia isn't available for every state, the numbers of these types of resources are growing. More than a dozen states currently maintain an online encyclopedia, almanac, or some other type of resource providing historical, cultural and/or scientific information.

One advantage of online state resources is that they can easily be updated and expanded. For instance, **The Handbook of Texas** <<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook>> has been working to expand the number of Tejano and Mexican American entries in their project.

Let's explore some of the interesting features available in these information sources.

INFORMATION ACCESS

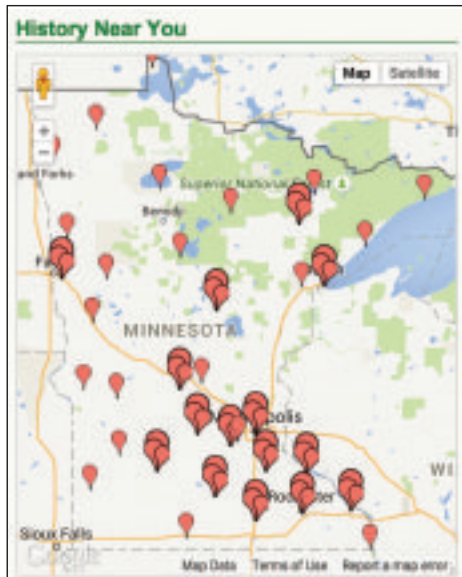
Students need to be able to easily access information on their state. For instance, the **Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture** <<http://www.okhistory.org/publications/encyclopediaonline>> provides three ways for users to access articles: by keyword; browse by letter; or explore by people, places and objects.

The **Encyclopedia of Alabama** <<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/>> focuses on the history, culture, geography, and natural environment of Alabama. In addition to searching by keyword or phrase, users can also browse by category. Indexes are provided by articles, authors, events, organizations, people, and places. Users can also explore features and image galleries. Finally, "Quick Facts" are available for those seeking classic state report information like state flag, bird, flower, and mammal.



Encyclopedia of Alabama: Features Section.

In addition to searching by keyword or browsing by category, some encyclopedias provide other types of navigation. For in-



MNopedia: Google Maps

instance, the MNopedia <<http://www.mnopedia.org/>> uses place marks on a Google Map to spotlight local landmarks. Users click on the marker to access the article.

MATERIAL TYPES

In addition to text, many encyclopedias contain entries with images, audio, video, and multimedia elements. The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture <<http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/>> provides the option to browse by images, videos, audios, or interactives. Users can view a slide show of visuals from the Battle of Shiloh, watch a video about slavery, or listen to a music clip.

The Encyclopedia Virginia <<http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/>> contains virtual tours of more than a dozen historical sites across Virginia.



Encyclopedia Virginia: Virtual Tours

Many of the encyclopedias focus on topics related to history. Articles often include primary source documents. The Free

Online Encyclopedia of Washington State History <<http://www.historylink.org/>> contains cyberpedias, timeline essays, and people's histories as well as numerous collections on historical topics. Many of these include primary source documents such as newspaper articles, maps, photographs, government documents, scrapbook items, and more.

The Wyoming History Encyclopedia <<http://www.wyohistory.org/encyclopedia>> provides a list of both primary and secondary sources at the end of each article. For instance, an article entitled "The Notorious Blizzard of 1949" cites primary sources including newspaper articles, scrapbook albums, and personal stories.

Timelines are another common feature in these web resources. The Alaska: History & Cultural Studies <<http://www.akhistorycourse.org/>> website displays parallel timelines showing Alaska, national, and international events throughout history.

READING LEVEL

Reading levels can sometimes be an issue with online information sources. The Colorado Encyclopedia <<http://coloradoencyclopedia.colostate.edu/>> contains scholarly reviewed articles specifically written for the fourth, eighth, and tenth-grade reading levels. Divided into sections on people, places, events, and things, the encyclopedia also contains six broad intellectual themes including origins, diversity, community, ecology, political economy, and place. The large, easy-to-read font and simple screen display lacks the distractions of many other websites and increases readability.

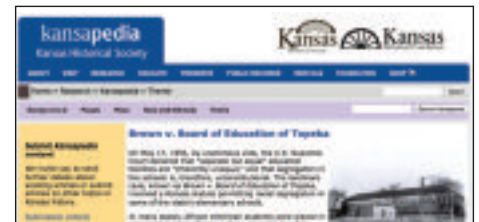
DEPTH OF CONTENT

Unlike reference sources that skim the surface, some of the state encyclopedias provide an in-depth examination of processes and products distinct to their state. For instance, the New Georgia Encyclopedia <<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/>> features fascinating articles on topics like the genetics of cotton. The encyclopedia also explores the unique people, places, and objects of Georgia.



New Georgia Encyclopedia: Genetics of Cotton.

From oral histories to stories about historical events, many state encyclopedia websites use a narrative approach to their articles. The Kansapedia <http://www.kshs.org/portal_kansapedia> website invites readers to submit 500-word articles to expand their content. Many of the stories connect to the more than 200,000 images from the Kansas Memory online collections. The story area categories include people, place, race and ethnicity, and theme.



Kansapedia: Brown v Board of Education of Topeka

The Online Nevada Encyclopedia <<http://www.onlinenevada.org/>> explores both historical and contemporary topics. For instance, it contains a section on contemporary Las Vegas poets along with a lesson on poets and poetry.

TEACHER RESOURCES

Many of these reference resources provide teaching materials such as links to standards, student activities, and lesson plans.

The Texas Almanac <<https://texasalmanac.com/>> contains 46 downloadable lessons and resources focusing on all aspects of Texas from the economy and politics to natural disasters and culture.

NCPedia <<http://ncpedia.org/>> contains a large educator section includ-

ing standards-connected articles, activities and lesson plans, fast facts, printable bookmarks, and a handout containing 100 North Carolina icons.



NCPedia: Educator Section

The West Virginia Encyclopedia <<http://www.wvencyclopedia.org/>> provides more than twenty, 10-item quizzes related to the content of the state encyclopedia. Students are presented with the questions and given the opportunity to explore for the answers. When they click the “Take the Quiz” button, they are presented with multiple choice questions. At the end of the quiz, they submit their work. Then they are informed of the correct and incorrect answers and given links for more information.

EXTENSIONS

Beyond providing basic encyclopedia articles, many of the state encyclopedias provide links to extend the experience. The Connecticut History <<http://connecticuthistory.org/>> website provides a “Learn More” option at the bottom of each article providing links to websites, places, documents, books, and other resources.

GET INVOLVED

Many of the websites rely on volunteers and contributions from users. For instance, the Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture <<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/>> encourages users to get involved with their project by writing an en-

try, suggesting a topic, reviewing entries, suggesting media, and involving students. Although they’re seeking college students to create entries, teachers could adapt their activities for K-12 students. Their “Helpful Tips” section would be useful for students searching and using the encyclopedia.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Some encyclopedia websites use social media as a way to maintain contact with users. For instance, the The Oregon Encyclopedia <<http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/>> uses their web site, Facebook page, and Twitter feed to share daily history posts. Their postings often include primary source documents and historical photos to draw student interest.



The Oregon Encyclopedia: Facebook Posting.

APPS



ExplorePAhistory App.

Increasingly, these reference resources are available as apps in addition to websites. ExplorePAhistory <<http://explorepahistory.com/>> provides their materials as both a website and app.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

These state-by-state resources are useful across the curriculum.

Many of the state resources focus on history topics. MassMoments <<http://www.massmoments.org/>> is a website containing a collection of 365 stories from Massachusetts history. A different story is presented each day of the year along with primary sources and teacher resources.



Mass Moments.

Many states provide resources focusing on the flora and fauna found within the state. The GeorgiaINFO: An Online Georgia Almanac <<http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/>> wildlife section is divided into amphibians, birds, fish, invertebrates, mammals, and reptiles.

TERRITORY AND CITY FOCUS

Educators sometimes forget about the United States Territories. Use online encyclopedias to explore these important regions.

Guampedia <<http://www.guampedia.com/>> provides information about Guam including the topics of art, environment, government, history, society, and villages. The World War II era is of particular interest. Filled with amazing photographs and other primary source materials, the articles in this section focus on an area of the world often overlooked when studying American history.



Guampedia: World War II.

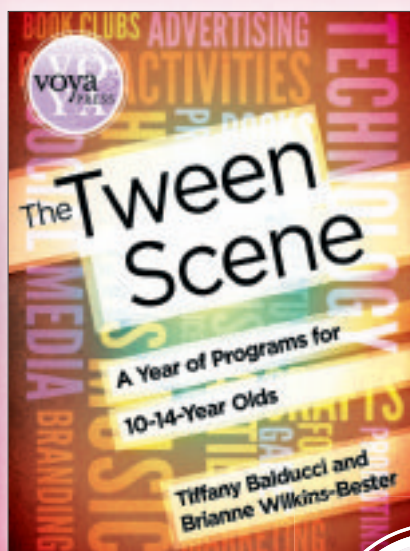
The Puerto Rico Encyclopedia <<http://www.encyclopedia.pr.org/>> is available in both Spanish and English, making it an excellent resource for language learning in addition to its use as a reference tool.

In addition to encyclopedias of states, there are also a few encyclopedias that focus on specific cities. The Encyclopedia of Chicago History <<http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/>> provides a comprehensive look at the windy city. In addition to articles, the website also contains historical sources, maps, and special features such as video clips.

The Encyclopedia of Cleveland <<http://ech.case.edu/>> features articles, images, maps, and multimedia connected with Ohio's second largest city.

ONLINE REFERENCE RESOURCES IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

When working with teachers on states projects, consider the wide range of resources available beyond traditional books and popular websites. Use these projects as an opportunity to introduce students to interesting primary source materials. Finally, encourage students to seek out interesting people, places, and things that reflect the amazing history and culture of their state.

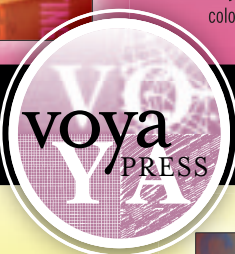


The Tween Scene: A Year of Programs for 10- to 14-Year Olds

Tiffany Balducci and Brianne Wilkins-Bester
978-1-61751-029-8 • 232 pages • \$50.00

The Tween Scene: A Year of Programs for 10- to 14-Year Olds is a treasure chest of programs, tips, and ideas for serving the tweens coming to your library. No longer children, while not yet teens, tweens need to have programs geared to their interests and age level. The authors tell you how to get started, how to publicize to tweens, and provide ice breakers to get tweens talking. Then there are *four* programs for each month of the year. Each program description offers advertisement ideas, a guide for preparation, forms, room set-up suggestions, a complete outline for the program presentation, a list of materials used, a budget, and personal comments and suggestions from the authors' experiences. If you are thinking about initiating programming for tweens, or need fresh ideas for your group, this is the book you need. Includes many color illustrations and reproducibles.

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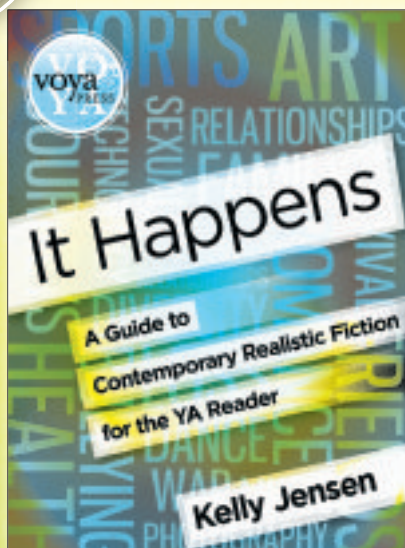
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