

# Applications for the World Wide Web in the College Classroom

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*The World Wide Web enables instructors to bring the world into the classroom, and creates opportunities for active learning, increases student contact time with material, and enhances critical thinking ability. It is an exciting tool which provides almost unlimited resources for the College professor. (Note: When entering the URL addresses given here, do not type the parentheses, which are included for clarity only.)*

The World Wide Web has created a global information network and, consequently, is a powerful educational tool for courses which deal with global issues. Creative use of the World Wide Web can develop critical ability and encourage the active encounter with material necessary for effective learning.

The most effective and practical way to use the Web in the classroom is to create a Home Page, which can be easily accomplished using HTML Assistant, a shareware program which allows even novices to create HTML files, the primary language of the WWW. An on-line HTML tutorial is available at (<http://www-pcd.stanford.edu/mogens/intro/tutorial.html>). Lecture notes, class outlines, reference materials, and databases related to course content can be made available on a Home Page, such as the author's World Civilization Virtual Library at DeKalb College (<http://dekalb.dc.peachnet.edu/~dvess/dvess.htm>). This Home Page contains class manuals for selected courses, with hypertext links to a wide array of databases on the WWW. Search engines, such as Magellan, a search engine connected to the McKinley Internet Directory, and Lycos (<http://www.lycos.com/>), can be used to build a relevant array of databases.

On the most basic level, a Home Page is an easy and practical way to improve the "holdings" at institutions with limited resources. Instructors can create an interactive reference library tailored to their classes with electronic texts from all periods and subjects, such as the texts in The Tech Classics Archive (<http://the-tech.mit.edu/Classics/>). Such resources allow instructors to more effectively direct student research, from the initial exploration of topics to the creation of a thesis statement, bibliography and outline.

The Home Page can also function as a writing and reference tool. Sample essays can be included which illustrate the proper and improper ways of writing essays, and several on-line style and citation manuals are available. On a deeper level, the databases in a Home Page can be integrated into course assignments, creating a myriad of new possibilities for exploring the world. Virtual field trips through on-line art museums, such as The Australian National University's site (<http://rubens.anu.edu.au/>), or the Athenian Acropolis (<http://www.mechan.gsd.btua.gr/webacropol/>) can greatly enhance appreciation for the cultures of the world. Students can explore the world's languages at the Yamada language guide (<http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/guides.html#f>), and connect the symbolism of language to social and historic conditions.

A visual encounter with digitized manuscripts, such as the Diamond Sutra (<http://portico.bl.uk/access/treasures/diamond-sutra.html>), the world's earliest dated printed book, enhances a discussion of the technological superiority of ancient China. Students might compare literacy in China to that of the medieval west, or might reproduce a short section of the manuscript in order to

better understand the nature of the copyist's art. The Web makes it possible for undergraduates to do the sort of research once confined to graduate schools with the finest libraries and offers an opportunity for interaction with sources which are often obscure for students. The Web is also a highly effective device for developing critical analyses of material. Many electronic texts have search engines attached, which can be used to develop analytical essays. The University of Pennsylvania has a gopher site (<gopher://cat.sas.upenn.edu:3333/11/Religious/Biblical/KJVBible>) which contains the full text of the Torah and a search mechanism. A search for key phrases, such as "an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth," provides ample material for a comparison of Hebrew social justice and the Code of Hammurabi. Exam essays can be developed which require the student to critically analyze ten or more citations from the Internet and to compare/contrast their findings to previously studied course material. The search process requires students to actively participate in the gathering of information, which they must physically and mentally manipulate. Contact time is increased as the results of a search are generated a passage at a time, which also presents the texts in a format which students can more easily absorb.

Home Pages are multifaceted resources whose benefits far outweigh any effort involved. The author's students often spend hours exploring links on the Home Page, and generally pursue at least two to three entries in addition to those required. The Web is a highly interactive environment in which students can better master sources and become further acquainted with materials they might not otherwise have encountered. •