

The Iowa Council for the Social Studies Journal

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Teaching with Online Primary Source Documents

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This year's edition of the ICSS Journal focuses on *TEACHING WITH ONLINE PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENTS*. The use of primary source materials in the teaching of history is not a new or a particularly innovative idea. For over a hundred years, American educators have used source materials to enlighten and enliven history classes. However, classroom use of these materials did not progress without considerable controversy and confusion. The inclusion of primary sources in teaching was justified in the 19th century as a means of creating more interest in history; stimulating thinking and the formation of judgement; aiding in the visualization of history; and engendering the love of truth for truth's sake. Holding this ideology, some educators entirely abandoned the textbook in exchange for the great value source materials promised as instructional materials. However, this promise was premised upon ready availability of source materials, which was rarely the case confronting the 19th century classroom teacher.

Today's teachers face quite the opposite problem. What teachers lacked in the 19th century is readily accessible today through online sources, the magnitude of which was unthinkable even a decade ago. In an attempt to address the perplexing challenges of "information overload," this issue of the ICSS Journal provides six articles written by teachers in the field who use online source materials in teaching.

In the opening article, Peter Pappas describes the development of "Teaching with Documents" (TWD), a Website designed to help teachers and students make sense of the vast amount of source material available over the Internet. This site allows students to bring these resources to their work as historians in ways that are instructionally effective.

In a second article, Hester Menier describes how her work as an elementary art teacher was enhanced by building connections with classrooms through integration of online source materials into the teaching of art history.

Cherie Viner, an elementary media specialist, describes in a third article how online sources enhanced the teaching of local history as she teamed with teachers and students to explore available instructional resources.

In a fourth article, Matt Miller describes how his 9th grade history classes stop in the 1950's on their trip through history. By using online resources in conjunction with local community sources, students in his classes relive a time their parents and grandparents remember vividly and love to talk about.

Susan McDanel describes in a fifth article, how online sources can enhance the study of architecture as students explore their local community and build connections to the world through online sources.

In a sixth article by Paul Horton, online sources provide the foundation for an investigation of slavery in America. Drawing upon the WPA Ex-Slave Narratives available online, Horton's students examine the evidence historians use to construct the often conflicting narratives of history.

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