SELECTED WEB RESOURCES ON THE MIDDLE EAST

by Margaret R. Dittemore
❖ ❖ ❖

The Middle East is a large region stretching from Morocco in the west through Pakistan in the east and from Turkey in the north to the Gulf of Aden in the south. This diverse region includes many people of different ethnic backgrounds, sets of beliefs and ways of life. The following list of annotated web sites will touch on that diversity, but emphasizes the religion of Islam and the Muslim people who practice it. Once again, the Internet provides teachers and students alike with access to primary sources and teaching/study materials not often available in schools or even smaller colleges and universities. Below are some examples:

GENERAL RESOURCES

Middle East Network Information Center (http://link.lanic.utexas.edu/menic/) Also referred to as UT-MENIC or MENIC. Launched in 1993 by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas at Austin, it is an excellent gateway to a wealth of resources on this region. Access information by broad subject headings such as ancient history, news and media, and society; by country, ranging from Afghanistan to Yemen; or by research resource headings, such as historical records and resources. Includes a section on outreach to both the community and educators nationwide and on K-12 Educational Resources (see below).

Middle East Studies Internet Resources (http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/mideast/cuvlm) Compilation of resources by subject specialists at Columbia University. Gateway to a large number of sites with information about Islam, Middle East and North Africa, covering historical and current events. Organized by region, country and subject. Also includes sections on images and graphics, news sources, electronic journals, and newspapers.

Library of Congress Country Studies (http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html)Online versions of books previously published in print between 1988 to 1998 by LC's Federal Research Division. Each study includes a description and analysis of a country's historical setting and its social, economic, and political systems and institutions. Check the "Research Completed" data at the beginning of each study to verify timeliness. See also the 2001 volumes of **The World Factbook** (http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/), a somewhat similar series produced by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Internet Islamic History Sourcebook (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/islam/islamsbook.html) Great site with a large number of links to Islamic history as well as some art, religion, and culture. Organized chronologically beginning with pre-Islamic Arab world and continuing to modern times and events. Includes primary source material (much in translation), secondary articles, reviews, and topical discussions, and other web sites and resources. A part of Paul Halsall's **Internet History Sourcebook Project**.

Encyclopedia of the Orient (http://i-cias.com/e.o/index.htm) Offers short descriptions and links to longer articles about the Middle East and especially North Africa for high school students and teachers.

ABZU: Guide to Resources for the Study of the Ancient Near East Available on the Internet (http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/ABZU/ABZU.HTML) An excellent gateway to a vast array of exciting sites on this topic. See also **Egypt and the Ancient Near East: Web Resources for Young People and Teachers** (http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/ABZU/YOUTH_RESOURCES.HTML). Both are projects and publications of the Research Archives of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.

TEACHING STRATEGIES/RESOURCES

Middle East Network Information Center (http://link.lanic.utexas.edu/menic/) Very wide offerings for K-12 educators and students. Its homepage has sections on Services for K-12 Educators and Students, including online resources, teacher workshops, exhibits, and a resource center from which materials can be borrowed. The section on K-12 Education Resources includes more teacher resources, interactive sites for K-12 students, organizations with catalogues of educational resources, and a sample section of online lessons and lesson plans.

Teaching Islamic Civilization with Information Technology (http://www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol1no1/teach-islamic.html) Published in the *Journal of MultiMedia History* 1(1), Fall 1998 by Professor Corinne Blake. A critical review and selection of primary materials on the Internet and on CD-ROM for teaching Islamic civilization and a discussion of methods and issues related to incorporating them into courses. Includes sections on the religion of Islam, Islamic literature, Islamic art and architecture, and miscellaneous tools (maps, etc.).

Teaching Middle East Anthropology (http://www.aaanet.org/mes/teach.htm) A number of course syllabi (outlines, materials used, grading methods, etc) on this topic contributed by college and university faculty. Also includes selection of ethnographic films and bibliography of better known ethnographies, writings, and samplings of recent articles and books. Site is part of MESNET, produced by the Middle East Section of the American Anthropological Association.

Islam for Children (http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/carolrb/islam/islamintro.html) A clearly written and well illustrated presentation of Islam, Muhammad, the Our'an, the Five Pillars of Wisdom, festivals, mosques, Islamic art, family and daily life, etc. Part of the RE Agreed Syllabus for Oxfordshire, England students learning about world religions. See also **Islam UK** (http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/introduction/index.shtml)

produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation for a concise introduction aimed at an older group. For advanced students and teachers, see Professor Godlas' **Islamic Studies, Islam, Arabic and Religion** (http://arches.uga.edu/%7Egodlas/), a scholarly overview with links to a variety of other sites, including September 11 and its aftermath. (Be sure to read the *Chronicle of Higher Education*'s review of it. The link is towards the end of the webpage.)

History/Social Studies For K-12 Teachers (http://www.execpc.com/~dboals/boals.html/) Click on Non-Western history and then on Middle East for a wide assortment of sites ranging from prehistoric times to current events. Offered to promote the use of the Web and assist K-12 teachers in locating and using these resources in the classroom.

Teaching About Islam and Muslims in the Public School Classroom 3rd edition (1995) Produced by the Council on Islamic Education (CIE) and available for purchase or print-out (53 pages) at their website (http://www.cie.org). Very useful for anyone interested in this topic. The CIE website also includes a number of other good teaching units and information for educators as well as for publishers, parents and students. Very good resources both for teaching non-Muslims and for increasing educators' awareness of needs of Muslim students.

A number of teaching videos have companion websites with lesson plans, activities and the like. Among these are: **Islam: Empire of Faith** (http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/), which accompanies the PBS video series by same title and **Meet Sa'ud** (http://www.amideast.org/meet_saud), which accompanies *Young Voices from the Arab World: The Lives and Times of Five Teenagers*. Videos available at sites.

Teach Yourself a New Language (http://menic.utexas.edu/menic/hemispheres/online.html) Take a look with your students at a few

of the languages spoken in the Middle East, including Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, Assyrian/Aramaic and Tamazgha or download **Glyph Tutor** and learn to read Egyptian heiroglyphs. Students can also see their names or other text written in hieroglyphics at **Your Name in Hierogylphics** (http://www.horus.ics.org.eg/html/your_name_in_hieroglyphics.html). Check out **Marhaba: Welcome to the World of Arabic** (http://mec.sas.upenn.edu/arabic.html), an introduction to the Arabic language and civilization for grades 4-8 conducted last year by the University of Pennsylvania's Middle East Center and the School District of Philadelphia. Finally, see **Arabic Contributions to the English Language** (http://www.arabicstudies.edu/A-Epage.htm), a short list of common English words that are thought to be of Arabic origin.

The material culture of the Middle East and of Islam is rich and varied and has a strong aesthetic appeal for many. A clear, concise introduction to Islamic art and architecture is offered at the BBC website (http://www.bbc.co.uk). Once at the site, type "Islamic art" in the search box in the upper right hand corner. Also look at **Islamic Art** through the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (http://www.lacma.org/Islamic_art/islamic.htm), at Islamic metalwork through the Smithsonian's exhibition **Fountains of Light** and accompanying online guide for educators (http://www.asia.si.edu/edu/onlineguides.htm), and at its architecture, calligraphy, coins, and oriental rugs as explained by the Islamic Arts and Architecture Organization (http://www.islamicart.com/index.html). **Religious Beliefs Made Visual: Geometry and Islam** (http://www.askasia.org/frclasrm/lessplan/1000030.htm) offers good classroom exercises in the patterns that are so popular in this tradition. (**Please Note:** What should be a number one in the last email address (1000030.htm) is actually a lower-case letter l.)

Margaret R. Dittemore is head of the John Wesley Powell Library of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution Libraries.

MONGOLIA EXHIBIT

The Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History will host "Modern Mongolia: Reclaiming Genghis Khan," an exhibition produced by the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, for a six-month period beginning in early July 2002. Curated by Dr. Paula Sabloff, the exhibition features the political evolution of Mongolia during the past century, from traditional to Soviet-dominated, to an independent democracy beginning in the early 1990s. The exhibit highlights museum collections, archival documents, historical and modern photographs, and video presentations. Genghis Khan's regime established the foundations of independence, representative government, and human rights that have served Mongolia for the past 800 years.

❖ ❖ ❖

ANTHRONOTES RECEIVES AWARD

AnthroNotes has received the Society for American Archaeology Award for Excellence in Public Education: "For presenting archaeological and anthropological research to the public in an engaging and accessible style, and for encouraging the study of these disciplines in the classrooms across the nation." *AnthroNotes* began publication in 1978 and today has a circulation of about 9,000 educators across the United States and 50 countries. It also is available online at www.nmnh.si.edu/departments/anthro.html