

Use your library card online to explore “Hidden Web”

You’ve got your notebooks. You’ve got your backpack. The school bell has rung, and now it’s time for the homework to start piling up.

Your family may visit the local public library in person to check out books, use a computer or ask for help from a librarian...but you may not know that you can also visit your library from your home computer.

Just like your library buys books that you can then check out for free, it also buys online subscriptions you can use for free with your library card. These sites, sometimes called the “Hidden Web” because the usual search engines can’t access them, can be found at your library’s Web site or through your library’s computers. These online library resources are safe, accurate, free and often available 24/7.

The American Library Association’s (ALA) Great Web Sites for Kids Committee, which evaluates Web sites to find excellent resources for children, recommended a few favorite “Hidden Web” sites that many libraries offer.

Every library is different, but here are a few recommendations you might try:

America the Beautiful (Grolier Passport)

Readily accessible and attractive. A basic overview of state-by-state information comes with particularly helpful summaries of state symbols, population statistics and forms of government. Teachers and librarians will want to fill in some gaps, as the information is introductory.

Brainpop/Brainpopjr

These sites provide animated educational videos featuring the sites’ characters Tim and Moby, as well as quizzes, activities and resources for parents and teachers. All core subject areas are covered with many subtopics in each.

Encyclopaedia Britannica Online School Edition

Default search provides separated results for elementary, middle, and high school articles. The site also includes a dictionary and thesaurus, as well as journal articles and videos/photos.

Grolier Online Encyclopedia

Grolier was chosen by the ALA Notable Software committee two years in a row as an excellent subscription Web site. It has so much more than just encyclopedia articles – including video, photos, audio and Web site links. Grolier is very user-friendly and engages users so they want to return to it again and again.

Infotrac/Infotrac Junior Edition/Kids Infobits (Gale)

Consisting of articles from magazines, journals, and newspapers, as well as links and transcripts to NPR broadcasts, students will find these useful for research. Many articles are available in full-text. The various editions provide appropriate resources for each age level.

McGraw-Hill's AccessScience

In addition to McGraw-Hill's Encyclopedia of Science and Technology, this site also offers biographies, photos, videos and up-to-date research articles. You can search or browse through this Web site. Recommended for middle and high school students.

Searchasaurus (EBSCO)

A good choice for new Web searchers. Visual and tradition searching are available. Includes Primary Search, Middle Search Plus, Funk & Wagnalls Encyclopedia, and EBSCO Animals. Recommended for upper elementary and middle school students.

World Book Online

The familiar quality and clarity of the print version of World Book also are found in the online version with the added advantage of the ability to link to "see also" and related references almost instantly. Helpful appendices include "books to read" sections on report writing, study skills, maps and photographs.

Teachers and parents might also like to try these at the library:

Teachingbooks.net

Designed to help teachers and librarians help young people connect to books. Includes audio readings of book, author, web sites, projectable author programs filmed in the author's own home. Customized reports for educators. Thousands of thematic booklists and links to book-related websites.

NoveList K-8

Contains a wealth of information about books for young people: reading lists, awards winners, searchable database by genre, grade level. Lexile numbers included.

Not sure where your library is? Find it here: www.ilovelibraries.org/findyourlibrary/index.cfm. Not sure how to get started or what resources might be the most helpful with your project? Ask your librarian! He or she can point you in the right direction and help you get started.

Great Web Sites for Kids is an initiative of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA). You can find more Great Web Sites here: www.ala.org/greatsites.

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