
Best Free Reference Websites

ETS Best Free Websites Committee

The ETS Best Free Websites Committee is Autumn Lorraine Mather (co-chair), Paul E. Victor Jr. (co-chair), Georgia A. Baugh, Allyssa Guzman, James Langan Jr., Yaniv Masjedi, Emily Reed, Sheena Sewell, Mary Vasudeva, and Jeremy Walker.

Welcome to the nineteenth annual Best Free Reference Websites list. In 1998, the Machine-Assisted Reference Section (MARS) of RUSA appointed an ad hoc task force to develop a method for recognizing outstanding reference websites. This task force became a formal committee at the 2001 ALA Annual Conference, and is now named the Emerging Technologies Section (ETS) Best Free Websites Committee.

A link to this year's winners can be found on the ETS webpage along with a link to the "Best Free Reference Websites Combined Index," which provides, in alphabetical order, all entries from the current list and previous eighteen lists. Annotations for the Best Free Websites List entries, written by committee members in the years the websites were selected, provide guidance for using the websites as reference tools. Once again, the committee considered free websites in all subject areas useful for ready reference and of value in most types of libraries.

The committee has established the following criteria for nominations:

- Quality, depth, and usefulness of content
- Ready reference
- Uniqueness of content
- Currency of content
- Authority of producer
- Ease of use
- Customer service
- Efficiency
- Appropriate use of the web as a medium

More detailed explanation of the criteria can be found on the ETS webpage: <http://rusa.ala.org/update/awards/best-free-reference-websites/>.

As in previous years, the committee worked virtually, using email and the online bookmarking website Diigo (<http://www.diigo.com>). Each member nominated five to seven websites according to the criteria specified above, and then wrote annotations that would assist fellow committee members with reviewing and voting for their favorite nominated websites. Thirty-two websites were nominated. After careful review, the committee members recognized sixteen Best Free Reference Websites for 2017. The annotations for the winning websites were edited by the co-chairs to ensure that they are of optimal use to librarians and fit the criteria listed above.

If you are interested in working with the committee to identify the Best Free Websites for 2018, the twentieth anniversary of this list, please complete the Committee Volunteer

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Form on the ALA website (<https://www.ala.org/cfapps/committee/volunteerform/volunteerform.cfm>).

BEST WEBSITE WINNERS 2017:

American Kennel Club, www.akc.org

The American Kennel Club (AKC) is the most well-known and authoritative dog registry in the world. On the AKC website you can find information not only about different breeds of dogs, but also about dog health, nutrition, training, grooming, and care; upcoming dog shows and events; and pending legislation related to dogs. An AKC history and archive is also available, as are links to AKC publications. The website is easy to navigate. Dog breeds can be searched by name or browsed by category. Categories include group (herding group, hound group, sporting group, etc.), size, and characteristics (best for apartments, best family dog, hypoallergenic, smartest, etc.). Resources can also be searched by intended audience and area of interest (breeders, owners, clubs, events) and the resources page allows you to search by interest category (dog training, dog health, puppy information).

Author/Publisher: American Kennel Club

Date Reviewed: March 13, 2017

ClinicalTrials.gov, <https://clinicaltrials.gov>

This database serves as an index and provides research results for clinical studies on human subjects in all 50 states and 196 countries. Search by keyword, or use the advanced search to filter results to open studies, closed studies, studies with or without results, phase of the study, funder type, or study location. The site includes a glossary, information about clinical studies, and several appendixes that explain how to search, how to read a study record, and how to find the results of studies. These trials are divided by audience group (patients and families, researchers, and study record managers) to target search strategies to specific research uses.

Author/Publisher: National Library of Medicine (National Institute of Health)

Date Reviewed: March 5, 2017

College Scorecard, <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>

College Scorecard allows users to easily access statistical information about higher education institutions throughout the United States. Search for information about colleges by programs and degrees, location, size, name, type of school, special missions, or religious affiliations. College profiles include location, number of students, type of institution, cost information, graduation and retention rates, earnings after school, student body makeup, academic programs, and more. The website also contains information about financial aid and what to look for when choosing a college to attend.

Author/Publisher: US Department of Education

Date Reviewed: March 13, 2017

Data.gov, www.data.gov/

Data.gov allows users to quickly find and access government data on a wide variety of subjects related to society, economics, science, and technology. Publicly available data from every department of the federal government can be found on the site. Datasets and data-driven reports are available in a wide variety of formats, including HTML and PDF. Users can search for data using simple keywords or using filters to discover data according to a variety of topics, categories, tags, formats, and authoring agencies. Lastly, Data.gov provides support to developers for building web applications that can directly access and use some government datasets.

Author/Publisher: US General Services Administration

Date Reviewed: March 6, 2017

Drug Information Portal, <https://druginfo.nlm.nih.gov/drugportal/>

The Drug Information Portal provides users with a central starting point for learning about over 17,000 drugs. This includes drugs still undergoing testing and trials, all the way through established drugs that are widely available on the market. Users can search for known drugs by name or discover drugs by searching through various drug categories. Each drug has an individual entry which provides users with a quick overview of the drug's use as well as a variety of links to other government websites and authoritative health and medical associations. These links connect users to information regarding trials, clinical research, and general drug safety information. The site also has a mobile friendly version that many library patrons will find useful.

Author/Publisher: National Library of Medicine

Date Reviewed: March 6, 2017

EuroDocs, https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Main_Page

EuroDocs offers links to primary sources in European history that are transcribed, reproduced in facsimile, or translated (including some video, sound files, maps, photographs, etc.). The sources in EuroDocs cover a wide range of subject areas including politics, economics, and social and cultural history. The homepage allows you to browse by country or by means of a limited period menu. Documents are in chronological order. Visitors can also use the search box in the left-hand navigation pane to find specific documents or topics.

Author/Publisher: Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University

Date Reviewed: March 2, 2017

First Amendment Library, www.thefire.org/first-amendment-library/

Information about the First Amendment and its five freedoms, including an interactive timeline, a collection of articles, and a database of more than 900 Supreme Court cases make up this library. The library also contains Special Collections of primary-source materials, overview essays, and lists of Supreme Court justices and litigators of First

Amendment cases. The resource can be searched by topic, year, keyword, or citation. A fifteen-member board of advisors, including First-Amendment lawyers, scholars, and historians, oversees the library.

Author/Publisher: Ronald Collins, Editor-in-Chief/Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE)

Date Reviewed: March 5, 2017

GCFLearnFree, <https://gcflearnfree.org/>

GCFLearnFree is a free tutorial website that teaches basic technology skills as well as life skills needed in the workplace. From Microsoft Office and email to reading, math, and more, GCFLearnFree.org offers more than 2,000 lessons on more than 180 topics, including 800+ videos, and 55+ interactives and games, completely free. A search feature is available on every page of the website, or users can search tutorials by subject. The website contains videos and pictures to help aide the learner through the lesson, and provides links throughout the tutorial that point to additional resources. Free mobile apps are also available on the website for users who would like to complete tutorials on their mobile devices. This is a helpful resource for immigrants and individuals seeking assistance with computer use.

Author/Publisher: Goodwill Community Foundation Global

Date Reviewed: March 13, 2017

Grants.gov, www.grants.gov/

Grants.gov provides a centralized location for grant seekers to find and apply for federal funding opportunities. The funding is made available from more than 1,000 different programs and amounts to more than \$500 billion annually. One goal of the site is to standardize and streamline the grant information, application packages, and processes for finding and applying for federal grants. Part of the site is dedicated to educating applicants on topics such as what types of grants are available, one's eligibility to get grants, and how to apply for them. The online grant workspace allows applicants and affiliated colleagues to work on the same application together. Grants.gov also makes the necessary forms available, and provides instructions on how to fill them out. The online grants database allows applicants to search for grants and to apply such limiters as eligibility, type of agency, or different subject categories (education, health, science, etc.). This site is helpful for anyone wishing to apply for federal grant funding.

Author/Publisher: US Department of Health and Human Services

Date Reviewed: March 3, 2017

Motley Fool, www.fool.com/

Motley Fool is an investment education website that gives advice on investing, personal finance, and retirement planning. The intended audience is beginners in finance and investing as well as more experienced researchers who would like advice on stock options. Motley Fool contains a lot of advertisements throughout the articles as well as links

to endorsed products. With that said, the advice is credible and the website is a free resource for those seeking basic information on the financial world. The Motley Fool, founded by brothers Tom and David Gardner in 1993, is headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, but maintains offices in the UK, Germany, Australia, Singapore, and Canada.

Author/Publisher: Tom and David Gardner/The Motley Fool

Date Reviewed: March 13, 2017

National Security Archive, <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/>

Established in 1985, the National Security Archive is a non-governmental group that advocates for open government and expanding public access to government information. This group of investigative journalists and scholars has filed 50,000 Freedom of Information and declassification requests to more than 200 offices and agencies of the US government. The site serves as a library and archive of declassified US documents containing more than 10 million pages of previously secret US government documents. There is a standard, Google-style search link at the top of the page. The Documents link allows one to browse records relating to US national security, foreign policy, and intelligence policy, as well as diplomatic and military history. The links on the Documents page also include information on various foreign countries and their relationships with the US This information is organized by geographic region (i.e. Europe, China, Middle East, etc.).

Author/Publisher: Gelman Library, George Washington University

Date Reviewed: March 3, 2017

NIH 3D Print Exchange, <https://3dprint.nih.gov/>

The NIH 3D Print Exchange provides a platform for researchers and general users to share 3D printable files of biochemical and medical objects. In addition to allowing researchers to collaborate, the website provides students and educators with quick access to materials representing human and non-human anatomy, molecules and molecular structures, bacteria, and variety of other biochemical models for use as teaching and learning aides. Additionally, users can access files for printing customized laboratory or prosthetic equipment. Researchers can search the website through a Google-style search link, use an advanced search interface, browse models by category or license type and sort results by publication date. Participation in the exchange is not limited to researchers and authorized users, and all users are encouraged to create and share their 3D printable models on the exchange.

Author/Publisher: National Institutes of Health

Date Reviewed: March 8, 2017

Re3data, www.re3data.org/

The Registry of Research Data Repositories lists over 1,500 research data repositories worldwide that contain research in a wide-range of academic disciplines. It allows users to browse the list by subject, location, and by content

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type. Entries include links to the specific repositories. R3Data uses a system of badges to rate repositories on whether they are open, the types of licensing they offer, whether they are certified, and whether they allow the use of persistent identifiers. It helps researchers find a repository for their data that fits their preservation and sharing needs.

Author/Publisher: R3Data

Date Reviewed: March 9, 2017

Time & Date, www.timeanddate.com/

Time and Date offers many quick and easy tools to identify current times in other time zones. The website also features articles about various time/date topics such as daylight savings time and international holidays and festivals. It also provides diverse types of calendars such as “on this day in history” trivia, world-wide weather, phases of the moon, and sky maps. The site provides tools to easily calculate dates of future natural events such as solar and lunar eclipses. Additional features include a countdown to future dates, a timer, a stopwatch, an alarm, a calendar creator, and a distance calculator.

Author/Publisher: Time and Date AS

Date Reviewed: March 13, 2017

USA Jobs, www.usajobs.gov/

USAJOBS is the Federal Government’s official employment site. Search and apply for federal jobs across the US as well as internationally. More than five hundred Federal agencies use USAJOBS to facilitate their hiring processes and match qualified applicants to job openings. Establishing an

account on this site allows you to upload resumes (which you can make available to recruiters) and other documents, receive application status updates, as well as save jobs and searches. USAJOBS also offers application guidance and resources for various populations (veterans, people with disabilities, students/graduates, etc.). The homepage allows searching by keyword (job title, agency, skills, etc.) or by location. An events section (toward of the bottom of the homepage) announces various hiring opportunities and workshops being held throughout the country.

Author/Publisher: US Office of Personnel Management

Date Reviewed: March 3, 2017

Wonderopolis, www.wonderopolis.org/

Wonderopolis is a collection of articles intended for children and families to peruse. Browse by category or search through more than 1,800 intriguing questions (“Wonders of the Day”) that children ask, such as “What are stars made of,” or “Why don’t all books have pictures?” The website is similar to How Stuff Works, but is intended for a younger audience. Hosted by the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL), Wonderopolis has won several awards including TIME magazine’s “50 Top Websites of 2011,” Parenting.com “Best Kids’ App,” and Winner of Learning Magazine Teacher’s Choice Award for the Family. Each Wonder of the Day article can be saved as a PDF and/or printed, and all articles contain ideas for easy activities and a list of sources.

Author/Publisher: National Center for Families Learning

Date Reviewed: March 9, 2017

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