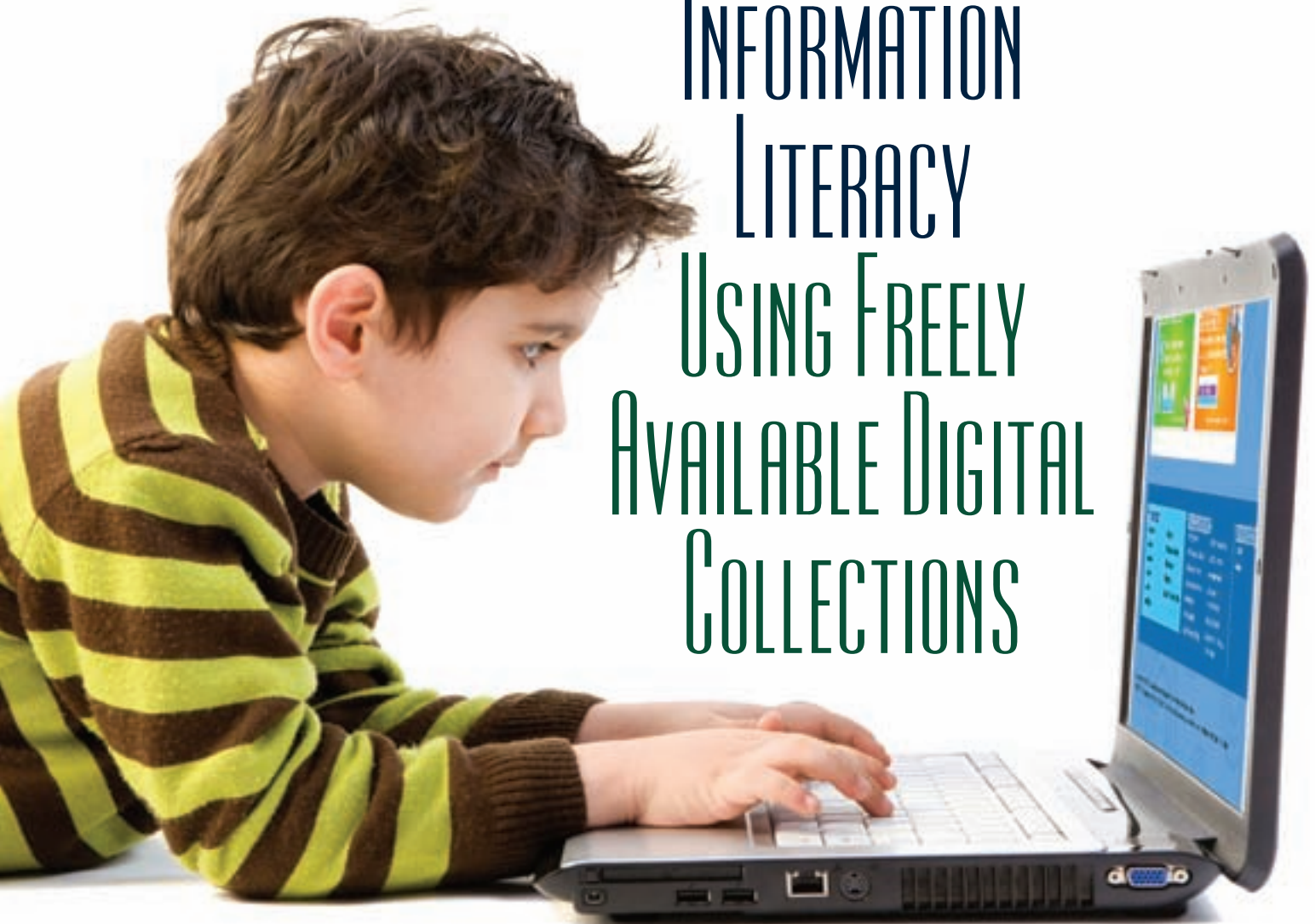


TEACHING INFORMATION LITERACY USING FREELY AVAILABLE DIGITAL COLLECTIONS



Information literacy is a vital part of 21st-century education, as both young people and adults access the Internet and communicate in personal and professional forums. Education must prepare students to become lifelong learners, participants in, and contributors to society by embedding information-literacy instruction at all educational levels.¹

Along with purchased database collections, some free Websites contain quality information that can be used in conjunction with national or regional information-literacy standards lessons to ensure that students acquire the necessary tools, vocabulary, and skills to become information-literate persons.²

Information-literacy standards are based upon inquiry

models teachers can use to guide students through the process of determining an information need, locating information to fulfill that need, evaluating information for credibility and usefulness, and then using the information discovered. Some countries integrate these skills throughout the education goals, while others have specific stand-alone standards. The “Empowering 8” and the Canadian “Focus on Inquiry” model are some information-literacy models or frameworks used in various locales.³ The American Association of School Librarians publishes *The Standards for the 21st Century Learner*, which specify that students are expected to be able to use skills, resources, and tools to do the following tasks:

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work) can contribute to learning in a number of subject areas. The International Children's Digital Library (ICDL) is a child-friendly site teachers can use in introducing students to digital libraries. As of April 2010, the ICDL contained more than 4,000 children's picture books in 54 languages, including some 400 award-winning titles. These books are chosen in conjunction with the ICDL's mission to "support the world's children in becoming effective members of the global community—who exhibit tolerance and respect for diverse cultures, languages and ideas—by making the best in children's literature available online free of charge."⁵ The site's target audience encompasses ages 3 to 13, but the library's international scope makes it useful when creating applications for older students who need beginning reading material or who are learning a second language. The ICDL is well documented and provides a wealth of information for instructors and researchers on library goals, selection criteria, copyright, and suggestions for use.

The ICDL may be used to teach students how to evaluate information on the basis of social and cultural context. Its international scope means that children can view stories from around the world. Because it provides for simple and advanced searches,

students can locate specific books or search for themed groups on topics such as celebrating differences and forever friendship. Students can view books in different languages, using the illustrations to learn about the story and other cultures.

The ICDL clearly states its copyright policy and guidelines for library use. By discussing those policies with older students, teachers can help them understand the ethical use of information from the Web.

The Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature has more than 2,500 fully digitized children's texts published in the United States and Great Britain during the 18th and 19th centuries. Because this collection was primarily created to facilitate historical research in children's literature, it is less user-friendly for elementary students. However, it provides multiple editions and access to classic children's literary periodicals, such as *St.*

- Inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge.
- Draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations, and create new knowledge.
- Share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of society.
- Pursue personal and aesthetic growth.⁴

A number of freely available digital libraries and child-friendly search engines can be used to teach information literacy. This article will review freely available sites that support information-literacy standards teachers can use to help students develop a lifelong love of inquiry and learning.

Digital Libraries

Digital libraries such as collections of books and primary documents (journals or oral histories, photographs, or art-



Nicholas Magazine. Specific links are likely the best way for teachers to utilize this collection with young students.

Many museums, national libraries, and art galleries provide digital access to portions of their collections, including artwork, photo collections, primary documents, and oral histories. Collections are frequently organized by era or topic, which helps students learn to use an inquiry-based process in seeking knowledge. Among libraries and museums that provide this type of access are the National Library of Australia, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Getty, and the British Library. The photo galleries of many major institutions—ranging from Bibliothèque de Toulouse to the State Library of New South Wales—may be viewed through Flickr’s The Commons project.⁶ As material continues to be digitized, these collections will grow, enabling students to visit more places and collections online.

The European Library Website provides access to the digital collections and catalogs of the National Libraries of Europe, including Polish and Dutch collections of digitized children’s books.⁷ The British Museum Website provides information about ancient civilizations and allows visitors to evaluate

Awesome Library organizes the Web with 37,000 carefully reviewed resources, including the top 5 percent in education.

Search: [Spelling](#)

Teachers	Kids	Teens	Parents	Librarians	College
The Arts	English	Math	Social Studies		
Science	Health	Technology	Languages		
Literature	Titles	Authors	K-12 Lessons		
Reference	News	Special Ed	Geography		
Counselor	Nurse	Principal	Teacher		
Students	Main	Family	Community		

Hot Topics: [American Flag](#), [Current Events](#), [Politics](#), [Iraq](#), [Education](#), [Environment](#), [Multicultural](#), [Middle East Conflict](#), [Climate Change](#), [Holidays](#), [Medical Care](#), [Child Heroes](#),



information on the basis of accuracy, validity, and appropriateness (in terms of user needs, importance, and social and cultural context).⁸ At the Library of Congress Website, younger students can search digital collections through America's Library, while more experienced students can access the American Memory.⁹ The British Library makes available a number of digital collections on topics as varied as cookbooks through the ages (students may enjoy a recipe "to make the haire of the bearde to grow" from the 16th century) to information and games about the East India Company.¹⁰ The National Library of New Zealand contains interviews with seven of that nation's past presidents.

Many Adventist university and college libraries have digitized collections that may be of interest to older students researching church history. Information gained from these sites can be used to help students develop questions for further research.

In addition to many free Websites, some subscription products including digital libraries and databases may be available to primary and secondary institutions for free or greatly reduced prices through government libraries. Contact your national, state, or provincial library for information about subscription collections that are available in your region.

Because the digital collections of libraries and museums offer information in a variety of formats including text, visual, and multimedia, they provide many opportunities to expand children's knowledge and to stimulate creative expressions of ideas in various formats, genres, and historical eras. With repeated use, students will become comfortable retrieving data in different formats, and with guidance, can learn to respond to and organize that information—all skills required of the information-literate person.

Search Engines for Children

Demonstrating mastery of technology tools for accessing information and pursuing inquiry is only

one aspect of information literacy. Students also need to understand how the Web indexes information in order to conduct a successful search. Studies of students' search behavior have concluded that when required to do a search, elementary students often move from page to page via links to discover answers.¹¹ There are many child-friendly search engines including Yahoo! Kids, Ask Kids, Awesome Library, and SquirrelNet's Kids Safe Search using Google, which has the search engine's strict level filter preset.¹² Since research has revealed that students frequently use the default setting in the browser, making them aware of multiple search choices is a first step in their achieving mastery of technology tools for accessing information and pursuing inquiry.¹³

Of these sites, SquirrelNet's Kids Safe Search best mimics typical search engine results and behavior. Yahoo! Kids is best searched by topic rather than by key terms. Ask Kids is the only one that allows students to inquire in a natural language format such as "Are calico cats always girls?" and allows them to pick the search that best resembles their original search idea. Ask Kids suggests ways to "narrow a search" or "broaden a search." For instance, the above search may be broadened to "calico cats," which helps students understand the difference between broad search concepts and narrow ones—an important skill in higher-level tasks. Research has shown that younger students tend toward category browsing (Yahoo! Kids), whereas older students use key search terms (Google SafeSearch). Although both are appropriate ways of finding information, the information-literate student should have an understanding of the benefits and potential pitfalls of each method.¹⁴ As with any use of the Internet by children, adults must monitor the search process to ensure that the resources accessed are appropriate to the student's maturity, useful for the curriculum and assignment goals, and congruent with Christian principles and church doctrines.

Conclusion

Research suggests that greater use of the Internet leads to higher information literacy for elementary students.¹⁵ Classroom Internet access enables students to access a variety of quality resources that might be otherwise unavailable to them. In the case of some online collections, the physical materials were previously available only to serious researchers.

The Internet includes resources that embed technology in lessons related to values education, although teachers will want to preview their content to be sure that it is appropriate for use in an Adventist school.

Other resources that are available to teachers include CIRCLE, which provides a list of library resources,¹⁶ and the American Library Association's "Great Web Sites for Kids," an excellent source that is organized by topic and helps teachers choose appropriate Websites for the age level of their classroom.¹⁷ Professional periodicals such as *Teacher Librarian* or local school library association journals often review Websites and search tools, and provide practical suggestions for integrating information literacy into the curriculum. Using these tools, teachers and school librarians can help students acquire the skills they need to be information literate, and inspire them to become lifelong learners. ✍



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