California Area Elementary Project
The pilot project at California Area School District has launched with Mr. Nick Roberts visiting the elementary school to conduct two workshops: (1) The Adventure Begins: Digital Resources at the Library of Congress; and, (2) Tools for the Adventure: Digital Primary Sources and Critical Thinking. A total of 10 elementary teachers attended the workshops. Following the workshops, Mr. Roberts stayed onsite two days to provide individualized instruction to participating teachers. As a result, second grade teacher Terri Vitchoff used the Internet to select a photograph of Martin Luther King, Jr. from the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog and used a TV to display the image. She then facilitated a photograph analysis discussion with the students. Mr. Roberts reported that the students were fully engaged and eager about the learning activity and that Ms. Vitchoff was pleased with her newfound resources.

In addition, Mr. Roberts conducted an interactive classroom demonstration with an XO laptop made by the One-Laptop-per-Child Association. XO laptops are a potent learning tool created expressly for children in developing countries living in some of the most remote environments. The laptop was designed collaboratively by experts from both academia and industry, bringing to bear both extraordinary talent and many decades of collective field experience for every aspect of this nonprofit humanitarian project. The result is a unique harmony of form and function; a flexible, ultra-low-cost, power-efficient, responsive, and durable machine with which nations of the emerging world can leapfrog decades of development—immediately transforming the content and quality of their children's learning. Mr. Roberts reported high student interest and is scheduled to repeat the presentation in other second grade classes at California Area Elementary School later this month.

XO Laptop
In honor of Black History Month, one would be fortunate to discover the Library of Congress’ collection entitled African Americans in Science and Technology. Provided by Science Reference Services, this resource is located at http:// www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/selected-internet/africanamericans.html.

Also apropos to Black History Month and the topic of science and technology is a podcast on wildlife conservation sponsored by the African and Middle Eastern Division of the Library of Congress. It is entitled Forest Peoples and Indigenous Knowledge: Keys to Preserving Africa's Threatened Wildlife. To tune in, listeners must first have a RealAudio media player (which plays the .RAM file format) and visit http://www.loc.gov/rr/a mad/i mages/africawildlife.ram. Those without RealAudio can download it for free at http:// w w w.r e a l.c o m/. Education majors should become interested in the dealings of their government after reading legislative bill H.R.36.IH. The short title of this House Resolution is National Science Education Tax Incentive for Teachers Act of 2007. If it becomes law, this bill would offer a 10 percent tuition tax credit to “encourage teachers to pursue teaching math and science subjects at elementary and secondary schools.” Visit THOMAS (http://thomas.loc.gov) to peruse the bill. Find the box labeled “Search Bill Text” on the main page. Type “H.R.36.IH” in it. Next, click “Bill Number” (instead of “Word/Phrase”). Finally, click “Search.” Afterwards, it would behoove you to contact your legislators and share your thoughts about this bill with them!

Another bill, far more wide-ranging than H.R.36.IH, may be of interest as well. S.761—titled America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act—affects math, science, and technology teachers in a multitude of areas. To find it, repeat the steps above, replacing “H.R.36.IH” with “S.761.”

Electronic Storybooks

Online stories used in the classroom, library, or media center are a great way for elementary teachers to help their students develop reading skills. Here are some of the benefits of online stories.

Using computers for reading can increase the amount of time students spend on literacy tasks. Some interactive texts such as Scholastic's Clifford's Interactive Storybooks http://teacher.scholastic.com/clifford1 have audio and multiple choice features embedded in the stories, giving readers immediate feedback, without the teacher’s immediate presence. For some reluctant readers, using the computer to read may provide the interest necessary to tackle reading tasks that might otherwise be looked on as chores. The interactive and multimedia elements of electronic storybooks are appealing to elementary age students, and most reading passages for readers at this stage are of a length that is well suited to electronic formats. Online stories are sometimes available in audio formats, which give students a chance to practice their listening skills, as well as test their comprehension and pronunciation. When an online story web site has a number of stories to choose from, students may be allowed to enjoy the added incentive of being able to pick their own readings. Parents can get involved with online stories, too. You can post URLs of stories students might enjoy reading with their parents on a class Web site, or print out a list of site URLs for students to share at home.

This information was retrieved on November 19, 2007. For more information, go to http:// www.thirteen.org/edonline/nitti/