MIKE’S NOTES

Thematic Units
An upgrade on the TPS Teachers Page makes it much easier to access ready to go content to use in your classroom. Themed resources are useful as they come with primary source sets related to a particular theme, collection connections that relate the theme back to American memory, and relevant lesson plans. Themes also connect to available exhibitions and special content such as student interactives. Some examples of themes are Immigration, Asian Pacific Americans, Advertising, Civil Rights, Exploration and Explorers, Labor, Literature and Poetry, and many others. Locate these and other resources on the TPS Teachers Page at http://www.loc.gov/teachers/. From the left hand menu, click on Classroom Materials. Once there, select Themed Resources. Provided by UNC TPS program.

ASK NIK

Last month, we covered the steps to begin searching for primary sources held in the Library of Congress’ Digital Collections. We will take that a step further this month, beginning with the most extensive collection, namely American Memory (AM). To access AM, click “American History and Culture” on the Digital Collections page. There are two major ways to search, either via the search box (in the upper-left of the screen) or via browsing. If you know exactly what you are looking for (e.g. Pittsburgh map), the search box is your best choice; otherwise, browsing is recommended. If you don’t see an area of interest, note that there are “More browse options” (lower-left of the screen).

LYNNE SAYS

This time of year in Pennsylvania schools, everyone is getting ready for the PSSA tests in April. Some schools add an additional class to help prepare students that may not have done exceptionally well the year before and other schools have classes on Saturdays. I have researched some sites on the web that will also offer additional practice for your students. The following link provides practice tests and information links to prior year PSSA tests: http://www.mcsdk12.org/pssa.htm. The next link provides standardized tests for specific grade levels: http://etestingcenter.com/PSSAexams.htm. You can access prior year practice tests from other school websites that will also aid in preparing for the PSSA’s. http://www.mcsdk12.org/curr/standardized_test_preparation.htm.

TPS SERVICES/EVENTS

Teaching with Primary Sources History Day Competition
March 4, 2010, marked the day of the third annual Teaching with Primary Sources History Day competition. The event was an outstanding success as 110 students submitted 54 entries in the following categories: exhibits, documentaries, web sites, performances, and research papers. Prizes were awarded for first, second, and third place. Four school districts were represented: Belle Vernon, Charleroi, Ringgold, and Uniontown. Sponsor teachers were Ross Farmer and David Devibliss (Belle Vernon), Laura Piecknick and Tiffany Furman (Charleroi), William Callaway (Ringgold), and Joshua Scully (Uniontown). The judging staff was comprised of Cal U faculty and staff, Cal U students from Education and History, retired educators, and members of local historical societies. The teachers received individualized instruction in the use of primary sources from Mr. Nik Roberts, TPS Instructional Specialist. For info about next year’s event, call Nik Roberts @ 724-938-6025.
SOCIAL MEDIA AND EDUCATION by NIK

A mission of the Library of Congress (LOC) is “to make its resources available and useful to the...American people.” Since 1995, the LOC has been instrumental in bringing millions of primary sources that were long relegated to the archives into the digital domain. The Digital Collections on the LOC web site are examples of the public access granted to rare and important historic content. But these online Collections have proven difficult to navigate, and often require training to effectively do so. As a result, the LOC has pioneered the merger between historic primary sources and easily accessible social media technologies. What follows is a sample of popular social media initiatives taking place at the LOC in regard to primary sources:

RESEARCH AND CURRENT THINKING

Historical Thinking

The 2010 Winter edition of the TPS Quarterly newsletter investigates historical thinking. Source, contextualizing, close reading, corroborating, and other habits of professional historians help K-12 students understand the past as more than just static events and dates. History becomes personal and relevant to students when they use historical thinking strategies to interpret primary sources, guided by their own inquiry and analysis. This issue of the newsletter presents strategies and resources for teachers to help students begin thinking like historians using digitized primary sources from the Library of Congress web site. The Research and Current Thinking section of the TPS Quarterly presents 11 annotated links to historical thinking resources. The links are available at http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/research.html

CENTER FOR ORAL HISTORY

The Teaching with Primary Sources Center for Oral History has collaborated with Cal U’s Women’s Center/ P.E.A.C.E Project to launch Cal U’s Women of Accomplishment: An Oral History Project. The purpose of the Cal U’s Women of Accomplishment: An Oral History Project is to collect and preserve the oral histories of California University of PA alumnae who have achieved notable accomplishments. The project is intended to preserve women’s legacies, communicate their stories, and inspire future generations of Cal U students and other women to pursue worthy and noble goals.

COMMUNITY AND CLASSROOM

Michael Brooks, a teacher in Bell Gardens, CA, says this about oral history. “Oral History has transformed my classroom. Students have discovered skills they never knew they had. My students learn to do research and to ask penetrating questions. They learn to listen, to transcribe, to edit, and to lay out a publication. They learn composition skills and some familiarity with tone, form, and audience. They are able to meet new people with ease and to make their way with confidence in communities, libraries, and other settings far from Bell Gardens. They gain recognition within the community, and they learn to respect the diversity of Bell Gardens as well as the story of their heritage as it is woven into the community history.” Enough said.