NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

National TPS Newsletter
The National TPS Newsletter is published quarterly and it is an excellent resource for teachers because it centers around a particular theme. Its content enables educators to enhance understanding about a particular topic related to teaching with primary sources. The current issue’s theme is “Promoting Critical Thinking.” It explores how teachers can use primary sources to build students’ critical thinking skills, preparing them for success in the 21st century. The Feature Article is written by Carroll Van West, Ph.D., from the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University. It is titled, Primary Sources: Gateways to Enhancing Critical Thinking in the Classroom. It is an excellent, must-read article for teachers who use or are considering using primary sources in the classroom. The Research and Current Thinking section contains summaries of and links to online resources—articles, research reports, Web sites, and white papers—that provide research and current thinking related to critical thinking. The current newsletter provides six links to trusted resources that keep teachers current on the topic of critical thinking. The Teacher Spotlight section introduces a teacher who has participated in Teaching with Primary Sources professional development and successfully used primary sources from the Library of Congress to support effective instructional practices. This issue’s Teacher Spotlight features Spanish teacher Linda Egnatz. Linda has taught all levels of high school Spanish, including Advanced Placement, for the past seven years at Lincoln Way Community High School in Frankfort, Illinois. In this interview, Linda discusses some of her teaching strategies and her favorite Library of Congress online resources. The newsletter also features two learning activities: one for the elementary level and one for the secondary level. Both are useful resources for classroom instruction. The TPS national newsletter link is http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/newsletter/index.html

FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Digital Collections & Services
The Library of Congress has made digitized versions of collection materials available online since 1994, concentrating on its most rare collections and those unavailable anywhere else. The following services are your gateway to a growing treasury of digitized photographs, manuscripts, maps, sound recordings, motion pictures, and books, as well as “born digital” materials such as Web sites. In addition, the Library maintains and promotes the use of digital library standards and provides online research and reference services. The Library provides one of the largest bodies of noncommercial high-quality content on the Internet. By providing these materials online, those who may never come to Washington can gain access to the treasures of the nation’s library. Such online access also helps preserve rare materials that may be too fragile to handle. The featured digital collections and services offer the following information for educators to use in the classroom for fun and interactive activities.

- American History and Culture
- Historic Newspapers
- International Collections
- Legislative Information
- Performing Arts
- Prints and Photographs
- Veterans History
- Web Site Archiving

The Library of Congress offers educators or researchers another online reference service called, “Ask a Librarian”. This online reference service allows researchers and educators to chat online with a librarian to help with any questions they may encounter when trying to find subject material for their classroom or lessons.
TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES AT CAL U

ANNEMARIE SAYS!

AnneMarie Walter, Associate Director, LC/TPS
Mars Hill College

Facts About... Web Evaluation Tool

If you are teaching your students about using the internet in a critical way, here is a terrific tool.

Try this: Ask your students to search Google for 'Facts about the Civil War.' Make sure you use those exact words. The very first hit on Google will be a page from the Idiotaica website (http://www.idiotaica.com/encyclopedia/content/civilwar.html), which displays a very professional looking site with 'interesting' information. There is just enough correct information to pass cursory inspection, but if students are paying attention, they will quickly pick up that the site is not a legitimate history site. Here is an example: “The war began as the result of a dispute between certain southern states and certain northern states regarding slavery and the taxation of cotton exports. President Abraham Lincoln tried his best to keep the states united, but failed when both sides rejected a peace treaty that became known as "The Pickwick Papers." Instead of choosing peace, the states chose sides:

EDUCATIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

Building off last month’s column—on the justification and theory behind blogging for education—we will now discuss setting-up blogs (or weblogs).

Owned by Google, one of the most popular and easily managed blog sites is blogger.com (AKA blog-ger.com). The Stingy Scholar is a good example of what you can expect from blogger.com (stingyscholar.blogspot.com). Through “posting”, blogger.com blogs allow users to: incorporate video (from YouTube or TeacherTube, for instance); share commentary and allow feedback; include images (such as maps or photos); provides hyperlinks to other sites; and, to organize and archive various “posts” on the blog. To get started, go to www.blogspot.com and click “CREATE YOUR BLOG NOW.” The next step is to create a Google Account, which blogger.com guides you through. On the following page the blog is given a name and URL (web address). The final step is to select a template. After this, you may start blogging. After you create your first post and publish it to the web, click the hyperlink that reads “View Blog.” From this screen, you get a first look at your blog. You can edit each section of the blog by clicking the icon of a screwdriver and wrench next to each section. After that, you may click in the upper-right hand corner of the screen to either create a “new post” or to “customize” your blog.

RESEARCH AND CURRENT THINKING

Three of the research articles that were submitted from TPS partners on the theme of critical thinking will be explored in this month’s column.

(1) “Reflective Thought, Critical Thinking.” Shermis addresses the origin of reflective thought, the application of theories about reflective thought to classrooms, conflicts and issues, and a synthesis of the essential ideas related to reflective thought. The authors provide a list of reflective skills—from identifying the author’s conclusion to articulating one’s own values in a thoughtful way—that involve all levels of the Bloom Taxonomy.

(2) “Strategies for Teaching Critical Thinking.” Potts addresses the essential skills related to critical thinking: finding analogies and other kinds of relationships between pieces of information, determining the relevance and validity of information that could be used for structuring and solving problems, and finding and evaluating solutions or alternative ways of treating problems. The author presents several generally recognized “hallmarks” of teaching for critical thinking.

(3) “Taking Seriously the Teaching of Critical Thinking.” Case and Wright argue that attempts to incorporate critical-thinking skills into social studies instruction have been negligible—“a goal and not a classroom reality.” It goes on to outline a framework for effectively helping students to become better thinkers. The model considers such pedagogical factors as background knowledge, habits of mind, and thinking strategies.

For the URLs (web addresses) to these articles and others, visit http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/newsletter/research.html. If you come across a stellar research article and would like to have it mentioned, please email Nick Roberts at roberts_n@cup.edu

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