

# What I Learned at the NCSS Annual Meeting—2007 Edition

C. Frederick Risinger

**A few months ago**, I wrote a column titled “What I learned at the NCSS Annual Meeting.” It was based on the Internet-oriented materials and resources featured at the 2006 NCSS convention in Washington, D.C. I received many e-mails from readers telling me that they appreciated having the opportunity to see which companies, not-for-profit, and governmental groups and agencies set up exhibits at NCSS. Two teachers wrote me and said that they used the column to get approval to attend this past November’s Annual Meeting in San Diego. I decided that I would reprise that column with one based on the San Diego meeting.

The number of exhibits that feature some Internet-based materials and resources as part of their offerings continues to grow. Moreover, the number of sessions and clinics focusing on technology also increases each year. I’m expanding the sources beyond the exhibit area for this “2007 Edition” of the column. I collected great materials and learned much from my experiences at the San Diego meeting. I went to three interesting sessions that were technology based. While participating in one session, I found myself wishing I were still teaching my history and U.S. government classes back in suburban Chicago. I would have had a great time teaching with the new resources that technology makes available for classroom teachers. I encourage teachers to show this column to their principal or curriculum director and to try and get some support to come to the NCSS Annual Meeting, November 14-16 in Houston.

There were hundreds of exhibits and hundreds of sessions and clinics in San

Diego. I have not included organizations and agencies that might have had excellent resources and materials, but charged for them—either on a one-time basis or with a subscription. For example, all of the major publishers have a vast array of primary documents, pictures, chapter and unit tests, and classroom activities. These are available only to teachers and schools who purchase the textbook or textbook series. Here are just some of the organizations and agencies that provide free Internet-based materials and resources for teachers and students.

## Digital History

[www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/)

The favorite session that I attended was by a project on teaching U.S. history in K-12 schools and colleges supported by the Department of History and the College of Education at the University of Houston. There are several partners who collaborate with this project including The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, The Chicago Historical Society,

The Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the National Park Service, American Voices, and the Teaching American History Project. In this session, the participants were divided into groups, and each group created its own history-based PhotoStory presentation. I downloaded this program (free from Microsoft) as soon as I got home. Write to Dustine Thomas ([dthomas15@uh.edu](mailto:dthomas15@uh.edu)) at the University of Houston’s College of Education to learn about Photo Story and how to use it. But the best part of this project is the amazing array of U.S. history resources that are accessible on this website. This site is a “must” for anyone who teaches American history! It features an online textbook, learning modules, primary sources, multimedia presentations, and superb hints for teachers. A “Hyperhistorian” even replies to questions about historical topics and materials featured on the site (though at press time, this feature was temporarily disabled due to excessive amounts of spam). I don’t have enough space to adequately tell you about this site’s resources. Please check it out.

## Teaching with News: The NewsHour Teacher Center

[www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/blog/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/blog/)

I’ve recommended The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer on PBS several times in previous columns. However, they have



recently added a special resource blog site that expands the site's already-extensive teacher services and resources. In addition to providing well-designed lesson plans on contemporary news events, the site hosts a "blog" by Brian McLaughlin, the Teacher Center's director, with contributions from "Teachers Like You." This is a great site for educators who want to learn more about blogging or who want to participate in a worldwide conversation about effectively using news and contemporary events in the classroom. I spent nearly an hour exploring all the lesson plans, recommended websites, and links to other teachers' blog sites. McLaughlin encourages teachers to write to him and help evaluate the site and its new offerings. For teachers wanting to include the 2008 U.S. elections in their teaching, this site is superb.

### International Global Community

[traubman.igc.org/global.htm](http://traubman.igc.org/global.htm)

This was one of the more interesting exhibit booths I stopped at in San Diego. Len and Libby Traubman, a retired pediatric dentist and clinical social worker, respectively, set up the Foundation for Global Community. It's doing a wonderful job of bringing American Palestinians and Jews together in a dialogue about peace. These "Living Room Dialogues" have been going on since the early 1990s and are now beginning to bring middle and high school students together. A free 43-minute DVD (*Dialogue at Washington High*) shows 50 tenth grade students becoming "more human" (in

the words of the accompanying teacher's guide) and learning about their similarities and differences. A teacher's guide is also available for another DVD, *Peacemakers: Palestinians and Jews Together at Camp*. This moving and inspirational DVD shows the experiences of 140 Palestinians, Jews, and Christians of varying ages together at a camp in the California mountains. The website is a bit confusing, but if you "click around" enough, you can find some wonderful resources and teacher's guides for examining one of the more intractable contemporary world conflicts.

### Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Arizona

[www.cmcs.arizona.edu/outreach/k12.php](http://www.cmcs.arizona.edu/outreach/k12.php)

The Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) at the University of Arizona is a Title VI National Resource Center supported by the U.S. Department of Education. It has done a wonderful job of creating outreach resources for K-12 teachers. It sponsors a three-day summer workshop and hosts trips to Syria, Turkey, Morocco, and other Middle Eastern nations. More importantly for teachers throughout the U.S., the center has lesson plans, resources, and other links to help K-12 teachers enhance their instruction on the Middle East. Two lesson units on literature and poetry—one for grades K-5 and another for grades 7-11—can be downloaded from the center's website. The site has links to great lesson plans developed by *National Geographic* on topics such as "Afghanistan: Land in

Crisis," and "Daily Life in the Middle East." A grade 6-12 resource CD is also available from the site.

### The United States Department of State

[www.videodirect.state.gov](http://www.videodirect.state.gov)

The U.S. Department of State may not be able to handle the myriad problems facing the nation and world, but it does produce some excellent classroom materials, primarily for the secondary level. One that caught my eye (My master's is in Chinese history) is titled "A Journey Shared: The United States and China—200 Years of History." Like all of the State Department's curriculum units, it includes a broadcast quality DVD and a curriculum package that fully supports the NCSS *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*. The package explores the growing importance of the U.S.-China relationship and traces the themes of our shared past. The 100-page package accompanying the DVD includes lessons in history, economics, government, and geography. Other packages include "The Cuban Missile Crisis," "Vietnam: Escalation of a Conflict," and the newest offering, "Sports and Diplomacy in the Global Arena." These materials are top-notch; classroom teachers and supervisors should definitely check them out.

### Federal Reserve System

[www.federalreserveeducation.org](http://www.federalreserveeducation.org)

Here's another government-related website that produces outstanding materials for students and teachers at all grade levels. The units include those that emphasize history ("Benjamin Franklin and the Birth of the Paper Money Economy"), personal finance, and international trade. Many of these units are on DVD or VHS tape and are loaned to schools by the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank. There is a return postage fee of about \$2 for the DVDs and tapes. But the materials are well done; match the curriculum guidelines of the National Council on Economic Education; and use drama, comedy, and even comic books to appeal to students' interests.



## Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights

[www.discoverhumanrights.org](http://www.discoverhumanrights.org)

I included this site because of the many well-designed materials and lesson plans on a variety of human rights issues, especially immigration. Immigration is a huge issue in this current U.S. election cycle—not only at the presidential level, but all the way down through senatorial, congressional, gubernatorial, and mayoral campaigns. A sub-site within the primary site ([www.energyofanation—Energy](http://www.energyofanation—Energy) of a Nation) has some excellent materials for teachers to help their students examine this controversial topic from different perspectives. The materials provide up-to-date facts as well as national and regional reports about

immigrants, and do a good job of engaging students with classroom activities.

## Annenberg Classroom—Resources for America's Teachers

[www.annenbergclassroom.org](http://www.annenbergclassroom.org)

The Annenberg Classroom provides a wide array of award-winning print, web, and multimedia resources. I am positive that you will be impressed with the breadth of their coverage of the social studies curriculum area and the excellence of their materials. Not only will you find lesson plans that cover dozens of social studies topics, but quizzes and crossword puzzles that students can use online or that can be downloaded. Multimedia resources include

films that examine the framing of the Constitution, protection of individual rights, and the independent judiciary. The films can be downloaded at no cost and are accompanied by lessons plans. “Conversations” with current Supreme Court justices are one highlight and include topics that appeal to students. There are special materials designed for use on Constitution Day (September 17). This is another outstanding website by an organization that exhibits annually at NCSS.

Gosh, I've used up my usual allotment of space, and I didn't get a chance to highlight a whole stack of materials on my desk—including The American Council for Polish Culture ([www.polish-cultureapc.org](http://www.polish-cultureapc.org)); Saudi-Aramco World ([www.saudiaramcoworld.com](http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com)); and the Newspaper Association of America ([www.naa.org](http://www.naa.org)). The stack contains many more brochures. If you want to see all of the interesting agencies, organizations, and companies that exhibit and present at NCSS, you'll have to join me in Houston—November 14–16. 🌐

**C. FREDERICK RISINGER** retired as director of professional development and coordinator of social studies education after 31 years at Indiana University, Bloomington. He currently is working on two social studies writing projects, is developing a new website, and works two shifts a week as a bartender at a local microbrewery.

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