

Webby Award Winners: Interactive Media for the Social Studies

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“And the Oscar goes to . . .” is an introduction people all over the world have come to associate with excellence in the film industry. For years teachers have written about, presented on, and discussed how to integrate award-winning literature, music, and film into their social studies classrooms. Now that the web is an omnipresent force in our lives, educators often look to the Internet for resources that can enhance teaching and learning in their classes. Nonetheless, discerning quality resources among the overwhelming proliferation of websites can be time consuming and yield disappointing results.

The Webbys are one of the leading international awards honoring excellence on the Internet. Established in 1996 during the web’s infancy, the Webbys are presented by The International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences, a 550-member body of leading web experts, business figures, luminaries, visionaries, and creative celebrities. These experts select the most distinguished sites, many of which hold promise for application in the social studies classroom. Teachers can inspire their students with the award-winning sites and use them as springboards to lively, interactive learning experiences. The exemplary websites can be linked to standards-based cross-curricular instruction. These web resources enhance online learning opportunities and offer an interactive text-based or graphical user interface.

Interactive websites engage students by providing information and resources along with practice, simulations, and other learning activities. Teachers can access the collection of Webby nominees and winners to design lesson plans,

locate curriculum materials, and create web-based interactive learning activities for students.

As we enter a new decade and reflect on the power of the Internet, the Webby list of The Ten Most Influential Internet Moments of the Decade provides teachers with an overview of moments in history that capture the historical influence of technology in reinventing society, including communications, perspectives on community, and civic engagement. The list includes both high-profile moments and quieter events that have proven to be turning points in the years that follow.

The Webby site (www.webbyawards.com) offers a search tool through which teachers can explore categories such as activism, art, cultural institutions, government, news, politics, and travel. The following Webby Award nominees and winners are just a sample of the quality resources that can foster powerful teaching and learning in the classroom. The Webby Award winners are required to give a five-word speech, and these poi-

gnant words are included in the descriptions below. For example, at the 2009 13th Annual Award, Rock the Vote www.rockthevote.com, which won the People’s Voice Winner category, exclaimed: “We Rocked. You Voted. Thanks!” www.youtube.com/webby?x=0Z-yS4Pvwww

2009 Nominee in the Cultural Institutions Category

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, State of Deception
www.ushmm.org/propaganda/

Webby Acceptance Speech: “Remember. What you do matters.”

The site was created by The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and focuses on the Nazi propaganda campaign. The website contains a number of dynamic components, including presentations on the various themes of the propaganda program, such as Making a Leader, Rallying the Nation, Indoctrinating Youth, Defining the Enemy, Writing the News, Deceiving the Public, and Assessing Guilt. The interactive timeline navigates critical events in the history of the Holocaust. The artifacts gallery contains examples of videos, pictures, posters, newspapers, and other documents.

2009 Winner in the Education Category

Smarthistory <http://smarthistory.org/>

Webby Acceptance Speech: “Conversation, the soul of education.”

Smarthistory.org was created in 2005 by two art historians who desired an engaging and free multimedia supplement or alternative to the traditional art history textbook. Smarthistory.org delivers entertaining narratives of Western art history using text, images, podcasts, and screen-casts, enabling a far more dynamic and multi-faceted introduction to the periods, pieces, and artists introduced in the traditional survey course. The interactivity of the site creates a compelling learning environment that optimizes the use of Web 2.0 technologies with opportunities for collaboration, authoring, and remixing of content.

2008 People’s Voice Winner in the Education Category and 2009 People’s Voice Winner in the Politics Category

FactCheck.org www.factcheck.org/

Webby Acceptance Speech: “Where truthiness goes to die.”

In a media saturated age with individuals constantly bombarded with vast amounts of information, there is a great need to assess the veracity of information. FactCheck.org is a nonpartisan, nonprofit project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. FactCheck.org is a “consumer advocate” for voters that works to reduce the level of deception and confusion in U.S. politics. The site monitors the accuracy of what is stated by major U.S. political players in TV ads, debates, speeches, interviews, and news releases.

According to FactCheck.org, the project’s goal is to apply the best practices of both journalism and scholarship, and to increase public knowledge and understanding. Articles provide examinations of false statements made to the media as well as more in-depth discussions about the climate change and health care debates. In the FactCheckED <http://>

factchecked.org/ section of the website, educators and students can locate reliable websites to gather political information. To decipher information and avoid deception, the site authors have created a five-step process to avoid misleading information. To further engage students, the site allows individuals to ask questions, and the FactCheck team does the research and responds to the more frequently asked topics.

2008 People’s Voice Winner in the Corporate Communications Category

The Footprint Chronicles

www.patagonia.com/web/us/footprint

Webby Acceptance Speech: “November 4th, vote the environment.”

This website is a commercial site for Patagonia which explores the impact of a variety of products from the design through the delivery process. Once a product, such as jackets or pants, is

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selected, there is a world map which allows the learner to track the product's development, along with video, text and images to enhance the story. As the product is developed, the site analyzes its footprint, including energy consumption, distance traveled, carbon dioxide emissions, waste generated, and water consumption necessary to create the product. Site visitors are able to participate in a discussion by leaving messages or comments related to environmental issues.

2008 Nominee in the Cultural Institutions Category

The Digital Vaults
www.digitalvaults.org

The National Archives Experience Digital Vaults is an interactive learning space that provides access to thousands of artifacts. Students can take or create a Pathways Challenge which is a series of clues that reveal relationships between a variety of records, such as photographs and documents. Vault explorers can also create a digital movie or poster by using preorganized collections around themes such as World War II, Aviation and Space, Civil Rights and Presidents. You also may create your own collection by searching for a keyword.

2008 Winner in the Government Category

Peace Corps (teens)
www.peacecorps.gov/teens/

Webby Acceptance Speech: "Hail to the Peace Corps."

Have your students ever thought about joining the Peace Corps? This engaging website introduces teenagers to Peace Corps initiatives and dispositions needed for global work. To gain a better understanding about a student's individual style, they can take a short test to assess how their background and interests relate to various Peace Corps responsibilities

and how you can prepare for a volunteer experience. On a broader level the site provides general guidance on how to get involved with an issue and volunteer to make a difference. You can listen to music from places like Bulgaria, China, Ghana, and Ukraine. Try following recipes for a shrimp and fruit salad from Jamaica or banana fritters from Madagascar. Students can also test their knowledge by participating in a trivia contest about the Peace Corps and the world. Imagine being assigned to a small village facing critical issues. This is the scenario that players face as they engage in the Peace Corps Challenge game. The website also contains a gallery of thought provoking photographs from all over the world.

2007 Winner in the Cultural Institutions Category

Smithsonian Photography Initiative
www.photography.si.edu

Photographs play a critical role in the teaching and learning of social studies, so it makes for good pedagogical practice to examine the Smithsonian Photography Initiative for images and integration strategies. There are a number of online exhibits to explore, such as America by Air. Lesson plans also are available that focus on visual literacy. Interactivity is encouraged, allowing individuals to share photos, submit a story, or comment on existing photographs in the collection.

2007 Nominee in the Education Category

Discovering Antarctica
www.discoveringantarctica.org.uk/

This instructional website unravels the mystery of Antarctica. The site was developed by the Royal Geographical Society with IBG, in partnership with the British Antarctic Survey and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Students take on the role of an explorer and

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use video clips, animation, fact sheets, data, and interactive experiences to get an in-depth look at this ever changing continent. *Who's eating who?* examines Antarctica's food web, and *What Not to Wear* lets students dress an Antarctic scientist to work in the harsh environment. The teacher area of the website contains directions and extensive teacher's notes for how to use the contents in an interactive and educational way.

2007 Nominee in the Community Category

del.icio.us <http://delicious.com/>

Organizing and accessing outstanding websites for instructional use has always been challenging for social studies educators. It's great to be aware of the many Webby award-winning and nominated websites such as The Newseum www.newseum.org, My Wonderful World

<http://MyWonderfulWorld.org>, National Geographic World Music <http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/>, and Gapminder www.gapminder.org/, but there are countless examples of teachers doing research for a lesson and locating an outstanding website only to misplace it or forget about it when teaching. Now imagine having all your bookmarks in one place, accessible anywhere in the world from any computer that is online. Delicious is a social bookmarking website which allows you to organize all your websites in one place with personalized tags that provide a means to store and describe links in a meaningful way. You have options to keep your bookmarks private or share them with students or colleagues around the world. Since this site focuses on connections, you can see other individuals who are bookmarking the same websites as the ones you have selected. Delicious is the

perfect way to organize and access the wonderful resources that you find on Webby as they unveil their annual list of distinguished sites. 🌐

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