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September 11, 2016

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Digitizing History:
Exploring Moments in Time
Through Web Design

Subject(s)

Educational Technology
U.S. History

Grade

3-5
6-8

Brief Description

Students work in teams to create a home page or small Web site based on a different theme related to a recent history or social studies lessons.

Objectives

Students will

- learn the basics of organizing a Web site;

- understand what makes an effective Web site;

- organize, refine, and present information about a historical time period in different forms, including images, sounds and text; and

- work collaboratively as a Web design team, either in small groups or as a class.

Keywords

History, American Revolution, education technology

Materials Needed

- A Web site creation software program geared for young students, such as Serifs WebPlus. Most programs will have tutorials to get you going quickly. Serif provides several online resources as well

as a CD of lesson suggestions, worksheets, and other materials to all educational users.

- Discuss with your IT manager the best way to make and have access to a shared drive or folder for students to store all the source files needed for the project, including text documents, digital photos, scans of student drawings, and other graphics, animated GIFs, video clips, and sounds files.
- A schedule for accessing the computers in your classroom.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Description:
With the entire class, visit one to three Web sites of your own choosing. Using a data projector or interactive whiteboard, if possible, ask students to take a good look at each site. Ask: *Who is the intended audience for the site? What is the purpose or function of the site? Does the site look clean and streamlined or messy and cluttered? How easy is it to find and read the Web site content?* Navigate the site and look at how pages are linked together. Ask students if there are any features they like or dont like.

As you explore each site, identify site features and discuss terminology including *navigation bar, buttons, links, text, headings, graphics,* and *home page*. (A searchable set of Internet terms geared for parents is available at NetLingo). Talk about the illustrations, font size, amount of text on a page, and any animations or other features.

Arrange students into five or six teams and explain that they are going to create a Web site to document a period in history recently covered in class, such as the American Revolution. (Alternate topics in other subject areas could include a favorite author, poet or artist, an aspect of government, or a science or geography topic they have covered recently.) Alternatively, an entire class could work together to create a single, complete Web site.

Explain the hierarchical structure of Web sites. One analogy suggests that Web sites are museums," and most people will enter through the front door," or home page, which contains links that help visitors navigate to the sites other pages. Note that most Web sites should make finding information easy for a visitor. Tell students that as the architects of their Web sites, they must decide what pages will be included (five or six linked from the home page will be enough), and what information each page will feature.

Ask students to work together to diagram their Web site structure and plan what pages they will incorporate; for example Revolutionary government, home life, industry, music, or cultural trends. (A blank template for a simple Web site structure can be found in the Serif WebPlus User Manual.) Encourage individual group members to take responsibility for a different aspect of their page -- making or finding illustrations or multimedia content, research, writing or proof-reading, or inputting content into the template. If working as a class, begin a brainstorming session to discuss proposed pages for the site.

Have students choose a style for the site and a suitable color scheme. Primary or muted colors would work better than bright hues or modern fonts, for example, to portray early America. Ask questions to encourage students to consider how suitable their proposed designs are for their choice of theme and intended audience. Help them reach a consensus on disputed aspects of design by writing down three top picks and taking a

vote.

Familiarize students with your Web site design software. Some, like Serifs WebPlus, have a wizard that can guide students through the initial site design. Demonstrate that they can create a master page that will apply changes to content and layout to all pages of the site.

Have students write and input their page titles and text. Ask them to replace default text and images in the template with their own. (Many historical photos can be downloaded free from the Web. Start by searching Google Images.) Serifs WebPlus, for example, enables students to modify most site features by double-clicking the object they want to change. Caution students to proofread the entire site and click every link to make sure they take visitors where the designers meant them to go.

Have students save text documents, artwork, or other items for their Web sites on a designated drive or folder on your class, school, or districts network. Remind them to save their work frequently.

When finished, have students visit one anothers sites and share their thoughts and suggestions. The completed sites can be published to a local folder for viewing within the school computer network or to a school Web site to showcase students work to a wider audience.

Teaching Tips:
To extend the lesson, have students

- create an animated marquee or other animation for their Web site.
- record a short video or audio clip.
- add such interactive features as a hit counter, blog, poll, or shout-out" box.
- build a site from scratch without using a software wizard.
- compile a list of top 10 tips for creating future Web sites.

Resources:

- Federal Resources for Educational Excellence: U.S. Time Periods -- 1763-1815, Revolution
- K-12 Web Archiving Project, a collaboration between Internet Archive, the Library of Congress and California Digital Library
- Oracle Education Foundations ThinkQuest Competition
- Serifs WebPlus product info, tutorials, and demo videos

Assessment

Grading Rubric:
Students grades should be based on their ability to

- present accurate information and understand the subject matter.
- find, select and organize relevant information.
- understand the underlying hierarchical structure of a simple Web site.
- match the content, language, and illustrations to their intended audience.
- work together well in small groups to design the site.

Lesson Plan Source

Dr. Thomas Gant, supervisor of education technology, Tabernacle (New

Jersey) School District

Submitted By

Theresa Freeman, Matter Communications on behalf of Serif

National Standards

GRADES K - 4
NSS-USH.K-4.1 Living and Working together in Families and Communities, Now and Long Ago
NSS-USH.K-4.2 The History of Students' Own State or Region
NSS-USH.K-4.3 The History of the United States: Democratic Principles and Values and the People from Many Cultures Who Contributed to Its Cultural, Economic, and Political Heritage
NSS-USH.K-4.4 The History of Peoples of Many Cultures Around the World
GRADES 5 - 12
NSS-USH.5-12.1 Era 1: Three Worlds Meet (Beginnings to 1620)
NSS-USH.5-12.2 Era 2: Colonization and Settlement (1585-1763)
NSS-USH.5-12.3 Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s)
NSS-USH.5-12.4 Era 4: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)
NSS-USH.5-12.5 Era 5: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877)
NSS-USH.5-12.6 Era 6: The Development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900)
NSS-USH.5-12.7 Era 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)
NSS-USH.5-12.8 Era 8: The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)
NSS-USH.5-12.9 Era 9: Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)
NSS-USH.5-12.10 Era 10: Contemporary United States (1968 to the Present)

SOCIAL SCIENCES: World History
GRADES 5 - 12
NSS-WH.5-12.1 The Beginnings of Human Society
NSS-WH.5-12.2 Early Civilizations and the Rise of Pastoral Peoples
NSS-WH.5-12.3 Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires
NSS-WH.5-12.4 Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter
NSS-WH.5-12.5 Intensified Hemispheric Interactions, 1000-1500 CE
NSS-WH.5-12.6 Global Expansion and Encounter, 1450-1770
NSS-WH.5-12.7 An Age of Revolutions, 1750-1914
NSS-WH.5-12.8 The 20th Century

TECHNOLOGY
GRADES K - 12
NT.K-12.1 Basic Operations and Concepts
NT.K-12.2 Social, Ethical, and Human Issues
NT.K-12.3 Technology Productivity tools
NT.K-12.4 Technology Communications tools
NT.K-12.5 Technology Research tools
NT.K-12.6 Technology Problem-Solving and Decision-Making tools

Originally published 05/08/2009
Last updated 06/10/2011

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