

WEB RESOURCES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This write-up presented a brief description of web resources for teaching and learning in schools and that are available for free. The basic features of the resources were highlighted while the url addresses of the listed resources were also given.

Keyword: Web resources, Databases, Internet Public Library, Awesome Library.

Introduction

The rapid proliferation of information in the internet era has important implications for teaching and learning in our schools just as sources of information available via the internet are increasing exponentially. (Thanuskodi, 2010). This comes with a steady increase in internet use for teaching, learning, research, and classroom management. Nigeria has a large base of basic and post basic schools that compete with minimal resources allocated for education on a yearly basis. This has led to inadequacy of learning resources in schools. However, the Internet is a ready tool available to save the teachers, students, and educators from this ugly incident.

The Internet provides the platform for web-resources and databases of information resources and has emerged as an important source of teaching and learning resources and other information for schools. Many learning resources, magazines, newspapers, and other important materials for implementing the curriculum are now available online. In fact, the Internet can serve as one stop-shop for free textbooks, projects, and lesson plans on diverse range of subjects in both elementary and high school. Some sites provide links to hundreds of journals and newspaper as well as offer virtual encyclopedias of information on diverse topics to support schools' curriculum. According to Awoleye and Siyanbola (2006) the internet has the most economical, easy, instant and vast resource of current information and can serve as an ideal tool for educators, teachers, and students.

This paper presents a brief summary of some of the free resources that teachers and students can take advantage of in facilitating authentic learning in teaching and learning in their schools. Authentic learning as a pedagogical approach allows students to explore, discuss, and meaningfully construct concepts and relationships in contexts that involve real world problems and projects that are relevant to the learner (Donovan, Bransfors, and Pellgrino, 1999).

It should be noted that the contents of these resources are prepared by experts, which make the resources relevant and adequate for teaching and learning in schools, hence teachers and students should begin to take advantage of some of these resources to transform teaching and learning. Siemens (2000) reiterated the duality of conceptual (new models of education, advancement of social learning theory) and the technological (e-

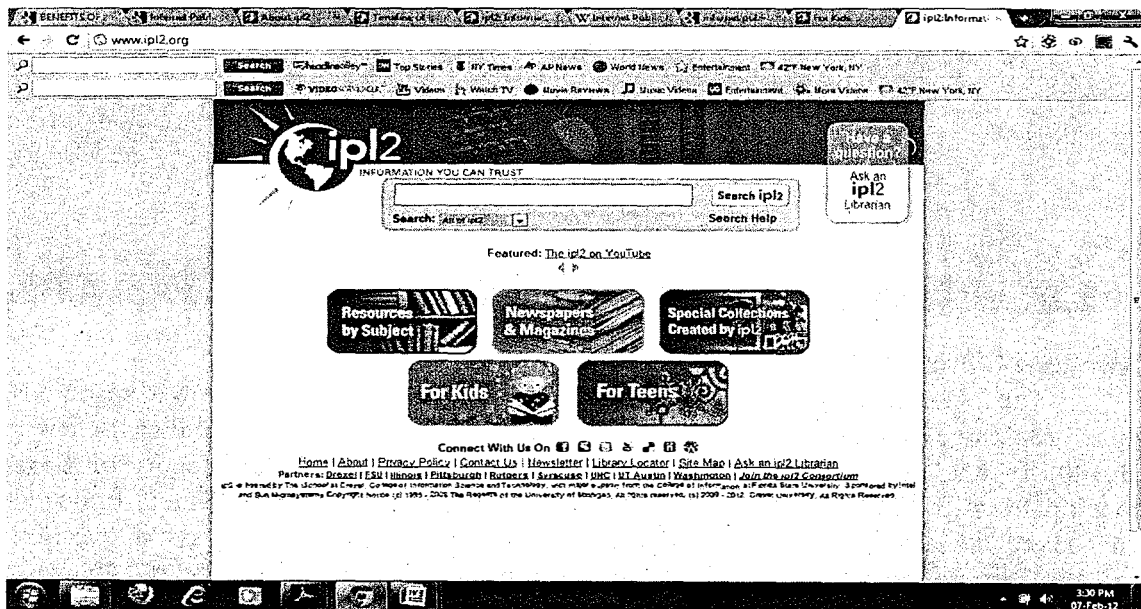
learning, mobile devices, learning networks) revolutions as key to transformation change in teaching and learning.

Internet Public Library - (IPL) (www.ipl2.org)

The Internet Public Library (IPL) is a public library available on the Internet designed to serve the purposes and carry out the functions of a Public library. The IPL is a project of the University of Michigan School of Information and Library Studies to provide an on-line, 24 hour public library service to the people irrespective of location. The original purpose of IPL was to create a virtual public library to serve the World Wide Web. Among the first services will be on-line reference; youth services; user education; and professional services for librarians. The IPL collection appeals to the needs of users in various categories (i.e high school students, college students, university students, researchers, teachers, educators, artisans, etc.).

The relevance of the IPL to schools is borne out of the fact that it makes provision for collection for Kids and Teens that form the bulk of pupils in our schools. The IPL is an important site for educators and teachers because it contains extensive directories of online texts, newspapers, magazines, reference materials; plus an exhibit hall and other special sections. The site is well-organized with simple navigational links at the bottom of most of the pages. The different sections often have more advanced navigational sidebars to help users get around that area. Though, the library has big site, navigation through it has been made easy.

Fig 1: Internet Public Library Home Page.



Other highlights of the IPL include:

- a reading room that has over 3000 titles that can be browsed or searched

- the collection that can be browsed by author, title, subject or Dewey decimal classification heading
- all works that can be searched by key word, author, title, subject or Dewey decimal classification heading
the reading room that provides facility to explore online texts, magazines, serials, and storybooks..
- the reference section that consists of the *"ready reference collection"* and the *"Ask a Question" service*.

The Reference Collection is an indexed set of links on the World Wide Web that covers a wide variety of research topics while the "Ask a Question service", provides a platform for users to ask questions which the volunteer librarians from around the world provides answers to.

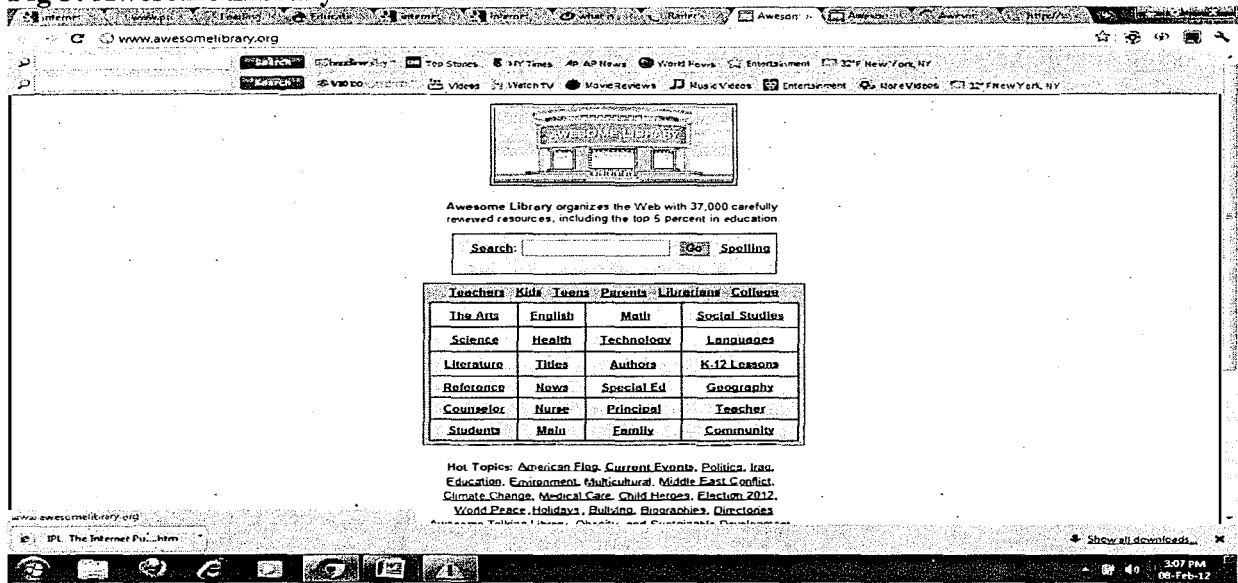
Fig 2: Internet Public Library Reference Page

The screenshot shows the 'Ask an ipl2 Librarian' question form. The page layout includes a search bar at the top with the text 'Search: All of ipl2'. Below this is a section titled 'Ask an ipl2 Librarian Question Form'. A sub-section asks 'Do you want to suggest a website or report a broken link? Please use our Contact Us form instead.' Below that, there is text stating 'Need an answer fast? Hundreds of our most popular questions and answers are listed on our Frequently Asked Questions pages. Want to know more about how the "Ask an ipl2 Librarian" Service works? This service runs 24 hours/day, 7 days/week during most of the year. Our Ask an ipl2 Librarian Holiday Closure Schedule shows when this service is unavailable or limited. Please review our Privacy Statement before submitting your question.' There are two input fields: 'Name*' and 'E-mail*', both marked as '* required information'. A small box on the right side of the form says 'If you have parental or mail controls turned on, please add ip/ret@ipl.org to your allowed mail list.' The browser's address bar shows 'www.ipl.org/askus/'.

Awesome Library (available at www.awesomeibrary.org)

The awesome library organizes the web with 37,000 carefully reviewed resources on a wide range of subjects such as Arts, English, Mathematics, Social studies, Science, Health, Technology, Languages, Literature etc. and also for a wide category of users ranging from Teachers, Kids, TEENS, Parents, Librarians, Counselor, Nurse, Principal etc. There are also resources for recreation and fun as well as the "ask a question category" for reference service. The Library can be searched using 'free word', 'phrase' or Boolean search.

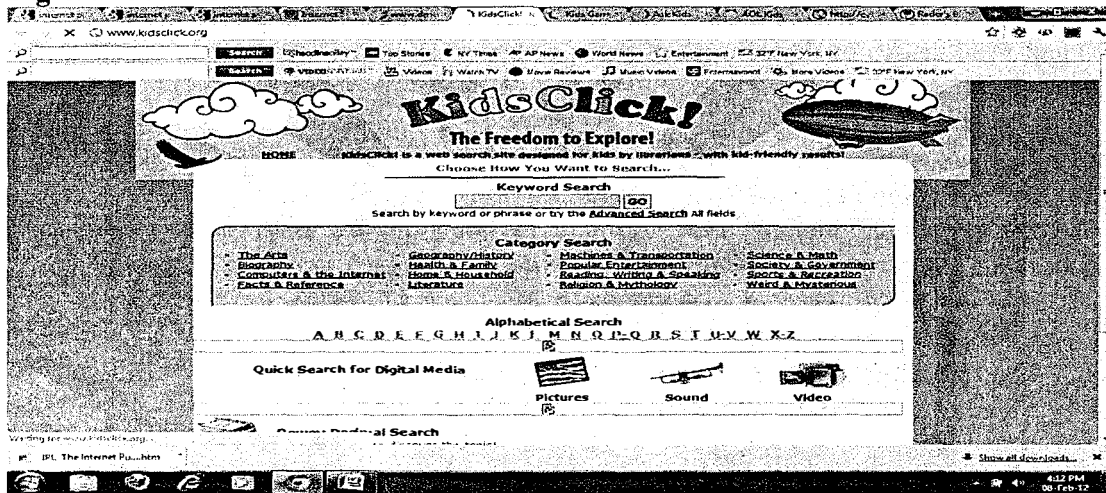
Fig 3: Awesome Library Search Interface



Kidsclick www.kidsclick.org

Kidsclick is a web search site designed for kids by librarians with kid-friendly results. Kidsclick provides a platform for to search resources by subject category, alphabetical category and Dewey decimal classification. It comprises collection that can make teaching and learning fun and interesting for the kids. The kidsclick has digital media in form of pictures, sound, and videos that are designed to make learning interesting and real for the nursery and primary pupils in schools. The site is interactive and has the ability to develop the search skills of the pupils.

Fig 4: Kidsclick Search Interface

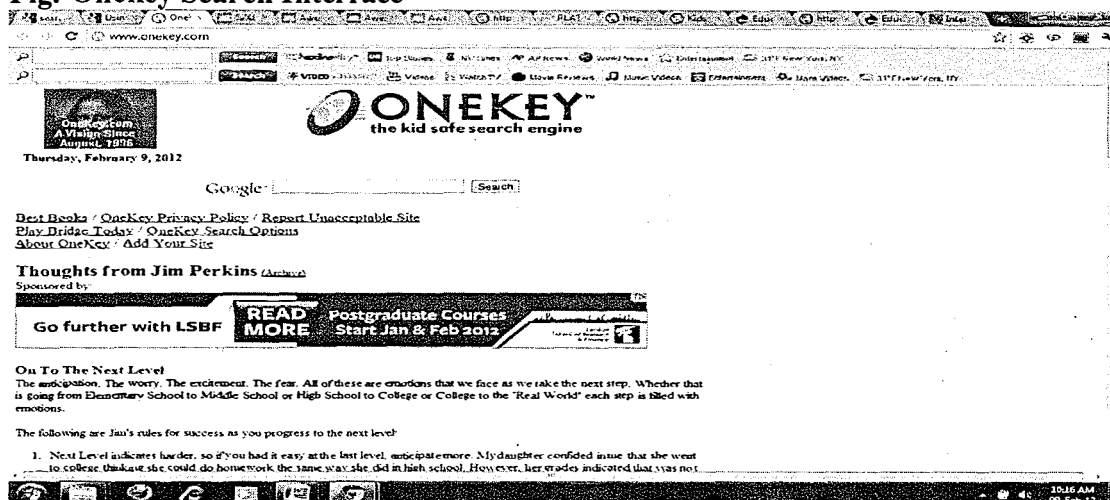


Onekey www.onekey.com

Onekey is search site that partnered with google to provide the largest database of kid safe sites. It has its strength in the fact that it blocked sites and webpages containing phonography and explicit sexual content from search results which makes it safe site that

pupils can interact with Onekey offers a resource library that has the best of collection covering a wide range of information including school subjects Onekey can be searched using simple keyword and search strategies such as quote marks for phrases and Boolean search (AND, OR, and NOT).

Fig: Onekey Search Interface



Other web-based resources that can be used to support teaching and learning in schools include:

- i. DMOZ (Open directory project www.dmoz.org)
- ii. Aolkids www.aol.com
- iii. Cybersleuth kids cybersleuth,kids.com
- iv. Askkid www.askkids.com

The detail description of the contents , aesthetic nature, organisation, search strategies, strengths and weaknesses of these some of these web resources will be done in the next edition.

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