Wandering the Web -- Multicultural Literature

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mer who thought that reference sharing should be easier. So he started tinkering. The site
maintains a “let’s figure it out together as we go along” that is common among grassroots
2.0 initiatives.

These are but a few examples of scholarly communication meets Web 2.0. Perhaps the biggest reason we are
seeing Web 2.0’s growing influence in our space is because the Web 2.0 world is influencing everything. It is
everywhere you turn. You can’t get away from it. The third grade class at Gilham Elementary School has
its own blog, for gosh sake (http://gilham.teacherhosting.com/blog/). In this regard, Web 2.0 calls to
mind another lesser known act of roguery, the Pace Match. For

Wandering the Web — Multicultural Literature

by Tadayuki Suzuki, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor of Literacy, Western Kentucky University)

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Introduction

Teachers and teacher trainees often wonder how they find a good multicultural story. There is no perfect answer to this question. Obtaining information and developing accurate knowledge of multicultural literary works through specialized Websites is a good initial step. Online recommendations are a fast and useful way to select quality multicultural literature. I recently researched Websites that offered comprehensive information related to multicultural literature. It was disappointing to find that many Web links were broken and not easily traced to newer sites. Below is a selective list of the Websites for multicultural literature I recently explored. These sites are reliable, current, and useful for literature-based literacy practices in K-12 instructional settings, and the sites are selected based on the quality of information and frequency of updating information.

General Information Regarding Multicultural Literature

Lisa Bartle’s Database of Award-Winning Children’s Literature — http://www.dawcl.com/ — This Website is maintained by Lisa Bartle, who is a reference librarian at California State University, San Bernardino. In this database, you can search award-winning children’s books based on ages of readers, authors/illustrators/translator, the types of awards, ethnicity, genders, genres, historical periods, keywords, types of languages, publication years and settings. As of December 2006, information on nearly 6,000 children books can be found in this database.

Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) — http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/multicultural.asp — The Cooperative Children’s Book Center is a unique and comprehensive online library about children’s literature. The site is maintained by the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education. This information-rich online library provides information about authors and illustrators, and books for children and young adults, literary events held by the CCBC, and periodicals published by the CCBC. Multicultural literature is listed under a specialized information link. This section provides annual statistics on the numbers of multicultural books published by both cultural insiders and outsiders. The statistical data are reported based on the racial groups such as Asian, Latino, Native American, and African American.

Carol Hurst’s Children’s Literature Site — http://www.carolhurst.com/ — In this Website, many types of children’s literature are listed with brief annotations. You can search using keywords, types of books, names of authors, and titles. The site also includes many resources for children and their parents. Many of the books are aimed at children with special needs.

Another reason why Web 2.0 is spilling into our space is that certain information sharing and social networking tools advance the fundamental scholarly communication experience. Community rating systems and annotation mechanisms remove the partitions that separate readers from one another. So, too, do folksonomies, in which readers and site visitors help categorize the content which they are reading. Tools like SSRN and ICPSR that create compelling, disintermediated aggregations of specific content types allow researchers to probe a deeper wellness of potentially valuable source materials.

In Part II of this column, I will discuss how institutional repositories and open access fit into this discussion. I will also offer some perspective as to how all these changes are affecting the role of the library. All that, plus a look into the world of Web 3.0, in the next issue.
Public Schools in Massachusetts. Accessibility to the external links on this site is periodically checked. One of the strengths is that the site offers useful information regarding daily instructional preparations for K-12 school teachers. Under Subjects Access: Literature and Language Arts on the site, you will find not only the links for both classical and multicultural literature databases, but also links for literature-based reading lesson plans, and literary criticism. Many external links related to literature are also useful for librarians for development of children’s and young adult literature collections.

Kay E. Vandergrift’s Special Interest Page — http://www.scilts.rutgers.edu/~kvander/in dex.html — This website is maintained by Kay E. Vandergrift, professor emeritus, Rutgers University, Newark. The site is replete with comprehensive information on both children and young adult literature. You will find practical, theoretical, and research-based information regarding children’s and young adult literature.

Dr. Vandergrift provides detailed descriptions, analyzing general elements of children’s and young adult literature, information on authors and illustrators, and on the history of literature. As one of the unique features of this site, the bibliographic information is listed based in a variety of genres such as gender and culture, cookbooks, authors, and informational resources. Information regarding children’s and young adult literary works of Islamic traditions and Muslim cultures are also found on this site. Judging from the depth of information, this site is appropriate for teacher trainees, in-service teachers, librarians, graduate students, college professors, and researchers in the field of children’s and young adult literature and literacy studies.

The Internet Public Library: KidSpace Home — http://ipl.si.umich.edu/div/kidspace/ — The Internet Public Library site is maintained by the School of Information at the University of Michigan. The primary purpose of the site is to provide students and faculty members with comprehensive information regarding literary documents and publications. However, the site also offers information regarding general education, literacy, and literature issues for children. Under Culture Quest in KidSpace Home, a variety of world regions such as Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, Middle East, North America, Central America, and South America are listed, and under each of these links, you will find not only cultural information, such as food and holidays, but also the titles and the descriptions of these regional folktales and fairly tales.

Children’s Picture Book Database at Miami University — http://www.lib.muohio.edu/picbks/ — This picture book database is maintained by Miami University Libraries in Ohio. This bibliographic database is designed for developing literature-based thematic units for several academic disciplines such as literature, language, and communications, mathematics, health and medicines, national history and natural science, social studies, and visual and performing arts. The database stores the abstracts of more than 5,000 picture books for children whose grade levels are from preschool to third grades. Through this database, the abstracts can be searched by more than 900 related keywords.

International Children’s and Young Adult Literature

The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) — http://www.ibby.org/ — This Website is the official site for the International Board for Young People (IBBY) in Switzerland. The organization aims to provide children with information on quality literature. IBBY promotes international understanding through disseminating information on children’s literature. The IBBY National Sections exist in seventy countries. The United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY, http://www.usbby.org) is a national section of the IBBY in the U.S. Book Bird: The Journal of International Children’s Literature is a refereed journal published quarterly by IBBY. The organization also offers workshops, seminars, and events pertaining to international children’s literature.

The Hans Christian Andersen Award, one of the prominent children’s literature awards in the world, is offered to the authors and illustrators who contributed their efforts to the promotion for the international understanding by this organization.

Professional Organizations and Special Interest Groups

Children’s Literature and Reading Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association — http://www.csulb.edu/org/childrens-lit/ — This Website is for children’s literature and reading special interest groups, and is maintained by the International Reading Association (IRA). The site works as the bulletin board for the group members in this interest group. The Dragon Lode is the title of the group’s journal, which is published twice yearly. This journal provides reviews and useful instructional suggestions regarding teaching children’s and multicultural literature. The selection criteria for submitting a journal article and the lists of new children’s literature and quality multicultural literature are available to both group members and non-members.

Regional Library Links Regarding Multicultural Literature

Ethnic Resource Centers, County of Los Angeles Public Library — http://www.colapublic.org/services/ethnic/ — Ethnic Resource Centers, under the Website of County of Los Angeles Public Library, offer four external links: American Indian Resource Center, Asian Pacific Resource Center, Black Resource Center, and Chicano Resource Center. Each of these external links further offers information engaged in the ethnic and cultural studies. The site also offers book lists written by African-American, Asian-American and Asian, and Hispanic and Latin American, and Native American authors. All of the books that appear on these lists are available at the Country of Los Angeles Library, and would be useful to librarians seeking to build multicultural collections of youth literature. Most of the titles listed are targeted toward adolescent or adult readers.

Evanston Public Library — http://www.epl.org/library/bibliographies/ — Evanston Public Library also offers similar information regarding ethnic and cultural studies and book lists of titles featuring international themes and protagonists. One of the interesting features of this site is that you will find information regarding books written by Indian and Middle Eastern authors. Most of the books on these lists are also for adolescents and adult readers, rather than for children.

Unique Multicultural Literature Sites

Children’s Literature by Reesa Cohen, The University of Manitoba, Canada — http://www.umanitoba.ca/education/edlab/child-lit.html — Since English is one of the official languages in Canada, people often overlook the fact that Canadian children’s literature is a part of the multicultural literature. Information on this Website is compiled by Reesa Cohen, who is an instructor of Children’s Literature at the University of Manitoba, Canada. This Website provides the external links of many children’s books published in Canada. You will also find the links for information of children’s literature published in the U.S., literature-based reading instruction, teaching ideas for using children’s literature, on-line literature journals and listserves. Some of these external links offer the directions in both English and French.

African American Literature Book Club — http://www.aalbc.com/ — This Website offers comprehensive information regarding African American issues such as children’s literature, books for adult readers, bestselling books and articles written by African American authors, and celebrities, music CDs, DVDs, and literary events for African Americans. The site also exists as an online community for African Americans and offers a chat room and discussion boards. People can freely participate in both a synchronous and asynchronous discussions.

A Few Resources for Purchasing Current Multicultural Books


NEAT Solutions for Healthy Children, Inc. — http://www.neatsolutions.com

Shen’s Books — http://www.shens.com/

It is sometimes difficult to find multicultural children’s books and related resources through even the larger bookstore chains and online vendors without having sufficient background knowledge on multicultural literature. The above links are to online stores for multicultural children’s books and resources. These links will help you find most current multicultural books and related instructional resources available in the U. S.

Conclusion

Finding appropriate multicultural literary continued on page 86
Do you recall the myth about the Golden Apples of Deceit? It seems instructive to me during these trying, tense technological times. Atalanta had been warned by the god Apollo that she would lose herself if ever she married so she determined not to. Living in woodlands and hilly places she became not the fastest woman, but the fastest human alive. She offered her hand in marriage to any man who could beat her in a footrace. If he lost the race, however, he would also lose his life. Hippomenes at first scoffed but when he saw her beauty, he too fell struck even after witnessing the defeat, and death of those foolish enough to challenge her. Atalanta felt moved by the young man’s beauty herself but refused to give in. He, on the other hand cried out to the goddess Cythera who lent him three golden apples.

As they began the race Atalanta closed in on Hippomenes to pass him. Quickly, he tossed a golden apple aside. She ran for the apple, amazed by its gleaming brightness. He, on the other hand closed in on her — for lack of a better word — screens.

He saw the confluence of events moving us along to a time when most everything he loses the race, however, he could beat her in a footrace. If he does, he wins. He goes on to point out that many of the “wild assertions” about technology that cannot possibly be true, such as providing access to information anywhere, any time, any place, because it assumes if it is in a database, in can be found easily when, “nothing could be further from the truth.”

We strive for the ‘paperless society’ forgetting, it appears, that the lifeblood of our libraries is, uh, paper.”

Lancaster cites dehumanization as much to blame, arguing that at least in the United States it has replaced the human element. But he goes on to blame librarians because they have become “completely uncritical of information technologies.” While this is largely true it cannot be left unsaid that those who have criticized information technologies have been branded as Luddite or worse (for example, wild-eyed Unabombers?). Lancaster also goes on to point out that many of the “wild assertions” about technology that cannot possibly be true, such as providing access to information anywhere, any time, any place, because it assumes if it is in a database, in can be found easily when, “nothing could be further from the truth.”

He goes on to point out that many scholars and experienced researchers were happy with results found until they discovered how many important items they missed. Individual librarians, as well as a team of librarians, also missed almost as many important citations.

The point of all this is that there may well come a time when technology, to put this in the patina of the new age, “ruled!” But that time is far from now. Libraries should make a resolution to become more critical and thoughtful about our brave new world and all that it portends, both for now, and for the future. If we do not, we may well be creating the rope that will be used to hang us later.

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