

A newsletter for parents about what school library programs have to offer.

## The School Library Link to Information Literacy

**I**nformation WHAT? So what is information literacy anyway? Well think about this: How many different places did you get information from when you were a young student? Three or four, right? Books, magazines, newspapers, and television? Well, today children have almost insurmountable amounts of information coming at them from all directions. News sources have multiplied, new forms of communication have emerged, and every Tom, Dick, and Shelley have innumerable ways of communicating their ideas, beliefs, and "facts." The invention of the Internet has brought about blogs and easy-to-create Web sites. Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter have made access to information by "word-of-mouth" instantaneous. Our kids are now communicating instantly, chatting online, texting each other on cell phones, and even broadcasting audio and video online. So, how do students tell what is "good information?" Where are the truly legitimate and trustworthy information sources anymore?

Well, that is exactly where the school library comes in. In the past, school libraries have been centers that promoted reading and taught students about doing research and citing their sources. But more and more "research" today is coming straight from Google- and Google alone. School librarians, school library media specialists, school library teachers-whatever you call them-have become teachers of information literacy. Not only do school library teachers have to know all the technology, but they must teach their students how to make the most of it.

For example, our school library is a place where we teach students how to evaluate a Web site for accuracy and validity. Whose writing are you reading? What are his or her credentials? How do you find a good Web site to begin with? School library teachers are




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now teaching students how to use search strategies, like Boolean search terms (*and, or, not*), to find the most effective and relevant Web sites in the first place. In addition, school library teachers teach about using article databases, which are the most reliable places to find information online.



But this is only the beginning. Information literacy encompasses a large number of skills that our students need to know heading on to middle school, high school, and especially college. Being able to read, understand, synthesize, and repeat information is the basis of all learning. School libraries are the first link to information literacy. 

## THE LINK TO...

### Online Encyclopedias

Online encyclopedias are a special type of database that are easy to search and useful for young students. In some ways, online encyclopedias have an edge over print versions because they usually have more up-to-date information, plus they often contain Web links and audio and video clips. Check out these encyclopedias to help your children with their projects:

**FactMonster**, [www.factmonster.com](http://www.factmonster.com)

**World Book Online**, [www.worldbookonline.com/kids/](http://www.worldbookonline.com/kids/)

**Encyclopedia Britannica**, [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)

**World Almanac Online for Kids**,  
[www.worldalmanacforkids.com](http://www.worldalmanacforkids.com)

## Help Your Kids Evaluate Web Sites


Do you help your kids do research online? Here are some tips to help guide your children to Web sites that are factual and trustworthy.

1. When you look at a Web site, look past the design and domain name. Your first stop should be the author of the Web site. Who wrote this information? What are his or her credentials?
2. Double-check your facts. Never use only one Web site to do research! Always use several sources of information to verify facts.
3. Use different search engines, rather than just



The Internet is a vast resource. Children need to become expert evaluators!

Google. Try these search engines, which have been designed using reliable, kid-friendly Web site results: [www.kidsclick.org](http://www.kidsclick.org), [www.yahooligans.com](http://www.yahooligans.com), and [www.askkids.com](http://www.askkids.com).

4. Help your kids remember to write down the Web site where they found their information. Don't know how to cite it? Try using [www.bibme.com](http://www.bibme.com) or come into the school library for quick lesson on writing Webliographies. 

### THE LINK TO... Great Nonfiction Books

Children's nonfiction has taken great strides in the last 20 years. No longer do children's publishers publish books for adults, only smaller. New nonfiction for kids has taken a visual turn: Books are chock-full of images, sidebars, and informational tidbits.

Why is nonfiction important? For one thing, many children don't particularly like fiction. And that's okay! But that doesn't mean that those children are destined to become "non-readers." Nonfiction can show a child that reading is fun because it is about their favorite hobbies or subjects. Look for how-to books (such as crafts, cooking, camping, or sports) for hands-on reading. What is your child fascinated with? No matter what it is there is bound to be a quality children's book about it. Nonfiction is fun, and reading it is a key link to developing information literacy!

#### **Publishers of Great Children's Nonfiction:**

**Dorling Kindersley** publishes the award-winning *Eyewitness* series, that appeal to kids' visual learning. Visit [www.dk.com](http://www.dk.com).


**Usborne Books** publishes high-quality nonfiction for all ages. Check them out for puzzle books, cookbooks, and other activity-oriented books. Visit [www.usborne.com](http://www.usborne.com).

**Holiday House** publishes nonfiction picture books in story form for the younger set. Visit [www.holidayhouse.com](http://www.holidayhouse.com).

## Using Your Local Library's Databases with Your Children

Databases are one of the best ways for students to do research online. Databases are computerized holding places for all kinds of articles from reputable media outlets, from both print and online sources. Plus, many databases are designed specifically for children! Local public libraries often subscribe to these databases, which you can usually access online from home using your regular ol' library card.

What can you find in a database? Well, it depends on which one you use. Most databases will list what magazines or newspapers or journals they have articles from. Some databases have entire articles, while others have just summaries.

How to use databases is another great skill that we teach in school libraries. Many schools have their own subscriptions to databases. Ask your school or public librarian today: What databases are available to your students? 

Watch for next month's issue of  
*The School Library Link:*  
The Link to Reading Readiness