H-ASIA

September 2, 1996

Query: Soliciting reports on use (successful or otherwise) of Internet sources for Asian studies

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From: Frank F. Conlon <conlon@u.washington.edu>

This is an open solicitation to H-ASIA members to report on their experiences in using Internet sources, (lists, webs, course-related lists, etc.) for teaching about Asia, or its component parts.


Please do not hesitate to reply on the basis of not having answers or comments to all of the above questions--they are offered merely as suggestions.

For some time it has been troubling me that while we have developed H-ASIA as a means for sharing ideas among professionals with respect to scholarship, we have, apart from a few bibliographies and syllabi, not addressed the question of how the new Internet medium has (or has not) worked in support of our teaching.

I look forward to your observations and reports of experience in this area.

Thanks

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Response to query: Using the Internet to Teach about Asia, No. 1
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From: Jana Everett <jeverett@carbon.cudenver.edu>

For a spring 1996 course on the politics of China, India, and Japan I got lots of help from H-ASIA folks on how students could access newspaper from those three countries, got further assistance from the Australian national university Asian studies web site, compiled a handout and had the students responsible for sharing with the class material they gleaned from these sources relevant to the topics we were covering (e.g. economic policy, political parties and elections, gender and politics).

This was an upper-division course that met twice a week; CU Denver is a commuter campus; many of the students did not have modems at home and so had to use campus computer labs. About half had no experience with the Internet--the availability of a grad assistant I had for another program was crucial to providing hands-on help for some to take the first step. This was a small class--18 students--so there was room for students to talk about what they read in the newspapers and connect it to the topics discussed.

Two-thirds of the way into the class the resources on India improved with several Indian newspapers developing home pages on the web in connection with the elections.

About half of the students seemed to find this worthwhile.

In my other courses I use the Internet more extensively, and I think I will do so when I teach Asian politics again--e.g. circulating material to the students through Email ( I did circulate the citation guide H-ASIA put out), but I’m still cautious because of inequalities in access among our students. The availability of Asian newspapers is a real plus.

--Jana Everett
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From: sangle@wesleyan.edu (Stephen C. Angle)

For several semesters now I have been incorporating Email and web based materials into my courses on Chinese philosophy. The things I’ve done break into three categories:

1. Class mailing list. The local computer staff sets up an alias at the system level so that mail sent to "phil222" is forwarded to all people in the class (including myself). This has proved to be a great
resource in several ways.

[A] Students who have questions about what a passage means can ask as they're reading; often they'll get an answer (from me or another --student) before the class meets.

[B] Discussion goes on outside of class--either continuation of themes raised in class, or new ideas that students didn't have time (or courage) to raise in class.

[C] I have one student per class post a summary (around 400 words) of what went on in class. Sometimes this sparks further discussion; at the very least, I get a sense of what students got out of the day's discussion/lecture.

2. Course materials on the web. I try to put all course materials--syllabus, hand-outs, assignments--on the class web site.

(E.g., <http://www.wesleyan.edu/phil/courses/205/phil205.html>).

Since not everyone is equally keen on using the web, I still hand out paper copies, too. But now they always have access to things, even if they've lost it. In some classes (e.g., a seminar I taught on human rights and Chinese philosophy), there's a fair amount of sentences. I think there's a lot that can be done with this kind of idea...if only I had more time....

Another thing I'd like to do is put e-texts of the course texts on the web, probably on a password-protected page so that only enrolled students who have bought the books can use them. Chinese philosophical texts are notoriously unorganized; if you're told to write a paper on "benevolence" in the _Analects_, it'd be nice to be able to readily track down all the occurrences in the text. Doesn't guarantee a good paper, by a long shot, but it might be a start. And it seems to me that if students have purchased the text, they should have free access to the electronic version for such a purpose as well (kind of like a single-user license for software). I've tried to get the presses that publish these books to tell me what they think; so far, no responses. Sigh.

For the most part I have had very positive feedback from students. The Email list is the most visible of these three categories, and in some classes it has been greatly successful, clearly enhancing the degree to which a portion of the students were engaged with the class's themes and ideas. Not everyone was happy about having to master Email (much less the web [though the web stuff wasn't required]), but it seems to me to be an essential skill for the future, so I didn't feel very guilty about making them do it.

Best of luck with your own experimentation; I look forward to hear what others have done!

Stephen C. Angle

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Response to query on using the Internet as a teaching resource, No. 3

From: Mark Lincicome <mlincicome@holycross.edu>

I may be premature in responding to Frank's timely request for suggestions about using the Internet as a resource to teach about Asia, since I have no prior experiences to relate. Instead, to help fuel the desired discussion on this issue, I thought I would mention that with the start of our new academic year tomorrow (September 3), I've decided to ask students in my survey history course, "Perspectives on Asia," to collectively compile a list of Internet resources which THEY believe are useful for learning about Asia.

Each student will be required to "surf the Net," identify one or two potential candidates for the list, and to introduce her/his selection(s) to other students in the course using a local e-mail address that I'm also setting up for them to communicate outside of class. They will be asked to briefly defend or justify their choice by describing what kind of information the website provides and what value they think it would have to other students like themselves. Before the end of the term, I plan to publish their list on the Internet, probably as a link from my home page and survey course syllabus (neither of which, I confess, is up and running yet!).

I look forward to reading about what others are doing.

Mark Lincicome
College of the Holy Cross

Response to query: using the Internet to teach Asia, No. 4

From: Ming-te Pan <pan@calvin.gonzaga.edu>

In addition to mailing list, on campus discussion forum which I find very useful, I have encouraged students in my East Asian to 1600, modern China and modern Japan to find material that may enhance their understanding of the subject matter. Before I can put a html text on the computer, I give them a list of web sites that they may be interested in. Students will spend their time to explore
the sites and come back with a 2 pages report on what are useful, what are not.

Asian newspapers are very helpful for students to approach the issues from a different perspective. Asahi, Yomiuri, Mainichi, The Peking Review, Taiwan Headline News, Strait Times all have English versions on the Internet. For more advance students with language training in Japanese and Chinese, there are much more out there. Mankajin, China Times, People's Daily, and many specialized magazines are all on the net.

Chinese classics: such as Laozi, Lunyu, Sunzi bingfa and many Buddhist texts are all available on Internet.

Library is another important source to the students who are working on papers or essays related to Asia. Library of Congress and many university libraries are now allowing guest users to access their data base.

In this summer I contacted the Japan Times inquiring the possibility for it to put some of the Times back issues on the net. I got no luck. No one from the institution has responded to my 3 inquiries. My original idea was to ask students using the information to compare US and Japanese perspectives on the same event, such as the Pearl Harbor Attack, Security Treaty, Rape of school girl in Okinawa...

I am also seeking the possibility to coordinate with colleagues on other campuses designing courses with a common theme. In this way we can organize a small discussion group across campuses on very specific issues. I believe this will encourage students to participate in discussion.

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Response to query on using the Internet to teach about Asia, No. 5

From: TSTANLEY@HKUCC.hku.hk (Thomas A. Stanley)

While I have not successfully used WWW or Internet to support teaching, I did try assigning my students last autumn to write their term papers in WWW format. My experience may be of passing interest to someone hoping to encourage students to think about presenting information and ideas in a different manner -- and perhaps coming to think a little differently about their studies.
The result was partially successful: all the students reported that they were far more involved in writing this assignment than their other assignments. The complained to some extent about having to learn new and confusing skills like scanning pictures and text as well as the moderate complexities of HTML composition; they also came to the point of expressing interest in these new skills/devices (and I gave myself the benefit of the doubt by assuming that in the end their interest outweighed their complaints and frustrations). I also think that they learned far more about their topics than they would have otherwise, probably because they spent more time on the "papers" but also because the subject I assigned them (Hong Kong’s reaction to Japanese invasion of China/Hong Kong) was closer to their hearts than my normal assignments on Japanese history.

Of the small group (11), two who have now graduated have applications pending to do graduate degrees with my department: one is even continuing with the general topic of Hong Kong Chinese during the occupation. This also leads me to assume, again with some self-congratulations, that the task of writing for the WWW affected the students more positively and profoundly than would have been the case if they had written the tradition paper on paper.

One of the reasons I demanded WWW documents was to force the students to depart from traditional linear presentations of research by using the less linear and multimedia capabilities of WWW/HTML. This part of the experiment was only partially successful: the initial papers were little more than a normal paper, digitized and with pictorial illustrations. Since these papers were, however, too large to be viewed on machines with only 4Meg memories, the students soon found themselves exploring the opportunities (and limitations) of alternative methods of presentation. In the end, the documents were more satisfying than when the students first presented them, but they still did not take very much advantage of the medium. This was largely because until they began the course, they had not spent time surfing and during the course they also did not surf. Accordingly, they were not familiar with the possibilities confronting them.

Now, they know that they could have done far more; hopefully, they will become WWW/Internet users.

Thomas A. Stanley
Department of History
University of Hong Kong

Response to query on using the Internet to teach about Asia, No. 6

From: Shahid Refai (refais@rosnet.strose.edu)

Prof. Conlon could not have suggested a better topic for this group than this. There are several points that I would like to raise in this respect which all of us as well as our students must have come across.
(1) Too much material is available and is pouring everyday like monsoon rain on the websites and on Internet. I wish there was some structure, as many of my graduate students complained. There were no shortage of Internet sources but rather too many of them which needed their time to "sort multiple lists" and to pinpoint their narrow topics from this --bumper bibliographic baggage that was out of control. Is there a way that would give them (and us too) a kind of "select bibliography" that is not only comprehensive but also critical with informed comments from scholars who have used that material. So that the user is not going into a blind alley to find only a facade when the expensive interlibrary loan book

(2) My graduate students also complained that neither they (nor I) knew last year how the citation of textual references or endnotes could be done if they had it from the Internet or website or gopher or whatever. Is there a standardized guide to citations of Internet, gopher, CDROM, websites, H-Net, e-mail, etc. that can be ordered from a publisher for the campus store?

(3) The material that was cited by my graduate students was so "cyber-oriented" that I could not check it on my computer as it could have taken enormous time to get it online once again. The only solutions they had was to xerox plethora of this material and attach it to their research paper!

(4) Finally, how do you ascertain the reliability of the cyberspace material that was not reviewed by (a) scholarly publications (b) choice cards © published bibliographies.

I hope these issues could be discussed and clarified by cyberspace gurus.

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Response to query: Using the Internet to teach about Asia, No. 7

From: Judith Henchy <judithh@u.washington.edu>

With reference to Professor Refai's questions in the previous post in this thread:

I would like to add to this discussion the view of a librarian. We believe that we have a responsibility to select information resources based on their value to our users; for this reason I would suggest that you start your student's searches on a site that has been created by a library. At least in this way they will start off in the realm of verifiable resources. Such sites also tend to be better organized and easier to use. Many libraries, such as ours, are posting lists of scholarly refereed e-journals, so their quality is again verifiable.

I believe that by starting in these kinds of sites the students have a standard of comparison which would help them critically analyze some of the less worthy sources they will encounter.
There is also an initiative on the part of one of the two major national bibliographic utilities to catalog the Internet; many libraries are now contributing URL cataloging to this endeavor in an attempt to guide users to valuable scholarly sites. These resources are searchable on the OCLC database, which is available to most research libraries.

Southeast Asia Library Guide:

URL: http://weber.u.washington.edu/~judith/wwwsea.htm

Regards,

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Response to query: Using the Internet to teach about Asia, No. 8

From: David Magier <magier@columbia.edu>

Shahid Refai (refais@rosnet.strose.edu) raised some very good points and issues about the use of Internet information in Asian studies. As a librarian and library administrator, I've been intimately involved in trying to formulate some solutions to the problems he outlines.

> (1) Too much material is available and is pouring everyday like monsoon > rain on the websites and on Internet. I wish there was some structure, as > many of my graduate students complained. There were no shortage of > Internet sources but rather too many of them... > Is there a way that > would give them (and us too) a kind of "select bibliography" that is not > only comprehensive but also critical with informed comments from scholars > who have used that material?

The Association for Asian Studies is now involved in a fledgling effort to coordinate evaluation, selection, classification and annotation of small select sets of "peer reviewed" Internet resources, for inclusion in the kind of structure you describe, to be called the Asian Studies Online Library. This effort will only succeed with active input from the community of Asian studies scholars, since no one library or organization will have the necessary human resources to do a good comprehensive job unilaterally of collecting and classifying the massive quantities of new information appearing daily on the Internet. I have been asked to chair the small subcommittee (which operates under the aegis of the AAS Committee on Publications), which will develop the structure to coordinate (and maintain on the web) such an information resource for Asianists. In the meantime, I myself have been working very hard to update the "virtual collection" for South Asia, which, till now, has been represented
online by The South Asia Gopher. In order to include a classified, annotated, selected set of web-based resources among the many others already available in the SAG, I have been preparing to bring up the web version of the SAG, which will be called SARAI (South Asian Resource Access on the Internet). So far I have concentrated almost exclusively on the "collection development" work, developing very large raw lists of particular useful Internet resources for South Asianists. Now I am shifting to the "classification" and "annotation" stages of the work, and hope to have SARAI up and running soon. To get a preliminary peek at the (very) raw lists of S.Asia materials I've been collecting for SARAI, have a look at

http://www.columbia.edu/~magier/SAsia.html

(These raw lists do not reflect the very hierarchical detailed *subject* structure which the classification effort will yield for this collection. Meanwhile, any advice, suggestions, or any other input from South Asia scholars and educators will be greatly appreciated).

> (2) My graduate students also complained that neither they (nor I) knew last year how the citation of textual references or endnotes could be done if they had it from the Internet or website or gopher or whatever. Is there a standardized guide to citations of Internet...?

Yes, a number of standards have been published on the net:

a) Li & Crane, "Bibliographic Formats for Citing Electronic Information", which can be read at:

http://www.uvm.edu/~xli/reference/estyles.html

b) Janice Walker, "MLA-Style Citations of Electronic Sources" which can be read at:

http://www.cas.usf.edu/english/walker/mla.html

c) There was also a work on "Citing Sources in History and Humanities" which was published on the H-Net gopher earlier. I have not been able to find its new address on the H-Net web page, but it was a good resource.

> (4) Finally, how do you ascertain the reliability of the cyberspace material...

All information, whether disseminated via ink on paper or electrons on the Internet, is essentially "buyer beware". It is certainly true that the ubiquity, ease of use, and inexpensive access of the Internet has made it very easy for anyone to 'self-publish' whatever they like, including all sorts of garbage masquerading as "fact" or scholarly work. But one shouldn't expect the Internet to be any different than, say, the output of all the worlds typewriters, photocopiers, printing presses and pens and pencils! In particular, the Internet is not a library. Libraries have the feature of being selective (they spend their money only on books they have evaluated as being "good books"), and they also ease intellectual access by organizing the books into coherent classification schemes (e.g. call number ranges) so that one can browse all the books on a given topic. The Internet itself, because of its lack of any centralized control or authority structure, is incapable of generating either of these added-value services. Therefore, for information consumers like us, the only way the Internet will
approach the functionality of library is if large stable organizations or structures (e.g. AAS?), with the support of wide ranges of specialist volunteers from the scholarly community, attempt to leverage collaborative input into the creation of recognized, ‘authoritative’ online libraries. Till that happens, we’re all just surfing, cruising, jumping and hopping: lots of fun but not very information-dense.

David Magier  
Columbia Univ.

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Re: Using the Internet for teaching about Asia, No. 9: Citation Guide

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From: Patricia Ebrey <p-ebrey@uiuc.edu>

I would like to respond to the question of using the Internet in teaching, since I spent much of the summer thinking about it and trying to develop some materials suited to it.

First, some background. Last spring I tried a very low tech approach to getting students to interact outside of class via e-mail. My experiences were rather different in the two classes I tried it in. One was an honors general education course which had 17 students, 16 freshman and sophomore non-majors, and one senior major. This was designed as a discussion class, and I looked on e-mail as a way to improve the quality of the discussion. I assigned one or two students the responsibility of generating questions for each reading we had and passing them to me and the other students by 9 PM the night before. The freshmen and sophomores, who mostly live in dorms wired to the campus backbone, had no trouble with this. Moreover, they wrote some excellent questions, often bringing up apparent contradictions with previous readings and asking for explanations of them. It was clear to me that the students had begun to compete with each other to come up with probing questions, which was great for the quality of the discussion. Having the questions in advance helped me, too, because I could get a good sense of what students had made of the readings, and could plan ways to make sure that we also got to some topics I would have raised.

The other class was a team-taught senior seminar/graduate seminar with thirteen students of a very wide range of backgrounds. For this one class, groups of four or five students were assigned the responsibility of coming up with questions for an entire session, discussing them among themselves in advance by e-mail or in person, then sending them to the other students. The groups were designed to mix students with different backgrounds. Unfortunately, this group of older students, who mostly lived in apartments, found using e-mail much less convenient. Moreover, --More-- (27%) they tended to write the sorts of questions that work fine in person but are boring to read, such as “What was the author's main point?” The groups fell into the habit of merely dividing up the

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readings, so in the end, we had to switch our strategy and use more small-group discussion, beginning the three-hour seminar by dividing the class into groups so that they could caucus to come up with a short list of the key issues that would need to be discussed that week.

Having been impressed with the effect of using e-mail in the lower-level course, I began thinking more about other possible ways Internet technology could enhance teaching. I was particularly attracted to the possibility of making more effective use of visual materials. Putting them on web pages would seem, potentially at least, to have several advantages over other ways of conveying visual images, such as slide lectures or illustrated books.

Pedagogically, my objection to slide lectures is that students tend to treat them as a day off. Illustrations put on a web page, however, could be treated much like assigned readings, with students asked to come prepared to discuss them. The problem with illustrated books is that one can never get all the illustrations in them that one would like. I had just finished the Cambridge Illustrated History of China, for which I had spent a lot of time collecting ideas for illustrations and maps. In the finished book, however, only was only was able to use a fraction of what I had collected.

Anyway, I got a grant from an office at the university that supports projects for "asynchronous learning," which allowed a graduate student and me to spend our summer preparing materials to try out next spring for the 100-level Chinese civilization course. These fell into two groups: Maps and what I called "visual units." I divided Chinese history into seven time periods, and each period into four sessions, one on general history, one on a "visual unit," one on documents, and one on literary sources.

Besides using e-mail to distribute questions, this time I will have a large set of web pages for the visual units. For these visual units the class will be divided into groups, and each group is supposed to discuss among themselves what one can infer about Chinese culture from the illustrations via e-mail before coming to class. Since the purpose is to spark discussion, the "units" do not give a lot of textual explanation. The ones we prepared include one on early tombs (Shang-Han), one on paintings that show social life (Song), one on furniture and architecture (Ming-Qing), and one of people at work (late-nineteenth-early twentieth century). Selecting and scanning this material took much more time than I anticipated, but it was relatively straightforward.

Maps proved another story. I began with the model in my head of the great maps that appear in the New York Times every day. Wouldn't it be great if there was some software program that would allow me to quickly draw maps like these to illustrate points I wanted to make in class? Well, I now know that there isn't. I began knowing almost nothing about how maps are made, and have learned quite a bit since then (in part because of the generous response I got from a query in H-ASIA), but map-making is still not easy.

I learned two things about maps that might be of some interest to others.

If all you want is a bright colorful map that gives shaded topography and the names of lots of cities, it is hard to beat Encarta World Atlas. For about $40, you can get a CD that lets you zoom to any place on the globe, with more and more city names listed as you get smaller in scale. There appears to be well over a thousand Chinese cities, for instance. You cannot add your own details to this map,
however; nor can you delete modern names to make it work better for a discussion of earlier periods. Because I was mainly interested in making custom maps, looked at several more expensive map-making programs, such as MapArt and MapInfo, which allow someone familiar with a design or drawing program to make layered maps. There are problems with these, however, since I wanted to be able to show areas larger than today's PRC, and most of the maps are designed according to contemporary borders. Moreover, I did not find any that used color effectively to show topography, and it seemed a waste not to make use of color if the map was destined for the web.

In the end, I got a cartographer to make a base map for me of Asia. It took her over twenty hours to do this, tracing from a book for contour lines. Because rivers, city names, province boundaries, and so on are on different layers, I can redesign the map as I please, changing font size, adding new layers for other information I want. The main problem with this so far is that one cannot crop vector drawings of this sort. Rather, the image has to be converted to a bitmap image and exported to a photo-handling program to be cropped, which results in some loss of clarity. I am still working on this problem.

I won't teach the Chinese Civilization course until the Spring, so I cannot yet say how students will respond to this sort of course. The course will have a couple of other Internet-type features, such as extensive use of e-mail to distribute questions (generated sometimes by single students, sometimes by pairs). Moreover, one of the four short papers will be a web-paper, in which the students will research what they can find on a topic concerning recent China on the Internet.

Let me pose a question. As I worked creating or collecting material for--More--(90%)visual units, I had vaguely in the back of my mind that it would make sense to prepare a "visual sourcebook" CD that gathered images that would work will in teaching Chinese civilization, much the way the more usual sourcebook collects texts. This would be a large and expensive venture (one would need to pay permission fees for most of the images, not to mention compensation for all the time that would be required). Would there be enough of a market for such a product to repay its costs?

Students buy sourcebooks, but perhaps only the teachers or libraries would buy such a CD. Wouldn't those who purchased the CD quickly put the images on Web pages, making them so widely available that no one had the incentive to buy the CD anymore?

Patricia Ebrey

University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign

Using the Internet to teach about Asia, No. 10: Guide to Citations

From: "T.Matthew Ciolek" <tmciolek@coombs.anu.edu.au>

Dear H-Asia Colleagues,
In reference to Shahid Refai's query about electronic citation formats I highly recommend visiting the following site:

Electronic References & Scholarly Citations of Internet Sources


It is established and maintained by Dr Anita Greenhill (A.Greenhill@hum.gu.edu.au), Griffith University, Australia.

Her www page provides links to and a review of at least ten citation schemes. That page is a part of the Information Quality WWW Virtual Library:


Some of these I found to be simple (however, not the system proposed by H-AFRICA's Mel Page) elegant and very effective in my work - in both paper and on-line contexts.

Another, recently announced and useful source of relevant materials is:

URL: http://www.classroom.net/classroom/CitingNetResources.html

- best regards -

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