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## Online Technology Resources

Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators

<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/>

I learned of Kathy Schrock's website for educators during one of my first classes in the ITEC program, and I've used it often ever since. Started in 1995, the site has been hosted by and run in partnership with Discovery Education since 1999.

One section of the homepage, "Subject Access," offers links for numerous content areas, each of which in turn offers the reader links to additional web-based activities and instructional materials. Another major section provides resources to assist teachers with integrating technology-based activities into their classrooms; of particular interest is the [Presentation Support](#) page, which includes links to Kathy's previous presentations, covering topics as basic as an introduction to new technologies and as advanced as a theory- and research-based visual literacy primer to help teachers create effective multimedia presentations. With its clean design and indexing/search functionality, the site is easy to navigate and also contains none of the "fluff" that plagues many of the other content aggregator sites.

This website is in my "top 5" because of the sheer breadth of its content. Although I work primarily with adult learners, I have often used the [critical evaluation](#) section of the website to help guide me in assessing the design and usability of both websites and instructional materials I've developed. I have also utilized many of the [rubrics](#) to help design and define learning objectives for my training sessions.

MERLOT: Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching

<http://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm>

Perhaps best known by researchers as the online location of the Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, the MERLOT site is a true collaboration portal for educators. Free to join as a member, it contains peer-reviewed interactive content, learning materials categorized by curriculum area, and virtual communities dedicated to specific disciplines and learning partners, all of which is available for re-use under a Creative Commons license. Prominently displayed on the homepage is a link to a powerful [content builder](#) to aid members in building their own multipage websites; offering such functionality is unusual for a free website.

The website is developed and maintained "in partnership with higher education institutions, professional societies, and industry" (MERLOT, 2011), which makes it pertinent to my primary areas of interest, and I often choose to visit the "partnerships" section of the website to read the newsletters about what's happening in the online learning and teaching

arena. With an entire section of the site dedicated to [workforce development](#), I can always find something to learn; while the learning materials found in this section have a decidedly scientific and medical bias, the various multimedia presentations demonstrate “best practices” in action and show how the thoughtful use of visual design principles transcends the content material.

Annenberg Learner

<http://www.learner.org/>

I first found this site while doing research last fall, and I have used its resources in some of my training sessions since then. Sponsored by [The Annenberg Foundation](#), this site’s mission is to use “media and telecommunications to advance excellent teaching” (Annenberg Learning, 2011), and does so by offering free online multimedia content to aid teachers in enhancing their instruction; its content is similar to what can be found on Youtube or Teachertube, but is professionally produced and therefore of very high quality.

In addition to the online videos and multimedia presentations, the site also offers educators free online professional development through a wide range of [workshops](#) presented via video on demand and supplemented by PDF study materials and online discussion sites. Each workshop is targeted for teachers of a specific age group, with the majority focusing on K-8 education, but this is one of the few sites I’ve found that includes developmental materials specific to adult learning instructors.

iTunes U

<http://www.apple.com/education/itunes-u/>

A list of high-quality teacher resources for my adult learning environment would not be complete without mentioning iTunes U. The ability to incorporate content from both academic and industry experts is invaluable in helping me to demonstrate the real-world applicability of the procedural and structural knowledge I’m trying to relay to my learners. An intuitive [search page](#) makes it easy to find potential course materials by major subject area or by popularity, and search results return links to audio and video files as well as printable content such as worksheets and assessments. While YouTube is often seen as a hodgepodge of content of questionable quality, iTunes U offers courses from institutions such as MIT and Carnegie Mellon, which helps to increase iTunes’ credibility as a supplier of high-quality educational materials.

Although it can take considerable time and effort to find just the right segment for my lessons, using the site to supplement my training sessions help to minimize learner fear and distrust of “new” technology tools, since many of my learners are already familiar with iTunes. I also enjoy the opportunity to review content from the “Teaching and Education” category that helps me to further develop my instructional skills based on research and the experiences of pioneers in the field

Smithsonian Education

<http://smithsonianeducation.org/>

With sections for educators, families, and students, this site offers something for everyone. The educators section of the site offers age-appropriate lessons that are tailored to each state's standards; the search functionality to find courses that meet a particular state's grade level standards is so well presented that the considerable effort required behind the scenes to link lessons to standards is completely transparent. [Lesson plans](#) and instructional materials are available for multiple content areas, as are multimedia virtual "field trips" to the museums, and the site also offers numerous professional development opportunities. For parents, the site provides guides to help plan visits to the Smithsonian museums and study guides for at-home enrichment and learning support, while students can use the site's search engine to help research curator-reviewed primary sources for use in class projects or explore subjects that can't be reviewed in the traditional classroom due to either time or geographic constraints.

On a personal level, I love this website because the content is professionally reviewed and indexed by age group and content area standards, which makes it easy for my wife and me to direct our young kids to appropriate materials to pique their interest on subjects that they're not studying in school. Additionally, we've used the website as preparation for trips to Washington, D.C., allowing our 8-year-old to help plan our itinerary and our 5-year-old to identify areas and exhibits he would like to see. (The best part is they don't even realize that they're learning as we have them doing such activities!)

## References

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